

Reducing Energy Consumption on Elm Park Gardens Estate

Analysis of stakeholder consultation

May 2023



Introduction

Background

With the cost of living crisis we know that many people are facing difficult times and we want to work with residents to support them. The price of energy has gone up over the last year and we're looking at ways to help reduce energy consumption on Council housing estates. One way to do this is to look at how the communal heating system on Elm Park Gardens Estate is used.

The increase in energy prices affects everyone across the country. We buy the energy for heating and hot water in bulk from suppliers to keep the costs down. But regrettably, even with this advantage, the energy costs residents pay this year will go up; the estimated unit cost for gas has risen by 229 per cent and electricity by 125 per cent.

How can the Council help?

We can make changes to the way heating systems are managed which will reduce the energy used in the building without compromising comfort; this could reduce the amount of energy tenants and leaseholders pay for. It will also have environmental benefits, reducing the carbon footprint of buildings.

Recommended changes on Elm Park Gardens Estate

Heating season

The heating service is currently active between mid-September to the end of May. We recommend changing the settings so that the heating is active from the start of October until the end of April. This will help save energy consumption over the course of the year. We can override the settings if there's an unusual cold snap outside the proposed heating season.

Communal areas

Where there are radiators fitted in the communal parts of the building, i.e. in stairwells and corridors, we recommend that we turn these off manually. This would help reduce fuel consumption and deliver an overall saving over the course of a year.



Introduction

Work to improve your communal heating system

The system that manages and automates the boilers serving homes is outdated and we recommend changing it. Upgrading this system would allow us to control more options to help manage energy consumption, including:

Heating times – this feature would allow us to make the heating come on between set times; for example, it could be turned off for a few hours in the middle of the night which could save energy.

Heating temperature – this feature would allow us to set the temperature the boiler heats to, relative to the outside temperature. For example, we could adjust it so if it was 15°C outdoors the water in the radiators would be 58°C, but if the outside temperature dropped below 11°C the boiler would pump out water at 70°C, allowing residents to keep the temperature in their flat at a comfortable level, but not using the boiler more than is necessary.

Upgrading the heating management system would incur costs which would be passed on to leaseholders proportionally, in line with the terms of leases and the relevant legislation.

Residents of Elm Park House

There is already work planned to refurbish the plant room that serves homes. This would include a more modern building management system that offers some of the above options.



Introduction

Consultation methodology

A letter explaining the proposals accompanied a paper survey sent to all tenants and leaseholders on Elm Park Gardens Estate. An online version of the survey was also available for those that wished to complete in this way. The exercise opened on 16 March 2023 and closed on 28 April 2023.

Report

A total of 88 surveys were returned by the deadline, a response rate of 25 per cent (there are 354 properties on the estate). Quality assurance was undertaken on submissions to ensure that only responses from those connected to Elm Park Gardens were counted and that only one response per household was received.

In addition eight emails were received from residents of Elm Park Gardens. A summary of the content of the emails can be seen as part of this report.

This report contains an analysis of survey responses and a summary of responses received by email. Where graphs do not total 100 per cent, this may be due to computer rounding or where respondents have chosen not to respond to a question.

A separate appendix report is available on request, which details all comments made by respondents to the questions within the survey and full details of emails received.

Acknowledgements

The Council would like to thank all residents and stakeholders that took the time to feedback their views.



Results at a glance – survey responses

Heating season

- More than half (58 per cent) of respondents agreed with the recommendation to set the heating to operate from the start of October until the end of April.
- However, a significant minority (38 per cent) disagreed with this recommendation.
- When asked, the most popular reasons for disagreeing were: *'Can still be cold in these periods/temperature is unpredictable'* and *'older/vulnerable/young people are more affected'*.

Heating in communal areas

- Two-thirds (67 per cent) would like radiators serving communal areas to be turned off.
- However, a quarter (25 per cent) did not agree.
- Most common reasons for disagreeing were: *'Communal areas would be cold'* and *'energy efficiency and draughts'*.

Upgrading the building management system

- Almost two-thirds (63 per cent) would like consideration to be given to upgrading the building management system.
- However, over a quarter (26 per cent) did not agree.
- Most common reasons for disagreeing included: *'Cost'*, *'wait for impact of the other measures first'* and a *'need to understand the cost/benefits first.'*

Possible negative impacts

- Over a quarter (28 per cent) felt the recommendations would have a negative impact on them or their household.
- Almost a third (32 per cent) did not feel they would have a negative impact.
- Just over a quarter (26 per cent) did not know if there would be a negative impact.
- The most common negative impacts identified by respondents were: *'Increased costs (upgrade/alternative heating options)'* and *'feeling cold/impact on older/young/vulnerable residents'*.



Results at a glance – email responses

In addition to the survey responses, eight emails were received from residents of Elm Park Gardens. The first email outlined a number of concerns and questions and the following seven emails primarily supported the original email. A summary of the feedback can be seen below, with full emails in the appendix document.

Summary of feedback

- There was disappointment expressed about the length of time taken to advance the request of stopping 24 hour heating and the delay in beginning the consultation.
- Questions were asked about whether there is a need to upgrade the boilers or whether this was needed in all cases. There was a request for independent experts to examine the boilers and building management system to understand which needed upgrading.
- Concerns were expressed about the cost of upgrading the building management system and the passing of these costs on to leaseholders. If leaseholders are to pay, it was felt that leaseholders should decide whether to go forward or not.
- Views were expressed that some flats were subsidising others, because they were more energy efficient, smaller or had different layouts.
- It was felt that a question should have been asked about the hours of operation of the heating system, i.e. start and stop times.
- The cost of the survey and the need to ask demographic questions was also raised.



