DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SURVEY
AUTUMN 2002

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SURVEY : OCTOBER 2002

CONTENTS

APPENDICES :

1. Copy of questionnaire (marked up with top-line findings)
2. Tables of Results (Separate contents list)
3. Respondents' suggestions for improvements to services

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SURVEY : OCTOBER 2002

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

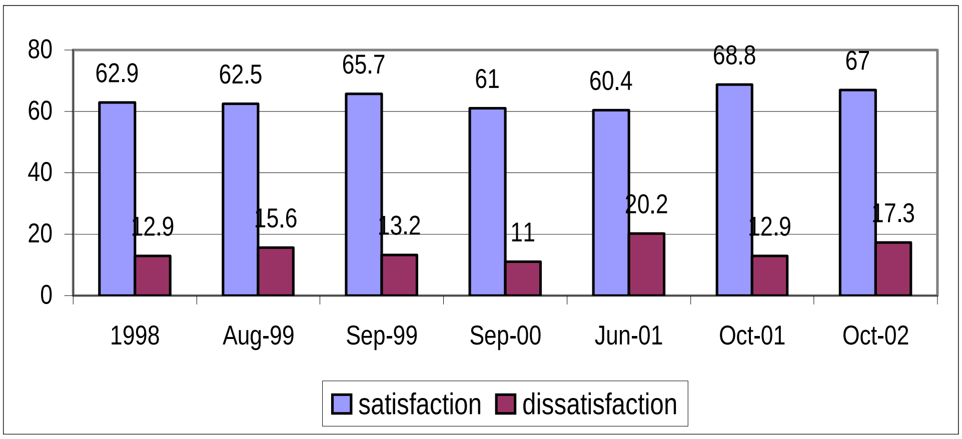
* In 1998 Darlington Borough Council commenced a programme of community research and consultation covering all aspects of the Council's activities, the overall purpose of which was to inform the development of Best Value initiatives, and to set a context for the evolution of the Council's annual budgets : this survey (1026 face to face interviews with residents aged 16+ years) is part of that ongoing programme of research and consultation.

Satisfaction with Running the Borough

* 67% of all respondents said that they were satisfied with the way the Council is running the Borough, and only 17.3% of respondents said that they were dissatisfied. 14.0% of respondents gave 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' responses, and a further 1.7% said 'don't know'.

* There have been only minor differences in satisfaction levels since the tracking exercise was started in 1998 when overall satisfaction was recorded as 62.9%. The current 67% satisfaction level is not significantly different from that recorded in October 2001.The current level of dissatisfaction (17.3%) is slightly higher than the October 2001 level (12.9%), though not as high as that recorded in June 2001 (20.2%).

Satisfaction with the way the Council is running the Borough
% response – all respondents



Better or Worse at Running the Borough ?

* 11% of respondents believed the Council has 'got better' at running the Borough over the last year, whilst 23.8% believed it had 'got worse'; the majority of respondents (61.9%), however, believed that there had been 'no change'. 6.3% of respondents gave 'don't know' responses. Although the number of people who believe the Council has 'got better' at running the Borough is very similar to that found in October 2001, there is a significant increase in the number who believe the Council has 'got worse' (October 2001 : 11.9% 'better'; 12.1% 'worse' and 70.6% 'no change').

* The principal issue referred to when asked how the Council had 'got worse' at running the Borough was the 'refuse collection' (29.2% of those who gave a 'got worse' response, and 6.2% of the total sample), with many respondents expressing dissatisfaction with a recent change of policy whereby residents have to place their waste at the edge of the pavement for collection. Other reasons given by more than 10% of those who had this negative perception related to 'cleanliness' (16%) and 'roads and/or pavements' (12.8%).

* The principal reason given for believing the Council had 'got better' at running the Borough was 'better cleanliness, maintenance and/or appearance' (referred to by 29.2% of those gave 'got better' responses), with a further 13.3% referring to 'flowers, parks and open spaces', and 12.4% to 'improvements in security/c.c.t.v.' .

Local Neighbourhoods

* Satisfaction with local neighbourhoods was high (81%), with 39.2% of respondents saying they were 'very satisfied' and 41.8% that they were 'fairly satisfied'. 15.3% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction (10.4% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 4.9% 'very dissatisfied'), whilst 3.4% gave 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' responses and 0.3% said 'don't know'. Overall satisfaction with the local neighbourhood was very similar to that found in 2001 – 79.2% satisfaction, and 16.2% dissatisfaction.

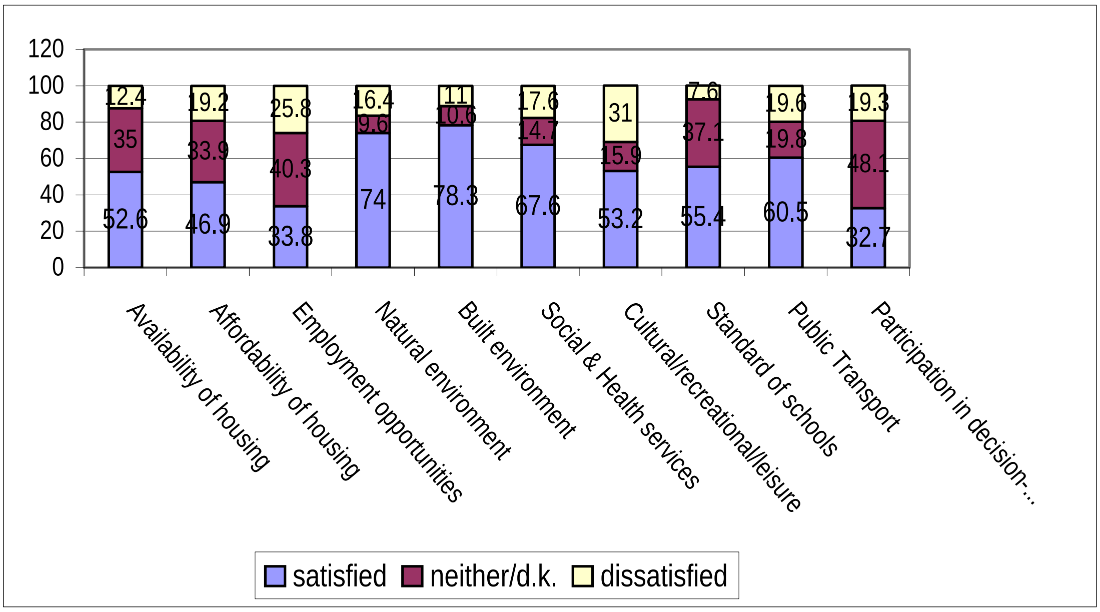
* 33.1% of respondents felt that their neighbourhood had ‘got worse’ as a place to live, over the past year, whilst just under half (49.4%) of all respondents felt it ‘had stayed the same’. Only 8.2% felt it ‘had got better’. (9.3% gave ‘don’t know’ responses.)
This is a similar result to that found in the 2001 survey : 30.6% ‘worse’; 51% ‘same’, and 9.5% ‘better.

* ‘Crime and vandalism’ (mentioned by 30.4% of all respondents who perceived a negative change), ‘upkeep / appearance’ (28.8%), and ‘problems with neighbours or other residents’ (22.7%) were the principal aspects referred to when asked in what ways the neighbourhood had got worse.

* 43.9% of those who believed their local neighourhoods had ‘got better’ over the past two years referred to improvements in ‘upkeep and appearance’, with improvements in terms of ‘crime/vandalism’ (13.4%), ‘better neighbours’ (11%), and a ‘quieter environment’ (11%) being next most frequently mentioned issues.

* Respondents were asked about various aspects of their local neighbourhood. Expressed satisfaction over the total sample was highest in respect of ‘the quality of the built environment’ (78.3% satisfied), and ‘the quality and amount of the natural environment’ (74%). Other aspects about which over half of all respondents declared satisfaction were ‘the level of social & health services available’ (67.5%), ‘public transport’ (60.5%), ‘standard of schools’ (55.4%), ‘cultural/recreational/leisure services’ (53.2%) and ‘availability of housing’ (52.6%). Less than half of all respondents reported satisfaction with ‘affordability of housing’ (46.9%), ‘employment opportunities’ (33.8%), and ‘opportunities to participate in local planning, decision making etc.’ (32.7%). Overall dissatisfaction was highest in respect of ‘Cultural/recreational/leisure services’ (31%), and ‘employment opportunities’ (25.8%).

Satisfaction with aspects of local neighbourhood :
% response – all respondents



* However, overall satisfaction levels with the above issues, , as calculated by a mean satisfaction score, which takes into account both the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction (very or fairly) and the number of respondents expressing an opinion, were highest in respect of 'Standard of Schools', (mean 2.07, where 1 = very satisfied, 3 = neither satisfied/dissatisfied, and 5 = very dissatisfied), with 'Built Environment' (2.2) and 'Quality and amount of Natural Environment' (2.28) in second and third places'. 'Employment Opportunities' (mean = 3.0) was the only issue, which did not achieve an overall positive (less than 3) mean score.

* Satisfaction ratings for most issues were very similar to those achieved in the 2001 survey. The issue about which the greatest change was observed was 'affordability of housing' (satisfaction – 14.4%, and dissatisfaction + 11%). Other services, which showed small negative changes from 2001 were 'Cultural/recreational/leisure services' (dissatisfaction + 6.3%), 'social & health services' (dissatisfaction + 5.6%). The 'built environment' achieved a slightly higher satisfaction rating than in 2001 (satisfaction + 7%), though the mean satisfaction score was unchanged.

Feelings of Safety

* The great majority (88.9%) of respondents feel 'safe' when outside in the Darlington Borough area during the day (33.3% 'very safe' + 55.6% fairly safe'), and only 7% felt 'unsafe' (0.3% 'don't know', and 3.9% 'neither safe nor unsafe'). However, just over a third (36.9%) of respondents reported feeling safe when outside in the Darlington area after dark (7.6% 'very safe' and 29.3% 'fairly safe'), whilst almost half (48.4%) reported feeling 'unsafe' (24.8% 'slightly unsafe' and 23.6% 'very unsafe') (11.0% 'neither safe nor unsafe' and 3.7% 'don't know').

Noise Pollution

* Only 37.6% of all respondents did not find any type of noise a problem : 62.4% reported that at least one type of noise was a problem (serious or not serious) to them, and differences between areas were relatively minor in this respect.

* 'Road traffic' was perceived as the greatest noise pollutant, mentioned by just over a third (34.6%) of all respondents as a problem : by 10.6% as a 'serious problem', and by a further 24.0% as a 'problem, but not serious'. This represents a similar finding to the 2001 survey (problem 33.5% : serious 9.8% + not serious 23.7%).

* 'Aircraft' (19.4% problem – 3.4% 'serious' + 16% 'not serious), 'neighbours' (18% problem – 5.4% 'serious' + 12.6% 'not serious'), and 'road works' (10.4% problem - 1.1% 'serious' + 9.3% 'not serious) were the only other noises rated as a problem by in excess of one in ten respondents. Again, these findings are not significantly different from those of the 2001 survey.

Access to services

* The majority of respondents reported no difficulties in reaching major services. The services most difficult for respondents to get to using their usual form of transport were ‘recycling facilities’ (21.3% difficult),‘G.P./ Doctor’s Surgery’ (19.5%). Seven other services were also reported as being difficult to reach by in excess of 5% of all respondents – these were ‘local hospital’ (14.8%), ‘Sports Centre’ (11.8%), ‘Council Office’ (10.4%), ‘Bank/ Cash Point’ (10.1%), ‘Shopping Centre’ (9.5%), ‘Library’ (8.9%), and ‘Park/Green Space’ (7.4%).

* The services most easily accessible are ‘Local shops’ (74.5% very easy to get to) and ‘Post Offices’ (66.8% very easy).

* For all services there were increases in the number of respondents who reported difficulty of access, and this was most noticeable in respect of ‘recycling services’ (rising 12.7% ‘difficult’ in 2001 to 21.3% in 2002), ‘G.P./Local Surgery’ (increasing from 10.7% to 19.5%).

* Whilst the 2002 sample had a greater number of respondents who reported having someone with a disability (self or other family member) in the household than in 2001 (2002 32.4%, 2001 28.6%), this does not fully explain the changes in perception as regards access which appear to have taken place since 2001: an analysis of only those respondents who reported that no-one in their household (neither self nor other family member) had a long-term illness/disability, also shows significant increases in reported difficulty of access with respect to ‘recycling facilities’ (2001 11.6%, 2002 18.6%) and ‘G.P.’s/ Doctor’s Surgeries’ (2001 9.7%, 2002 16.2%).

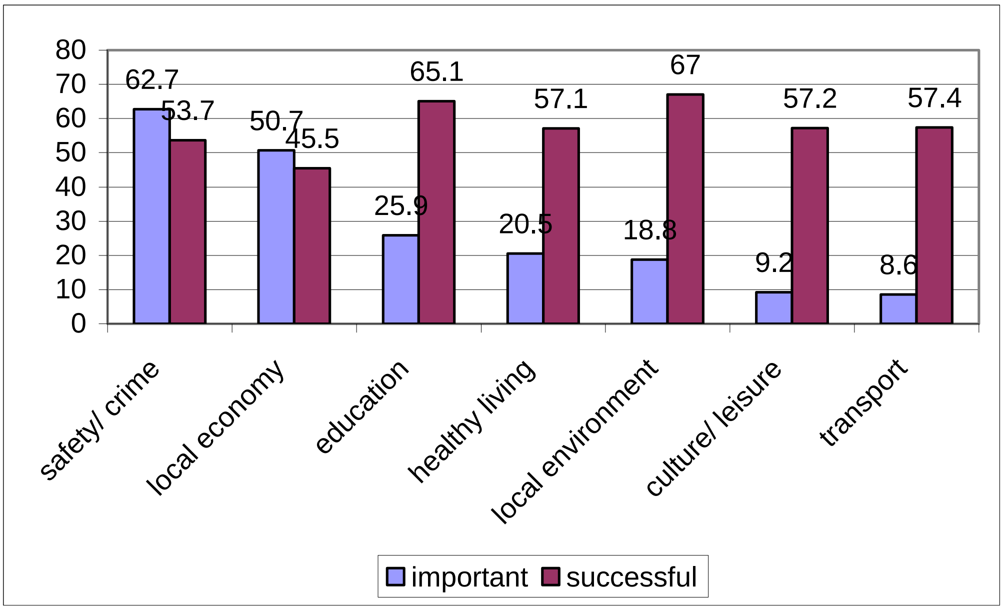
Most important issues facing the Council

* The majority (67.2%) of respondents believe that 'promoting community safety and reducing crime' is one of the two most important issues facing the Council : 37.7% of respondents believe this is the 'most important' issue, and a further 25% that it is the '2nd most important' issue. This was seen as the most important issue in all areas of the Borough.

* 'Improving the local economy and creating jobs' (50.7%) was voted the second most important issue by the overall sample, being referred to by 27.3% as the 'most important' and 23.4% as the '2nd most important'.

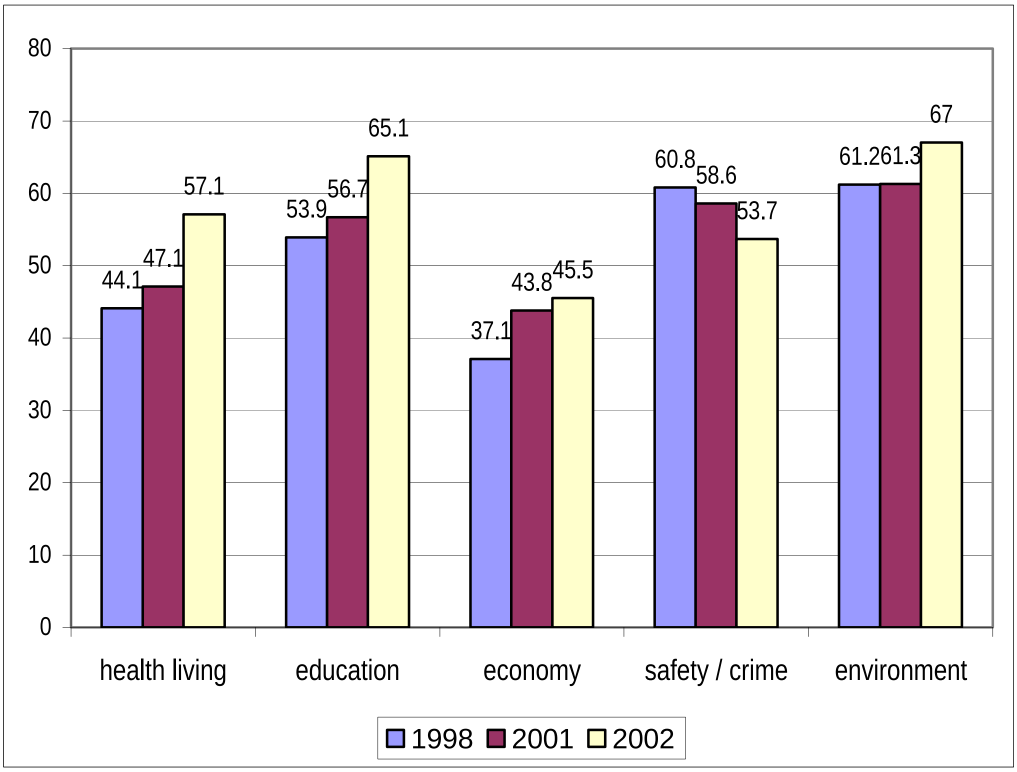
* The Council was perceived by the overall sample as being most successful in terms of 'maintaining and enhancing the environment' (67% successful : 9.4% very + 57.6% fairly), and in 'supporting educational achievement' (65.1% : 10.8% very + 54.3% fairly). The only issue listed which the Council was not seen as having success with by a majority of the sample was 'improving the local economy and creating jobs' (only 45.5% successful - 3.0% very + 42.5% fairly).

