Research Report

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| **Residents Survey, 2016** |
| Prepared for: Suffolk County Council |
| Prepared by: Francis Bolton |



Residents Survey, 2016

**Prepared for: Suffolk County Council**

**Prepared by: Francis Bolton, Senior Researcher**

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# Introduction

## Background and objectives

BMG Research was commissioned in November 2015 to undertake a survey of Suffolk residents. Given the continuing need to make savings, the survey aimed to inform the Council’s decision-making process by measuring which services are most important to Suffolk residents; which are most used; and which services residents would be willing to see reduced.

Other objectives were to measure residents’ satisfaction with the Council’s performance and their local area, and satisfaction with a range of services provided or supported by the Council. Other issues covered by the survey include how prepared and how able residents are to access Council information online, in the light of the Council’s digital transformation agenda; and a series of lifestyle metrics to support the Council’s public health remit.

## Methodology

A postal survey was undertaken of 11,200 residents, using sample drawn from the Postal Address File. A two-stage sampling process was employed:

1. Selection by second-tier authority: the number of questionnaires sent out by district/borough was adjusted to take account of the lower than average response rates recorded in Ipswich and, in particular, Forest Heath on the 2008 Place Survey, with more questionnaires sent out for these areas and correspondingly fewer in the remaining districts.
2. Selection by ward: Out of the allocated total mailing for each district/borough (shown in Table 1), the mailing was then stratified by ward to ensure that the number mailed out for each district/borough was representative of the district/borough by ward.

Residents not responding to the first mailing were sent a reminder, including a copy of the questionnaire. Fieldwork commenced in January 2016 and closed at the end of February.

All those surveyed were given the choice of completing the survey by post or online. In total, 2,841 surveys were completed (including 54 online), a response rate of 25.4%. Based on an adult (18+) population of 576,907, according to the 2011 census, this equates to a maximum adjusted standard error of ± 1.8% at the 95% confidence level on an observed statistic of 50%. This means that if all Suffolk’s adult residents had completed a survey, a figure of 50% in this report would fall within the range of 48.2% to 51.8%.

Table 1: Response rates and confidence interval

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Mailed out | Completed surveys | Response rate | Confidence interval |
| Total | **11,200** | **2,841** | **25.4%** | **± 1.8%** |
| Babergh | 1,487 | 443 | 29.8% | ± 4.6% |
| Forest Heath | 1,993 | 407 | 20.4% | ± 4.8% |
| Ipswich | 1,772 | 360 | 20.3% | ± 5.2% |
| Mid Suffolk | 1,487 | 462 | 31.1% | ± 4.6% |
| St Edmundsbury | 1,487 | 406 | 27.3% | ± 4.9% |
| Suffolk Coastal | 1,487 | 425 | 28.6% | ± 4.7% |
| Waveney | 1,487 | 338 | 22.7% | ± 5.3% |

The survey findings were then weighted by gender, age, and ethnicity at a district/borough level, using the 2011 census profile of each district/borough. As a result of this weighting, the findings are broadly representative of these areas by these core demographics. At a total (County) level, the findings are representative of the County by the core demographics and also by the seven second-tier authorities.

## Report

Throughout this report the word significant is used to describe differences in the data. This indicates where the data has been tested for statistical significance. This testing identifies ‘real differences’ (i.e. a difference that would occur if we were able to interview all residents in the study area rather than just a sample). However, as already noted the actual percentages reported in the data may vary by ±1.8% at the 95% confidence level on an observed statistic of 50%.

Figures and tables are used throughout the report to assist explanation and analysis. Although occasional anomalies appear due to ‘rounding’ differences, these should never be more than +/-1%. These occur for example where rating scales have been added to calculate proportions of residents who are satisfied at all (i.e. either very or fairly satisfied).

Except where stated otherwise, the written report is based on valid responses, i.e. if a resident did not answer a question, or answered it incorrectly they were excluded from the analysis for that question.

## Benchmarking

Where appropriate the results for Suffolk County Council are benchmarked against other research carried out by BMG, as follows:

* Essex (Residents Survey, 2014);
* National. These are findings for GB respondents from the BMG Omnibus November 2015 - February 2016.
* East of England. These are findings from East of England respondents only from the Omnibus work referred to above.

Note: the BMG Omnibus is a sample of residents selected to be representative of the UK/GB by key demographics. The core questions on satisfaction with the performance of the local council, whether the local council provides value for money, and satisfaction with the local area as a place to live were included on this survey. Whilst the LGA carry out national polling on these questions, the BMG Omnibus data is more robust and more comparable with the Suffolk Residents Survey data, for the following reasons:

* The sample size achieved on the BMG Omnibus in this period is much higher than the LGA’s polling (5,988 compared to 1,008);
* The BMG Omnibus, unlike LGA polling, provides a regional breakdown of findings, enabling the East of England comparison referred to above;
* The BMG Omnibus is conducted via a self-completion methodology (online), as is the methodology used for the Suffolk Residents Survey (postal/online). (It should be noted that the BMG Omnibus sample is selected to be representative of the country by age group, ensuring that older people are not under-represented as a result of the online methodology used). By contrast, the LGA polling is conducted by interviewers (by telephone);
* At the time this report was produced, the latest LGA findings were from polling conducted in June 2015, i.e. around 6 months older than the BMG Omnibus data.

# Key findings

## Perceptions of the Council

A majority of residents are satisfied with the way the Council runs things (55%), with 20% dissatisfied. Encouragingly, satisfaction levels on this measure are significantly higher compared to the 2013 Budget Survey findings, and compared to local and national benchmarks.

Residents are also on balance more likely to agree than disagree that the Council provides value for money (39% agree, 22% disagree). Again, these findings are more positive than the relevant local and national benchmarks.