Analysis of survey responses

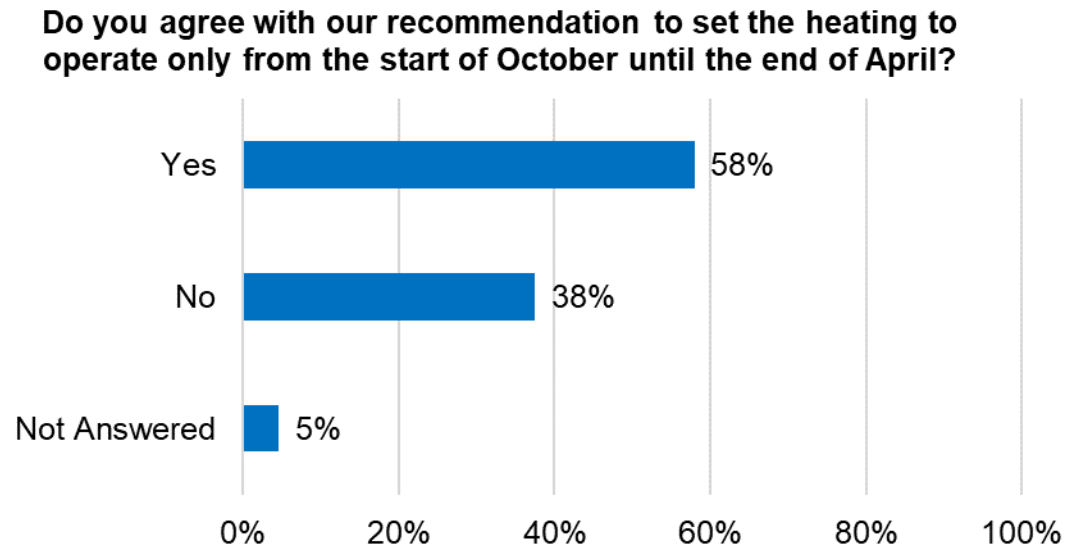


The heating season

The heating service is currently active between mid-September and the end of May. Respondents were asked if they agreed with the Council's recommendation to set the heating to operate from the start of October until the end of April.

- Over half (58 per cent) agreed with the recommendation.
- However, more than a third (38 per cent) did not agree.

Respondents that did not agree, were asked to explain why, which is explored on subsequent pages.



Base: All respondents (88)



The heating season – demographic differences

The below explores differences of opinion for different demographic groups. Comparisons are made for demographic groups where there is sufficient numbers to make a comparison.

- Leaseholders were more likely to support the proposal (77 per cent) than tenants (47 per cent). A total of 40 per cent of tenants being against the proposal, compared to 23 per cent of leaseholders.
- Male respondents were more supportive of the proposals (71 per cent) compared to female respondents (63 per cent). A total of 33 per cent of females were against the proposals compared to 21 per cent of males.
- Respondents under 65 were more likely to support the proposals (69 per cent) compared to those 65 or older (63 per cent).
- Respondents without a physical, mental health condition or illness were more likely to support the proposals (73 per cent), than those with one (52 per cent). A total of 38 per cent of those with a physical, mental health condition or illness were against the proposals compared to those without (24 per cent).



The heating season - comments

Those that disagreed with the recommendation to reduce the heating season were asked to explain why.

Comments made have been themed and themes with two or more comments are summarised in the table below. Examples of comments can also be seen on the next page, with the full list of themes and comments found in the appendices.

Theme	Count
Can still be cold in these periods/temperature is unpredictable	18
Older/vulnerable/young people are more affected	10
Energy efficiency of property (draughts, double glazing)	5
As long as can be turned on in cold spells	3
System takes too long to heat/react to being turned on (e.g. in cold snaps)	3
Damp created when heating off	2
Should react to outside temperature	2



The heating season - comments

“Both September and May can be cold.”

Can still be cold in these periods/temperature is unpredictable

“It’s usually very cold in May and a full month with the heating off makes life more difficult.”

Can still be cold in these periods/temperature is unpredictable

“There is no double glazing and when windy, it gets very cold.”

Energy efficiency of property (draughts, double glazing)



“Mid September to the end of April, as September can be cold and we need to consider the very young and the elderly.”

Older/vulnerable/young people are more affected

“I am at the age where I feel the cold so I am not really sure about the end of April.”

Older/vulnerable/young people are more affected

“I agree, provided the settings can be overridden if there is a cold snap.”

As long as can be turned on in cold spells

“After the four massive boilers, which provide all of the heating on this side of the road, have been started up, it takes several weeks before any heating actually reaches the far end. There is always lots of ‘tweaking’ and air removal from the system required before heating actually reaches the flats on the top floor of Block 68. The pipes are long and reaching high up, at the end of the line, is problematic. This time-lag means we could not get adequate heating until the end of October under the proposed system.”

System takes too long to heat/react to being turned on (e.g. in cold snaps)

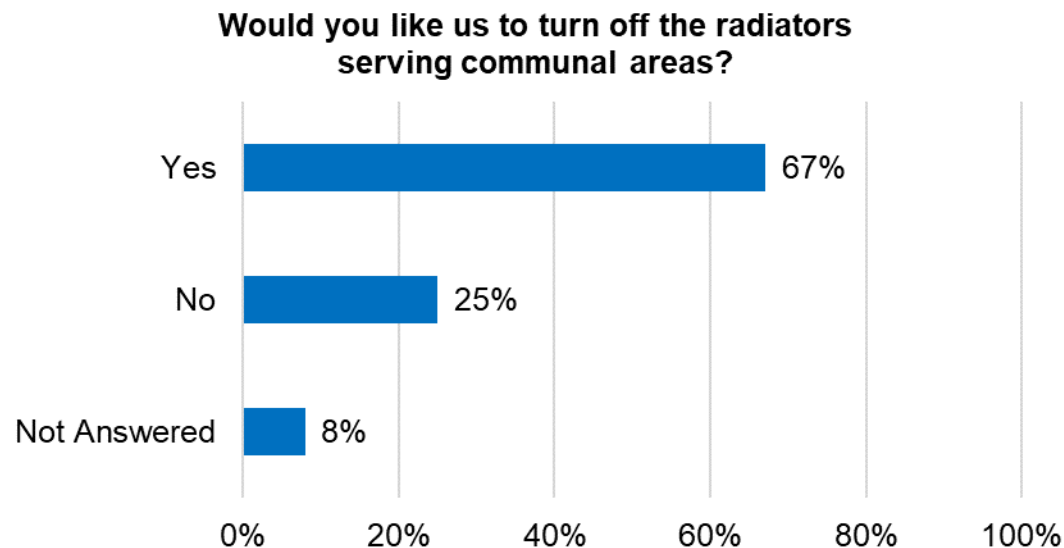


Heating in communal areas

The radiators serving communal areas, like corridors and stairwells, are currently turned on and have the same settings as the main heating system. Respondents were asked if they would like radiators turned off serving communal areas.

