

Public Consultation

Customer Survey 2014 - Christmas Closure

Epping Forest District Council

www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk



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1) Executive Summary

Introduction

The Council wanted to seek the views from our residents and Members on future arrangements of opening Council buildings during the Christmas and New Year period between 24 December to 2 January.

Historically, the Council buildings have been closed in this period, although emergency services are available and officers are on standby.

A survey of staff opinion was carried out in Autumn 2013. The Cabinet and JCC reports of January 2014 and April 2014, and the Cabinet decision March 2014, wished officers to seek the views of residents and members on this matter.

Methodology

The questionnaire contained questions about how residents contact the Council, when and by what means they contact the Council and their preferred method of contact, eg, telephone, face to face, electronically or by letter. There were also questions about why they contact, eg, to report a repair, to pay a bill or to make a complaint etc.

The Council also wanted to find out the level of awareness of Council services and how to contact them either in an emergency or in the course of a normal working day. The Council also was looking into the methods used to deliver information to our residents and if it was sufficient to their needs, eg, the Council's website, social media, local newspapers and Councillors surgeries.

The public consultation was carried out between the 28 June and the 17 August 2014. The consultation was published on the front page of the Council's website with a link to an online questionnaire. A link to the questionnaire also appeared in The Forester, the Council's newsletter, which went out to every household in the District.

Some profile questions were asked eg, gender, age, ethnicity, disability and faith, which may help to determine if there were any difficulties with regard to access to services during this religious period.

A second questionnaire was sent to the 58 District Councillors via the Member's Bulletin.

The questionnaire contained questions about access to Council services, which services were needed at the time and which services, should be contactable between 24 December to 2 January. The questions asked if there were any complaints received or inconvenience caused relating to the Christmas/New Year closure period.

There were also questions on preferences for receiving information/communication from the Council at this time of year and the views of Members on the Civic Offices being open.

Copies of the questionnaires were also available at the Council's information desks and main Reception, Civic Offices and Human Resources.

The results are shown as a percentage and some figures may be + or - a percentage point due to rounding up.

1) Executive Summary

Summary

Key results

There were 209 respondents to the survey.

- Under half of respondents to the consultation (48%) said they have contacted the Council within the last year.
- Just under half contact the council by:
 1. telephone (46%),
 2. face to face (22%),
 3. online/electronically (22%), and
 4. 10% contact the Council by letter.

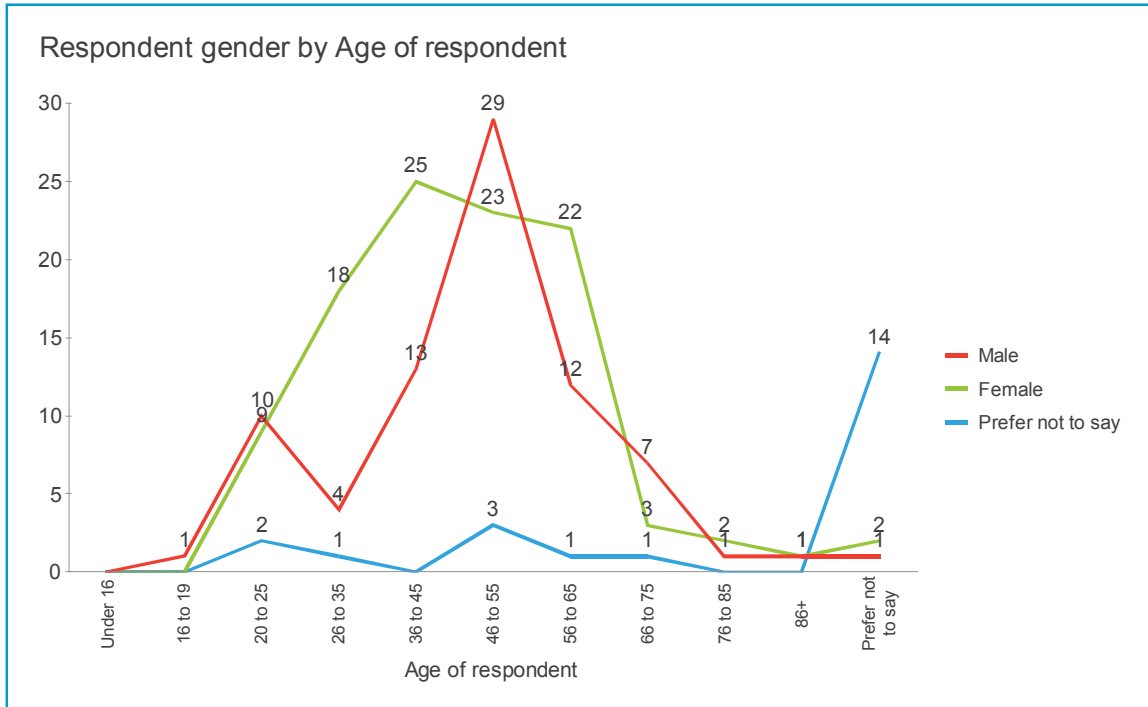
There were no 'other', methods of contact stated by respondents.

- 70% said it was their preferred method.
- June (12%) and March (11%) were the busiest months for respondents contacting the Council.
- The majority of respondents contacted the Council once in the last year (63%). In April 2014, 5 respondents contacted the Council more than 5 times.
- 41% of respondents enquired about a service, 19% to speak to an officer, 15% to collect recycling bags, 14% to pay a bill, 7% to ask for a repair to a property, and 4% to make a complaint.
- 82% said they are aware of available services over the Christmas period, 18% were not aware.
- The majority of respondents know how to contact the Council either in an emergency (86%), during the day (96%), using the Council's website (95%), Checking telephone messages for updates (64%).
- For those respondents who were not aware of how to contact the Council, checking phone messages for updates was the method that respondents were the least familiar with (36%).
- The Council's website was where respondents usually find out about Council services (46%). Others usually ring the main council number or ask the local library staff or Parish Council. The Forester (30%) was also where a third or respondents find this information.
- 45% said the Council's website, is the method that they would usually use to be informed of any issues over the period between 24 December to 2 January.
- Environmental Services including roads/street lighting etc, managed by Essex County Council (34%), and Waste and Recycling services managed by the Council (34%). Housing Repairs and Housing Options (20%), were services also thought to be required by respondents.
- Respondents were asked if they checked the Council's current information sites which are updated in this period, eg, the website, telephone messages, in person, via a Councillor Surgery or in the newspapers. Very few respondents answered this question (7), and most didn't check for updates (5).
- 99% of respondents said that they had not been inconvenienced by not being able to access a Council service between 24 December to 2 January.

2) Profile

Age and Gender

Profile - The total overall number of public responding to this consultation was 209.



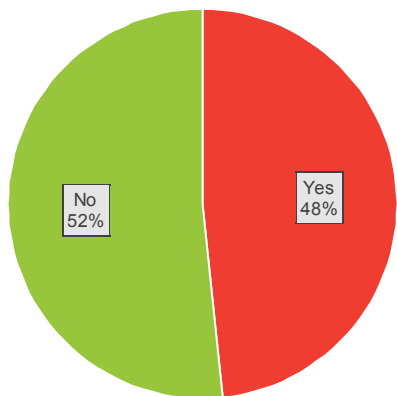
- Over half were female (52%), 38% Male.
- The majority were White British, Irish, Welsh, Scottish or other White origin (89%).
- The majority age range was 40 to 54 years (27%).
- 12% were disabled. For those with 'Other', disabilities (28%) were not age related disabilities.
- The majority were Christian (55%), with a number who said they have no faith (26%).

