

Thinking Ahead About Independent Living

September 2018

This report is based on conversations or responses freely given by members of the public. Where possible quotations are used to illustrate individual or collectively important experiences.

Survey and interview responses are collected anonymously and, where appropriate, further anonymised during editing. Engagement officers collect responses verbatim and we also present these in our final report as an appendix. This is important in showing the accuracy of our analysis, and so that further work can be done by anyone wishing to do so.

A full explanation of the guiding principles and framework for how we do engagement and analysis can be found online on our website www.healthwatchbolton.co.uk.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed and contributed by members of the public in relation to the specific project as set out in the methodology section of the report.

Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences or opinions of all service users and staff, only an analysis of what was contributed by members of the public, service users, patients and staff within the project context as described.

This is a commissioned piece of work aimed at exploring the views of potential future service users with regards to the model of service and options for independent living in Bolton.

Commissioners were specifically interested to explore what people who do not currently require extra care housing feel would be important if they were to need such a service in the future.

The work is commissioned by the Local Authority and is aligned with a service review/development process. The work compliments a piece of research carried out by the Local Authority with current users of extra care housing services.

Further details of the proposed Extra Care Housing strategy can be found at:

<http://www.bolton.gov.uk/sites/DocumentCentre/Documents/Extra%20Care%20Strategy.pdf>

The purpose of this research is to investigate what would encourage/discourage people when considering independent living options for themselves or for loved ones.

We asked a number of questions about **environment**, **amenities** and **support** that will help Commissioners to develop service and/or building specifications. In particular we asked :

- What kind of **physical environment** would attract people to consider independent living options?
- What kind of **social environment** would attract people to consider independent living options?
- What kind of **practical amenities** would people want ?
- What kind of **practical support/services** would people like?
- What **health care and wellbeing support/services** would people like to be able to access in independent living sites?

We also explored some broader questions exploring what influences people's decision-making about their housing options and how they like to receive information about options. These questions should inform the Local Authorities modelling and communications strategies :

- What things matter most to people in making decisions about their independent living options?
- What factors influence people's decision making when thinking about moving to an independent living set up. What tenure options do people prefer?
- How would people like to get information and advice about independent living options; what format and from where?

Methodology

Engagement officers visited a number of groups and sites in Bolton to gather people's opinions on 'Independent Living' – another term used for Extra Care Housing. It was felt this term would be broader and highlight that this was not only about care for those with additional health needs, but also a mixed way of living, with the option of support and nearby services.

We carried out both:

- Guided discussions in group work settings.
- An online public survey which was publicised via our website and social media channels, via our members and contacts database. We asked people to disseminate the survey link to family and friends and their own networks which many people did.
- Individual interviews with people who we stopped in the street or accessed through our own networks. The results of these interviews were added to the online survey.

Following the research the comments were analysed for themes relevant to the original questions.

Independent Living

Picture yourself in 20 years time...What are you up to ? How do you feel? Where are you living? When is it the right time to start planning your later life?

Most people want to age well, at home, doing the things they love as part of a community surrounded by friends and family. Suitable housing underpins that vision.

By 2025, almost half the people over 50 living in Bolton will have a long standing illness. As we all start to live longer we can expect to need varying levels of support to enjoy life independently. Bolton's commissioners, health and social care providers and landlords are looking to the future. Bolton's vision is to provide housing options for vibrant community living with easy access to care packages that meet the needs of our population.

The independent living ethos promotes flexibility, choice, responsiveness and safety into housing options. These purpose built communities can play a vital role in preventing and supporting people living with conditions or disabilities to lead connected and fulfilling lives.

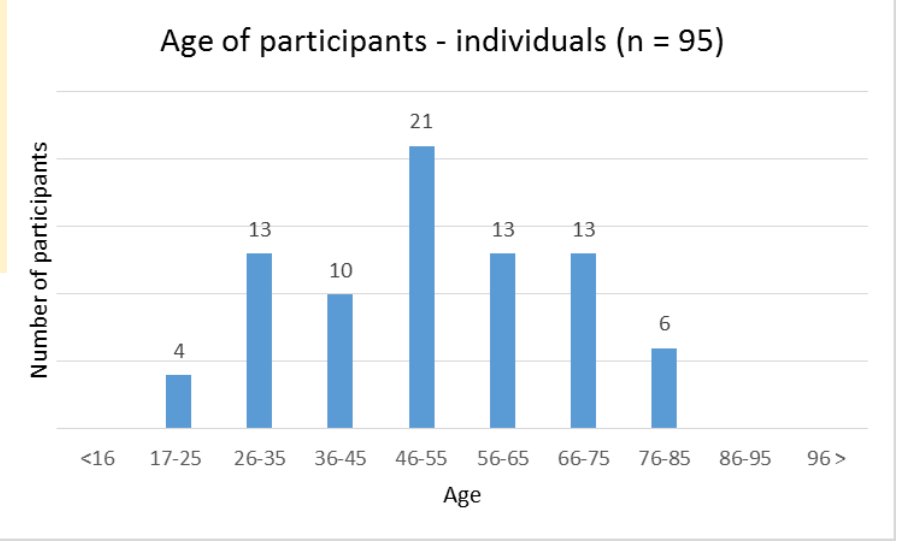
Please share your thoughts and ideas on what is important to you when considering future independent living actions for yourselves or a loved one. Your responses to this survey will inform models of independent living housing options.

1. An ageing society means we need more imaginative housing options. What kind of property would you expect to be available in an independent living community? (e.g. gardens, number of rooms, size of scheme?)
2. Age friendly communities reduce isolation and promote good health and wellbeing. What facilities would you want in an independent living community to allow hobbies and relationships? (e.g. gym, café, organised activities, communal spaces)
3. What kind of health and wellbeing services would you want in an independent living community? (e.g. GP, podiatry, physio, exercise classes)
4. What would your preferred housing tenure options be? (please tick preferred options)
5. What kind of practical services would you want from an independent living community? (please tick all relevant options)
6. What kind of information about independent living options would you expect to be able to access? (e.g. booklet, online)
7. Where would you expect to find out about independent living options (e.g. housing officer, UCAN, One Stop Shop, social worker)
8. What three things matter most to you or your loved ones when making decisions about your housing options?
9. If you lived in an independent living community, how would you like to be involved in decision making within the community?
10. Have you any other thoughts or comment you'd like to share on the topic?

