

MAYOR AND CABINET		
Title	The future provision of the Handyperson Service in Lewisham.	
Key Decision	Yes	Item No.
Ward	All wards	
Contributors	Executive Director for Customer Services	
Class	Part 1	Date: 22 March 2017

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report updates Mayor and Cabinet with the results of the consultation which was carried out in September 2016 on a proposal to stop the direct provision by the Council of the handypersons service and achieve a saving of £151,000. It also seeks approval for Lewisham Homes to advertise the service at a charge to cover costs.

2 Background

- 2.1 A number of savings proposals are being considered by the council over the next few years in order to meet significant funding gaps.
- 2.2 The Housing Service's contribution to the Council's overall savings target required by 2020 amounts to £1.5m. There are also underlying pressures totalling approximately £0.7m relating to the homeless service; this means very tough decisions are needed in terms of service provision over the next few years.
- 2.3 The Handypersons Service provides minor repairs to home owners in Lewisham who are elderly or vulnerable, and whilst the results of a survey undertaken in September 2016 indicated it is a very popular service this is not a mandatory service, and as such has been put forward as a saving for 2017/18.
- 2.4 The proposal to stop the direct provision of the Handyperson Service contributes £151,000 to the overall savings target.
- 2.5 In order to mitigate the impact of stopping the Service consideration was given to alternative ways of providing the services to this client group at no cost to the Council as well as seeking views from client users themselves as to their preparedness to pay for services received.
- 2.6 The alternatives considered including asking other organisations to provide the service such as Lewisham Homes Repair Service, retired Police officers in Lewisham (as this happens in Bromley) and Age UK. We also looked at whether the Disabled Facilities Grant could be used to cover service costs.
- 2.7 In terms of seeking feedback from users and potential users, a survey was sent

on 23 September 2016 to residents in the borough who had used the Handypersons Service from April 2015 to August 2016 inclusive. The survey included a return envelope and was also sent to 500 or so members of the Positive Ageing Council as well as being uploaded on the Positive Ageing Council website.

- 2.8 On 16 November 2016 Housing Select Committee were presented the savings proposals together with the survey results. The Housing select Committee considered the alternatives and made a referral to Mayor and Cabinet that Lewisham Homes be approached to advertise the service at a charge to cover all costs rather than stopping the service altogether. The referral was approved by Mayor and Cabinet on 7 December 2016.
- 2.9 Lewisham Homes has since agreed to advertise the service on their website whereby homeowners specifically request a particular service and, in order to cover costs, will be charged an hourly rate. This would ensure that rents paid by Lewisham tenants would not be subsidising homeowners.
- 2.10 A further report was presented to Housing Select Committee on 7 March 2017. The Committee suggested that Lewisham Homes clearly set out the charges and whether VAT would be charged.
- 2.11 Lewisham Homes have indicated that the hourly charge will not include travel time and VAT will be charged. They have agreed to ensure the charge (as set out below) is clearly advertised and explained to all residents requesting the service.

3 Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Mayor:
- 3.2 Note the results of the resident survey undertaken in September 2016 (set out in section 4 below)
- 3.3 Note that following the referral by the Housing Select Committee on 16 November 2016 to Mayor and Cabinet on 7 December 2016 Lewisham Homes has agreed to advertise the service at an hourly rate to cover costs.
- 3.4 Agree to the Council stopping the direct provision of the handyperson service and achieve a saving of £151,000 and for Lewisham Homes to advertise this service on their website from April 2017 at a charge to cover the costs. The proposed charge from April is £40 plus VAT.
- 3.5 Agree that officers through the Council's clienting arrangements ensure Lewisham Homes produce a clear breakdown of costs and the services offered as recommended by Housing select committee on 7 March 2017

4 Results of consultation survey

4.1 Of the 1408 surveys sent, 525 responses (37.29%) were received by the closing date of 19 October 2016.

4.2 The survey focused on 3 key areas:

- How satisfied are you with the current service
- If the service were to be deleted would you be willing to contribute
- Per job (and how much)
- Per hour (and how much)
- What other jobs would you like to see the handypersons undertake

4.3 The headlines from the responses, show 77% satisfaction with the current service; based on 333 of the 432 service users stating the service was good, 7 stating they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 2 stating they were dissatisfied.

4.4 Contributions offered by service users to cover the costs of the service were varied but averaged at £20.00 per job or £5.80 per hour, although a very few (4%) said they would pay any amount to retain the service. This is compared to an average of £36.00 for current costs (minus overheads).

4.5 For a full breakdown of survey feedback please see Appendix 1

4.6 Alternative ways of providing the handypersons services at no cost to the Council were explored. The results are as follows:-

- **The Police Handyperson** service based in Bromley (Blue), offer a handyperson service via ex-officers who live in Bromley however they will not be able to offer the service in Lewisham. They do not have any ex-officers who live in the borough and they say they prefer not to travel to Lewisham. Lewisham Police were also approached but they do not offer a similar service.
- **Lewisham Homes** provide a day to day repairs service to housing tenants however this does not include the type of jobs provided in the handypersons service such as fixing curtain rails etc. The repairs service in Lewisham Homes is funded from tenants' rents (HRA), whereas the handyperson service is provided largely to homeowners through the general fund. Whilst Lewisham Homes may be able to provide the service they would need to charge recipients of the handyperson services for the work undertaken to cover the costs as it would not be appropriate to use tenants' rents to provide services to homeowners.

Lewisham Homes, following Housing Select Committee comments, have been approached and have agreed to advertise the service and charge to cover costs. The average hourly rate has been confirmed by Lewisham Homes to be £35.95 plus an on cost of £5.39 for

administration making the total hourly rate of £41.34. This will be rounded down to £40 per hour (plus VAT).

Therefore, Lewisham Homes could provide some handypersons services at a cost to the homeowner which would provide some mitigation for the closing of the service.

- **Voluntary Sector – Age UK** currently provide a free service to Southwark residents that is funded through grant provided by Southwark Council and complements Southwark’s in-house service. Age UK have indicated they may be interested in taking on the service if Lewisham grant funded it like Southwark but this would not deliver the savings required.
- **Disabled Facilities Grant** – this grant is used to provide major adaptations to make it easier for elderly and vulnerable people to remain living at home such as level access showers, stair lifts etc. Only costs associated with large capital expenditure items can be recovered from the grant therefore this option does not deliver the savings required.