Perceived Council Success in dealing with them
(Q11/ 12 : % response – all respondents)



* Comparisons with responses from the 1998 and 2001 Community Surveys show small, but significant increases (since 1998) in the number of people who view the Council as being successful, for all issues but one – 'promoting community safety and reducing crime', with 7% fewer respondents viewing the Council being successful with this aspect than in 1998.

Perceived Successful – 1998, 2001 & 2002
(all respondents - % 'successful' response)



Satisfaction with Council Services

* Services about which most (more than three-quarters of all) respondents expressed satisfaction were 'street lighting' (88%), 'security, incl. c.c.t.v. in the town centre' (86.5%), 'upkeep & appearance of the town centre' (86.4%), 'signposting' (79.2%). and 'Civic Theatre' (78.9%).

  Services about which most (more than a quarter of all) respondents expressed dissatisfaction were 'pavement maintenance' (48.4% dissatisfied), 'road maintenance & repairs' (46%), children's play areas (36.2%), 'car parking in the town centre' (32.6%), 'youth clubs & other facilities for young people' (27.8%), and 'car parking in residential areas' (27.5%).

* The highest overall satisfaction levels (as calculated by the 'mean' score which takes into account both the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, where 1 = very satisfied, and 5 = very dissatisfied, and the varying level of don't know responses) were achieved by 'civic theatre' (mean 1.71), 'security measures (incl. c.c.t.v.) in the town centre' (1.77), 'upkeep and appearance of the town centre' (1.86), 'arts centre' (1.89)', 'libraries & museums' (1.92), 'festivals and events' (1.94), 'nursery & primary schools' (1.97), 'street lighting' (1.97), and 'the Dolphin Centre' (1.98).

* Lowest satisfaction levels (as calculated by mean scores) were reported in respect of 'youth clubs & other facilities for young people' (3.41), 'children's play areas' (3.26), 'pavement maintenance', (3.25), and 'road maintenance and repairs' (3.20). 'Youth clubs and other facilities for young people' achieved the lowest overall satisfaction rating in all areas of the Borough.

* Principal changes in satisfaction ratings since 2001 were in relation to the 'refuse collection' (satisfaction down 14.4%, dissatisfaction up 15.4%), and 'recycling facilities '(satisfaction down 6.8%, dissatisfaction up 12.4%), both of these negative changes. 'Pavement maintenance' also showed a significant decrease in net satisfaction since 2001 (dissatisfaction up 8.4%), but this still remained significantly higher than the 1998 level (when 57.9% dissatisfaction was recorded).

* 'Council Tax Administration and Collection' showed the greatest positive gain (satisfaction up 10.8%).

* Services with the highest usage, and which more than one fifth (20%) of respondents reported that they or members of their household used were the 'Dolphin Centre' (47.3%), 'Council Tax Administration & Collection' (46.4%), 'Civic Theatre' (45.7%), 'Car parking in Town Centre' (43.6%), 'Libraries and Museums' (43.4%), 'Car parking in other areas' (34.1%), 'festivals and events' (29.1%), 'Arts Centre' (28.2%) and 'nursery and primary schools', (22.3%).

* The least used services (used by less than 10%) were 'social care for older and vulnerable people' (5.7%), 'planning & control of development' (3.6%), and, 'Youth Clubs

and other facilities for young people' (2.3%), with this latter service only rising to 7.5% amongst those with 'children 12-17 years' in their household.

* For most services, overall satisfaction levels (as calculated by 'mean' satisfaction scores) amongst users was somewhat higher than amongst all respondents, the only exception here being in respect of 'planning and control of development' and 'car parking in residential areas' which showed very small (and hence not statistically significant) negative differences, and 'children's play areas' were the 'mean' satisfaction score was exactly the same.

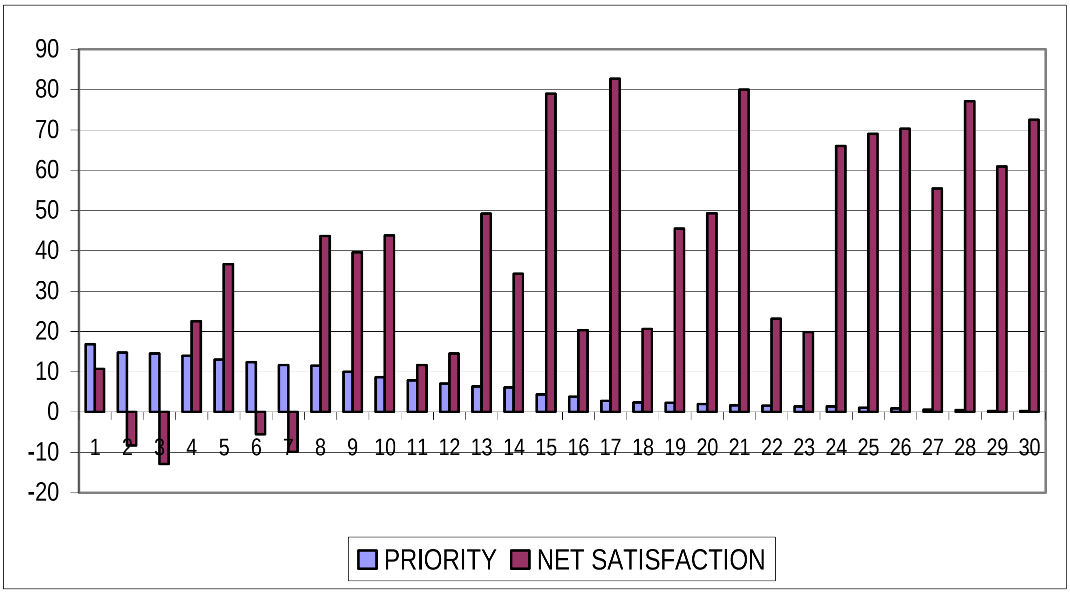
* Satisfaction amongst users of services was highest in respect of the 'Civic Theatre' (1.5 and 'Arts Centre' (1.5), and was lowest amongst users of users of 'children's play areas' (3.26), this being the only service to attain an overall negative mean rating (less than 3) amongst users.

Priorities for Improvement

* Opinion was quite divided as to which service should be given the greatest (first) priority for improvement. 'Social care for older and vulnerable people' was referred to by most respondents here (8.6%), but was closely followed by 'nursery & primary schools' (7.7%), 'children's play areas' (7.6%), 'youth clubs and other facilities for young people' (7.6%), 'secondary schools (6.9%), 'security measures, incl. c.c.t.v. in other areas' (6.8%), ' and 'road maintenance' (6.6%).

* When first and second priorities for improvements are added together, opinion is still quite divided, though 'social care for older and vulnerable people' is still the top priority, mentioned by 16.8% of all respondents. Other services mentioned as priorities (1^{st} or 2^{nd}) by 10% or more of all respondents were 'children's play areas' (14.8%), 'youth clubs and other facilities for young people' (14.5%), 'security measures, incl. c.c.t.v. in areas other than the Town Centre' (14.0%), 'secondary schools' (13%), 'road maintenance and repairs' (12.4%), 'pavement maintenance' (11.7%), 'nursery and primary schools' (11.5%), and 'parks and open spaces' (10%).
* Priority for improvement for all services listed is shown graphically below, set against 'net satisfaction'

Service Priorities (1st + 2nd) and 'Net Satisfaction
(% response – all respondents)



Code

No.		Priority	Net Sat.		No.		Priority	Net Sat
1	Social care for older & vulnerable people	16.8	10.7		16	Car parking – other areas	3.8	20.3
2	Children's play areas	14.8	-8.3		17	Security measures incl cctv – town centre	2.8	82.7
3	Youth clubs /other facilities for young people	14.5	-12.9		18	Housing & Council Tax Benefits	2.4	20.6
4	Security measures incl cctv – other areas	14	22.5		19	Other sports facilities	2.3	45.5
5	Secondary schools	13	36.7		20	Adult education	2	49.3
6	Road maintenance & repairs	12.4	-5.5		21	Street lighting	1.7	80
7	Pavement maintenance	11.7	-9.9		22	Planning & control of development	1.6	23.2
8	Nursery & primary schools	11.5	43.7		23	School meals	1.4	19.8
9	Parks & open spaces	10	39.6		24	Dolphin Centre	1.4	66
10	Upkeep of appearance – other areas	8.7	43.8		25	Festivals & Events	1.1	69
11	Car parking – town centre	7.9	11.7		26	Libraries & museum	0.9	70.3
12	Council housing	7.1	14.5		27	Council Tax admin & collection	0.6	55.5
13	Refuse collection	6.4	49.2		28	Civic Theatre	0.5	77.1
14	Recycling facilities	6.1	34.3		29	Arts Centre	0.3	60.9
15	Upkeep of appearance – town centre	4.4	79		30	Signposting	0.3	72.5

* The main suggested improvements or comments relating to the three services mentioned as a 1st or 2nd priority by the greatest number of respondents were :

'Social care for older and vulnerable people'

- More support/resources generally
- Care homes/concern at closures
- Support in the community

'Children's play areas'

- More play areas/facilities
- Better standard of maintenance/cleanliness
- Supervision/safety issues

Youth clubs and other facilities for young people'

- More for young people to do and more places for them to go to keep them off the streets.

* Over 70% of respondents did not mention a service on which they felt that Council spending could be reduced : 'don't know' (26.0%); 'none' (44.2%). The service mentioned most frequently as the one on which spending could be reduced was 'the upkeep and appearance of the town centre' (6.1% of all respondents): this was a similar result to that found in the 2001 survey, when 8.5% referred to this service.

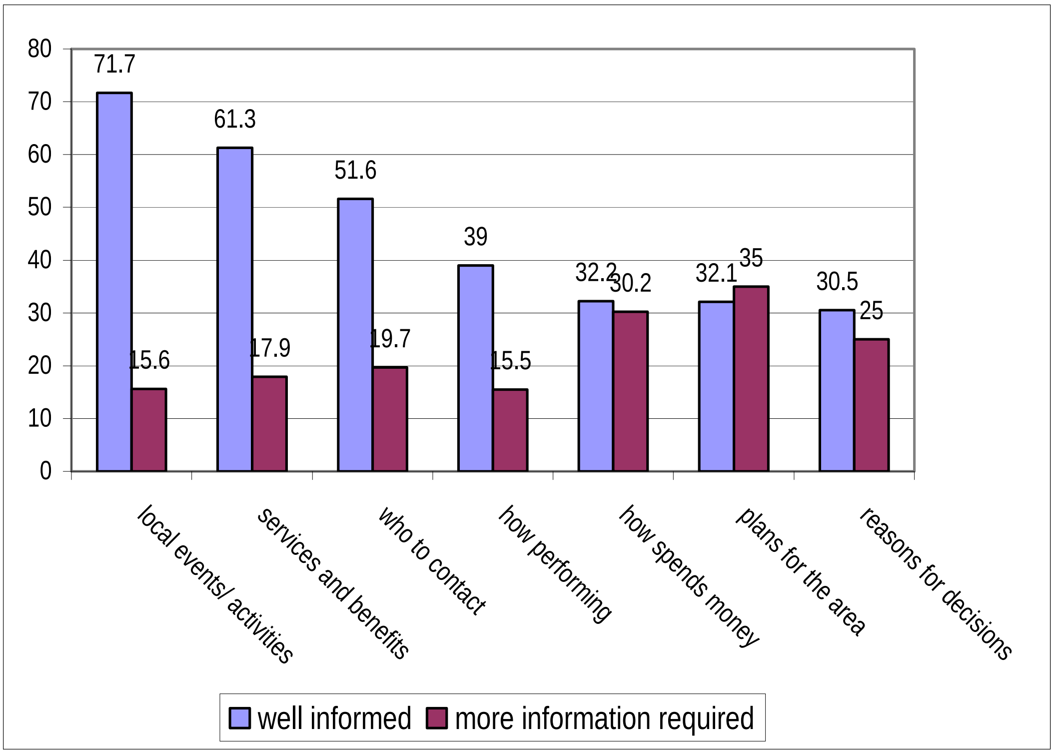
Information

* A majority of respondents believed the Council keeps them 'well informed' about the following issues : 'local events and activities which affect them' (71.7%); 'services and benefits it provides' (61.3%), and 'who to contact at the Council to find out about services and facilities' (51.6%). However, less than a third of respondents feel 'well informed' about : 'how the Council spends it's money' (32.2%), 'Council Plans for the area' (32.1%) and 'the reasons why it makes the decisions that it does' (30.5%).

* Respondents' perceptions as to how well the Council keeps them informed has changed little since the question was first asked in 1998. The greatest change was in relation to 'local events and activities' which showed an increase from 65.4% to 71.1% in 'well informed' responses.

* Almost two-thirds (63.9%) of respondents had a requirement for further information, with the greatest requirement being in respect of those issues about which respondents felt less well informed : 'Council plans for the area' (35% requirement), 'how the Council spends its money' (30.2%), and 'the reasons why it makes the decisions it does' (25%).

Perceived Adequacy of Current Information & Requirement for more Information
Q19 : 'Well informed' & Q20 : 'Require more'
(% response – all respondents)



* 'The Town Crier' was the principal source of information about the Council, referred to by two-thirds (66.9%) of all respondents. 'Free newspapers' (35.6%), 'leaflets/ posters/ notices' (24.1%), and the 'Northern Echo' (23.2%) were the only other sources referred to by more than 20% of the total sample when asked how they currently received information about the Council.

* Just under half of all respondents offered some suggestions as to how the Council could keep residents better informed, with most respondents referring to ‘leaflets, letters or newsletters delivered to the home’ (16.9%). Other suggestions referred to ‘local newspapers’ (6.6%), ‘Town Crier’ (5.5%), ‘website/internet’ (3.4%), ‘local radio’ (2.6%), ‘notice boards/ posters’ (2.2%), ‘Council magazine/newspaper’ (1.9%), ‘T.V.’ (1.4%), and ‘information in public places/buildings’ (1.3%).

Access to Personal Computer/ Internet

* Over half (53.5%) of the total sample reported having access to a ‘personal computer’ at home, and 45.1% have access to the ‘internet’. (This response suggests there has been little change since 2001, when 54.6% had access to a personal computer at home, and 45.3% access to the internet.)

* Amongst those who did not have access to the internet at home, 24% believed it was likely that they will have access in the next two years or so (10.1% ‘very likely’ + 13.9% ‘likely’), whilst the majority (70.9%) believe they will not gain this facility in the next two years.

Travel to school

* In total, amongst all respondents, there were 516 children between 5 and 17 years of age : 245 attending primary school, 209 attending secondary school, and 62 not attending school or in further education. Amongst those who attended primary school, 69.8% ‘walked’, and 26.5% travelled by ‘car’, with only small minorities using other methods of transport (1.2% ‘school bus’, 1.6% ‘other bus’, 0.4% ‘taxi’ and 0.4% ‘other’). Amongst those who attended secondary school, 52.2% ‘walked’, 20.6% ‘travelled by school bus’, 12.9% ‘travelled by car’, 11.5% travelled by ‘other bus’, whilst only 1% ‘cycled’ and 1.9% ‘travelled by taxi’.

Citizens Panel

* 42.9% of all respondents said they were willing to become members of the Citizens Panel. Willingness to participate was lowest amongst ‘65+ year olds’ (21.3%), and amongst those living in the North East (34%).

MAIN REPORT

A. BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

A.1 In 1998 Darlington Borough Council commenced a programme of community research and consultation covering all aspects of the Council's activities, the overall purpose of which was to inform the development of Best Value initiatives, and to set a context for the evolution of the Council's annual budgets : this survey is part of that ongoing programme of research and consultation.

A.2 Specific objectives of the survey were to gather information relating to :

- 2.1 Satisfaction with the Council overall, and reasons for any dissatisfaction
- 2.2 Satisfaction with local area, and reasons for any dissatisfaction
- 2.3 Perceived changes over last year – in way Council running the Borough, and in local area
- 2.4 Satisfaction with particular aspects of local neighbourhood
- 2.5 Perceived safety of local neighbourhood and town centre
- 2.6 Concern about noise pollution
- 2.7 Ease of access to services
- 2.8 Most important issues, and perception of Council success in dealing with these issues
- 2.9 Satisfaction with specific Council Services
- 2.10 Usage of Council Services
- 2.11 Services Priorities
- 2.12 Adequacy of information received and requirements for more information
- 2.13 Current methods of receiving information about Council
- 2.14 Suggestions as to how the Council can keep residents better informed
- 2.15 Access to personal computer and internet at home, and likelihood of gaining access to internet in next two years or so
- 2.16 Mode of transport for travel to school for children 5 – 17 years.
- 2.17 Willingness to become member of Citizens' Panel

B. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

Survey Methodology

B.1 Face-to-face interviews were conducted during October 2002, using a structured questionnaire, with 1026 residents of Darlington Borough who were aged 16 years and over.

B.2 In order to track changes in residents opinions over time, all of the questions were the same as, or similar to, those included in the 2002 and/or 1998 Community Survey. A copy of the questionnaire (marked up with the overall sample results) is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

B.3 Interviewing took place in all Wards of the Borough, with the number of interviews conducted in each Ward being proportionate to the population therein. Age and gender (inter-locked) quotas were applied in order to ensure that the sample was representative of the Borough in terms of these variables.

B.4 In order to avoid interviews being carried out solely within one location in a ward, randomised starting points were selected for the interviewers, and no more than eight interviews were carried out from any random location starting point. Only one interview was conducted per household.

B.5 All interviewing was conducted in accordance with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. Interviewers showed respondents NWA Identity Cards, and letters from the Council, which explained the nature of the research. Respondents were also given an NWA free-phone telephone number for contact if they had any queries.