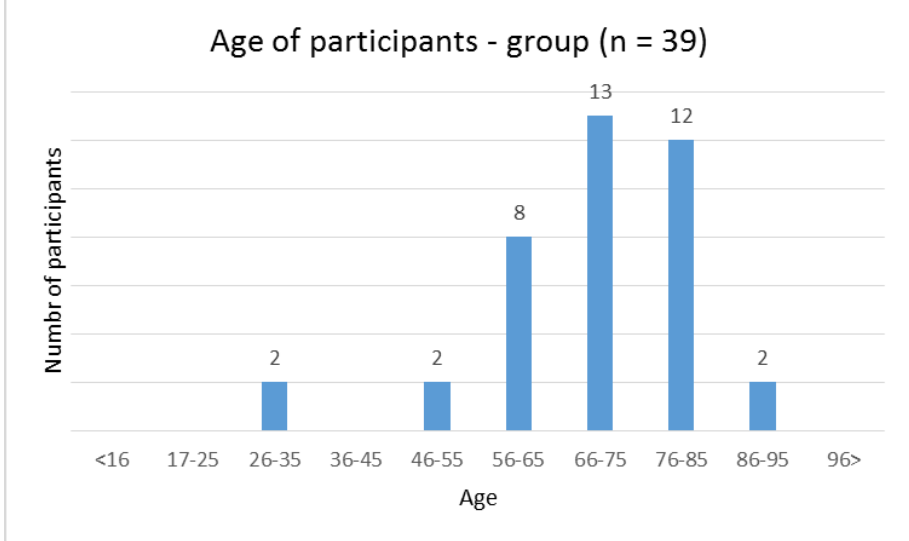
Methodology – Who we spoke to

We spoke to 149 people in this study. Many gave us individual responses, with some captured through group work.

Individual data
TOTAL 95



Female 54, Male 27
Average age: 43
White British 54, BAME 27
Tenure: own house 41%, mortgage 17%, all forms of renting 27%.



Female 37, Male 17
Average age: 69
White British 52, White Irish 1
Tenure: own house 10%, rented/social housing 5%.

Group work Data
TOTAL 54

Nb not all respondents answered the demographic questions

Key Findings



Community

- A desirable space in a safe, familiar location
- A community which is open, but allows privacy
- Well connected place, with access to activities such as sports.



Options

- Renting and buying are both popular options
- The most popular services would ensure homes are well maintained, are safe and secure and support independence



Informing

- Information should be clear, it should be available in both physical and online formats
- Various council departments should be informing people alongside advice groups and charities and ‘trusted individuals’ such as community group leaders
- Advertising would support knowledge base.



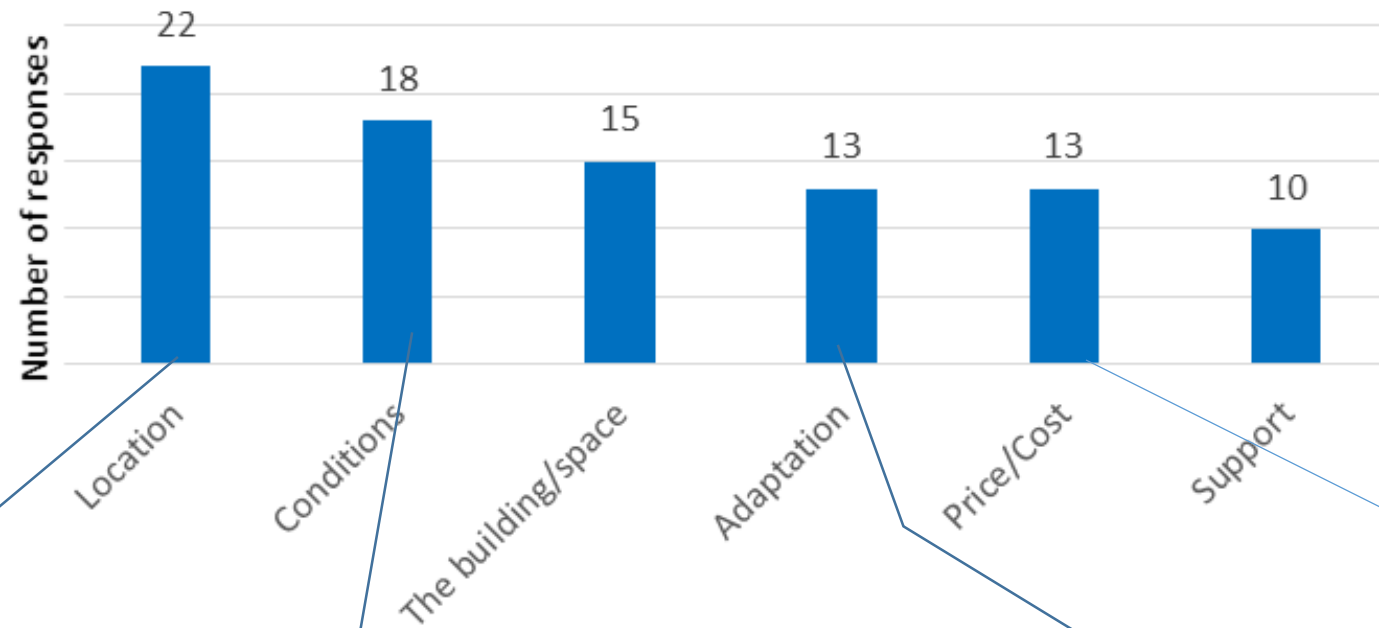
Deciding

- People want to feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in the place they live
- This place needs to be in a safe area, which is accessible and affordable
- Involving residents through committees and with regular engagement and discussion is essential

What is most important to you ? Group Members Responses

Remember the older, more predominantly female and dominantly white British demographic of the group participants

Important factors in housing options (n = 91)



The **location** category was most important for people who we spoke to in groups. A **familiar** location (i.e. close to their current community) was valued

Conditions - which included concerns over **community safety, security** and **condition of the property** itself - was the second most popular category.

People wished their space to be suited to their current needs and expectations and **adaptable** to any future needs. It should be **low maintenance** and **accessible** if required.