4.7 Housing Select Committee considered the alternative ways of providing the handypersons services and made a referral to Mayor and Cabinet suggesting that Lewisham Homes be approached to find out if it could be viable for them to provide a handypersons service at a reasonable price. The referral was approved by Mayor and Cabinet on 7 December 2016.

4.8 Subsequently, Lewisham Homes has agreed to advertise the service and to charge service users an hourly rate to cover costs and to trial this for a year

4.9 We can estimate from the survey results that there is likely to be little take up as the vast majority of service users have indicated that they would not want to contribute at all or any amount to cover costs. Therefore demand is likely to be low.

4.10 Currently 3 handypersons are in post who would be in a redundancy position as a result of the closure of the Council’s service (see section 7 below) and redeployment options would be explored with them.

5 Financial implications

5.1 The deletion of the Handypersons Service will contribute £151k to an overall savings target for the strategic housing service of £1.5m to be achieved between 2017/18 and 2019/2020

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 TUPE is unlikely to apply as a result of the Council's Handyperson's Service closing and Lewisham Homes then advertising on a commercial basis - not on behalf of or subsidised by the Council. The Council's Management of Change Policy will ensure that redundancies will be carried out in accordance with the law.
- 6.2 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.3 In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.4 It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, or to promote equality of opportunity or foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. It is a duty to have due regard to the need to achieve the goals listed above.
- 6.5 The weight to be attached to the duty will be dependent on the nature of the decision and the circumstances in which it is made. This is a matter for the Mayor, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. The Mayor must understand the impact or likely impact of the decision on those with protected characteristics who are potentially affected by the decision. The extent of the duty will necessarily vary from case to case and due regard is such regard as is appropriate in all the circumstances.
- 6.6 The Equality and Human Rights Commission has issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled "Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice". The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at:
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-codes-practice>

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and->

[guidance/equality-act-technical-guidance](#)

- 6.7 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

[The essential guide to the public sector equality duty](#)

[Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making](#)

[Engagement and the equality duty: A guide for public authorities](#)

[Objectives and the equality duty. A guide for public authorities](#)

[Equality Information and the Equality Duty: A Guide for Public Authorities](#)

- 6.8 The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance#h1>

7 Equalities Implications

- 7.1 11 residents who use this service are elderly or vulnerable. Almost three quarters stated they received a state pension and just under a third stated they received an illness related benefit. Paying for this service will impact on these groups. The majority of residents are home owners, many may be equity rich but cash poor. Officers have worked with Lewisham Homes to provide a fee structure to enable those on very low incomes to receive a minor repairs service as well as looking at other agencies who can support residents where they are unable to pay.

8 Environmental Implications

- 8.1 No specific environmental implications have been identified as arising from this report.

9 Crime and Disorder Implications

- 9.1 No specific crime and disorder implications have been identified as arising from this report

10 Background Documents and report author

10.1 Appendix 1: Handyperson survey results

10.2 If you require further information about this report please contact Antoinette Stasaitis on 0208 314 9340.

APPENDIX I

Handyperson questionnaire – survey results

November 2016

Background

On 7th September 2016, Housing Select Committee commented on the review being undertaken with regards to the handypersons service and noted a need to focus on the current level of satisfaction with the service and the impact that a requirement to contribute to the service might have. A consultation was launched to capture feedback from clients and key partners with regards to the above points and to capture additional information about the client group and their future needs to inform future decision making.

Survey methodology

A postal questionnaire was sent on 23 September 2016 to 1408 elderly and disabled residents in the borough who had used the handypersons service over a 16 month period from April 2015 to August 2016 inclusive. To increase the likelihood of response a return envelope was included with all questionnaires. The survey was also sent to 500 members of the Positive Ageing Council and was uploaded to their website.

Top line result

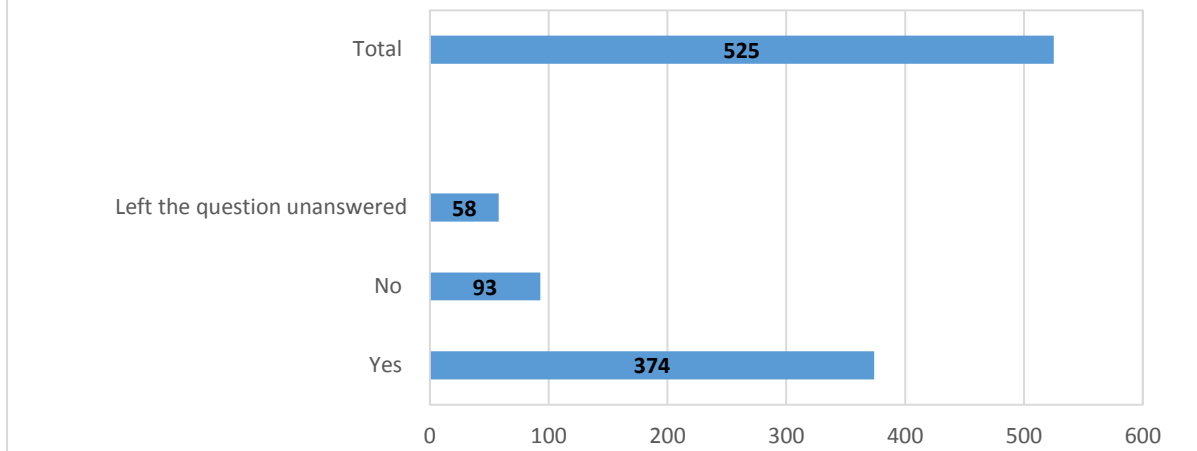
525 responses were received providing a 37% response rate amongst those contacted directly. Not all respondents answered all of the questions and as such the below analysis may contain less than 525 in some responses.

342 respondents answered the question regarding satisfaction with 97% recording satisfaction with the current service. The vast majority of service users said they would be unhappy to lose the service with over 92% reporting this. When asked whether they would be willing to contribute to the cost of the service, 119 did not answer. Over 65% said they would be willing to contribute between £0 and £10 per hour whereas under 4% responded that they would pay whatever the cost of the work was. Last year's financial data suggests the cost of providing the handyperson service is £36 per hour.

