Insight through vision

# 2013 STAR Report
# Report C: Leaseholders

Prepared by CR Market Research

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# Introduction

This is the third and final report in our series of analyses of the 2013 STAR Survey. The survey, undertaken by CR Market Research on behalf of Slough Borough Council, gathered the views of 80 leaseholders on a range of issues to help the Housing Service develop a better understanding of their residents' views, perceptions and concerns. The numbers of responses for leaseholders are low. Generally leaseholder surveys have a poor response rate and this is in line with our experience when carrying out leaseholder surveys. The key findings from our research are detailed in this report and will inform the organisation's decision making process by identifying priorities and expectations.

We believe the results from this research, alongside our previous two reports examining the views of tenants, will provide Slough BC with crucial insight into the views of their residents.

Rose Collin
Sales & Marketing Director
CR Market Research

# Key Findings

Compared to the results from our Tenants' Reports, our analysis uncovers a relatively dissatisfied community of Leaseholders. Levels of dissatisfaction often exceed satisfaction in many areas of the report, and there will be several areas (described in more detail below) where the Housing Service will want to make improvements.

Some specific findings are listed below, including areas where results are more positive.

1. More than half of leaseholders are satisfied with the quality of their home.
2. More leaseholders are dissatisfied with the value for money they perceive their service charges provide than are satisfied.
3. Another area for attention might be the service's approach to listening to and acting upon leaseholders' views.
4. Just more than half (51%) of leaseholders are satisfied with the service provided to them in terms of the upkeep of communal areas, but notably 38.5% are dissatisfied. On a positive note, we see that nearly one quarter of all leaseholders (23%) are 'very satisfied' with repairs to communal areas.
5. Nearly half of respondents were satisfied with the consultation they receive before service charge levels are set, and 34% are dissatisfied. Is there a difference between leaseholders being consulted with and their perception that they are genuinely contributing to the decision-making process?
6. When asked for priorities for improvements to the Housing Service, two thirds of leaseholders feel that one of the top three priorities should be repairs and maintenance of homes. Just more than half (55%) feel dealing with anti-social behaviour should be a priority.
7. One in four (25%) leaseholders states that they do not trust the Housing Service. Nearly half of these say that they 'strongly disagree' with the notion.
8. Six in ten (60%) respondents found it hard to get hold of the right person when making a complaint. Less than half found the staff helpful and a similar proportion felt their query was answered within a reasonable time.
9. When asked which communication channels respondents might be interested in using to get more involved in influencing the way the service is run, the two channels that at least half of respondents mentioned are 'in writing' (56%) and 'telephone' (50%). This is a reminder of the value of more 'traditional' means of communication.

# Project Background

Slough Borough Council Housing Service commissioned CR Market Research to conduct a postal and online based consultation exercise with a representative sample of their leaseholders during May and June 2013. The STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) Survey, launched by Housemark, is the replacement for the STATUS Surveys. They are designed to provide social housing landlords with the means of benchmarking satisfaction results with each other, and use a consistent set of questions to enable comparison.

The survey consisted of around twenty questions covering a range of themes such as satisfaction with the services provided by Slough Housing, its responsiveness to problems and the standard of customer service provided when leaseholders make contact with the trust.

Slough Housing has 919 leaseholder households. CRMR has strived to ensure the households sampled for this survey are broadly representative of all leaseholder households. As part of this, we have collected the postcode of each respondent and identified which ward each household lives in. Although the sample size does not permit a robust analysis of the data at ward level, we have presented the number of leaseholder surveyed in each ward for information (see Figure 1).

# Respondent Profile

Figure 1 presents the number of respondents in each ward.

| Ward | Leaseholders | % of Leaseholders | Sample | % of sample | Sample as % of Ward |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Baylis and Stoke** | 12 | 1.3% | 0 | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Britwell** | 45 | 4.9% | 2 | 2.5% | 4.4% |
| **Central** | 22 | 2.4% | 1 | 1.3% | 4.5% |
| **Chalvey** | 104 | 11.3% | 12 | 15.0% | 11.5% |
| **Cippenham Green** | 11 | 1.2% | 3 | 3.8% | 27.3% |
| **Cippenham Meadows** | 94 | 10.2% | 2 | 2.5% | 2.1% |
| **Colnbrook with Poyle** | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **Farnham** | 19 | 2.1% | 1 | 1.3% | 5.3% |
| **Foxborough** | 97 | 10.6% | 13 | 16.3% | 13.4% |
| **Haymill** | 220 | 23.9% | 14 | 17.5% | 6.4% |
| **Kedermister** | 128 | 13.9% | 9 | 11.3% | 7.0% |
| **Langley St. Mary's** | 68 | 7.4% | 14 | 17.5% | 20.6% |
| **Upton** | 46 | 5.0% | 5 | 6.3% | 10.9% |
| **Wexham Lea** | 53 | 5.8% | 4 | 5.0% | 7.5% |
| | 919 | | 80 | | |

*Figure 1*

We can also profile respondents in terms of sex, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and religion (figures based on main tenant unless stated).

| Age & Sex | Male | | Female | | Not recorded | | Overall | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **18 - 29** | 1 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% |
| **30 - 49** | 12 | 15% | 3 | 4% | 10 | 13% | 25 | 31% |
| **50 - 69** | 15 | 19% | 7 | 9% | 11 | 14% | 33 | 41% |
| **70+** | 6 | 8% | 0 | 0% | 5 | 6% | 11 | 14% |
| **Not recorded** | 1 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 9 | 11% | 10 | 13% |
| Overall | 35 | 44% | 10 | 13% | 35 | 44% | 80 | 100% |

*Figure 2*

| *Ethnicity* | Number | % |
|---|---|---|
| **White British** | 33 | 41% |
| **White Irish** | 5 | 6% |
| **White Other** | 2 | 3% |
| **Asian or Asian British** | 21 | 26% |
| **Black or Black British** | 7 | 9% |
| **Mixed** | 2 | 3% |
| **Other** | 0 | 0% |
| **Not recorded** | 10 | 13% |

*Figure 3*

| *Religion* | Number | % |
|---|---|---|
| **Christian** | 39 | 49% |
| **Muslim** | 11 | 14% |
| **Sikh** | 4 | 5% |
| **Hindu** | 6 | 8% |
| **Buddhist** | 0 | 0% |
| **Jewish** | 0 | 0% |
| **Other** | 1 | 1% |
| **No religion** | 8 | 10% |
| **Not recorded** | 11 | 14% |

*Figure 4*

| *Limiting Long Term Illness* | Number | % |
|---|---|---|
| **Yes – limited a lot** | 13 | 16% |
| **Yes – limited a little** | 10 | 13% |
| **No** | 51 | 64% |
| **Not recorded** | 6 | 8% |

*Figure 5*

| *Sexuality* | Number | % |
|---|---|---|
| **Heterosexual/Straight** | 53 | 66% |
| **Bisexual** | 0 | 0% |
| **Gay/Lesbian** | 1 | 1% |
| **Not recorded** | 26 | 33% |

*Figure 6*

# Analysis

## Maintenance

Respondents were first asked to consider how satisfied they are with the overall maintenance of their home. Available options ranged between 'very satisfied' to 'very dissatisfied'.