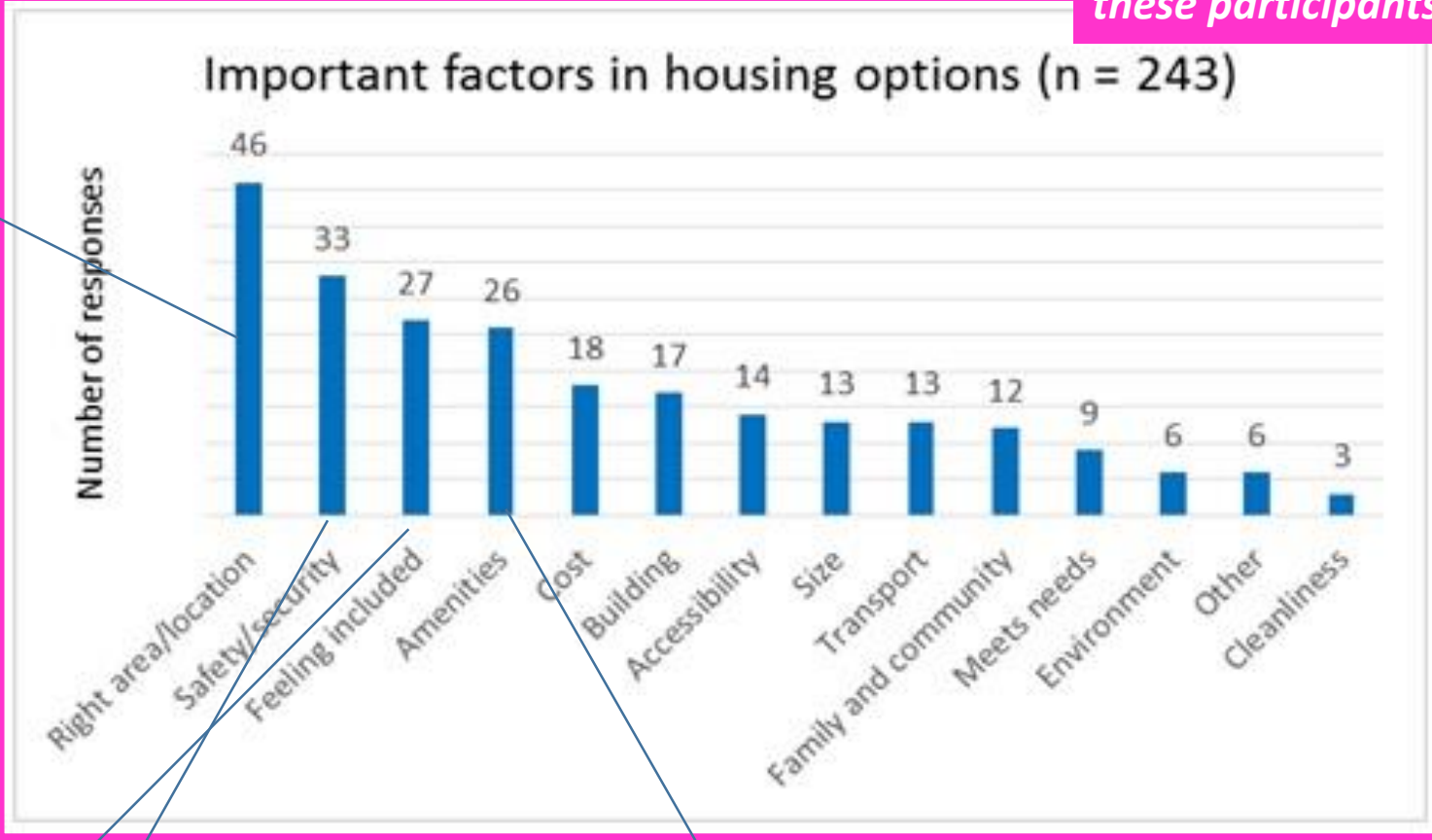
Price is an important factor. Comparisons to current housing costs might help people already in the older persons age group to decide

What is most important to you ? Individual Participant Responses

Remember the younger and more age and ethnicity diverse demographic of these participants

Location is most important to people. A **safe area** that is **familiar** to the individual is most desirable.

Feeling part of where you live was important factor for most people in this group. This encompassed both feeling **connected to the wider community** but also **participating** in the life of the scheme/street where you live



Safety and security of both the homes and the wider community is an important requirement

Amenities are important to people. A good range of **local community assets** combined with **modern, flexible on site amenities** would make properties attractive.

Reflections

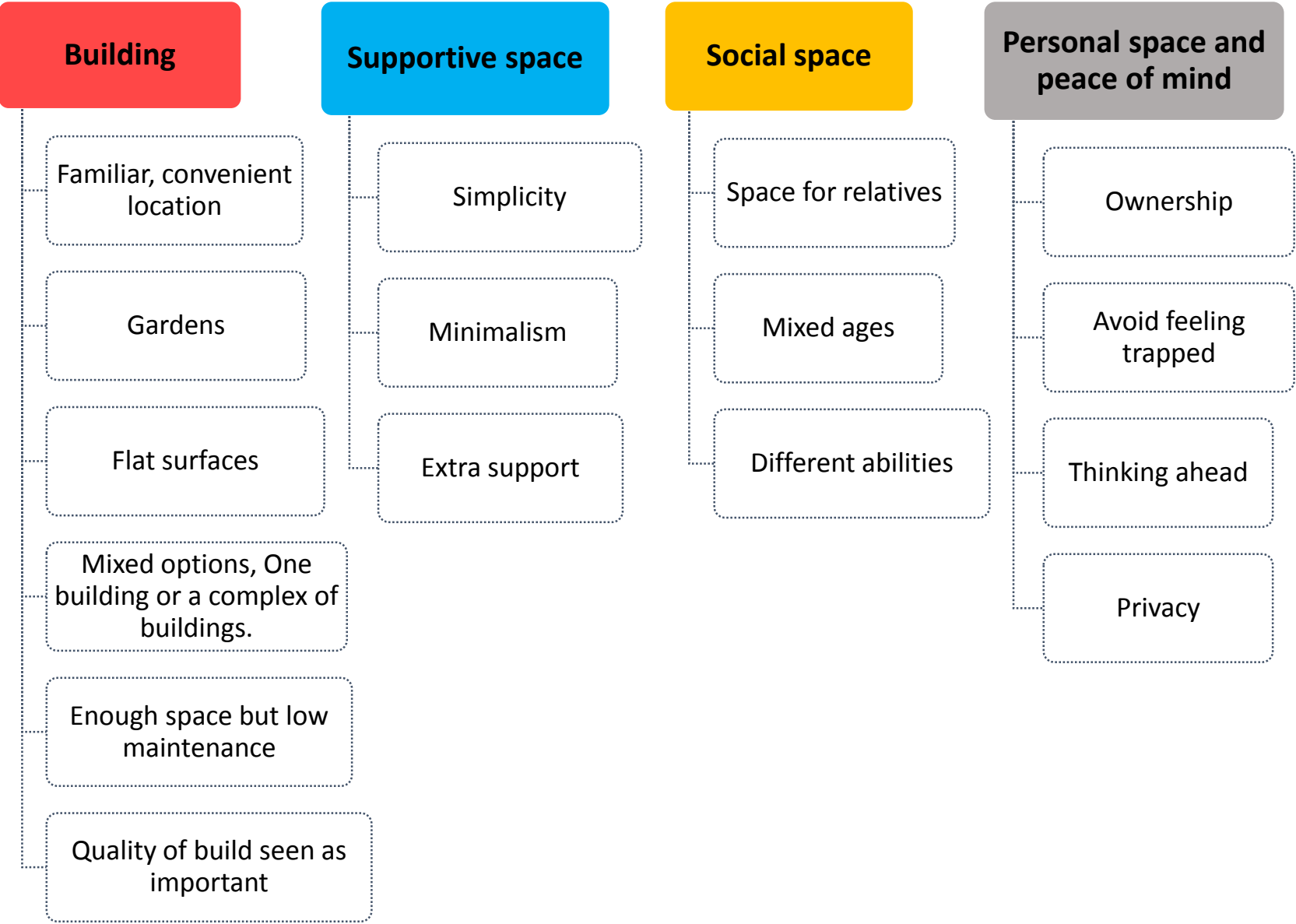
- People were generally happy to chat about the subject but found it difficult to imagine themselves in a situation where they would move out of their current homes and into a housing scheme. The mind-set about independent or supported living is very much, **'you move when you can't manage in your own home'**. We met some very independent people 80+ whilst out and about and they mostly felt they still managed well in their own homes.
- The terms **extra care** and **independent living** didn't really mean anything to anyone. Researchers tried a variety of different terms including **'retirement living'** (which was difficult for many people to imagine) and **'last time home' / 'last time move'**. We had some good conversations about the (fluid) retirement age and what age would be suitable for people to start thinking about moving into a housing scheme. There was stronger knowledge and understanding of **sheltered housing** options.
- Younger people often found it easier to project the questions onto the situation of an older friends or relatives. People who had friends or relatives in supported housing couldn't really think beyond the set up they had experienced, similarly people living in sheltered accommodation found it difficult to imagine anything else. It was quite **tricky to move the conversation onto the principles of independent living and what that could be like**.
- People were concerned with the **tenure** question particularly about the impact of different tenures on their **savings** and the kinds of **neighbours** they ended up with.
- Those in more affluent areas with good community support were not very keen on the idea of moving into a scheme, they worried for their independence.
- People often commented they didn't want to live with only old people.