## Perceptions of the local area

Most residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live (84%). Just 7% are dissatisfied. These findings are similar to the 2013 Budget Survey findings and 2014 Essex Residents Survey findings; and ahead of National and East of England benchmarking.

In terms of local decision making nearly three in ten agree that they would like to be more involved in decisions that affect their local area (28%), and a further 59% say they are prepared to be involved depending on the issue. Despite this apparent interest in becoming more involved, residents are more than twice as likely to disagree as agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area (58% cf. 26%). Just 2% definitely agree that they can influence such decisions. This suggests that more work is required to convince residents that their contribution can make a difference to decisions about the future of services in their area.

## Service use and priorities

For most services, residents are more likely to state that service reductions are unacceptable than acceptable. This indicates that residents may not yet fully appreciate the hard choices that remain to be made.

The five services where there is net support for service reduction are libraries; cultural/heritage services; trading standards and consumer advice; adult learning; and countryside rights of way. Of these services, it should be noted that 46% of residents have used an SCC library in the last year; 34% have used cultural/heritage services; and 22% countryside rights of way. Reductions to these services may therefore need to be approached with caution. In particular, 77% of library users have used or borrowed books from an SCC library in the last 12 months, indicating that this is a particularly visible aspect of the library service.

## Satisfaction with Council services

Residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with a series of Council-provided or supported services. Satisfaction is highest with the services shown below as strengths; services marked as areas for focus all receive net dissatisfaction.

The areas of strength are particularly encouraging given the relatively high proportion mentioning the fire and rescue service, and household waste disposal and recycling, as important services.

The areas for focus are all linked to broader service areas that many residents see as important/not to be reduced. Given this, and the relatively low satisfaction with these services, it is likely that any reductions to these services will need to be approached with caution to avoid further deterioration in satisfaction levels.

## Information and communication

Nine in ten Suffolk residents have internet access at home. The majority (60%) are satisfied with the speed of their internet connection, although 28% are dissatisfied.

Encouragingly given the Council’s digital transformation agenda, around three-quarters or more would prefer to visit a Council website for each of the information needs asked about. The sole exception to this is in respect of complaints about Council services or the local area, where there is a narrow preference for contact other than via the website.

## Healthy living

On average, residents have undertaken moderate exercise (for 30 minutes or more) on 4 of the last 7 days. In the last month, residents have undertaken on average 4.9 days of sporting activity.

In terms of alcohol consumption, NHS guidance advises that adults should not regularly consume more than 14 units of alcohol per week. Approaching one in eight (12%) of Suffolk residents have drunk more than this in the past 7 days.

Approaching one in ten Suffolk residents smoke nowadays (9%). Encouragingly, this is half the level recorded nationally[[1]](#footnote-1).

# Perceptions of the Council

## Satisfaction with the way the Council runs things

Asked how satisfied they are with the way the Council runs things, 55% of residents are satisfied, whilst one in five (20%) are dissatisfied. Just 8% and 6% respectively give the most polarised responses of very satisfied/very dissatisfied. This indicates a lack of strong opinion, whether positive or negative, on the Council’s performance. As Figure 1 below indicates, the proportion satisfied with the way the Council runs things is, encouragingly, significantly higher compared to the 2013 Budget Survey findings, when 48% were satisfied. The proportion *dissatisfied* on this measure has also increased over the same period but by a smaller margin (3 percentage points).

Satisfaction levels are similarly ahead of the levels recorded in the following research carried out by BMG:

* Research for a neighbouring county council (Essex) in 2014;
* Omnibus survey, carried out at around the same time as the Suffolk Resident Survey. The BMG Omnibus asked a representative **national** sample of respondents the same question in relation to their own councils;
* East of England respondents (a regional subset of the national Omnibus findings).

Figure 1: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Suffolk County Council runs things? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2016 Residents Survey: 2,811, 2013 Budget Survey: 1,139

Figure 2: Proportion satisfied with the way Council runs things - Benchmarking

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

The overall findings can also be broken down by demographic sub-groups.

By age, satisfaction is lowest amongst residents aged 45-64, as the figure below indicates. As is normal for research of this kind, satisfaction is significantly higher amongst those aged 75+, compared to all other age groups.

By second-tier authority, satisfaction is significantly higher amongst Babergh, St Edmundsbury, and Suffolk Coastal residents compared to Forest Heath and Waveney residents. Satisfaction amongst Babergh residents is also significantly higher compared to Ipswich and Mid Suffolk.

Figure 3: Proportion satisfied with the way the Council runs things - By age and second-tier authority (Based on valid responses)

Unweighted sample sizes in parentheses

## The Council providing value for money

Residents were also asked to what extent they agree or disagree that the Council provides value for money. On balance, residents are more likely to agree than disagree that this is the case (39% agree, 22% disagree). Over one in three (35%) neither agree nor disagree (as well as 5% who don’t know). This, and the low proportion who strongly agree / strongly disagree (4% cf. 5%), suggests a degree of uncertainty or ambivalence about whether the Council provides value for money.

As with the findings on overall satisfaction with the Council’s performance, satisfaction levels are ahead of the available benchmarking data, as Figure 5 below indicates. The gap between SCC and other authorities is narrower on this measure compared to overall satisfaction. However, it should also be noted that the proportion who strongly *disagree* that SCC provides value for money is significantly lower than the Essex/National/East of England benchmarking, where 10% - 12% strongly disagree.

Figure 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that Suffolk County Council provides value for money? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,816

Figure 5: Proportion agreeing that Council provides value for money - Benchmarking

Unweighted sample sizes in parentheses

By age, responses on this metric are again more positive amongst residents aged 75+. By second-tier authority, the proportion agreeing that the Council provides value for money is (as with the overall satisfaction question) significantly lower amongst Forest Heath and Waveney residents (compared to St Edmundsbury and Babergh). There is, however, net agreement that the Council provides value for money amongst all age groups and second-tier authorities.