Key respondent's profile	
Gender	52% female, 38% male, 10% prefer not to say
Age	27% 40-54, 19% 36-45, 17% 55 to 65, 10% 20 to 25, 5% 66 to 75, 2% 76 and over, 8% Prefer not to say
Ethnicity	89% White, 6% Prefer not to say, 5% Asian/Black/Chinese/Mixed

Key respondent's profile	
Disability	12% disabled, 83% not disabled
Disability type	Physical (52%) Mental health (3%) Sensory, visual, hearing (14%) Learning (3%) Other (28%)
Faith	50% Christian, 26% No faith, 18% Prefer not to say, 1% Muslim, 2% Hindu, 3% Jewish,

3) Findings

Have you contacted the Council within the last year?



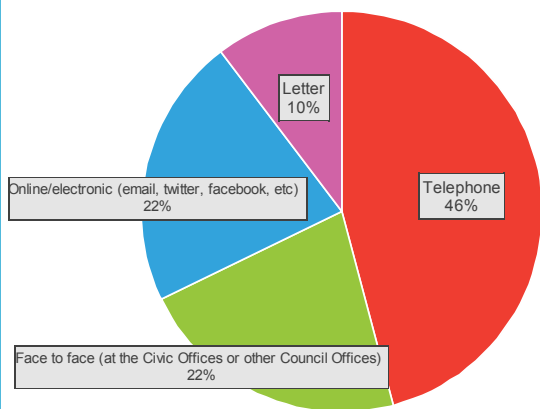
Base: 209 respondents

Contact with the Council (Q1)

Respondents were asked if they had contacted the Council within the last year, in order to get a an overall picture of the number of respondents contacting the Council.

- Over half (52%) said they have not contacted the Council within the last year?
- Those that said they had contacted the Council in the last year (48%), 50 were female, 42 male.
- Nearly half of females and under half of all male respondents contacted the Council in the last year, (see Appendix 4).

How did you contact the council?



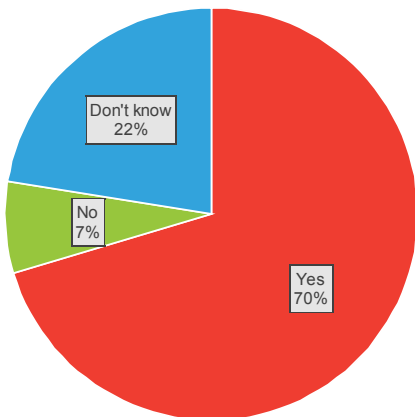
Base: 98 respondents

How did you contact the Council (Q2)

Respondents were asked how they had contacted the Council, in order to get a an overall picture of the methods respondents used to contact the Council.

- Just under half contact the council by telephone (46%).
- Face to face (22%) and online/electronically (22%).
- 10% contact the Council by letter.
- There were no 'other', methods of contact stated by respondents, (Q2a).
- For those with a physical disability, contact by telephone is also favoured by respondents. For those with a sensory disability, contact by letter is also preferred, (see page 11).

Is this how you would prefer to contact the Council?



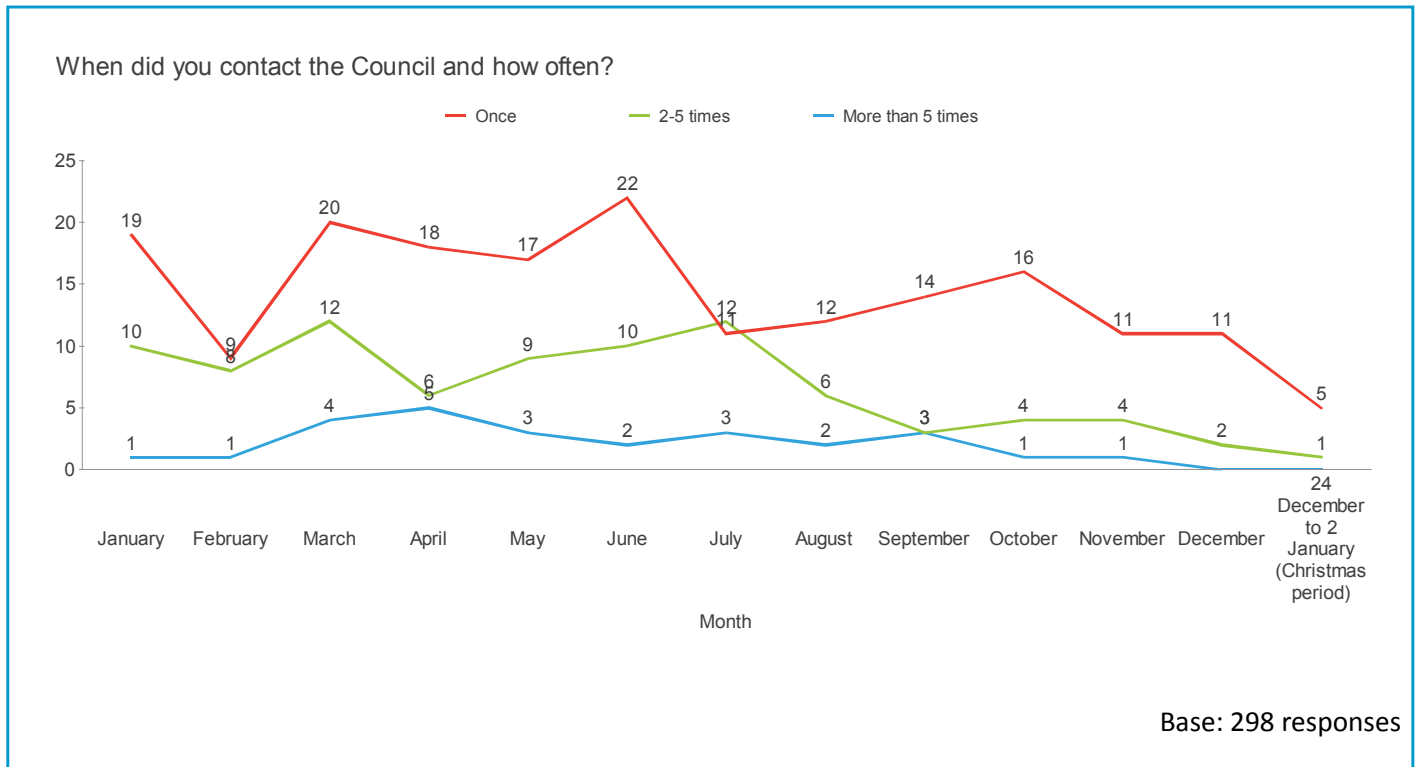
Base: 99 respondents

Preferred method of contact (Q3)

Respondents were asked how they would prefer to contact the Council, to find out if this was their usual method of contact.

- Most said it was their preferred method of contacting the Council (70%).
- The majority of respondents with a disability contact the Council by telephone or letter, (see ~Appendix 5).

