



Resident Engagement Strategy Consultation

October 2020

Background



Rationale:

In 2017, customers, staff and board members worked collaboratively to redesign our resident engagement strategy.

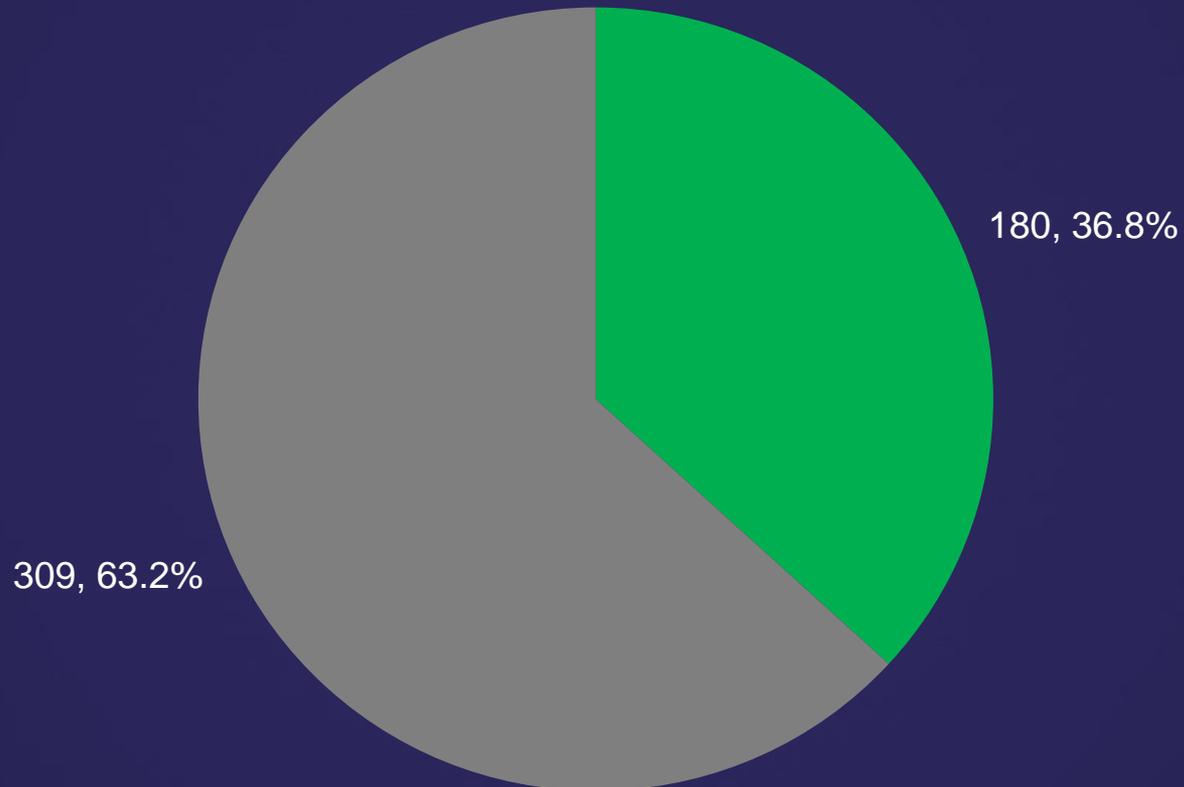
Since then, the percentage of customers who are satisfied that Accent 'listens to views and takes them into consideration' has declined.

We have been reflecting on what parts of the strategy we have successfully delivered and what we have yet to achieve and invited customers to shape and influence our new Resident Engagement Strategy.

Sample size:

We invited all members of the Accent 500 to take part in this survey as well as customers who indicated that they are dissatisfied that Accent 'listens to views' to take part in this survey. Two attempts to contact customers were made, by email, over a period of two weeks. In total the survey yielded 180/489 responses (36.8%) with a margin of error of $\pm 7.4\%$