Figure 6: Proportion agreeing that the Council provides value for money - By age and second-tier authority (Based on valid responses)

Unweighted sample sizes in parentheses

## Attributes of the Council

Residents were also asked to rate the Council on a series of attributes. On all the attributes shown, residents are more likely to give a positive response (A great deal/To some extent) than a negative (Not very much/Not at all).

In keeping with the generally positive perceptions of their area as a place to live (see Section 4), residents are most likely to agree that the Council *is making the local area a better place to live* and *is working to make the area cleaner and greener*.

Residents are least likely to agree that the Council *acts on the concerns of local residents*. This finding should be read in conjunction with the finding that a majority of residents disagree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area (Section 4.3), and suggests that the Council needs to do more to be seen as responsive to the concerns of local residents. Agreement that the Council *promotes the interests of local residents*, a related measure, is also relatively low.

Figure 7: To what extent do you think that these statements apply to Suffolk County Council? Suffolk County Council… (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample bases vary (2,688-2,726)

# Perceptions of the local area

## Satisfaction with local area as a place to live

Most residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live (84%), including one in three who are very satisfied (33%). Just 7% are dissatisfied. These findings are similar to the 2013 Budget Survey findings and 2014 Essex findings; and ahead of national and East of England benchmarking (76% and 80% satisfied respectively).

Figure 8: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2016 Residents Survey: 2,811, 2013 Budget Survey: 1,146

Figure 9: Proportion satisfied with their local area as a place to live - Benchmarking

Unweighted sample sizes in parentheses

By age, residents aged 55-64 are least satisfied with their local area as a place to live. By second-tier authority, residents of Babergh, Mid Suffolk, St Edmundsbury, and Suffolk Coastal are significantly more likely to be satisfied compared to other residents. However, approaching three-quarters or more (74%+) in each age group and authority are satisfied with their local area as a place to live.

Figure 10: Proportion satisfied with their local area as a place to live - By age and second-tier authority (Based on valid responses)

Unweighted sample sizes in parentheses

## Community cohesion

Residents were also asked to consider two questions on the theme of community cohesion. Two thirds feel they belong strongly to their local area (66%), whilst 30% feel they do not belong strongly to their local area. However, just 6% feel they belong ‘not at all strongly’ to their local area, suggesting that most residents feel at least some ties to their area.

Figure 11: How strongly do you feel you belong to your local area? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,760

Breaking these findings down further, there are no significant differences in the proportion feeling strongly that they belong to their local area by those who are disabled compared to those who are not; and by those living on their own compared to those living with others. This is encouraging given the potential for feelings of isolation amongst these groups.

By age, younger residents (in particular those aged 18-34) are less likely to feel strongly that they belong to their local area, which may reflect social changes and/or the greater mobility of this group.

In keeping with the findings on overall satisfaction with the local area, residents of Forest Heath and Ipswich are significantly less likely compared to other authorities to state that they feel they strongly belong to their local area - although this may reflect the younger age profile of these authorities.

Figure 12: Proportion who feel strongly that they belong to their local area - By age and second-tier authority (Based on valid responses)

Unweighted sample sizes in parentheses

Residents were also asked whether or not they feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together[[2]](#footnote-2). Approaching two-thirds agree that this is the case (63%), whilst 18% disagree. A further 19% responded ‘don’t know’.

Figure 13: To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together? (Valid responses excluding ‘Too few people in local area’/’All the same background’)

Unweighted sample base: 2,519

BME residents are slightly more likely to feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area, compared to white residents. However, this difference is not statistically significant. By age, older residents are the most likely to feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area. By authority, perceptions are most positive amongst Suffolk Coastal and Babergh residents and, as with the other community cohesion findings, least positive amongst Ipswich and Forest Heath residents. Again, this may reflect the relative age profile of the authorities.

Figure 14: Proportion agreeing that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together - By age and second-tier authority (Based on valid responses excluding ‘Too few people in local area’/’All the same background’)

Unweighted sample sizes in parentheses

## Local decision making

Residents were also asked to consider decision making in their local area. In total, nearly three in ten agree that they would like to be more involved in decisions that affect their local area (28%), and a further 59% say they are prepared to be involved depending on the issue.

Figure 15: Generally speaking, would you like to be more involved in the decisions that affect your local area? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,752

Interest in being more involved is correlated with lower satisfaction with the local area and the Council:

* Approaching four in ten of those *dissatisfied* with how the Council runs things responded ‘Yes’ at this question (39%), significantly more compared to those *satisfied* with how the Council runs things (25%);
* Approaching four in ten of those *dissatisfied* with their local area as a place to live responded ‘Yes’ at this question (39%), significantly more compared to those *satisfied* with their local area as a place to live (27%).

In keeping with this, residents of Forest Heath and Ipswich, where satisfaction levels with the area and Council performance is below average, are the most likely to respond ‘Yes’ at this question (35% cf. 31%). Younger residents are similarly more likely to state that they would like to be more involved.

Figure 16: Proportion agreeing that they would like to be more involved in the decisions that affect their local area (Based on valid responses)

Unweighted sample sizes in parentheses

Despite the apparent interest of residents in becoming more involved in decisions affecting their local area, residents are more twice as likely to disagree as agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area (58% cf. 26%). Just 2% definitely agree that they can do this, as opposed to 20% who definitely disagree.

Figure 17: Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,751

Amongst those stating that they would like to be more involved, the proportion agreeing that they can influence decisions is 29%, whilst the proportion disagreeing rises to 65%. On this evidence, work is required to convince those who would in principle like to be more involved that their contribution would make a difference.