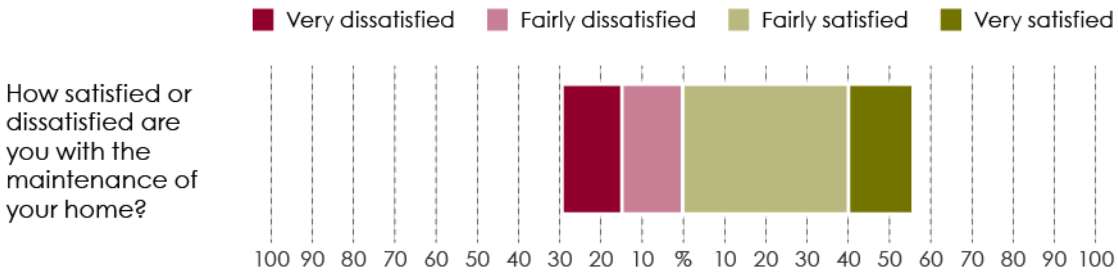


*Figure 7*

Overall, 55% of leaseholders are satisfied with the maintenance of their home, with 15% very satisfied. More than one quarter (29%) said that they were dissatisfied, which may be an area for further assessment.

## Engagement

There then followed a couple of questions relating to communications and engagement with leaseholders.

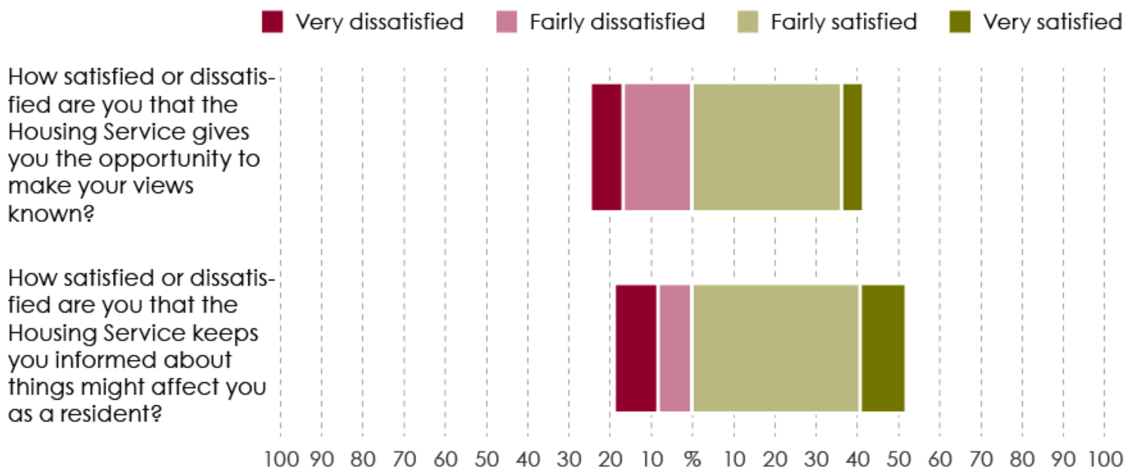


*Figure 8*

Although more leaseholders are satisfied than dissatisfied in terms of being given the opportunity to make their views known, only 41% are satisfied and just 8% are very satisfied. One quarter are dissatisfied with this aspect of engagement with leaseholders.

More residents (51%) are satisfied that the Housing Service keeps them informed about things that might affect them as a resident, with most of these (43%) very satisfied. Just 19% were dissatisfied.

## Satisfaction with Specific Issues

Leaseholders were then asked for their satisfaction levels in relation to a broad mix of specific themes and issues.

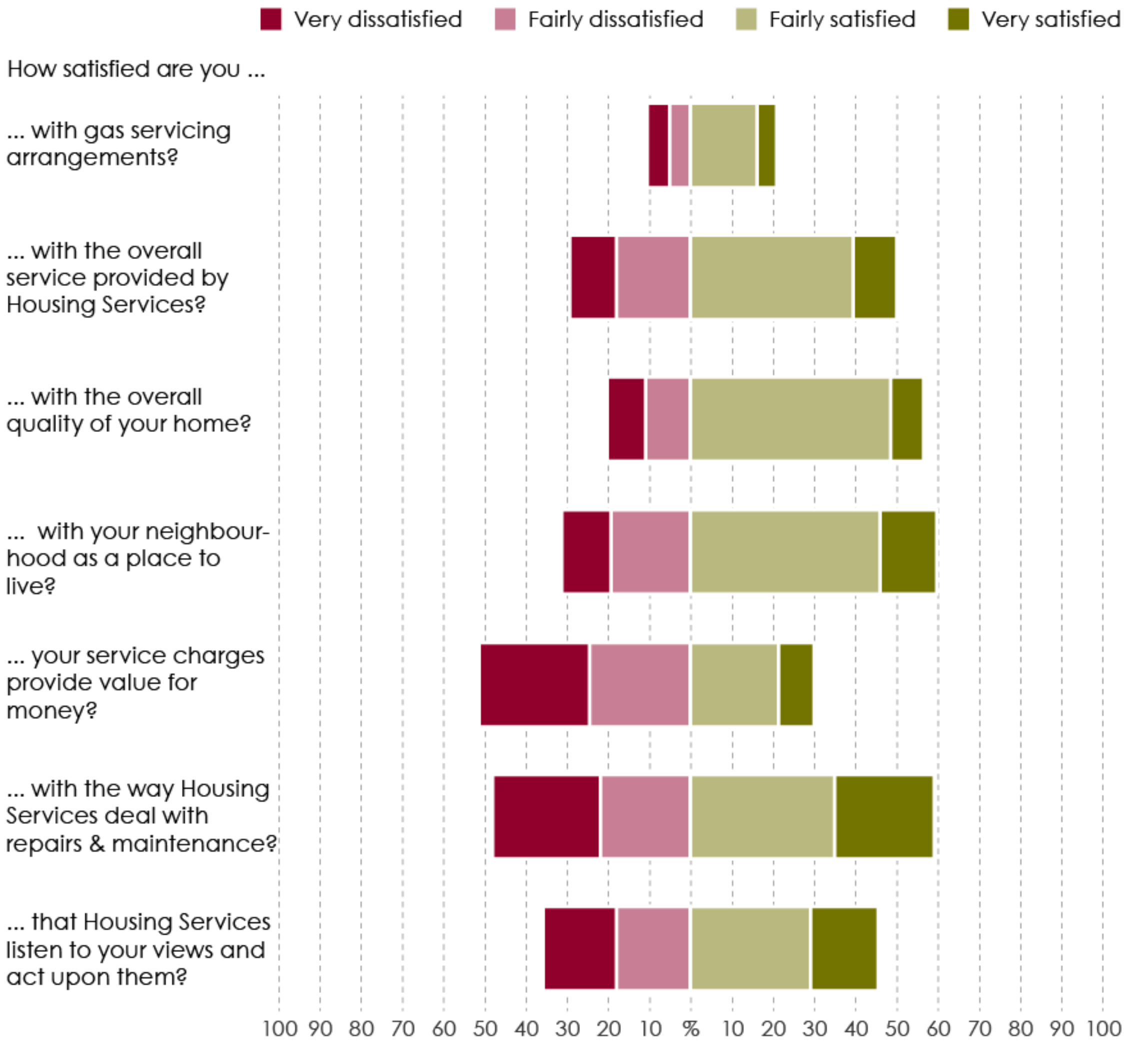


*Figure 9*

There is considerable variation in the levels of satisfaction expressed across these themes, and in one case (value for money of service charges) we actually see more dissatisfied than satisfied leaseholders.

Overall satisfaction rarely exceeds 50% on these indicators, and net satisfaction (satisfaction minus dissatisfaction) is low in most cases. It is also notable how much lower satisfaction is on these measures than that expressed by tenants in the other part of the STAR Survey. For further details please refer to the 2013 STAR Report - Report A: Tenants.

There will be several areas for attention here, including the service's approach to listening to and acting upon leaseholders' views, alongside the aforementioned value for money measure.

