



Briefing Report

Barriers to disposing of waste

Consultation analysis

Strategic Waste and Environment
Customer and Commercial Services
August 2019

Introduction and methodology

This consultation was carried out on behalf of the Mayor of Lewisham, Damien Egan. The Mayor’s manifesto, and Lewisham Council’s Corporate Strategy, outline that the Council will work towards addressing the barriers that are stopping residents from disposing of household waste responsibly.¹

Following initial meetings with the Mayor, the idea of the consultation was developed and a survey was created. In collaboration with the Corporate Communications team, and the Corporate Policy and Governance team, the survey was built. It consisted of three key areas: ‘your knowledge’, ‘your views’, and ‘your experience’. The idea behind this being that the data provided could be consolidated into tangible recommendations for service improvements, if required, moving forward.

In total the survey consisted of 18 questions, not including the equality and data questions. With the survey being split into three main sections, participants were encouraged to indicate their understanding of the environmental services offered by Lewisham Council. There was only one open question, with all the rest being closed. The reason behind this was ease of analysis – having the survey based on statistical answers would provide data that could be analysed more effectively.

As an incentive for the consultation, we offered five £50 Amazon Vouchers. This was offered through an opt-in section with clear terms and conditions applied. The recipient of the vouchers was chosen at random. The consultation was run from 18 February – 8 April 2019 to provide enough time for responses.

During the consultation, the Strategic Waste and Environment team attended the following:

Assemblies	Drop-ins
Brockley Assembly, 5 February	Blackheath Community Library, 20 February
TRA (Bence House), 6 February	Catford Library, 27 February
Perry Vale Assembly, 21 February	Wavelengths Leisure Centre, 28 February
Lewisham Central Assembly, 23 February	The Bridge Leisure Centre, 1 March
Blackheath Assembly, 28 February	Crofton Park Library, 4 March
Sydenham Assembly, 5 March	Bellingham Leisure Centre, 6 March
Telegraph Hill Assembly, 12 March	The Library (Deptford Lounge), 8 March
Rushey Green Assembly, 13 March	Downham Library, 11 March
Evelyn Assembly, 14 March	Downham Leisure Centre, 18 March
Catford South Assembly, 16 March	Lewisham Central Library, 21 March
Crofton Park Assembly, 23 March	Sydenham Library, 2 April
Bellingham Assembly, 27 March	

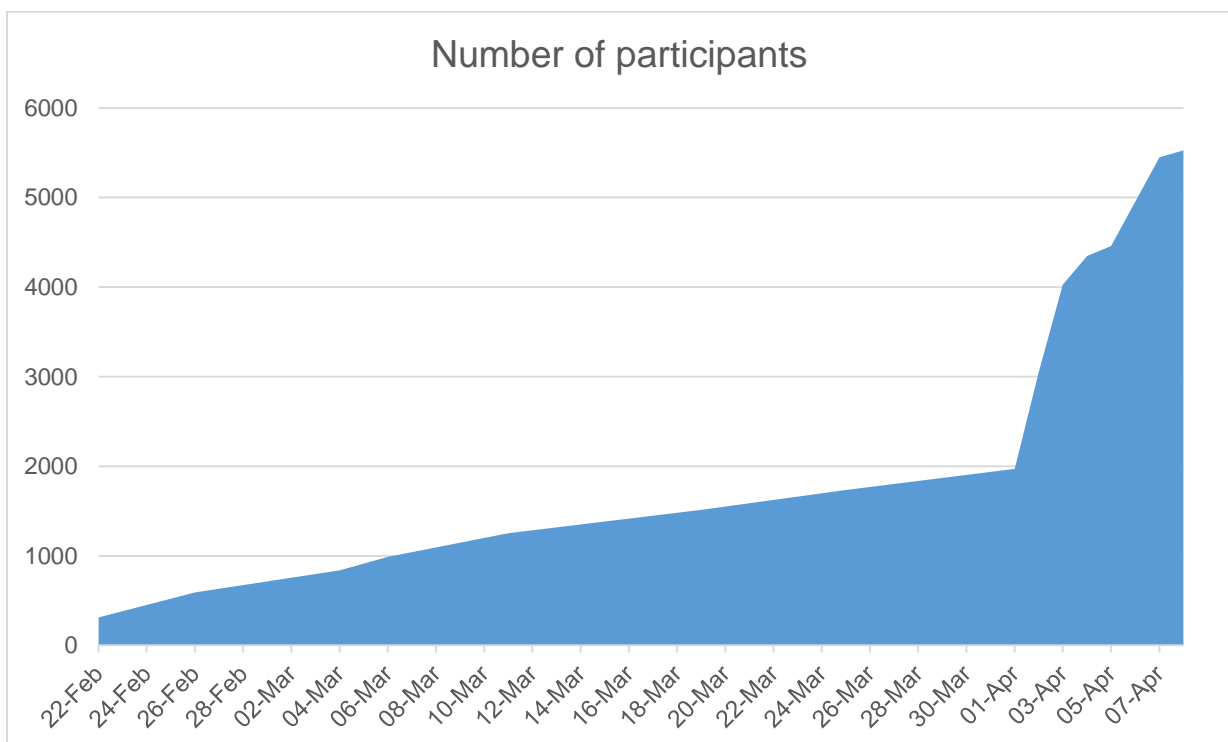
¹ London Borough of Lewisham: Corporate Strategy 2018-2022 | <https://lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/corporate-strategy>

By attending assemblies, and hosting drop-ins, the team were able to directly engage with members of the public. This provided a good opportunity to inform members of the public of any significant updates within the Environment division, answer any questions that may have arisen and publicise the consultation. With the cooperation of local councillors in their respective wards, the turnout and engagement within the assemblies was very positive.

With the assistance of the Corporate Communications team, advertising took place through:

- emails to the Lewisham Life mailing list of roughly 30,000 people about the consultation
- regular mentions in the Lewisham Life weekly enewsletter to roughly 30,000 people
- the Lewisham Council website
- the Council's Lewisham Life magazine (circulated to 116,000 households)
- JCDecaux advertising boards across roughly 50 sites across the borough from 12 March to 26 March
- the Council's Facebook (roughly 4,300 followers) and Twitter (roughly 22,400 followers) channels and the Environment team's Twitter account (roughly 3,900 followers).

The below graph outlines the participation rate as and when updates were provided, with accompanying table.