Analysis

Analysis of the responses to each question can be found below.

Question 1: Have you used Lewisham's handy person service?



Of the 525 respondents;

- 374 (71%) had used the service before
- 93 (18%) had not used the service
- 58 (11%) left this question unanswered

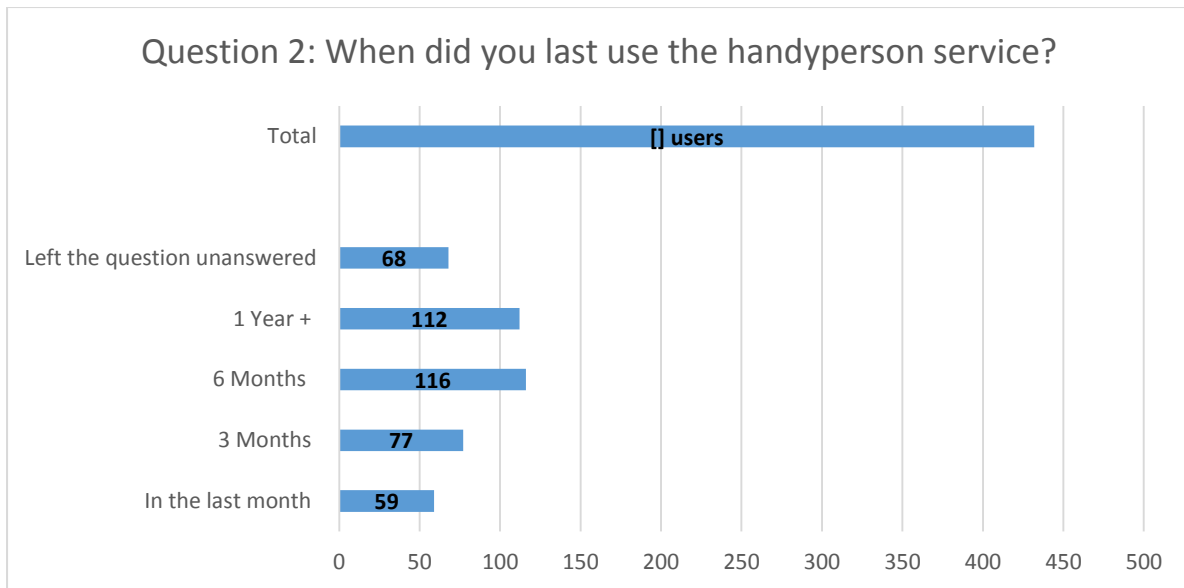
Many of the 58 who left this question blank answered later questions relating to satisfaction with the service.

Of those who had used the service before women were by far the highest users (85%) with an even split between those of white and BME backgrounds.

Of the males who responded and who had previously used the service 64% were white and 36% were from BME backgrounds.

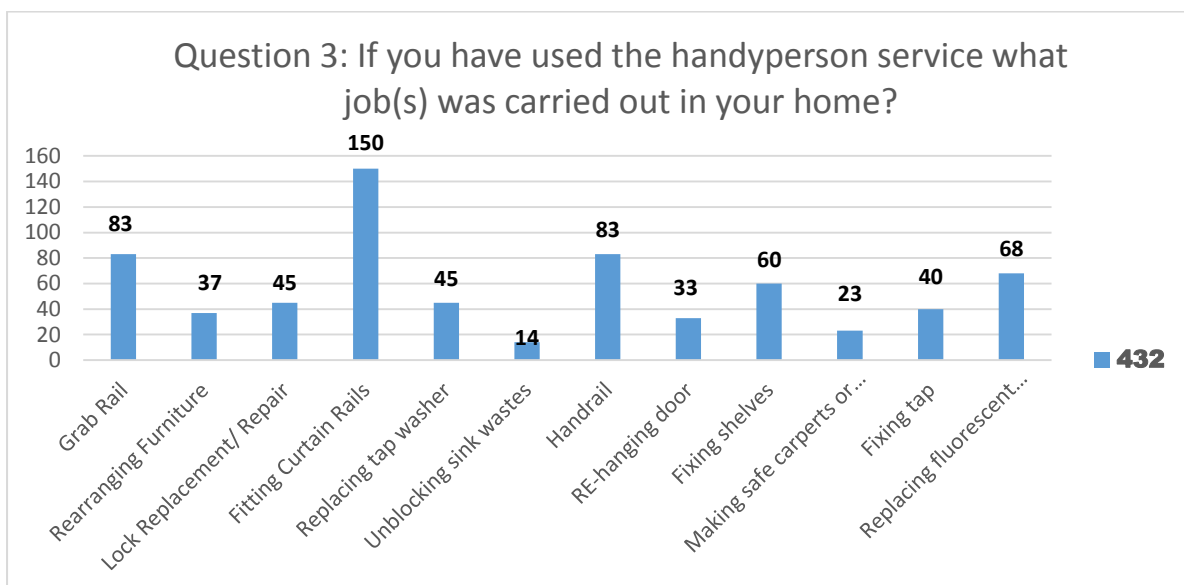
The age group who stated they used the service most were 70 to 79 year olds; this was similar for both male and females. There was no difference to the age category having not used the service, with 70 -79 years being the most prevalent responders.

Those people who had never used the service before, offered contributions averaging £10.00 per hour, compared to an average of £5.80 per hour for those who had used the service previously.