Analysis

B.6 The data was analysed using the statistical package SPSS 11.0. Tables were produced, for all questions, showing counts and percentages for the total Borough, and for the following sample sub-groups : area, age, gender, tenure, occupation of chief wage earner, number of cars in household, whether anyone in household has long-term illness/disability, and household type. These tables are included as Appendix 2.

Geographical Areas

B.7 For analysis purposes the Borough was divided into six geographical areas :

1. South East

Bank Top
Central
Eastbourne North
Eastbourne South
Lascelles
Lingfield
Park East

2. South West

College
Hummersknott
Park West

3. North East

Harrowgate Hill
Haughton East
Haughton West
Northgate North
Northgate South
North Road

4. North West

Cockerton East
Cockerton West
Mowden
Pierremont

5. Rural

Heighington
Hurworth
Middleton St. George
Sadberge
Whessoe

Sampling Error

B.8 All sampling is liable to sampling error: this is based on both the size of the sample and the level of response to individual questions. An estimation of potential sampling error at the 95% Confidence level is given below for the total sample, and for all sample sub-groups. Estimations are based on a 50%/50% split in response, and a 10%/90% split. As an example, if 50% of the total sample said they were 'satisfied' with a particular aspect, we estimate with 95% Confidence that between % and % (50% ± %) of the total adult Darlington are satisfied with that same aspect.

Sampling Error : 95% Confidence Intervals for sample sub-groups

		Count	50%/50%	10%/90%
			± %	± %
Area	South East	260	6.1	3.6
	South West	120	8.9	5.4
	North East	291	5.7	3.4
	North West	202	6.9	4.1
	Rural	153	7.9	4.2
Age	16 to 24 years	137	8.4	5.0
	25 to 44 years	344	5.3	3.2
	45 to 64	334	5.4	3.2
	65+ years	211	6.7	4.0
Gender	male	497	4.4	2.6
	female	529	4.3	2.6
Tenure	owner occupied	782	3.5	2.1
	rented from the Council	142	2.6	4.9
	rented other	99	9.8	1.9
Occupation chief wage earner	AB (Professional/ Managerial)	223	6.6	3.9
	C1 (Other White Collar)	222	6.6	3.9
	C2 (Skilled Manual)	269	6.1	3.6
	DE (Semi/Unskilled /Benefits)	311	5.6	3.3
Car/van in household	yes - 1	510	4.4	2.6
	yes - more than 1	263	6.0	3.6
	no	253	1.9	3.7
Long term illness/disability	yes - self	222	6.6	3.9
	yes - other h'hold member	125	2.8	5.3
	no	694	3.7	2.2
Household	no children	634	3.9	2.3
Household	children under 5 years	152	7.9	1.5
Household	children 5 – 11 years	197	7.0	1.3
Household	children 12 – 17 years	187	7.2	4.3
ALL RESPONDENTS		1026	3.1	1.8

C. PROFILE OF SAMPLE

(Appendix 2, pages 130 to 144 refer)

The great majority (79.8%) of respondents had lived in the Darlington area ‘more than ten years’, whilst 8.7% had lived in the area ‘six to ten years’, 9.3% ‘one to five years’ and only 2.2% ‘less than a year, though more than three months’.

13.4% of respondents were aged ‘16-24 years’, 33.5% ‘25-44 years’, 29% were ‘45 years to retirement age’ (59 years females and 64 years males)’, and 24.1% were of ‘retirement age’ (60+ years females / 65+ years males).

Just over half of the sample were economically active : 31% in full-time employment (30+ hours per week), 15.2% in ‘part-time’ employment, 3.9% self-employed, 0.3% ‘on a government scheme’ and 0.7% registered unemployed. The remainder were : ‘not in paid employment – seeking work’ (2.7%), ‘looking after house/children etc’ (10.5%) ‘suffering from a long term illness or disability’ (5.3%), ‘in full time education’ (3.4%), or ‘retired’ (26.7%).

48.4% of respondents were ‘male’ and 51.6 % ‘female’. 97.6% of the sample were ‘White – British’.

16.7% of respondents lived in a ‘single person household’, 36.8% in a ‘two person household’, 19.3% in a ‘three person household’, 17.3% in a ‘four person household’, 9.1% in a ‘five or six person household’, and 0.8% lived in households with ‘seven or more members’.

32.4% of respondents reported that they (20.2%) and/or another member of their household (10.7%) ‘suffered from a limiting long term illness or disability’ (1.5% referring to both self and other household member).

Just over a quarter (24.7%) of respondents ‘did not have a car’ in the household; 49.7% had ‘one car or van’, and 25.6% had ‘more than one car or van’. 23.4% of respondents lived in ‘rented’ property (13.8% from the Council, and 9.6% from other landlords), whilst 76.2% were ‘owner-occupiers’ (0.3% ‘other tenure’).

D. RESEARCH FINDINGS :

1. SATISFACTION WITH THE WAY THE COUNCIL IS RUNNING THE BOROUGH

1.1 Overall satisfaction

Q.1 : '*Thinking about Darlington Borough Council. Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the Council is running the Borough ?*
(Appendix 2, page 1 refers)

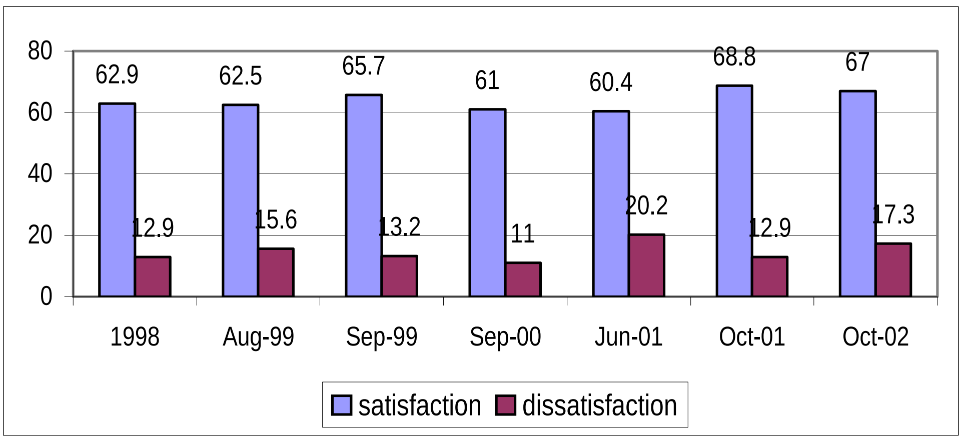
1.1.1 The above question has been included in several previous surveys undertaken by the Council and acts as a 'tracking' question.

1.1.2 67% of all respondents said that they were satisfied with the way the Council is running the Borough, (9.7% - very satisfied and 57.3% fairly satisfied), and only 17.3% of respondents said that they were dissatisfied, (12.3% fairly dissatisfied, and 5.0% very dissatisfied). 14.0% of respondents gave 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' responses, and a further 1.7% said 'don't know'.

1.1.3 There have been only minor differences in satisfaction levels since the tracking exercise was started in 1998 when overall satisfaction was recorded as 62.9%. The current 67% satisfaction level is not significantly different from that recorded in October 2001.

1.1.4 The current level of dissatisfaction (17.3%) is slightly higher than the October 2001 level (12.9%), though not as high as that recorded in June 2001 (20.2%).

Satisfaction with the way the Council is running the Borough
% response – all respondents



1.1.6 Satisfaction with the way the Council is running the Borough was highest in the South West (75%) and lowest in the North East (63.5%). Dissatisfaction was highest (20%+) amongst those aged '45 years and over', 'Council house tenants', and those 'with long term illness or disabilities'.

1.2 Perceived changes over the last year

Q.2 : *'And over the past year or so, do you think Darlington Council has got better or worse at running the Borough, or has it stayed about the same ?'*
Q.3 : *'In what ways do you think it has got better (worse)?'*
(Appendix 2, pages 2 to 4 refer)

1.2.1 11% of respondents believed the Council has 'got better' at running the Borough over the last year, whilst 23.8% believed it had 'got worse'; the majority of respondents (61.9%), however, believed that there had been 'no change'. 6.3% of respondents gave 'don't know' responses. Although the number of people who believe the Council has 'got better' at running the Borough is very similar to that found in October 2001, there is a significant increase in the number who believe the Council has 'got worse' (October 2001 : 11.9% 'better'; 12.1% 'worse' and 70.6% 'no change').

1.2.2 Residents living in the South East (27.3%) were most likely to think the Council 'had got worse' at running the Borough over the past year, and those living in the South West' (13.3%) least likely to think this.

1.2.3 The principal issue referred to when asked how the Council had 'got worse' at running the Borough was the 'refuse collection' (29.2% of those who gave a 'got worse' response, and 6.2% of the total sample), with many respondents expressing dissatisfaction with a recent change of policy whereby residents have to place their waste at the edge of the pavement for collection. Other reasons given by 4%+ (6 respondents or more) of those who had this negative perception related to 'cleanliness' (16%), 'roads and/or pavements' (12.8%), 'grass cutting/tree maintenance' (6.8%), 'parks' (6.4%), 'crime/vandalism' (5.9%), 'everything/ general deterioration' (5%), 'council tax/ costs' (4.6%), 'money wasted' (4.1%), 'housing repairs' (4.1%), 'problem neighbours' (2.7%), 'buses/ bus shelters' (2.7%) and 'consultation/ communication' (2.7%). Principal reasons given for this question in 2001 were 'cleanliness and/or maintenance', 'crime & security', 'money wasted/ charges/ costs' , 'road & pavement maintenance', and 'speed and efficiency of services'.

1.2.4 The principal reason given for believing the Council had 'got better' at running the Borough was 'better cleanliness, maintenance and/or appearance' (referred to by 29.2% of those gave 'got better' responses), with a further 13.3% referring to 'flowers, parks and open spaces'. 'Improvements in security/c.c.t.v.' (12.4%) was the only other issue referred to here by more than 10% of those who perceived an improvement.. (These three issues were also the three main issues referred to in 2001.) Other aspects referred to here by more than 5% (6 respondents) of those who felt things had got better, were 'general improvement' (8.8%), 'Town Centre' (8.8%), 'refuse collection' (8.8%), 'housing repairs/improvements' (8%), 'leisure activities/ events' (7.1%), 'roads/ cycle paths' (6.2%), and 'consultation/communication' (5.3%).

2. SATISFACTION WITH LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD

2.1 Overall satisfaction

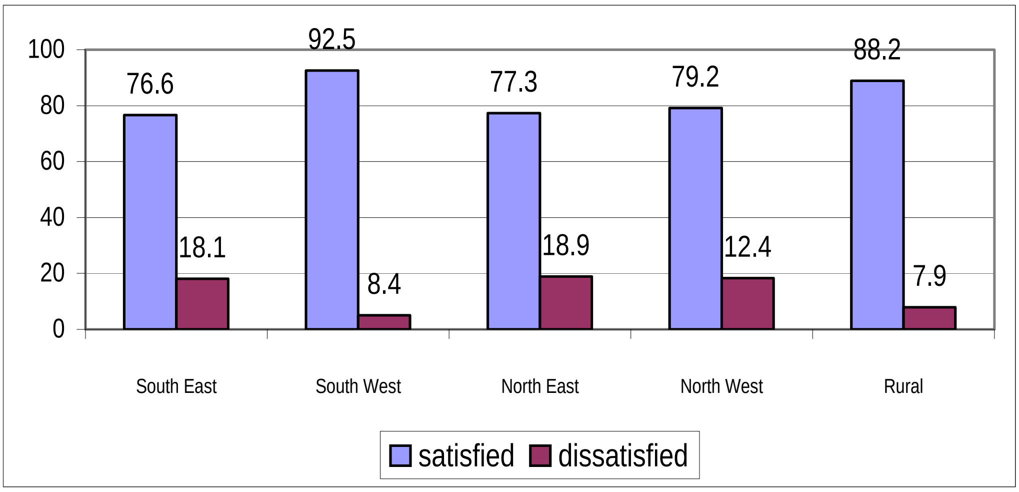
Q.4 : '*Thinking now about this neighbourhood. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live ?'*
(Appendix 2, page 4 to 5 refers)

Satisfaction with local neighbourhoods was high (81%), with 39.2% of respondents saying they were 'very satisfied' and 41.8% that they were 'fairly satisfied'. 15.3% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction (10.4% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 4.9% 'very dissatisfied'), whilst 3.4% gave 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' responses and 0.3% said 'don't know'.

Overall satisfaction with the local neighbourhood was very similar to that found in 2001 – 79.2% satisfaction, and 16.2% dissatisfaction.

Satisfaction with the local neighbourhood was highest in the South West (92.5%) and in the Rural areas (88.9%), whereas dissatisfaction was highest (over 18%) in the South West, North East, and North West. This is a similar pattern of results as found in the 2001 survey.

Satisfaction with local neighbourhood as a place to live - 2002
% response – by area



2.2 Perceived changes over the last year

Q.5 : *'And over the past year or so, do you think your neighbourhood has got better or worse ?'*
Q.6 : *'In what ways do you think it has got better (worse)?'*
(Appendix 2, pages 6 to 7 refer)

2.2.1 33.1% of respondents felt that their neighbourhood had 'got worse' as a place to live, over the past year, whilst just under half (49.4%) of all respondents felt it 'had stayed the same'. Only 8.2% felt it 'had got better'. (9.3% gave 'don't know' responses.)
This is a similar result to that found in the 2001 survey : 30.6% 'worse'; 51% 'same', and 9.5% 'better.

2.2.2 There were some variations by area, with respondents living in the South West being least likely to perceive a change (65.8% 'stayed same'), though in all areas respondents were much more likely to refer to a negative change than to a positive change. 'Council house tenants' (37.3%), those with 'long term illness or disabilities' (37.4%), and those 'without a car/van in the household' (37.2%) were more likely than others to think things had got 'worse' over the last year.

2.2.3 'Crime and vandalism' (mentioned by 30.4% of all respondents who perceived a negative change), and 'upkeep / appearance' (28.8%) were the principal aspects referred to when asked in what ways the neighbourhood had got worse, and these were followed by 'problems with neighbours or other residents' (22.7%), 'drug or alcohol abuse' (13.8%), 'nuisance children/young people' (12.9%), and 'lack of opportunities for leisure for young people' (11.7%). Other aspects referred to by more than 2% of those who perceived a negative change were 'residential car parking' (7.7%), 'roads/pavements', (6.4%), 'public transport' (3.1%) and 'noise' (2.1%).

2.2.4 On an area basis, principal reasons given for the opinion that the local neighbourhood had got worse were : *(% based on those who said area had got worse)*

South East
- 'upkeep/appearance' (43.8%) : 'crime/vandalism' (30.3%)

South West
- 'upkeep/appearance' (46.2%); 'crime/vandalism' (30.8%)

North East
‘crime/vandalism’ (30.8%); ‘upkeep/appearance’ (27.0%)

North West
‘neighbours/ other residents’ (26.2%); ‘crime/vandalism’ (26.2%)

Rural Area
- ‘leisure opportunities for young people’ (23.9%); ‘upkeep and appearance’ (21.7%) ;

2.2.5 43.9% of those who believed their local neighourhoods had ‘got better’ over the past two years referred to improvements in ‘upkeep and appearance’, with improvements in terms of ‘crime/vandalism’ (13.4%), ‘better neighbours’ (11%), and a ‘quieter environment’ (11%) being next most frequently mentioned issues (as only a small percentage of respondents perceived a change for the better, the above three issues were the only ones mentioned as improvements by more than five respondents).

2.3 Satisfaction with particular aspects of local neighbourhood

Q.7 : '*How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following issues in your neighbourhood ?'*
(Appendix 2, pages 8 to 18 refer)

2.3.1 Availability of Housing

52.6% of respondents expressed satisfaction with 'availability of housing' (12.1% 'very satisfied' + 40.5% 'fairly satisfied', and 12.4% expressed dissatisfaction (9.0% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 3.4% 'very satisfied'). 10.2% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 24.8% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses. (This result represents a small increase in dissatisfaction since 2001, when 56.8% of respondents expressed satisfaction and 7.5% dissatisfaction.)

Respondents living in the North West (59.9%) were most satisfied, and those living in the South West (40.8%), where most respondents gave 'neither satisfied/dissatisfied' or 'don't know' responses, expressed the least satisfaction. Dissatisfaction, however, was highest in the Rural areas (18.9%). Other groups who expressed greatest dissatisfaction were those living in 'non Council rented housing '(25.3% dissatisfied), and those with 'children under five years' (22.4%).

2.3.2 Affordability of Housing

Only 46.9% of respondents expressed satisfaction with 'affordability of housing' (7.1% 'very satisfied' + 39.8% 'fairly satisfied', and 19.2% expressed dissatisfaction (13.6% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 5.6% 'very dissatisfied'). 12.1% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 21.8% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses. This result represents a significant decrease in satisfaction since 2001, when 61.3% of respondents expressed satisfaction, and only 8.2% dissatisfaction.

As for 'affordability of housing', respondents living in the South East (59.6%) were most satisfied, and those living in Rural areas least satisfied (39.2% satisfied/ 28.8% dissatisfied). Respondents living in 'private rented' accommodation (24.3% dissatisfied), and those 'with children under 5 years' (23.7%) were more likely than others to express dissatisfaction with 'affordability of housing'.

2.3.3 Employment Opportunities

Only 33.8% of respondents expressed satisfaction with 'employment opportunities' (3.3% 'very satisfied' + 30.5% 'fairly satisfied', whilst 25.8% expressed dissatisfaction (14.8% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 11.0% 'very dissatisfied'). 10.3% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 30.0% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses. This response is little changed from 2001 (36.3% satisfaction, 21.8% dissatisfaction).

Satisfaction with 'employment opportunities' ranged from 27.5% in the South West to 37.7% in the South East. Dissatisfaction with 'employment opportunities' rose to over 30% amongst young people (16-24 years 38.7%), 'Semi or unskilled manual workers or those on benefits only' (32.2%), those 'who had another member of their household with a long term illness or disability' (32.8%), and 'those with young people 12-17 years in the household' (34.2%).