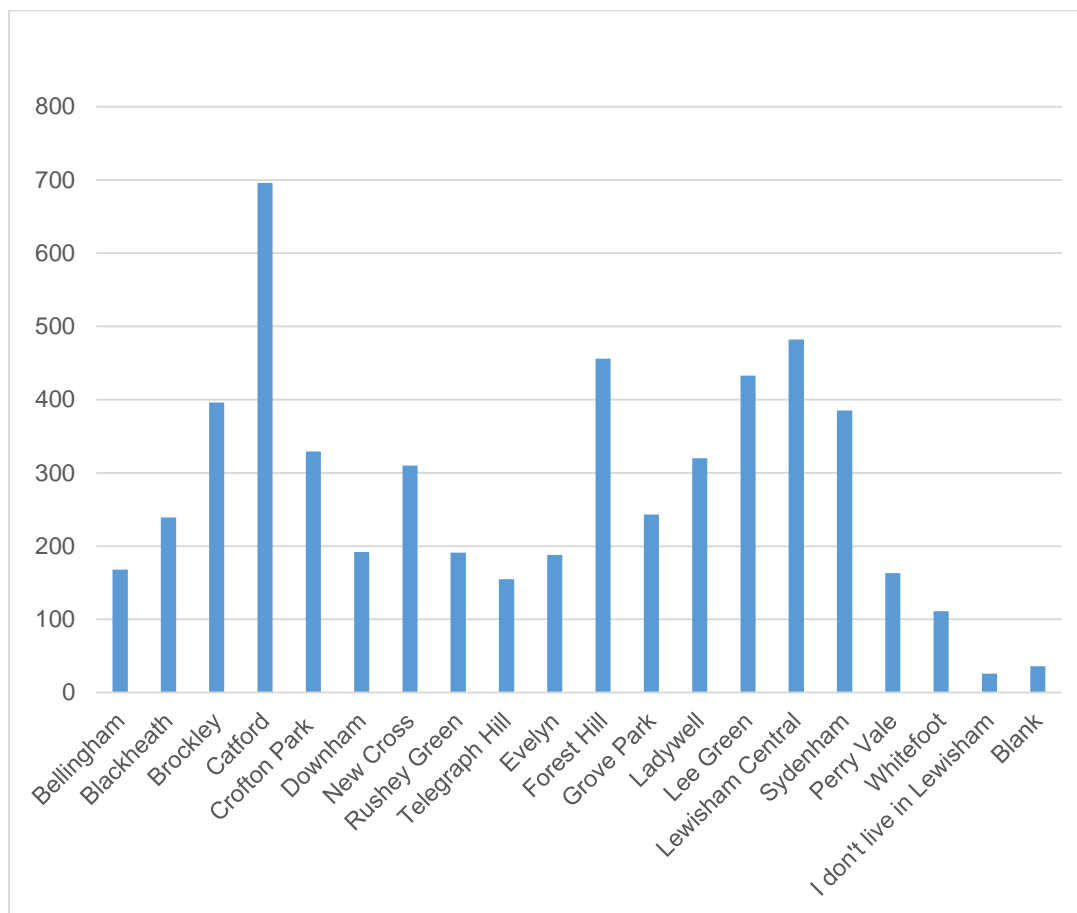
Date	Number of participants
22 February	313
26 February	592
4 March	838
6 March	989
11 March	1,253
19 March	1,512
25 March	1,734
1 April	1,972
2 April	3,049
3 April	4,027
4 April	4,348
5 April	4,459
7 April	5,450
8 April	5,528

As indicated above, upon closure of the survey, 5,528 responses to the consultation were recorded.

Demographics and equality

Location of participants:

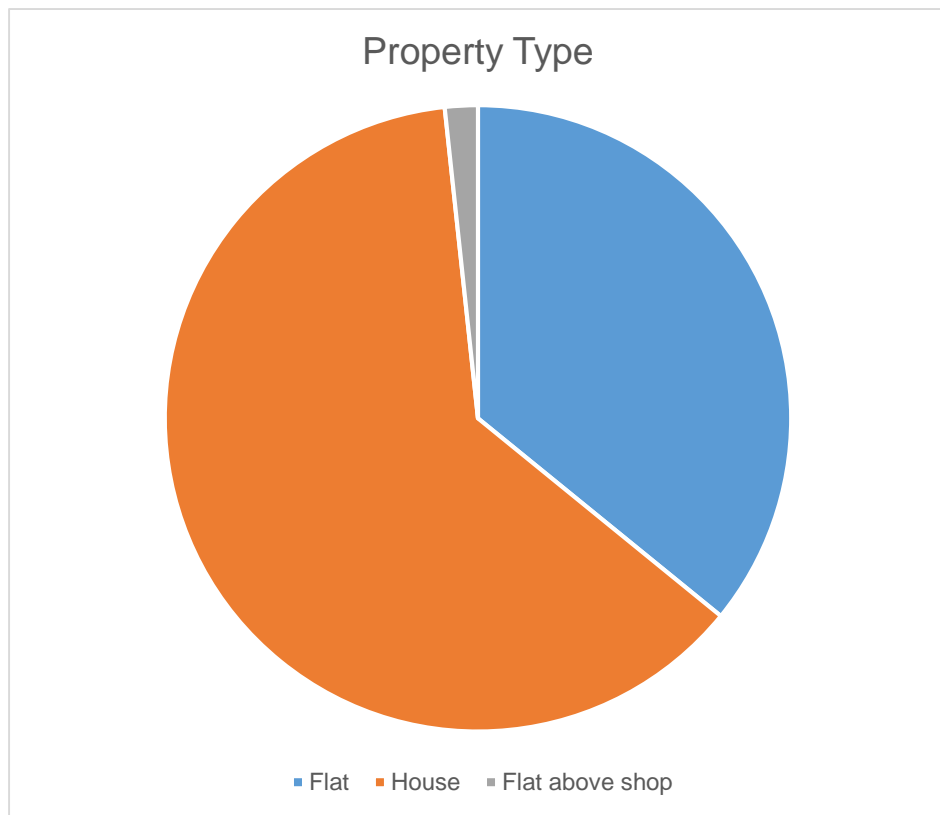
The graph below indicates responses by ward. As can be seen, most responses came from Catford. Individual data for participants by ward can also be seen in the below table.



Bellingham	168
Blackheath	239
Brockley	396
Catford	696
Crofton Park	329
Downham	192
New Cross	310
Rushey Green	191
Telegraph Hill	155
Evelyn	188
Forest Hill	456
Grove Park	243
Ladywell	320
Lee Green	433
Lewisham Central	482
Sydenham	385
Perry Vale	163
Whitefoot	111
I don't live in Lewisham	26
Blank	36

Household of participant:

Further on in the report, the data will be analysed against the participants' household type to see if there are any correlations. However, overall, the below household type was indicated.



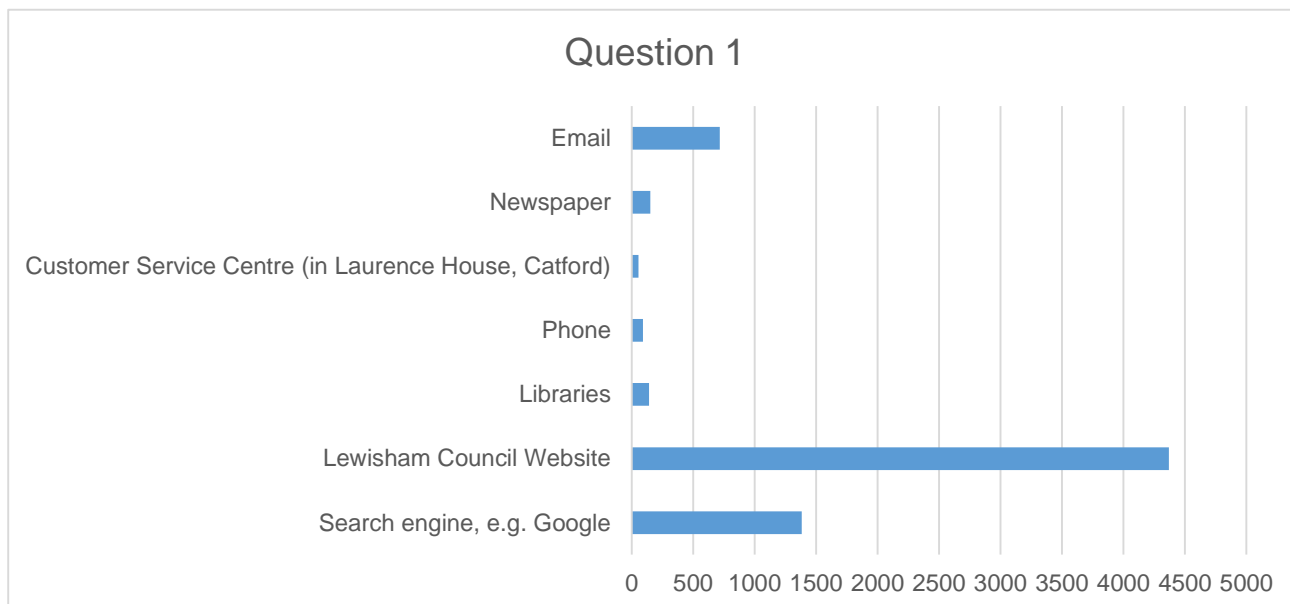
Flat	1,963
House	3,416
Flat above shop	93
Not Answered	56

Your knowledge

The purpose of this section was to identify whether members of the public have a good understanding of the waste services provided by Lewisham Council.