When did you contact the Council? (Q4)

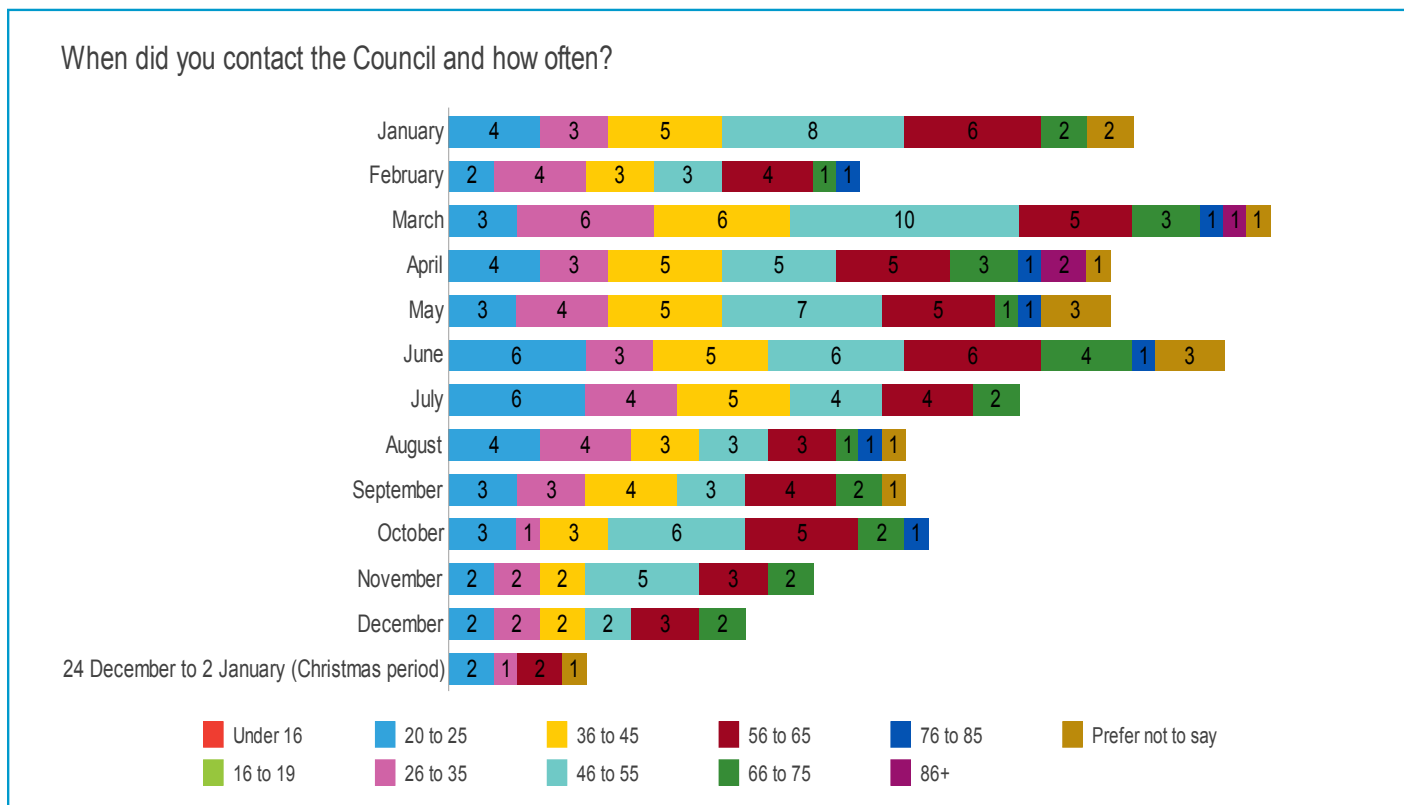


Counts Base % Respondents	Total			
		Once	2-5 times	More than 5 times
Base	298	185 62%	87 29%	26 9%
January	30 10%	19 6%	10 3%	1 0%
February	18 6%	9 3%	8 3%	1 0%
March	36 12%	20 7%	12 4%	4 1%
April	29 10%	18 6%	6 2%	5 2%
May	29 10%	17 6%	9 3%	3 1%
June	34 11%	22 7%	10 3%	2 1%
July	26 9%	11 4%	12 4%	3 1%
August	20 7%	12 4%	6 2%	2 1%
September	20 7%	14 5%	3 1%	3 1%
October	21 7%	16 5%	4 1%	1 0%
November	16 5%	11 4%	4 1%	1 0%
December	13 4%	11 4%	2 1%	-
24 December to 2 January (Christmas period)	6 2%	5 2%	1 0%	-

Respondents were asked when they contacted the Council and how often, to try to understand the amount of contact traffic in the 12 months of the year and the Christmas/New Year period) and the frequency of those contacts. The chart above shows the number of contacts made by respondents each month and their frequency. The table opposite shows the number and percentage of respondent contacts each month.

- March (12%) and June (11%) were the busiest months for respondents contacting the Council.
- Fewer respondents contacted the Council in November (5%) and December (4%).
- There are small increases in contact with the Council around every quarter of the calendar year eg, March, June, October.
- Very few respondents contact the Council between 24 December to 2 January (Christmas period) (2%)
- The majority of respondents contacted the Council once in the last year (62%).
- In April 2014, 2% respondents contacted the Council more than 5 times.
- Contact activity was constant throughout the year with peaks in the Spring, tailing off at the end of the year.

When did you contact the Council? by Age group (Q4)



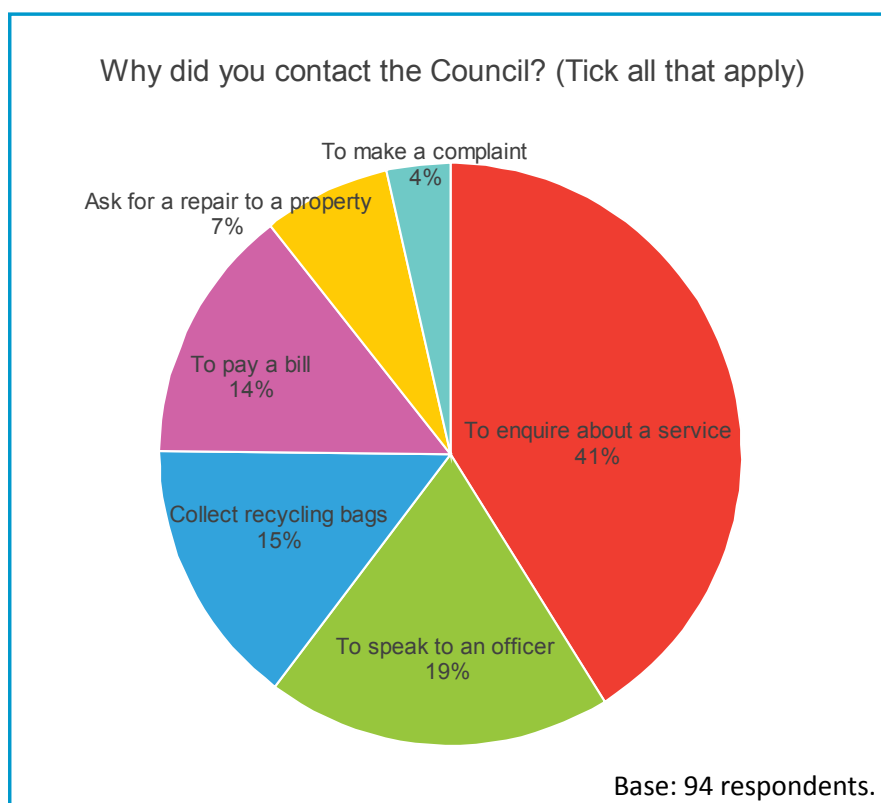
Respondents were asked when they contacted the Council and how often, to try to analyse the amount of contact traffic in the 12 months of the year and the Christmas/New Year period) and the frequency of those contacts for different age groups.

The chart above shows the number of contacts for each month by age group. The fourth quarter of the year shows a small decrease in contact and at the end of each quarter there is a slight increase in contact with the Council.

Most age groups contacted the Council throughout the year. The age groups 76 to 85 and 86+ tended not to contact during the winter months and started contact in the Spring. Further study may show a pattern with regard to this analysis, January, March, and June were the busiest months for respondents.