Responses

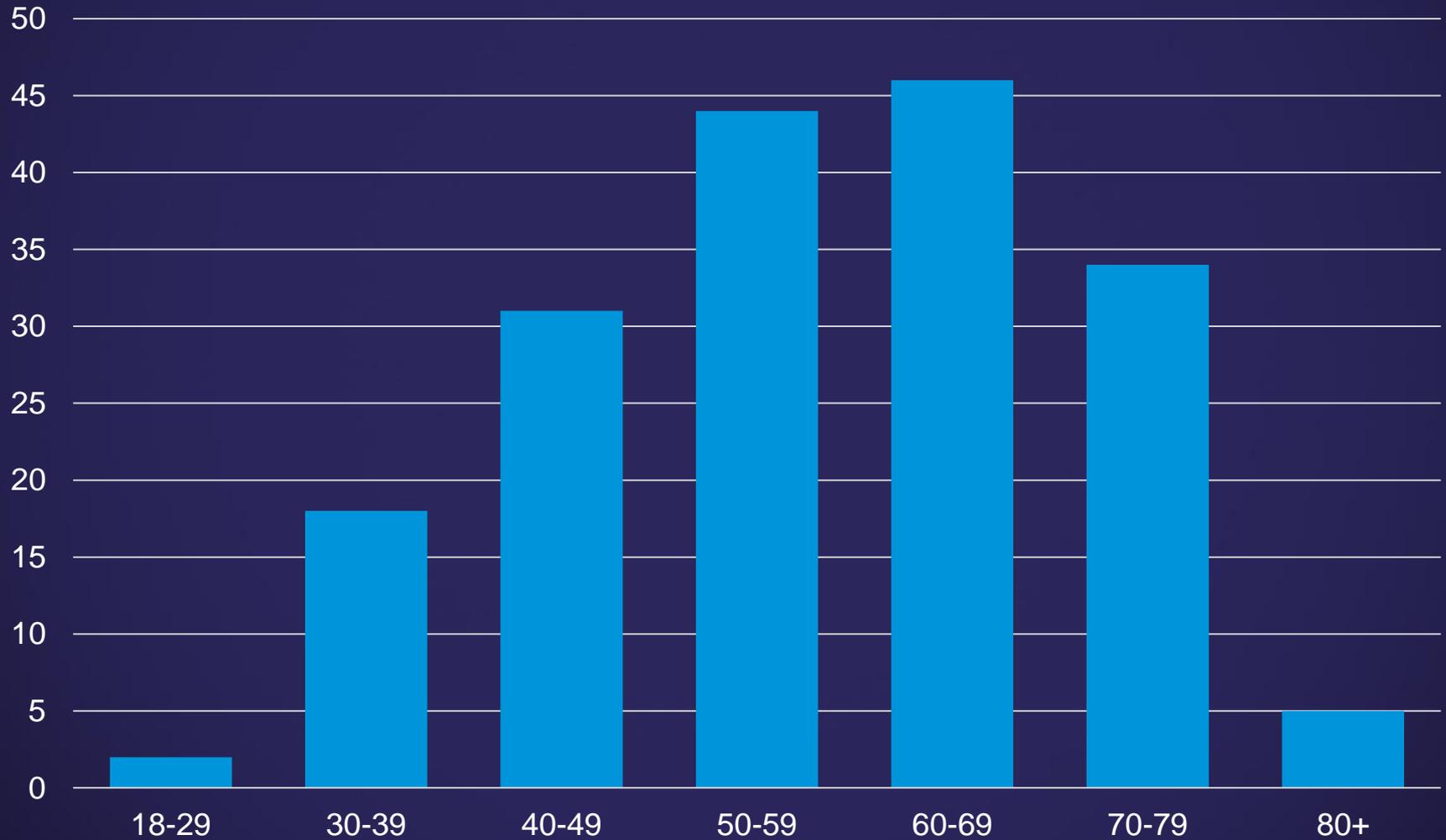


■ Response ■ No response

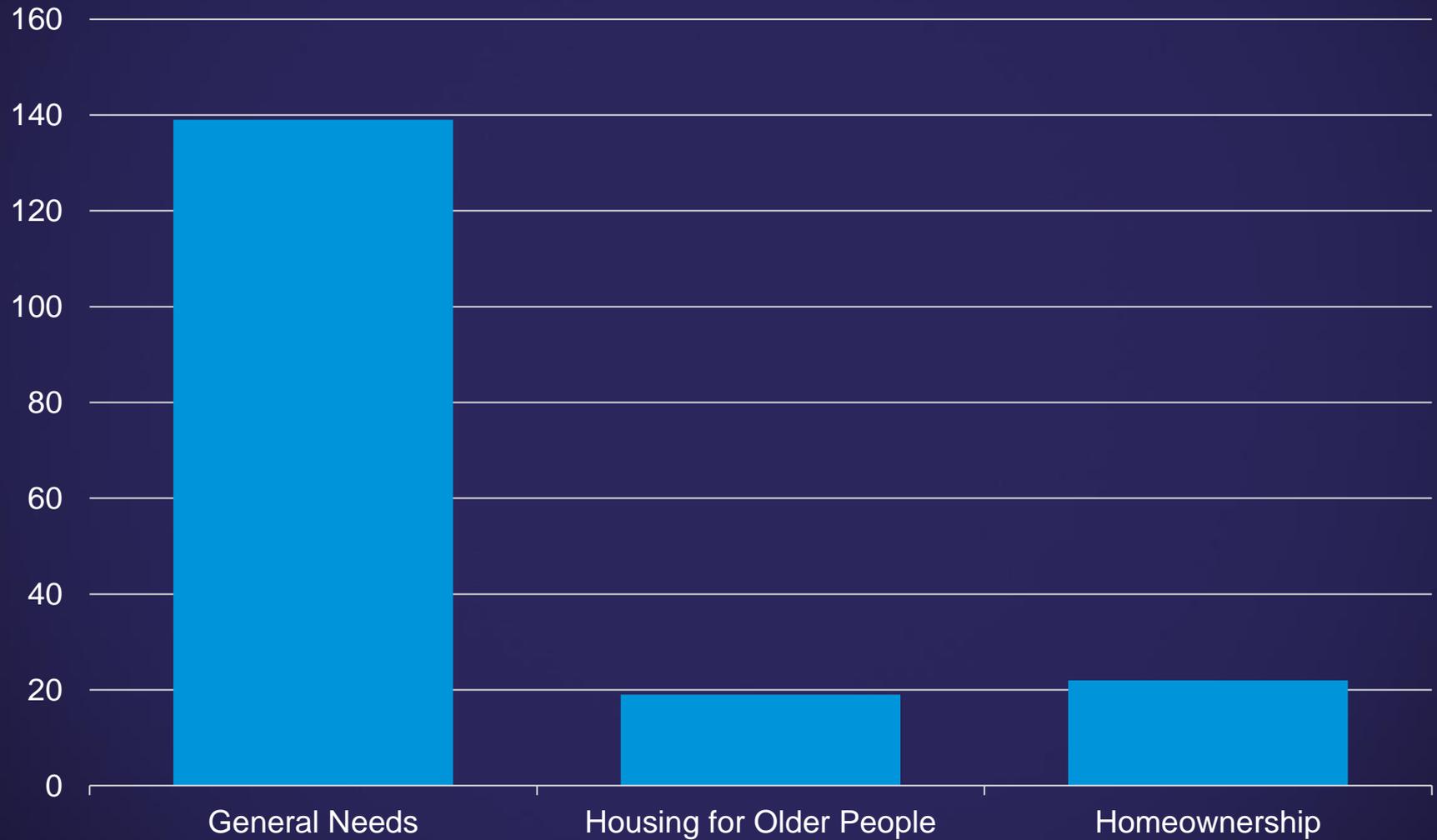
Responses by Region



Responses by Age Band



Responses by Tenure Type



In 2016, 64% customers were satisfied that 'Accent listens to views and takes them into consideration'. This fell to 51% when we asked the same question in 2020. Why do you think this has happened?



2020 has been a very difficult year re COVID... There has also been a change in the Partner/Housing Officer role that may have had an impact on residents' views.

Miss A, Blackburn

Accent's resistance in scrutinising grass roots problems. Not everyone believes in online surveys and their given scrutiny...

Mr M, Wakefield

At times it's not easy to contact the person you need to speak to. I've found on leaving messages, calls are not returned. This was before COVID.

Mrs L, Middlesbrough

Because in that time there have been incidents where residents have made repeated complaints about services, and been totally ignored. That was my experience, maybe others had it too.

Mr H, Cambridge

Because you don't listen and bulldoze through unacceptable changes.

Mr W, Windlesham

Complacency from Accent possibly. Job pressure - too much for Accent workers and/or shortage of staff or service providers i.e. contractors etc.

Miss K, Peterborough

Decline in appointments or face-to-face contact with Housing Officers etc.

Miss M, Camberley

Long-standing staff disappearing will unsettle tenants. Changing companies who do the repairs can also unsettle.

Mr L, Peterborough

I think a lot of the decline is down to the unsatisfactory management and poor contractors which residents are paying for and not getting satisfactory service.

Mr D, Leeds

In 2016, 64% customers were satisfied that 'Accent listens to views and takes them into consideration'. This fell to 51% when we asked the same question in 2020. Why do you think this has happened?



I think that although you ask for our views, we see very little action to make us think you are listening. We fill in various surveys but nothing ever changes.

Mrs G, March

I think this is purely down to the COVID pandemic. Accent did well to keep residents informed throughout.

Mrs B, Woking

Now that every aspect of dealing with residents has been centralised, staff have less detailed knowledge of individual sites. Residents never have any contact with local staff.

Mr D, Bagshot

I have a list of repairs that need doing and that doesn't get done yet if I'm late for my rent at all I get letters, emails, visits and phone calls.