The first question that was asked was:

- 1) Which method do you mainly use to find out information about Lewisham Council?
 - a. Search engine e.g. Google
 - b. Lewisham Council website
 - c. Library
 - d. Phone
 - e. Customer Service Centre (in Laurence House, Catford)
 - f. Newspaper
 - g. Email.

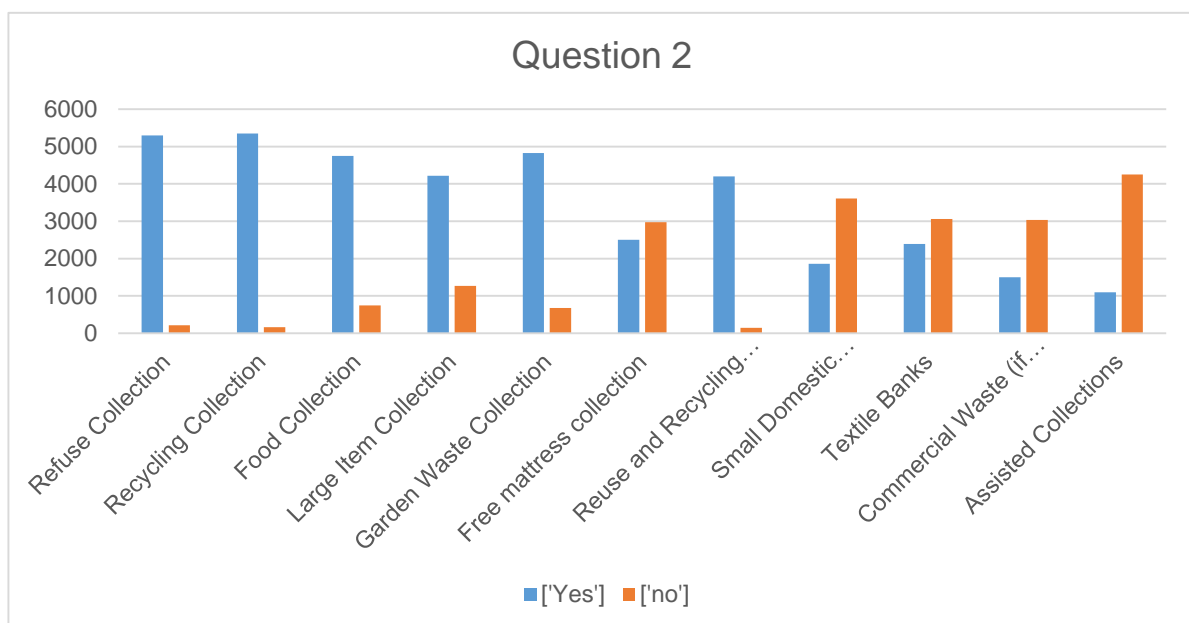


Search engine, e.g. Google	1,383
Lewisham Council Website	4,370
Libraries	141
Phone	91
Customer Service Centre (in Laurence House, Catford)	54
Newspaper	151
Email	717

Reviewing the overall responses, it is clear that residents are using the website more to find out information about Lewisham Council. However, it is also clear that many residents also rely on emails to find out information, expecting the Council to provide them with information, rather than them seeking out information themselves.

2) The next question was a list of options, requiring the participant to indicate whether or not they knew about the following council services: 'Do you know that the Council provides the following services':

- Refuse collection
- Recycling collection
- Food collection
- Large item collection
- Garden waste collection
- Free mattress collection
- Reuse and recycling centre (the 'tip')
- Small domestic appliance banks (for small electricals and mobile phones)
- Textile banks
- Commercial waste (if applicable)
- Assisted collection (for residents who are unable to manage their own collections).



	['Yes']	['no']
Refuse collection	5,301	214
Recycling collection	5,347	162
Food collection	4,751	750
Large item collection	4,216	1,270
Garden waste collection	4,828	674
Free mattress collection	2,500	2,973
Reuse and recycling centre	4,198	148
Small domestic appliance banks	1,857	3,610
Textile banks	2,388	3,060
Commercial waste (if applicable)	1,502	3,033
Assisted collections	1,099	4,255

Upon reviewing the feedback given by participants, there were some clear areas for improvement.

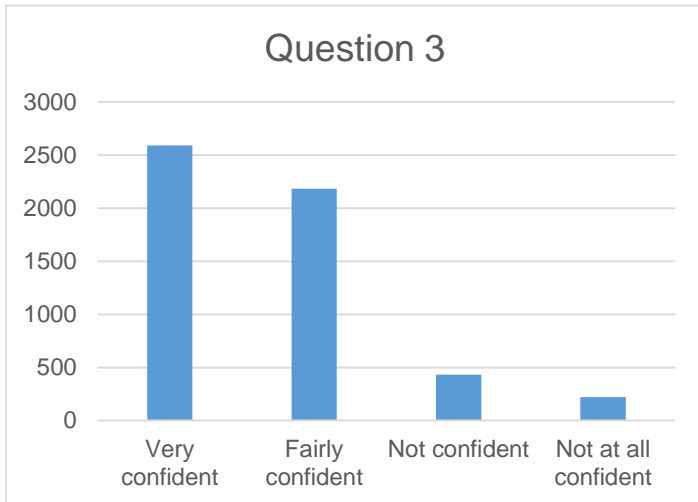
As regularly communicated at assemblies, free mattress collections are on offer yet incidents of fly-tipped mattresses are still occurring. Moreover, textile and small domestic appliance banks have been recently audited and the locations of these have been updated on the website. Clear website guidance is needed so that those residents who want to dispose of this type of waste can find out how to do so.

There is an indication that some residents are unaware that the Council offer a large item collection service, a free mattress collection service, small domestic appliance banks, textile banks, commercial waste and assisted collections. In order to improve this, regular and consistent communication is needed to remind Lewisham residents that these services are constantly available to them. Furthermore, due to the transient population of Lewisham, it is essential that information is regularly updated and communicated to residents – whether it's through Lewisham Life magazine, email, website, or possibly a bespoke environment mailing list.

Assisted collections are available to those residents who are unable to move their bins to the edge of their property themselves – whether it's due to medical reasons or frailty. It is clear that the communication of this service needs to be improved, and targeted to those groups who use existing support groups within the borough.

3) How confident are you in knowing which day your refuse is collected?

1. Very confident
2. Fairly confident
3. Not confident
4. Not at all confident



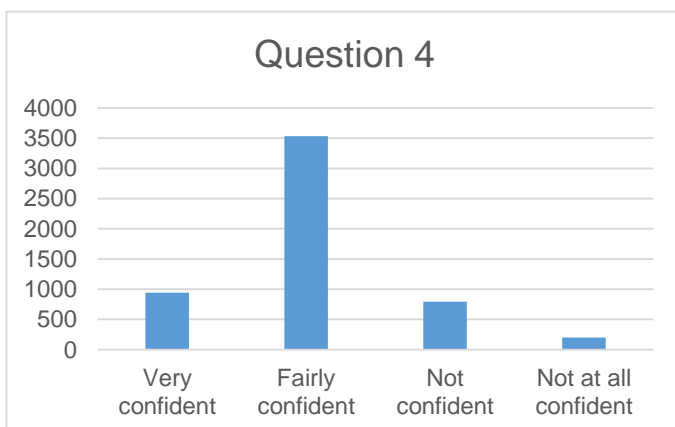
Very confident	2,591
Fairly confident	2,183
Not confident	433
Not at all confident	222

Upon the introduction of fortnightly refuse collections for kerbside properties, there were a significant amount of issues with residents not knowing when their bins were going to be collected. The results of this question are a good indication that residents are understanding when their bin is to be collected.