- Two-thirds (67 per cent) would like radiators serving communal areas to be turned off
- However, a quarter (25 per cent) did not agree

Respondents that did not agree, were asked to explain why, which is explored on subsequent pages.



Base: All respondents (88)



Heating in communal areas– demographic differences

The below explores differences of opinion for different demographic groups. Comparisons are made for demographic groups where there is sufficient numbers to make a comparison.

- Leaseholders were more likely to support the proposal (84 per cent) than tenants (50 per cent). A total of 38 per cent of tenants being against the proposal, compared to 11 per cent of leaseholders.
- Female respondents were more supportive of the proposals (74 per cent) compared to male respondents (63 per cent).
- Support for the proposals was similar for both those under 65 (69 per cent) and those aged over 65 (68 per cent).
- Respondents without a physical, mental health condition or illness were more likely to support the proposals (81 per cent), than those with one (48 per cent). A total of 38 per cent of those with a physical, mental health condition or illness were against the proposals compared to 16 per cent of those without.



Heating in communal areas- comments

Those that disagreed that radiators should be turned off in communal areas were asked to explain why.

Comments made have been themed and themes with two or more comments are summarised in the table below. Examples of comments can also be seen on the next page, with the full list of themes and comments found in the appendices.

Theme	Count
Against proposal, communal areas would be cold	7
Agree with the proposal	6
Energy efficiency, draughts	4
Do not use communal areas/not applicable	2
Few radiators/would not make much difference	2
Radiators already turned off	2



Heating in communal areas- comments

“At night, even during summer, the corridors, communal can get cold.”

Against proposal, communal areas would be cold

“I do not want it, to arrive with a cold entrance, cold building.”

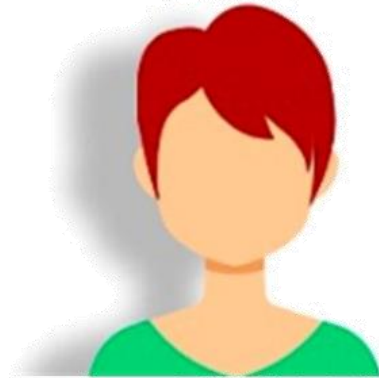
Against proposal, communal areas would be cold

“Our building 34 already has been off since beginning of 2022 (when heating was switched on).”

Radiators already turned off

“I have gaps in my flat entrance door so it would be cold if corridors and stairwells are turned off, however I have answered yes as I am hoping when my flat entrance fire door is fitted there will be no gaps in door for cold air to come through from staircases.”

Energy efficiency, draughts



“This is a complete waste of energy. Settings are far too high and unnecessary in the first place.”

Agree with the proposal

“YES! I have often thought how much heating is wasted in the common parts of the building. The front door is sometimes left open.”

Agree with the proposal

“There is only “ONE” radiator on ground floor. Turning it off will not make much change to energy consumption.”

Few radiators/would not make much difference

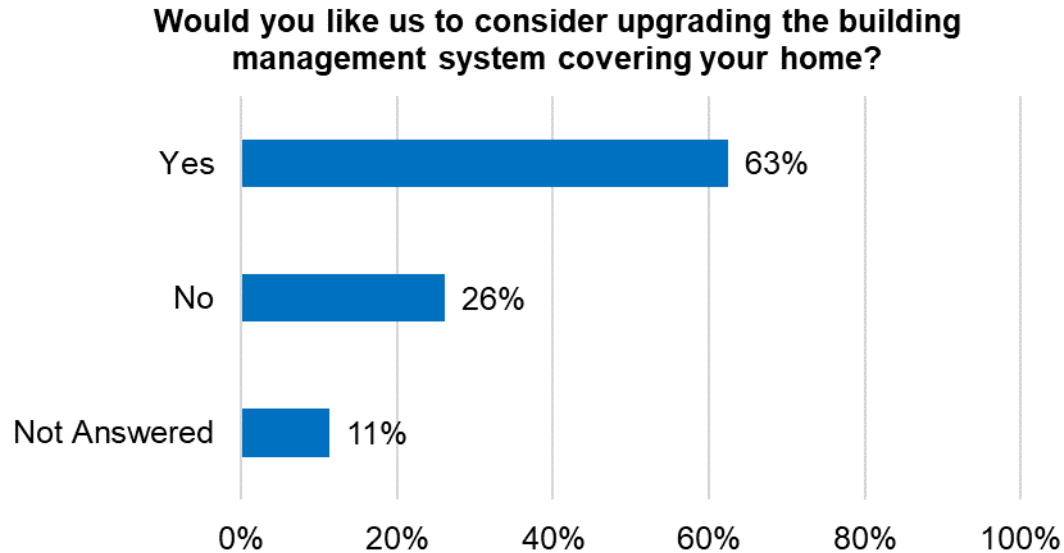


Upgrading the heating system

Upgrading the system that manages the heating would offer further opportunities to reduce the energy consumption in the buildings. This would incur costs which would be passed on to leaseholders proportionally, in line with the terms of their lease and the relevant legislation. Respondents were asked if they would like the Council to consider upgrading the building management system.