By local authority, residents’ confidence that they can influence decisions is particularly low in Waveney and Forest Heath, as the figure below indicates. Around a quarter of residents in these areas definitely disagree that they can influence decisions (24% cf. 26%). No clear pattern is discernible by age group.

Figure 18: Proportion agreeing that they can influence decisions affecting your local area? (Based on valid responses)

Unweighted sample sizes in parentheses

# Service use and priorities

At a time when SCC, like other authorities, needs to make difficult decisions about where to focus its resources, the survey asked residents directly which services are most important to them personally and to their local community, before asking them which services they feel should be reduced or protected. To set these findings in context, residents were also asked to identify which local public services they have used in the past 12 months.

## Importance of services

Residents were asked to identify up to five services from a given list that are important to them personally, and up to five that they feel are important to their local community in general. The limit of five services was designed to help respondents prioritise the services they feel are most important. It should be noted therefore that residents are likely to consider other services as important in addition to the answers summarised overleaf.

The condition of roads and pavements is much the most important to residents both personally and, in their view, to their local communities. This is the case for all key demographics (e.g. second-tier authority, age group, disabled residents, etc).

Figure 19: Thinking about you personally, which of the things below would you say are most important for Suffolk County Council to support or deliver? / And thinking about your local community in general, which of the things below would you say are most important for Suffolk County Council to support or deliver? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,396 (Important generally); 2,446 (Important personally)

## Reducing service levels

Having prioritised the services most important to them, residents were then asked to go further and identify for each service whether they consider service reductions are acceptable or unacceptable. The list of services provided was broadly similar to the previous ‘importance’ question. The question was introduced in these terms:

Like all councils, Suffolk County Council faces significant funding pressures over the coming years. The Council needs to make savings of £73 million over the next two years, and ongoing savings in the years after that. This means the Council must look at how it can make savings across the services it provides, and where it should prioritise spending. This may mean reducing service levels in some instances. As part of this decision-making process, the Council is interested to hear what local residents think.

Overall, as the figure overleaf indicates, for most services residents are more likely to state that service reductions are unacceptable than acceptable. For each service, at least 21% did not give a response, suggesting that some residents are reluctant to back outright service reductions even for services that are considered less important. This indicates that residents may not yet fully appreciate the hard choices that remain to be made. Compared to the 2013 Budget Survey findings, willingness to countenance service reductions is less apparent; the three services marked in the figure overleaf as *Net opposition to service reductions* attracted net support for reductions previously, as well as the services attracting net support for reductions on this survey. However, it should be noted that the 2013 Budget Survey referred to a more striking headline figure of £156 million savings (over four years), and also mentioned that the Council had ruled out Council Tax increases.

Eight services, marked on the figure overleaf, attract significant opposition to service reductions, with the proportion opposing reductions outnumbering those supporting reductions by a factor of more than three to one. Unsurprisingly, these services are also the most mentioned by respondents as important to their local community in general[[3]](#footnote-3).

These findings should also be read in the context of service usage (Section 5.3). It is clear that many residents value some services that they use relatively rarely, for instance fire and rescue, and social services for children, young people, and families. Conversely, at least one in five residents use libraries, cultural/heritage services, and countryside rights of way - all services attracting net support for service reductions (including, for countryside rights of way, amongst those who have used this service). In approaching reductions to library services, the detailed findings on which library services are most used should be considered (Section 5.3.1). It should also be borne in mind that cultural and heritage services is defined widely in this survey (records offices, museums, arts and sports and physical activity promotion), so further work may be required to establish which of these services is most valued.

Figure 20: For each of the service areas below please indicate whether you think it is acceptable or not acceptable to reduce the levels of service. For each service please bear in mind that the money would need to be found from another part of the Council if current service levels were to be maintained (All responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,841

**Net support for service reductions**

**Net opposition to service reductions**

**Significant opposition to service reductions**

The priorities shown above are broadly similar across the key demographics. Parents are most likely to name education services and support for schools as a service that should not be reduced (82%), more than any other service. However, approaching six in ten non-parents (58%) also mention this as a service that should not be reduced. It is also apparent that older residents on average mention fewer services that they feel should be protected from cuts; for example, residents aged 75+ mention on average six services that should be protected, compared to 18-34 year olds who mention eight. Interestingly, fewer than half of those aged 75+ identify social care services for adults as a service that should not be reduced (47%), compared to an average of 57% of all residents who give this answer.

## Use of local public services

Residents were also asked which local public services (again, from a given list) they had used in the last year. Unsurprisingly, household waste disposal and recycling is much the most mentioned in this context (91%); this service, and highways and roads (79%), attract considerably more mentions than any of the other services listed.

The five top services identified overleaf are also the services most mentioned by residents in each authority and age group. Approaching three in ten disabled residents (29%) have used adult social care services in the last year, significantly more than non-disabled residents (7%); however, as with other residents, disabled residents are more likely to mention household waste disposal and recycling; highways and roads; local bus services; and libraries.

Figure 21: In the last year, which, if any, of the following local public services have you used? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,738

### Use of library services

Those who have used library services commissioned by SCC in the last 12 months were asked which library services (from a given list) they have used in the same period. By far the most popular service is using/borrowing books - this is mentioned by over three-quarters of library users (77%). Whilst 30% of library users agree that reductions to the library service are acceptable, these findings suggest that issuing books is seen as the core function of SCC libraries and that reductions to this aspect of the service may attract more opposition.

Although 91% of SCC library users have internet access at home, it is apparent that information in a physical format remains more widely used at SCC libraries:

* 77% use/borrow books, compared to 5% who borrow e-books;
* 12% borrow music or spoken word CDs, compared to 4% who borrow downloadable music/spoken word recordings;
* 24% read newspapers/magazines, whilst 2% download online magazines.