Once the next phase of the service change is rolled out, it is anticipated that residents will again be confused as to when their refuse will be collected and measures will be put in place, including clear and consistent communication, to ensure residents are aware when the bins will be emptied.

4) How confident are you in knowing what can and can't be recycled?

1. Very confident
2. Fairly confident
3. Not confident
4. Not confident at all



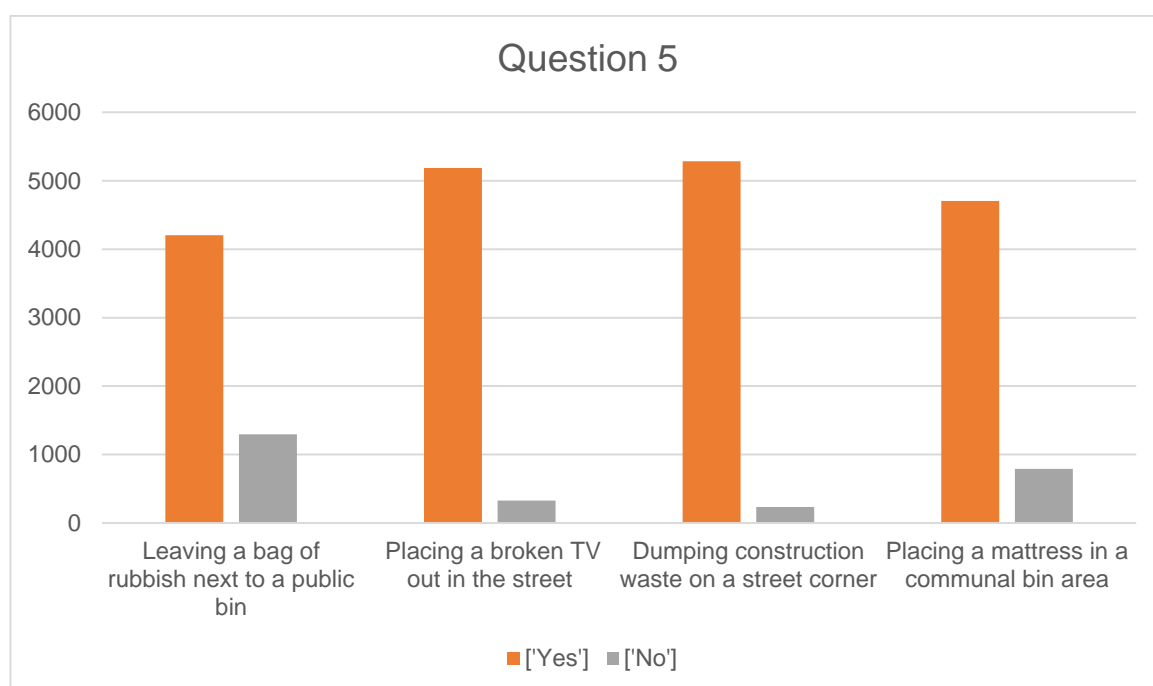
Very confident	943
Fairly confident	3,534
Not confident	794
Not at all confident	199

It was clear that residents' knowledge of what can and can't be recycled was patchy. During the assemblies, several questions were asked on this, in particular around plastics and recycling. We anticipated that this would be confusing to residents, as consumer guidance often contradicts what the Council advises.

Furthermore, our current Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) dictates what can and can't be accepted for recycling in three categories: 'acceptable', 'objectionable', and 'prohibited'. However, this could change as our current recycling contract is due to expire. All changes will be communicated to councillors and residents, with detailed guidance on which things are recyclable.

In the meantime, we do have a detailed guidance page on the Council's website that details what can and can't be recycled, and we will be publicising this more, as well as using Lewisham Life magazine to communicate with residents.

- 5) Please state whether or not you consider the following scenarios to be fly-tipping or inappropriate disposal of waste:



	['Yes']	['No']
Leaving a bag of rubbish next to a public bin	4,207	1,294
Placing a broken TV out in the street	5,189	326
Dumping construction waste on a street corner	5,284	236
Placing a mattress in a communal bin area	4,704	792

Question 5 was used to test participants' knowledge. All four scenarios used were examples of fly-tipping that the Council regularly deal with. All are inappropriate methods of disposing of waste. Below outlines the consequences of the scenarios:

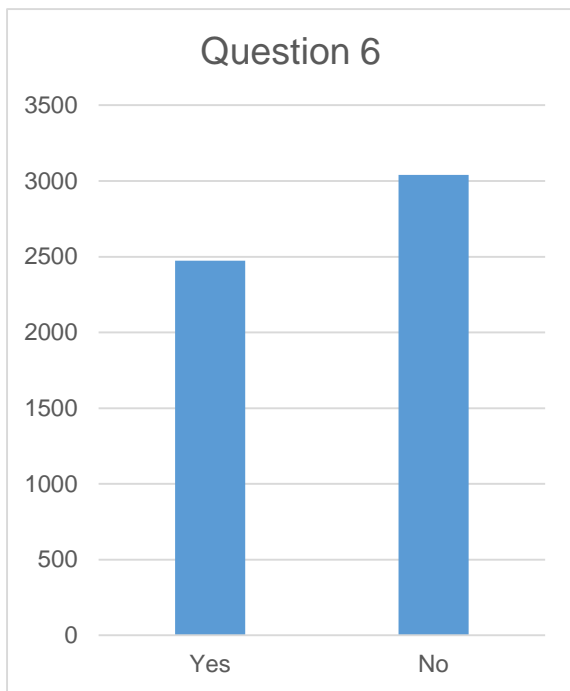
Leaving a bag of rubbish next to a public bin: this would be a low level fly-tip and most likely to lead to a £150 fixed penalty notice.

Placing a broken TV out in the street: this would be a low level fly-tip and most likely to lead to a £150 fixed penalty notice.

Dumping construction waste on a street corner: this would be a medium to high level fly-tip and most likely to lead to a £400 fixed penalty notice or a prosecution at the magistrates' court. Fly-tipping carries a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

Placing a mattress in a communal bin area: this would be a low level fly-tip and most likely to lead to a £150 fixed penalty notice. A Community Protection Warning may also be issued to the tenant and/or landlord.

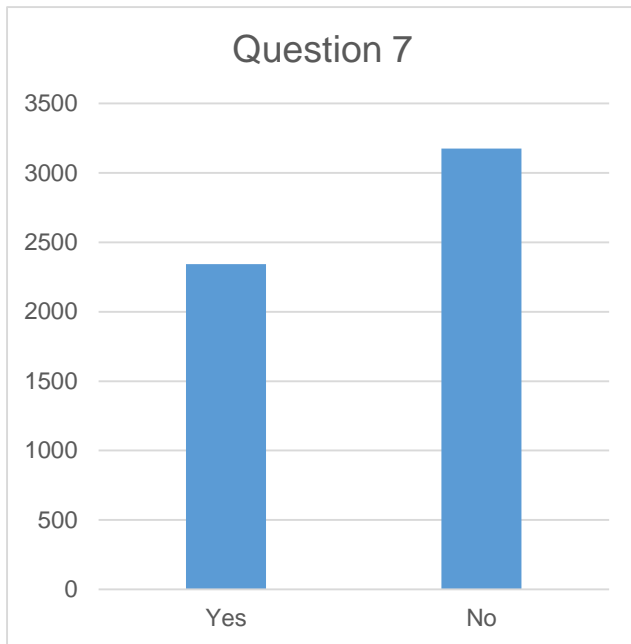
6) Do you know what happens if you contaminate your bin e.g. put dirty recycling in your recycling bin?



