

Wide-spread Dissatisfaction Among Residents and Their Local Council

Contributed by Localise
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Localise, the consumer profiling arm of DJS Research Ltd, yesterday released figures which suggest wide-spread dissatisfaction among UK residents in relation to the way in which local councils target their services and spending, and the extent to which councils understand the position of local residents.

Only around a quarter of people, from a UK-wide poll of 1,034, actively agreed (i.e. "agree strongly" or "agree") that council had a good understanding of its residents, compared to nearly two-fifths (37%) who actively disagreed with the statement. This is particularly true in Wales and Northern Ireland, where around half actively disagreed with the statement (49% and 48% respectively).

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Similarly, when asked to what extent they agreed with the statement that their local council targeted services in a way which best suited them, only a fifth of residents said that they actively agreed, with more than double that actively disagreeing (43%) and within that more than one in ten strongly disagreeing with the statement (13%). Only around a tenth of 15-24 year olds actively agreed with the statement.

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Residents were also asked about their perceptions of how councils spent their budgets. Again, when asked to indicate their agreement with the statement "My local Council focuses its budget on the services which matter most to local people," fewer than a quarter agreed (23%) with only 3% strongly agreeing. This statement also had the highest level of "strong disagreement", with almost one in six (14%) choosing that option. Overall, two fifths (39%) disagreed with the statement. Agreement with the statement was particularly low in Wales and Northern Ireland, with just 12% and 10% net agreement respectively.

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An opportunity in disguise?

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However, despite the seemingly poor findings, analysis for the three questions above also found that around a third of respondents for each question stated that they neither agree nor disagree "suggesting either that they may lack the information to make a judgement or that they are ambivalent about council services.

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The same piece of research from Localise also found that residents across the UK would generally support (52% net agree, 8% net disagree) councils moving their communications channels to a more online approach if savings made could then be applied to other areas. Those aged over 65 were the only group in terms of age where net agreement dropped below half (48%).

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Alasdair Gleed, Head of Localise and Public Sector Research at DJS Research, commented on these findings:

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"At a time when local councils are being asked to make large percentage savings year on year, communications channel shifting is something which has the potential to provide a better service at a reduced cost. These findings show that the majority of people are dissatisfied with current council performance, but also that there is a large minority who are unsure how their council performs. This represents an opportunity for councils to look at their communications policies holistically in order to think about how successes can be better communicated, how opinions can be better gathered, and how this can be done cost-effectively to improve services in other areas."

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Verbatim comments provided as part of the survey also outline these facts, with issues around a lack of Council information appearing regularly. You can download the full report from the DJS Research Ltd website or call Alasdair Gleed on 01663 767 857.

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The report can be downloaded here:

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http://www.djsresearch.co.uk/Free/Localise%20Report_Local%20Councils_July%202014_vFinal.pdf