Analysis – Buildings & Environment

‘Extra care schemes that are a large vibrant community 60 plus apartments with gardens and communal facilities . Apartments should be able to accommodate couples so a decent size.’

‘small schemes with communal facilities and gardens that are usable’

Main Themes – Buildings & Environment



I am interested in a building that matches my needs

- “I think it needs to be a mixture with options. Some would prefer a flat, while others would prefer a bungalow. While some would prefer a garden. It would be practical or desired by others...Also the type of accommodation would be dependent on physical/medical conditions.
- “Spacious rooms for the person, for carers. Garden definitely. More green spaces, age friendly, ramps.”

I imagine it being a supportive space

- “No stairs. 24 hour support. Walk in shower. Easy access. Room for people to stay in the property or could book a flat in the complex. Accessibility is really important to cope with different mobility needs.”
- “All you need is a bed, bath, kitchen.”
- “...I wouldn't live all cramped and squashed but still would like it to be low maintenance.”

I would be comfortable in a social space

- “Spare room for relatives to stay.”
- “Community group to attend making new friends.”

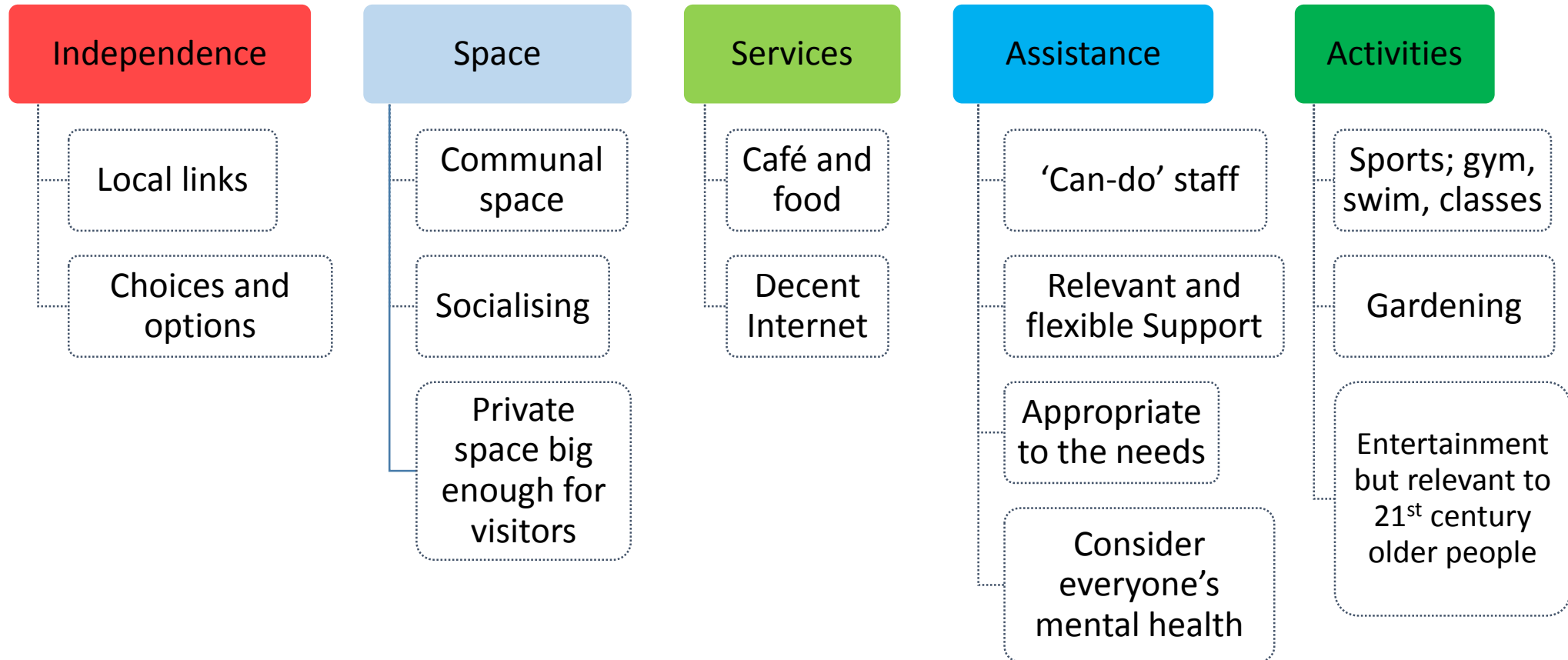
I want it to be attuned to concerns

- “Well built, you don't want to have to get people out to do jobs all the time like I do in my council house now. Things are never finished properly so after a job is done I have to get them out again the month after.”
- “It needs to be obvious that it can cater for people at the different stages of life. Needs to be central so you can potter to amenities.”
- “I think it should cater for all ages, I'd hate to live in a complex full of older people...I love seeing the children going to school, you wouldn't get that in a complex.”
- “It is important to have mixed communities but at what age is this suitable, there's a difference between a 55 year old and an 89 year old.”

Analysis – Facilities

‘Close to a library Some community activities that are open to the community so we can meet different people and not be surrounded by older people all the time A choir or some musical activity. A pleasant communal space A space with a kitchen if you have visitors or are catering for a party .’

Main Themes – Facilities



Activities that promote independence

- Close to a library. Some community activities that are open to the community so we can meet different people and not be surrounded by older people all the time
- Any activity which increases independence as a homeowner gardening club with raised beds so people can be involved have communal and private spaces so that people can enjoy with their families and visitors but if some residents don't want the noises they still have somewhere to have access to

I want communal spaces and private spaces

- “A community room but I like to keep myself to myself, a notice board of activities to choose from -knitting or gardening.”
- “Meet ups and social activities to maintain independence but reduce loneliness. Activities in the evening not easily accessible to the outside world i.e. strangers off the street...”
- “Small, homely building. No more than 10 rooms. Garden, patio, vegetable patch, No communal lounge, but a conservatory to all rooms,

I imagine supportive services

- “Cafe, communal gardens, shop and activity centre.”
- “...As long as I have internet access I would be able to follow interests- so fast Wi-Fi would be the most important thing.”

I require the right assistance

- “...Staffing who care and go above and beyond, not want to hear “that's not my job”.”
- “General mental health needs to be looked at for example counselling (voluntary and/or professional).”