Yes	No
2,474	3,040

7) Are you aware that contamination means the Council has to pay additional costs to dispose of your waste?

Yes	No
2,342	3,175



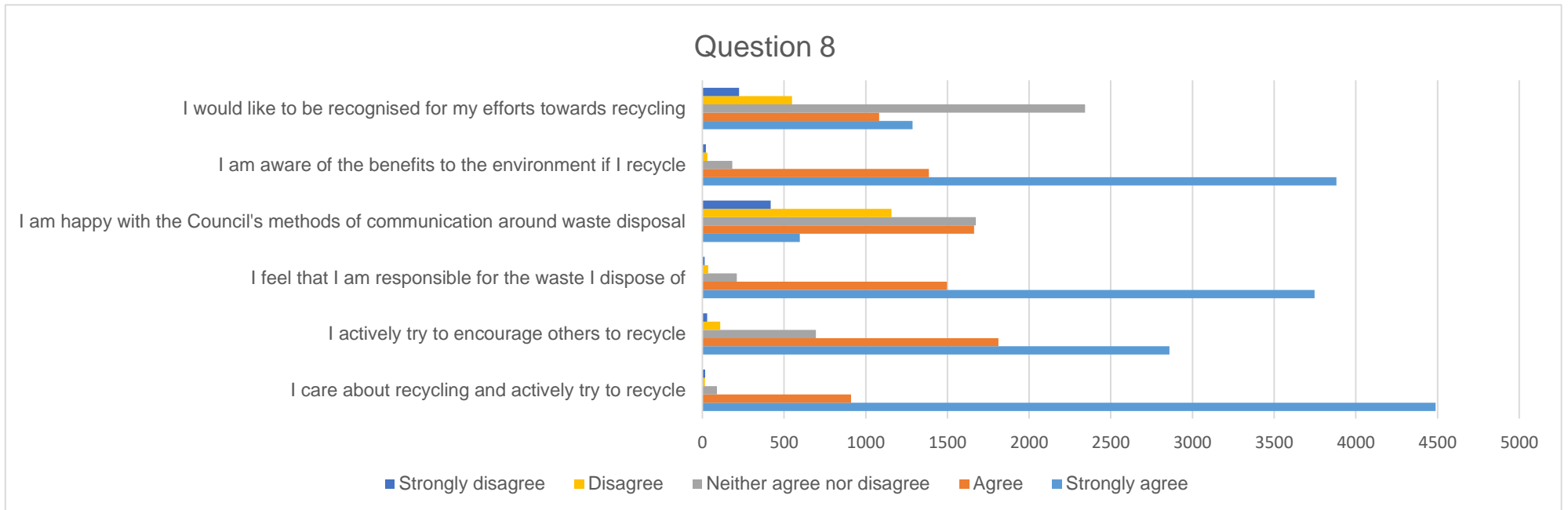
Contamination – when non-recyclable materials are placed in the recycling bin – is a costly issue for the Council. If non-recyclables are taken to the recycling plant, the waste can be rejected meaning the Council have to pay further disposal costs, and the crews need to spend extra time taking the waste to be incinerated. Therefore there is a direct correlation between the quality and cost of recycling.

From this data, and from the feedback gathered during assemblies, it is clear that residents were not aware of this, meaning it's essential to regularly communicate it to them. If residents were aware that it costs the Council to empty contaminated recycling bins, it may lead to an increase in the quality of the recycling.

Your views

This section was designed to identify participants' opinions and views on waste and recycling, to identify whether the service is designed in a way that matches how people feel.

8) Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements:



	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I care about recycling and actively try to recycle	4,489	910	89	15	17
I actively try to encourage others to recycle	2,859	1,812	694	109	29
I feel that I am responsible for the waste I dispose of	3,748	1,497	210	35	13
I am happy with the Council's methods of communication around waste disposal	596	1,663	1,674	1,158	418
I am aware of the benefits to the environment if I recycle	3,881	1,387	183	30	21
I would like to be recognised for my efforts towards recycling	1,287	1,082	2,343	548	224

Over 97% of participants said they care about recycling and actively try to recycle, which shows that Lewisham residents understand the importance of recycling. Furthermore, over 84% of participants actively try to encourage others to recycle. Over 95% of participants also said that they are aware of the benefits to the environment if they recycle – this would have been influenced by national, and international media, around recycling – particularly plastics.

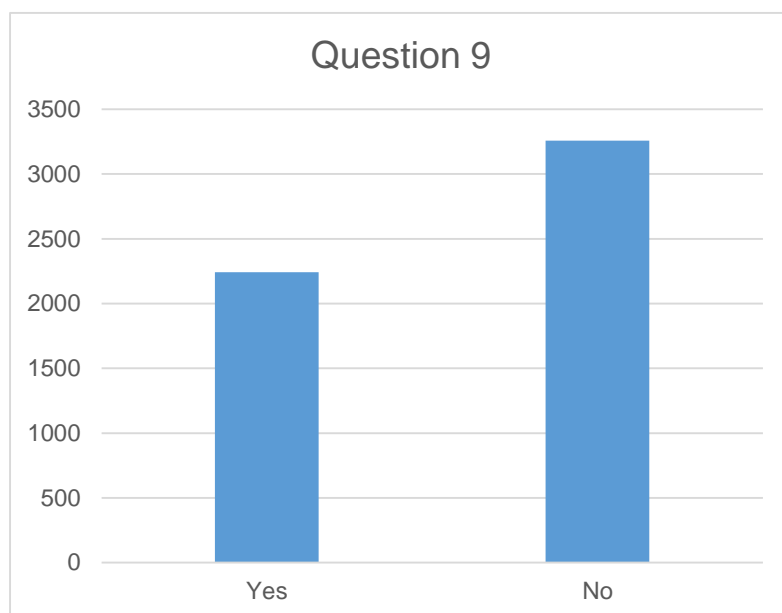
This is a key message that needs to be communicated more to households, with examples on how recycling is good for the environment. Whether it's the diversion from landfill, or the waste hierarchy and the benefits this brings to the environment, it is significant that key messages are communicated consistently from the Council.

With targets being driven by the Mayor of London and the EU Waste Directive, it is more important now than ever that Lewisham recycles materials that are pure and of a high quality. 95% of participants said that they feel responsible for the waste they dispose of. With education, this could lead to a future reduction in contamination as more people are becoming aware of the importance of disposing of waste appropriately. The Government's newly published 25-year Environment Plan outlines a number of positive aspects which will bring about positive change. It is encouraging to see residents recognising these future changes through informal feedback during the consultation, and their likeliness to adapt to any changes to disposing of their waste.

58% of participants said that they 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that they are happy with the Council's methods of communication around waste disposal. Throughout this report, it has been shown that communication is one of the poorest performance indicators for the Environment division. Some elements of the division have regular, concise and consistent messages that are communicated successfully e.g. bin collection days and changes to service times. This is an indicator that communication needs to be redesigned within Environment – and the Council would benefit from having its own bespoke communications strategy for Environment – being one of the biggest services that affects the majority of Lewisham residents.

Lastly, 43% of participants 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that they would like to be recognised for their efforts towards recycling. Previously, the Council operated a scheme whereby streets were recognised for their recycling efforts through tonnage monitoring. This shows that residents may be open to the idea of re-introducing a similar scheme, which could be incorporated in to the waste strategy and reduction and recycling plan in the future.

9) Do you find it difficult to recycle in Lewisham?



Yes	No
2,243	3,258

Over 40% of participants said that they find it difficult to recycle in Lewisham, which is subjective in itself as there are several contextual factors that need to be taken in to account such as location, household type, the availability of recycling facilities, and the type of material being recycled.

