



# Resident Engagement Strategy Consultation

October 2020

# Background



## Rationale:

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

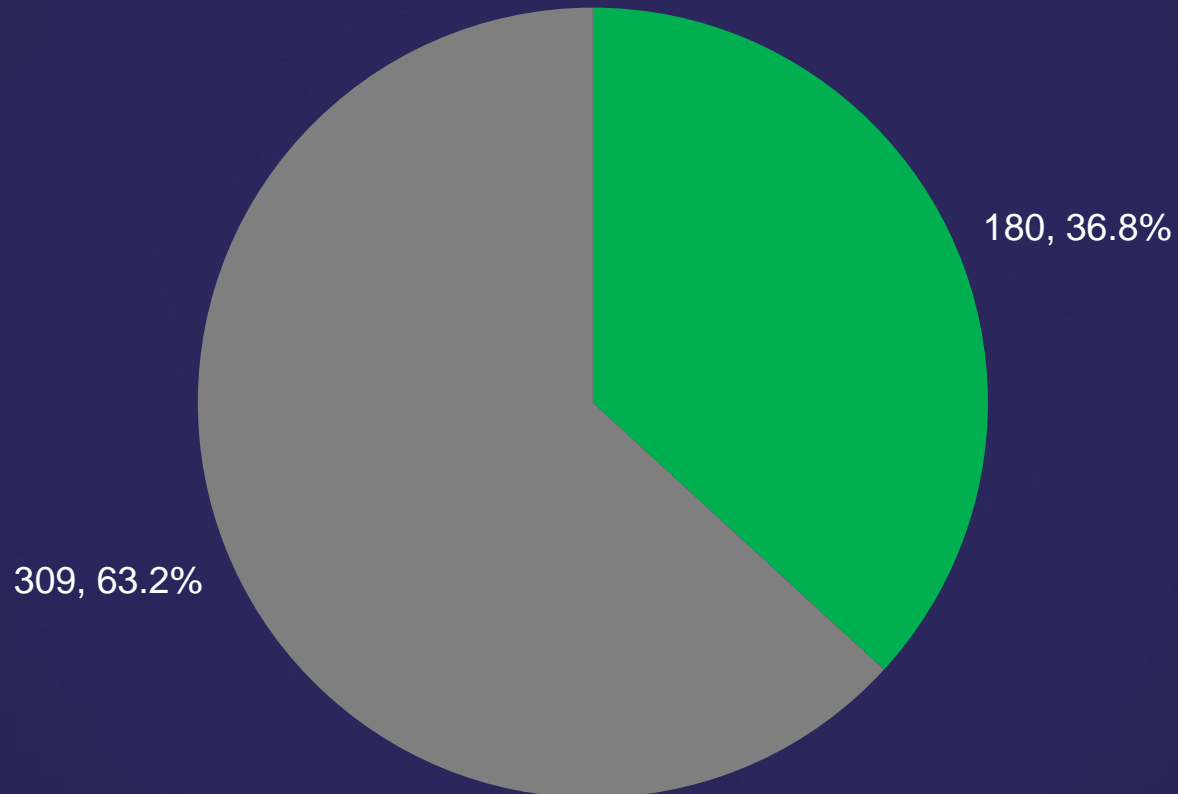
Since then, the percentage of customers who are satisfied that Accent 'listens to views and takes them into consideration' has declined.

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:

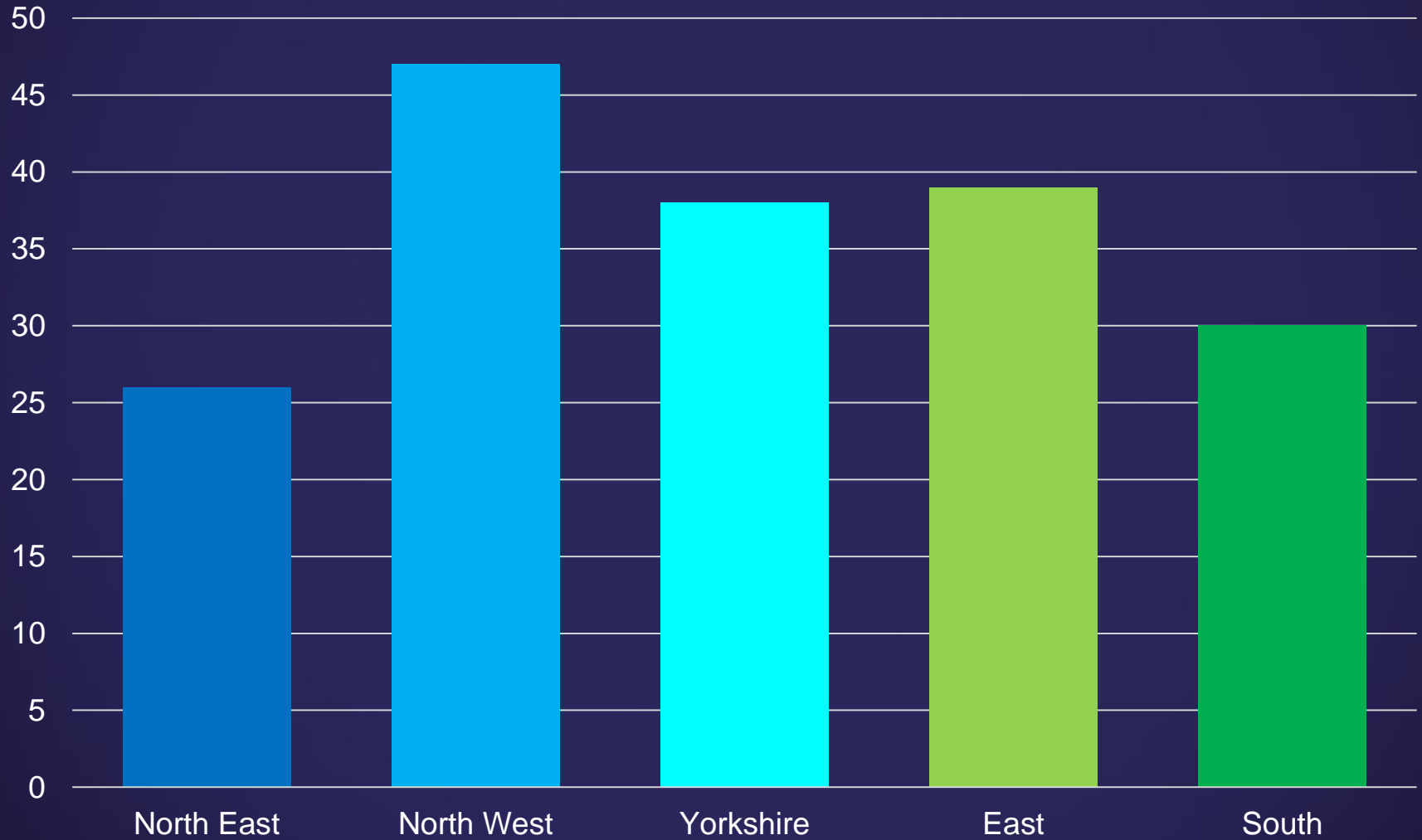
We invited all members of the Accent 500 to take part in this survey as well as customers who indicated that they are dissatisfied that Accent 'listens to views' to take part in this survey. Two attempts to contact customers were made, by email, over a period of two weeks. In total the survey yielded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