Miss B, Colne

You moved out of the area. You were no longer seen as our housing landlord, but as someone up there we could no longer communicate with face-to-face.

Mr R, Camberley

You stopped listening and changed the management. A loss of confidence and faith in the company.

Mr M, Burnley

...No evidence of listening to views obvious or made known. Little or no interest in the area you live in.

Slack service. Staff turnover.

Inadequate training.

Ms L, Huntingdon

Dealing with issues raised would mean taking action, which incurs costs. I think profits come before residents.

Mrs K, Wakefield

Accent talks a lot about engagement, but we rarely see any evidence of this. That probably adds to the dissatisfaction and adds to survey figure.

Mr T, Ashford

What does 'listening to views and taking them into consideration' mean to you?



A company that is actively listening to its customer base genuinely does take into consideration its customers ideas etc. when deciding changes or policy.

Mr R, St Neots

Acknowledged and something done about it. If nothing can be done then explaining why, honestly.

Mr L, Leeds

Exactly what it says. You get the feedback and discuss it. Where you recognise that you need to change, that is what you do.

Mr R, Huntingdon

Further action. Coming back to the person who has raised the issue. Concerns raised are often not addressed, so personally I think 'what is the point?'

Mrs L, Middlesbrough

Hearing residents concerns and issues and prioritising work/attention on the issues and concerns that are of the highest priority.

Ms J, Barrow-In-Furness

Hearing what tenants are saying and evidencing that things have been changed where necessary.

Mrs D, Camberley

There is 'hearing' and there is 'listening'. Listening is absorbing what a person has to say, and acknowledging that the person could be making some viable points that are useful...

Miss A, Blackburn

If you ask us to give a view on something you have an obligation (I feel) to actually give us some feedback on why it can or can't be done.

Mrs G, March

It means that we're not just a tenant that you take money from, it shows us that we can work together to maintain a good relationship and be happy with the service provided.

Mrs L, Brighouse

What does 'listening to views and taking them into consideration' mean to you?



Some things I've spoken to Accent about haven't happened or been implemented or changed, but some have, and I feel valued when that happens.

Mrs K, Rushden

I have found that the call staff are always friendly and willing to help. However their responses are largely governed by their computers...

Mr D, Bagshot

Listen to many views and try to come up with a satisfactory solution to please (where possible). We do understand that it is difficult to please everyone.

Mr D, Leeds

Proactively looking at ways to deliver new and innovative services to become better and make tenants happier in their homes.

Ms S, Addlestone

Willing to hear what you may not want to hear and viewing it without any preconceived opinions and being flexible in reaching a decision.

Mr J, Ossett

Answer our queries and stop passing it on or telling us to refer our questions to a manager. This is your job to get the answers to our questions.

Mr Y, Yarm

Asking for views before decisions are made, not after, and you can see where views have influenced decisions.

Ms B, Wakefield

Being attentive and helping to find solutions if and when possible. Compromise or come to an agreement too in some cases. Being supportive and helpful with a good attitude.

Miss K, Peterborough

Discussing proposed changes with customers, respecting their responses.

Miss T, Leyland

Customers have consistently told us that they would like more choice and influence over the services they receive at a local level (repairs, estate services etc.). How would you expect to be consulted about such issues?



Advance warning of intended action (not 'oh by the way, we are fitting your new kitchen next week').

Mr B, March

Zoom street meetings would be helpful and may give a positive feel of togetherness.

Mrs H, Burnley

Any communication on this front would be an improvement. Recently, since its all online, the service has been appalling. Zero communication at all.

Mr L, Leeds

Bearing in mind the current COVID situation, meetings on platforms such as Teams, Zoom, surveys, letters, questionnaires and so on.

M, Nottingham

By letter, phone or in person depending on individuals. A choice of options will enable different sections of customers to communicate their views.

Miss T, Leyland

Email or knock on the door!

Ms S, Addlestone

Email, that is how. But there has to be a discussion in person. Good ideas can come from anyone.

Mr H, Wakefield

Given a choice of contractors and more check-ups on the current contractors' work.

Mr E, Nelson

If it was a major change, I would expect some form of face-to-face activity possibly a roadshow of some form, along the lines of the one you did to promote people using your online platform.

Mr A, Bradford

Customers have consistently told us that they would like more choice and influence over the services they receive at a local level (repairs, estate services etc.). How would you expect to be consulted about such issues?



I feel as though we aren't kept up to date with a lot of things and find that Accent is reactive and not proactive with regards to repairs etc.

Miss A, Blackburn

A say in as much as possible in the works and services that get done.

Miss K, Peterborough

Accent do well to try to engage with its residents. I feel if more residents took part in, or had access to, these surveys they would have a greater say.

Mrs B, Woking

Hold the teams accountable for poor service and refund us. If it were a private contractor we hired, we'd seek compensation for poor service, whereas Accent just pay anyway regardless of quality.

Mr R, Camberley

Be presented with a set of choices and scenarios and be able to vote...

Ms M, Huntingdon

Economy of scale isn't everything... tendering isn't always transparent. Consider local input at tender specification and communicate outcomes. After all, we pay for them.

Mr H, Yarm

Genuinely. How often have we all been part of a consultation that was anything but? The recent grounds contract is an excellent example of totally ignoring residents.