## Communal Areas and Repairs

Specific to the Leaseholder Survey, respondents were then asked a set of questions relating to the upkeep of any communal areas in their block/scheme.

Less than one quarter of respondents (24%) were aware of the Housing Service's Service Standards and Local Offers.

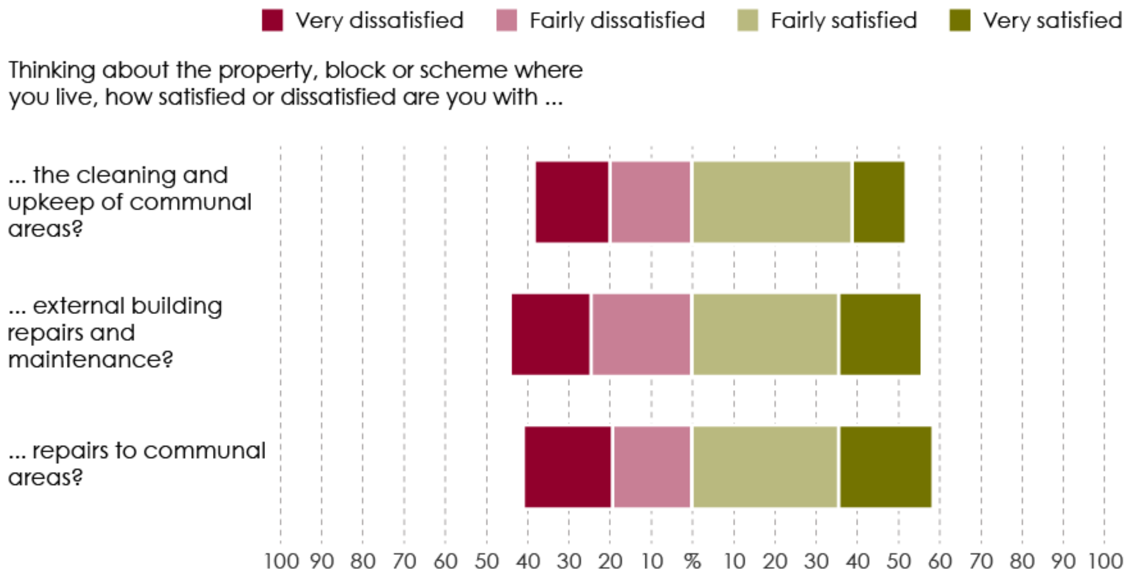


*Figure 10*

Again, it is notable that there are relatively high levels of dissatisfaction across these measures. Figures are fairly consistent, with a representative figure of around 55% of leaseholders satisfied and 40% dissatisfied across the 3 services covered.

On a positive note, we see that nearly one quarter of all leaseholders (23%) are 'very satisfied' with repairs to communal areas.

## Service Charges

Next followed a set of questions relating to leaseholders' satisfaction with the service charges they pay.

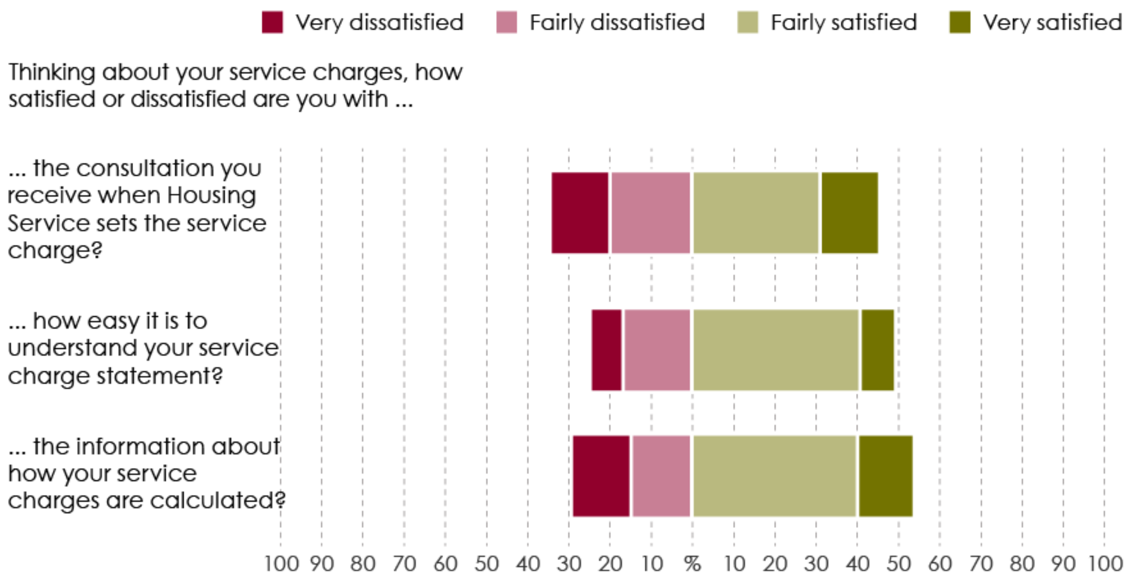


*Figure 11*

Although the number of satisfied leaseholders outweighs the number of dissatisfied leaseholders on all of these measures relating to service charges, there are not insignificant proportions stating that they are dissatisfied and there is clearly room for development.

For example, 45% of respondents were satisfied with the consultation they receive before service charge levels are set, compared with 34% that are dissatisfied. Is there a disconnect between leaseholders being consulted with and feeling they are genuinely contributing to the decision making process?

## Information and Advice

Respondents to the survey were then asked to share their views on issues relating to the agreement they have the Housing Service and access to information on this.

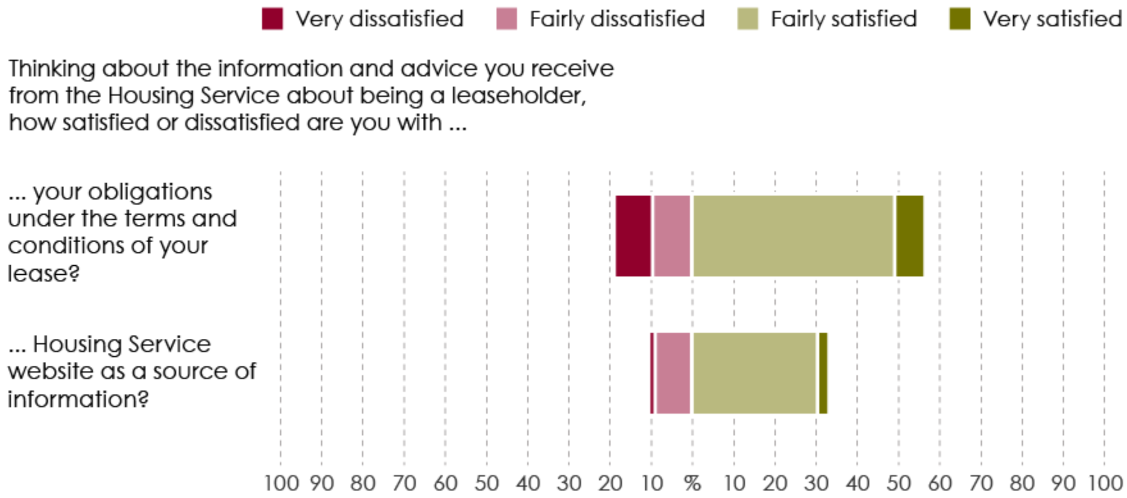


*Figure 12*

Leaseholders are broadly satisfied with the obligations they have under their lease with the Housing Service. Nearly six in ten (56%) are satisfied, compared with 19% that are dissatisfied.