Other profiles eg, Ethnicity, Gender, disability, showed no particular pattern of behaviour linked to when or how often they contacted the Council.

Why did you contacted the Council? (Q5)



Respondents were asked why they contacted the Council, either to enquire about a service, ask for a repair to a property, to pay a bill, to make a complaint, to speak to an officer, to collect recycling bags or other reason.

- 41% of respondents enquired about a service,
- 19% to speak to an officer,
- 15% to collect recycling bags,
- 14% to pay a bill,
- 7% to ask for a repair to a property, and
- 4% to make a complaint.

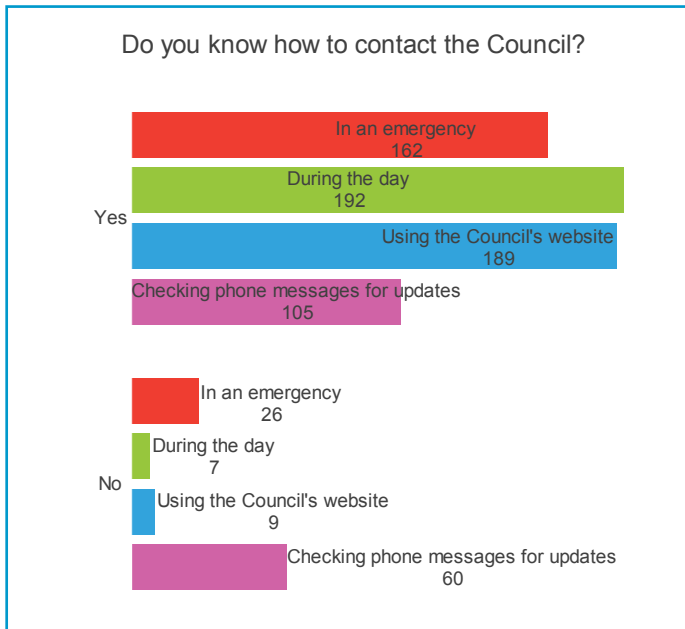
The chart above shows the percentage of respondents who contacted the Council in April and why they contacted the Council.

Q5a 'Other'.

Respondents were asked if there were any other reasons why they wanted to contact the Council. Their comments are shown below:

- To report flytipping,
- Housing arrears advice to help my mother in EFDC sheltered accommodation,
- To enquire about giving up my garage tenancy housing/garage rent arrears, Council Tax, trees consultation,
- Bags are collected from the library,
- To report missing lid stopper to recycling bin.

How to contact the Council? (Q6)

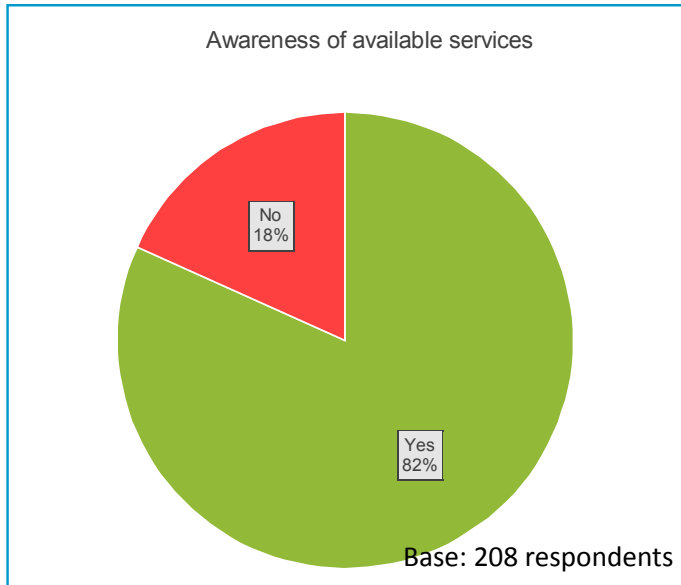


Respondents were asked if they knew how to contact the Council:

- In an emergency,
- During the day,
- Using the Council's website, and
- Checking phone messages for updates.

For those respondents who were not aware of how to contact the Council, checking phone messages for updates was the method that respondents were the least familiar with. The chart below shows contact with the Council in an emergency/Age group. The age group who are least familiar with contacting the Council in an emergency were the 66 to 75 and the 76 to 85's.

Counts Break % Respondents	Total	Age of respondent										
		Under 16	16 to 19	20 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 65	66 to 75	76 to 85	86+	Prefer not to say
Base	186	-	1	18	20	33	50	32	11	3	1	17
In an emergency												
Yes	160	-	1	16	18	26	44	28	8	2	1	16
	86%	-	100%	89%	90%	79%	88%	88%	73%	67%	100%	94%
No	26	-	-	2	2	7	6	4	3	1	-	1
	14%	-	-	11%	10%	21%	12%	13%	27%	33%	-	6%

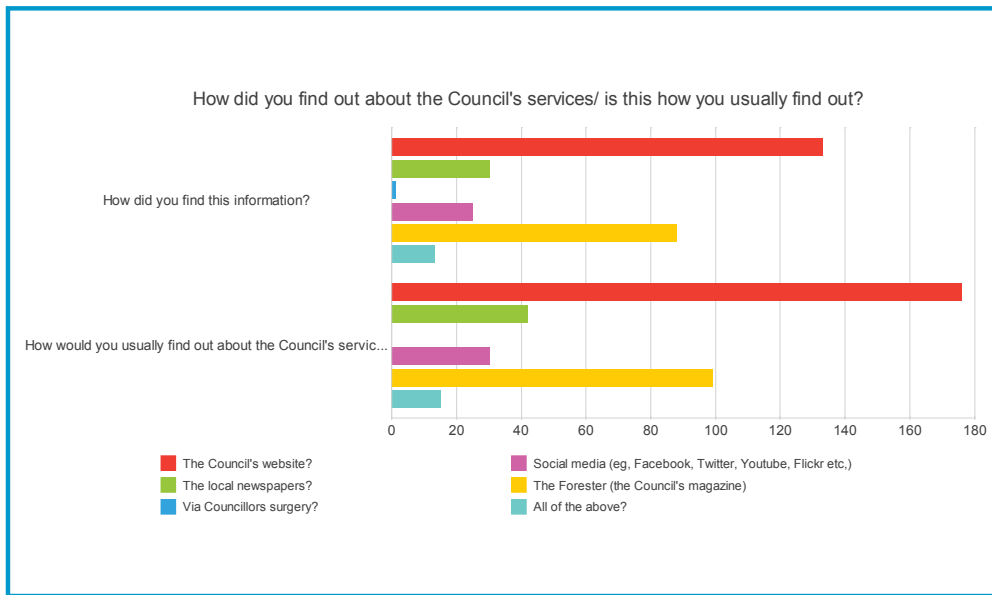


Awareness of services available (Q7)

The majority of respondents (82%), said they are aware of available services, 18% were not aware.

For those that were not aware of services available to them, 30% were in the age group 36 to 45, (see Appendix 2).

