

# **Customer Access Strategy**

## **Public Consultation Findings**

**April 2016**

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the detailed findings from the public consultation (18 January 2016 to 14 March 2016) on proposed changes to the way customers access the council's services. A total of 119 surveys were completed (69 online responses and 50 paper responses) where 94% responded as Barnet residents or business.

The majority of respondents (75%) use the internet to access information, goods or services. Of the remaining 30 respondents, just under half of them (12) "do not feel confident in their skills" to use the internet.

Of the 67 respondents who answered whether or not they would like to learn more skills for using the internet, some 40% responded "yes"<sup>1</sup> – mainly wish to learn through help from family members, formal training or council staff.

Apart from Sport Pitch Booking and License Application for Businesses (which hasn't had full online functionality delivered), over half of respondents showed preference to access services online (when presented with online or telephone self-service only options). When asked how they would access these services if they were made only available online, over half of respondents answered that they would access them "on your own".

Just under half of 90 respondents (49%) cited preference over face to face interaction as reason for visiting Barnet House. Sixty respondents answered the question on whether they thought the proposed changes would stop them from accessing services and of this, over half of them (36; 60%) answered that it would. Housing benefits and council tax were the most common services that respondents felt they would be unable to access.

Further qualitative feedback were gathered from a workshop conducted with Inclusion Barnet. It was found that the use of social media, (e.g. Facebook and WhatsApp), was the most prevalent form of internet use and most attendees were willing to access the Council's website if it is functional, accessible and user friendly.

### 1.1 Summary of approach to consultation

The public consultation ran from 18 January 2016 to 14 March 2016.

A summary of key findings is outlined over the following pages. The results will feed into the draft proposals and will be used to make any changes that have been highlighted as necessary through the consultation before finalising the strategy later in the year.

The consultation consisted of an online survey which was published on [Engage Barnet](#). Paper copies were available at the council's two face to face centres; Barnet House and Burnt Oak Library and Customer Service Centre. Easy-read versions were available on request. Posters to advertise the consultation were put up in various locations:

- North Finchley and Golders Green Libraries,
- Burnt Oak Registration and Nationality Service,
- Burnt Oak Library and Customer Service Centre, and
- Barnet House

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<sup>1</sup> Within which, 63% were "Fairly Confident" with their current skills for using the internet; and 37% were "Not very confident" and "Not at all confident".

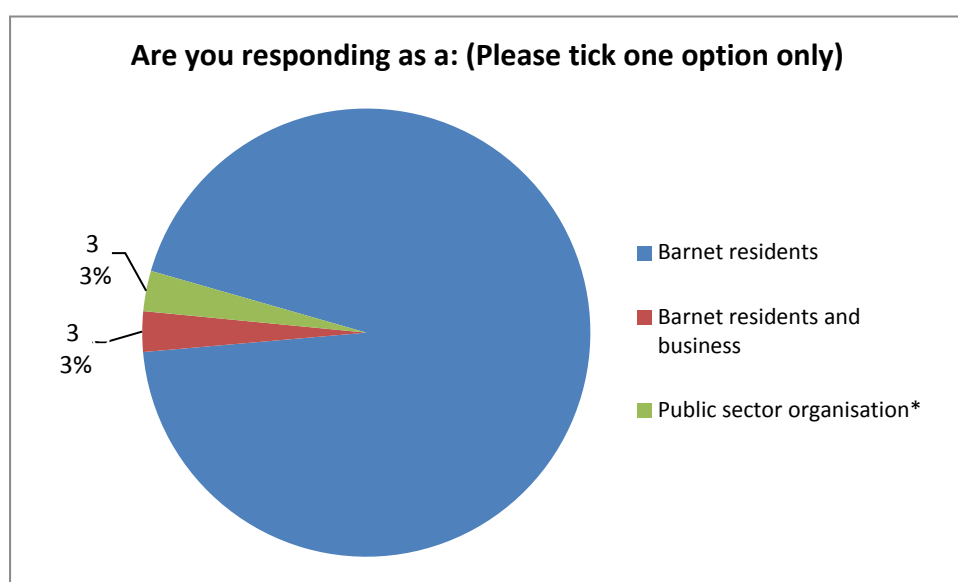
The consultation was also advertised through:

- An article in the CommUNITY Barnet newsletter,
- An email to the Communities Together Network,
- An email to elected Members,
- An article in the School Circular,
- A press release,
- An article in the Partnership Board Monthly Update,
- An email to the Barnet Borough Resilience Forum,
- An article on the Barnet Homes web page, and
- Social media coverage (Twitter and Facebook)

Staff within the Social Care Direct, Barnet Homes, Re and Coventry call centres were also briefed to promote the consultation to customers.

A Partnership Board Workshop was scheduled for the afternoon of 2 March 2016 but was cancelled due to lack of take up.

In total, 119 surveys were completed (69 online responses and 50 paper responses). Of the 103 respondents who specified in what capacity they were responding:



\*Two respondents specified this organisation as Barnet Council.

## 1.2 Response to the survey

In total 119 survey responses were completed, including 69 completed online and a further 50 hard copy responses<sup>2</sup>.

### 1.2.3 Survey response and profile

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<sup>2</sup> Four hard copy consultation were also received after the deadline therefore have not been included in this analysis

The table below shows the profile of those who responded to the survey. Of the 103 responses received to this question, the vast majority were Barnet residents (94%, 97 responses).

13 per cent (16 respondents) chose not to answer this question.

Type	Number	%
Barnet resident	97	94%
Barnet business	0	0%
Barnet resident and business	3	3%
Representing a voluntary/community organisation	0	0%
Representing a public sector organisation	2	2%
Other	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100%</b>
Not answered	16	13%

The chart below shows the demographic profile of those who responded to the survey. This has been compared with the demographic profile of the borough as a whole<sup>3</sup> (shown in brackets).