Relatively fewer respondents answered in either direction when asked about the Housing Service website. Although many answered ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ it is reasonable to assume that most of these leaseholders have not used the website and therefore have no view. Just 1% said they were ‘very dissatisfied’ with the website.

Just 6% of respondents said that they had found it easier to afford their mortgage payments and service charges since moving into their property. This compares to 38% stating that they have found to harder to manage financially. This might be an area for further exploration; the survey only provides a signpost towards a potential issue here.

## Priorities

Respondents were presented with a range of options for what the Housing Service could choose as priorities and were asked to pick their three personal choices. Figure 13 illustrates how preferences were distributed across the respective options.

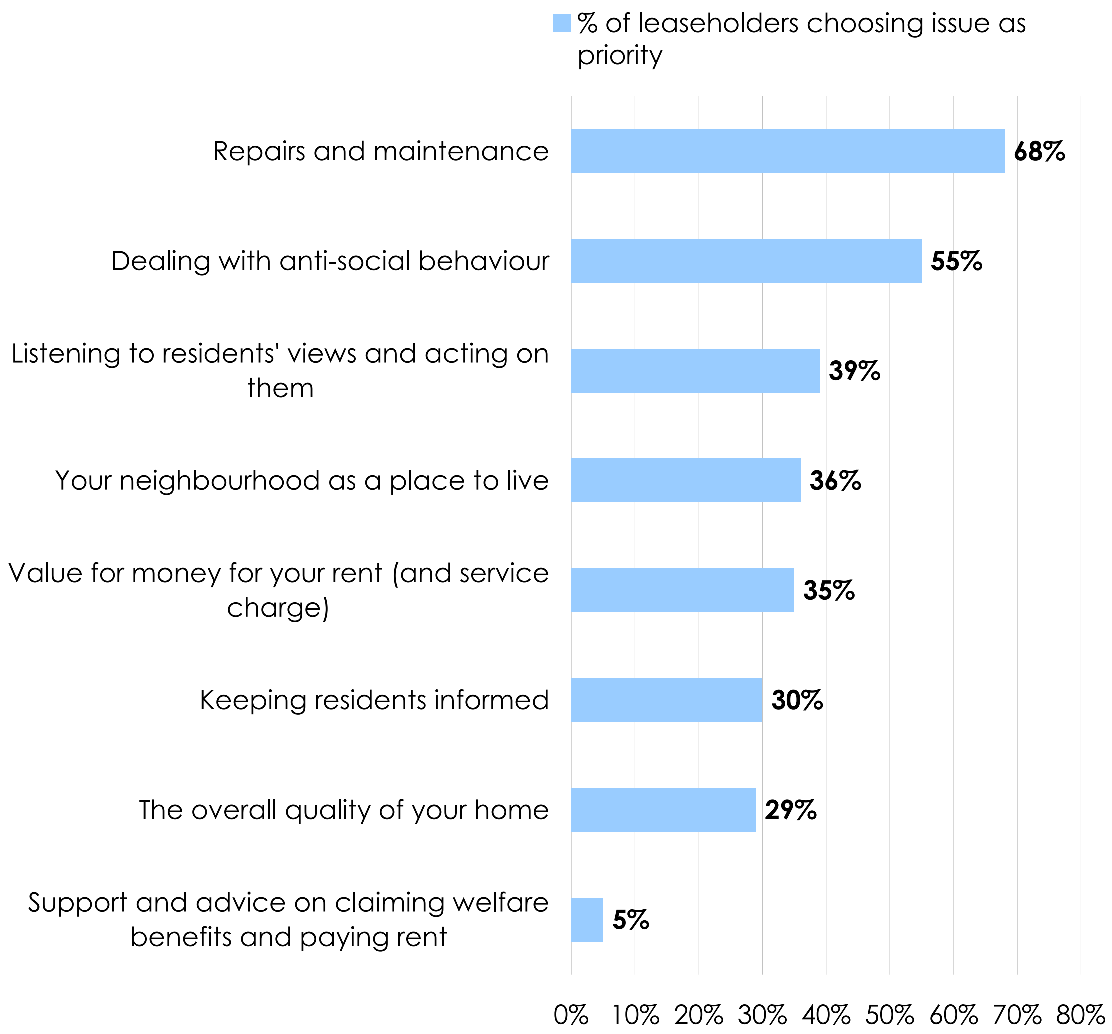


*Figure 13*

Two thirds of leaseholders feel that one of the top three priorities should be repairs and maintenance of homes. Just more than half (55%) feel dealing with anti-social behaviour should be a priority.

It is interesting to note the differences between these figures and those reported in the analysis of tenants' views. For further details please refer to 2013 STAR Report - Report A: Tenants. For leaseholders, the overall quality of the home is less important priority, whereas dealing with anti-social behaviour features more prominently.

## Quality Standards

The next set of questions can be loosely grouped under the heading of 'quality standards'. Leaseholders are asked whether they agree with a series of statements relating to the level of service they receive from Slough Housing Services.

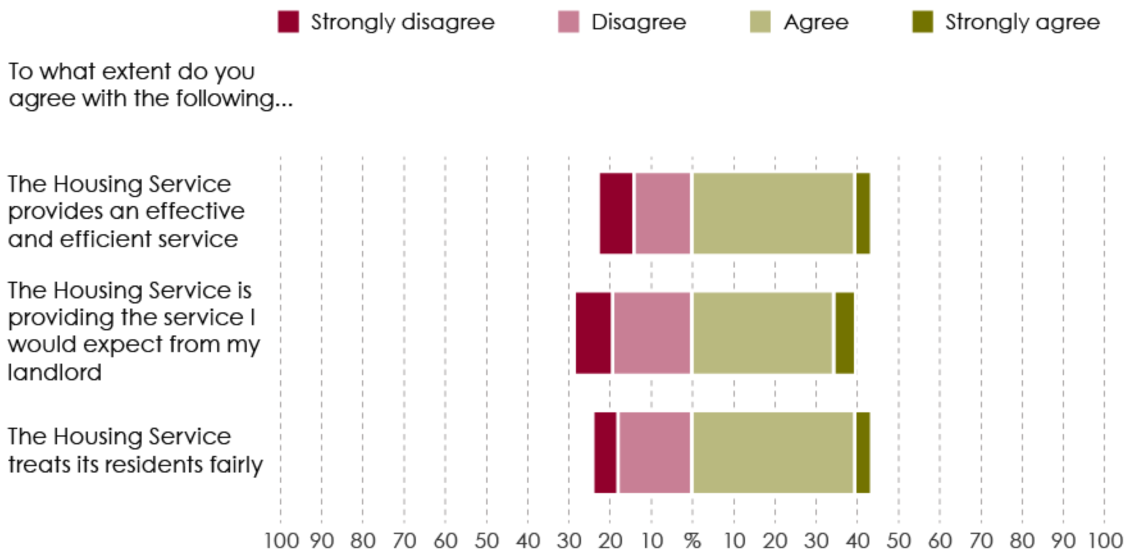


*Figure 14*

On balance, the results are positive. Representative figures across the 3 measures of quality show around 40% of respondents agree with the statements and a smaller proportion, of around 25%, disagree.

The highest level of disagreement relates to the Housing Service providing the service leaseholders expect from their landlord. Nearly 30% disagree with this statement.

## Reputation and Trust

Leaseholders were asked a set of questions relating to the 'brand' associated with the Housing Service, and specifically whether they agreed with a number of statements.