# Responses

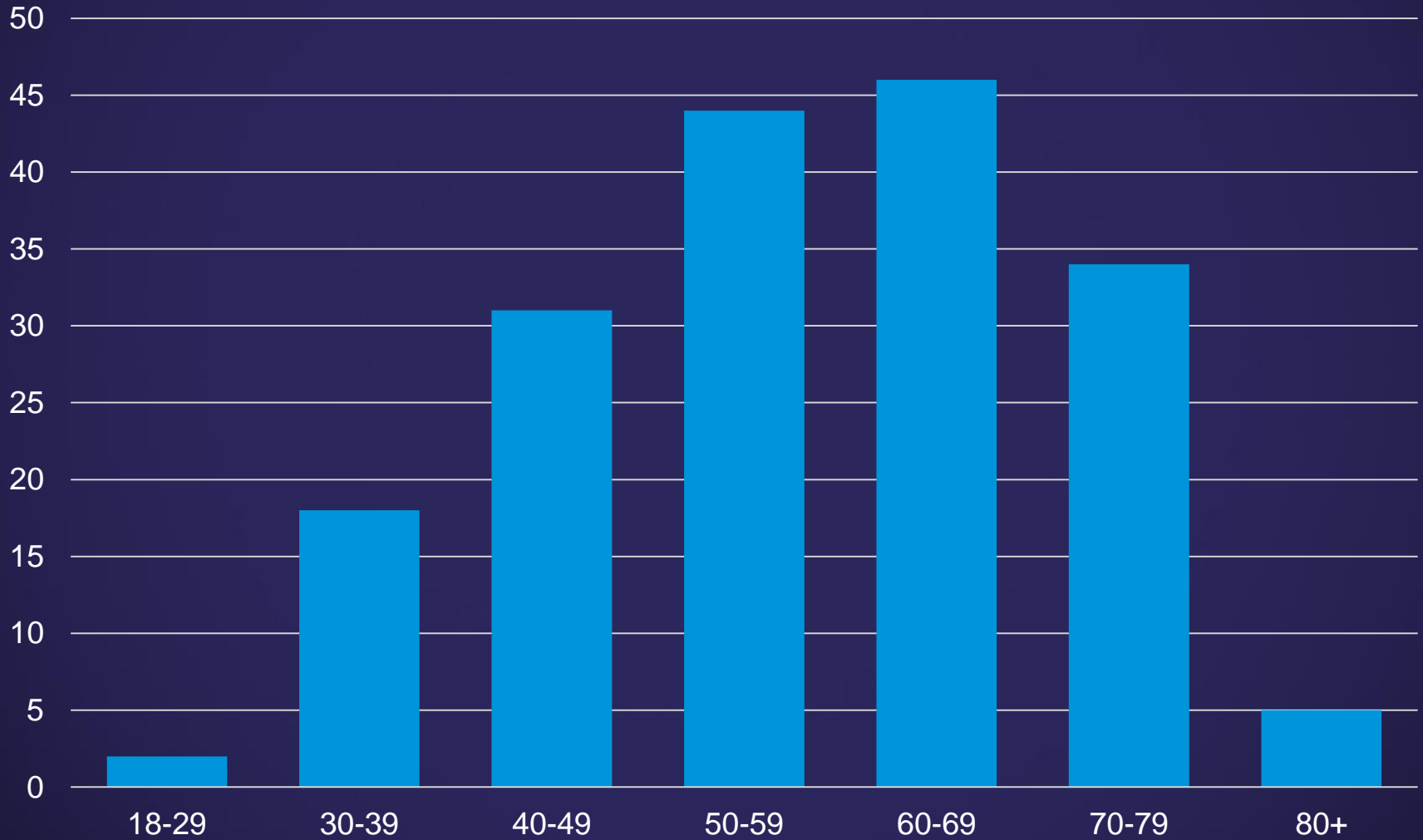


■ Response ■ No response

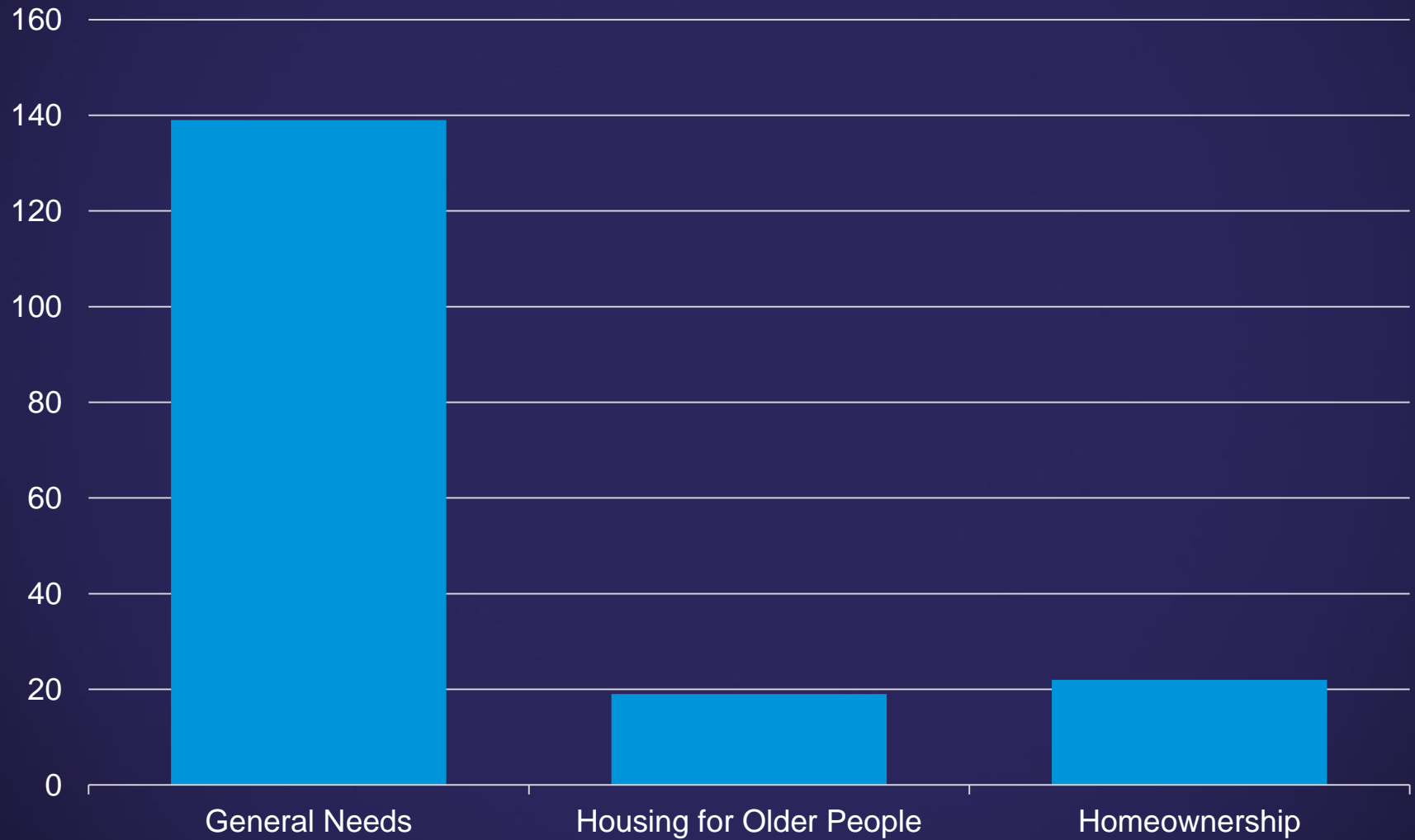
# Responses by Region



# 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**

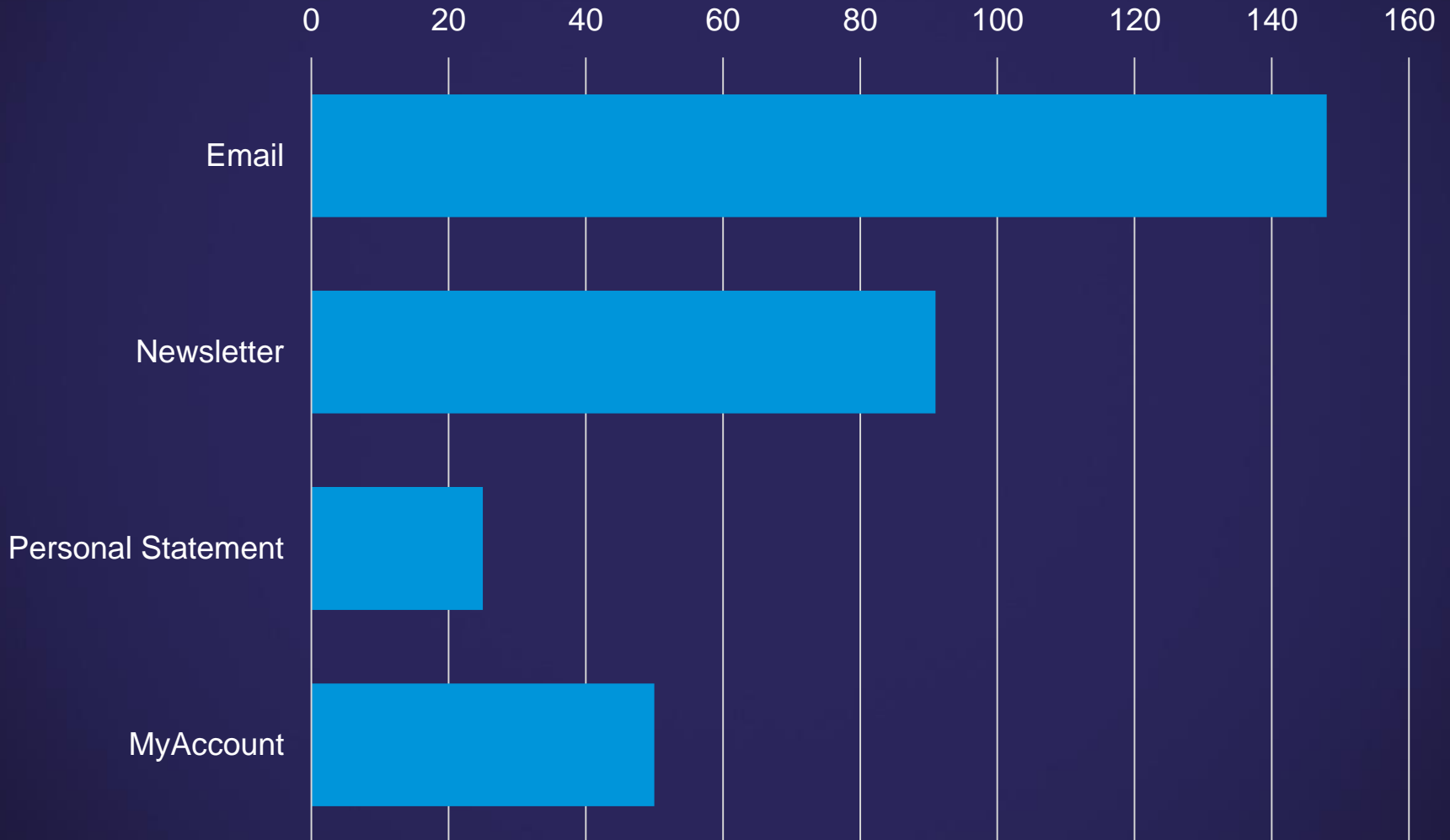