- Almost two-thirds (63 per cent) would like to see this considered
- However, over a quarter (26 per cent) did not agree

Respondents that did not agree, were asked to explain why, which is explored on subsequent pages.



Base: All respondents (88)



Upgrading the heating system– demographic differences

The below explores differences of opinion for different demographic groups. Comparisons are made for demographic groups where there is sufficient numbers to make a comparison.

- Tenants were more likely to support the proposal (72 per cent) than leaseholders (64 per cent). A total of 30 per cent of leaseholders being against the proposal, compared to nine per cent of tenants.
- Female respondents were slightly more supportive of the proposals (74 per cent) compared to male respondents (71 per cent).
- Those aged 65 or older were more likely to support the proposals (76 per cent) than those aged under 65 (69 per cent).
- Respondents without a physical, mental health condition or illness were more likely to support the proposals (76 per cent), than those with one (66 per cent).



Upgrading the heating system - comments

Those that disagreed with consideration being given to upgrading the building management system were asked to explain why.

Comments made have been themed and themes are summarised in the table below. Examples of comments can also be seen on the next page, with the full list of themes and comments found in the appendices.

Theme	Count
Cost/cost for leaseholders	12
Against upgrade/wait for impact of the other measures	10
Need to understand cost/cost benefit first	8
In favour of upgrading the system	3
Improve fuel procurement	1
Individual control	1
Involve residents in process	1
No confidence to organise efficiently	1
Tenants should contribute too	1
Unsure what benefit(s) would be	1



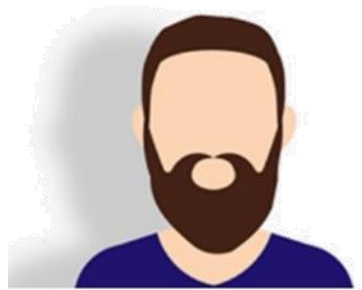
Upgrading the heating system - comments

“The current system works well. We do not need any further costs at a time when other costs are so high.”

Cost/cost for leaseholders

“Only if it won't cost us any money. Life is difficult as it is.”

Cost/cost for leaseholders



“But we need to know the cost of this upgrading first.”

Need to understand cost/cost benefit first

“But need to understand cost benefit analysis.”

Need to understand cost/cost benefit first

“I am quite happy with the system as it is.”

Against upgrade/wait for impact of the other measures

“Why change when the system works well for our building.”

Against upgrade/wait for impact of the other measures

“I agree but am concerned about the cost.”

In favour of upgrading the system

“This seems vague - How would the ‘system that manages’ heating be upgraded when the system is four huge boilers underground? Already there are scheduled lift replacement works and general capital works apparently - extra expense would push up costs further and likely therefore rental cost too in the area.”

Need to understand cost/cost benefit first



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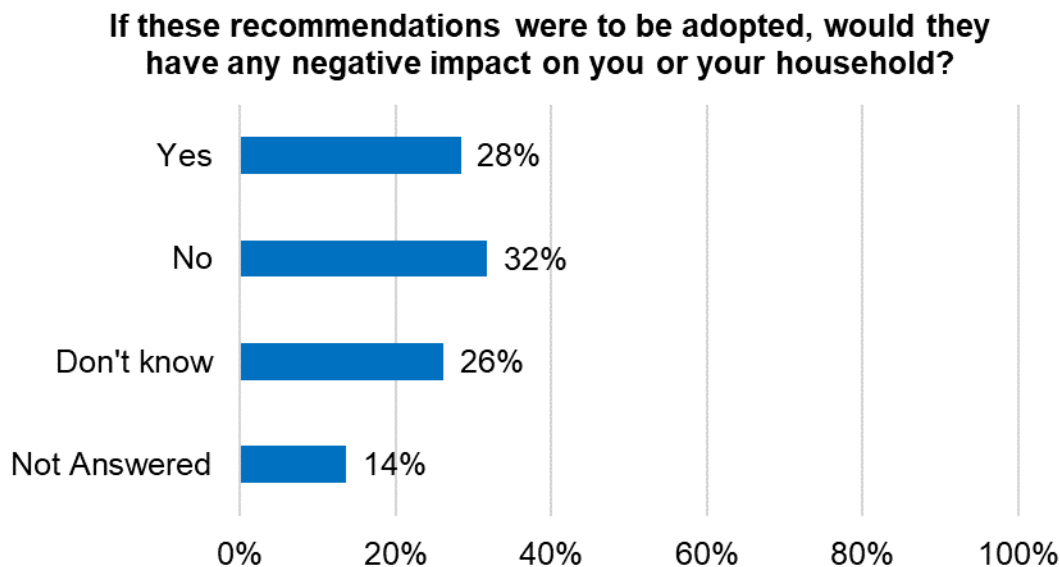
Possible negative impact

Respondents were asked, should the recommendations be introduced, whether they would have any negative impact on them, or their household

Responses to this question were fairly even.

- Over a quarter (28 per cent) felt the recommendations would have a negative impact.
- Almost a third (32 per cent) did not feel they would have a negative impact.
- Just over a quarter (26 per cent) did not know if there would be a negative impact.

Respondents that felt there would be a negative impact were asked to explain, which is explored on subsequent pages.



Base: All respondents (88)



Possible negative impact– demographic differences

The below explores differences of opinion for different demographic groups. Comparisons are made for demographic groups where there is sufficient numbers to make a comparison.