This analysis has identified a number of under and overrepresented groups through this survey in comparison to the overall demographic of Barnet. Those in age groups under the age of 34 are underrepresented whereas those between 35 and 74 are overrepresented. The 75+ age group is underrepresented in these results.

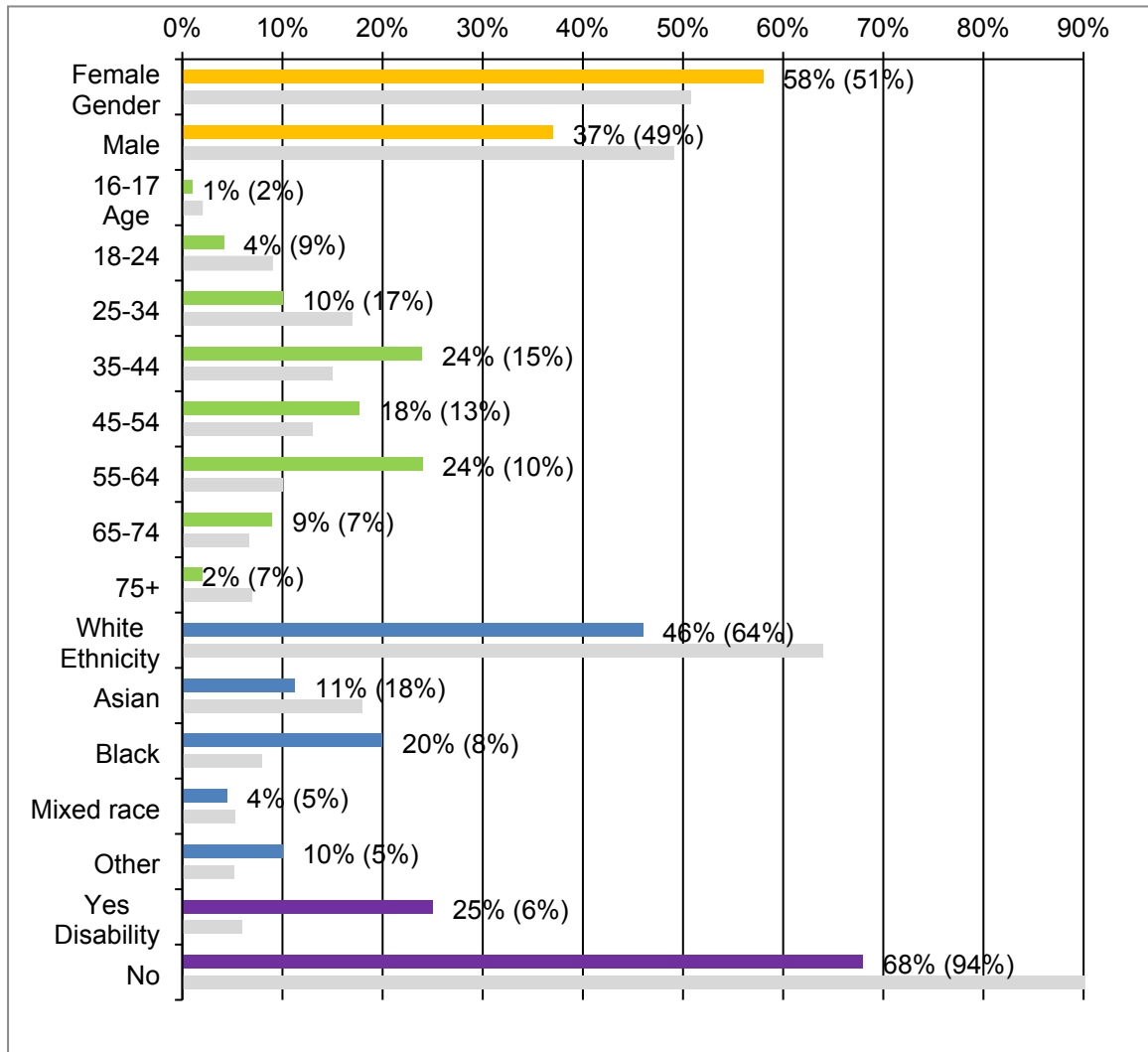
Those from White, Asian, or Mixed ethnicities are underrepresented, whereas those from Black ethnic backgrounds are significantly overrepresented. Those whose ethnicity is 'Other' are also overrepresented.

Respondents with a disability were significantly more represented in comparison to the general population of Barnet. It should also be noted that there was an overrepresentation of female respondents and male respondents were underrepresented.

The Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) outlines four of the protected characteristic groups that could potentially be negatively impacted; pregnant/maternity leave; ethnicity; disability; and age. Although there is not data on pregnancy and maternity leave on a borough-wide level, of those who completed the survey 2% responded that they are pregnant, and 3% responded that they were currently on maternity leave. It was noted in the EIA that the assessment and actions in relation to the relocation of services away from Barnet House that may negatively impact on those who are pregnant or on maternity leave are the same as have been identified for the older population.

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<sup>3</sup> 2011 census data and GLA population projections (2013)



Ethnicity was noted in the EIA as being impacted by the proposals because those whose first language is not English may prefer face to face options to communicate effectively. In the case of this survey, none of the ethnic groups were representative of the general Barnet population due to a key proportion of Asian, White, and Mixed ethnic backgrounds being underrepresented. It is therefore essential that the Digital Inclusion Strategy considers how translation can be incorporated into emails sent in response to self-service transactions and automated telephony self-service.

The older population are more likely to be digitally excluded. With the exception of the over 75 age group, those above 35 are heavily represented in the results of the survey. Some focus may need to be put on the 75+ age group to ensure engagement and make sure that their views are taken into account.

In terms of disability, this protected characteristic is overrepresented in comparison to the Barnet baseline therefore is well represented in the results of the survey.