2.3.4 Quality & amount of natural environment, e.g. countryside, wildlife

74% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the 'natural environment' (18.2% 'very satisfied' + 55.8% 'fairly satisfied', and 16.4% expressed dissatisfaction (11.4% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 5.0% 'very dissatisfied'). 7.5% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 2.1% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses.
(This represents little change since 2001 when 70.6% were satisfied and16.9% dissatisfied.)

Respondents living in the South West (90% satisfied) and Rural areas (87% satisfied) were most satisfied with the 'natural environment', and those living in the South East were most dissatisfied (22.3% dissatisfied).

2.3.5 Quality of built environment, e.g. town centre, housing industrial estates

78.3% of respondents expressed satisfaction with 'built environment' (13.6% 'very satisfied' + 64.7% 'fairly satisfied'), and 11% expressed dissatisfaction (8.4% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 2.6% 'very dissatisfied'). 8% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 2.6% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses. This represents a small increase in satisfaction since 2001 (70.6% satisfied, 9.3% dissatisfaction).

Satisfaction with the ‘built environment’ ranged from 71.6% in the South East to 88.3% in the South West. Differences between areas in dissatisfaction levels were significant. Differences between tenure sub-samples were not significant.

2.3.6 Level of Social & Health Services Available

67.6% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the ‘level of social & health services available’ (14.3% ‘very satisfied’ + 53.3% ‘fairly satisfied’), whilst 17.6% expressed dissatisfaction (11.2% ‘fairly dissatisfied’ + 6.4% ‘very dissatisfied’). 8.9% of respondents were ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ and a further 5.8% gave ‘no opinion/don’t know’ responses. This represents only a small (negative) change since 2001 (71.1% satisfaction, 12% dissatisfaction)

Satisfaction did not vary significantly by area. Other sub-group differences were also minimal here, with satisfaction being lowest amongst those with ‘young people 12-17 years in the household’ (59.9% satisfaction).

2.3.7 Level of cultural, recreational & leisure services available

53.2% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the ‘level of cultural, recreational & leisure services available’ (9.6% ‘very satisfied’ + 43.6% ‘fairly satisfied’), whilst 31% expressed dissatisfaction (18.4% ‘fairly dissatisfied’ + 12.6% ‘very satisfied’). 7.7% of respondents were ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ and a further 8.2% gave ‘no opinion/don’t know’ responses. This represents a small increase in dissatisfaction since 2001 (57.5% satisfaction / 24.7% dissatisfaction).

Satisfaction levels ranged from 71.7% in the South West down to only 43.3% amongst those living in the North East. Dissatisfaction here was highest in the North East (38.5%), and Rural areas (36.6%). Dissatisfaction was also high amongst younger respondents (16-24 years 33.6%, 25-44 years 37.2%), and amongst those with children or young people in the household (35%+).

2.3.8 Standard of schools

55.4% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the ‘standard of schools’ (19% ‘very satisfied’ + 36.4% ‘fairly satisfied’, whilst 7.6% expressed dissatisfaction (4.5% ‘fairly dissatisfied' + 3.1% 'very dissatisfied'). 5.6% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 31.5% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses. This is a very similar response to that received in 2001 (55.8% satisfied, and 7.4% dissatisfied).

Satisfaction was higher in the South West (71.7%) than in other areas, but did not fall below 50% in any area. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction were highest amongst those with school aged children in the household : 'under 5 years' 74.4% satisfied/13.2% dissatisfied; '5-11 years' 80.7% satisfied/13.2% dissatisfied; '12-17 years' 75.4% satisfied/12.9% dissatisfied.

2.3.9 Level of public transport services available

60.5% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the 'level of public transport services available' (16.3% 'very satisfied' + 44.2% 'fairly satisfied', whilst 19.6% expressed dissatisfaction (12.0% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 7.6% 'very dissatisfied'). 5.9% of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and a further 13.9% gave 'no opinion/don't know' responses. This is a very similar to the 2001 response (60.6% satisfaction, 16% dissatisfaction).

Dissatisfaction with the level of public transport services was highest, and exceeded 20% in the Rural areas (31.4%), and amongst those 'who had another member of the household with a long term illness or disability' (28%). Respondents 'without a car/van in the household' (66.4% satisfied/21.7% dissatisfied) did not have significantly more dissatisfaction with the services than those with cars/vans.

2.3.10 Opportunities to participate in local planning & decision making processes

Only 32.7% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the 'opportunities to participate in local planning & decision making processes' (3.9% 'very satisfied' + 28.8% 'fairly satisfied'), whilst 19.3% expressed dissatisfaction (9.9% 'fairly dissatisfied' + 9.4% 'very dissatisfied'). The largest proportion of respondents (48.1%), however, gave either 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (16.5%) or 'don't know/no opinion' (31.6%) responses, and this rose to 57% amongst '16-24 year olds'. This is a very similar response to that received in the 2001 survey (31.8% satisfaction, 19.9% dissatisfaction).

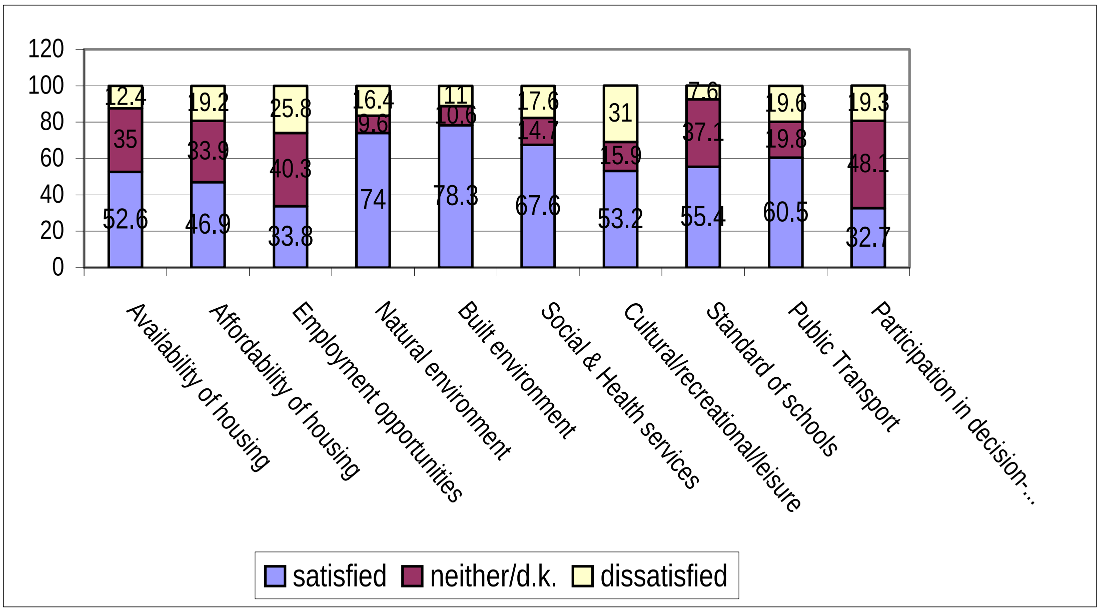
Respondents living in properties the Rural areas (45.1%), and those where 'another member of the household had a long term illness/disability' (42.4%), were most likely to be satisfied with this aspect of life in their local neighbourhood.

2.6.11 Summary

As displayed in the Chart below, expressed satisfaction over all the sample was highest in respect of 'the quality of the built environment' (78.3% satisfied), and 'the quality and amount of the natural environment' (74%). Other aspects about which over half of all respondents declared satisfaction were 'the level of social & health services available' (67.5%), 'public transport' (60.5%), 'standard of schools' (55.4%), 'cultural/recreational/leisure services' (53.2%) and 'availability of housing' (52.6%). Less than half of all respondents reported satisfaction with 'affordability of housing' (46.9%), 'employment opportunities' (33.8%), and 'opportunities to participate in local planning, decision making etc.' (32.7%). Overall dissatisfaction was highest in respect of 'Cultural/recreational/leisure services' (31%), and 'employment opportunities' (25.8%).

However, overall satisfaction levels, as calculated by a mean satisfaction score, which takes into account both the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction (very or fairly) and the number of respondents expressing an opinion, were highest in respect of 'Standard of Schools', (mean 2.07, where 1 = very satisfied, 3 = neither satisfied/dissatisfied, and 5 = very dissatisfied), with 'Built Environment' (2.2) and 'Quality and amount of natural environment' (2.28) in second and third places'. 'Employment opportunities' (mean = 3.0) was the only issue, which did not achieve an overall positive (less than 3) mean score.

Satisfaction with aspects of local neighbourhood :
% response – all respondents



Satisfaction with aspects of local neighbourhood :
All Respondents :Mean Satisfaction Scores

(1 = very satisfied : 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied : 5 = very dissatisfied)
(Note : highest mean scores denotes lowest satisfaction level)

	mean
Standard of Schools	2.07
Quality of built environment, e.g. town centre, housing, industrial estates	2.2
Quality and amount of natural environment	2.28
Availability of housing	2.35
Social & Health services	2.39
Public Transport	2.42
Affordability of housing	2.63
Cultural/ leisure services	2.79
Opportunities to participate in local planning/ decision-making	2.88
Employment opportunities	3

'Employment opportunities' was the most negatively rated issue amongst those living in the South East, North East and North West, whereas those living in the South West expressed least satisfaction with 'opportunities to participate in decision making etc', and those in the North East were least satisfied with 'cultural/recreational/leisure service'.

Satisfaction with aspects of local neighbourhood :
Mean Satisfaction Scores by Area

(1 = very satisfied : 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied : 5 = very dissatisfied)
(Note : highest mean scores denotes lowest satisfaction level)

	S.E.	S.W.	N.E.	N.W.	Rural	TOTAL
Availability of housing	2.36	2.31	2.36	2.27	2.45	2.35
Affordability of housing	2.29	2.74	2.61	2.78	2.91	2.63
Employment opportunities	2.94	2.96	3.10	3.01	2.90	3.00
Quality & amount of natural environment	2.58	1.81	2.27	2.41	1.95	2.28
Quality of built environment	2.32	1.93	2.25	2.19	2.09	2.20
Level of social & health services available	2.40	2.32	2.42	2.39	2.34	2.39
Level of cultural, recreational & leisure services available	2.70	2.29	3.06	2.77	2.87	2.84
Standard of schools	2.22	1.69	2.20	1.98	2.05	2.07
Level of public transport services available	2.36	2.64	2.17	2.46	2.81	2.26
Opportunities to participate ….	2.79	3.13	2.92	2.94	2.72	2.96

2.6.12 Changes since 2001

Satisfaction ratings for most issues were very similar to those achieved in the 2001 survey. The issue about which the greatest change was observed was ‘affordability of housing’ (satisfaction – 14.4%, and dissatisfaction + 11%). Other services, which showed small negative changes from 2001 were ‘Cultural/recreational/leisure services’ (dissatisfaction + 6.3%), ‘social & health services’ (dissatisfaction + 5.6%), also showed very small negative changes. The ‘built environment’ achieved a slightly higher satisfaction rating than in 2001 (satisfaction + 7%), though the mean satisfaction score was unchanged.

	Mean 2002	mean 2001	change
Standard of Schools	2.07	2.17	-0.1
Quality of built environment, e.g. town centre, housing, industrial estates	2.2	2.2	0
Quality and amount of natural environment	2.28	2.23	0.05
Availability of housing	2.35	2.25	0.1
Social & Health services	2.39	2.26	0.13
Public Transport	2.42	2.33	0.09
Affordability of housing	2.63	2.38	0.25
Cultural/ leisure services	2.79	2.61	0.18
Opportunities to participate in local planning/ decision-making	2.88	2.8	0.08
Employment opportunities	3	2.94	0.06

2.4 Perceived safety in Darlington Borough area

Q.8 : *'How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in Darlington Borough area ….1) during the day ? 2) … after dark ?*
(Appendix 2, pages 19 to 20 refer)

2.4.1 During the day

The great majority (88.9%) of respondents feel 'safe' when outside in the Darlington Borough area during the day (33.3% 'very safe' + 55.6% fairly safe'), and only 7% felt 'unsafe' (0.3% 'don't know', and 3.9% 'neither safe nor unsafe'). Respondents 'with a long term illness or disability' were most likely to feel 'unsafe' (14.5%) during the day. On a geographic basis, respondents living in the South East (10% 'unsafe'), were the most likely to 'feel unsafe' when out alone in their local neighbourhood during the day, and those living in the South West (1.7%) least likely.

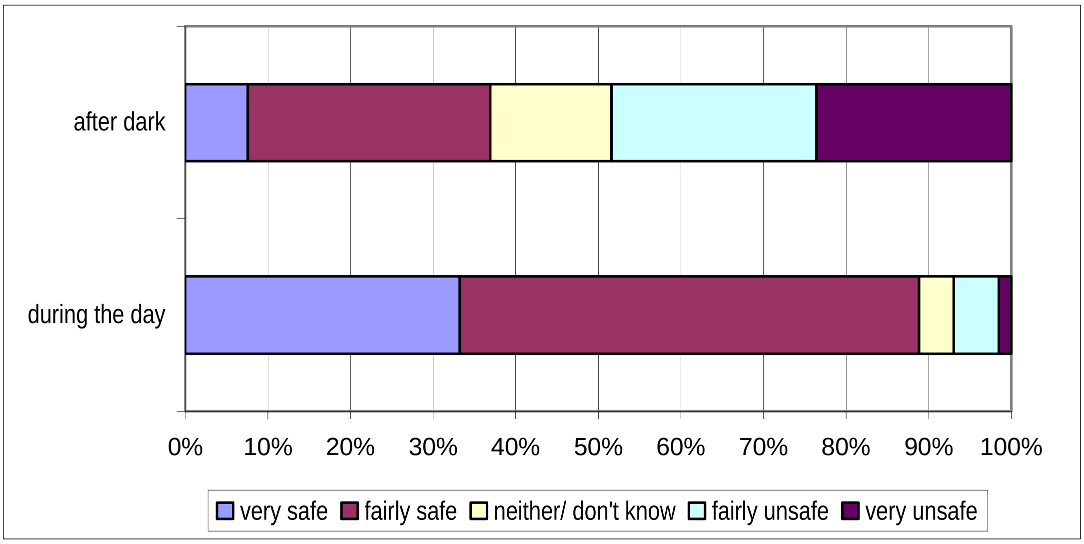
The 2001 Community Survey asked about perceived safety in specific areas of Darlington - 'your own neighbourhood' and 'the town centre' and is thus not directly comparable. However, 2001 responses were: 'local neighbourhood' 96.1% safe/ 3.4% unsafe : 'town centre' – 93.2% safe/4.5% - suggesting that perhaps respondents feel safer in areas with which they are familiar.

2.4.2 After dark

Just over a third (36.9%) of respondents reported feeling safe when outside in the Darlington area after dark (7.6% 'very safe' and 29.3% 'fairly safe'), whilst almost half (48.4%) reported feeling 'unsafe' (24.8% 'slightly unsafe' and 23.6% 'very unsafe' (11.0% 'neither safe nor unsafe' and 3.7% 'don't know'). On an area basis, those who lived in the South West (36.9% unsafe), were least likely than those from other areas to feel 'unsafe' outside after dark. '65+ year olds', 'those with a long term illness or disability, and 'females' reported feeling least safe, with a third of these respondents reporting that they feel 'very unsafe' when outside after dark.

The 2001 Community Survey findings relating to perceived safety when outside alone after dark were : 'local neighbourhood' 63.7% safe/ 28.1% unsafe; 'town centre' 29.3% safe/ 42.4% unsafe.

'How safe do you feel when you are outside in Darlington Borough area ….?
(% response – all respondents)



2.5 Noise pollution

Q.9 : *'Noise pollution can be a problem. How would you rate the following types of noise in your neighbourhood ?'*
(Appendix 2, pages 21 to 32 refer)

Only 37.6% of all respondents did not find any type of noise a problem : 62.4% reported that at least one type of noise was a problem (serious or not serious) to them, and differences between areas were relatively minor in this respect.

'Road traffic' was perceived as the greatest noise pollutant, mentioned by just over a third (34.6%) of all respondents as a problem : by 10.6% as a 'serious problem', and by a further 24.0% as a 'problem, but not serious'. This represents a similar finding to the 2001 survey (problem 33.5% : serious 9.8% + not serious 23.7%).

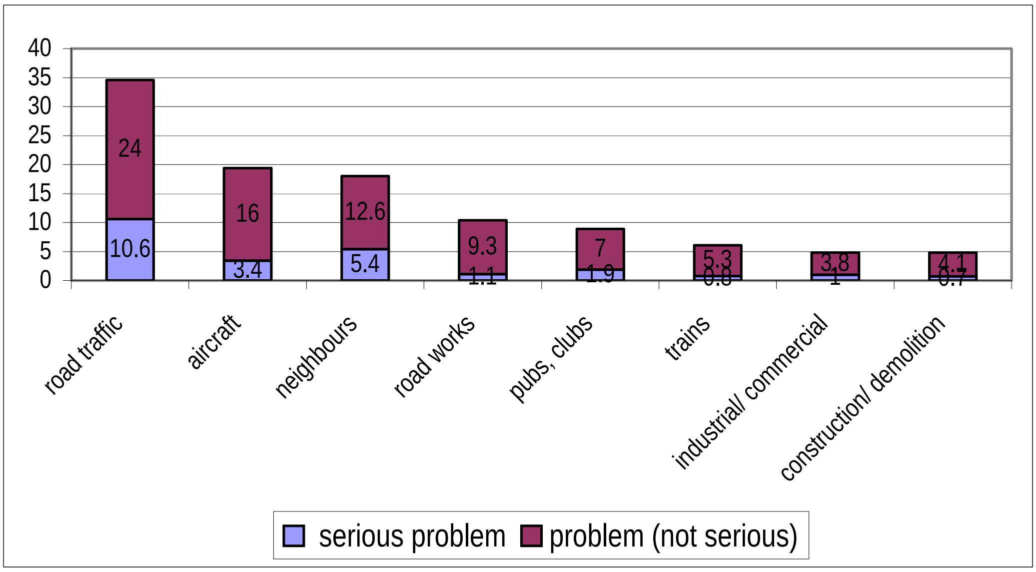
'Aircraft' (19.4% problem – 3.4% 'serious' + 16% 'not serious), 'neighbours' (18% problem – 5.4% 'serious' + 12.6% 'not serious'), and 'road works' (10.4% problem - 1.1% 'serious' + 9.3% 'not serious') were the only other noises rated as a problem by in excess of one in ten respondents. Again, these findings are not significantly different from those of the 2001 survey : 'aircraft' 19.5% problem / 'neighbours' 15.6% problem/ 'road works' 11.6% problem.