Give out the details of contractors who are vying for contracts of maintenance or repairs with their actual contract offers to the customers who can then respond to you...

**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).



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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**

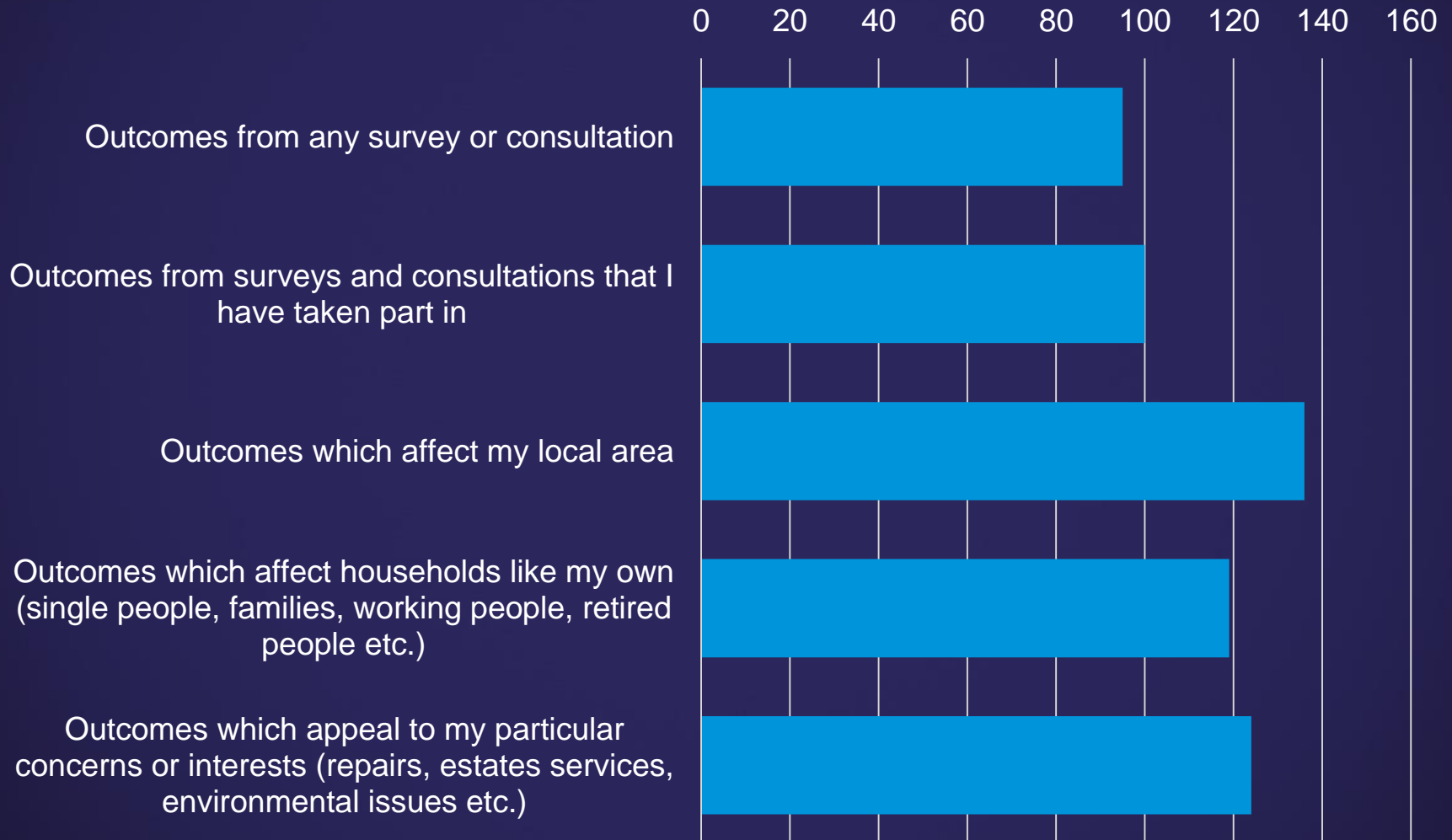
Personal contact or monthly  
newsletter.  
**Mr R, Camberley**