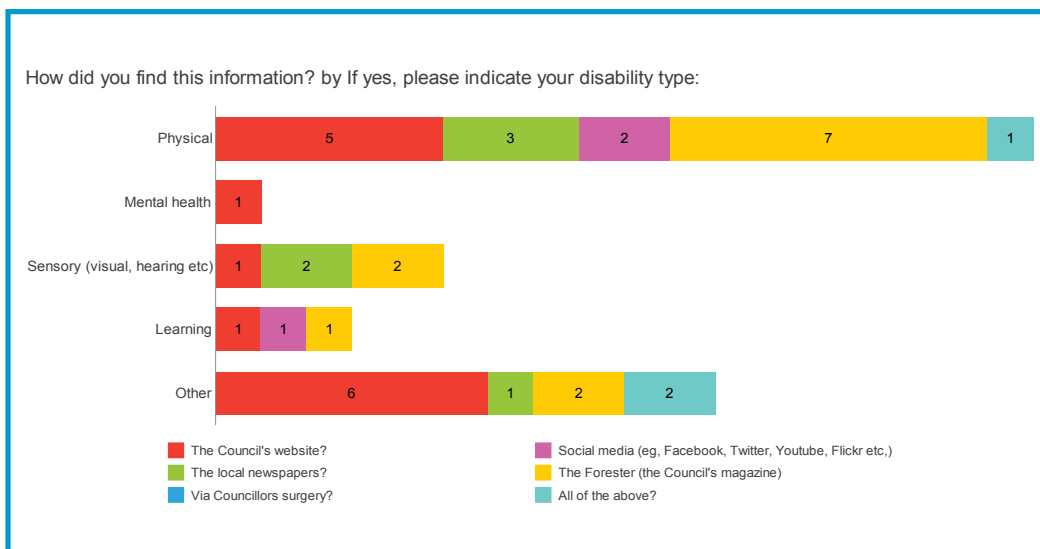
How did you find the information? (Q8) and How would you usually find out about Council services?



Respondents were asked how they found out about council services and which method would they usually use. The chart above shows the majority of respondents find information on the Council's website. This also tends to be how respondents usually find out about Council services (Q9). The chart below shows a breakdown by disability type.

- The Council's website (46%), and The Forester (the Council's magazine) (31%), were the two largest responses. Also favoured by respondents with a physical disability.
- Local newspapers (10%) and Social media (eg, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr etc) (9%).
- All of these methods (5%) and Councillors surgeries (0%), were the two lowest responses.

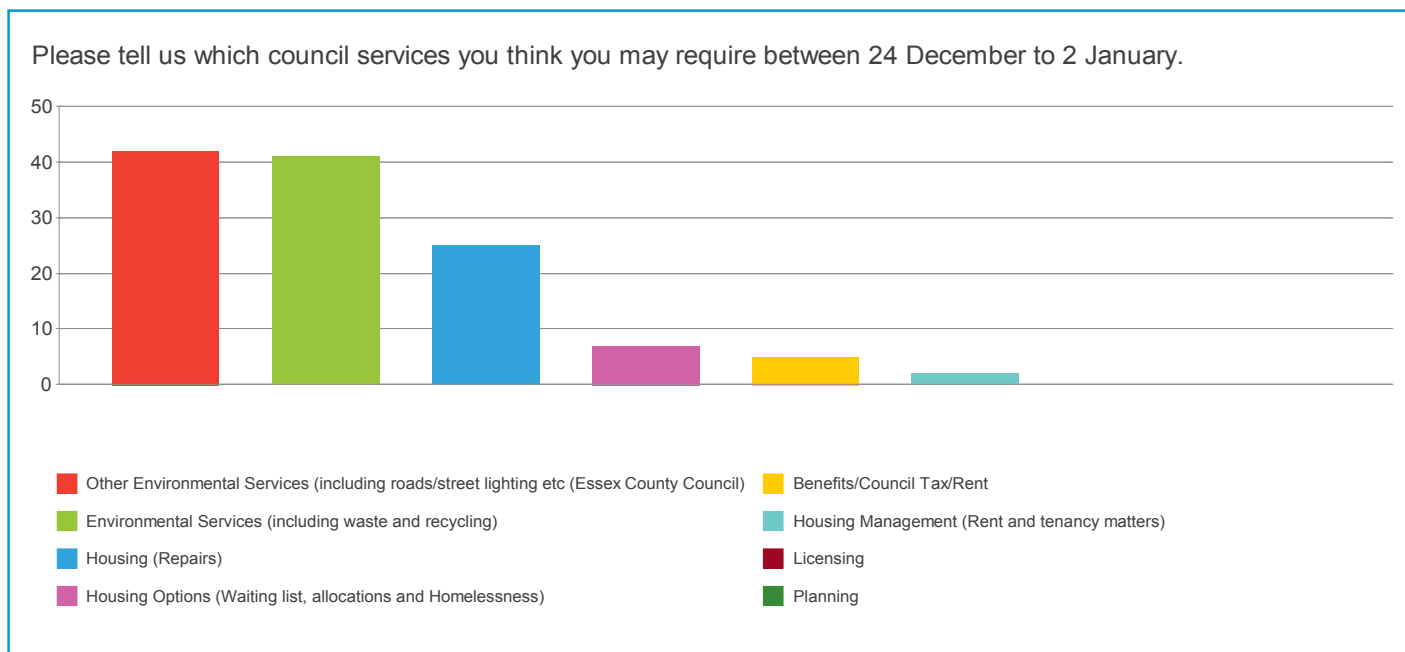
How would you usually find out about Council services?/Disability (Q9)



'Other', ways of finding out about the Council's services (Q9a)

Respondents were asked if there were other ways they could find out about Council services. Some said telephoning the Council on the main number, speaking to an officer concerned, going to the Council offices, going to Council meetings. It was also stated that the only service received by one person from the Council, was their bin collection, and another asked the local library or Parish Council for information.

Council services required over the Christmas/New Year period (Q10)



Respondents were asked which services they thought they may require between 24 December to 2 January. Of the 209 of the total survey response, 42% responded to this question, (see Appendix 3).

The chart above shows the following:

- Environmental Services including roads/street lighting etc, managed by Essex County Council (34%), and waste and recycling services managed by the Council (34%), were the two largest responses.
- Housing repairs (20%) and Housing Options, (eg, waiting list, allocations and homelessness) (6%).
- Environmental services and housing repairs were also thought to be required by those with a disability.
- Benefits/Council Tax/Rent (4%), and Housing Management (Rent and tenancy matters) (2%), were the two lowest responses.
- No requirement for Licensing or Planning were indicated.

Q10a 'Other services'

Respondents were asked if there were other council services required between 24 December to 2 January. There were 55 comments on this subject. The majority said 'No', or 'None' (see pages 16,17). Other comments were:

- *'I would only expect critical emergency services to be running (or access available to these) during this period. I feel it is reasonable to wait until the offices open for all non-urgent issues'.*
- *'Regarding housing options, only homelessness needs to be covered, not waiting lists or allocations'.*
- *'None of the above because it's festival season and have no need for services. I am busy with my family'.*
- *If a problem arose during the Christmas period, I would like to be able to contact the Council on working days'.*

Christmas closure inconvenience (Q11)



Counts Base % Respondents	Total	Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a heal...		
		No	Yes, limited a little	Yes, limited a lot
Base	208	179 86%	23 11%	6 3%
Have you ever been inconvenienced by not being able to ac...				
Yes	2 1%	-	1 0%	1 0%
No	206 99%	179 86%	22 11%	5 2%

Respondents were asked have they ever been inconvenienced by not being able to access a Council services between 24 December to 2 January. The majority of respondents said they had not been inconvenienced (99%).

As Christmas is a religious holiday for Christians, analysis of the contact made by those with religious beliefs was undertaken, (please see Appendix 5). Religious belief was not however, a factor in whether or not respondents felt inconvenienced by the Council offices closure during the Christmas New/Year period.

For those with a disability however, although very few in number, access to information about services may be a possible factor in the inconvenience to these respondents. The 1% that were inconvenienced, one was between the ages of 66 to 75 and the other preferred not to say their age and both were not aware of the Council services provided over the Christmas/New Year period. Further study for improving access to information for those with a disability may also improve customer experience in this area.