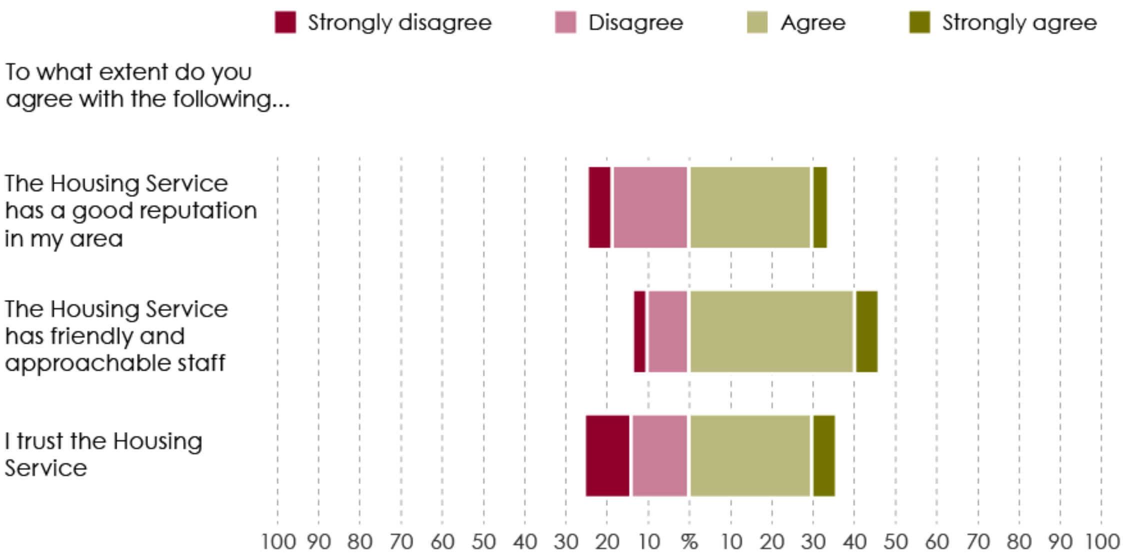


*Figure 15*

Although the positive responses outweigh the negative ones, the Council will be interested to see that one in four leaseholders (25%) state that they do not trust the Housing Service. Nearly half of these say that they 'strongly disagree' with the notion.

The most positive views are associated with the statement 'the Housing Service has friendly and approachable staff'. Here, nearly half of respondents (45%) agree while just 14% disagree.

## Contacting the Housing Service

This next section of the survey asked a series of questions relating to leaseholders' experiences when contacting the Housing Service. Some of the questions relate to a subset of respondents, based on their previous answers, and the sample sizes are provided where appropriate.

Overall, 45% of respondents stated that they had contacted the Housing Service in the last twelve months with a query other than to pay rent or service charges. These respondents (36) were then asked questions relating to their experiences.

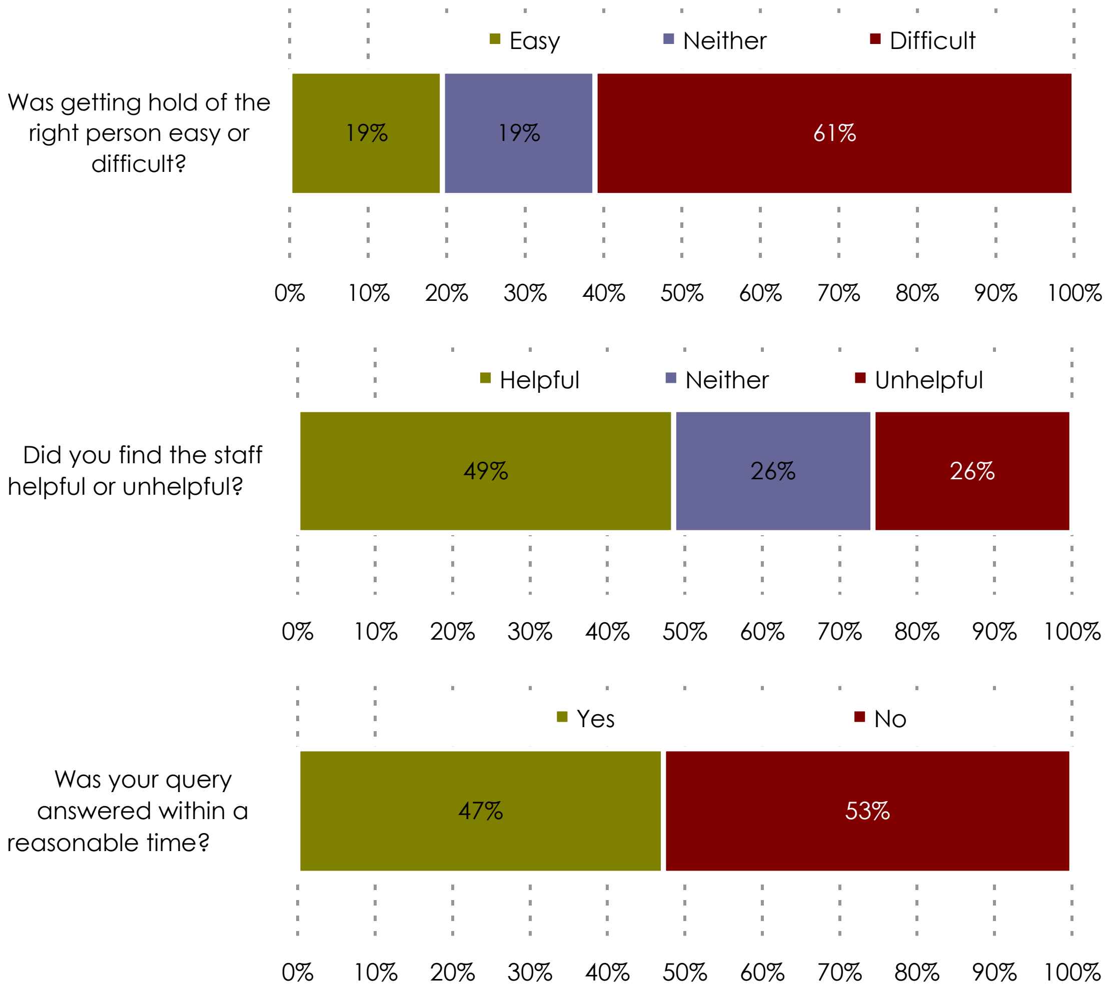


*Figure 16*

More than half (61%) of respondents found it hard to get hold of the right person. Less than half (49%) found the staff helpful and a similar proportion felt their query was answered within a reasonable time.

All 80 respondents were then asked customer experience questions relating to contact they had made with the Housing Service for any reason during the past twelve months. Of these, 19 did not provide an answer, presumably because in most cases they had not made contact with the service. Therefore, the following analysis relates to a subset of 61 leaseholders.

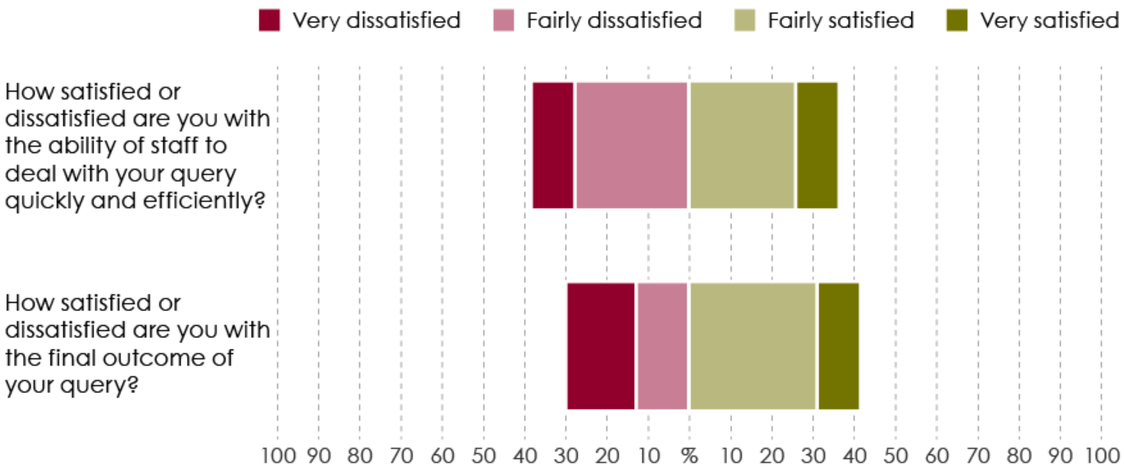


*Figure 17*

The analysis illustrates that more leaseholders were dissatisfied than satisfied with the ability to contact staff. Overall, nearly four in ten respondents were dissatisfied with this aspect of service provision. Again, this represents higher levels of dissatisfaction than that observed in the comparable analysis of tenants' views.