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).

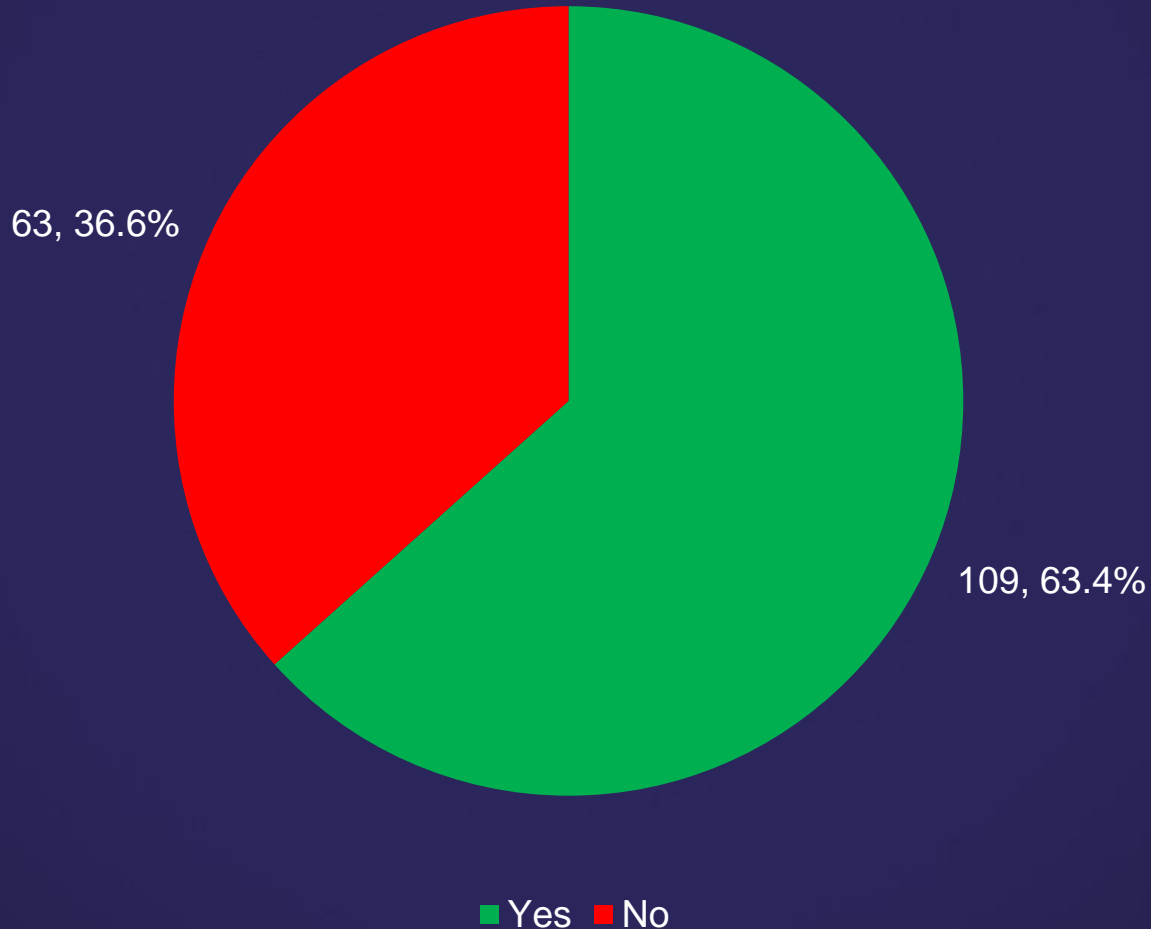


At which point(s) would you expect to be notified about the results or outcomes of a survey/consultation? (Accent 500 only).

