

Staffordshire People's Panel

Autumn 2008 Survey Report: Executive Summary



Document Information

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If you have any questions about the data contained in the report or would like to investigate the possibility of further analysis please contact Kerry McCormick on 01785 276518. For queries about future Staffordshire People's Panel consultation activities please contact Wendy Bailey on 01785 854267.

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

Staffordshire People's Panel (here after referred to as 'the Panel') is a database of approximately 1,500 residents across Staffordshire that broadly reflect the geographic, gender and age profile of Staffordshire. These residents have agreed to be regularly consulted by Staffordshire County Council to help inform policy and improve service delivery. This report presents the findings of the Autumn 2008 survey.

2. Methodology

In September 2008 all members of the Panel received a self-completion survey containing a wide range of topics. A total of 506 completed questionnaires were received by the final cut-off date, this represents a response rate of 35%. The data has been weighted to ensure it is representative of Staffordshire's population in terms of age, gender and district area.

3. Communicating with Residents

The method that most Panel members found helpful in finding out information about Staffordshire County Council was the magazine 'Your Staffordshire' (69%). Around half of respondents (49%) were aware of the website but had never used it. Younger respondents were more likely to have found the website helpful than older respondents.

Over half of respondents were not aware of the mobile unit or the county councillors Question Time (55% and 54% respectively).

Recommendations for service delivery: Communicating with Residents

- Increase awareness of the county council's mobile unit and Question Time event.
- Continue to use 'Your Staffordshire' as a primary method for communicating with residents.
- Continue to develop the county council website to further increase it's usefulness as a source of information.

4. Community Hubs

The Panel felt that it was important for schools in Staffordshire to offer all three types of services: after-school activities for children, health advice from NHS professionals and after-school activities for adults. There was particularly strong support for after-school activities for children which nearly all respondents (95%) felt it was important for schools to offer.

Recommendations for service delivery: Community Hubs

- Schools in Staffordshire should offer after-school activities for children and adults, plus health advice from NHS professionals.

5. Council Budget and Priorities

The Panel felt that the top three priorities for Staffordshire should be: reducing the level and fear of crime (51%), making sure the most vulnerable people in Staffordshire have the support they need (47%) and supporting older people to maintain independence and their quality of life (35%). Opinions on the top priorities did vary dependent on the age of the respondent. There has been little change in the top three priorities since 2007.

The three priorities identified by the Panel as areas that should receive **more** funding are the same three overall priorities identified. The Panel identified the following three priorities as areas that should potentially receive **less** funding: taking a leadership role in tackling climate change in Staffordshire (74%), looking after and improving Staffordshire's environment (39%) and reducing the amount of rubbish Staffordshire sends to landfill (35%).

Recommendations for service delivery: Council Budget & Priorities

- The top three priorities for Staffordshire County Council should be reducing the level and fear of crime, making sure the most vulnerable people in Staffordshire have the support they need and supporting older people to maintain independence and their quality of life. These are the three areas which respondents would like to see receive more funding.
- If Staffordshire County Council needs to reduce funding in certain areas these areas should be taking a leadership role in tackling climate change in Staffordshire, looking after and improving Staffordshire's environment and reducing the amount of rubbish Staffordshire sends to landfill.

6. Customer Service

Almost all respondents (98%) felt that a phone call to the county council should be answered within seven rings, with over half of respondents (54%) feeling it should be answered within five rings. Most respondents (81%) would expect to see a receptionist within a five minute wait and around three quarters of respondents (76%) thought it was acceptable to see an officer within ten or within fifteen minutes.

Three quarters of respondents (75%) would expect to receive a fully answered response to their letter or email to the county council within ten working days. Around half of respondents (51%) would expect to receive an acknowledgement that their letter or email had been received in all situations.

Around 41% of respondents felt that their complaint to the county council was dealt with in a professional manner, however less than a third of respondents (30%) said they were made aware of the process of dealing with their complaint.

Recommendations for service delivery: Customer Service

- Phone calls to the county council should be answered at least within seven rings and preferably within five.
- Visitors to the county council should be seen by a receptionist within five minutes and by an appropriate officer within ten to fifteen minutes.
- Letters or emails to the county council should be fully answered within ten working days.
- Acknowledgements should be sent out if a full response is not possible within a reasonable timescale and preferably for all correspondence.
- More should be done to ensure that complainants are fully aware of how the complaints process works.

7. Staffordshire and the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics

There is some scepticism about the benefits to Staffordshire of the 2012 London Games. Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) agreed that Staffordshire would benefit. It is not known how this compares to other parts of the country (outside of London). The potential benefit with the highest percentage of respondents who thought it was essential/important was for Staffordshire athletes to compete in the games (85%), followed by residents having free access to swimming at their local authority pools (84%).

Around a fifth of respondents (21%) thought that the 2012 London Games would inspire them to take part in more physical activity. Only 12% of respondents said nothing would inspire them to become more physically active. The main barrier to people becoming more physically active is cost.