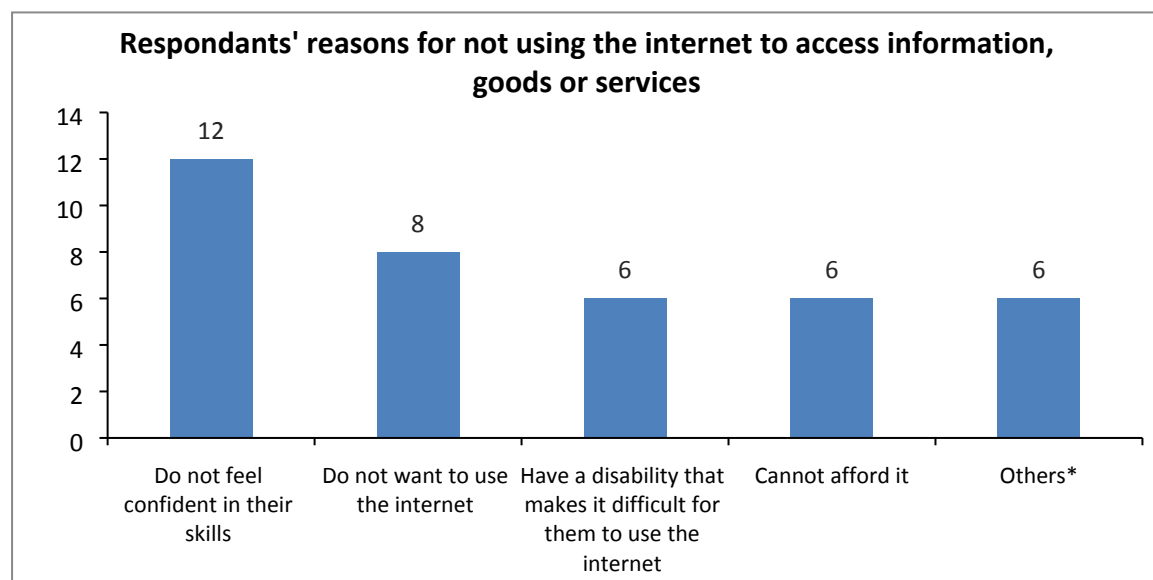
The table below shows the broad postcode areas of the respondents to the survey. 25% of respondents chose not to answer this question or gave an invalid postcode. The table shows that respondents were spread across the borough, with the most respondents being from Edgware/Burnt Oak (HA8 postcode area – 19%), followed by Hadley Wood/Cockfosters/East Barnet/New Barnet (EN4 postcode area – 12%) and East Finchley/Hampstead Garden Suburb (N2 postcode area – 10%).

Postcode area	Number	%
HA8 (Edgware, Burnt Oak)	17	19%
EN4 (Hadley Wood, Cockfosters, East Barnet, New Barnet)	11	12%
N2 (East Finchley, Hampstead Garden Suburb)	9	10%
NW11 (Golders Green, Temple Fortune, Hampstead Garden Suburb, Hendon, Brent Cross)	8	9%
NW9 (The Hyde, Colindale, West Hendon)	8	9%
EN5 (High Barnet, Arkley)	7	8%
NW7 (Mill Hill, Edgware, Arkley)	7	8%
NW4 (Hendon, Brent Cross)	5	6%
N20 (Whetstone, Totteridge, Oakleigh Park)	4	4%
N3 (Finchley, Church End, Finchley Central)	4	4%
N11 (New Southgate, Friern Barnet, Bounds Green)	3	3%
N12 (North Finchley, Woodside Park)	3	3%
NW2 (Cricklewood, Childs Hill, Golders Green, Brent Cross)	3	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100%</b>
Not answered/out of borough	30	25%

## 2. DETAILED FINDINGS FROM SURVEY

### 2.1 Current internet use

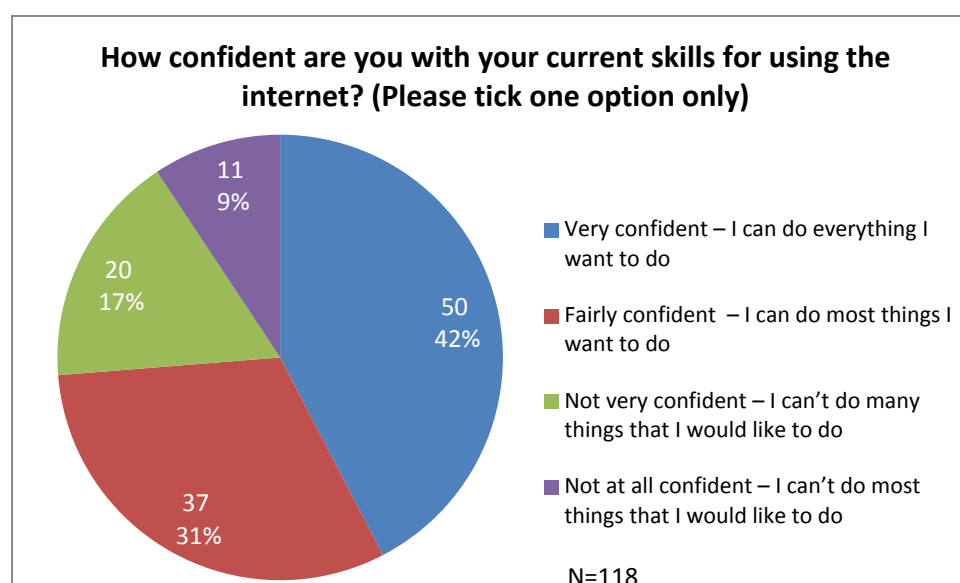
The majority of respondents (75%) use the internet to access information, goods or services. Of the remaining 30 respondents, 90% gave reasons for why they did not ever use the internet to access information, goods or services:



\*Other reasons for not using the internet included:

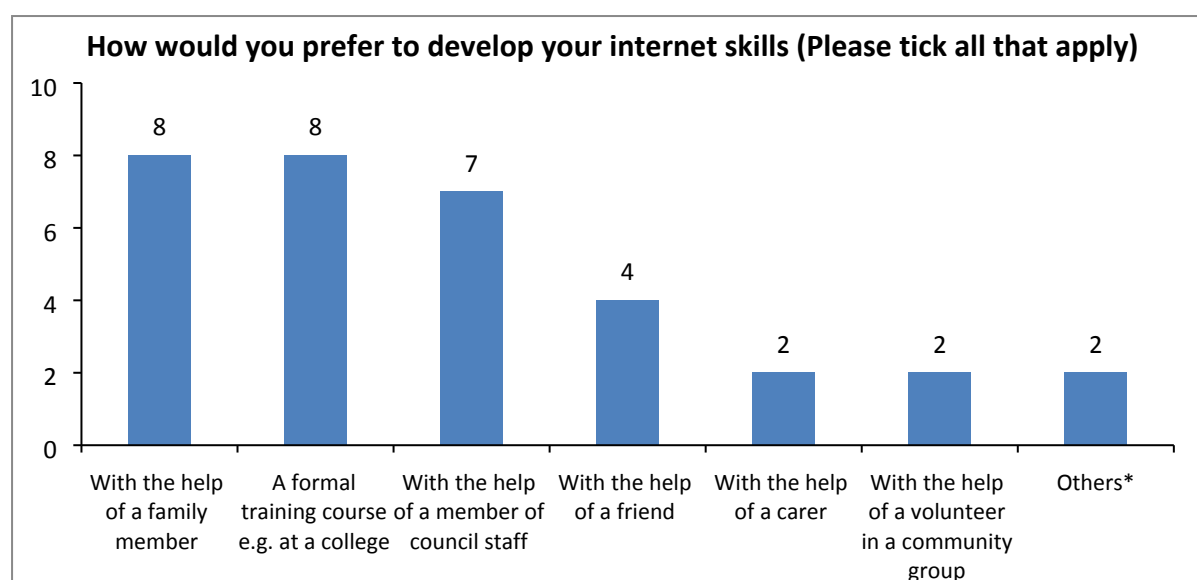
- The high standard of face to face services currently offered,
- Not being able to read or write,
- The opportunity to explain a complex problem with face to face and
- A preference for physically handing in documents

In total, 118 respondents answered the question on how confident they were in their internet skills:



Three quarters of all respondents (74%) felt confident about their skills for using the internet and less than 10% felt “not at all confident”.

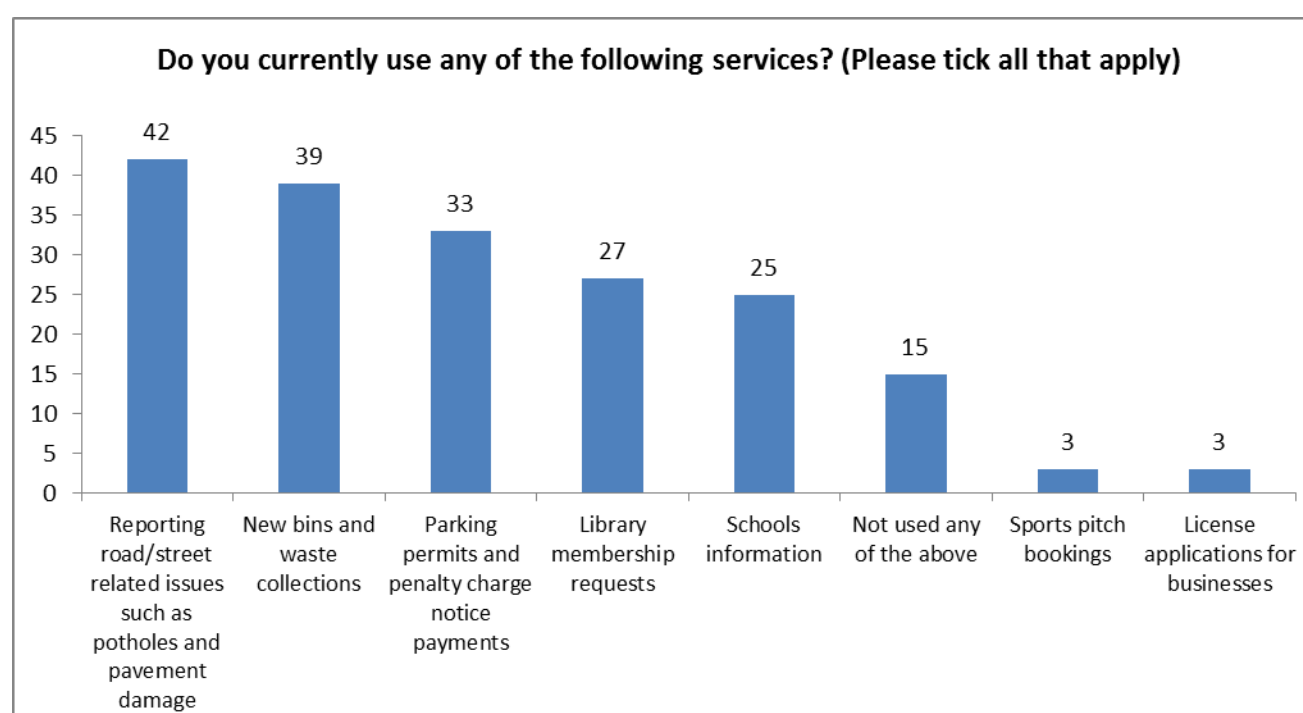
Of the 67 respondents who answered whether or not they would like to learn more skills for using the internet, 40% responded yes and 60% responded that they would not like to learn more skills for using the internet. Twenty-five respondents answered how they would like to develop their skills:



\*Comments under “Others” were irrelevant, including “being unable to afford college fees” and family and friends being too busy to offer help.