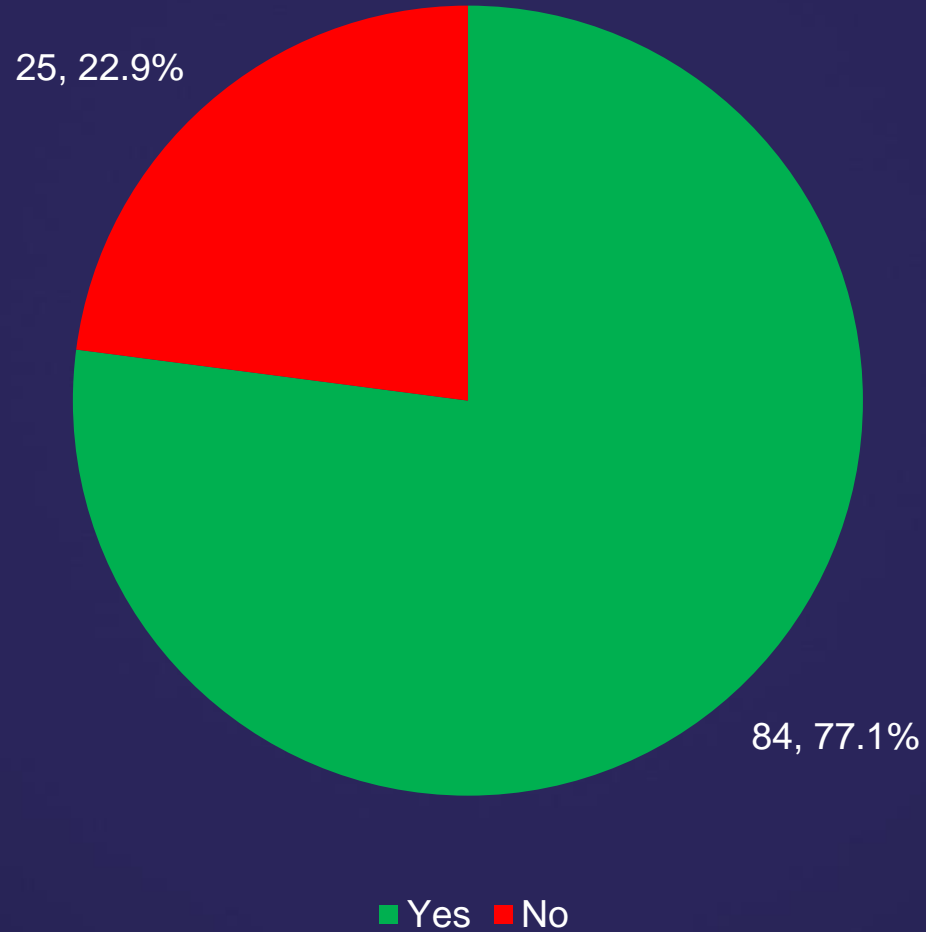




We currently post the outcomes of surveys and consultations on our 'You said, We did' webpage. We notify customers who have taken part in surveys and consultations when new outcomes have been published. Have you received notifications like this in the past?



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.