Mr W, Bradford

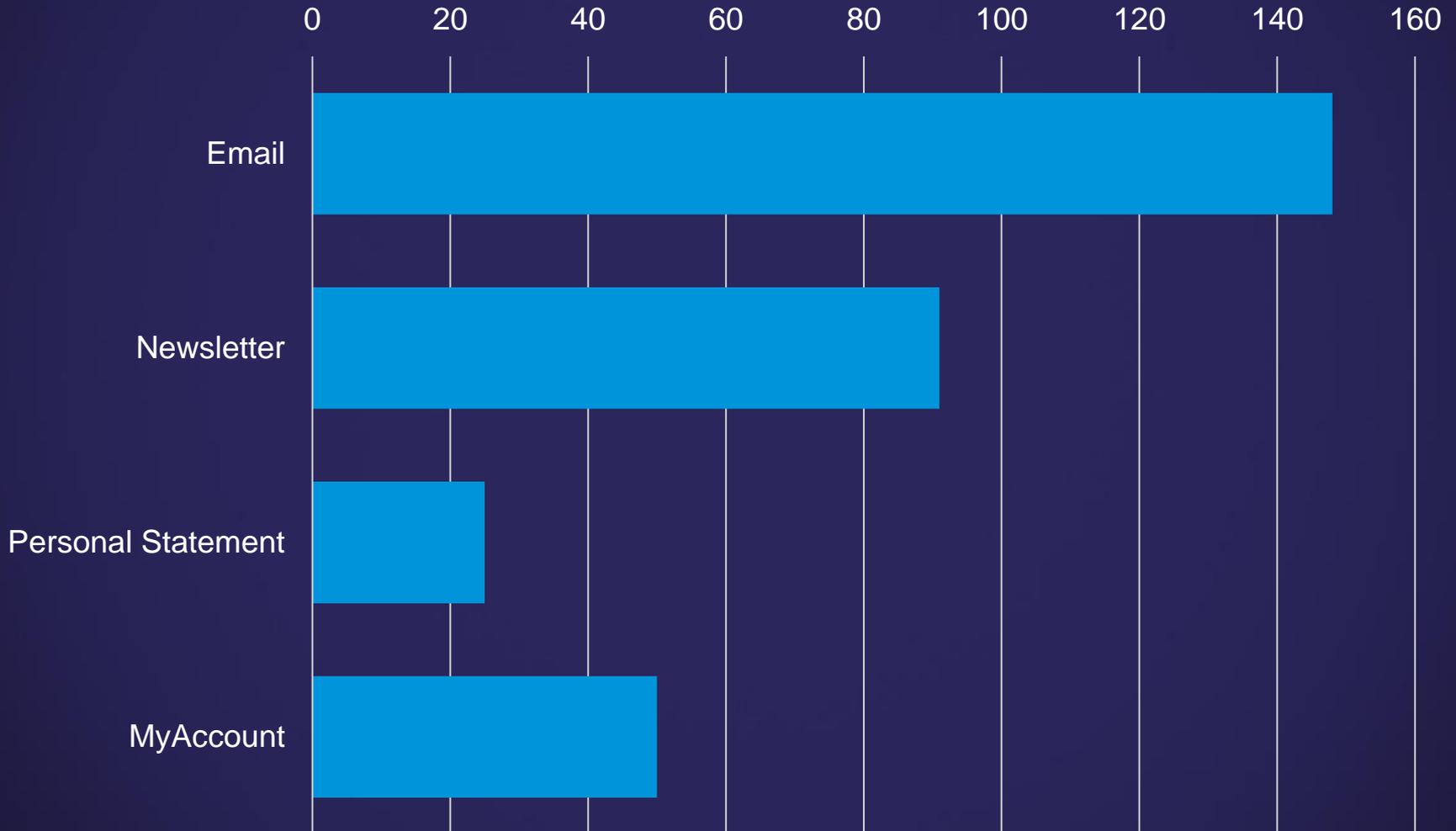
Give out the details of contractors who are vying for contracts of maintenance or repairs with their actual contract offers to the customers who can then respond to you...

Mr M, Cambridge

Given options on services and being asked for feedback on the service received so that issues can be quickly and easily flagged up.

Ms J, Barrow-In-Furness

How would you expect to be kept informed about the outcomes of surveys and consultations? (Accent 500 only).



How would you expect to be kept informed about the outcomes of surveys and consultations? (Accent 500 only).



Noticeboards where applicable.
Mr J, Ossett

Scheme Manager.
Mr D, Peterborough

Via text message.
Miss K, Peterborough

Via Scheme Manager, or Customer
Partner.
Mrs N, Camberley

Being told by a member of staff
from Accent.
Mr P, Bradford

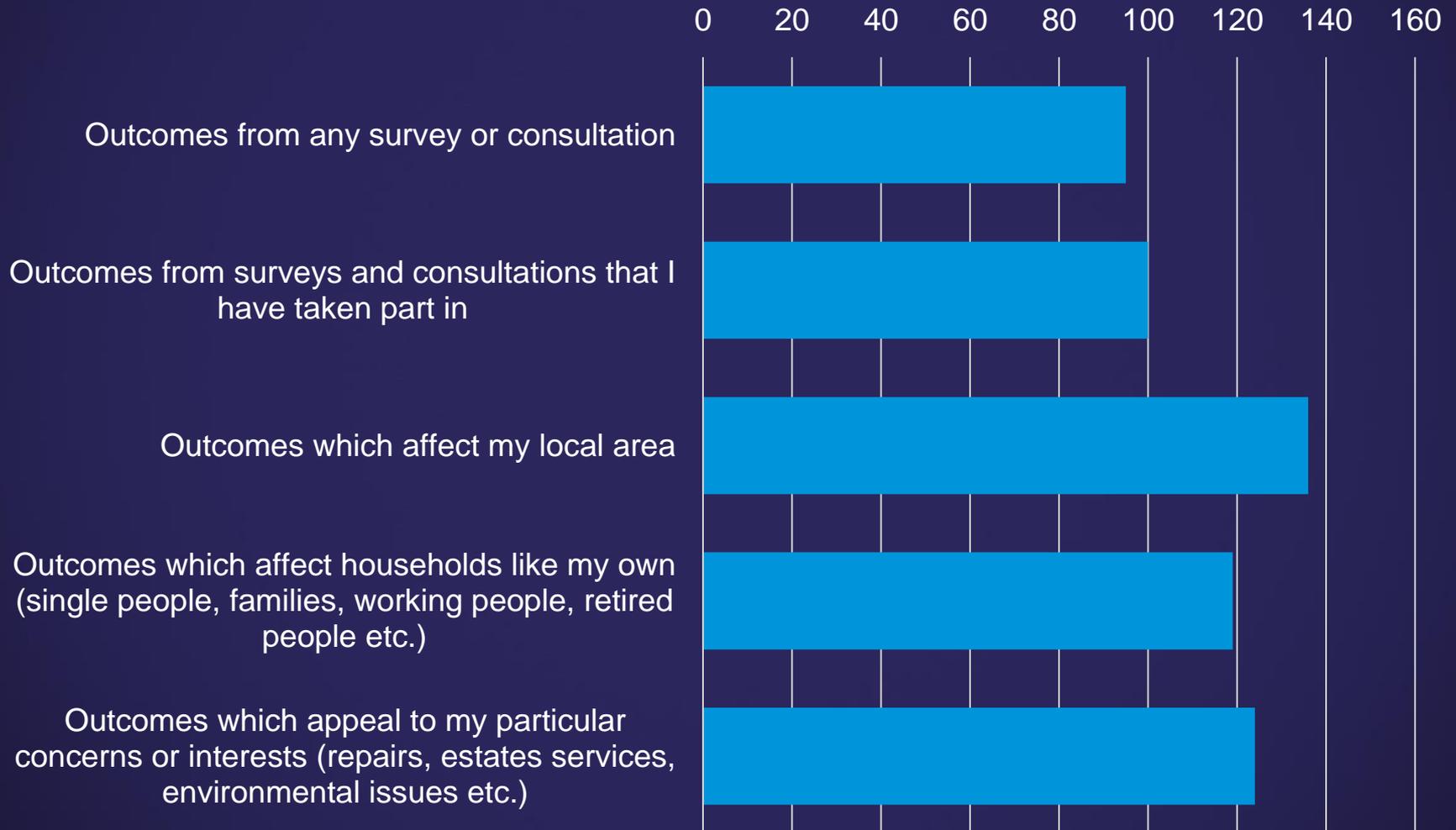
Personal contact or monthly
newsletter.
Mr R, Camberley

