

Appendix 12 - School admission arrangements 2026/27 - Summary of the public consultation

How the consultation ran

The public consultation ran from 6 December 2024 to 31 January 2025. This is a period of 8 weeks and therefore 2 weeks longer than the minimum 6 weeks required by legislation. "Consultation must be for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October and 31 January of the school year before those arrangements are to apply." The Council recognises that Christmas fell within that timeframe.

The public consultation followed an engagement exercise that took place across October 2024, the details of which can be reviewed in the [November 2024 Cabinet paper](#).

The consultation included:

- Publishing of a YourVoice survey on 6 December which was open until 31 January 2025. A total of 3836 completed responses were received, a summary of those is given below.
- A notification about the consultation to all primary, secondary and special schools, all early years providers, diocesan boards, neighbouring local authorities and academy trusts in week commencing 9 December 2024.
- A Frequently Asked Questions document and a summary write up of the proposals was uploaded to YourVoice on the 17 December 2024.
- Publicly advertised online consultation meetings held in December with over 100 attendees at each meeting.
- In person consultation meetings held at Hove Town Hall and Jubilee Library
- Meetings held at 10 schools (3 secondary and 7 primary schools) during January 2025 with a mixture of openly advertised and targeted invites to local school communities.
- A face to face and an online meeting facilitated by the city's Parent and Carer Council to enable the voice of families of children with SEND to be heard
- Surgery slots offered with the Lead Cabinet Member for children to discuss concerns around SEND
- Publicly advertised meeting facilitated by Hangleton & Knoll Project to hear from communities in the west of the city.
- Youth work undertaken by the Trust for Developing Communities which gathered the views of 182 young people across five secondary schools and three youth clubs on school admissions and transport.
- A workshop was conducted with the city's Youth Council.

There was a general email address available for questions and representations – schoolorganisation@brighton-hove.gov.uk plus residents submitted Member enquiries and enquiries to the customer feedback team. During the engagement exercise and the consultation a number of FOI requests were also made.

Who responded to the consultation and how

- 3836 completed responses were made to the YourVoice survey – this could include individuals making multiple entries
- 45 Member enquiries were received during the consultation

- 26 enquiries were received during the consultation during to the customer feedback team
- Over 300 emails were sent to schoolorganisation@brighton-hove.gov.uk which have been accepted as responses to the consultation. One letter was also received in the post.
- Hundreds of people engaged with public and targeted consultation meetings

Summary of the consultation

Explanatory note: This Appendix provides a summary overview of responses received to the public consultation. It includes a summary analysis of the Your Voice survey, of the emails received directly to the council, of school and group responses and a summary of the comments/questions raised at the meetings facilitated by the council.

Members of Full Council (all 54 elected Members) have been provided with access to the full responses received by the council – the full results of the survey, all emails and letters received. These cannot be shared publicly in full for 2 reasons – they contain personal and sensitive information which might identify the consultee and which the council is therefore not able to put into the public domain. Consultees can also rightly expect their submissions to be dealt with in a confidential and private manner. However, there is a requirement on decision makers to conscientiously consider the responses to this public consultation, therefore in addition to the summary provided below, all responses have been shared on a confidential basis with Councillors.

Please note that AI has been used to support the summary analysis of:

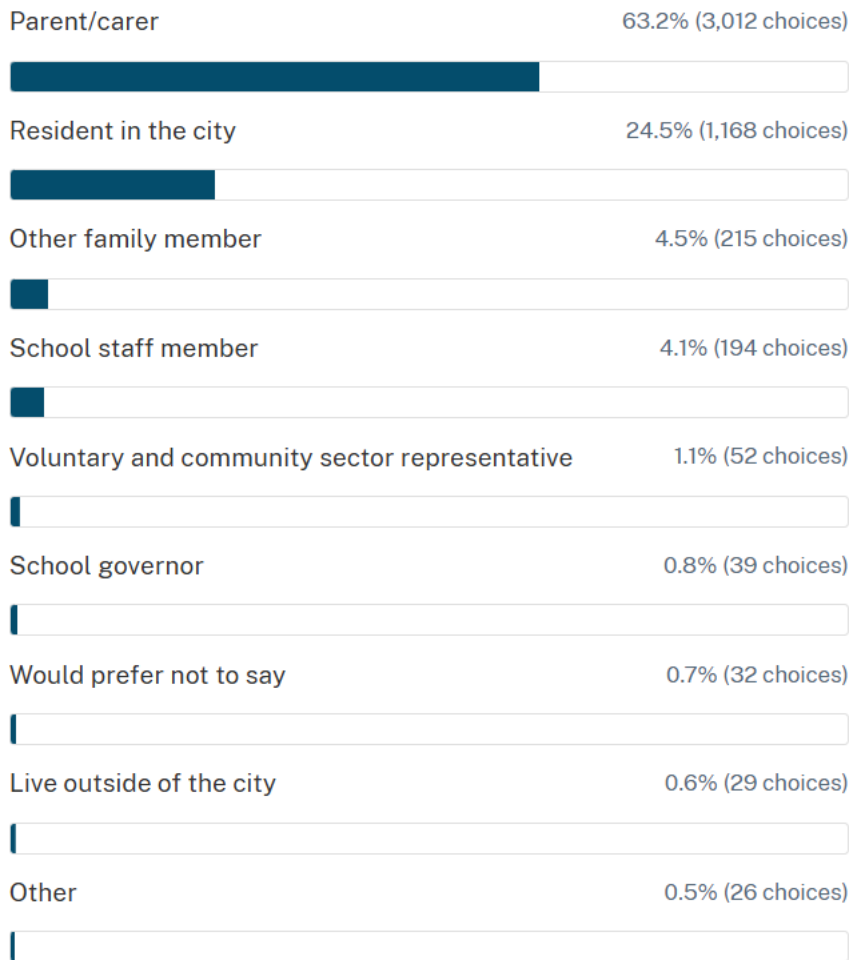
- the free text responses to the YourVoice survey
- The summary analysis of the email and group responses

Officers have read all individual responses and AI has been used to support the collation of themes and support the phrasing of summaries.

AI was also used to help inform the wider analysis of themes that is provided within the cover officer report on this item.

Summary analysis of the YourVoice survey main questions responses

Survey Question: In what capacity are you responding to this survey? This was a required question where respondents could chose as many of the multiple choice options as they wished to. All survey respondents replied to this question.



We then asked survey users to leave a comment if they'd like to explain why they were provided a response to the survey. This was an optional answer and 618 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

Many respondents commented that they had children being educated in the city, either still to go to secondary school or had been through the system and were interested in how the arrangements may change in the future.

Many respondents also provided views on the proposals themselves.

Concerns were raised about whether the proposals would solve inequality issues and whether in fact they may cause further division. There were comments highlighting the negative impact of long journeys for children – particularly for those with SEND or where this could affect the mental health of children. There were doubts raised about whether these proposals would improve educational outcomes and that resources should be focussed on improving schools rather than redistributing pupils.

There were calls for more evidence-based decision-making and a slower, more considered approach to implementing changes.

Some respondents left comments supporting the proposals, citing them as a necessary step to addressing long-standing inequalities in the city's education

system. People expressed believe that the changes could provide better opportunities for disadvantaged children. There was support shared for the idea of creating a fairer system for school allocations. Some comments highlighted the benefits for underrepresented communities such as North Whitehawk.

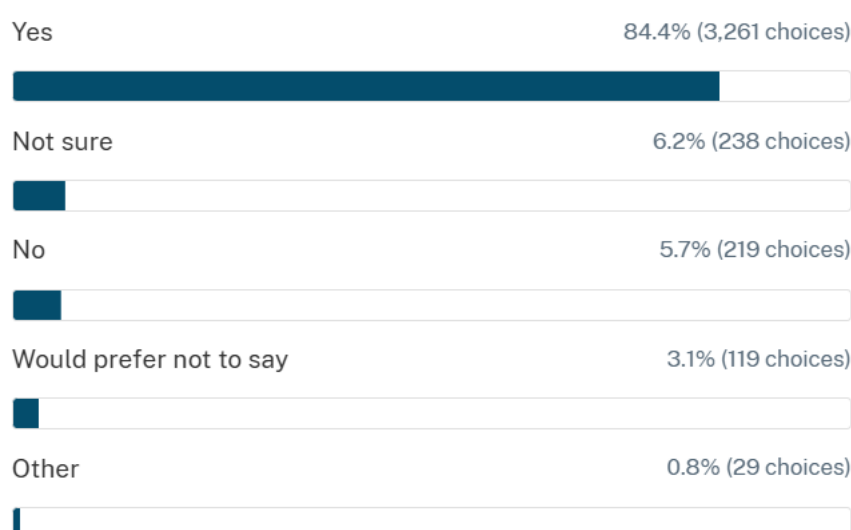
Survey question: What is your postcode This was a required question where consultees were asked to provide details of their postcode. It was recommended that people provide the first 4 or 5 digits of their postcode eg BN3 4 or BN41 2. People were invited to write 'no answer' if they didn't want to provide this detail.