Other noise pollutants listed were rated as problems (serious or not serious) by less than 10% of all respondents, and again this was not significantly different from 2001 : 'pubs, clubs & entertainment' (2002 8.9% : 2001 7.5%), 'trains' (2002 6.1% : 2001 6.8%), 'noise from industrial or commercial premises' (2002 5.9% : 2001 5.2%), and 'construction/ demolition' (2002 : 4.8% : 2001 5.0%).

Respondents were also asked if there were 'any other source of noise which is a problem', and 13.6% replied in the affirmative (5.3% 'serious' / 8.3% 'not serious). More than half of these people referred to 'young people/ children' (5.3% of the sample in total), with the problem being perceived the greatest by those living in the North East (spontaneously referred to by 7.6% of all respondents from that area). Other sources of noise referred to were 'dogs', 'alarms', 'fireworks', 'motorbikes', 'people going to/from pubs etc', and 'Croft Autodrone'.

'How would you rate the following types of noise in your neighbourhood ?'

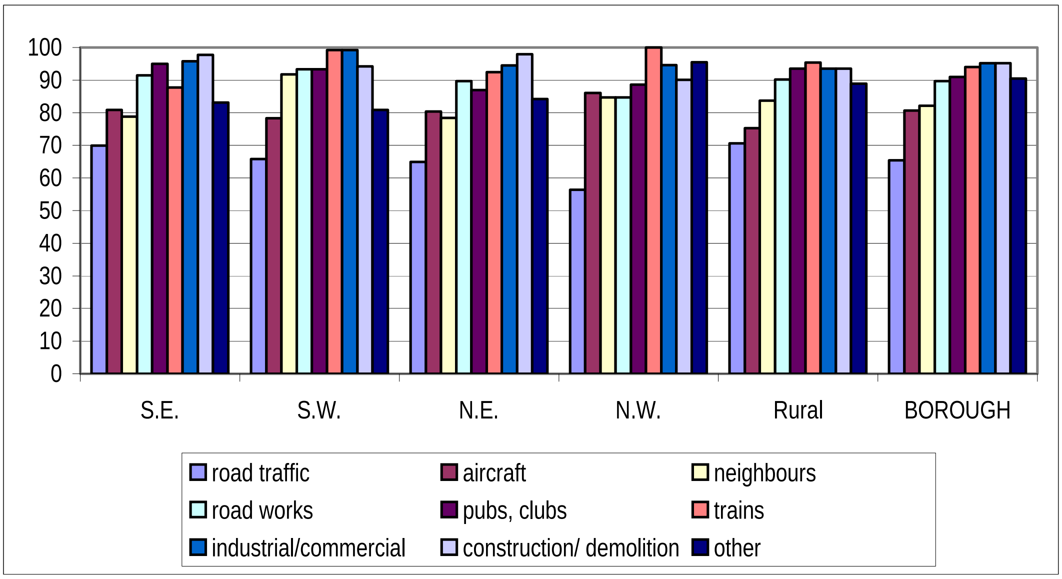
(% response – all respondents)



As regards area differences, 'road traffic' was rated as the major noise problem in all areas of the Borough, with the % of respondents reporting this a problem ranging from 29.4% in the Rural areas, to 43.6% in the North West. 'Aircraft' was slightly more likely to be rated as a problem by those living in Rural areas (24.9% aircraft problem) , whilst 'neighbours' were less likely to be seen as a problem by those living in the South West (neighbours only 8.3% problem, cf. 15%+ in other areas)

'How would you rate the following types of noise in your neighbourhood ?'

('Not a problem' -% response – by area)



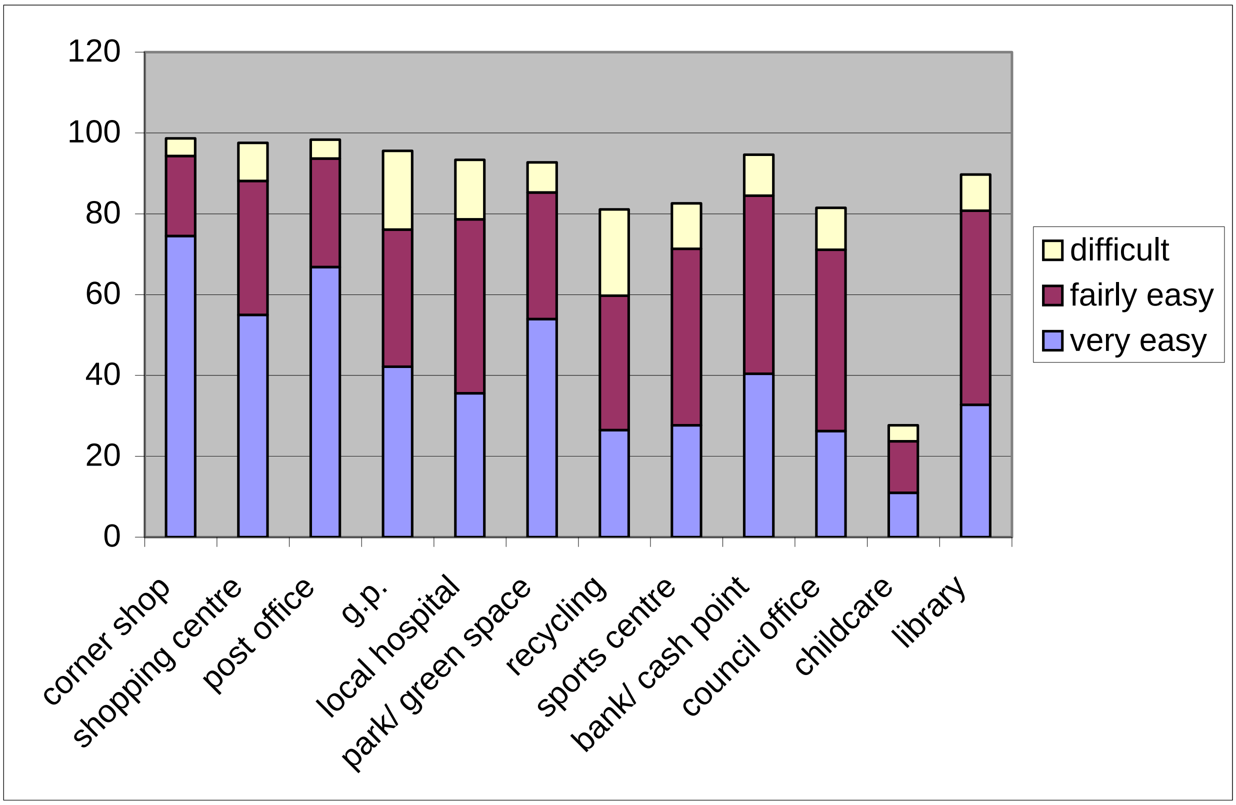
2.6 Ease of access to services

Q.10 : '*From your home, how easy is it for you to get to the following, using your usual form of transport ?'*
(Appendix 2, pages 33 to 47 refer)

The majority of respondents reported no difficulties in reaching major services. The services most difficult for respondents to get to using their usual form of transport were 'recycling facilities' (21.3% difficult),'G.P./ Doctor's Surgery' (19.5%). Seven other services were also reported as being difficult to reach by in excess of 5% of all respondents – these were 'local hospital' (14.8%), 'Sports Centre' (11.8%), 'Council Office' (10.4%), 'Bank/ Cash Point' (10.1%), 'Shopping Centre' (9.5%), 'Library' (8.9%), and 'Park/Green Space' (7.4%).

The services most easily accessible are 'Local shops' (74.5% very easy to get to/ 4.4% difficult) and 'Post Offices' (66.8% very easy/ 4.7% difficult). Other services which a majority (50%+) of respondents reported as being 'very easy' to get to using their usual form of transport were 'Shopping Centre or Supermarket' (55%) and 'Park or green space which can be used by the public', (54%).

'How easy to get to… using usual form of transport ?'
(% response – all respondents)



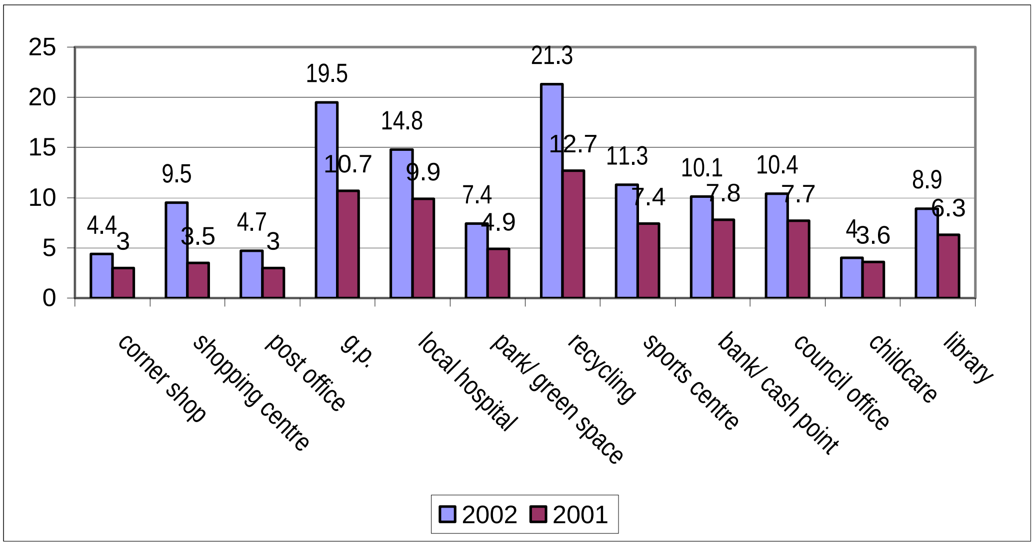
For all services a number of respondents gave a 'don't know' response when asked about 'ease of getting to', and this is probably indicative of respondents not using the service. Over half (63.8%) of all respondents gave 'don't know' responses in respect of 'Childcare facilities', and when these 'don't know' responses are excluded from the analysis, the % or respondents reporting 'ease' in getting to the service rises to 65.5% (very easy 30.2%, fairly easy 35.3%), with 23.5% giving ' neither easy nor difficult' responses, and 11.1% reporting this to be 'difficult'. For all other services the proportion of 'don't know' responses was relatively small, and only rose above 3% in respect of 'council office' (12.5%), and 'recycling facility' (11.5%). 'sports centre' (10.2%), and 'library (5.8%).

Access to services for all services was most difficult for respondents with 'long standing illnesses or disabilities', those 'without a car in the household' and '65+ year olds', with 'Doctors Surgeries' and 'Recycling Facilities' presenting the greatest difficulties for these groups.

The most notable area differences were in relation to 'Local Hospitals' and 'G.P./Doctors Surgeries'. Respondents living in the North East (24.7% difficult) reported the greatest difficulty in getting to a 'G.P./Doctors Surgery', and those living in the Rural Areas (8.5% difficult) the least difficulty. Those living in the North East (22.3% difficult) also reported the greatest difficulty in getting to a 'Local Hospital', whereas those living in the North West (5.5% difficult) reported least difficulty.

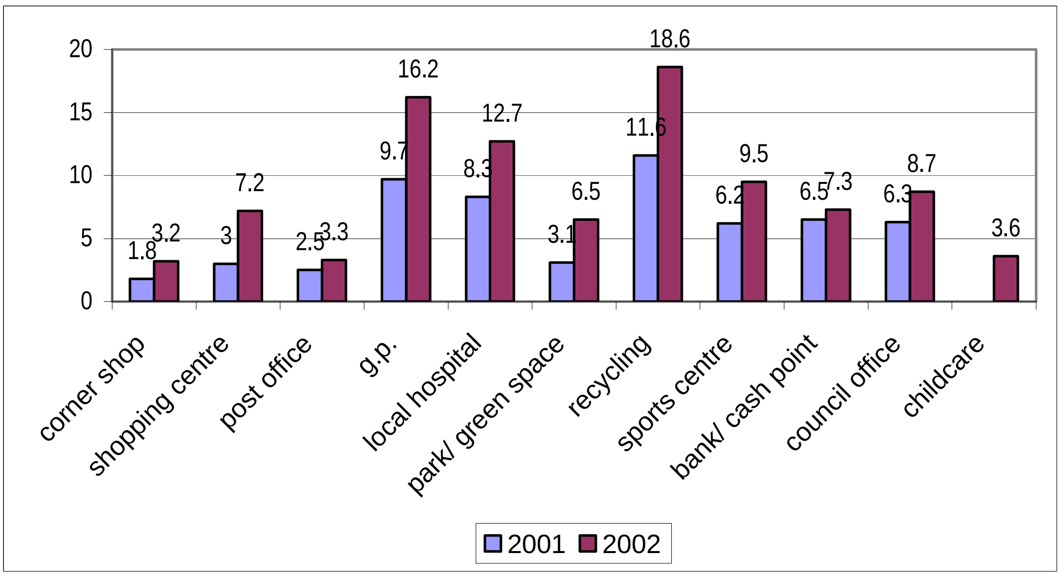
For all services there were increases in the number of respondents who reported difficulty of access, and this was most noticeable in respect of 'recycling services' (rising 12.7% 'difficult' in 2001 to 21.3% in 2002), 'G.P./Local Surgery' (increasing from 10.7% to 19.5%), 'local hospital' (increasing from 9.9% to 14.8%), and 'shopping centre' (increasing from 3.5% to 9.5%).

<u>Service Reported to be Difficult to Get To : Changes since 2001</u>
(Q10 : All respondents : 'very difficult' + 'fairly difficult' response)



Whilst the 2002 sample had a greater number of respondents who reported having someone with a disability (self or other family member) in the household than in 2001 (2002 32.4%, 2001 28.6%), this does not fully explain the changed in perception as regards access which appear to have taken place since 2001. This is illustrated in the following chart, which shows an analysis of only those respondents who reported that no-one in their household (neither self nor other family member) had a long-term illness/disability, and which shows significant increases in reported difficulty of access with respect to 'recycling facilities' and 'G.P.'s/ Doctor's Surgeries'.

<u>Service Reported to be Difficult to Get to : Changes since 2001</u>
Respondents where <u>no one</u> in the household (self or other family member)had long term illness or disability : Q10 : 'very difficult' + 'fairly difficult' response



3. MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES

Q.11 : '*The Council's principal role is to make Darlington a place where people want to live, work and can enjoy a high quality of life. The Council has identified seven main issues which it believes are important –*
a) Which of these issues do you feel are most important (first & second) *in making Darlington a place where people want to live, work and can enjoy a high quality of life ?*
b) And how successful or unsuccessful would you say the Council is in dealing with these issues.? '

3.1 Most important issues

(Appendix 2, pages 48 to 53 refer)

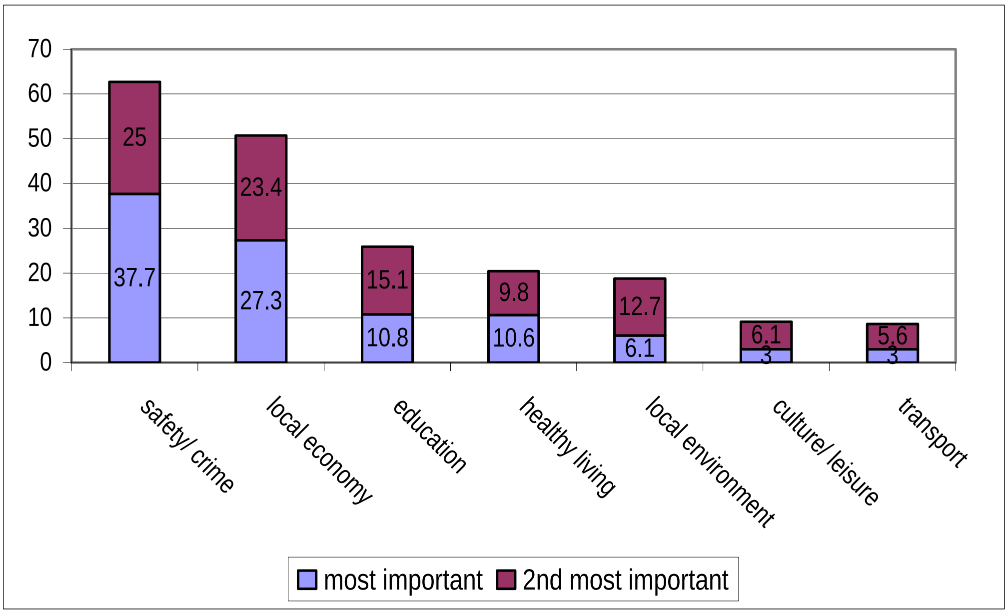
The majority (67.2%) of respondents believe that 'promoting community safety and reducing crime' is one of the two most important issues facing the Council : 37.7% of respondents believe this is the 'most important' issue, and a further 25% that it is the '2nd most important' issue.