A slightly larger proportion, 41%, was satisfied with the final outcome of their query. We also see that nearly three in ten (39%) were dissatisfied with the outcome of their query.

## Channel Preferences

As in the tenants' survey, Slough Housing Service was interested in understanding which communication channels were more or less favoured by leaseholders, both in terms of receiving information and getting in touch with the service. Respondents were asked to choose which channels from they would be receptive towards from a list.

To begin this section, leaseholders were asked whether they had access to the internet at home. Overall, 61% said that they did (although a further 13% did not answer the question).

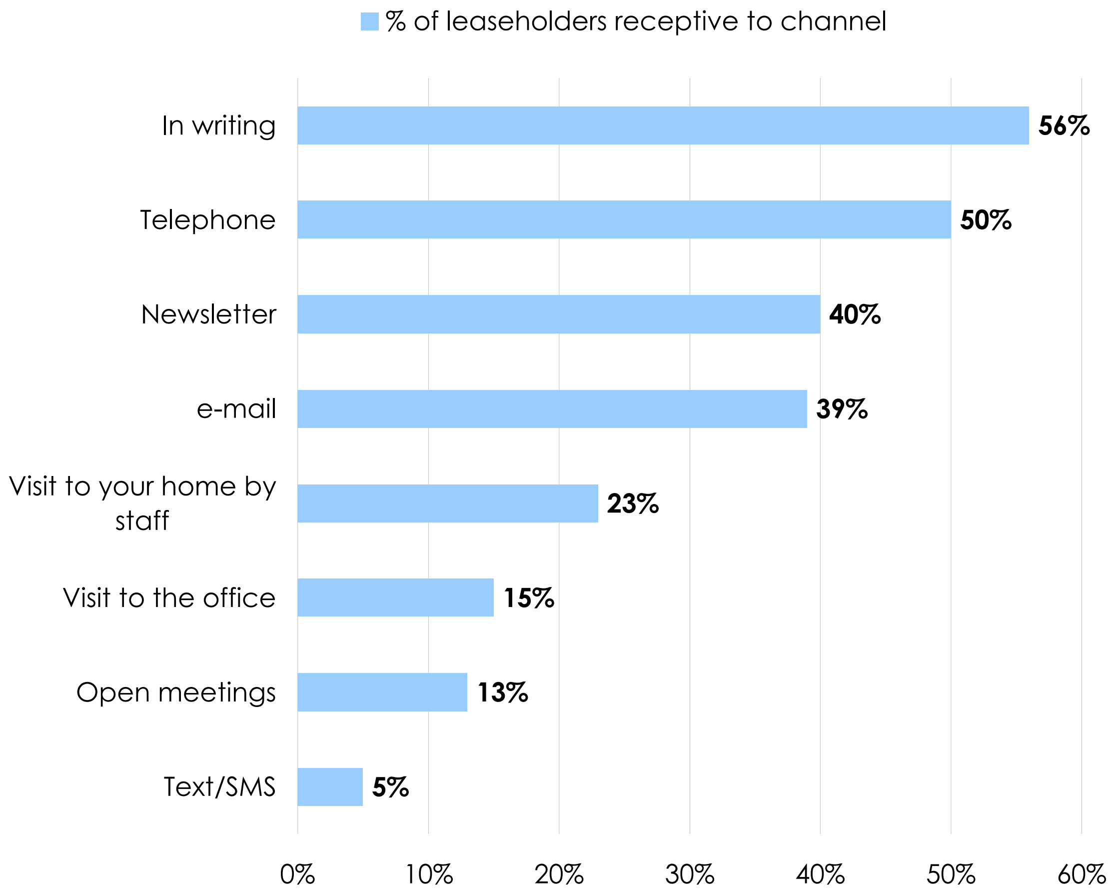


*Figure 18*

The two channels that at least half of respondents said they were interested in are 'in writing' (56%) and 'telephone' (50%). This is reminder of the value of more 'traditional' means of communication, although we do see that nearly four in ten are receptive to email (notably higher than tenants).

Just more than half of respondents (54%) are satisfied with the cost of contacting the Housing Service by telephone.

## Advice and Support

One of the ways the Housing Service offers support to leaseholders is through the provision of advice on issues such as welfare benefits and financial management. Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with this aspect of the service.

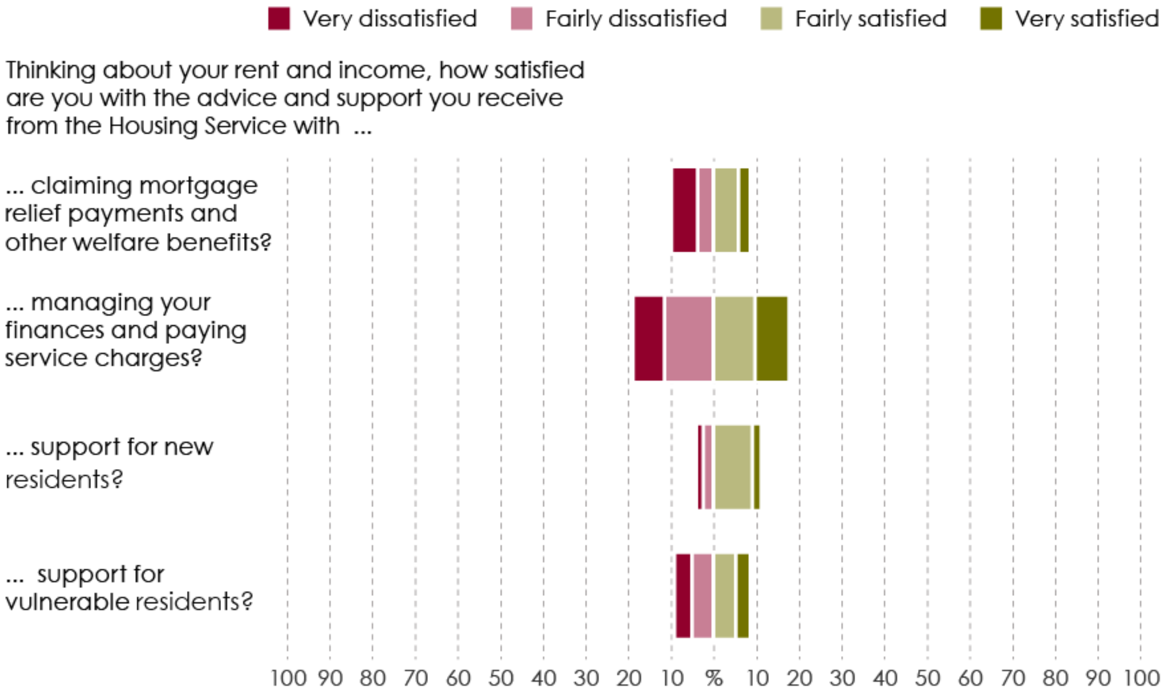


*Figure 19*

The most striking finding from this analysis is that relatively few respondents held a view either way. For all questions in this section of the survey, most respondents stated they were 'neither satisfied not dissatisfied'. This implies that most respondents had no experience of the various issues being discussed.