Site Manager.
Mr S, Bradford

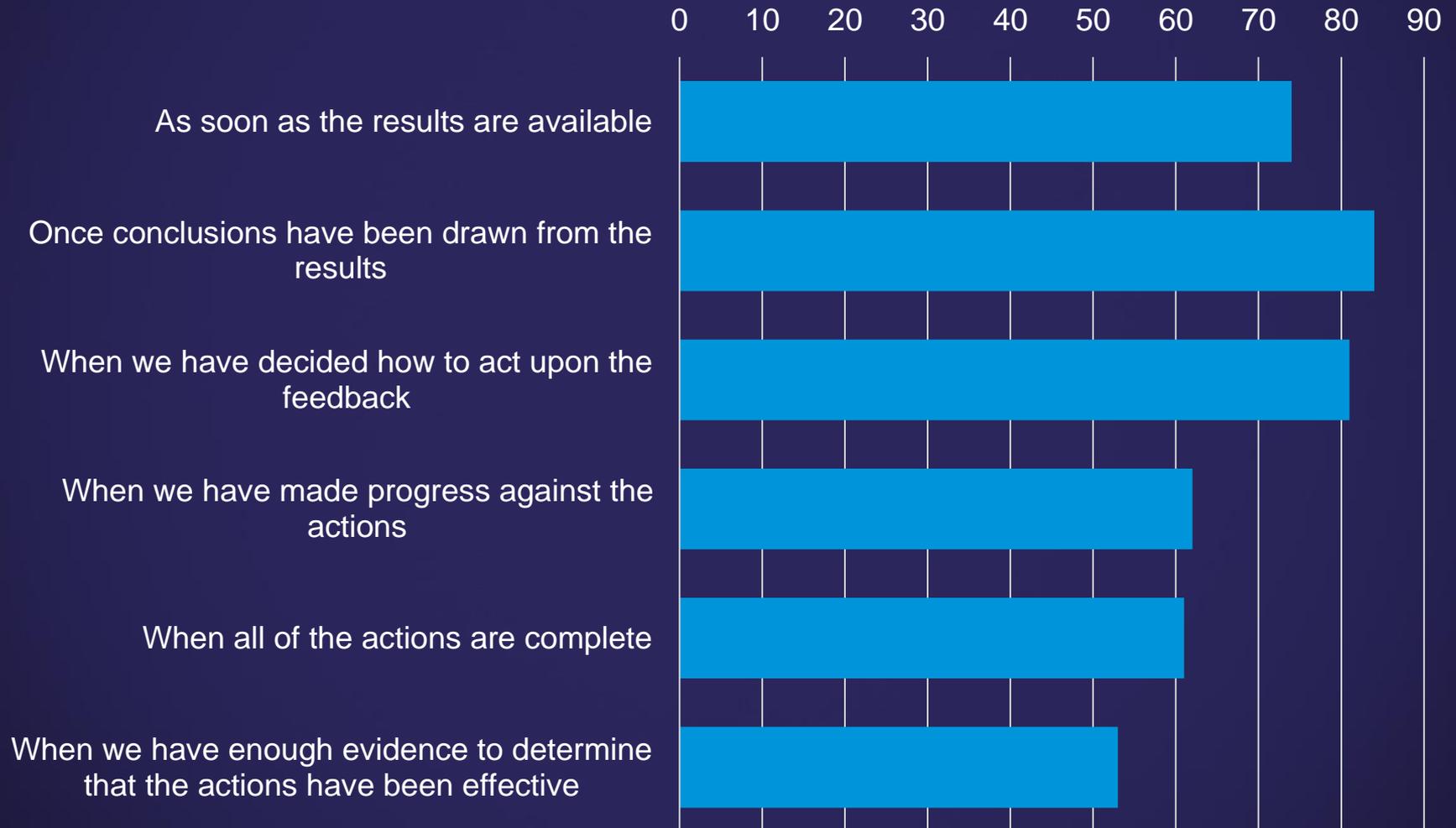
Text.
Mr F, Middlesbrough

By telephone.
Mr M, Burnley

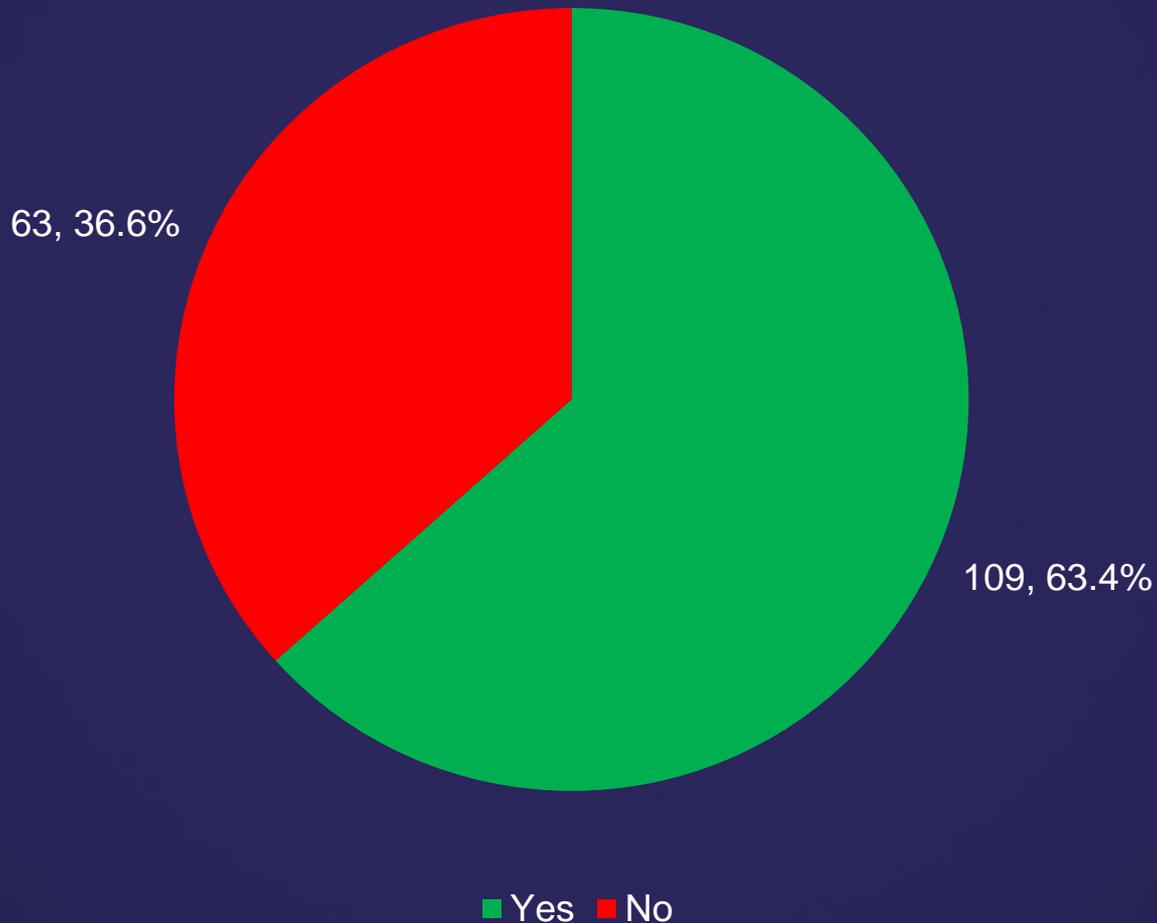
What sort of outcomes would you expect to be notified about? (Accent 500 only).