However, this is still a negative indicator that shows more needs to be done to ensure residents find it as easy as possible to recycle as much of their waste as possible. Following this question, there was an open-text box asking participants why they found it difficult to recycle. Following a thematic analysis, the following categories were pulled from the open-text comments:

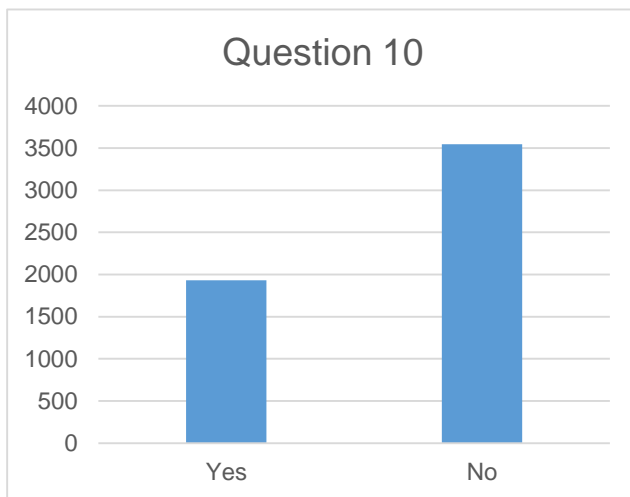
- Manufacturer guidance – participants were confused by conflicting guidance from packaging and guidance issued by the Council. This has been mentioned previously in this report, but it's likely that this won't be a quick-fix due to the upcoming expiration of the Council's recycling contract.
- Delivery of bins – participants have expressed their frustration with the delay in bins being delivered, or requests not being actioned, leaving them without bins for months at a time.
- Amount of bins – participants said that they don't have the correct amount of bins, particularly those participants who live in shared households. This is part of a bigger problem, which requires some researching as too many bins in a household could lead to more bins being stored on the public highway.
- Reuse and recycling centre – participants were unhappy with the location of the reuse and recycling site, and several requests were made for another reuse and

recycling site to be placed in the south of the borough. There is a current arrangement with Bromley Council that residents in Lewisham can use the reuse and recycling site at Waldor Road in Bromley for a charge of £3. Due to spatial restrictions, it is difficult to allocate another reuse and recycling site in the borough.

- Recycling guidance – there was a strong indication that there is not enough guidance on recycling for residents in the borough. This is an issue that the Council is aware of, and consistent communication needs to occur to ensure residents are educated regularly on what can and can't be recycled.

It was positive, however, to see that more than half of participants said that they did not find it difficult to recycle in Lewisham.

10) Do you feel that you could approach our crew members for advice about your waste disposal?



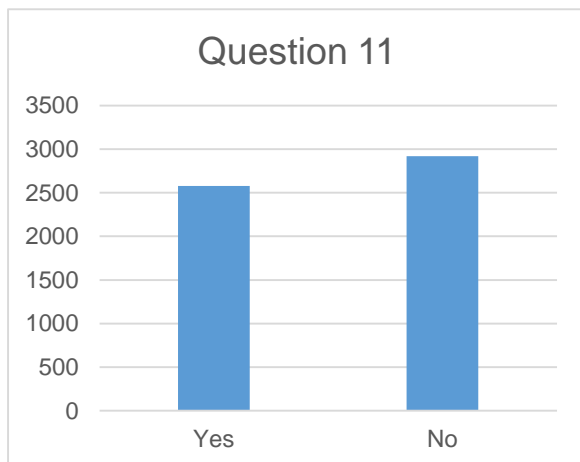
Yes	No
1,933	3,545

Over 64% of participants said that they do not feel that they could approach crew members for advice about their waste, which is disappointing. All crews should be approachable, and the Council will take this feedback on board to ensure our crew members are accessible and approachable to answer any questions residents have.

Your experience

This final section of the consultation looked at participants' experience of the waste and recycling services provided by the Environment division.

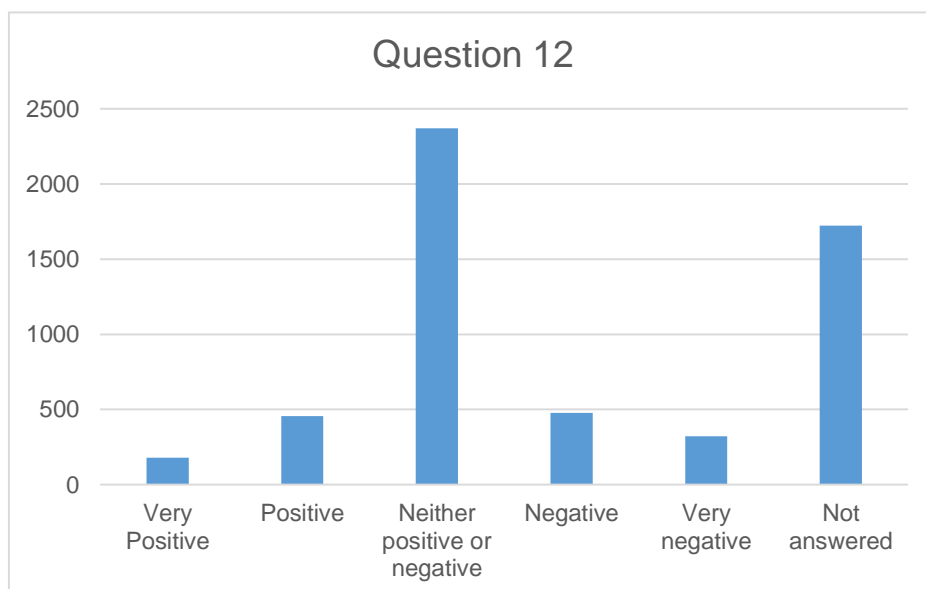
11) Have you experienced a missed collection in the past year?



Yes	No
2,577	2,918

46% of participants said that they had experienced a missed collection in the past year. These figures are monitored monthly in an operational management meeting. As indicated in the service standards², all missed collections will be emptied within two working days if the Council are informed about it within 24 hours of the collection. If not, the collection will not be done until the following week.

12) How did you find the experience when you reported this, and then had your rubbish collected?

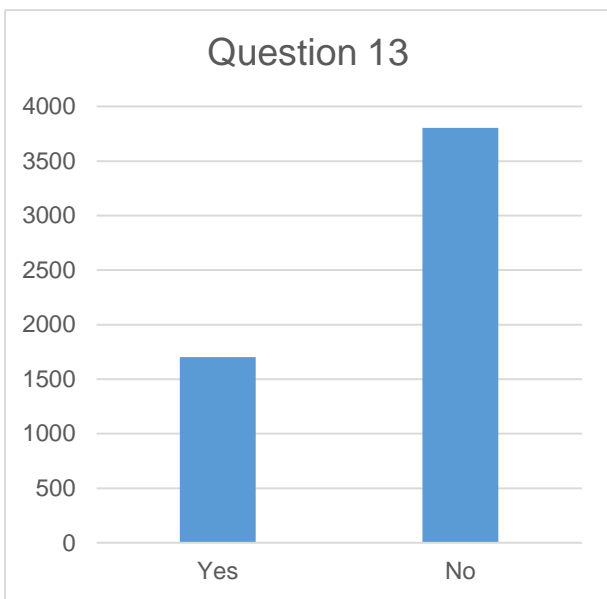


² London Borough of Lewisham, Recycling and Refuse Service Standards: <https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/wasterecycle/your-bins/service-standards>

Very Positive	Positive	Neither positive or negative	Negative	Very negative	Not answered
180	457	2,369	478	322	1,722

From a satisfaction perspective, more needs to be done to ensure residents receive a more positive experience. One of the main issues that came out of this was that when residents report their missed collection, it doesn't get communicated to the operations team which was an internal system error. Work is being done within the Council to resolve this, but more communication needs to be done to ensure residents are reporting to the Council if their bin is missed.