Where opinions were expressed, respondents seemed equally likely to be satisfied as dissatisfied. We note that nearly 20% were dissatisfied with the support offered around managing finances and service charges.

## Complaints

Just less than half of leaseholders (48%) are aware that the Housing Service has a formal complaints procedure. Eighteen percent of respondents said that they had made a complaint to the service during the past twelve months, and these next questions relate to the experiences of those 14 leaseholders (note the limited sample size).

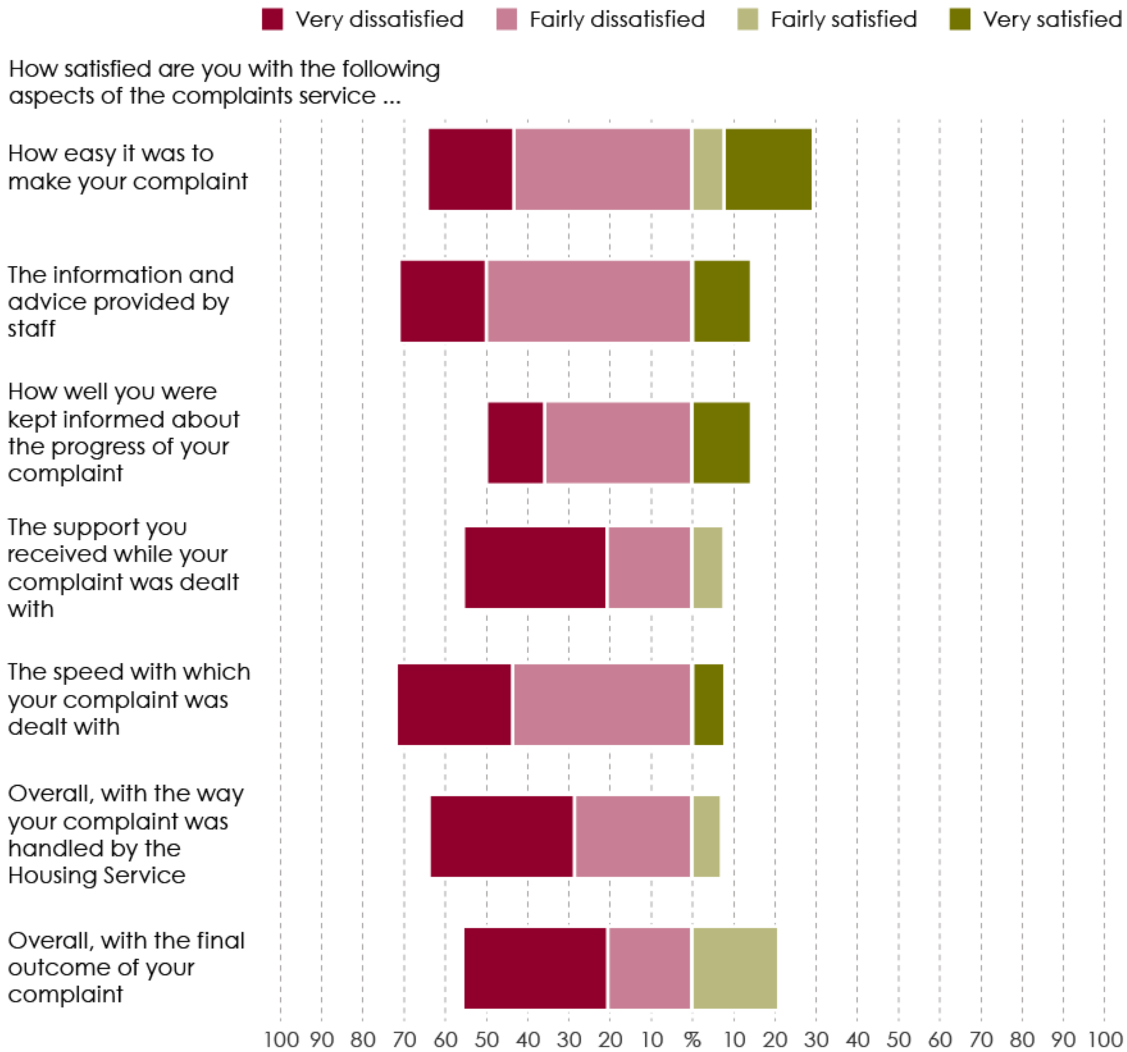


*Figure 20*

Given the nature of the topic, it is not surprising that we see higher levels of dissatisfaction for these questions. However, the scale of the dissatisfaction might be cause for concern (albeit based on a small sample). For example, more than 70% of leaseholders that responded to this part of the survey stated that they were dissatisfied with the advice and information provide by staff and the speed with which their complaint was dealt with.

The only indicator exceeding 20% satisfaction was with regard to how easy it was to access the complaints process. Still, even here, more than 60% of respondents were dissatisfied. Two thirds would be willing to make a complaint in the future.

## Repairs

The next section considers leaseholders' experiences in relation to repairs and maintenance on their home. Just 19% said that they'd had repairs to their home in the last twelve months.

Of these 15 leaseholders, 10 said that they had received an invitation to consult with the council following a Section 20 notice for proposed repair work.

Of those 10 leaseholders, 6 were satisfied with the consultation arrangements.

## Personalising Interactions

When asked whether they were satisfied with the last communication they had with the Housing Service, the data illustrates that four in ten leaseholders (40%) were satisfied. This is twice as many as were dissatisfied.

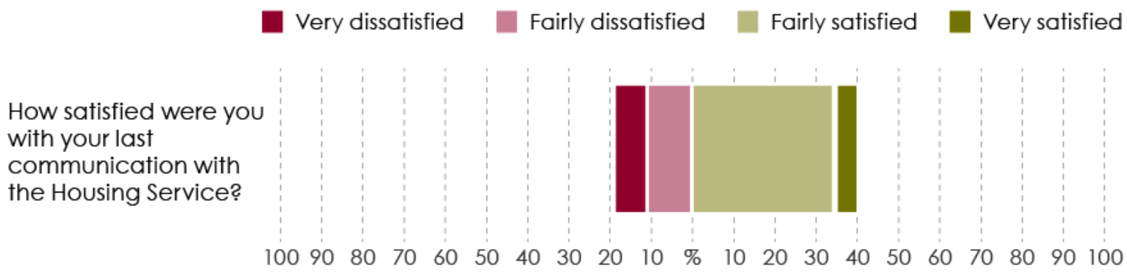


*Figure 21*

Less than half of leaseholders (49%) feel that they are the focus of the service's attention when they make contact. This might be an area for improvement.

For reference, the survey also asked whether respondents were owner occupiers (94%) and whether they sublet (6%).

## Getting Involved

The final questions asked respondents for information on if and how they would like to get more involved in having a say about the housing services provided by Slough Council. The section is divided into two parts; whether leaseholders are willing to contribute in a less intensive way ('armchair involvement') and whether they are keen to be more actively involved.