- Leaseholders were more likely to indicate the proposals would have a negative impact (25 per cent), compared to tenants (19 per cent). Leaseholders were more likely to indicate the proposals would not have a negative impact (43 per cent) compared to tenants (28 per cent). Tenants were more likely to indicate they did not know if the proposals would have a negative impact (38 per cent) compared to leaseholders (20 per cent).
- Males were more likely to indicate the proposals would have a negative impact (25 per cent) compared to females (15 per cent). Males were also more likely to indicate the proposals would not have a negative impact (46 per cent) compared to females (35 per cent). Females were more likely to indicate they did not know if the proposals would have a negative impact (39 per cent) compared to males (17 per cent).
- Results for both those under 65 and those over 65 were similar, with 18 per cent of those 65 or older believing the proposals would have a negative impact, compared to those under 65 (17 per cent)
- Respondents with a physical, mental health condition or illness were more likely to indicate the proposals would have a negative impact (34 per cent) compared to those without (11 per cent). Respondents without a physical, mental health condition or illness were more likely to indicate the proposals would not have a negative impact (57 per cent) compared to those with a physical, mental health condition or illness (17 per cent).



Possible negative impact - comments

Those that felt the recommendations would have a negative impact were asked to explain what impact it would have.

Comments made have been themed and themes are summarised in the table below. Examples of comments can also be seen on the next page, with the full list of themes and comments found in the appendices.

Theme	Count
Increased costs (upgrade/alternative heating options)	12
Feeling cold/impact on older/young/vulnerable residents	8
Against proposals	2
In favour of communal heating proposal	2
Noise/disruption of installation of new boilers	1
Property is privately rented	1
Want individual control of heating	1



Possible negative impact - comments

“Feeling cold and not having heating as an option.”

Feeling cold/impact on older/young/vulnerable residents

“I spend most of my time in my home, it would take away the comfort and warmth I need.”

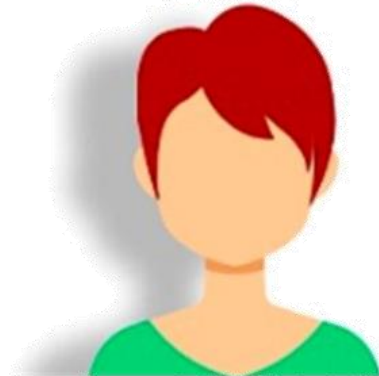
Feeling cold/impact on older/young/vulnerable residents

“They would have a negative impact on the elderly, young and sick.”

Feeling cold/impact on older/young/vulnerable residents

“New communal boilers were installed at great expense 13-14 years ago in major works. Most radiators are either on five (too hot) or off. Please do not attempt to reduce energy consumption in our block- whilst increasing electricity consumption on charging points for cars. Electricity is energy too.”

Against proposals



“I could not afford yet another such a big expenditure on top of so many existing and outstanding other improvement projects which are forced upon leaseholders.”

Increased costs (upgrade/alternative heating options)

“More unnecessary work and expense with little benefit. What is the cost?”

Increased costs (upgrade/alternative heating options)

“Noise and disruption in installation at Elm Park House as 60 flats.”

Noise/disruption of installation of new boilers



Other comments

Respondents were given an opportunity to make any other comments they wished on the proposals.

Comments made have been themed and themes with two or more comments are summarised in the table below. Examples of comments can also be seen on the next page, with the full list of themes and comments found in the appendices.

Theme	Count
In favour of proposals	8
Cost impact/concerns	5
Other energy efficiency measures (e.g. double glazing)	5
Need more information on cost/benefits	4
Individual control/meters	3
Against proposals	2
Keep heating times/season the same	2



Other comments

“I have been asking for this for the past decade - the porters are not even allowed to turn down radiators in common parts! Lets make it happen soon! Thank you.”

In favour of proposals

“Long overdue proposal to reduce energy costs while this is considered please add changing the louvred glass at the entrance which is absurd when there is a radiator close by. The newly fitted smoke alarms should suffice.”

In favour of proposals

“Double glazing is more important to save energy.”

Other energy efficiency measures (e.g. double glazing)

“Has the Council considered heat pumps and solar panels?”

Other energy efficiency measures (e.g. double glazing)



“Cost is the main factor. RBKC is becoming a very expensive council to live in based on the poor procurement process when it comes to works. Cost efficiency for residents must be priority.”

Cost impact/concerns

“It would be totally unacceptable to load yet more financially onerous burdens on residents of Elm Park Gardens. RBKC thinks leaseholders have unlimited funds and are wealthy and many are not.”

Cost impact/concerns

“Would you be able to give us an estimate for upgrading the system?”

Need more information on cost/benefits

“It would be even better if each individual flat had their own reading for the consumption used. As often flats are rented they go off on holiday leaving heating on full blast. The rest of the residents are paying for that.”