Of the 364 who answered this question;

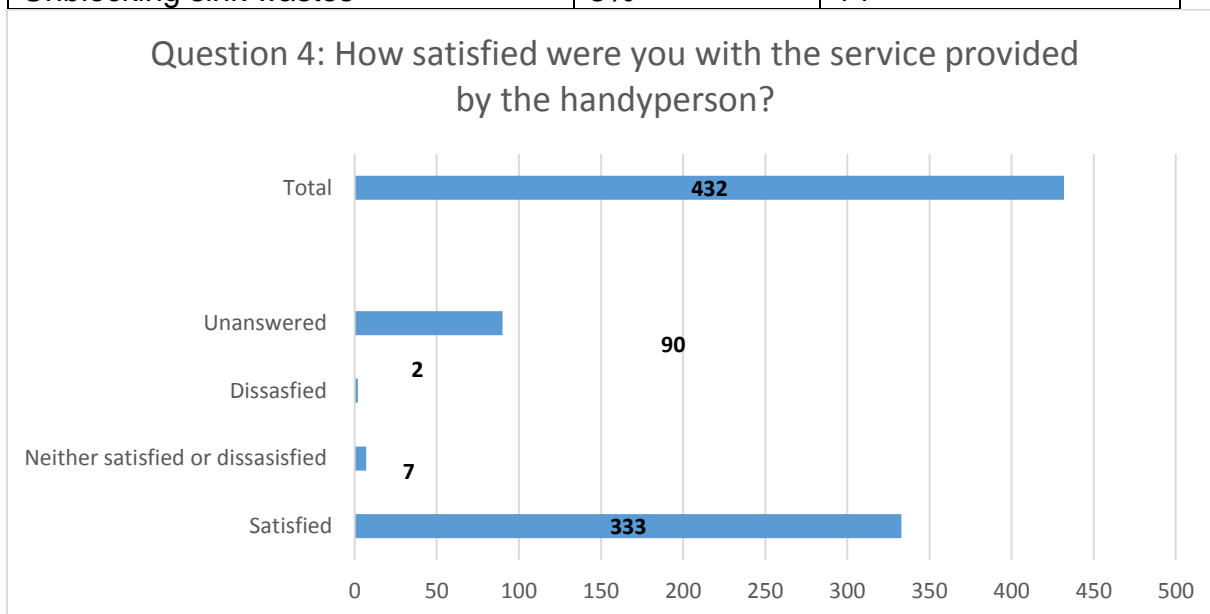
- Over 16% (59) had used the service in the last month
- Over 21% (77) had used the service in the past 3 months
- Almost 32% (116) had used the service in the last 6 months
- The remaining just under 31% (112) had used the service over a year ago
- 15% left the question unanswered.



The above table outlines the responses which respondents gave when asked which jobs had been carried out in their property. 35% of respondents recorded that the handyman had fitted curtain rails, representing 22% of all jobs recorded. 19% recorded that the handyman had fitted a handrail and 19% recording they had fitted a grab rail, each of which represented 12% of the total jobs recorded.

Jobs carried out	Percentage	Number of people
------------------	------------	------------------

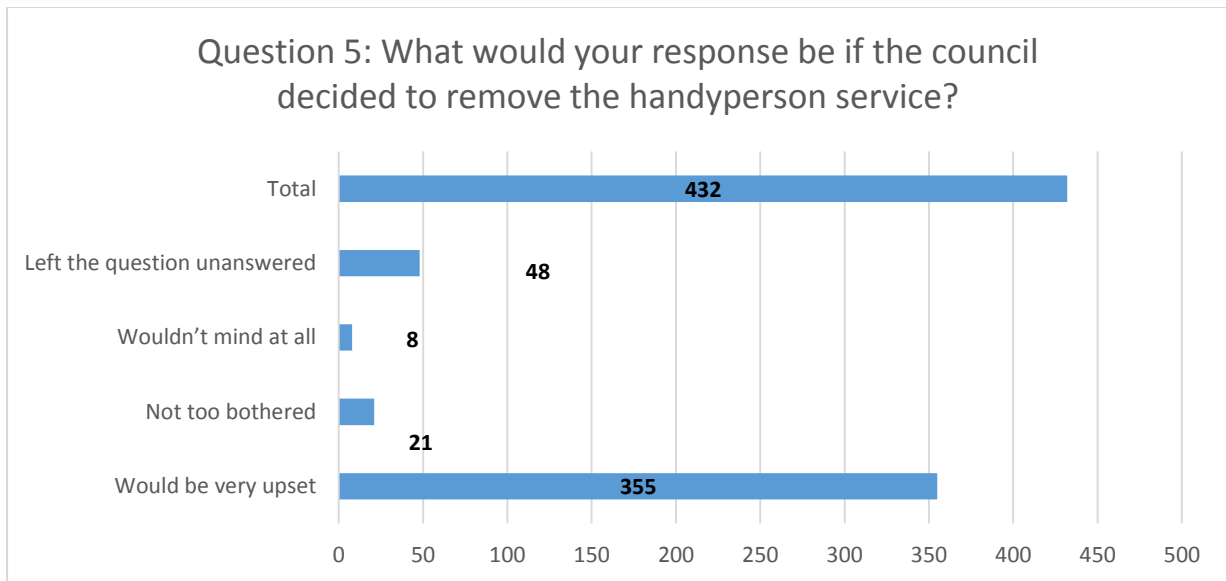
Fitting Curtain Rails	35%	150
Handrail	19%	83
Grab Rail	19%	83
Replacing Fluorescent Lights	16%	68
Fixing shelves	14%	60
Replacing Tap Washer	10%	45
Lock Replacement/repair	10%	45
Fixing tap	9%	40
Rearranging Furniture	9%	37
Re-hanging door	8%	33
Making carpets and flooring safe	5%	23
Unblocking sink wastes	3%	14



Of the 342 respondent who answered this question;