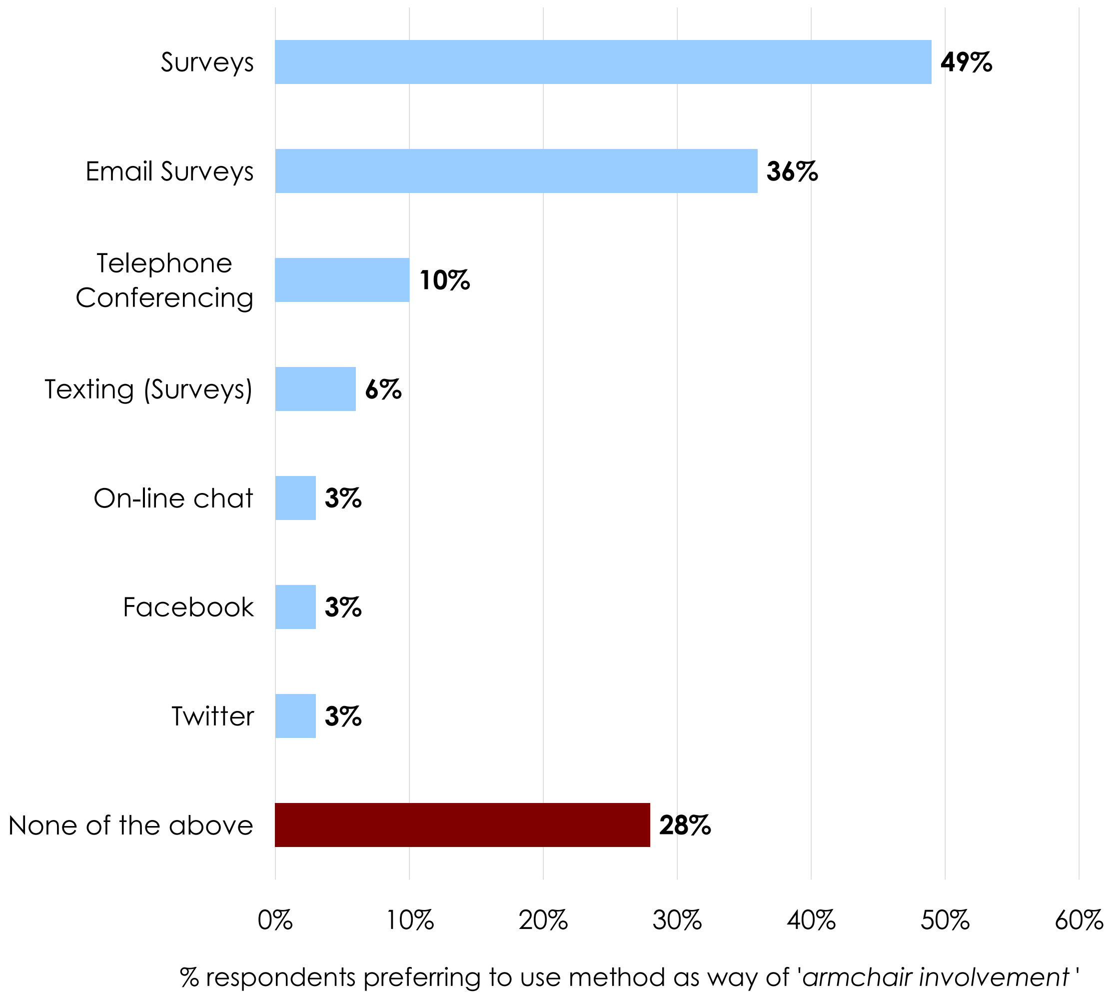


*Figure 22*

No channels received support from the majority of respondents. The only two with reasonable levels are (paper based) surveys and email surveys. One quarter said that they would choose any of the options provided.

There appears to be relatively little interest in social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

These results have the same rankings as presented in the tenants' survey report, implying both sets of customers have similar channel preferences.

Figure 23 considers interest in the more active forms of involvement.

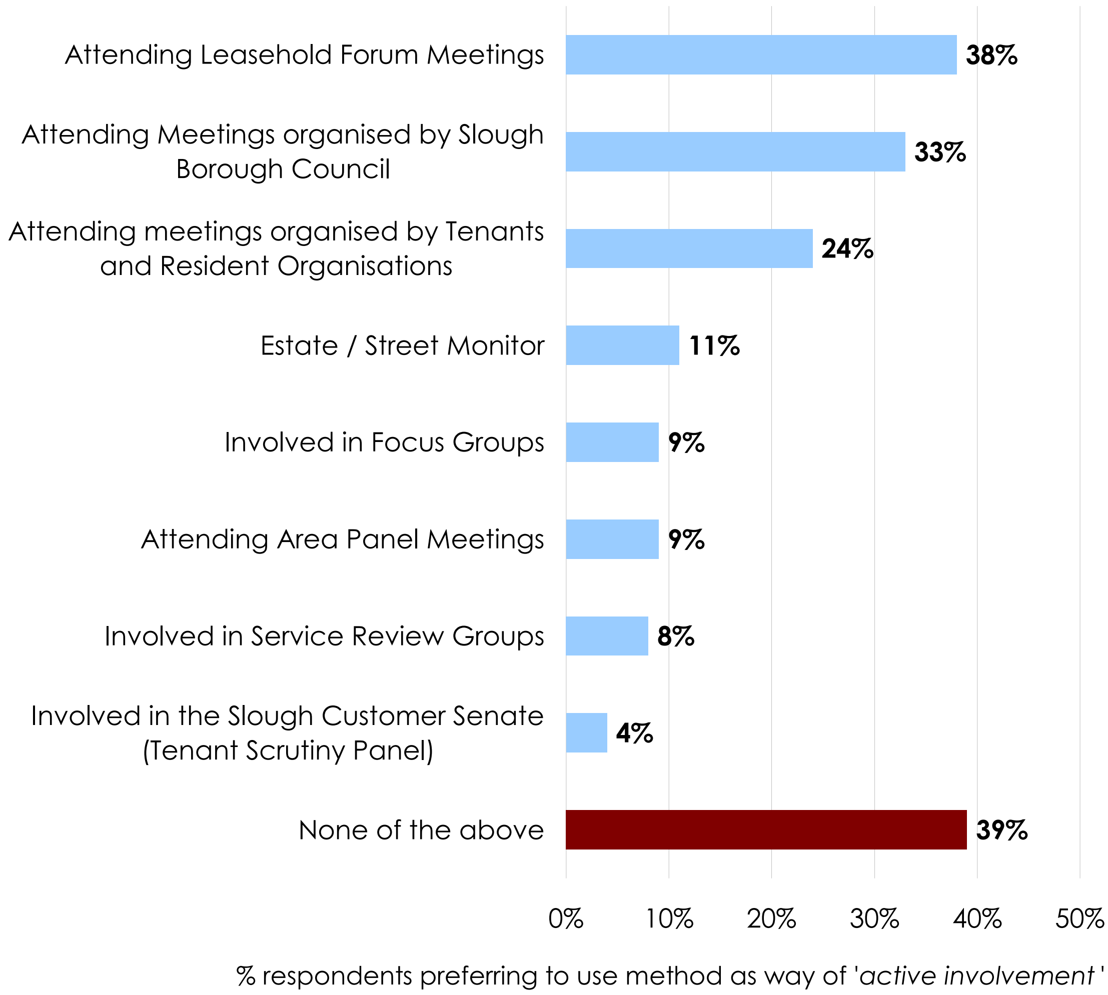


*Figure 23*

There is less interest in getting involved in more active ways. The most frequent choice here was 'none of the above'. The only areas where there did seem to be some interest were attending Leaseholder Forum meetings, Council-organised meetings and tenant-organised meetings.

Respondents were also provided with the opportunity to state other forms of getting involved that were of interest to them. No ideas were offered. The only quote was as follows:

*"Don't like open meetings where tenants hog the time banging on about late rent payments."*