Individual control/meters

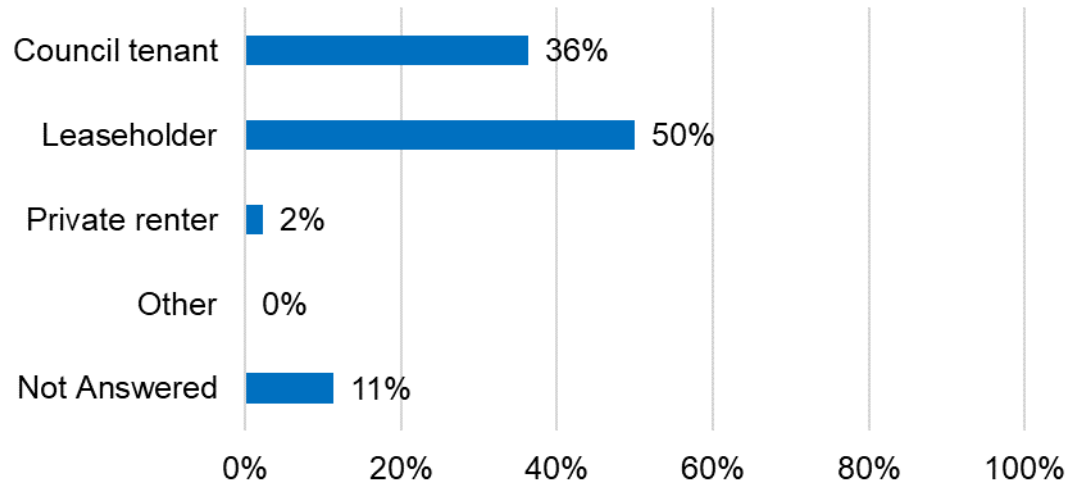


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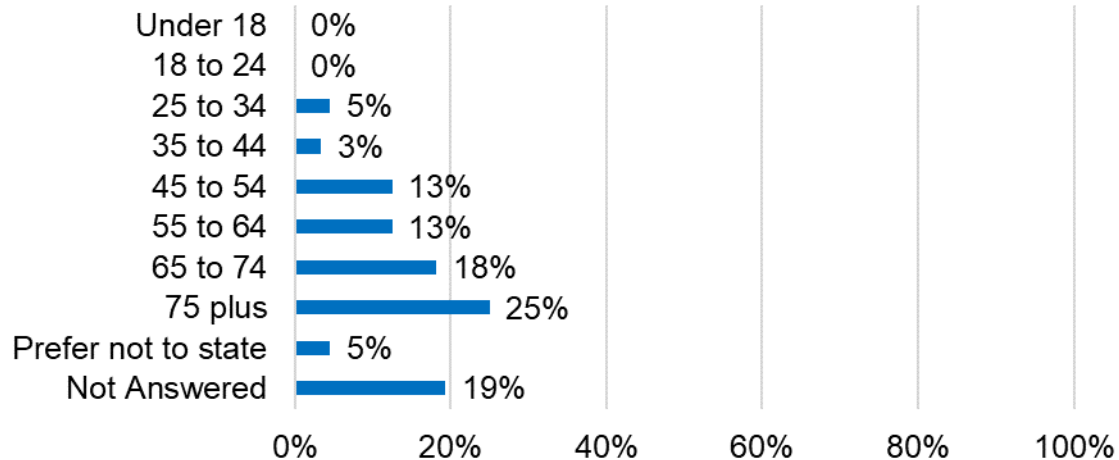
Profile of respondents

Respondents were asked a series of questions about themselves. to understand who had responded to the consultation.

Which of the following best describes you?



Which age group do you belong to?

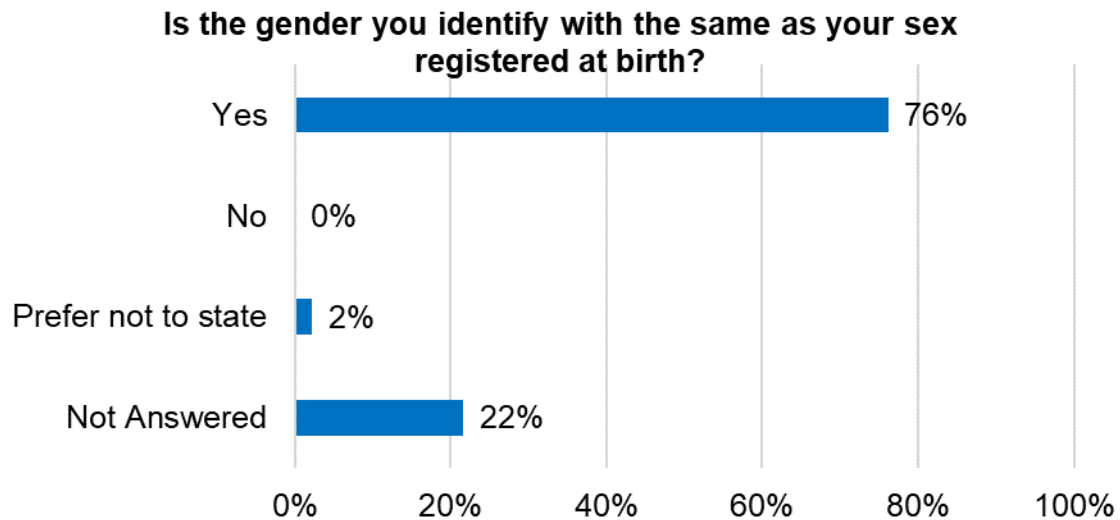
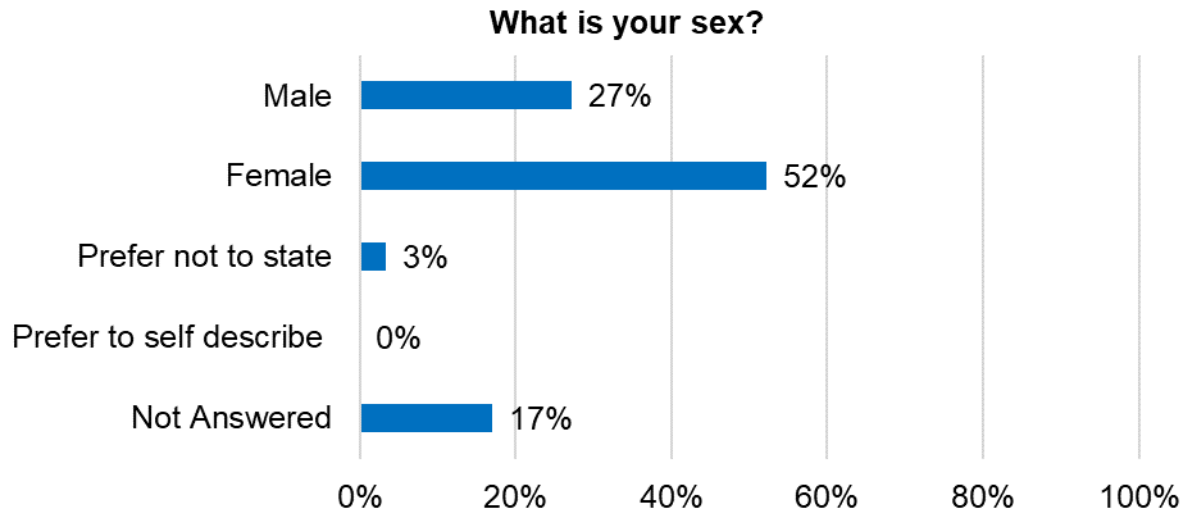