13) Were you aware of the 'bring' sites across the borough (a site where you can take items such as small electrical equipment or used clothes)?

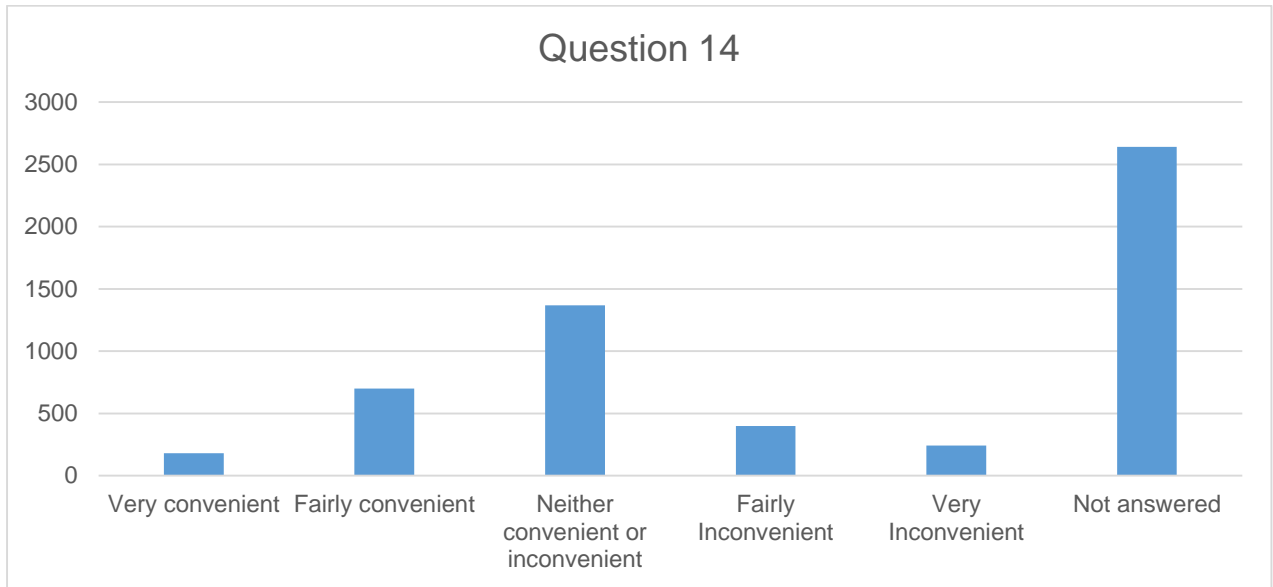


Yes	No
1,701	3,803

The Council have recently audited the bring banks in the borough, and the website has been updated³ to reflect the up-to-date locations of these sites. However, we are aware that more needs to be done to inform residents that these sites exist because the promotion of the sites has not been consistently active.

³ Bring Banks: <https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/wasterecycle/recycling/recycling-small-electricals-and-mobile-phones>
 Textile Banks: <https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/wasterecycle/recycling/textile-recycling>

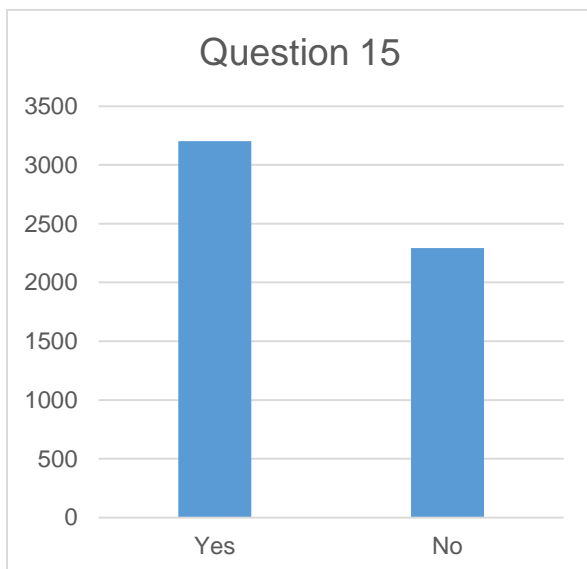
14) If yes, how convenient do you find the 'bring' sites?



Very convenient	Fairly convenient	Neither convenient or inconvenient	Fairly Inconvenient	Very Inconvenient	Not answered
181	699	1,369	398	241	2,640

This may not be an accurate representation of the convenience of the sites. As indicated in the previous questions, over 69% of participants were not aware of the existence of bring sites. Therefore, once residents become aware of their existence and location, the convenience scores will naturally increase as there are over 22 sites across the borough.

15) Have you heard of the reuse and recycling centre at Landmann Way?

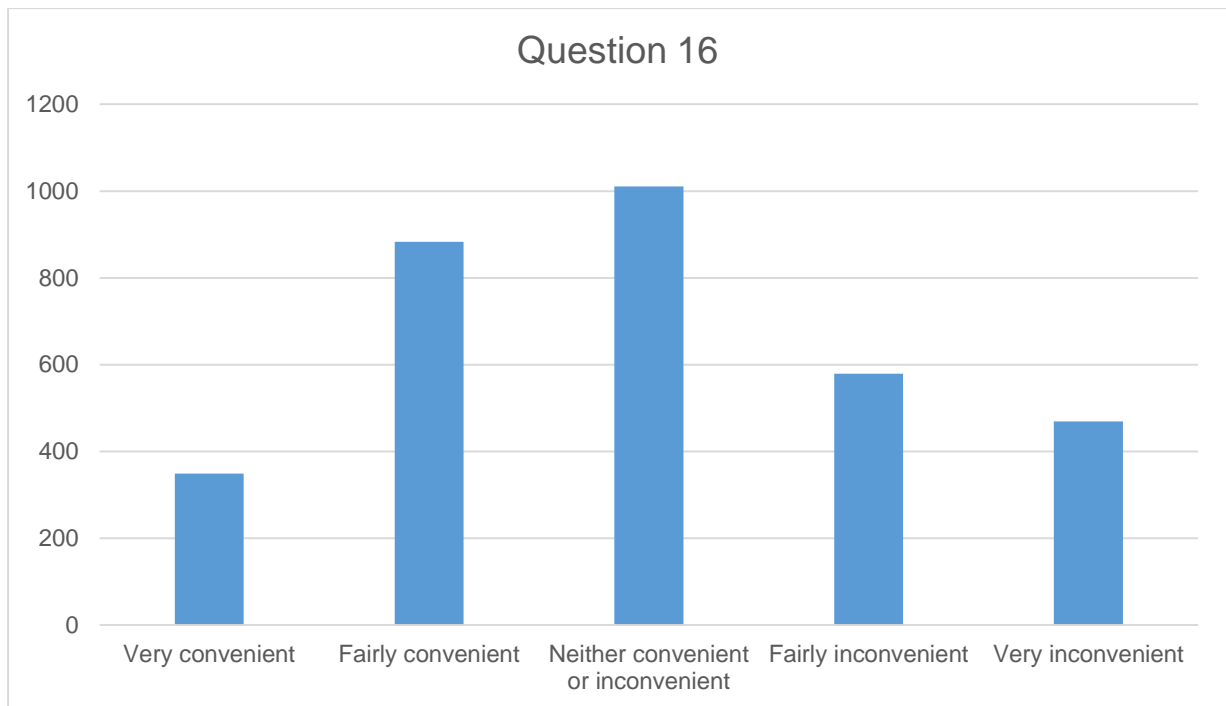


Yes	No
3,203	2,294

58% of participants said that they had heard of the reuse and recycling centre at Landmann Way. There is guidance on the website about the materials that are accepted at the centre,

and there are future plans for this to be further updated to provide a more extensive list of materials that are acceptable and not acceptable.