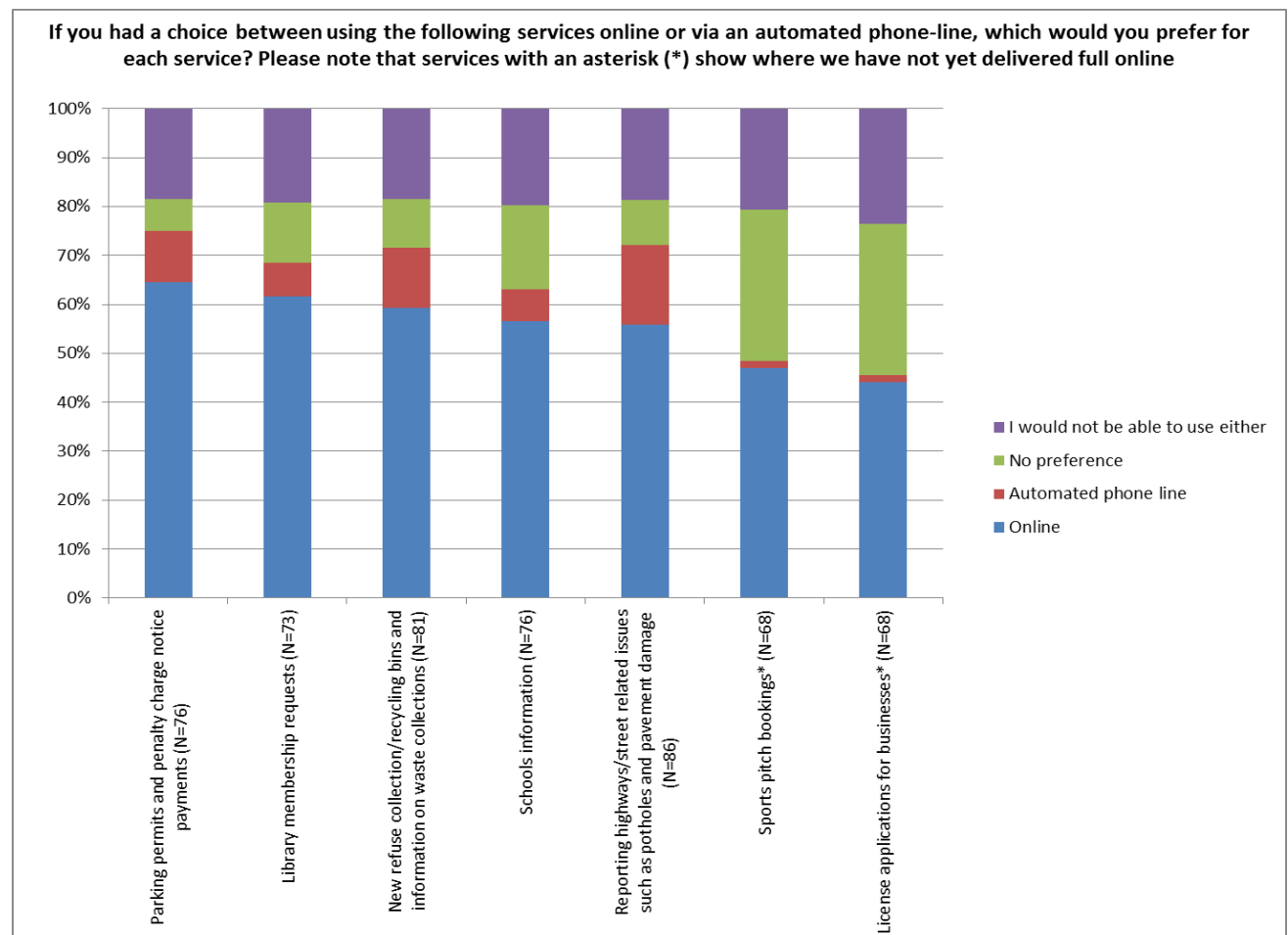
## 2.2 Self-service only council services

There were 94 respondents who answered the question on whether or not they use the following council services. Of these, the vast majority (84%) had used council services:

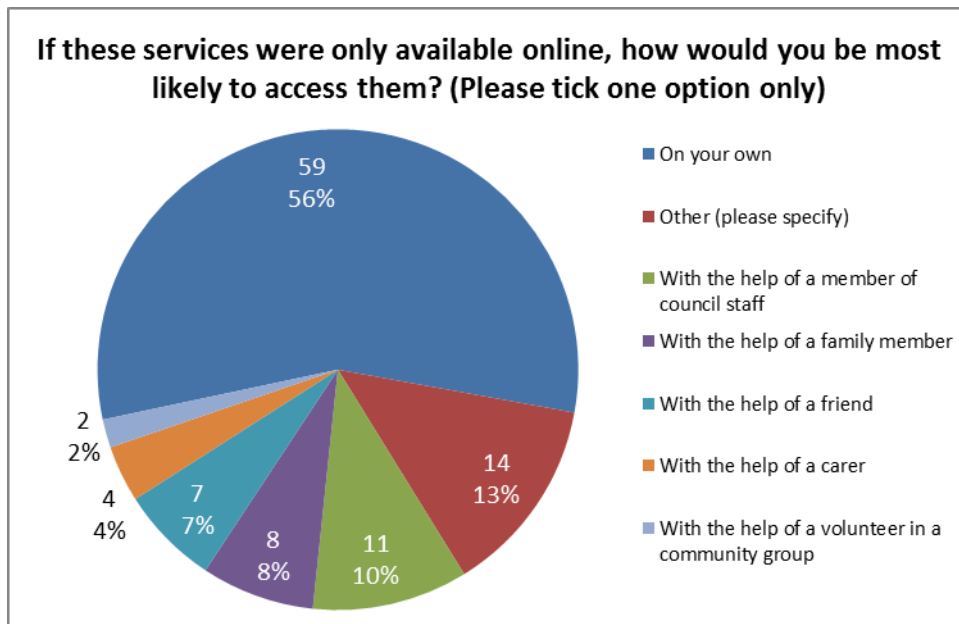




The preference for accessing services was online (when presented with online or telephone self-service only options), although a significant proportion of respondents answered that they would not be able to use the service should it only be offered online or via automated telephone. Note that it was included in the question that sports pitch bookings and licence applications for businesses have not currently had full online functionality delivered and despite this, online was still the most popular response for these services.