I am interested in appropriate activities

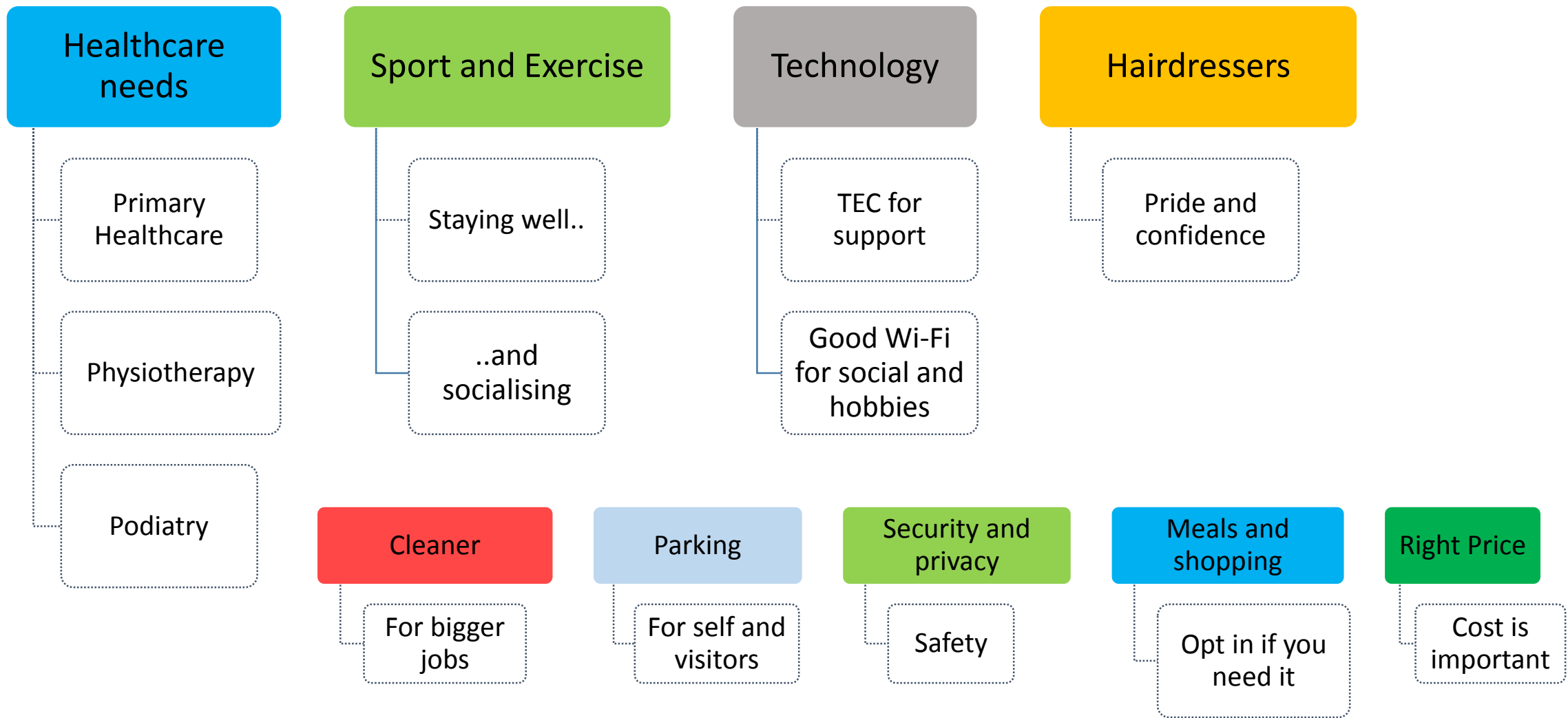
- “Private spaces but with some communal spaces. Activities that are in line with the 50+ people of today. Often activities are based on a more traditional or last generation needs and want and are very out of date with the ageing generation of today...”

Analysis – Amenities & Services

‘Dreaming dreams - maybe nursing support, including foot care, and physio? Possibly a pharmacy and various exercise classes such as Pilates, Zumba etc. Maybe even a small swimming pool?’

‘Communal and shared cooking; encourage people to do things themselves or volunteer to help each other. Encourage relationships so you wouldn't need befriending.’

Main Themes – Amenities & Services



I want convenient healthcare links

- “GP, dentist, podiatry, physio/classes follow up.”
- “GP - nice to have one for people who cannot go out.”

I would like opportunities to stay healthy

- “Yoga, Pilates classes, Zumba classes, dancing lessons.”
- “Keep fit, swimming pool.”

I see the possibilities for the right technology

- “...Options for technology, everybody could be given a tracker watch on arrival, this could be linked to a family app. Many people won't have these things once they need them because they are alien but if they were introduced earlier it would work.”