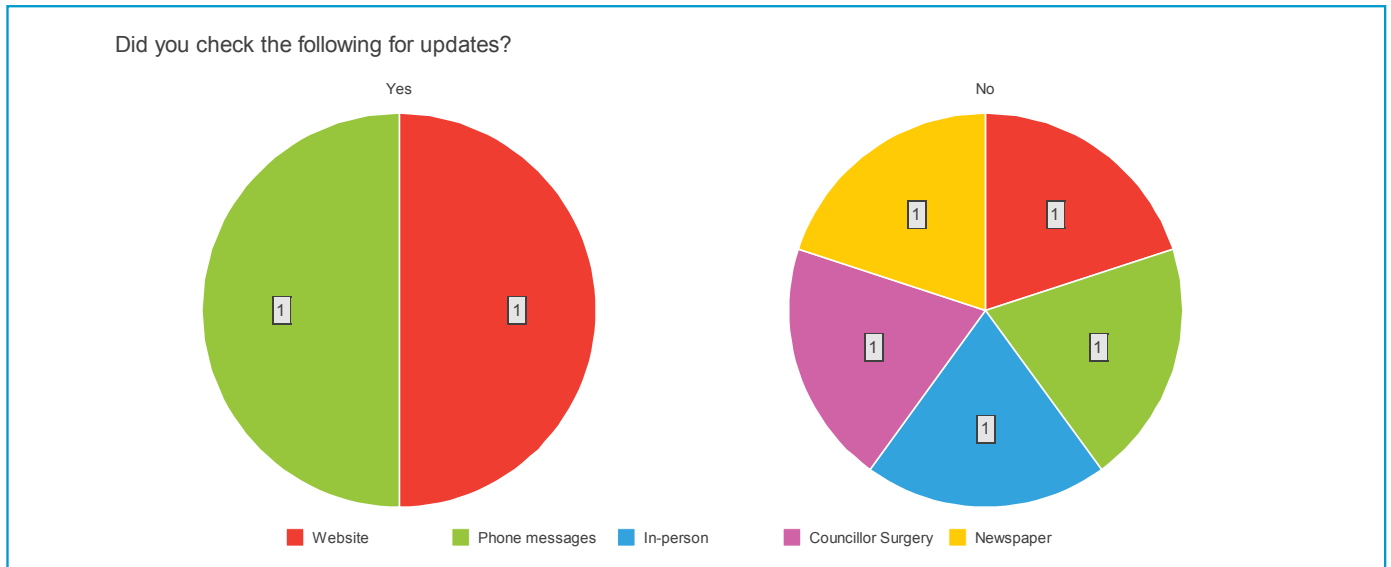
Q11a 'Other',

Respondents were asked to tell us about their inconvenience. There were 2 responses.

Their comments were:

1. *'Lack of refuse collection (scheduled). No one available to advise when collection could be expected. As I remember it was cancelled altogether that week.'*
2. *'Needed to report a planning enforcement issue.'*

Did you check the following for updates? (Q12)

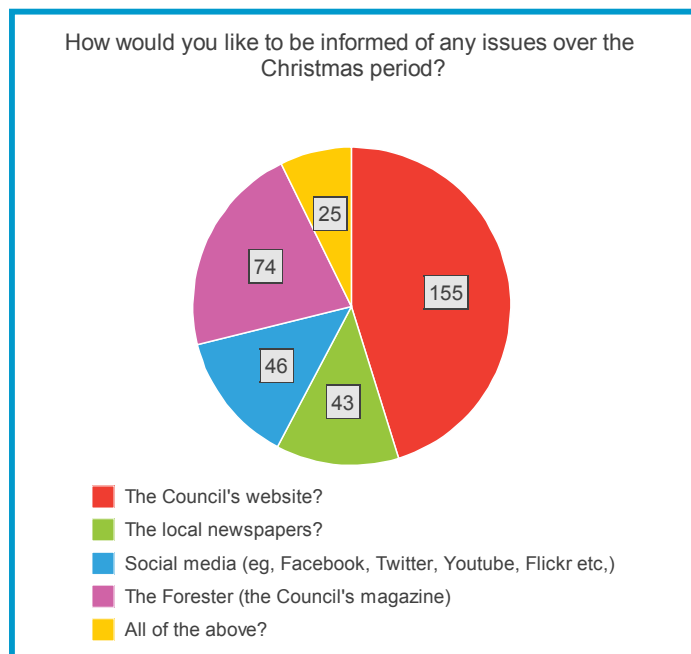


Respondents were asked if they checked the Council’s various methods for updated information either the website, telephone messages, in person via a Councillor Surgery or in the newspapers.

There were very few responses to this question (7). Most respondents were not familiar with checking for updates in any of the communication channels eg, website, phone messages, newspapers etc.(5)

Which services were needed at the time? (Q13)

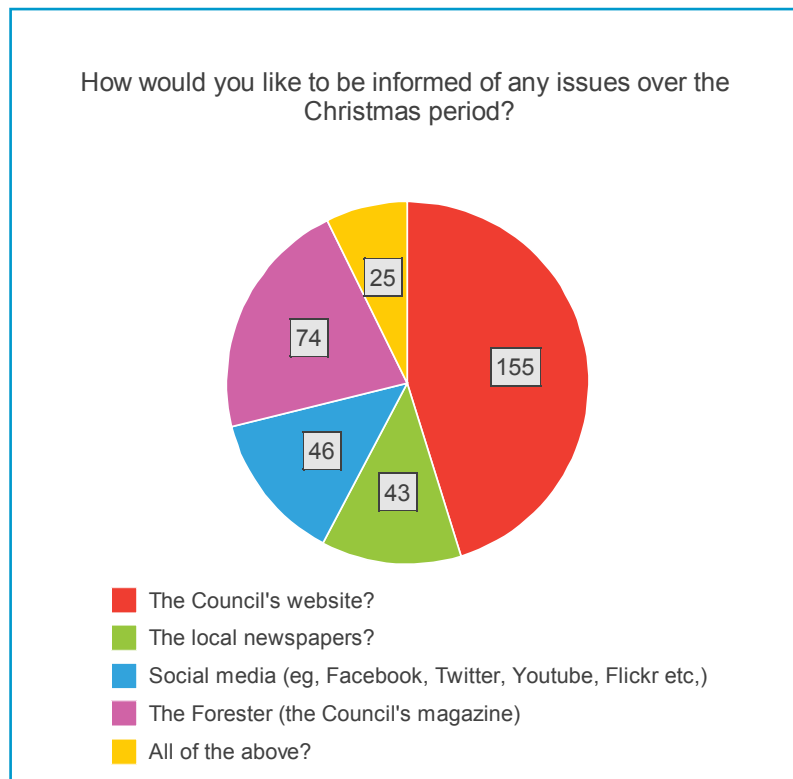
For those who were inconvenienced, respondents were asked which services they needed at the time. One respondent said Environment (including waste and recycling and one respondent said Planning.



Q13a

Respondents were asked to suggest ‘Other’, services here. There were no suggestions.

Preferred method of communication over Christmas period (Q14)



Respondents were asked how they would like to be informed of any issues over the period between 24 December to 2 January.

- The majority (155), said the Council's website, (45%).
- 74 said the Forester, (22%).
- 46 said Social media methods, (13%).
- 43 said local newspapers, (13%) and
- 25 said all of the above (7%).