Base: All respondents (88)



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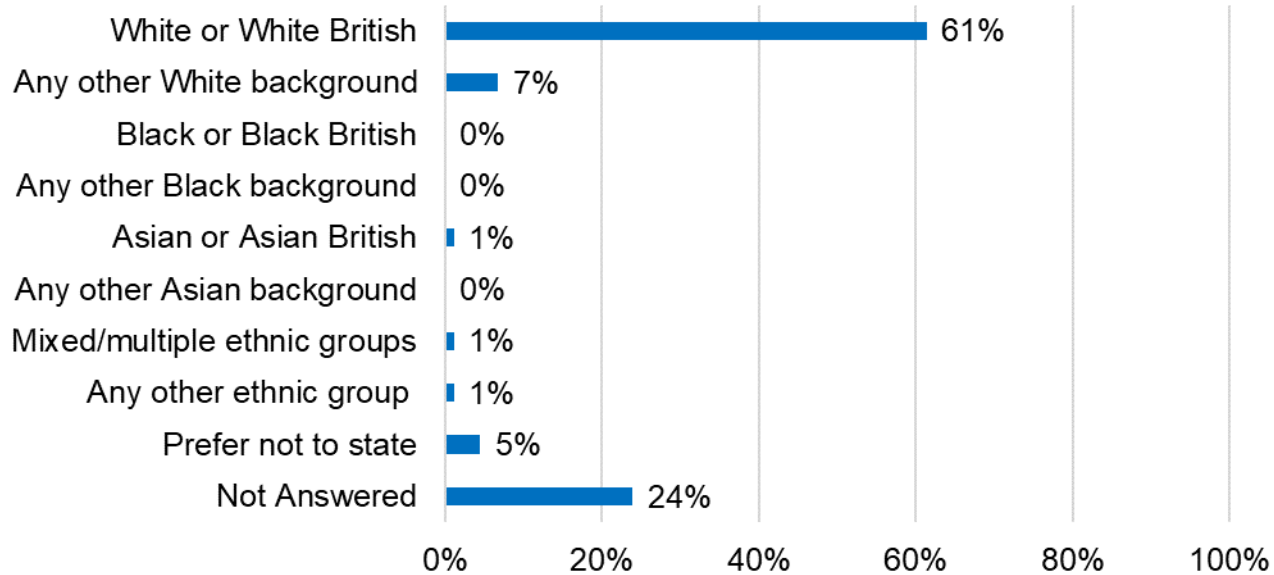
Profile of respondents



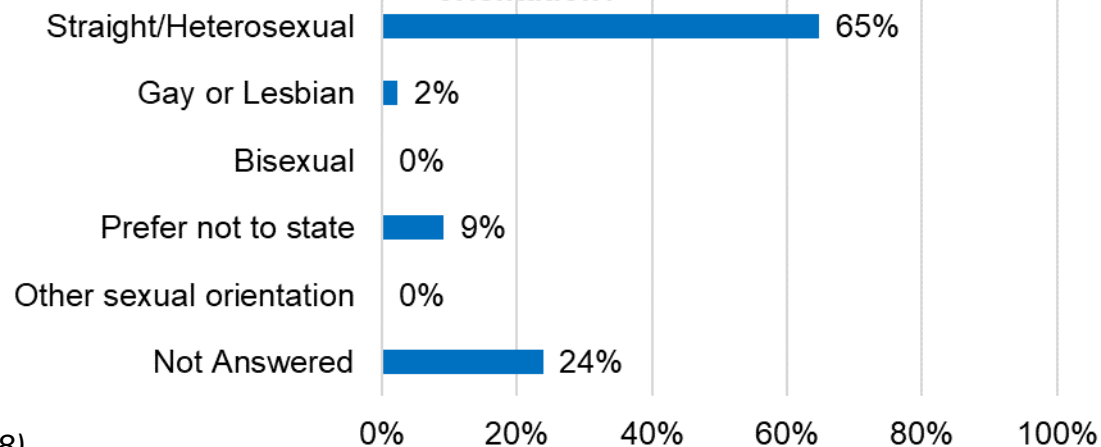
Base: All respondents (88)

Profile of respondents

How do you describe your ethnic origin?