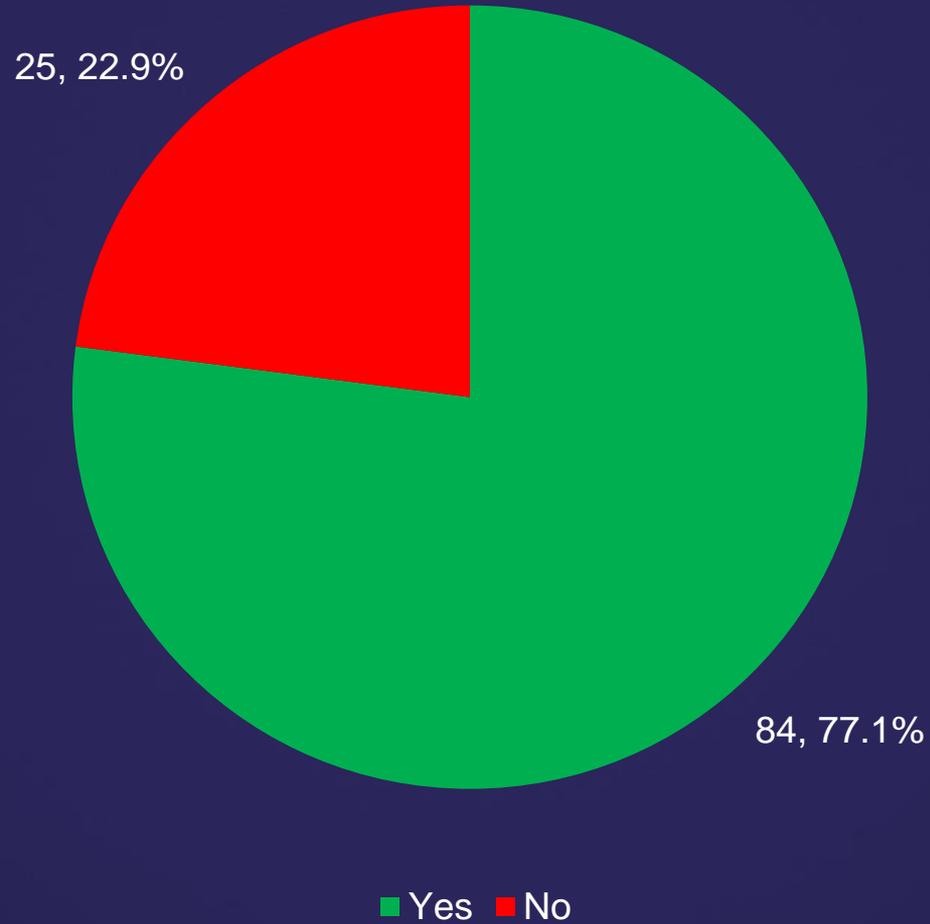
At which point(s) would you expect to be notified about the results or outcomes of a survey/consultation? (Accent 500 only).



We currently post the outcomes of surveys and consultations on our 'You said, We did' webpage. We notify customers who have taken part in surveys and consultations when new outcomes have been published. Have you received notifications like this in the past?



Is this the best way of presenting the outcomes of surveys and consultations?



What would you suggest instead?



By published newsletter to each scheme for posting on Accent noticeboard.

Mr M, Wakefield

Give us the raw information so we can draw our own conclusions.

Mr L, Leeds

I feel the way outcomes are decided and communicated are very vague and don't make my life any better/worse. It doesn't feel personal to me...

Mrs H, Burnley

Post local information via an app or MyAccount.

Mrs N, Camberley

Regular updates on changes when they happen rather than crammed into one.

Miss A, Stanley

Detailed report for those who want to look deeper into issues.

Mr H, Yarm

Letters or emails that are more tailored.

Miss H, Peterborough

The issues seem very selective and only those where Accent can put a positive spin.

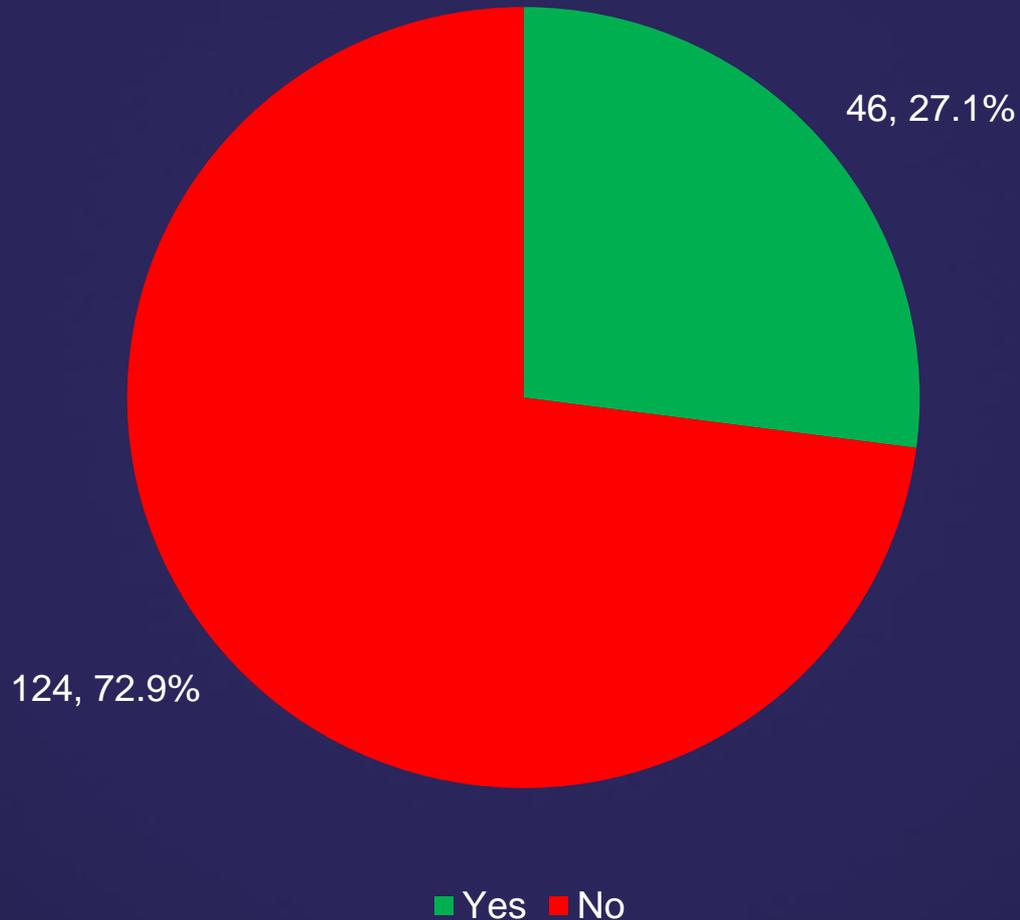
Ms C, Ilkley

The report was a shameful spotlight on 'why Accent are great' and made us even more annoyed.