Q2a Other, please state other method of communication.	
None	
Q5a Other, please tell us why you contacted the Council.	
1	To report flytipping
2	Housing Arrears Advice to help my mother in EFDC sheltered accommodation
3	To enquire about giving up my garage tenancy Housing/Garage Rent Arrears Council Tax
4	Trees consultation
5	Bags are collected from the library
6	To report missing lid stopper to recycling bin
Q9a Other, please state which method here.	
1	Phone
2	Council offices
3	Speaking to an officer concerned
4	Council meetings
5	I am an EFDC employee
6	Ring the main council number
7	The only service I receive from the Council is my bin collection
8	Ask local library or parish council
Q10a Other, please tell us which other council services you may require between 24 December to 2 January.	
1	None
2	None
3	None
4	None
5	None
6	None
7	None
8	None
9	None
10	None
11	None
12	None
13	None
14	None
15	None
16	None
17	None
18	None
19	None
20	None
21	None
22	None
23	None
24	None
25	None
26	None

Appendix 1 - Comments

27	None
28	None
29	None
30	None
31	None of the above
32	None of the above
33	None of the above
34	None of the above
35	None of the above
36	None of the above
37	None of the above
38	None of them
39	None at all
40	Zero
41	n/a
42	Hopefully none
43	None as I visit family in Scotland during this time
44	None as I am holiday in Spain
45	None of the above because it's festival season and see or have any need to do so. All busy with family.
46	None - Holiday period
47	None as I would not be using the council between this period, this period is for friends & family and not for using the councils services
48	I do not require the offices to be open over the Christmas period
49	None - Only a Repairs emergency if necessary, but not likely.
50	None as there are emergency lines and therefore can wait for a few days if not an emergency.
51	None - I would wait for them to open again
52	None everything is explained on website
53	None really, unless I was homeless maybe, anything else can wait
54	I hope I will not have need to use Council Services during this period but am reassured that services are available should they be required.
55	I don't feel I need any council services to be available between these dates. I would use website for info until the new year.

Q11a If you answered 'Yes', please tell us about it below.

1	Lack of refuse collection (scheduled). No one available to advise when collection could be expected. As I remember it was cancelled altogether that week
2	Needed to report a planning enforcement issue

Q13a Please tell us which other council services you may require between 24 December to 2 January.

	None
--	------

Q14a Other, please state which method here.

1	Phone
2	Council offices
3	Speaking to an officer concerned
4	Council meetings
5	I am an EFDC employee
6	Ring the main council number
7	The only service I receive from the Council is my bin collection
8	Ask local library or parish council

When did you contact the Council/Why did you contact the Council?

Counts Base % Respondents	Total	Why did you contact the Council? (Tick all that apply)					
		To enquire about a service	Ask for a repair to a property	To pay a bill	To make a complaint	To speak to an officer	Collect recycling bags
Base	279	168 60%	38 14%	80 29%	23 8%	125 45%	84 30%
January	28 10%	18 6%	5 2%	7 3%	2 1%	13 5%	6 2%
February	18 6%	11 4%	4 1%	7 3%	1 0%	10 4%	7 3%
March	35 13%	20 7%	6 2%	11 4%	3 1%	15 5%	7 3%
April	27 10%	17 6%	5 2%	8 3%	2 1%	12 4%	10 4%
May	27 10%	13 5%	5 2%	5 2%	1 0%	13 5%	10 4%
June	30 11%	19 7%	3 1%	9 3%	2 1%	12 4%	6 2%
July	24 9%	14 5%	3 1%	5 2%	1 0%	8 3%	8 3%
August	20 7%	14 5%	1 0%	6 2%	2 1%	9 3%	6 2%
September	19 7%	13 5%	2 1%	7 3%	2 1%	8 3%	8 3%
October	18 6%	10 4%	- -	6 2%	2 1%	10 4%	5 2%
November	15 5%	8 3%	1 0%	3 1%	3 1%	8 3%	7 3%
December	12 4%	8 3%	3 1%	5 2%	1 0%	4 1%	2 1%
24 December to 2 January (Christmas period)	6 2%	3 1%	- -	1 0%	1 0%	3 1%	2 1%

Awareness of available services over the Christmas/New Year period/ Age group

Counts Break % Respondents	Total	Age of respondent										Prefer not to say
		Under 16	16 to 19	20 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 65	66 to 75	76 to 85	86+	
Base	204	-	1	21	23	37	55	34	11	3	2	17
Are you aware of which services are available over the Ch...												
Yes	168 82%	-	1 100%	17 81%	20 87%	26 70%	46 84%	30 88%	9 82%	3 100%	2 100%	14 82%
No	36 18%	-	-	4 19%	3 13%	11 30%	9 16%	4 12%	2 18%	-	-	3 18%