However, one-third of users (31%) have used library services to access the internet (use computers with internet connections; free Wi-Fi).

Figure 22: Which, if any, of the following public library services commissioned by Suffolk County Council have you used in the last 12 months? (Valid responses, all who have used library services commissioned by SCC in the last 12 months)

Unweighted sample base: 1,268

Across all age groups, using or borrowing books is much the most-mentioned service provided by SCC libraries. In total, 36% of all Suffolk residents (taking into account non-library users) have used this service in the last 12 months.

However, there are significant differences by age group in the services used. The table overleaf highlights all services used by 20% or more of each age group; approaching half of users aged 18-34 have attended an activity for children (48%) in the last 12 months, and a similar proportion (46%) have accessed the internet (whether by using free wi-fi or computers with internet connections).

In relation to internet access, almost all residents aged 18-34 have internet access at home. However, as discussed in Section 7.2 this group are significantly less likely than residents aged 35-44/45-54 to have internet access via a laptop or PC, whilst almost all have access via a smartphone. It may therefore be the case that some younger residents value the opportunity to use library PCs (and accompanying printing facilities), and also the opportunity to access free Wi-Fi for their smartphones.

By contrast, older users are more likely than younger users to use the library to read newspapers/magazines or to find local information.

Overall, 44% of library users who are parents have attended an activity for children.

Table 2: Which, if any, of the following public library services commissioned by Suffolk County Council have you used in the last 12 months? - By age group (Valid responses, all who have used library services commissioned by SCC in the last 12 months)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 18-34 | | 35-44 | | 45-54 | | 55-64 | | 65-74 | | 75+ | |
| Use/borrow books | | 68% | | 87% | | 74% | | 76% | | 76% | | 73% |
| Borrow E-books | | 3% | | 6% | | 3% | | 8% | | 5% | | 3% |
| Borrow music or spoken word CDs | | 11% | | 13% | | 11% | | 17% | | 14% | | 6% |
| Borrow downloadable music/spoken word recordings | | 3% | | 4% | | 2% | | 6% | | 3% | | 3% |
| Use computers with Internet connections | | 33% | | 21% | | 25% | | 24% | | 21% | | 13% |
| Free Wi-Fi | | 21% | | 17% | | 18% | | 16% | | 11% | | 8% |
| Read newspapers/magazines | | 11% | | 22% | | 25% | | 24% | | 27% | | 34% |
| Download online magazines | | 2% | | 2% | | 1% | | 3% | | 1% | | 2% |
| Find local information, e.g. OS maps, phone numbers | | 10% | | 11% | | 21% | | 23% | | 24% | | 23% |
| Find Health and Wellbeing information | | 9% | | 10% | | 14% | | 19% | | 9% | | 13% |
| Putting up or consulting local adverts | | 6% | | 9% | | 11% | | 16% | | 12% | | 12% |
| Reading group/ask for help with book club | | 6% | | 4% | | 4% | | 5% | | 8% | | 10% |
| Using it as a place for social interaction | | 12% | | 11% | | 16% | | 11% | | 14% | | 11% |
| Job search/application | | 18% | | 4% | | 15% | | 6% | | 1% | | 2% |
| Using it as a place to study | | 16% | | 13% | | 21% | | 10% | | 7% | | 7% |
| Attend courses and classes at the library | | 8% | | 4% | | 3% | | 5% | | 5% | | 9% |
| Find out about courses and classes held elsewhere | | 5% | | 8% | | 14% | | 17% | | 11% | | 17% |
| Attend an activity for children | | 48% | | 37% | | 9% | | 8% | | 8% | | 2% |
| Attend an activity for older people | | 2% | | 1% | | 2% | | 5% | | 9% | | 12% |
| Attend another event | | 4% | | 6% | | 7% | | 6% | | 7% | | 7% |
| Summary: Access the internet | | 46% | | 31% | | 34% | | 31% | | 25% | | 14% |
| Summary: Courses/classes | | 10% | | 11% | | 16% | | 19% | | 15% | | 20% |

# Satisfaction with Council services

Residents were then asked to rate a series of services provided or funded by the Council. The services were grouped under the headings shown in this section. A don’t know/no opinion option was provided, and those giving this response are excluded from the findings in this section. Depending on the service asked about, up to 69% responded don’t know/no opinion; however, the base size for each question remains robust even after these responses are excluded.

## Summary

Of all the services in this section, satisfaction is highest with waste disposal, fire and rescue service, and support for recycling centres. This is encouraging given the relatively high proportion mentioning the fire and rescue service, and household waste disposal and recycling, as important (Section 5.1).

By contrast, services that receive net dissatisfaction are listed overleaf as areas for focus. All the areas for focus listed are broadly identified as important by residents or as services that should not be reduced. Given this, and the relatively low satisfaction with these services, it is likely that any reductions to these services will need to be approached cautiously to avoid further deterioration in perceptions:

* Maintenance of local roads and pavements: ‘Condition of roads and pavements’ is rated much the most important service to residents (Section 5.1), and the majority oppose reductions in the highways and roads service;
* Social care for those with mental health problems, and services to prevent youth crime and reoffending; these services are not specifically identified in earlier questions. However, the majority of residents oppose reductions in social care services, and services to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

## Highway and transport services

Of the highway and transport services listed, satisfaction is highest with street lighting (51% satisfied), although over one in four are dissatisfied with this service (27%). There is net dissatisfaction with maintenance and repair of local roads and pavements.

Figure 23: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORT SERVICES provided or supported by Suffolk County Council? (Valid responses excl. Don’t know/No opinion)

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

## Services for children and families

Of the services for children and families listed, satisfaction is highest with safeguarding children from harm and abuse (42% satisfied). By contrast, there is net dissatisfaction with services to prevent youth crime and re-offending.