I think hairdressers should be an option

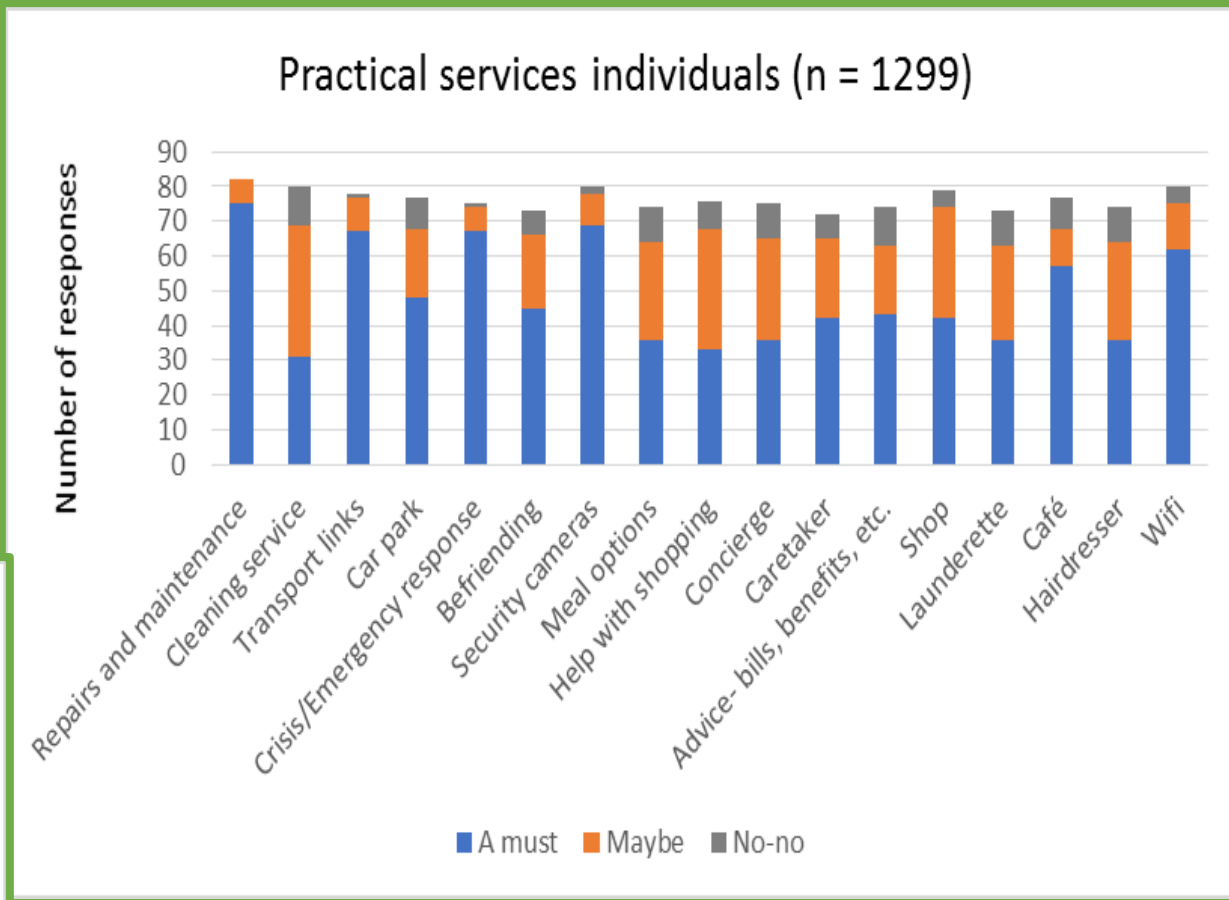
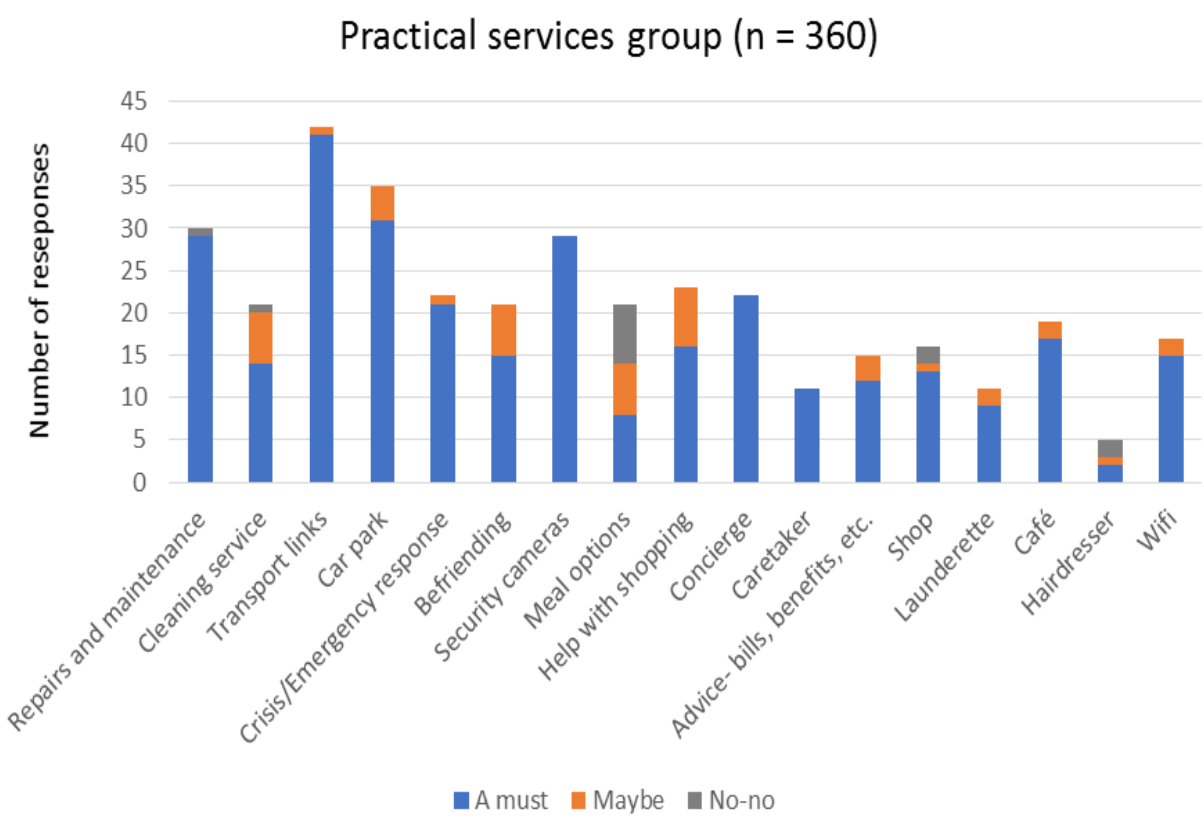
- “...hairdressing is a good one. My mum has a hairdresser once a week but she can't manage herself and I can't do it so all the other days she's not looking her best. There could be a salon or someone who just popped in to tidy hair at the flat.”

Scores – Practical Services

Most wanted :

- *Transport links*
- *Car park*
- *Repair and maintenance*
- *Security cameras*
- *Concierge*
- *Crisis and emergency response*
- *Café*

Group
Participants



Most wanted:

- *Repair and maintenance*
- *Transport links*
- *Crisis and emergency response*
- *Security cameras*
- *Wi-Fi*
- *Café*
- *Car park*

Individual
Participants

Comments – Amenities & Services

I could need a cleaner

- “The option of a cleaner would be great. Would be useful to have the option of getting your windows cleaned or your sheets changed.”

I think parking space is important

- “People are driving later, even if I no longer drive my visitors will; a separate car park for visitors, a car park is really important. 1 space per household.”

I value security and privacy

- “Fob entry system, fobs, Careline alarm is not quite enough, fob keys, I'd want a fob system but not so much cameras, cameras at the entrances would be good, I think especially for the front door...These need to be outside and on the corridors. Only to make sure the boundaries are safe on the outside, not to spy on people or see who is coming or going.”

I can see potential for meal options and shopping assistance

- “This can be organised independently; these could be linked with the café; Wiltshire Farms provide this, why reinvent the wheel, not meals on wheels they are not very good.”
- “Would be good to have some shopping delivery options, there should be options for someone to take the residents shopping not just do it for them, all these options should have different levels on offer. Depends how old you are.”

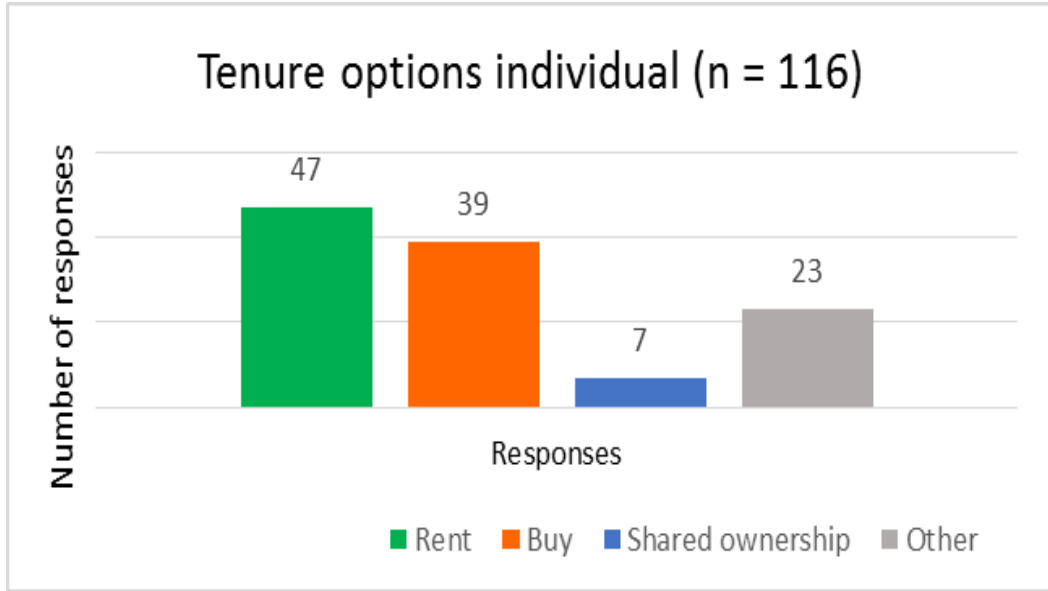
Cost

- “How much will all this cost?”