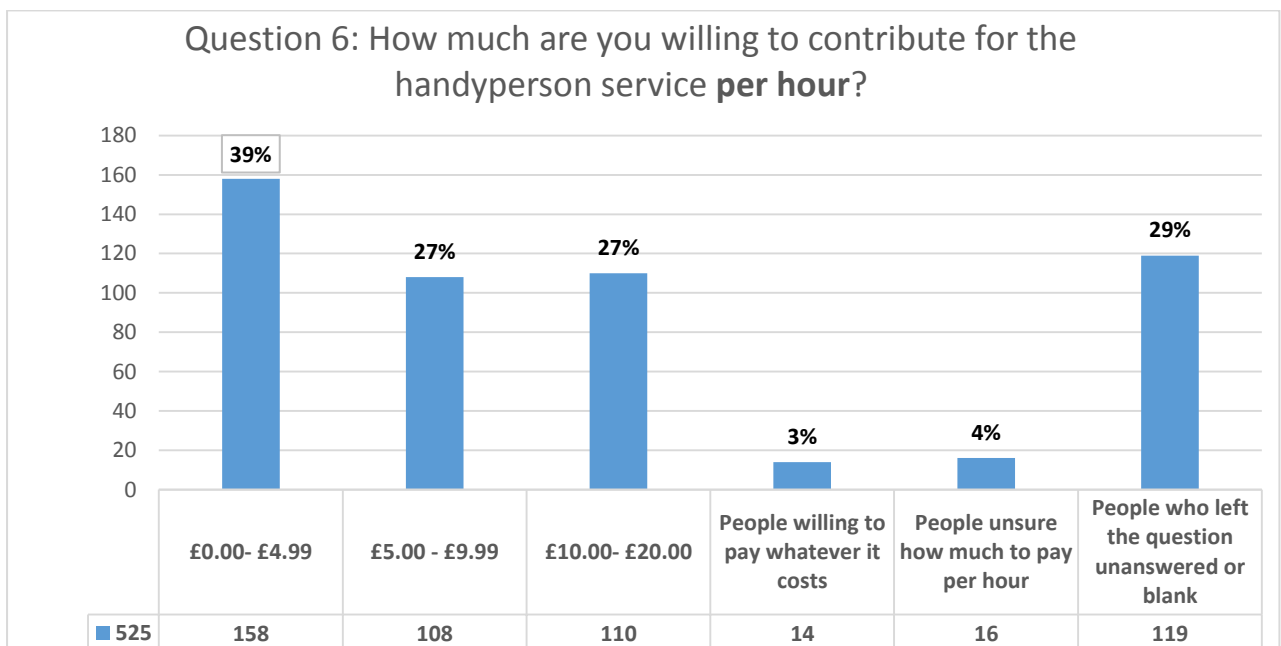
- 333 (77%) were satisfied with the handyperson service
- 7 service users (1.6%) responded they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- (0.4%) people said they were dissatisfied.

43 of those who are recorded as satisfied in the above figures had crossed out satisfied and written very satisfied.



Of the 384 respondents who answered this question;

- 355 (92%) of respondents said they would be very upset if the service was taken away
- 29 (7%) said they would not be too bothered or wouldn't mind at all.



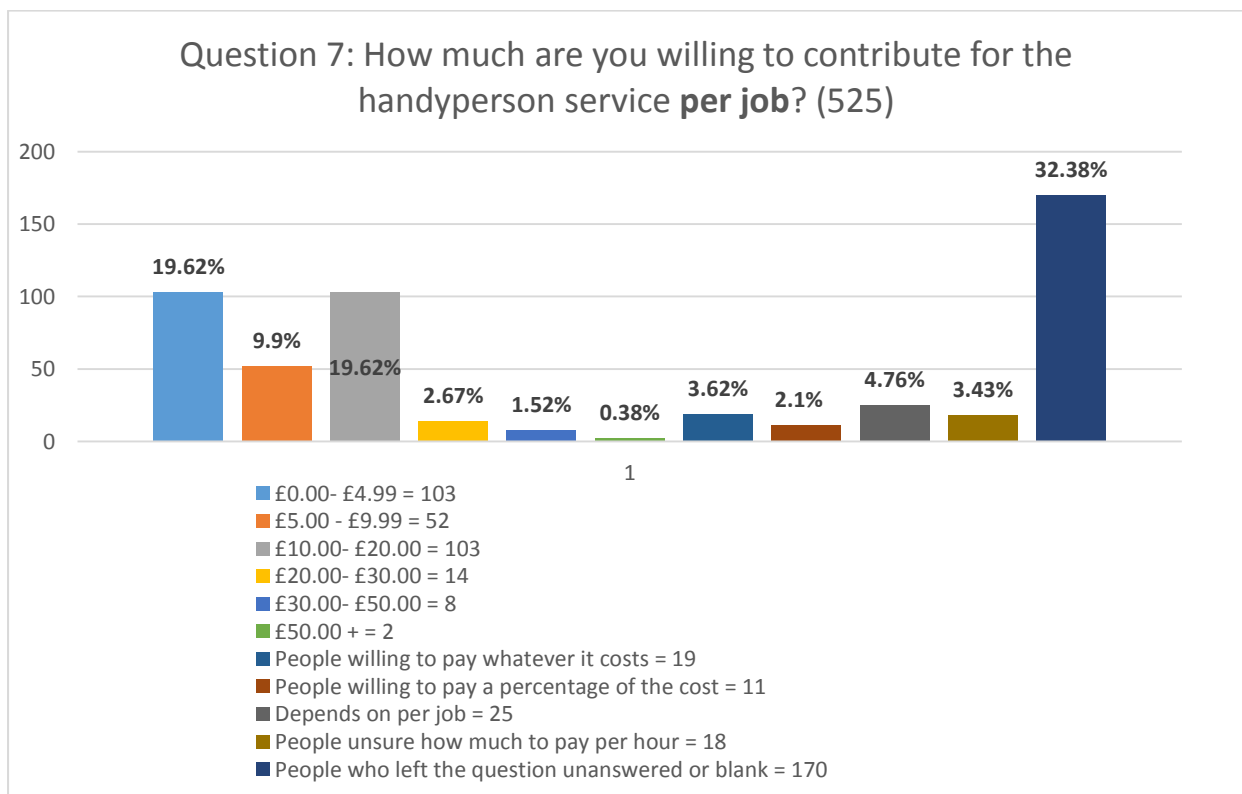
406 respondents answered question 6 relating to the potential contribution of users of the service of which;

- 39% (158) responded that they would be willing to contribute between £0 and £4.99 per hour
- 27% (108) responded that they would be willing to contribute between £5 and 9.99 per hour

- 27% (110) responded that they would be willing to contribute between £10 and £20 per hour
- 3% (14) responded that they would be willing to pay whatever the cost of the service was
10.3
10.4 4% (16) responded that they were unsure of how much to pay per hour