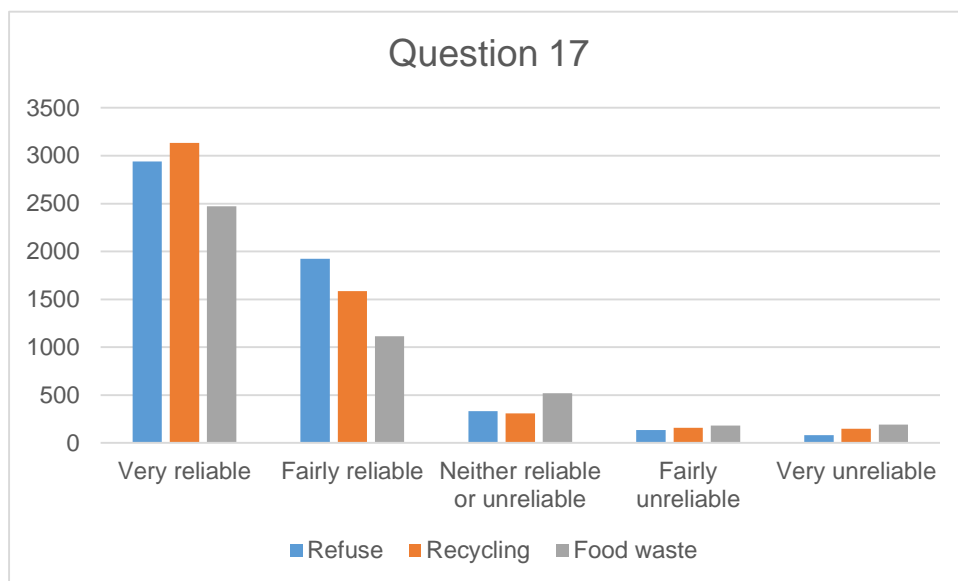
16) If yes, how convenient do you find the reuse and recycling centre?



Very convenient	Fairly convenient	Neither convenient or inconvenient	Fairly inconvenient	Very inconvenient
349	883	1,011	579	469

As previously mentioned, the location of the reuse and recycling centre has been raised as an issue and this has naturally driven a decline in the convenience score. Due to spatial restrictions, it is difficult to obtain another site in the borough. The financial resources to introduce another site are also not readily available. Moving ahead, more work will be done to improve the communication around the site, plus a review of the site will be carried out to ensure its opening hours are suitable for residents.

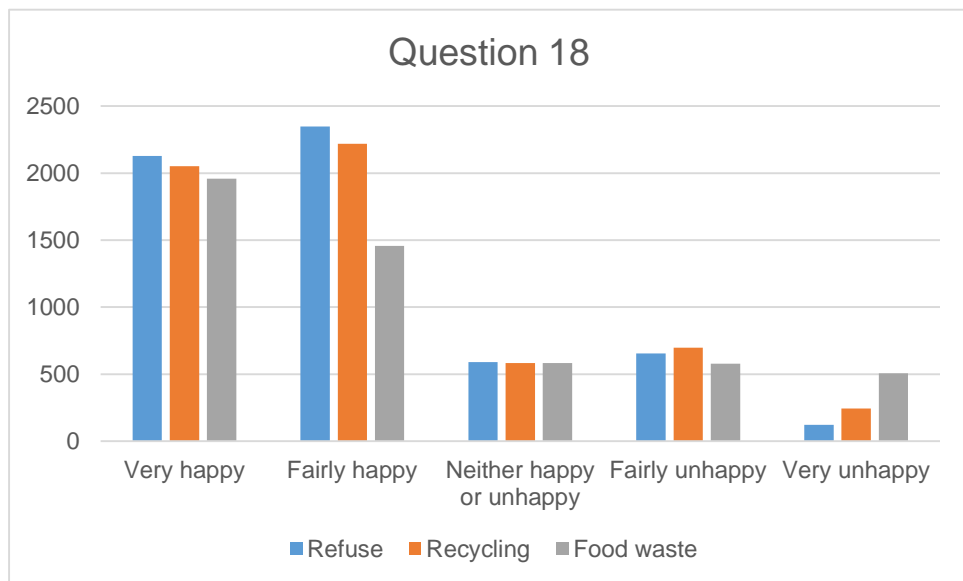
17) Please indicate how reliable you find the following collections:



	Very reliable	Fairly reliable	Neither reliable or unreliable	Fairly unreliable	Very unreliable
Refuse	2,940	1,923	331	136	82
Recycling	3,132	1,585	309	157	148
Food waste	2,472	1,113	520	183	192

The majority of participants indicated that they find their collections either 'reliable' or 'fairly reliable', which shows that the Council are performing to a satisfactory standard thus far. With a few minor improvements, it is hoped that this will increase further.

18) How happy are you overall with the following facilities when it comes to disposing of your waste appropriately?



	Very happy	Fairly happy	Neither happy or unhappy	Fairly unhappy	Very unhappy
Refuse	2,129	2,348	591	655	122
Recycling	2,051	2,218	582	697	245
Food waste	1,958	1,458	582	579	506

Although the services were thought to be reliable, there is a clear juxtaposition where residents may find the service reliable but not be particularly happy with it. The number of participants indicating 'fairly unhappy' or 'very unhappy' are fairly small compared to the 'very happy' or 'fairly happy', but there are a few notable reasons that may contribute to this.

Since the introduction of the food waste service in October 2017, 80,000 kerbside properties were changed to a fortnightly collection for their refuse, and a weekly collection for their food and recycling. Several residents were confused about their collection days, and this took a reasonable amount of time to adjust to.

The Council are now at a point where we are seeking to roll out the food waste collection to the next phase by extending it to properties on red routes. Once this has been done, the food collection will then be rolled out to flats and estates. The plan is to eventually have a food waste collection service in place for all households and flats in the borough.

In terms of the recycling, several residents have indicated that they are unhappy with the contamination process whereby if a recycling bin is found to be contaminated on three occasions, the recycling bin is removed for 12 months. The resident is made aware of this at each stage of the contamination process via a letter. Furthermore, residents are often confused as to the guidance provided around what can be recycled.

Currently, the top contaminants in recycling bins are black bags, textiles, food waste, and nappies, all of which can't be recycled. With the creation of the reduction and recycling plan, the Council will be updating its waste strategy and formulating a bespoke environment communications strategy to ensure key messages are communicated to residents consistently.

Conclusion and recommendations

Following on from the data analysis, it is clear that communication is the main area that needs to be improved in terms of the waste and recycling service. Moving forward, the service will be taking the following steps:

Action	Time-frame	Completed by
Create a reduction and recycling plan ⁴ , as directed by the Mayor of London, incorporating feedback and recommendations from the consultation.	Begin creating in May 2019.	First draft completed by end of 2019, to be submitted to the office of the Mayor of London.
Update the London Borough of Lewisham's waste strategy.	Begin quarter 3 of 2019.	Draft to be completed by mid-2020, to be submitted to Mayor and Cabinet for approval.
Create an environment communications strategy in cooperation with the Corporate Communications team.	Begin creation in July 2019.	Completed by end of 2019, to be approved by Head of Environment.
Customer service training for all crew members, following feedback from consultation.	Commence training in August 2019.	To be carried out on a rolling basis.
Review of the reuse and recycling centre, in particular its opening hours and materials guidance.	Begin in May 2019.	To be completed by September 2019.
Clearer guidance around acceptable materials for recycling.	Begin in May 2019.	Finalised list not able to be completed until July 2020 when new contract commences.

⁴ London City Hall, Waste policy: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/waste-and-recycling/waste-policy>