When asked how respondents would be most likely to access the aforementioned services should they only be available online, the most popular response was 'on your own' (56%).



Fourteen per cent of respondents gave “other” responses, these included:

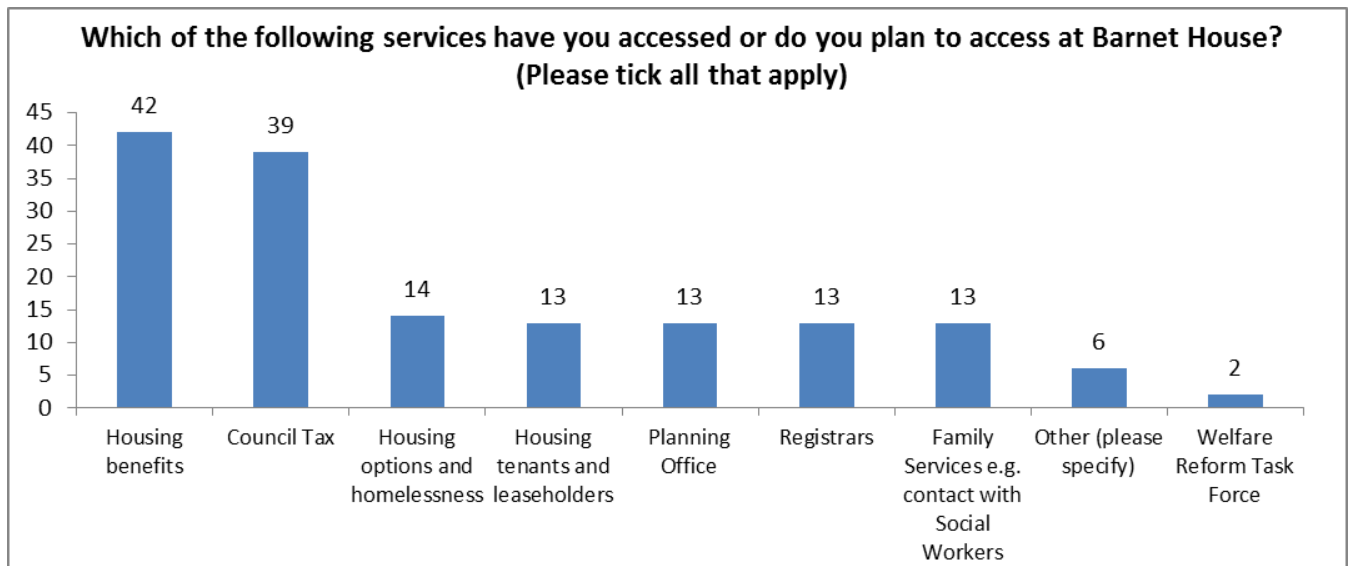
- Referring everything to councillors,
- Not using the service at all,
- Not wanting to access any services online or phoning customer services for help.

There were 46 responses to the question ‘please outline any further support you think you would need if these services were to become self-service only’. The most popular responses included:

- The need to improve the existing web service (28%),
- Wanting or needing face to face services, or expressing the high quality of existing face to face provision (17%),
- The provision of a back-up for example, a non-automated phone line or face to face contact if you are unable to resolve your issue via self-service (13%) and
- Expression of concern for others that may have issues, for example, those with a disability or the older population (13%).

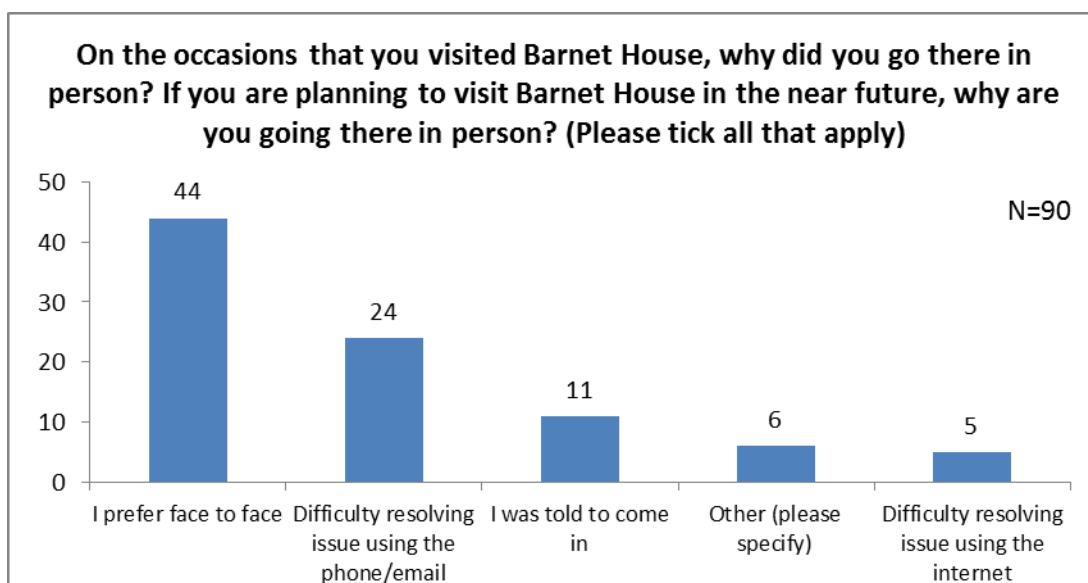
## 2.3 Accessing services at Barnet House

There were 110 responses on whether or not respondents accessed services at Barnet House. Of these, 55% answered that they had visited or were planning to visit Barnet House in the near future to access the council's customer services. Housing benefits and council tax were the most commonly cited reasons for visiting:



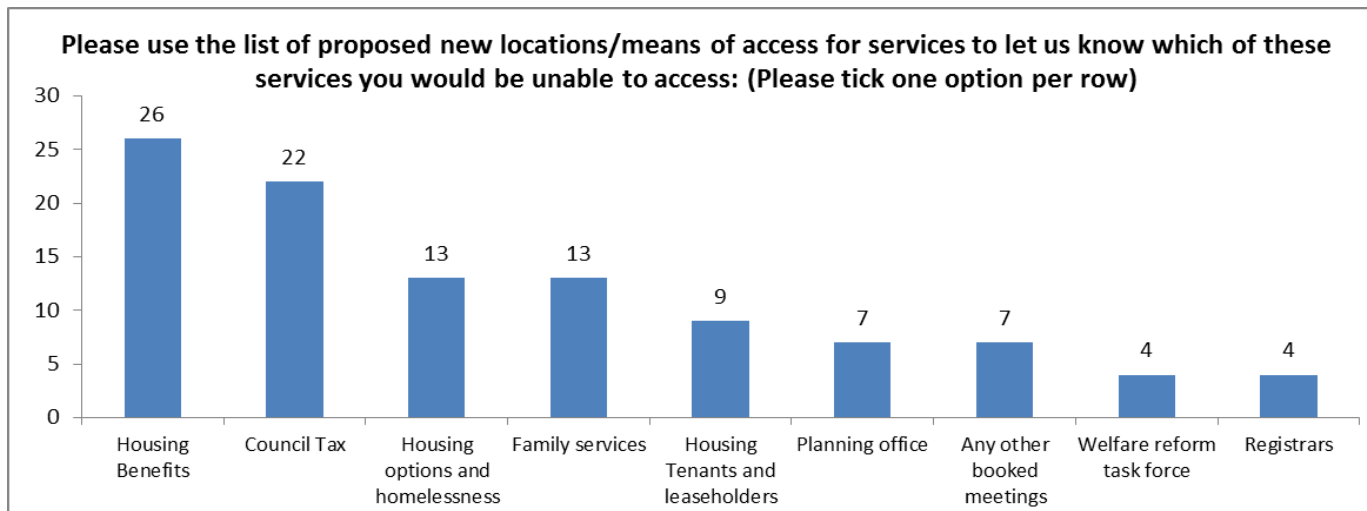
“Other” reasons included focus groups, disabled parking permits, bus passes, council meetings, complaints and freedom passes.

When asked reasons for visiting Barnet House, just under half of respondents (49%) cited preference over face to face interaction:



“Other” reasons included queries relating to planning, handing in documents with an urgent deadline, and a preference for physically handing in documents.

Sixty respondents answered the question on whether they thought the proposed changes would stop them from accessing services and of this, over half of them (36; 60%) answered that it would. Housing benefits and council tax were the most common services that respondents felt they would be unable to access:



On the online survey an explanation for why respondents felt they would not be able to access the services was compulsory, however, on paper surveys this question was not always answered. Therefore, although there were 33 respondents for this question, there were only 17 comments. The most common reason cited was:

- Issues relating to transport (41%)
- Not being able to use the internet or not having access to the internet (18%) and
- Not being unable to resolve issues over the phone, concerns about resolving the issue online or a preference for face to face (18%).

Other responses included concerns specific to Colindale, for example:

- Safety (12%),
- Concerns that the new services would not be up to the same standards as the current services (6%) and
- Needing to discuss confidential information (6%).

There were 17 responses to the question 'please write any further comments you would like us to consider regarding the proposed new locations/means of access for these services'. The most popular comment related to reconsidering locations due to travel to the current proposed locations being too difficult (29%), followed by the desire to keep face to face (18%) and ensuring there is adequate parking at the proposed locations (12%). The remaining responses consisted of:

- More advice on how to use the council's online services
- Improving the telephone service with respect to officers calling back when they say they will and less time spent on hold
- Considering what happens when the 'seamless' customer journey breaks down, for example, the customer needing to speak to someone so they can gain a deeper understanding of the case
- Some people with disabilities cannot use the internet at all
- Concerns that the system would be more open to abuse and that those in genuine need may be put off from applying for services
- Provision for job seekers in libraries

- Concerns over Colindale being overcrowded

## 2.4 Consultation events and engagement

A Partnership Board workshop was scheduled for the 2 March to ensure that our more vulnerable and hard to reach residents were given the opportunity to have their say. The invite to this event was circulated with the Partnership Board Monthly Update which went out on 3 February therefore a month's notice of the event was given. However, the event was cancelled due to a lack of responses.

Inclusion Barnet made contact regarding holding an event as part of their next Members Meeting, however this fell outside of the survey timescales. Nonetheless, this went ahead on 19 April. Inclusion Barnet is a peer-led organisation that promotes accessibility for disabled people. Around 20 residents with a range of different disabilities (physical and learning) attended the workshop. The full notes from this meeting can be found in Appendix A, but general themes emerging from it included:

- Use of social media, like Facebook and WhatsApp, was the most prevalent form of internet use.
- Those who do access the internet tended to use it via tablet/mobile devices rather than desktops or laptops as they are more intuitive for those with learning difficulties and easier to handle for those with physical disabilities.
- There was a general preference to use the website if it works properly, but alongside that a concern that issues reported online might get "lost in the system". Because of this impression that online reporting and communication is less accountable, several attendees indicated a preference for face to face or phone contact.
- Of those who currently did not use the internet, there was a general willingness to be taught how to use it, and the recognition that it could make their lives easier and improve accessibility.

An email was sent out to Members explaining what we are consulting on and this prompted a separate response from the Labour Group. The key concerns highlighted in this response include libraries not being an adequate replacement for Barnet House and the need to improve service standards and integrate services better. This response will also feed into the final report.

## 3. Technical details and method

The public consultation on the proposed changes to customer services outlined in the Customer Access Strategy was live for a period of 12 weeks, from 18 January 2016 to 14 March 2016.

The consultation was published on the council's engage space [www.engage.barnet.gov.uk](http://www.engage.barnet.gov.uk) which gave a detailed background on the aims of the Customer Access Strategy and the proposals that would change the existing customer service, including links to the summary consultation document, the full draft Customer Access Strategy and the Equalities Impact Assessment that has been completed for the draft strategy.