Figure 24: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES provided or supported by Suffolk County Council? (Valid responses excl. Don’t know/No opinion)

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

## Social care services for adults

Of the social care services for adults listed, satisfaction is highest with social care for older people and physically disabled people. However, at least one in four are dissatisfied with each of the social care services for adults, and there is net dissatisfaction with social care for people with mental health problems.

Figure 25: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following SOCIAL CARE SERVICES FOR ADULTS provided or supported by Suffolk County Council? (Valid responses excl. Don’t know/No opinion)

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

## Services for the local economy and environment

Of the services for the local economy/environment listed, satisfaction is highest with waste disposal (78% satisfied) followed by support for recycling centres (69%). Satisfaction is lowest with economic development to stimulate local businesses and the economy (33% satisfied, 23% dissatisfied).

Figure 26: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following SERVICES FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND THE ENVIRONMENT provided or supported by Suffolk County Council? (Valid responses excl. Don’t know/No opinion)

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

## Education services

Of the education services listed, satisfaction is highest with access to nursery schools and childcare (54% satisfied). Fewer than half are satisfied with the other services listed.

Figure 27: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following EDUCATION SERVICES provided or supported by Suffolk County Council? (Valid responses excl. Don’t know/No opinion)

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

## Cultural services and facilities

Of the cultural services and facilities listed, over half are satisfied with sports and physical activity promotion (54% satisfied) and the public archives and records office (53%). However, sports and physical activity promotion attract the highest levels of dissatisfaction (16% dissatisfied). Whilst just 40% are satisfied with local archaeology, this is driven by a high proportion who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (53%). This suggests that there may be uncertainty over the standard of the service provided in this area, even after don’t know/no opinion responses are excluded.

Figure 28: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following CULTURAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES provided or supported by Suffolk County Council? (Valid responses excl. Don’t know/No opinion)

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

## Services to protect members of the public

Of the services to protect members of the public listed, satisfaction is highest with the fire and rescue service (73% satisfied). Satisfaction is lowest with services to protect vulnerable groups (39% satisfied, 19% dissatisfied).

Figure 29: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following SERVICES TO PROTECT MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC provided or supported by Suffolk County Council? (Valid responses excl. Don’t know/No opinion)

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

# Information and communication

The Council is currently engaged in a programme of digital transformation, designed to make more services available online. To help inform this process, a series of questions was asked to evaluate what proportion of residents are online currently; and their communication preferences in terms of finding out Council information and local news. Residents were also asked how well informed they feel about local public services currently.

## Information about local public services

Following the questions around satisfaction with a range of local public services (Section 6), residents were asked how well informed they feel about these services. The majority of residents (60%) feel ‘not very well informed’ or ‘not well informed at all’. Just 2% feel ‘very well informed’. This suggests that further work may be necessary to educate residents about the services that the Council provides, if residents are to make informed choices about which services are to be reduced.

Figure 30: Overall how well informed do you feel about these local public services? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,772

By age, residents aged 75+ are the most likely to feel well informed (39%). By authority, there are no significant differences in the proportion feeling well informed; however, Forest Heath residents are the most likely to feel ‘not well informed at all’ (22%); this is in keeping with this group’s relatively low confidence that they can influence local decision making (see Section 4.3).

Residents were asked, as an open-ended question, which services provided or supported by the Council they feel they need more information on. Just 31% gave a response at this question; of this group, 20% responded ‘Nothing’; and of the remainder no clear theme emerges, as the figure below indicates. This suggests that there is no clear priority in terms of information about service needs; it may also suggest that a number of those who do not feel well informed about local public services do not feel the need for more information. Residents are most likely to mention social care services in this context (13%); followed by education services (10%); and public transport (9%).

Figure 31: Which services provided or supported by Suffolk County Council, if any, do you feel you need more information on? (Valid responses coded by more than 1%)

Unweighted sample base: 819

## Internet access and broadband

Most Suffolk residents are online. Nine in ten (91%) access the internet; almost as many (90%) have internet access at home. Residents are most likely to access the internet via a laptop/PC (75%), followed by mobile phone (58%) and tablet (53%).

Figure 32: How do you access the internet, if at all? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,737

There are no significant differences in the proportion with internet access at home by second-tier authority. By age, more than nine in ten of age groups up to 55-64 have internet access at home, falling to 86% of those aged 65-74 and 54% of those aged 75+. However, modes of accessing the internet vary. 18-34 year olds in particular are significantly more likely to access the internet via a mobile phone compared to other age groups; but less than three-quarters of 18-34 year olds access the internet via a laptop/PC (73%), a significantly lower proportion compared to 35-44 year olds and 45-54 year olds.

Table 3: How do you access the internet, if at all? - By age group (Valid responses)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 18-34 | | 35-44 | | 45-54 | | 55-64 | | 65-74 | | 75+ | |
| Laptop/PC | | 73% | | 86% | | 83% | | 79% | | 75% | | 46% |
| Mobile phone | | 92% | | 81% | | 71% | | 48% | | 30% | | 11% |
| Tablet | | 62% | | 69% | | 60% | | 52% | | 42% | | 22% |
| Computer away from home (work, library, etc) | | 31% | | 28% | | 31% | | 16% | | 5% | | 3% |
| Do not access the internet | | <0.5% | | 1% | | 2% | | 7% | | 13% | | 45% |
| Summary: Internet access | | 100% | | 99% | | 98% | | 93% | | 87% | | 55% |
| Summary: Home internet access | | 99% | | 99% | | 97% | | 92% | | 86% | | 54% |

Residents were then asked to rate the speed of their broadband connection. A don’t know/I don’t have broadband option was provided, and those giving this response are excluded from the findings below. Six in ten are satisfied with the speed of their broadband connection (60%), whilst almost three in ten are dissatisfied (28%).