Data was inputted manually by consultees so the resulting data is subject to inaccuracies,/differences in how postcodes are written. However the data indicates the following:

Out of the responses provided to this question in the survey:

- 24 (0.63%) where it was not possible to determine what the postcode was
- 55 (1.43%) were from outside of the city
- 1698 (44.26%) were from the BN1 area – with 819 (21.35%) from BN1 6 specifically (mentioned because it had a significant level of responses compared to other postcode groups in BN1)
- 1452 (37.84%) were from the BN2 area – with 431 (11.23%) from BN2 4 specifically (mentioned because it had a significant level of responses compared to other postcode groups in BN2)
- 317 (8.27%) were from the BN3 area
- 55 (1.43%) were from the BN41 area
- 235 (6.13%) said no answer or left a mark in the answer so they could move on to the next question.

Do you consider yourself affected by these proposals? This was a required question where respondents could chose as many of the multiple choice options as they wished to. All survey respondents replied to this question.



We then asked survey users to leave a comment on why they felt they were impacted by the proposals. This was an optional answer and 598 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

Many people felt they were impacted because they have children who are due to attend secondary school from next September onwards.

Many expressed worries about the ability of their child to gain a place at a local school.

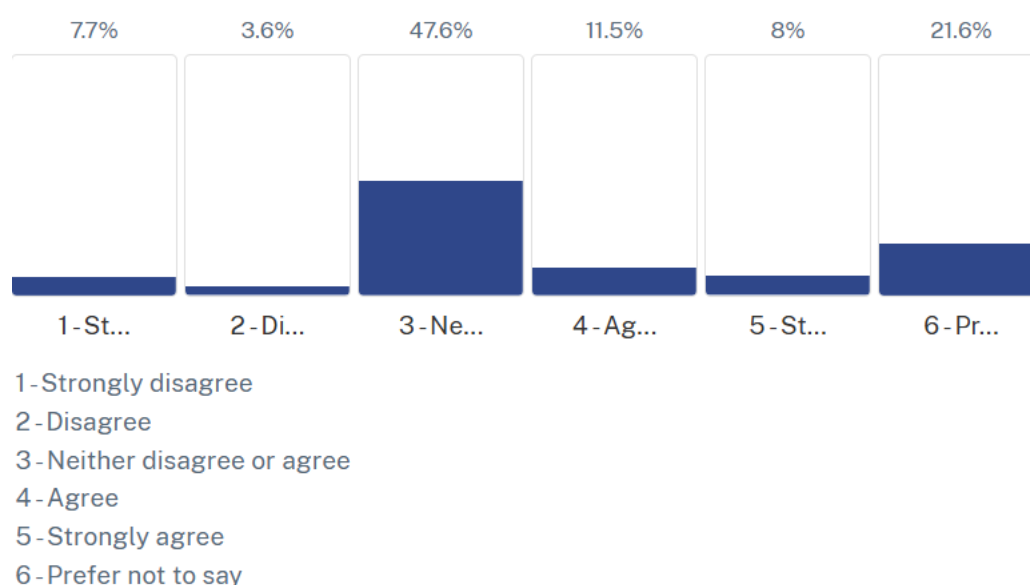
Many respondents expressed worries about the stress and anxiety the proposed changes may cause for their families and for their children. There were concerns that the proposals would fracture communities with children having to attend schools far from their homes. This would disrupt existing friendship groups and community ties.

The potential for increased travel times were a concern for many. Parents fear that long commutes will lead to more road accidents, absenteeism, and lower academic attainment. They also worry about the safety of their children traveling long distances, especially in the dark. People also expressed concern about the cost of additional travel. Concerns were raised about the safety of girls on buses.

Parents of children with special educational needs (SEND) worried that the proposals could increase the challenges their children face, as longer travel times and unfamiliar environments could negatively impact their education and well-being.

There were calls for a focus to be on school improvement rather than amending the school admission arrangements.

Survey question: How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed PAN increase at Rudyard Kipling School from 30 to 45? This was a required question so all survey consultees provided an answer.