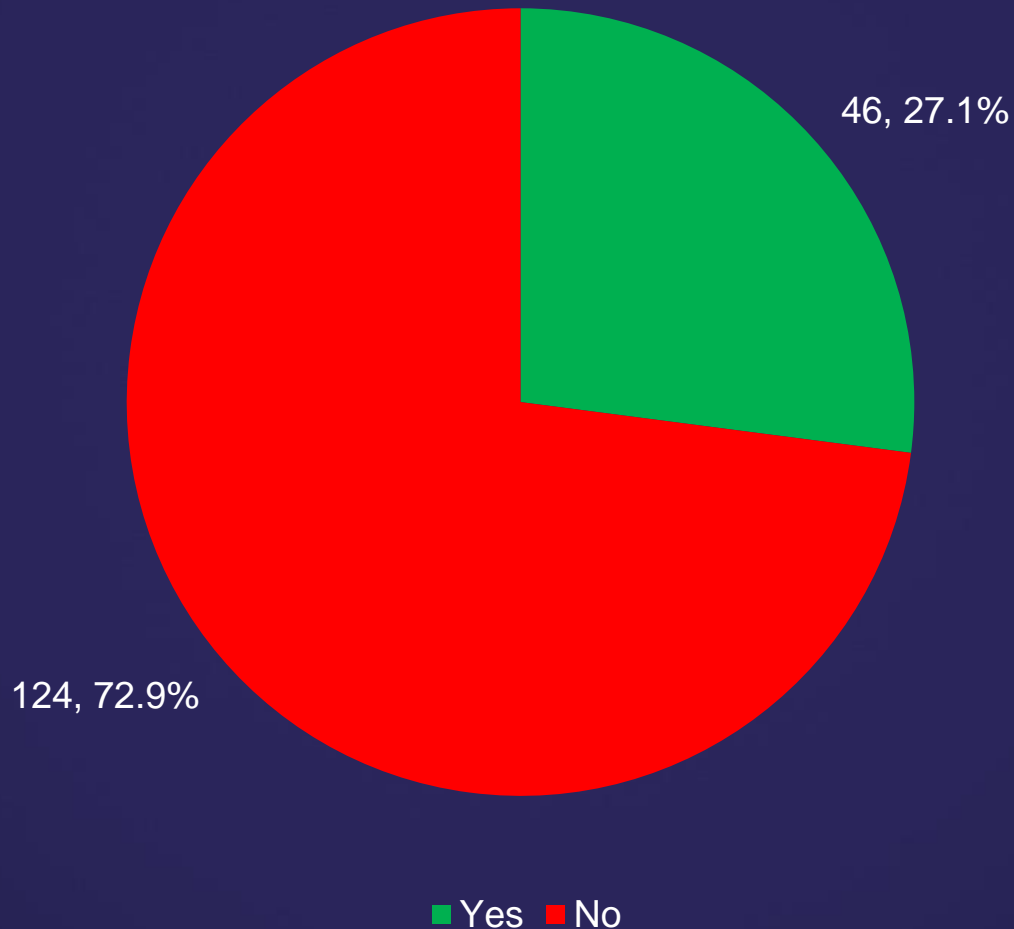
**Ms C, Ilkley**

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

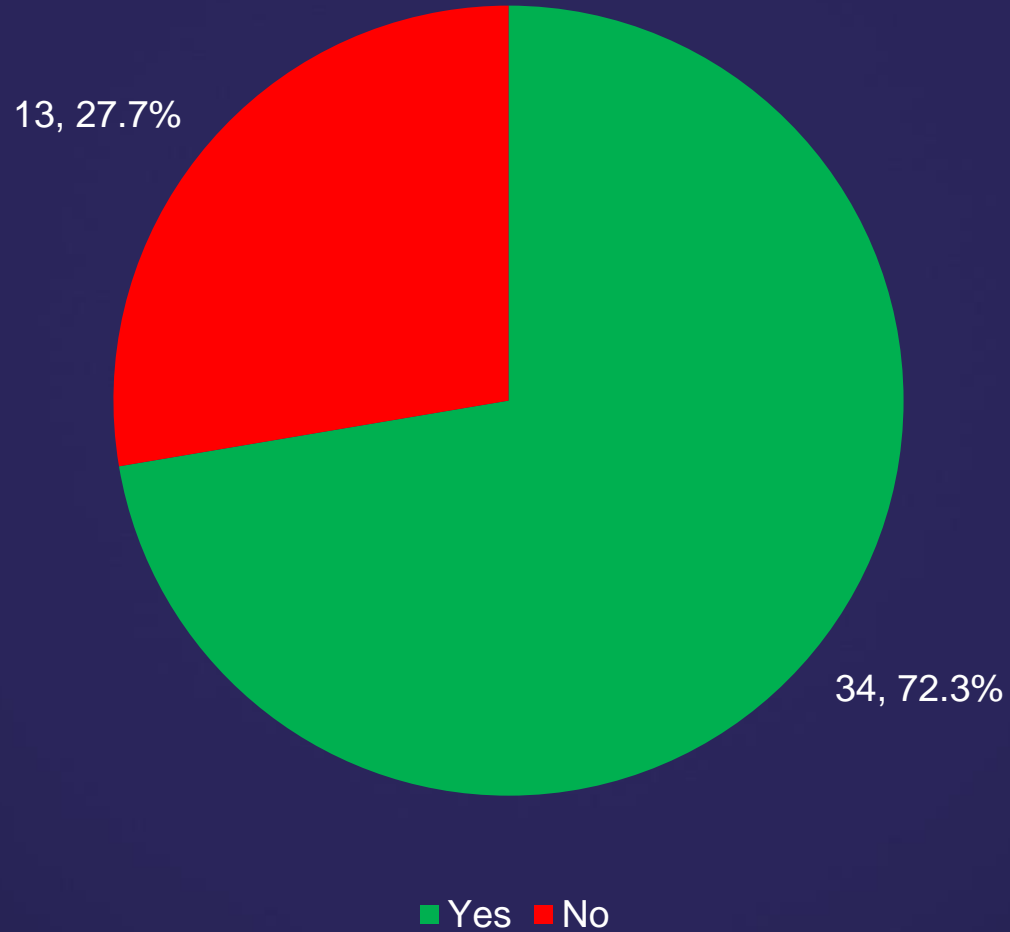
It cherry picked the best comments and filtered the worst.