Age and gender/number and %

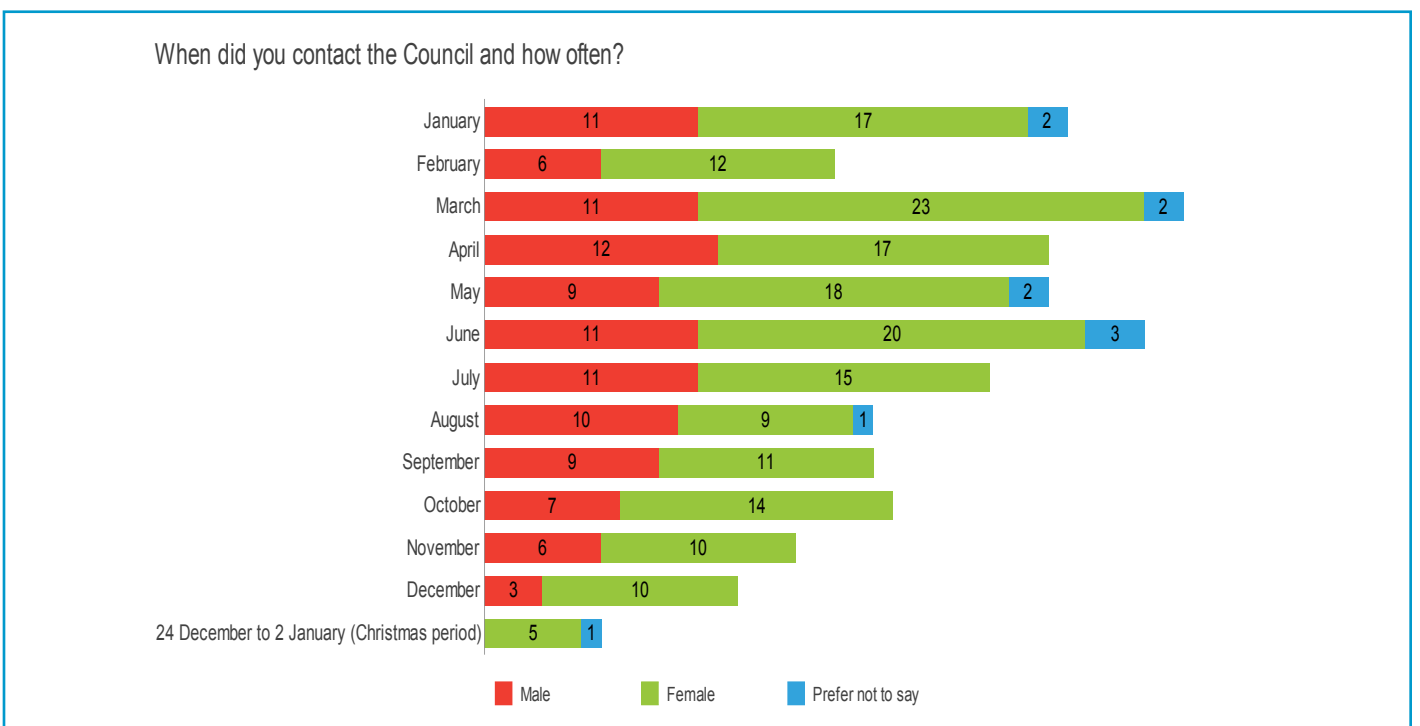
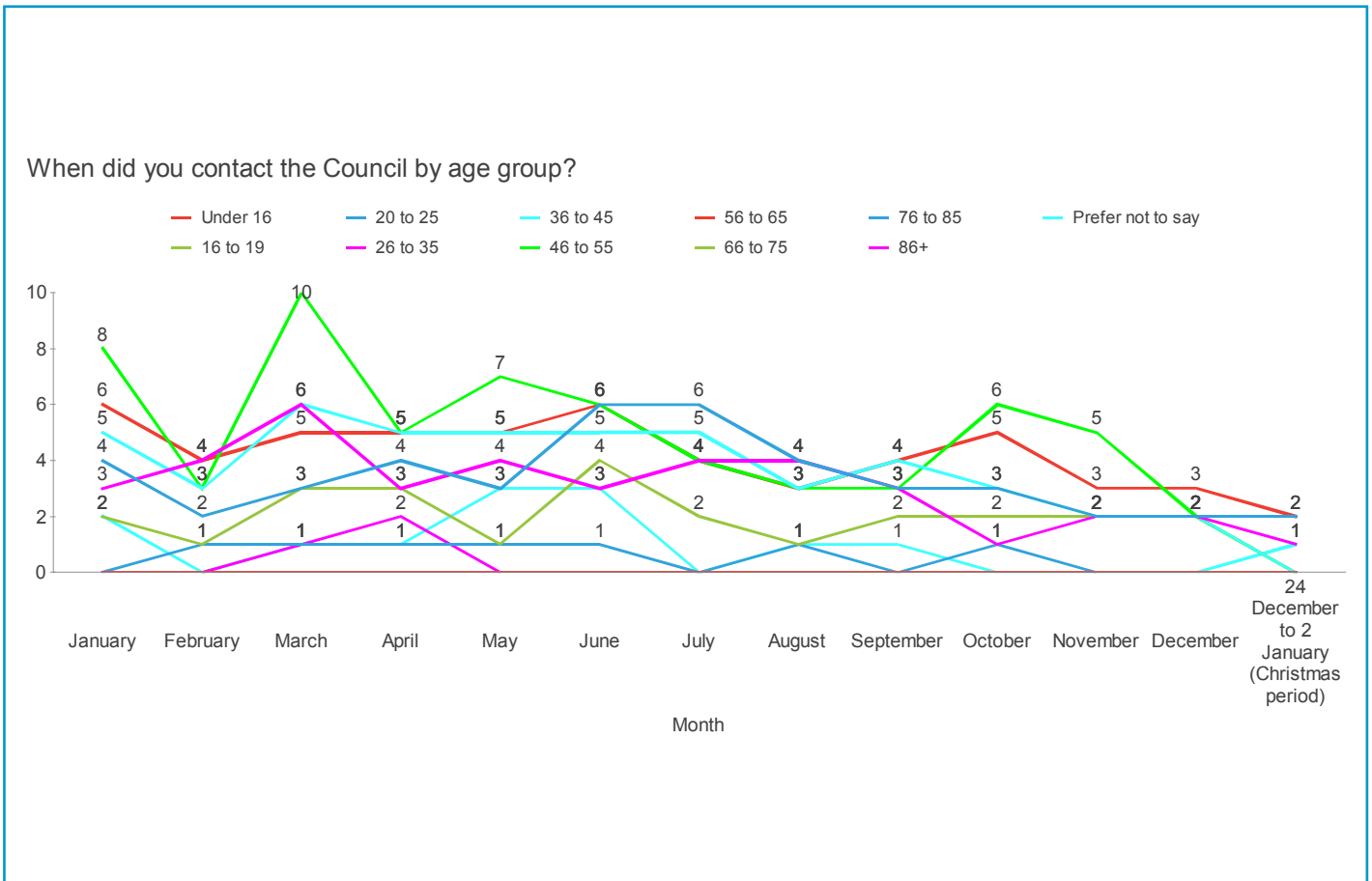
Counts Base % Respondents	Base	Respondent gender		
		Male	Female	Prefer not to say
Total	206	79 38%	105 51%	22 11%
Age of respondent				
Under 16	-	-	-	-
16 to 19	1 0%	1 0%	-	-
20 to 25	21 10%	10 5%	9 4%	2 1%
26 to 35	23 11%	4 2%	18 9%	1 0%
36 to 45	38 18%	13 6%	25 12%	-
46 to 55	55 27%	29 14%	23 11%	3 1%
56 to 65	35 17%	12 6%	22 11%	1 0%
66 to 75	11 5%	7 3%	3 1%	1 0%
76 to 85	3 1%	1 0%	2 1%	-
86+	2 1%	1 0%	1 0%	-
Prefer not to say	17 8%	1 0%	2 1%	14 7%

Services which may be required/for those with a disability

Counts Analysis % Respondents	Total	If yes, please indicate your disability type:				
		Physical	Mental health	Sensory (visual, hearing etc)	Learning	Other
Base	10	5 50%	- -	1 10%	- -	4 40%
Please tell us which council services you think you may r...						
Housing (Repairs)	2	1 50%	-	-	-	1 50%
Housing Options (Waiting list, allocations and Homelessness)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Housing Management (Rent and tenancy matters)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Environmental Services (including waste and recycling)	5	3 60%	-	1 20%	-	1 20%
Other Environmental Services (including roads/street lighting etc (Essex County Council))	7	4 57%	-	-	-	3 43%
Licensing	-	-	-	-	-	-
Planning	-	-	-	-	-	-
Benefits/Council Tax/Rent	-	-	-	-	-	-

Contact during the year by/Age group/Male and Female

The chart below shows the number of contacts respondents said they made each month. This was broken down by the age groups of the respondents.



Preferred method of contact/Age group

Counts Base % Respondents	Base	Is this how you would prefer to contact the Council?		
		Yes	No	Don't know
Total	97	69 71%	7 7%	21 22%
Age of respondent				
Under 16	-	-	-	-
16 to 19	-	-	-	-
20 to 25	11 11%	7 7%	-	4 4%
26 to 35	9 9%	5 5%	-	4 4%
36 to 45	22 23%	17 18%	3 3%	2 2%
46 to 55	25 26%	16 16%	2 2%	7 7%
56 to 65	12 12%	8 8%	2 2%	2 2%
66 to 75	7 7%	6 6%	-	1 1%
76 to 85	2 2%	1 1%	-	1 1%
86+	2 2%	2 2%	-	-
Prefer not to say	7 7%	7 7%	-	-

Inconvenience/Religious belief

Counts Break % Respondents	Base	Have you contacted the Council within the last year?	
		Yes	No
Total	204	98 48%	106 52%
What is your religion, even if you are not practising?			
Christian (including all Christian denominations)	102	47 46%	55 54%
No religion	52	27 52%	25 48%
Prefer not to say	37	16 43%	21 57%
Jewish	5	3 60%	2 40%
Hindu	4	2 50%	2 50%
Any other religion	2	1 50%	1 50%
Buddhist	1	1 100%	-
Muslim	1	1 100%	-
Sikh	-	-	-

Inconvenience/Disability

Counts Respondents	Total	Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a heal...		
		No	Yes, limited a little	Yes, limited a lot
Base	208	179	23	6
Have you ever been inconvenienced by not being able to ac...				
Yes	2	-	1	1
No	206	179	22	5