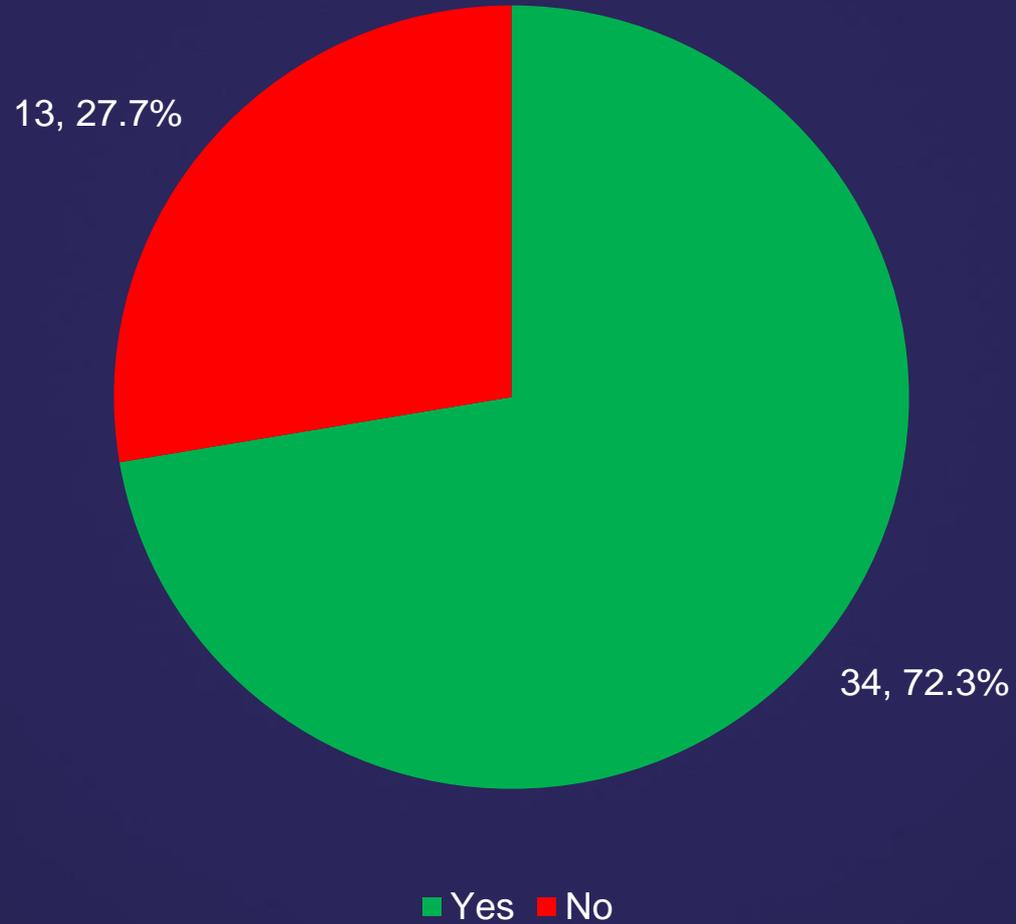
It cherry picked the best comments and filtered the worst.

Mr R, Camberley

Outcomes from local engagement activity is posted on our 'Grass Roots Engagement' webpage. We have sorted the outcomes by location and then by address so that customers can easily find the details of activities which have taken place in their local area. Have you visited this webpage before?



Is this the best way of categorising the outcomes from local engagement activity?



What would you suggest instead?



A public meeting.
Mrs D, Preston

Having a list of other websites
people could visit for activities and
what's on in their area also.
Miss A, Stanley

Not everyone has access to
technology.
Mrs W, Accrington

Mailshots. Many residents are
elderly and are not computer
conversant.
Mr M, Stockton-on-Tees

The webpage does not engage.
Bring back a newsletter.
Mrs H, Camberley

Newsletters so everyone gets one
and knows what is happening.
Then there is no excuse.
Mr S, Bradford

What would you suggest Accent does to attract participation from a diverse group of customers (in particular, younger customers)? (Accent 500).



By using social media.
Mrs D, Preston

Perhaps you should split
Independent Living sites away
from 'regular' sites to target the
young.
Mr M, Wakefield

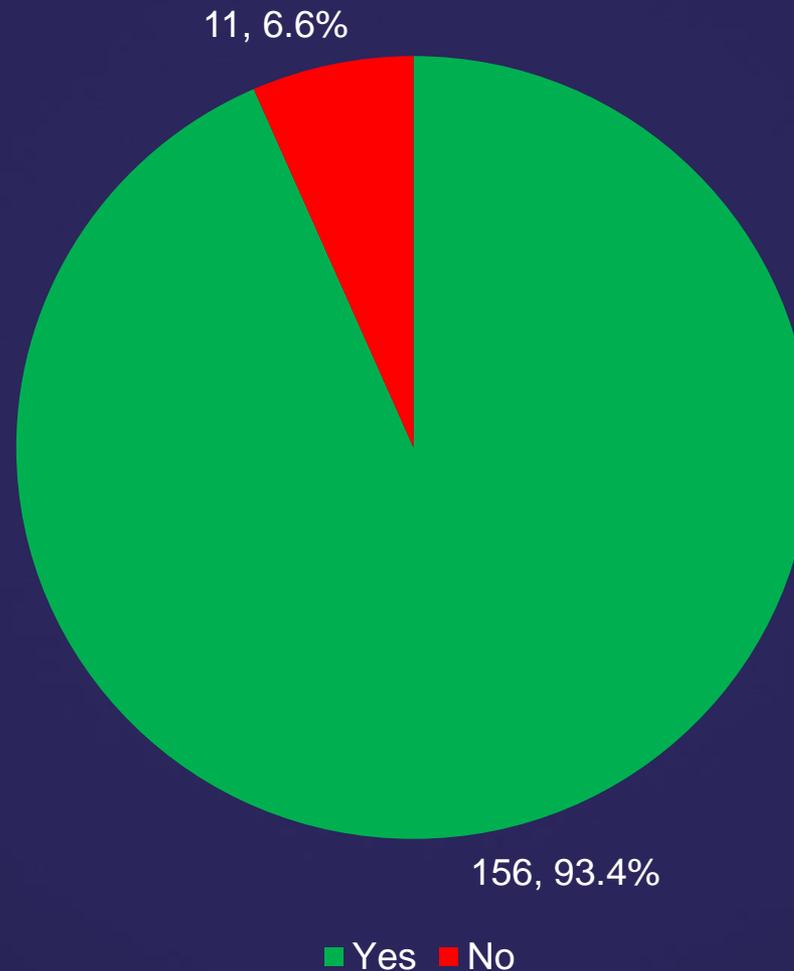
Facebook/Instagram.
Miss A, Stanley

Offer incentives.
Mrs W, Accrington

Don't use big words that most
people would not understand
(demography). Keep it plain and
simple.
Mr S, Bradford