Figure 33: If you have broadband at home, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the speed of your broadband connection? (Valid responses excl. Don’t know/I don’t have broadband)

Unweighted sample base: 2,314

By local authority, there appears to be a particular issue with perceived broadband speeds in Mid Suffolk. Just under half of Mid Suffolk residents are satisfied with the speed of their broadband (49%), whilst 40% are dissatisfied. Almost one in four Mid Suffolk residents are very dissatisfied on this measure (22%).

Figure 34: Proportion satisfied with the speed of their broadband connection - By second-tier authority (Valid responses excl. Don’t know/I don’t have broadband)

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

## How residents find out about what’s happening in their area

Of a given list of news/information sources, residents are much the most likely to use local newspapers to find out about what’s happening in their local area (74%), as the figure below indicates. Online sources are used by 53%, including 30% who use the SCC website and 28% who use social media.

Figure 35: Which, if any, of the following sources do you use to find out about what's happening in your local area? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,783

By age group, local newspapers are used by at least 68% of each age group, as the table below indicates. Younger residents are, unsurprisingly, significantly more likely to use online and social media sources compared to older residents, with just over half of 18-34 year olds using Facebook in this context (52%).

In the table below, all figures underlined and in bold are significantly higher than at least one other figure on the same row.

Table 4: Which, if any, of the following sources do you use to find out about what's happening in your local area? - By age group (Valid responses)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 18-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65-74 | 75+ |
| Suffolk County Council website | **30%** | **35%** | **37%** | **35%** | **25%** | 13% |
| Local newspapers | 70% | 68% | 74% | 73% | **81%** | **81%** |
| National newspapers | 8% | 11% | **14%** | **19%** | **27%** | **31%** |
| Television | 39% | 39% | 44% | **59%** | **67%** | **72%** |
| Radio | 40% | 42% | 42% | 48% | 45% | 45% |
| Word of mouth | **62%** | **55%** | 46% | **53%** | **53%** | 46% |
| Twitter | **7%** | **9%** | **6%** | **3%** | 1% | <0.5% |
| Facebook | **52%** | **37%** | **22%** | **14%** | **8%** | 2% |
| Summary: Newspapers | 70% | 73% | 75% | 77% | **84%** | **85%** |
| Summary: Social media | **55%** | **43%** | **29%** | **19%** | **10%** | 4% |
| Summary: Online | **72%** | **71%** | **61%** | **53%** | **37%** | 17% |

## Preferences for accessing Council information

Residents were then given a list of themes and asked how they would prefer to access Council information on each - either via a Council website or contacting a Council by another means (e.g. telephone). Encouragingly given the digital transformation agenda, around three-quarters or more would prefer to visit a Council website. The sole exception to this is in respect of complaints about Council services or the local area, where there is a narrow preference for contact other than via the website (49% prefer the website, 51% prefer contact by other means). This is likely to indicate that many residents still feel that the particular circumstances of a complaint require individualised attention from a Council officer.

Figure 36 below analyses the responses of those with internet access. Unsurprisingly, this shows that residents with internet access are more likely to prefer to visit a council website, but a large proportion of this group (47%) still prefer to contact a Council by another means for complaints.

Figure 36: Assuming that you needed information on each of the following, would you prefer to visit a Council website or contact a Council by another means, e.g. telephone? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample bases vary (2,150 - 2,426)

Figure 37: Assuming that you needed information on each of the following, would you prefer to visit a Council website or contact a Council by another means, e.g. telephone? (Valid responses - RESIDENTS WITH INTERNET ACCESS ONLY)

Unweighted sample bases vary (1,911 - 2,105)

# Healthy living

In connection with SCC’s public health role, residents were asked a series of lifestyle question, relating to alcohol consumption, smoking, and physical activity.

## Exercise and sporting activity

NHS guidance states that adults should aim to be active daily. One in five residents have undertaken 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day in the last 7 days (20%). On average, residents have undertaken this level of physical activity on 4 of the last 7 days. Approaching one in ten have not done this at all in the last 7 days (9%).

As this survey was undertaken in January-February, it is possible that activity levels may be higher in spring and summer.

Figure 38: Thinking about the last 7 days, on how many days, if any, did you do 30 minutes of moderate physical activity? By moderate we mean anything that makes you feel warm and breathe harder than normal, such as brisk walking. You can count 3 bursts of 10 minutes or 2 bursts of 15 minutes as long as they are all on the same day (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,664

Mean no. of days exercise in the last 7 days: 4.0

There are no significant differences in the mean number of days exercise taken when comparing across the second-tier authorities. By age group, residents aged 75+ take the least exercise, with 14% not taking the exercise described at any point in the last 7 days. However, residents aged 18-34 are significantly less likely to take exercise compared to residents aged 65-74.

Figure 39: Mean number of days exercise in the last 7 days - By age group (Based on valid responses)

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

A valuable way of getting fit is through participating in sport. With this in mind, residents were asked how many days they have taken part in sporting activity in the last month (excluding walking, cycling, or manual work). Just over half have not taken part in sporting activity at all in this period (54%). On average, residents have taken part in sporting activity on 4.9 days in the last month.

Figure 40: Thinking about the last month, on how many days did you take part in sporting activity, either as part of a group or as an individual (excluding walking, cycling or manual work involving physical effort)? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,634

Mean no. of days sporting activity in the last month: 4.9

By age group, there is no significant difference in the number of days sporting activity when comparing the three youngest age groups. Participation then declines significantly amongst age groups aged 55-64 and older. However, the proportion of 45-54 year olds undertaking **no** sporting activity is significantly higher compared to 18-34 year olds and 35-44 year olds (49% cf. 37% cf. 39%).