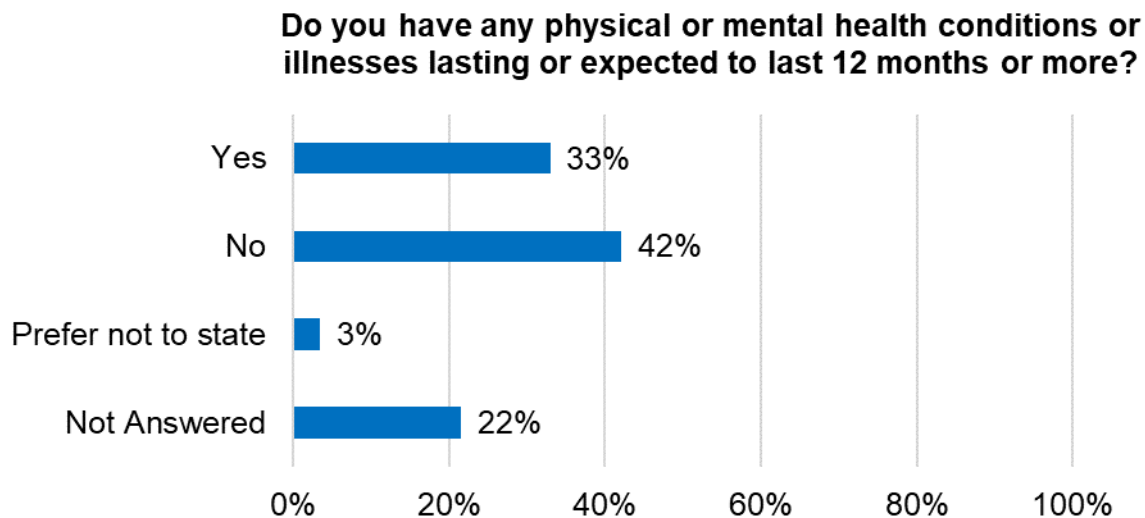
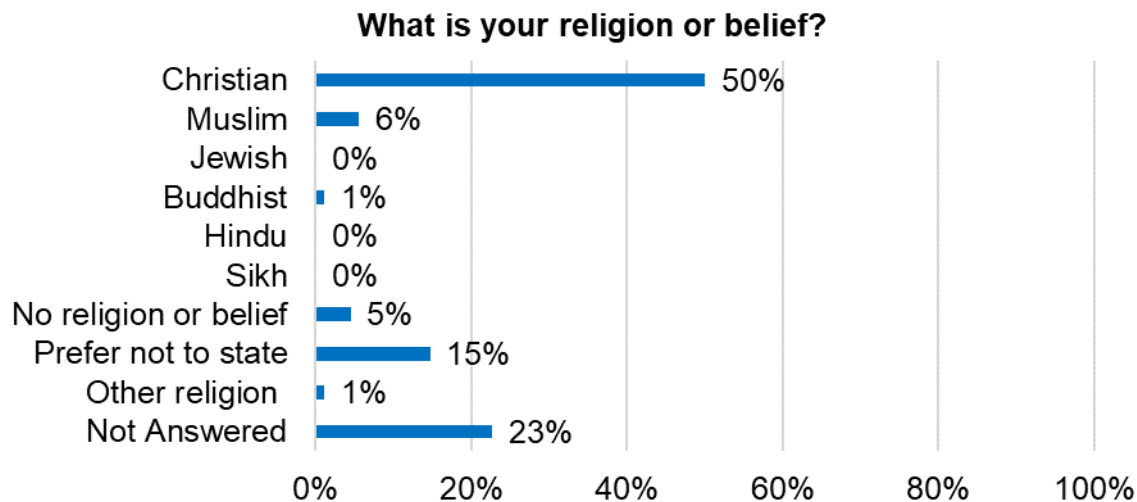


Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?



Base: All respondents (88)

Profile of respondents

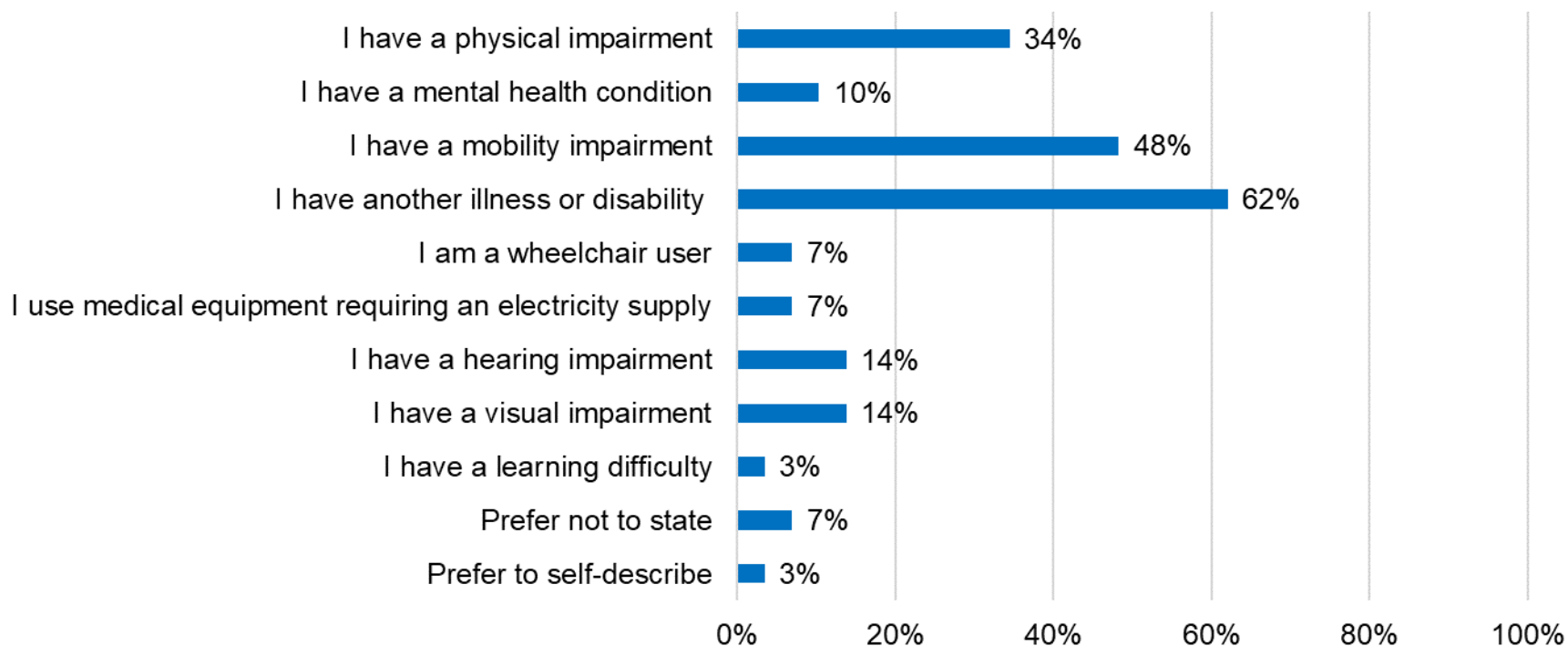


Base: All respondents (88)



Profile of respondents

If yes, what is the nature of your physical or mental health condition or illness?



Base: Those indicating they had a mental or physical condition or long term illness (29)