'Improving the local economy and creating jobs' (50.7%) was voted the second most important issue by the overall sample, being referred to by 27.3% as the 'most important' and 23.4% as the '2nd most important'.

'Supporting educational achievement' (10.8% most + 15.1% 2nd most), 'supporting healthy living' (10.6% most + 9.8% 2nd most), and 'maintaining & enhancing the local environment' (6.1% most + 12.7% 2nd most), achieved the 3rd, 4th and 5th overall importance rating, whilst 'extending opportunities for cultural, recreational and leisure' and 'creating a safe and effective transport network' were rated by the total sample as the least important issues listed, both being referred to by less than 10% of the sample as one of the two most important issues.

'Promoting community safety/ reducing crime' was seen as the most important issue by all area sub-groups, ranging from 31.4% amongst those from Rural areas, to 41.2% amongst those from the South East.

Most important issues ?
(Q11a : % response – all respondents)



A similar question was included in the 2001 survey, but it did not list 'culture/leisure' or transport' issues, and it included an option relating to 'local democracy (six issues to chose from as opposed to seven in 2002). In the 2001 survey 'safety/crime' (60.8%1st most important) and the 'economy' (22.5% 1st most important) were deemed the most important issues, followed by 'environment' (6.5% 1st most important), 'education' (4.6% 1st most important), 'democracy' (2.3% 1st most important), and 'healthy living' (1.8% 1st most important), suggesting perhaps a decrease in the saliency of 'safety/crime' issues.

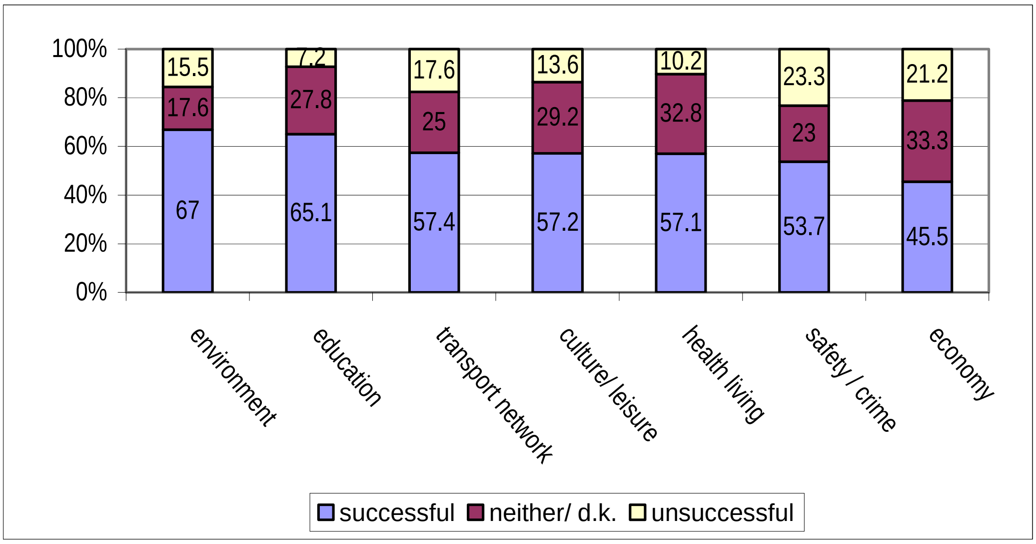
85% of respondents were of the opinion that all of the issues listed were important, whilst 8.5% believed 'extending opportunities for cultural, recreational & leisure' was not important, 4.1% that 'supporting healthy living' was not important, 1.8% that 'creating a safe & effective transport network' was not important, and 1% that 'supporting educational achievement' was not important. Very few (less than 1%) respondents were of the opinion that 'maintaining & enhancing the local environment' (0.6%), 'improving the local economy and creating jobs' (0.3%), or 'promoting community safety and reducing crime (0.1%) were not important.

3.2 <u>Councils success in dealing with most important issues</u>

(Appendix 2, pages 55 to 61 refer)

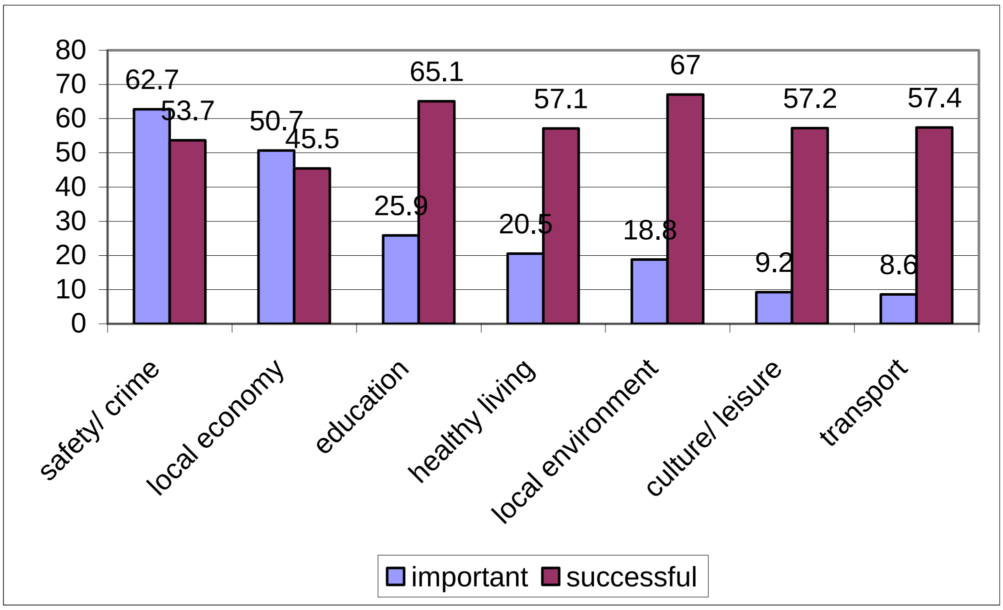
The Council was perceived by the overall sample as being most successful in terms of 'maintaining and enhancing the environment' (67% successful : 9.4% very + 57.6% fairly), and in 'supporting educational achievement' (65.1% : 10.8% very + 54.3% fairly). The only issue listed which the Council was not seen as having success with by a majority of the sample was 'improving the local economy and creating jobs' (only 45.5% successful - 3.0% very + 42.5% fairly).

'How successful is the Council in dealing with these issues?'
(% response – all respondents)



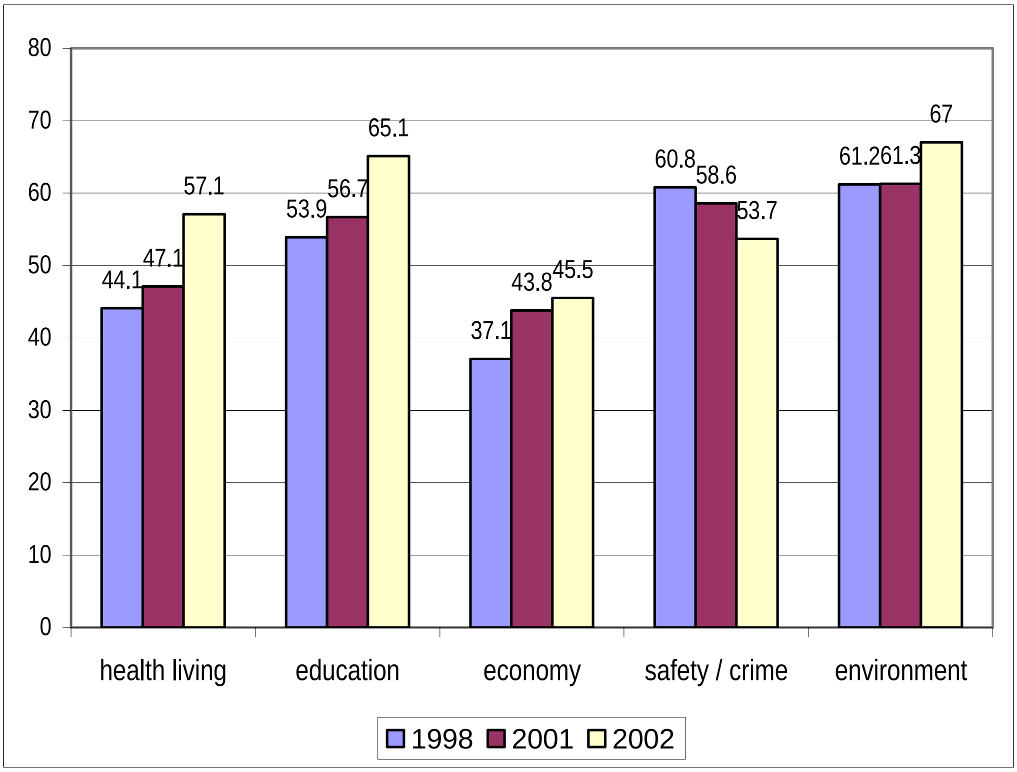
As regards area differences (reference 'mean' scores on page 149, Appendix 2), respondents living in the South East gave the lowest 'success' ratings with respect to 'the economy', 'safety/ crime' and 'the environment', whereas the 'transport network' received the lowest ratings from those living in the South West and Rural areas.

Most Important (1st + 2nd) Issues & Perceived Council Success in dealing with them
(Q11/ 12 : % response – all respondents)



Comparisons with responses from the 1998 and 2001 Community Surveys show small, but significant increases (since 1998) in the number of people who view the Council as being successful, for all issues but one – 'promoting community safety and reducing crime', with 7% fewer respondents viewing the Council being successful with this aspect than in 1998.

Perceived Successful – 2002, 2001 cf. 1998
(all respondents - % 'successful' response)



4. COUNCIL SERVICES

4.1 Satisfaction with Services (all respondents)

Q.13 : *'….I would like you to tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the way in which each of these services is provided in your local area ?'*
Q.14 : '*Are there any other services, not mentioned here, that you are particularly satisfied or dissatisfied with ?'*
(Appendix 2, pages 62 to 93 refer)

Services about which most (more than three-quarters of all) respondents expressed satisfaction were 'street lighting' (88%), 'security, incl. c.c.t.v. in the town centre' (86.5%), 'upkeep & appearance of the town centre' (86.4%), 'signposting' (79.2%).
and 'Civic Theatre' (78.9%).

Services about which most (more than a quarter of all) respondents expressed dissatisfaction were 'pavement maintenance' (48.4% dissatisfied), 'road maintenance & repairs' (46%), children's play areas (36.2%), 'car parking in the town centre' (32.6%), 'youth clubs & other facilities for young people' (27.8%), and 'car parking in residential areas' (27.5%).

Only 0.8% of respondents referred to 'unlisted' services, which they were particularly satisfied with – 'community wardens', council tips', environmental control', 'floral displays, 'on-line Council Tax collection', 'social services', 'town twinning' and 'Teesside Airport'. More respondents (8.1%) referred to 'other' services which they felt particularly dissatisfied with : these were diverse, with many respondents referring to issues already queried (a full listing of responses is shown in Appendix 3).

A summary of the satisfaction/dissatisfaction percentage responses from all respondents is shown in the following table for all services. The 'net' satisfaction score (satisfaction percentage minus dissatisfaction percentage) is also shown for each service.

Satisfaction with Council Services
(Q13 : % response – all respondents)
('Net satisfaction' = 'Satisfied' – 'Dissatisfied')

	Satisfied	Neither/ don't know	Dissatisfied	(net)
	%	%	%	%
Security measures - Town Centre	86.5	9.8	3.8	82.7
Street lighting	88	4.1	8	80
Upkeep of appearance - Town Centre	86.4	6.3	7.4	79
Civic Theatre	78.9	19.4	1.8	77.1
Sign posting	79.2	14.1	6.7	72.5
Libraries & Museum	74.2	21.8	3.9	70.3
Festivals & Events	72.2	24.6	3.2	69
Dolphin Centre	72.4	21.2	6.4	66
Arts Centre	62.9	35.2	2	60.9
Council Tax Admin & Collection	63.9	27.7	8.4	55.5
Adult education	53.7	41.9	4.4	49.3
Refuse collection	71.3	6.6	22.1	49.2
Other sports facilities	55.6	34.3	10.1	45.5
Upkeep of appearance - Residential areas	64.6	14.7	20.8	43.8
Nursery & primary schools	48.6	46.6	4.9	43.7
Parks & Open Spaces	64.2	11.3	24.6	39.6
secondary schools	43.7	49.3	7	36.7
Recycling facilities	58.4	17.5	24.1	34.3
Planning & Control of Development	36.2	50.8	13	23.2
Security measures - Other areas	45	32.6	22.5	22.5
Housing /Council Tax Benefits	31.1	58.4	10.5	20.6
Car parking - Residential areas	47.8	24.6	27.5	20.3
School meals	26.1	67.5	6.3	19.8
Council housing	25.5	63.5	11	14.5
Car parking - Town Centre	44.3	23	32.6	11.7
Social care	35.3	40.2	24.6	10.7
Road maintenance & repairs	40.5	13.5	46	-5.5
Children's play areas	27.9	36	36.2	-8.3
Pavement maintenance	38.5	13.2	48.4	-9.9
Youth Clubs etc	14.9	57.3	27.8	-12.9

The highest overall satisfaction levels (as calculated by the 'mean' score which takes into account both the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, where 1 = very satisfied, and 5 = very dissatisfied, and the varying level of don't know responses) were achieved by 'civic theatre' (mean 1.71), 'security measures (incl. c.c.t.v.) in the town centre' (1.77), 'upkeep and appearance of the town centre' (1.86), 'arts centre' (1.89)', 'libraries & museums' (1.92), 'festivals and events' (1.94), 'nursery & primary schools' (1.97), 'street lighting' (1.97), and 'the Dolphin Centre' (1.98).

Lowest satisfaction levels (as calculated by mean scores) were reported in respect of 'youth clubs & other facilities for young people' (3.41), 'children's play areas' (3.26), 'pavement maintenance', (3.25), and 'road maintenance and repairs' (3.20).

'Youth clubs and other facilities for young people' achieved the lowest overall satisfaction rating in all areas of the Borough.

The following table shows the means scores for all services for the overall sample and for the five areas of the borough.

Mean Satisfaction Scores by Area
(1 = very satisfied : 3 = neither satisfied/dissatisfied : 5 = very dissatisfied)
('don't know' responses excluded from calculations)

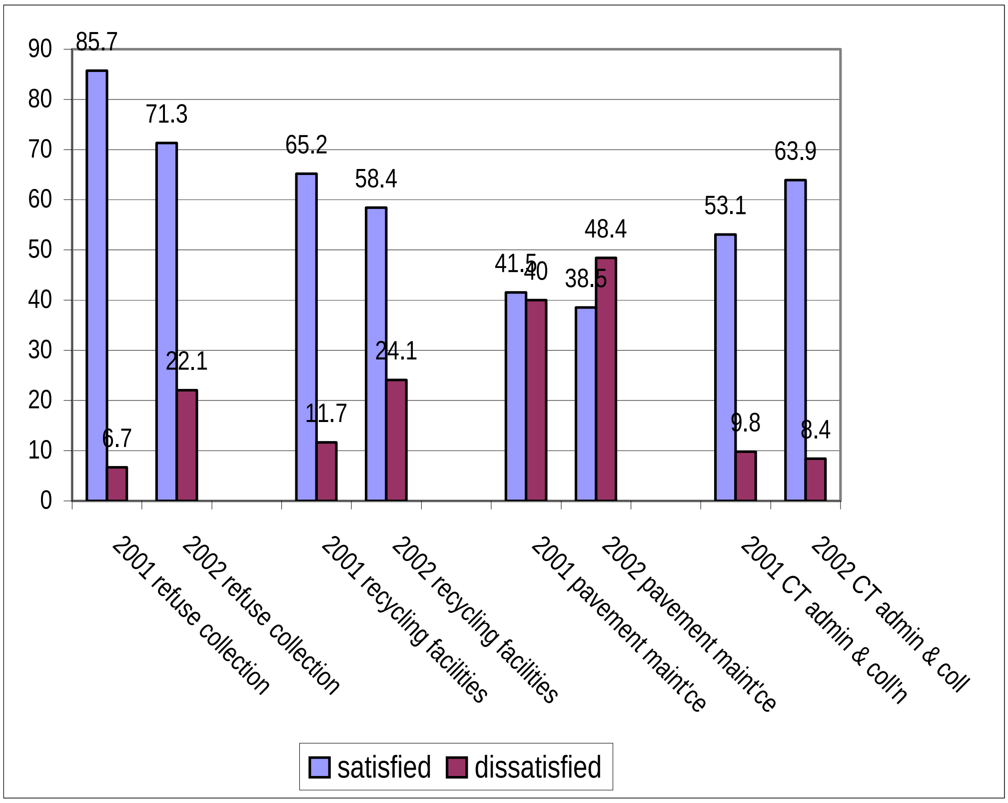
		S.E.	S.W.	N.E.	N.W.	Rural	TOTAL
Q13.1: Nursery & Primary schools		1.91	1.79	2.01	1.91	2.21	1.97
Q13.2: Secondary schools		2.38	1.97	2.28	2.05	2.00	2.18
Q13.3: School meals		2.22	2.54	2.55	2.24	2.39	2.38
Q13.4: Adult education		2.16	1.95	2.14	1.99	2.04	2.08
Q13.5: Children's play areas		3.39	3.30	3.20	3.31	3.12	3.26
Q13.6: The Dolphin Centre		1.97	2.10	1.96	1.96	1.95	1.98
Q13.7: Other sports facilities		2.39	2.25	2.28	2.25	2.20	2.29
Q13.8: Youth Clubs & other facilities for young people		3.28	3.49	3.44	3.47	3.46	3.41
Q13.9: Civic Theatre		1.73	1.69	1.77	1.64	1.64	1.71
Q13.10: Arts Centre		1.91	1.75	2.00	1.91	1.74	1.89
Q13.11: Libraries and Museums		1.98	1.85	1.92	1.85	1.96	1.92
Q13.12: Festivals and Events		2.05	1.92	1.91	1.94	1.83	1.94
Q13.13: Council housing		2.59	2.74	2.79	2.49	2.81	2.68
Q13.14: Housing & Council Tax Benefits		2.52	2.91	2.71	2.41	2.72	2.62
Q13.15: Council Tax Administration & Collection		2.42	2.25	2.29	2.14	2.10	2.26
Q13.16: Parks & Open spaces		2.74	2.47	2.52	2.57	2.28	2.54
Q13.17: Upkeep of appearance - of Town Centre		1.88	1.95	1.88	1.85	1.76	1.86
Q13.18: Upkeep of appearance - Residential Areas		2.67	2.35	2.55	2.37	2.34	2.49
Q13.19: Pavement Maintenance		3.29	3.28	3.35	3.23	3.02	3.25
Q13.20: Road maintenance and repairs		3.18	3.36	3.28	3.08	3.13	3.20
Q13.21: Refuse Collection		2.39	2.43	2.51	2.40	2.35	2.42
Q13.22: Recycling facilities		2.71	2.69	2.59	2.43	2.60	2.60
Q13.23: Street lighting		2.04	1.78	2.06	1.97	1.84	1.97
Q13.24: Sign posting for facilities & attractions		2.15	1.89	2.15	2.05	1.98	2.07
Q13.25: Car parking - in Town Centre		2.70	3.18	2.98	3.01	2.72	2.90
Q13.26: Car parking - in Residential Areas		2.79	2.87	2.80	2.87	2.76	2.81
Q13.27: Planning & Control of Development		2.56	3.03	2.58	2.61	2.84	2.68
Q13.28: Security measures (incl CCTV) - in Town Centre		1.79	1.74	1.78	1.75	1.77	1.77
Q13.29: Security measures (incl CCTV) - in Other Areas		2.55	2.53	2.90	2.61	2.76	2.69
Q13.30: Social care for older and vulnerable people		2.67	3.18	2.92	3.03	2.85	2.89