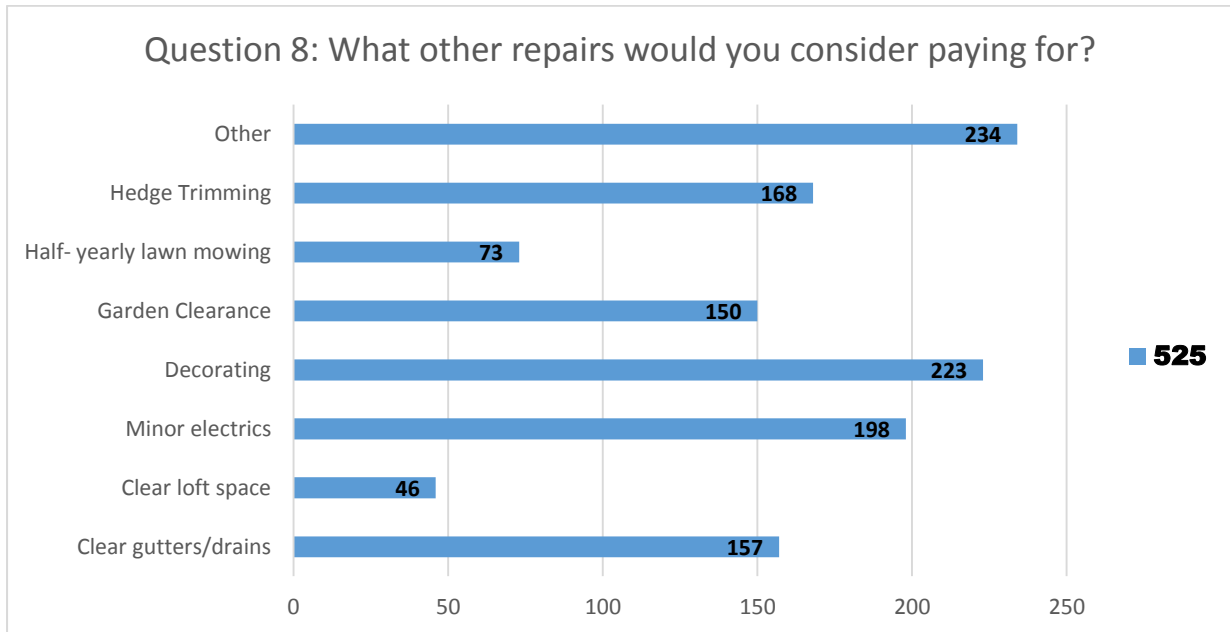
11

12 Last years' outturn shows the cost of providing the handyman per hour is £36.00 (excluding overheads).



- Just under a third of all responders left the question of contributions per job blank.
- Just under a fifth of all responders said they would pay up to £5.00 per job, and the same again for those willing to pay between £10.00 and £20.00 per job.
- 19 people (3.62%) were willing to cover the costs whatever they may be, however, 100 responders (19%) said they would not want to contribute at all.
- A total of 84 of all responders (16%) stated they would not want to contribute to either an hourly rate or per job rate.

- The average amount people were willing to pay for the service was £20.00 per job. The average cost of a job provided by the handyperson service amounted to £37.27 based on 15/16 outturns (plus corporate overheads).

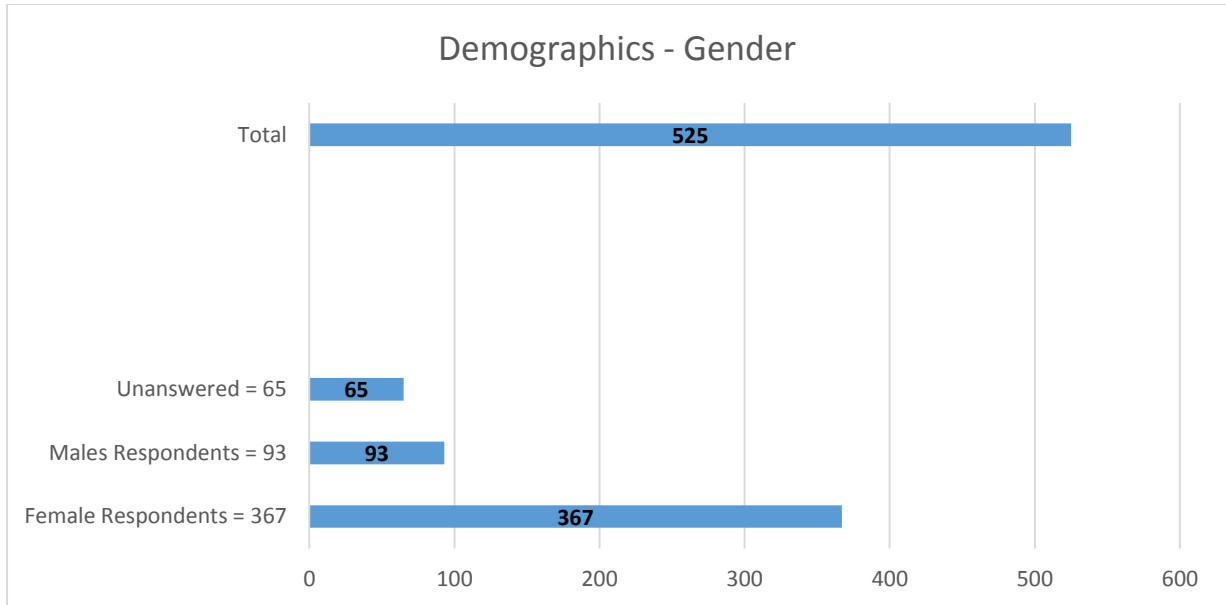


234 responders indicated that they would pay for other jobs to be done by handypersons but did not give precise details of the service they wanted. The most commonly requested assistance currently not provided through the handypersons service is decorating, followed closely by minor electrical works. Some other local authorities do offer these services.

Job	Percentage	Number
Other	45%	234
Decorating	43%	223
Minor Electrics	38%	198
Hedge Trimming	32%	168
Clear gutters/drains	30%	157
Garden Clearance	29%	150
Half- yearly lawn mowing	14%	73
Clear Loft space	9%	46

Respondents who indicated they would be willing to pay for other repairs chose minor plumbing and odd jobs round the house such as clearing blockages to toilet/sinks as the most popular job types.