Analysis – Tenure

'I'd want options and want a trusted person to talk through the options with.'

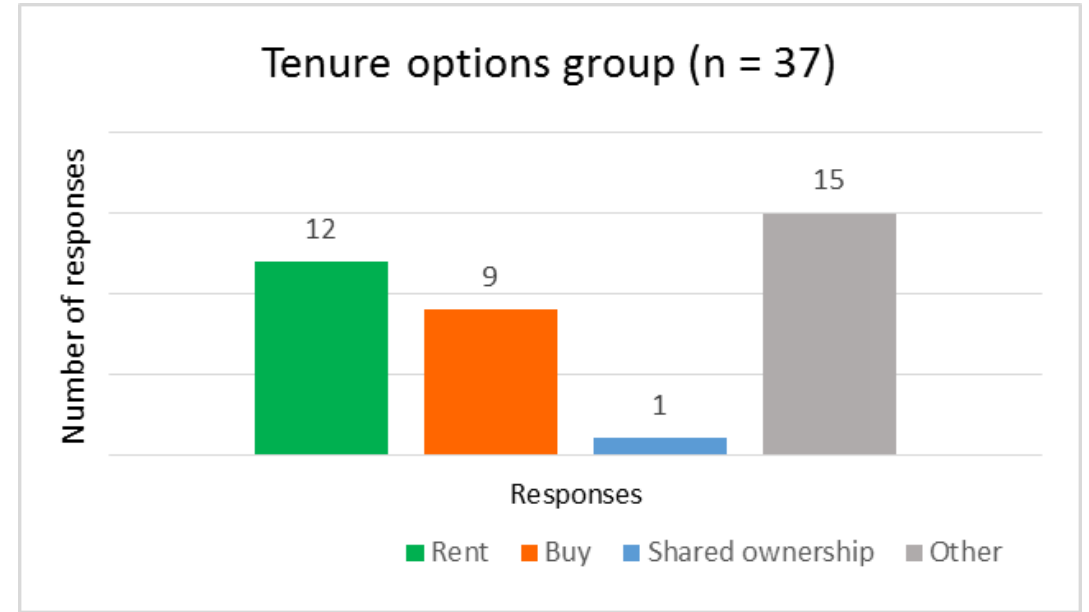
'It can be confusing, you've got to think about rent and service charge and are there hidden costs.'



In both groups of participants significant numbers opted for both renting and buying as their preferred tenure option

For both groups there was a slight preference for renting.

Shared Ownership was not a popular choice with either group



There were a significant number of people recording 'other' though this is mainly accounted for by a strong feeling that both **rent and buy options** should be available.

There was a strong feeling that people worried about the financial implications of all the options and needed good advice.

I want to continue ownership

- “Some people have always owned and wouldn't step down to renting.”
- “I think shared ownership doesn't work, I'd be worried about what will happen if I want to move or die. It can be quite tricky.”
- “I don't like the shared ownership scheme, people want to leave things for their kids, not problems but things.”

I may rent, if right for me

- “Renting would be easier.”
- “a range of options. People can be reticent about going from mortgage free to renting.”

I anticipate choice

- “I'd want options and want a trusted person to talk through the options with.”
- “You need to have a choice, people have different circumstances.”

I have to think about finances

- “Not sure really, I'd be worried about selling my house, having all that money in the bank, going into rented accommodation and the tax man taking all my money.”

I have concerns

- “We need to be careful about these options, it has an impact on the kind of people living there, there should be options but maybe across different schemes as opposed to mixed into one.”
- “I'd be concerned about sub letting, your not supposed to but people do and then you don't know who you are left with.”
- “What about the bedroom tax, I've always owned, I don't know what renting might lead to.”

Analysis – Participation



38
comments

Communicate through a committee or group

“Being consulted and informed about decisions. Residents as a group to be consulted and informed.”

“A community group, could easily be set up to make democratic and meaningful decisions.”

13
comments



By giving my opinion or feedback

“A clear way of giving feedback or raising issues that are then listen to and acted upon.”

“Get a voting slip through the post.”



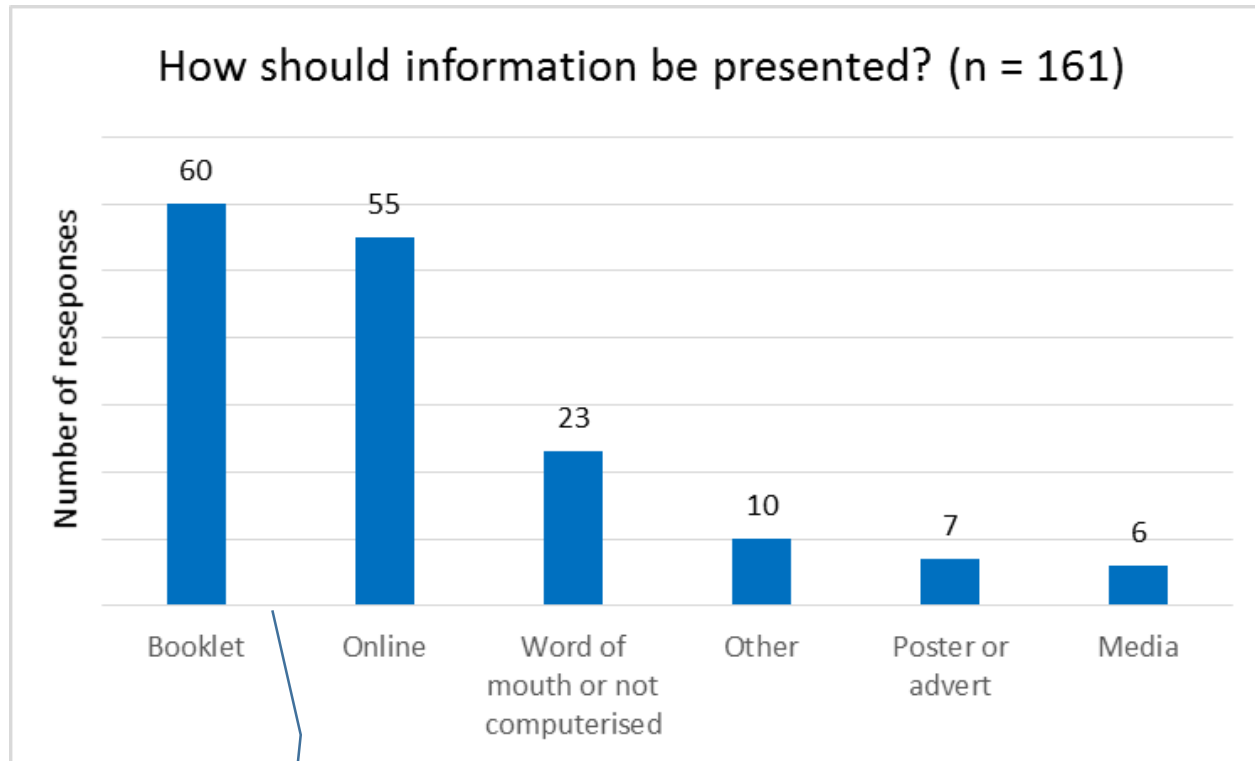
17
comments

Another option or suggestion

“Written to and informed about changes and plans.”