4.2 Satisfaction with Services (comparison with 2001)

Principal changes in satisfaction ratings since 2001 were in relation to the 'refuse collection' (satisfaction down 14.4%, dissatisfaction up 15.4%), and 'recycling facilities' (satisfaction down 6.8%, dissatisfaction up 12.4%), both of these negative changes. 'Pavement maintenance' also showed a significant decrease in net satisfaction since 2001 (dissatisfaction up 8.4%), but this still remained significantly higher than the 1998 level (when 57.9% dissatisfaction was recorded).

'Council Tax administration and collection' showed the greatest positive gain (satisfaction up 10.8%).

Satisfaction with Council Services
Major changes in 'net' satisfaction since 2001
(% response – all respondents)



Changes in 'net' satisfaction since 2001 : All Respondents
('net' satisfaction = % satisfied response minus % dissatisfied response)

	2001 net satisfaction	2002 net satisfaction	Change since 2001
Refuse collection	79.0	49.2	- 29.8
Recycling facilities	53.5	34.3	- 19.2
Pavement maintenance	1.5	-9.9	- 11.4
Arts centre	68.6	60.9	- 7.7
The Dolphin Centre	73.4	66	- 7.4
Car parking in residential areas	26.5	20.3	- 6.2
Civic Theatre	83.3	77.1	- 6.2
Security incl CCTV in other areas	28.6	22.5	- 6.1
Youth clubs & other facilities for young people	-6.9	-12.9	- 6.0
Festivals & events	73.8	69	- 4.8
Children's play areas	-3.7	-8.3	- 4.6
Libraries & museum	74.8	70.3	- 4.5
Signposting for attractions/facilities	76.8	72.5	- 4.3
Secondary schools	39.5	36.7	- 2.8
Car parking in town centre	14.0	11.7	- 2.3
School meals	22.1	19.8	- 2.3
Nursery & primary schools	45.8	43.7	- 2.1
Upkeep & appearance - town centre	80.7	79	- 1.7
Road maintenance & repairs	-3.9	-5.5	- 1.6
Planning & control of development	24.5	23.2	- 1.3
Council housing	15.7	14.5	- 1.2
Street lighting	80.3	80	- 0.3
Adult education	49.1	49.3	+ 0.2
Security incl CCTV in town centre	82.4	82.7	+ 0.3
Parks & open spaces	38.3	39.6	+ 1.3
Social care for older & vulnerable people	8.2	10.7	+ 2.5
Upkeep & appearance - residential areas	40.9	43.8	+ 2.9
Other sports facilities	41.5	45.5	+ 4.0
Housing & Council Tax Benefits	15.3	20.6	+ 5.3
Council Tax administration & collection	43.3	55.5	+ 12.2

4.3 Usage of Services

Q.17 : *'Which, if any, of the services on this card do you or members of your family use or feel you benefit from ?'*
(Appendix 2, pages 110 to 112 refer)

Respondents were asked about usage of services, which are 'discretionary' (i.e. accessed by choice or need).

Services with the highest usage, and which more than one fifth (20%) of respondents reported that they or members of their household used were the 'Dolphin Centre' (47.3%), 'Council Tax Administration & Collection' (46.4%), 'Civic Theatre' (45.7%), 'Car parking in Town Centre' (43.6%), 'Libraries and Museums' (43.4%), 'Car parking in other areas' (34.1%), 'festivals and events' (29.1%), 'Arts Centre' (28.2%) and 'nursery and primary schools', (22.3%).

The least used services (used by less than 10%) were 'social care for older and vulnerable people' (5.7%), 'planning & control of development' (3.6%), and, 'Youth Clubs and other facilities for young people' (2.3%), with this latter service only rising to 7.5% amongst those with 'children 12-17 years' in their household.

The most notable sub-group differences in usage related to usage of leisure and cultural facilities : younger people were more likely to use the 'Dolphin Centre', and less likely to use the 'Civic Theatre'; those living in the South West were more likely than others to use the 'Civic Theatre', 'Arts Centre' and/or 'libraries or museum', as were those households where the chief wage earner is 'professional or managerial' .

Reported usage for all services is shown in the following table.

'Which…do you or members of your family use, or feel you benefit from ?
(Q17 : % response – all respondents)

	Used/benefited %
Dolphin Centre	47.3
Council Tax Admin & Collection	46.4
Civic Theatre	45.7
Car parking in Town Centre	43.6
Libraries & Museum	43.4
Car parking in other areas	34.1
Festivals & Events	29.1
Arts Centre	28.2
Nursery & Primary Schools	22.3
Other sports facilities	17.3
Children's play areas	16.5
Secondary schools	15.8
Housing & Council Tax benefits	14.8
School Meals	13.6
Adult Education	13.3
Council Housing	12.2
Social care for older/vulnerable people	5.7
Planning & control of development	3.6
Youth Clubs & other facilities for young people	2.3

4.4 Satisfaction with Services amongst Service Users

For most services, overall satisfaction levels (as calculated by 'mean' satisfaction scores) amongst users was somewhat higher than amongst all respondents, the only exception here being in respect of 'planning and control of development' and 'car parking in residential areas' which showed very small (and hence not statistically significant) negative differences, and 'children's play areas' where the 'mean' satisfaction score was exactly the same.

Satisfaction amongst users of services was highest in respect of the 'Civic Theatre' (1.5 and 'Arts Centre' (1.5), and was lowest amongst users of users of 'children's play areas' (3.26), this being the only service to attain an overall negative mean rating (less than 3) amongst users.

‘Mean’ Satisfaction with Services – Users & All Respondents
(1 – very satisfied : 3 = neither satisfied/dissatisfied : 5 = very dissatisfied)

	All Respondents	Users only
Civic Theatre	1.71	1.50
Arts Centre	1.89	1.58
Libraries & Museum	1.92	1.68
Festivals & Events	1.94	1.68
Adult Education	2.08	1.76
Nursery & Primary Schools	1.97	1.79
The Dolphin Centre	1.98	1.87
Other Sports facilities	2.29	2.04
School Meals	2.38	2.06
Secondary Schools	2.18	2.08
Council Tax Admin & Collection	2.26	2.14
Housing & Council Tax Benefits	2.62	2.16
Council Housing	2.68	2.39
Social Care for older & vulnerable people	2.89	2.51
Planning & Control of development	2.68	2.74
Youth clubs & other facilities for young people	3.41	2.77
Car parking in other areas	2.81	2.83
Car parking in Town Centre	2.90	2.85
Children’s play areas	3.26	3.26

4.5 Service Priorities

Q.115 a & b: *‘And which two services do you think should be given the greatest priority for improvement ?’*
(Appendix 2, pages 94 to 105 refer)

4.5.1 First Priority for Improvement

Opinion was quite divided as to which service should be given the greatest (first) priority for improvement. ‘Social care for older and vulnerable people’ was referred to by most respondents here (8.6%), but was closely followed by ‘nursery & primary schools’ (7.7%), ‘children’s play areas’ (7.6%), ‘youth clubs and other facilities for young people’ (7.6%), ‘secondary schools (6.9%), ‘security measures, incl. c.c.t.v. in other areas’ (6.8%), ‘ and ‘road maintenance’ (6.6%).

On an area basis, in the South East ‘children’s play areas’ (11.2%) achieved the highest vote, whereas in the South West it was ‘Social care’ (10.8%), in the North East it was ‘Secondary Schools’ (8.6%), in the North West it was ‘Primary Schools’ (9.4%), and in the Rural areas it was ‘Youth Clubs & other facilities for young people’ (9.8%).

4.5.2 First + Second Priorities

When first and second priorities for improvements are added together, opinion is still quite divided, though 'social care for older and vulnerable people' is still the top priority, mentioned by 16.8% of all respondents. Other services were mentioned as priorities (1^{st} or 2^{nd}) by 10% or more of all respondents were 'children's play areas' (14.8%), 'youth clubs and other facilities for young people' (14.5%), 'security measures, incl. c.c.t.v. in areas other than the Town Centre' (14.0%), 'secondary schools' (13%), 'road maintenance and repairs' (12.4%), 'pavement maintenance' (11.7%), 'nursery and primary schools' (11.5%), and 'parks and open spaces' (10%).

First + Second Priorities by Area

	South East	South West	North East	North West	Rural	Total
Social care for older & vulnerable people	18.8	23.3	13.1	14.9	17.6	16.8
Children's play areas	18.5	10.0	16.8	13.4	10.5	14.8
Youth clubs /other facilities for young people	11.9	14.2	16.2	13.4	17.6	14.5
Security measures incl cctv – other areas	13.1	12.5	15.1	14.9	13.7	14.0
secondary schools	13.5	5.0	16.8	9.4	15.7	13.0
Road maintenance & repairs	11.5	15.8	10.7	10.4	17.0	12.4
Pavement maintenance	13.1	11.7	12.7	11.4	7.8	11.7
Nursery & primary schools	8.8	9.2	12.9	12.9	13.7	11.5
Parks & open spaces	10.0	18.3	7.2	9.9	9.2	10.0
Upkeep of appearance – other areas	13.5	5.8	10.3	5.9	3.3	8.7
Car parking – town centre	5.8	9.2	9.3	7.9	7.8	7.9
Council housing	9.6	3.3	8.6	5.0	5.9	7.1
Refuse collection	5.0	2.5	8.2	8.4	5.9	6.4
Recycling facilities	3.1	13.3	6.9	3.0	8.5	6.1
Upkeep of appearance – town centre	2.7	6.7	4.5	4.5	5.2	4.4
Car parking – other areas	3.1	7.5	2.7	5.9	1.3	3.8
Security measures incl cctv – town centre	5.4	3.3	1.7	1.0	2.6	2.8
Housing & Council Tax Benefits	2.3	3.3	1.7	3.0	2.6	2.4
Other sports facilities	3.1	-	0.7	4.5	3.3	2.3
Adult education	3.5	-	1.0	3.5	1.3	2.0
Street lighting	2.7	1.7	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.7
Planning & control of development	0.4	5.8	-	1.0	3.9	1.6
School meals	0.8	0.8	2.1	1.5	1.3	1.4
Dolphin Centre	0.8	2.5	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.4
Festivals & Events	0.8	2.5	0.3	1.5	1.3	1.1
Libraries & museum	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.7	0.9
Council Tax admin & collection	0.4	-	1.0	1.0	-	0.6
Civic Theatre	0.4	0.8	0.7	0.5	-	0.5
Arts Centre	0.4	-	0.3	0.5	-	0.3
Signposting	0.4	-	-	0.5	0.7	0.3

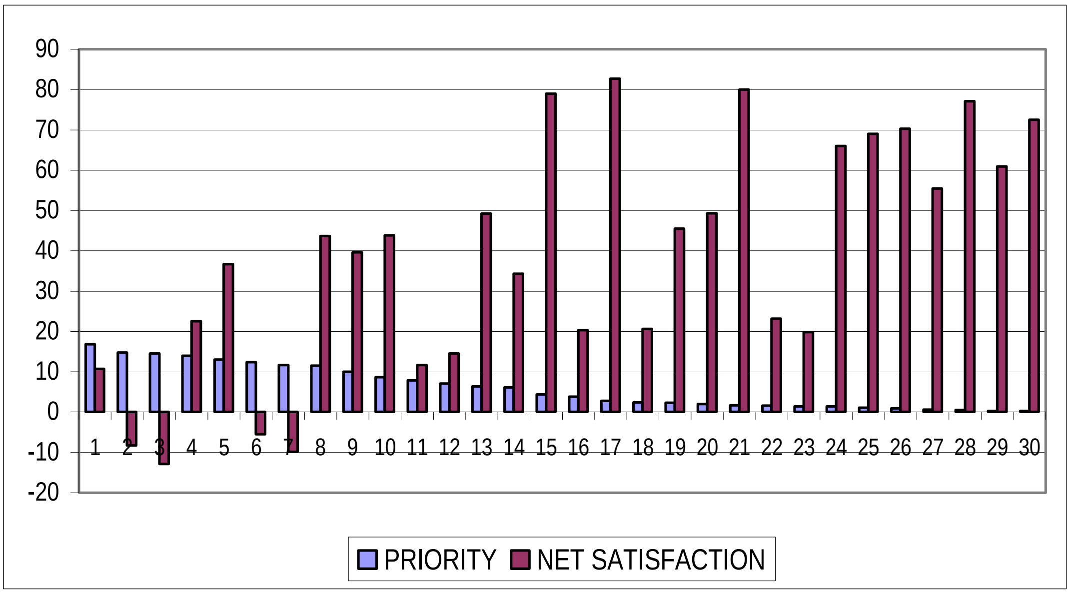
There were some areas differences, though 'social care for older and vulnerable people' achieved the highest (or joint highest) priority 'vote' (1^{st} + 2^{nd}) in four of the five areas of the borough, as shown by the listings of the top three priorities (1st + 2nd) for each area below:

South East	Social care for older & vulnerable people (18.8%)
	Children's play areas (18.5%)
	Secondary schools (13.5%
South West	Social care for older & vulnerable people (23.3%)
	Parks & open spaces (18.3%)
	Road maintenance and repair (15.8%)
North East	Children's play areas (16.8%)
	Secondary schools (16.8%)
	Youth clubs & other facilities for young people (16.2%)
North West	Social care for older & vulnerable people (14.9%)
	Security measures incl cctv – other areas (14.9%)
	Children's play areas/ Youth Clubs etc. (both 13.4%)
Rural	Youth clubs & other facilities for young people (17.6%)
	Social care for older & vulnerable people (17.6%)
	Road maintenance & repairs (17%)

There were also other sample sub-group differences: 'children's play areas' were the highest priority for those with children in the household ('under 5 years' 37.5%: '5 to 11 years' 31.5%), whilst 'youth clubs and facilities for young people' (26.2%) and 'secondary schools' (21.9%) were the greatest priorities for those with '12 to 17 year olds' in their households. Also, amongst '65+ year olds' 'pavement maintenance' (24.6%) was deemed the greatest priority, and 'council housing' was a greater priority for 'council house tenants' than for others (20.4%, second only to 'children's play areas').

Priority for improvement for all services is shown graphically below, set against 'net satisfaction'

Service Priorities (1st + 2nd) and 'Net Satisfaction
(% response – all respondents)



Code

No.		Priority	Net Sat.		No.		Priority	Net Sat
1	Social care for older & vulnerable people	16.8	10.7		16	Car parking – other areas	3.8	20.3
2	Children's play areas	14.8	-8.3		17	Security measures incl cctv – town centre	2.8	82.7
3	Youth clubs /other facilities for young people	14.5	-12.9		18	Housing & Council Tax Benefits	2.4	20.6
4	Security measures incl cctv – other areas	14	22.5		19	Other sports facilities	2.3	45.5
5	secondary schools	13	36.7		20	Adult education	2	49.3
6	Road maintenance & repairs	12.4	-5.5		21	Street lighting	1.7	80
7	Pavement maintenance	11.7	-9.9		22	Planning & control of development	1.6	23.2
8	Nursery & primary schools	11.5	43.7		23	School meals	1.4	19.8
9	Parks & open spaces	10	39.6		24	Dolphin Centre	1.4	66
10	Upkeep of appearance – other areas	8.7	43.8		25	Festivals & Events	1.1	69
11	Car parking – town centre	7.9	11.7		26	Libraries & museum	0.9	70.3
12	Council housing	7.1	14.5		27	Council Tax admin & collection	0.6	55.5
13	Refuse collection	6.4	49.2		28	Civic Theatre	0.5	77.1
14	Recycling facilities	6.1	34.3		29	Arts Centre	0.3	60.9
15	Upkeep of appearance – town centre	4.4	79		30	Signposting	0.3	72.5

4.6 Council spend on Services

Q.16 : '*Are there any services listed, which you feel that the Council spends too much money on, and could be reduced ?'*
(Appendix 2, pages 106 to 109 refer)

Over 70% of respondents did not mention a service on which they felt that Council spending could be reduced : 'don't know' (26.0%); 'none' (44.2%). The service mentioned most frequently as the one on which spending could be reduced was 'the upkeep and appearance of the town centre' (6.1% of all respondents): this was a similar result to that found in the 2001 survey, when 8.5% referred to this service.