Respondents' views were captured through an online self-completion survey. Hard copies of the survey were also available at Burnt Oak Library and Customer Service Centre, and Barnet House. Initially 60 copies of the survey were printed, 30 at each face to face centre. However, on the first day of the survey more paper copies were requested due to high

demand. In total, 260 paper copies were printed, 130 at each centre although in total only 50 were returned. Easy-read versions of the consultation were available on request.

The survey was promoted widely through a number of channels: CommUNITY Barnet, Communities Together Network, School Circular, social media, the council's news pages, Partnership Board, Barnet Borough Resilience Forum, Barnet Homes, and the council's call centres. Posters were used to advertise the consultation in North Finchley Library, Golders Green Library, Burnt Oak Registration and Nationality Service, Burnt Oak Library and Customer Service Centre, and Barnet House.

### **3.1 Questionnaire design**

The survey was developed to understand residents' views on proposed changes to the way customer services are accessed, in particular:

- If respondents currently use the internet, and if not, why not
- How confident respondents are in their web skills, if they would like to improve them and if so, how they would prefer to improve them
- If respondents currently use the eight services that the strategy proposes to trial as self-service, how they would prefer to access them if they were self-service only and how they would access them if they were only available online
- If respondents visited/plan to visit Barnet House, which services they access there, and if they think the proposed changes would stop them from being able to access the services.

The survey also included some open ended questions to enable further understanding of residents' views on the proposals:

- Respondents were asked if there was any other support they felt they needed from the council to help them access self-service only services
- Why respondents who answered that the changes to services currently accessed at Barnet House would stop them being able to access these services felt that they would no longer be able to access the services
- If there were any further comments respondents would like the council to consider regarding the proposed new locations/means of access for services currently accessed at Barnet House

Key demographic questions covering all of the protected characteristics were also asked to gain insight into the groups of people who the proposals will have the biggest impact on.


### **3.2 Calculating and reporting on results**

The results are based on "valid responses" only, i.e. all those providing an answer (this may or may not be the same as the total sample) unless otherwise specified. The base size may therefore vary from question to question depending on how many respondents chose to skip a given question.

## APPENDIX A


### Inclusion Barnet Members Meeting – Customer Access Strategy consultation notes

#### Feedback from Groups

	Customer Experience of Barnet Council	Preference for/ opinions of Phone/Web/F2F	Ideas for improvements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally didn't use the website very much, but when they had used it found it confusing and not very accessible (<i>Group 2</i>)</li> <li>Would like to report problems in their area online while they were out and about, but found the website difficult to use (<i>Group 2</i>)</li> <li>Some customers came to the website to sort out issues and problems, and hadn't realised the range of activities, events and offers that might be interesting and relevant to them (<i>Group 2</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General preference to use the website if it works properly (<i>Group 3</i>)</li> <li>Concerns that improvement suggestions for the website were sent but no responses received (<i>Group 3</i>)</li> <li>General worry that things might get "lost in the system" (<i>Group 1</i>)</li> <li>Would consider using the website if shown how to do it, and if it were accessible (<i>Group 2</i>)</li> <li>The whole group would welcome more online services, but websites need to be easy access and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Important to ensure that broken links are dealt with quickly and that content is up to date</li> <li>There needs to be more support/training to enable those who are not confident using the website (perhaps at libraries)</li> <li>The search box on the map in My Account for the 'report a problem' tool only allows for a street name to be inputted, and not a post code or full address. This could put users off easily</li> <li>The website content needs to be easier to read and understand, and be more user friendly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simple language</li> <li>Simplified and improved search function</li> <li>Icons, images and interactive tools (web chat)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Diversify methods of communicating the council, eg using Facebook (like DWP), text messaging (both being able to text the council, and for appointment reminders), WhatsApp, Twitter etc – channels already used by the group – so taking advantage of what already exists</li> <li>Stand-alone mobile apps should only be considered once the core web service works well on mobile devices – in line with central government policy (<a href="https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2013/03/12/were-not-appy-not-appy-at-all/">https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2013/03/12/were-not-appy-not-appy-at-all/</a>)</li> <li>The website should make very visible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Telephone support service for those who cannot easily use</li> </ul> </li> </ul>





	Customer Experience of Barnet Council	Preference for/ opinions of Phone/Web/F2F	Ideas for improvements
	<p>needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor experience of Barnet Homes helpline (<i>Group 1</i>)</li> <li>Excellent service over the phone to report fly tipping (<i>Group 1</i>)</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some experience of very patronising and disrespectful staff, both over the telephone and F2F. Possibly due to customer not speaking very good English, and staff growing impatient as she tried to explain herself (<i>Group 3</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due to how user-unfriendly the website is at the moment, 2 group members still prefer F2F (<i>Group 3</i>)</li> <li>Most group members did not use F2F services, but there was a sense that community hubs and more mobile social workers would be an improvement. Concern about accessible public transport from East to West of borough (<i>Group 1</i>)</li> <li>Customers with mobility difficulties would rather not have to come in for F2F meetings (<i>Group 1</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suggestion for 'drop-in' days for social care at libraries</li> <li>Community hubs, libraries and community spaces will need Wi-Fi connectivity to reduce face to face transactions</li> </ul>

### If/how the web is used

- Use of social media like **Facebook and Whatsapp very prevalent** – most common form of internet use.
- Those who do access the internet tend to use it **via tablet/mobile devices** rather than desktops or laptops, as they are more **intuitive, user-friendly and easy to use**. Preference for easy-to-use apps.
- Some cautiousness of using the internet due to privacy issues
- Some use of email
- Generally **didn't use the council website**
- Strong sense of pride in local community. **If it was easy would use web** to report roads/pavements/graffiti etc
- One person didn't use the internet at all, as he said he couldn't remember his password. He was proficient with an iPad and willing to learn to use it if it was easy.