By local authority, the mean number of days physical activity undertaken by Forest Heath residents is significantly higher compared to Babergh and St Edmundsbury residents. This may be linked to the younger age profile of Forest Heath compared to Babergh/St Edmundsbury.

Figure 41: Mean number of days sporting activity in the last month - By second-tier authority and age group (Based on valid responses)

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

## Alcohol

NHS guidance advises that adults should not regularly consume more than 14 units of alcohol per week. To evaluate the levels of drinking amongst Suffolk residents, residents were asked how much, of a given list of types of alcohol, they had consumed in the last 7 days. The types of alcohol included in the questionnaire, and the number of units allocated to each type at the analysis stage, is given below:

* Pints of beer, lager, cider - 2 units per pint;
* Small glasses of wine or sherry (1 large glass of wine = 2 small glasses) - 1.5 units per glass;
* Single pub measures or tots (25 ml) of spirits/liqueurs - 1 unit per measure;
* Bottles of alcopops and pre-mixed drinks (e.g. Smirnoff Ice, WKD) - 1.5 units per bottle.

Overall, 12% of Suffolk residents have drunk more than the recommended 14 units in the past 7 days. Approaching half (45%) have, by contrast, not drunk any alcohol at all in this period. Male residents are more than twice as likely to have exceeded the recommended allowance compared to female (19% cf. 8%). By age, residents aged 45-74 are the most likely to have done this. By authority, 15% of Babergh and Waveney residents have exceeded the recommended allowance in the period shown, significantly more compared to Ipswich residents and (compared to Babergh) Mid Suffolk residents.

Figure 42: Drinking in the past 7 days (Based on valid responses)

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

In terms of the kind of alcohol consumed, wine/sherry is the most popular as the figure below indicates.

Figure 43: Proportion drinking ANY of the given kinds of alcohol in the last 7 days (Based on valid responses)

Unweighted sample bases vary (2,329 - 2,619)

## Smoking

Approaching one in ten Suffolk residents smoke nowadays (9%). Encouragingly, this is half the level recorded nationally, which states that 18% smoke cigarettes (a figure for smoking overall, including cigars, pipes, etc is not available)[[4]](#footnote-4).

Figure 44: Which one of the statements below best describes you? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,726

By age, there is no significant difference in the proportion who smoke currently when comparing the four youngest age groups (i.e. up to and including 55-64). Those aged 75+ are significantly less likely to smoke currently compared to any other age group; those aged 65-74 are significantly less likely to do this compared to 35-44 year olds.

By authority, Ipswich has a significantly higher proportion of current smokers (14%), compared to Babergh, Forest Heath, Mid Suffolk, and Suffolk Coastal. Whilst this is likely to be linked to the younger age profile of Ipswich residents, the higher levels of smoking in Ipswich compared to Forest Heath (similar age profile) suggests that there may be scope to reduce smoking levels in Ipswich.

Residents who have a long standing illness, disability, or infirmity are also significantly more likely to be smokers than those who do not (13% cf. 8%). This is in spite of the fact that disabled residents have an older age profile and therefore, based purely on their age, would normally be less likely to smoke. Whilst in some cases smoking may have precipitated residents’ health problems, this nonetheless suggests that more information and support may be required to help this group stop smoking.

Figure 45: Proportion who smoke nowadays - By second-tier authority, age group, and disability (Based on valid responses)

Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

## Sources of health-related information

Asked how they get most of their health-related information, residents are most likely to consult a medical professional (49%), in particular a doctor or nurse (44%). However, approaching one in three mention the internet in this context (32%).

Figure 46: Where do you get most of your health-related information? (Valid responses)

Unweighted sample base: 2,107

Younger and non-disabled residents are significantly less likely to rely on the advice of a medical professional, and significantly more likely to rely on the internet. It is not clear within the scope of this survey whether this is because older and disabled residents are more likely to have serious complaints that would involve a medical appointment.

Appendix: Statement of Terms

**Compliance with International Standards**

BMG complies with the International Standard for Quality Management Systems requirements (ISO 9001:2008) and the International Standard for Market, opinion and social research service requirements (ISO 20252:2012) and The International Standard for Information Security Management ISO 27001:2013.

**Interpretation and publication of results**

The interpretation of the results as reported in this document pertain to the research problem and are supported by the empirical findings of this research project and, where applicable, by other data. These interpretations and recommendations are based on empirical findings and are distinguishable from personal views and opinions.

BMG will not publish any part of these results without the written and informed consent of the client.

**Ethical practice**

BMG promotes ethical practice in research: We conduct our work responsibly and in light of the legal and moral codes of society.

We have a responsibility to maintain high scientific standards in the methods employed in the collection and dissemination of data, in the impartial assessment and dissemination of findings and in the maintenance of standards commensurate with professional integrity.

We recognise we have a duty of care to all those undertaking and participating in research and strive to protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in research. This requires that subjects’ participation should be as fully informed as possible and no group should be disadvantaged by routinely being excluded from consideration. All adequate steps shall be taken by both agency and client to ensure that the identity of each respondent participating in the research is protected.

With more than 25 years’ experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

BMG serves both the public and the private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of the most up to date technologies and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.



1. Source: ONS Integrated Household Survey. 18% of adults aged 18+ smoke cigarettes (both England and UK), 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The options ‘Too few people in local area’ and ‘All the same background’ were provided, and coded by 4% and 5% respectively. These respondents are excluded from the figures below. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This comparison excludes *Supporting the creation of job opportunities and economic growth,* which was included on the list of services at the ‘importance’ question (Q9) but not includedon the service reductions question (Q10). It also equates *Highways and roads* (Q10) with *Condition of roads and pavements* (Q9). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Source: ONS Integrated Household Survey. 18% of adults aged 18+ smoke cigarettes (both England and UK), 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)