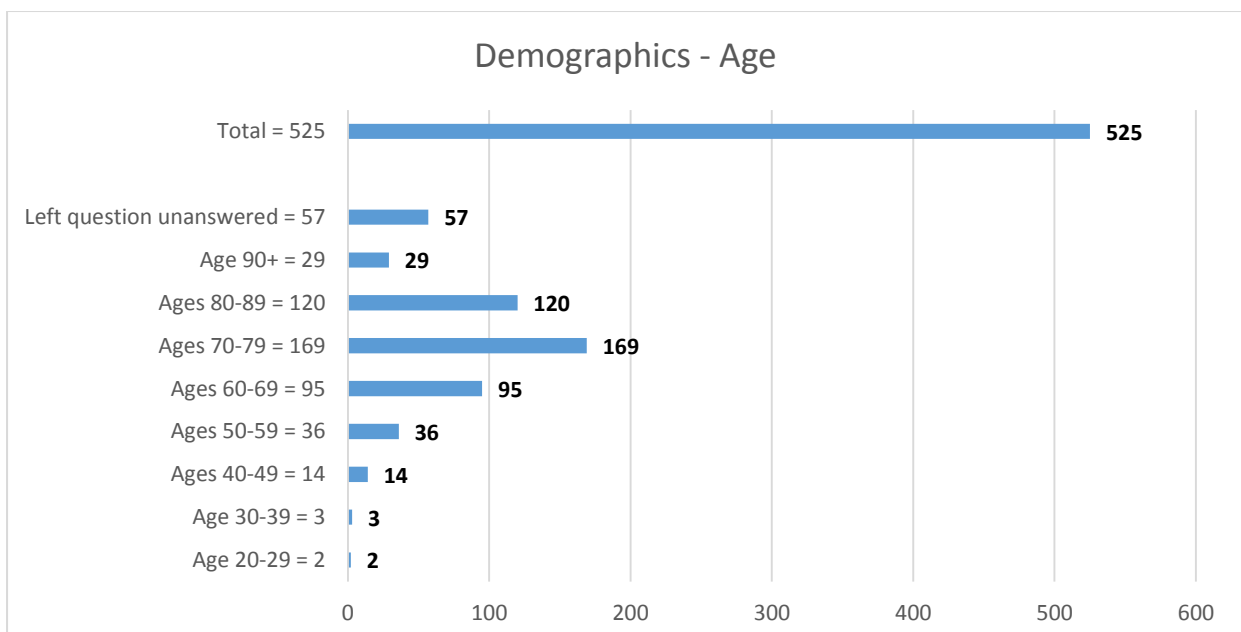
17% who had used the service before, compared to 16% of all responders, said they would not be willing to pay for any of the above jobs.



Of all 525 respondents;

- 70% were female
- 18% were male
- 12% left the question answered.

Of those who had used the service before 85% were female, whilst 15% were males.

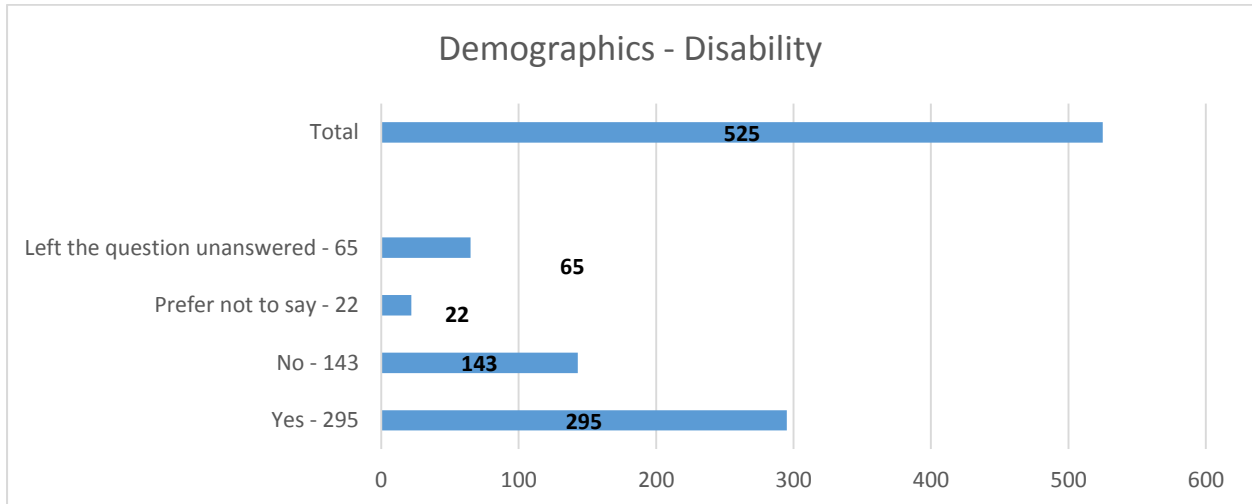


The age group of the respondents varied from 23 up to 97.

- 32% of respondents were aged 70-79

- 23% were aged 80-89
- 18% were aged 60-69
- 7% were aged 50-59
- 5% were 90 or older
- 4% were aged 50 and younger

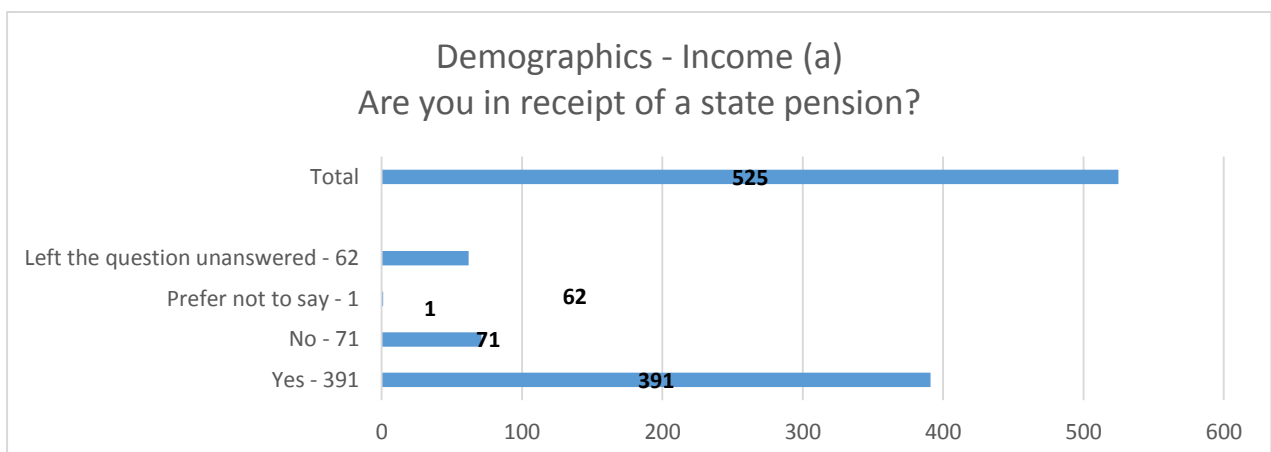
The remaining 11% did not answer this question.