“Maybe through the warden.”

Analysis – Information about Options



Information in both booklet and online forms are equally popular.
Several people suggested a broader information campaign using media, adverts and internet videos

“Written information in easy to read format.”

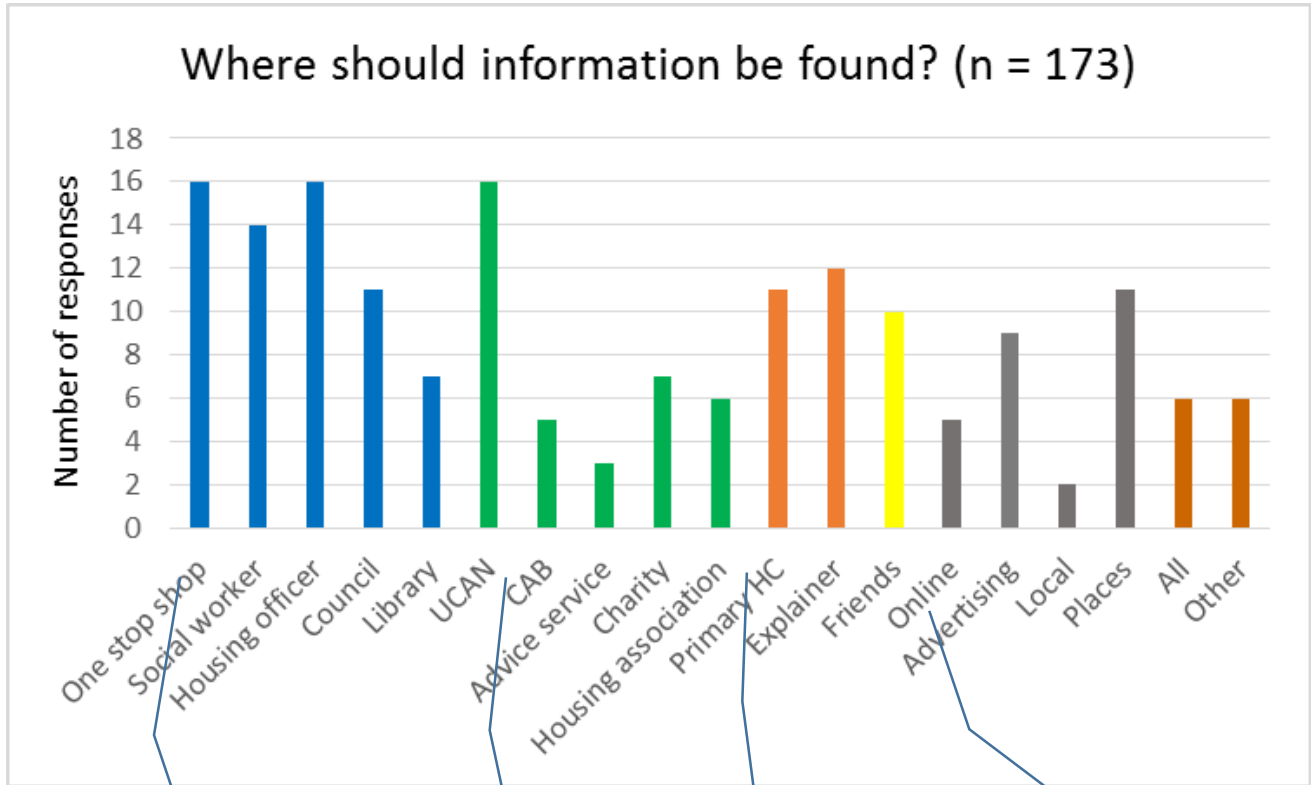
“Publicity e.g. the Bolton News, displays in public buildings, sent out notices in rate bills or other council info to homes.”

“TV, radio, social media, videos.”

“An easy to register/understand online option. This is no use if it is too difficult.”

“Word of mouth, computers can be too much.”

Preferences – where should information be found ?



Information about independent living options should be widely available and a broad range of people should be briefed/equipped to explain, promote and advise on the options.

“Locally in my community so family friends, neighbours, social workers.”

“Ring the Council and speak to a housing officer or local Community Hub (all of the above).”

“I believe in the art of communication, I want to talk to someone. Maybe Age Concern or advice through clubs people attend.”

Various Council sites, departments and staff	Charity, non-profit and advice agencies.	Trusted or knowledgeable individuals.	Open access info sources such as internet and advertising
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Key Points for Decision Makers

‘Choice’

Mixed tenure (buy and rent) in mixed size developments (small and large) of mixed style units (apartments, bungalows, houses) available in locations that are considered to be safe and familiar to individuals. Provision at neighbourhood level is indicated.

People appear to prefer 'spacious and airy'. They also want room for their visitors, car parking, spare rooms, a lettable unit for visitors and a bookable community room (for parties etc.) were all mentioned as desirables.

Older participants are concerned about maintenance (which they want to be trouble free) and everyone likes the idea of being able to access a little bit of help with 'bigger jobs' (carrying shopping, changing beds, cleaning windows, spring cleaning) on a 'pay as you go' basis,

Safety and security is of a major concern. This encompasses community safety as well as security of the property itself .

People want to be able to access health and wellbeing support close by, perhaps in something like a wellbeing centre or treatment room within a housing complex.

People are attracted by additional amenities and activities but they want them to be more 21st Century. So less bingo and dominos and more Wi-Fi and gym facilities. It should be noted that gardening, exercise classes and arts activities appear to be evergreen.

Sufficient parking and good transport links are seen as vital in keeping people connected to the wider community, encouraging visitors and, allowing residents to entertain.

Current Residents

People rate a 'light touch' approach coupled with a responsive service and a can do attitude when help IS needed


People want to participate in their community decision making

Prospective Residents

People feel ill informed and are anxious about the financial implications of their decisions on housing. There is a need for clear information and advice about people's options which should be available both in line and in physical formats.

People named a wide variety of places and people who might be well placed to deliver information and start conversations with people about housing options. These embrace voluntary and community sector groups, 'Informators' (Community Asset Navigators?), UCAN centre staff, community leaders and council staff from a wide range of departments not just housing services or social work.

For help in understanding the financial implications people want help from trusted and independent advisors



A myth busting campaign might help to raise general understanding and awareness

Healthwatch Bolton and Bolton MBC would like to thank all those that took part in this research or facilitated it to take place.