Around one in seven respondents (14%) currently volunteer to help others in sport or cultural activity for at least one hour a week. A similar proportion (66 people) used this survey as an opportunity to request further information on volunteering to help others in sport and cultural activities in their local area.

Recommendations for service delivery: 2012 London Games

- Ensure that free access to local authority swimming pools for Staffordshire residents is a tangible benefit from the 2012 London Games.
- To inspire people to become more physically active attempts should be made to reduce the cost of participation (e.g. introduce more discounted and reduced rates). There is little evidence that developing new facilities or investing in public transport to facilities will increase participation levels in physical activity.

8. Building Schools for the Future

Overall there is very strong support for the Building Schools for the Future programme, in principle, with only 4% of respondents stating that they would definitely or probably not support it.

The Panel identified that the top three priorities for Staffordshire's education system should be: more respect between young people and teachers, young people being encouraged to be self-motivated, creative and independent and more support for children with learning difficulties. There was some variation according to age.

Recommendations for service delivery: Building Schools for the Future

- Staffordshire's education system should prioritise increasing respect between young people and teachers, encouraging young people to be self-motivated, creative and independent and increasing the support for children with learning difficulties.
- There is strong support for the BSF programme in principle, especially amongst residents with school aged children.

9. The Role of County Councillors

More people were unaware of the role of county councillors (40%) than were aware of it (31%) and around a third of respondents reported knowing who their county councillor was. This percentage increased dependent on the age of the respondent. Overall, respondents agreed that county councillors made decisions about county council services and represented the interests of the community. However, more respondents disagreed that county councillors fostered community spirit than agreed.

Recommendations for service delivery: The Role of County Councillors

- Continue to raise awareness of the role of county councillors, particularly with regards to fostering community spirit and particularly with younger residents of Staffordshire.

10. Shugborough Hall and Estate

Over two-thirds of respondents (69%) have visited Shugborough at some time. The most popular reason for respondents to visit Shugborough was for a special event (37%). The vast majority—almost nine out of ten—respondents who had visited Shugborough were satisfied with their last visit.

The most popular reason for respondents not visiting Shugborough was because they couldn't get there (30%), followed by not being aware of Shugborough (28%).

The most popular reason that would make respondents visit Shugborough more often was having special offers discounts (52%), followed by a range of special events (44%).

Recommendations for service delivery: Shugborough Hall and Estate

- Customer satisfaction with Shugborough is very high which suggests that promoting Shugborough is more of a priority than improving the existing service.
- Consider special offers/ discounts, the range of special events and review transport links to increase visitor numbers.

11. Supporting Older People, Adults with Disabilities and Carers

Recommendations for service delivery: Supporting People and Carers

- The county council should focus on supporting the top three priorities for residents quality of life as they get older:
 - having enough money to maintain their quality of life;
 - being able to live in their own home; and
 - feeling safe from crime.
- The county council should review what it can do to support carers, in particular, for the top three services that Staffordshire residents feel should be available to carers:
 - being able to take short breaks/respite from their carer responsibilities;
 - advice and support with money and benefits; and
 - information about the services that Staffordshire County Council provides for carers.

12. Safeguarding Children and Adults

Most respondents would take action if they were concerned about the safety/ and or well-being of a child and a vulnerable adult. A higher percentage of respondents would take action with regards to a child than a vulnerable adult. The most likely action for respondents to take in the case of both children and vulnerable adults is to contact the council/ Social Services.

The most likely reason for respondents not to take action in the case of a child is due to being fearful of the repercussions (57%). In the case of a vulnerable adult, the most likely reason is a concern about making the situation worse (52%).

The majority of respondents (52%) have not experienced a vulnerable adult being ill-treated, neglected or exploited in hospital.

Recommendations for service delivery: Safeguarding Children and Adults

- The county council should continue to support the public in taking action when they are concerned about the safety of either a child or vulnerable adult. (In both cases residents are most likely to contact the council/ Social Services or the police.)
- The county council should consider what can be done to address the reasons why people do not report their concerns over a child or vulnerable adult. The main reasons are:
 - [with regards to children] being fearful of repercussions and concern about making the situation worse; and
 - [with regards to adults] concern about making the situation worse and unsure of what action to take/ who to contact.

13. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

The majority of respondents feel safe in their home from fire and know how to protect themselves from fire in their own home. The services that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue provide that respondents are most likely to be aware of were: Home Fire Risk Checks, school visits and specialist smoke/ fire alarms for the deaf and hard of hearing. Just under two thirds of respondents (63%) felt that the Home Fire Risk Check would be useful to them and their family.

Over three quarters of respondents (78%) were satisfied with the services provided by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue.

Recommendations for service delivery: Fire & Rescue Service

- Continue to increase awareness of the intervention schemes, particularly for deliberate fire setters, student firefighter schemes and working to reduce situations where arson may occur.