No need to reinvent the wheel.
Must be hundreds of community
consultations out there with best
practice ideas to be utilised.
Mr H, Yarm

From time-to-time, we are unable to act upon the feedback that customers have provided. Would you like to be informed about occasions when we have not been able to act upon feedback and the reasons why?



Here are some things that we think will improve customer engagement. Please indicate to what extent you think they will help:



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%



Is there anything else you would like to see in our new resident engagement strategy?



A differentiation between the needs of sheltered housing properties and regular housing properties.

Ms J, Barrow-In-Furness

A great number of older and disabled residents do not have access to email and internet. So a resurrection of a newsletter would let all residents know what was going on.

Mr G, Bishop Auckland

A who's who at Accent. Bit more about Resident Engagement team.

Mrs K, Rushden

An assigned member of staff for the area to win and ensure engagement, with performance being linked directly to it.

Miss S, Durham

Competitions and incentives. Things that will make people happy too; as there's not enough of that in this unsocial, paranoid and distant climate.

Miss K, Peterborough

One of the positives from this year is the increased awareness and utilisation of platforms like Zoom. You have the opportunity to have discussions with residents like never before.

Mr H, Cambridge

Regular on-site drop-in centres for residents to raise concerns etc.

Mr T, Skipton

Ensure that you are inclusive. You have a duty to your disabled customers and other minorities.

Mr D, Leeds

Don't give false promises. Act on what residents want and need.

Mr C, Stockton-on-Tees

Is there anything else you would like to see in our new resident engagement strategy?



More real life, one-to-one discussion.

Mr M, Wakefield

People will be more engaged if they can get excited about actually being able to make a difference. If you can show we can make a real difference... I know you will get more engagement.

Mrs H, Burnley

Positive outcomes. I have found I get lots of 'we will sort that out' and nothing happens. You seem to brush things under the carpet and hope we forget them or use COVID as an excuse.

Mr A, Ripon

A less pretentious title.

Mr E, Nelson

Active engagement would be a start. I don't even know who my Housing Officer is or how to contact them.

Miss K, Camberley

Don't put so much 'waffle' into the questions and be honest about what is likely to be happening.

Mrs G, March

Feel you need to engage 'community champions'. Maybe employ part-time residents to engage and help other residents with issues so they have access to info on their doorsteps.

Mr K, Accrington

It is important not to just gather views, run surveys and run resident-led groups, but to take on board what they say.

Ms M, Huntingdon

More insistence that tenants of Accent should pull together as communities to improve their areas...

Miss V, Colne

If you were writing Accent's resident engagement strategy, what would be your number one objective?



Act on complaints.
Miss L, Burnley

Be honest and explain things with more clarity.
Mrs G, March

Bringing residents together so they feel they have a voice that is listened to.
Mr T, Skipton

Clarity and ease of communications between Accent and customers in both directions.
Mr L, Aldershot

Finding a way to empower more residents to want to take part.
Mr A, Bradford

Communication is key!
Mrs L, Brighouse

Keep residents happy. To do this, keep them informed and follow up on everything you promise.
Mr A, Ripon

Make sure you listen to tenants' concerns and implement what you said you would do, with much more communication.
Mrs N, Camberley

More frequent one-to-one contact with residents, make them feel they are part of the solution not part of the problem.
Mr J, Ossett

If you were writing Accent's resident engagement strategy, what would be your number one objective?



More grass roots contact.
Mr B, Lightwater

Stop focussing on wishy-washy strategies that sound too corporate and completely impersonal so don't grab anyone's attention...
Mrs H, Burnley

To ensure that the customer is fully informed and made to feel valued.
Mr B, Camberley

Utilise new technology to engage with residents, keep them informed... doing surveys that ask ambiguous questions just bore people.
Mr H, Cambridge

Better communication with customer partners a local management.
Ms W, Ashton-Under-Lyne

I know this an electronic age but I suggest that a large number of older residents are unable to access email, text or Zoom facilities. Your comms plan needs to address this.
Mr B, Brough

People can see a clear path between their involvement and an impact on the service delivered.
Ms B, Wakefield

To educate residents and involve them in the running of their estate, making them aware of proposed changes and the reasons for them.
Mrs F, Bradford

To really hear residents and act upon what they tell you wherever that's possible. If you can't, have a valid reason why not and communicate it.
Mr W, Bradford

Conclusions



- Many respondents feel that the % customers satisfied that Accent 'listens to views' has fallen, in part, because of the current circumstances and feel disenfranchised due to lack of face-to-face contact.
- Many respondents did not see the benefit of centralising service delivery and feel disappointed by lack of consultation about this. Respondents feel disappointed by the lack of transparency about Accent's tendering processes.
- Many respondents feel disappointed by the lack of opportunities to provide feedback on the service areas that matter most to them and lack of influence over the way services are delivered locally and which contractors deliver these services.
- Respondents would expect to be consulted (or at the very least informed) about changes which affect their estates through a range of channels. They expect consultation processes to be fair, reasonable and accessible.

Conclusions



- Respondents' comments indicate that they rarely see improvements as a direct result of providing feedback and have begun to question its value.
- Respondents feel that 'You said, We did' commitments are vague and do not speak to their own experiences.
- There appears to be an appetite for local news and regular updates aimed at keeping customers informed about what is happening in their areas.
- Respondents who take part in surveys would expect to be kept informed about results, decisions made on the basis of feedback and progress on any actions taken.
- Respondents feel that the way outcomes from surveys and consultations are displayed on the website is sensible, but this needs to be supplemented by other communication channels to make sure the message has landed.
- Respondents would like to be kept informed about occasions when we have not been able to act upon their feedback and the reasons why.

Conclusions



- Respondents feel that all of our proposals will help to improve customer engagement; particularly responding to feedback, suggestions and complaints in real-time.
- Respondents would recommend more emphasis on 'grass roots' engagement and better utilisation of platforms like Zoom to appear in the next Resident Engagement Strategy.
- Respondents are mindful that not all customers are able to engage with Accent online and would recommend using other communication channels to ensure the views of the digitally excluded are captured.