Other services referred to by more than 2% of all respondents in this respect were 'festivals and events' (3.5%), 'road maintenance and repairs' (3.0%), 'Council Tax administration and collection' (2.0%).

7.0% of respondents referred to services 'other' than those listed (with 3.4% of these referring to 'flowers', and 1.7% to 'council administration costs – wages etc').

4.7 Service Improvements

Q.18 : '*You mentioned …… as being your first priority for improvement. How would you like this service to be improved ?'*

Respondents suggestions as to improvements were diverse and are shown in full in Appendix 3.

The main suggested improvements or comments relating to the three services mentioned as a first priority by the greatest number of respondents were :

'Social care for older and vulnerable people' (1st priority for 88 respondents)

- More support/resources generally
- Care homes/concern at closures
- Support in the community

'Nursery and Primary Schools'(1st priority for 79 respondents)

- More schools/places
- Smaller class sizes/more teachers

'Children's play areas'(1st priority for 78 respondents)

- More play areas/facilities
- Better standard of maintenance/cleanliness
- Supervision/safety issues

Youth clubs and other facilities for young people' (1st priority for 78 respondents)

- More for young people to do and more places for them to go to keep them off the streets.

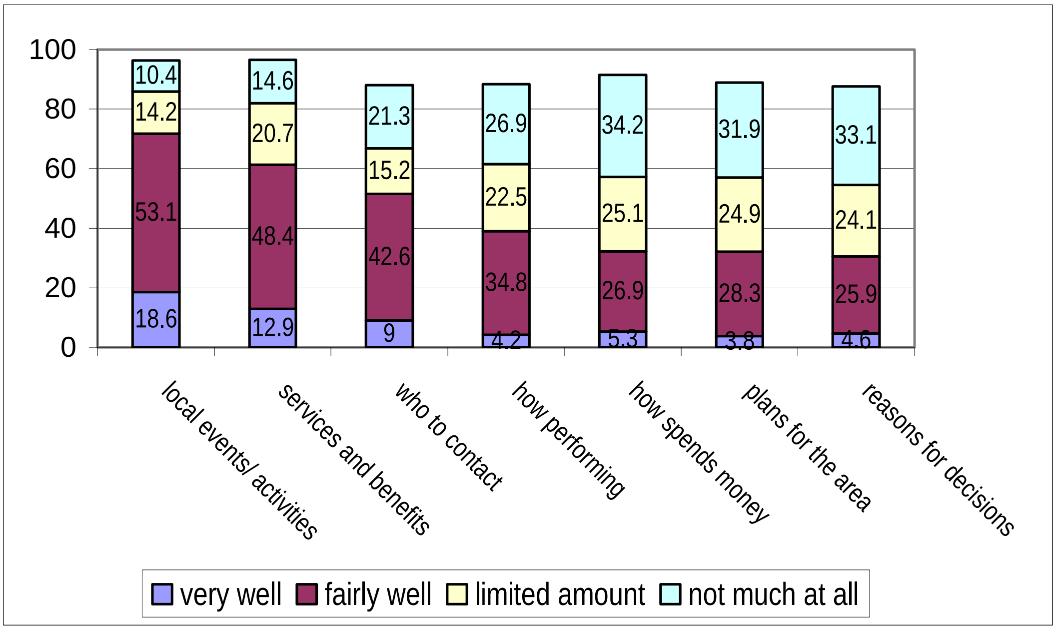
5. INFORMATION

5.1 Adequacy of information

Q.19 : '*How well informed do you think Darlington Borough Council keeps residents about the following ?*'
(Appendix 2, pages 113 to 119)

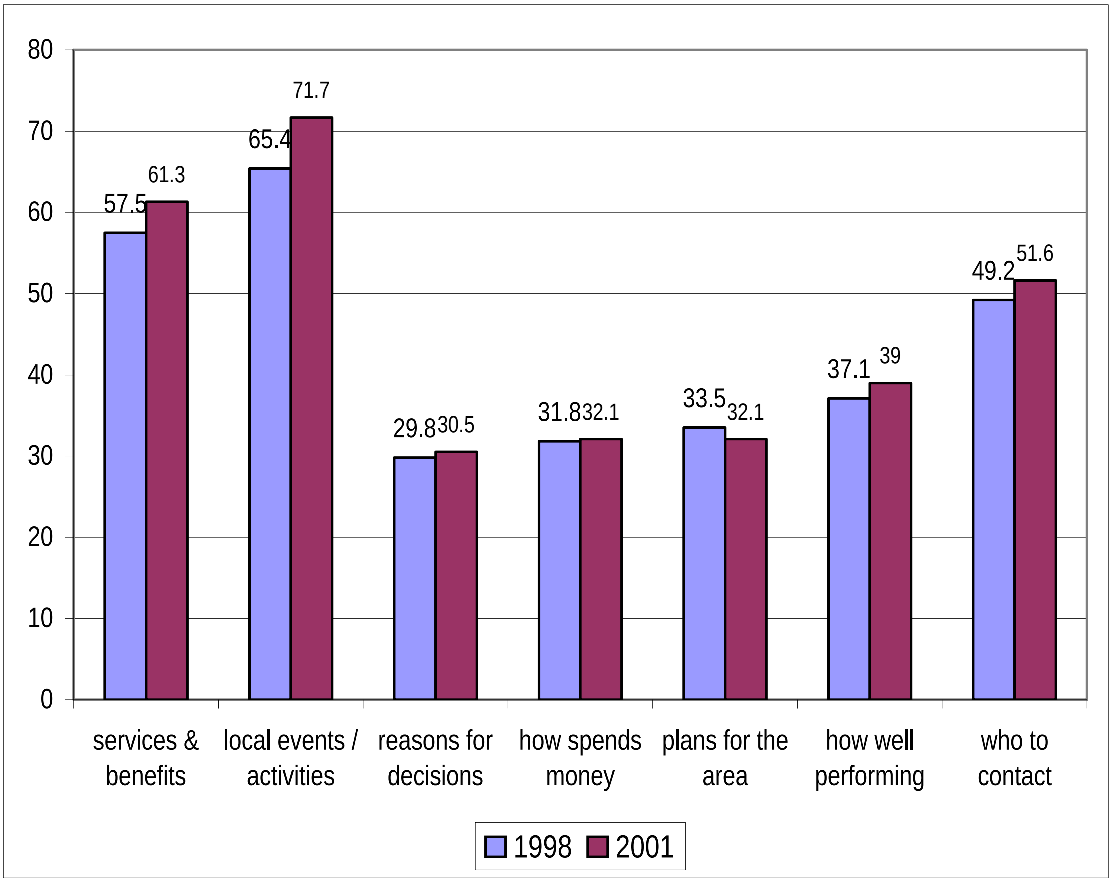
A majority of respondents believed the Council keeps them 'well informed' about the following issues : 'local events and activities which affect them' (71.7%); 'services and benefits it provides' (61.3%), and 'who to contact at the Council to find out about services and facilities' (51.6%). However, less than a third of respondents feel 'well informed' about : 'how the Council spends it's money' (32.2%), 'Council Plans for the area' (32.1%) and 'the reasons why it makes the decisions that it does' (30.5%).

How well does DB Council keep residents informed ...?
(Q19 : % response : all respondents)



Respondents' perceptions as to how well the Council keeps them informed has changed little since the question was first asked in 1998, as illustrated by the chart below. The greatest change was in relation to 'local events and activities', which showed an increase from 65.4% to 71.1% in 'well informed' responses.

Adequacy of Information : Comparisons with 1998
(% of all respondents giving 'well informed' responses)

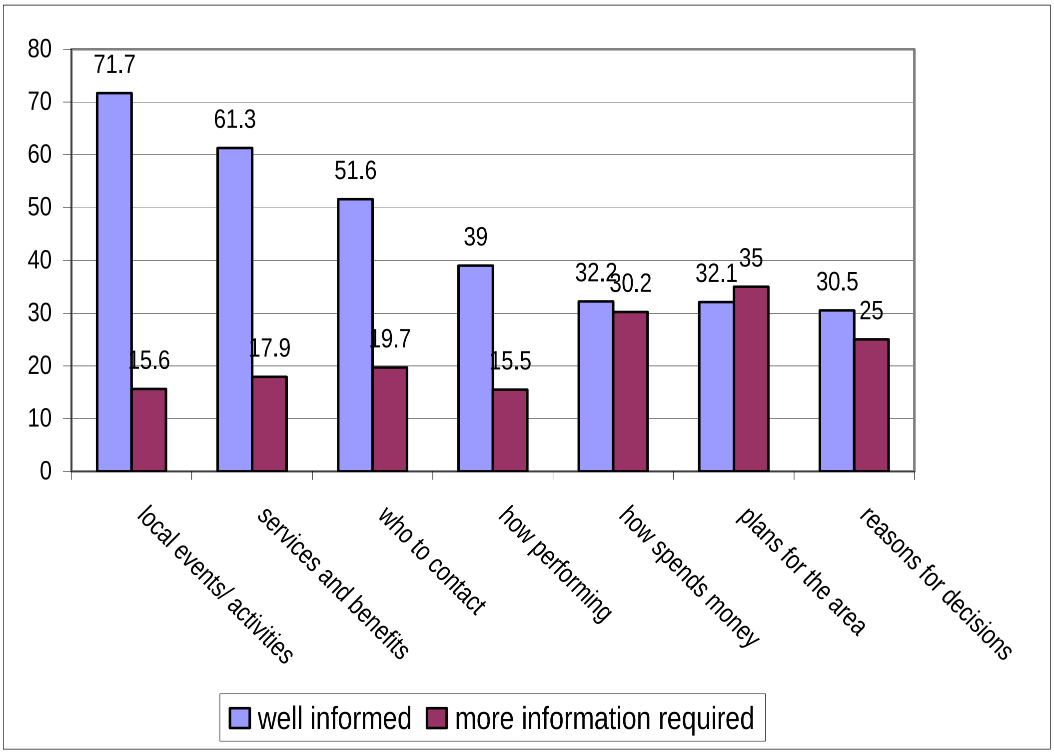


5.2 Requirement for more information

Q.20 : '*On which of the areas on this card, if any, would you like more information about the Council ?*
(Appendix 2, pages 120 to 121 refer)

Almost two-thirds (63.9%) of respondents had a requirement for further information, with the greatest requirement being in respect of those issues about which respondents felt less well informed : 'Council plans for the area' (35% requirement), 'how the Council spends its money' (30.2%), and 'the reasons why it makes the decisions it does' (25%). Slightly fewer respondents wanted more information from the Council relating to 'who to contact to find out about services and facilities' (19.7%), 'services and benefits it provides' (17.9%), 'local events and activities' (15.6%), and 'how well the Council is performing' (15.1%).

Perceived Adequacy of Current Information & Requirement for more Information
Q19 : 'Well informed' & Q20 : 'Require more'
(% response – all respondents)



The requirement for more information (of any type) was greatest amongst those who lived in the South West (83.3%), and lowest amongst those who lived in the South East (48.5%)

5.3 Current means of receiving information about the Council

Q.21 : '*How do you currently receive information about the Council ?'*
(Appendix 2, pages 122 to 124)

'The Town Crier' was the principal source of information about the Council, referred to by two-thirds (66.9%) of all respondents. 'Free newspapers' (35.6%), 'leaflets/ posters/ notices' (24.1%), and the 'Northern Echo' (23.2%) were the only other sources referred to by more than 20% of the total sample when asked how they currently received information about the Council. Other sources referred to by 2% or more were 'Council Tax Bill information' (11.6%), 'post / letters' (6.3%), 'other local paid-for newspapers' (6.3%), 'leaflets from Councillors' (5.4%), 'word of mouth' (4.9%), 'local radio' (3.3%), 'local groups and associations' (3.1%), 'contact with Council staff' (3.1%), 'contact with Councillors' (2.5%), 'Council web-site' (2.4%), 'local television' (2.1%) and 'library' (2%).

'The Town Crier' was referred to as a current source of information by a majority of all sample sub-groups, apart from 16-24 year olds (38%). '16-24 year olds' were also less likely than other age groups to get information about the Council from ''The Northern Echo' (13.9% '16-24 year olds' compared with 30.8% '65+ year olds), or from 'Free newspapers' (23.4% '16-24 year olds' compared with 44.5% of '25-44 year olds'), but were more likely to rely on 'leaflets/posters/notices' (31.4%) or 'post letters' (14.6%) , or to feel that 'they do not receive any information' (10.2%).

5.4 Suggestions as to how Council can keep residents better informed

Q.22 : '*Have you any suggestions as to how the Council could keep you better informed`?'*
(Appendix 2, pages 125 to 127 refer)

Just under half of all respondents offered some suggestions as to how the Council could keep residents better informed, with most respondents referring to 'leaflets, letters or newsletters delivered to the home' (16.9%). Other suggestions referred to 'local newspapers' (6.6%), 'Town Crier' (5.5%), 'website/internet' (3.4%), 'local radio' (2.6%), 'notice boards/ posters' (2.2%), 'Council magazine/newspaper' (1.9%), 'T.V.' (1.4%), and 'information in public places/buildings' (1.3%). 3.6% of respondents commented that they did not feel it was necessary to keep residents better informed, either because they were 'satisfied with the current methods/information' (1.8%), or because they felt that any improvements/changes would be likely to 'cost more money', (1.8%). All suggestions are listed in Appendix 3.

5.5 Access to Personal Computer and Internet in home

Q.23 : '*Do you have access to a) a personal computer in your home, and b) the internet at home ?'*
Q.24 (If no access) *'How likely do you think it is that you will have access to the internet at home in the next two years or so ?'*
(Appendix 2, pages 128 to 129 refer)

Over half (53.5%) of the total sample reported having access to a 'personal computer' at home, and 45.1% have access to the 'internet'. (This response suggests there has been little change since 2001, when 54.6% had access to a personal computer at home, and 45.3% access to the internet.)

There were again quite major sub-group differences, with access to the internet being highest amongst 'under 44 year olds' (57/58%), 'owner occupiers' (52.4%), 'professional and managerial workers' (73.1%), 'those with more than one car in the household' (73.4%), and 'those with children 12-17 years' (67.4%) or 'children 5-11 years' (59.9%). Access to the internet was lowest amongst '65+ year olds' (14.2%), 'those in rented accommodation' (21%), and 'those with no car in the household' (15%).

As regards area differences, access to the internet was highest in the Rural areas (66.7%) and the South West (62.5%), and lowest in the South East (35.4%) and the North East (36.4%).

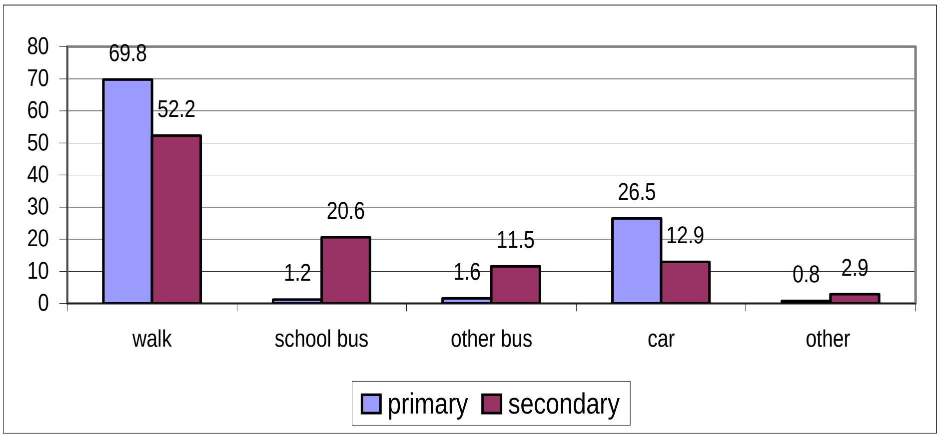
Amongst those who did not have access to the internet at home, 24% believed it was likely that they will have access in the next two years or so (10.1% 'very likely' + 13.9% 'likely'), whilst the majority (70.9%) believe they will not gain this facility in the next two years (12.3% 'unlikely' + 58.6% 'very unlikely). 90.1% of '65+ year olds' without access to the internet at home think it is unlikely they will have access in the next two years or so.

6. TRAVEL TO SCHOOL

(If Children 5 – 17 years in household) *'How do your children normally travel to school ? Will you tell me the main method for each child please ?'*
(Appendix 2, page 137 to 138 refers)

In total, amongst all respondents, there were 516 children between 5 and 17 years of age : 245 attending primary school, 209 attending secondary school, and 62 not attending school or in further education. Amongst those who attended primary school, 69.8% 'walked', and 26.5% travelled by 'car', with only small minorities using other methods of transport (1.2% 'school bus', 1.6% 'other bus', 0.4% 'taxi' and 0.4% 'other'). Amongst those who attended secondary school, 52.2% 'walked', 20.6% 'travelled by school bus', 12.9% 'travelled by car', 11.5% travelled by 'other bus', whilst only 1% 'cycled' and 1.9% 'travelled by taxi'.

Main methods of transport to/from school
(all children)



7. WILLINGNESS TO BECOME MEMBER OF CITIZENS PANEL

(Appendix 2, page 145 refers)

42.9% of all respondents said they were willing to become members of the Citizens Panel. Willingness to participate was lowest amongst '65+ year olds' (21.3%), and amongst those living in the North East (34%).