Of all 525 respondents;

- 56% (295) considered themselves to have a disability
- 27% (143) declared they were free of any disability
- 13% (87) left the question unanswered.

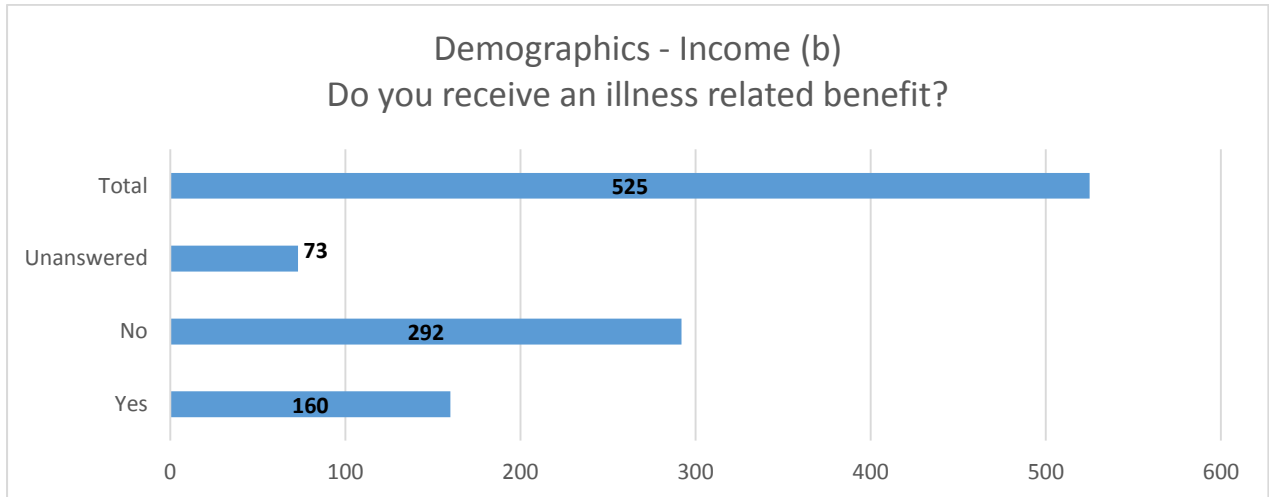
Of those who did consider themselves to have a disability, almost three quarters were female. The highest proportion of respondents who considered themselves to have a disability were those aged 70-79 accounting for 35% of the respondents. Of the 295 who considered themselves to have a disability, 41% (120) stated poor mobility or arthritis as their disability.



Of the overall 525 respondents;

- 74% were in receipt of a state pension
- 14% were not in receipt of a state pension
- 12% left the question unanswered.

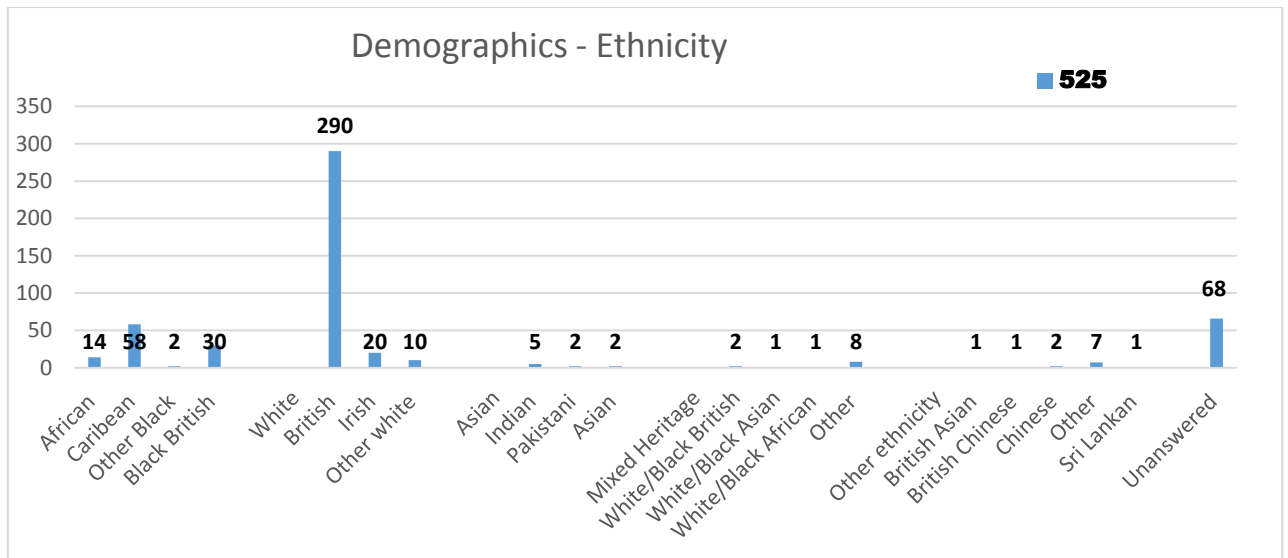
A total of 17% of the respondents who considered themselves to have a disability were in receipt of a state pension and received an illness related benefit.



Of all respondents;

- 56% did not receive an illness related benefit
- 30% did receive an illness related benefit
- 14% left the question unanswered.

Of those who did receive an illness related benefit 70% were female and of the 452 who answered the question, 29% considered themselves to have a disability but did not receive an illness related benefit.



The above chart captures the ethnicity recorded by respondents to the consultation.

Of those using the service who responded;

- 262 (61%) were White
- 97 (22%) were Black
- 9 (2%) were Asian
- (3%) were of mixed heritage
- 10 (2%) were from another ethnic origin
- 42 (10%) left this question blank