**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**

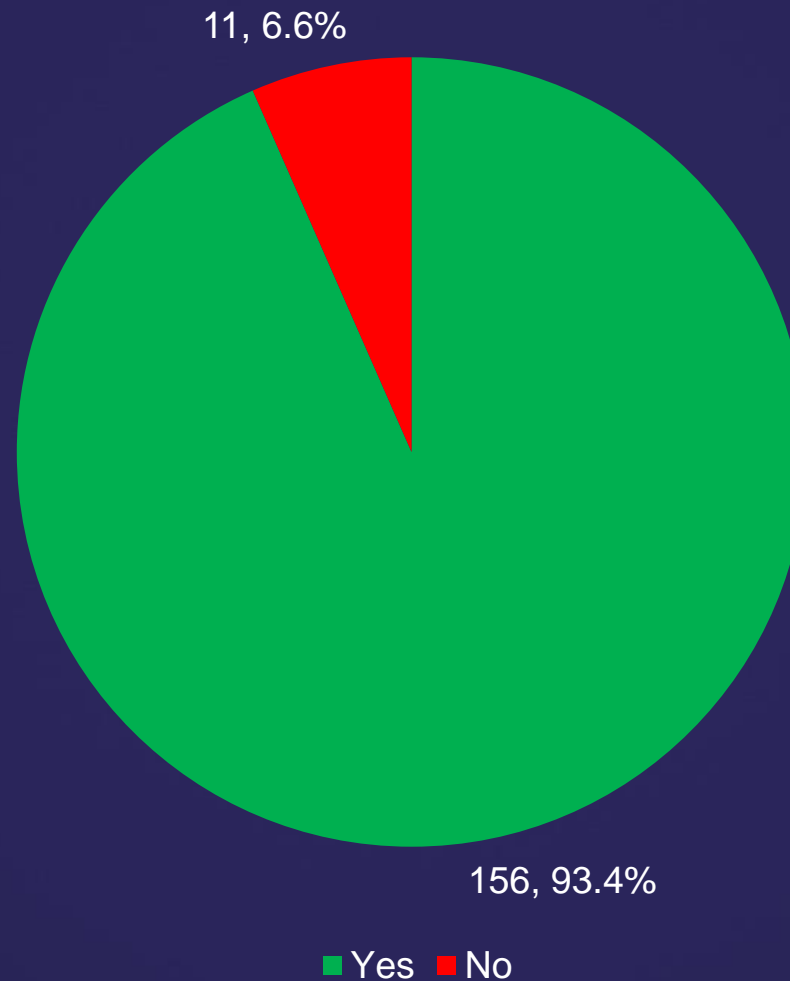
Facebook/Instagram.  
**Miss A, Stanley**

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?

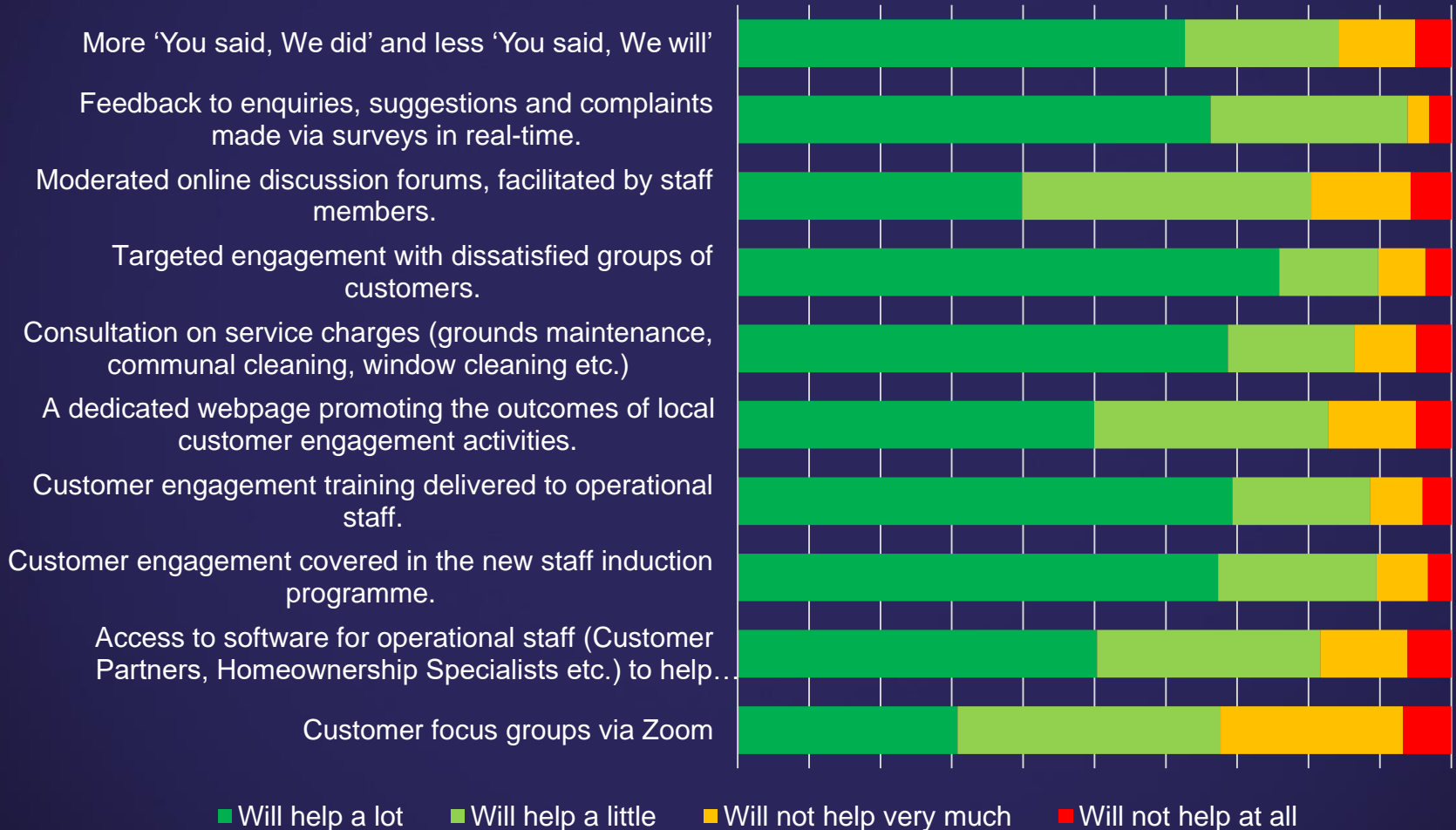




Here are some things that we think will improve customer engagement. Please indicate to what extent you think they will help:



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.