We then asked survey users if they wished to leave a thought or comment on their answer to the Rudyard Kipling PAN question. This was an optional answer and 297 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

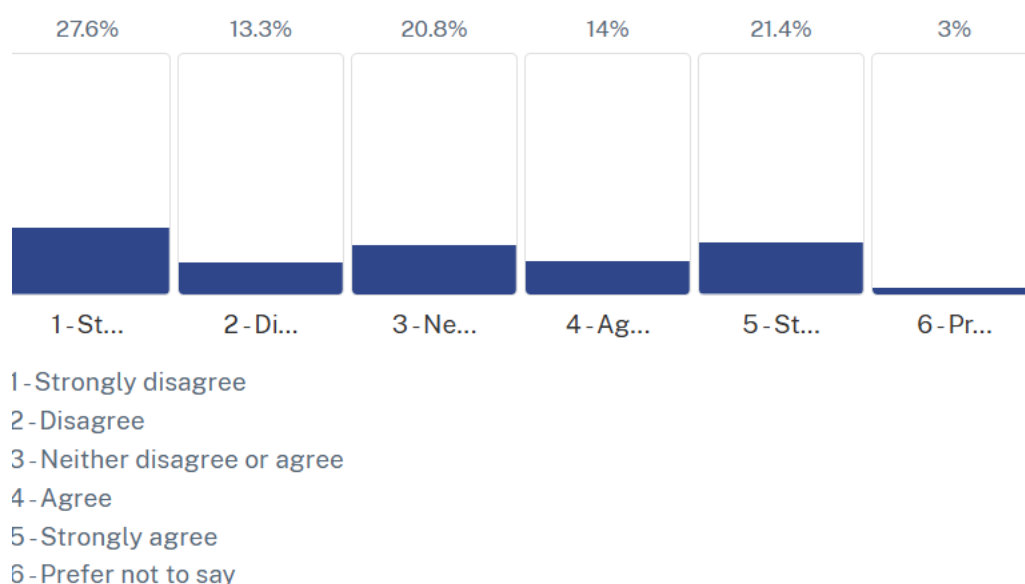
A mixture of views were expressed in the comments.

Concerns were raised around whether this would mean larger class sizes and related concerns about the quality of education or where individual support may be needed for individual children and whether this proposal impacts on that. A couple of comments raised concerns about the practicality and effectiveness of mixed year teaching. A small number of respondents questioned why the council would expand a primary school PAN when there are falling pupil numbers across the city and others questioned whether this PAN increase may cause any negative impacts on other local schools.

There were also comments supporting the Schools' Governing Board and saying that trust should be placed in their request for this increase and that the proposal appeared to be logical and proportionate. Some felt that this proposal would support children being able to attend local schools and therefore reduce potential travel times for some. There were positive remarks about the school's quality and that this proposal may support further diversity and providing opportunities for children from different socio-economic backgrounds. However there were also some counter views to that expressed, that widening the intake of the school may not always lead to a diversifying of that intake.

There were a number of comments raised about a lack of information or understanding of the question – with consultees questioning whether they were able to provide an informed response. There were also some questions about whether this question was relevant within a survey about secondary school admissions. TO clarify – the survey was about the full range of admission arrangements in the city's community schools including where we were proposing any changes, such as in Rudyard Kipling Primary School.

Survey question: Regarding the Free School Meals priority, how much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to use the 30% figure rather than a calculation each year for the city average . This was a required question so all survey consultees provided an answer.



We then asked survey users if they wished to leave a thought or comment on their answer to the FSMs quota. This was an optional answer and 658 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

Many respondents expressed support for the principle of prioritising places for children eligible for free school meals with support for this policy promoting fairness and social equity by giving disadvantaged children better access to a quality education offer. Some further comments were made about the perceived benefits of this policy around promoting social diversity and inclusion in schools and in addressing issues of social segregation in schools

Comments were shared about the admirable nature of the policy and hopes that other schools, and places would follow and take up this policy. Some felt the proposal would allow families to have more certainty when making their applications.

However some respondents questioned the ‘setting’ of the quota and wondered if it would be better to review this regularly in order to ensure it meets the needs of the city and local communities.

There were also concerns raised about whether prioritising children through this policy would lead some schools to have a disproportionate number of FSM children and therefore not achieve the council’s desired social mix – with concerns about some schools changing and getting a much higher concentration of FSM children – potentially impacting on the community cohesion of those schools.

Concerns were also raised about the increased journey times for those children taking up this policy offer and whether it could force children to attend schools far from their homes. There were additional comments made about what the impact might be on those children’s mental health and wellbeing because of those increased journey times.

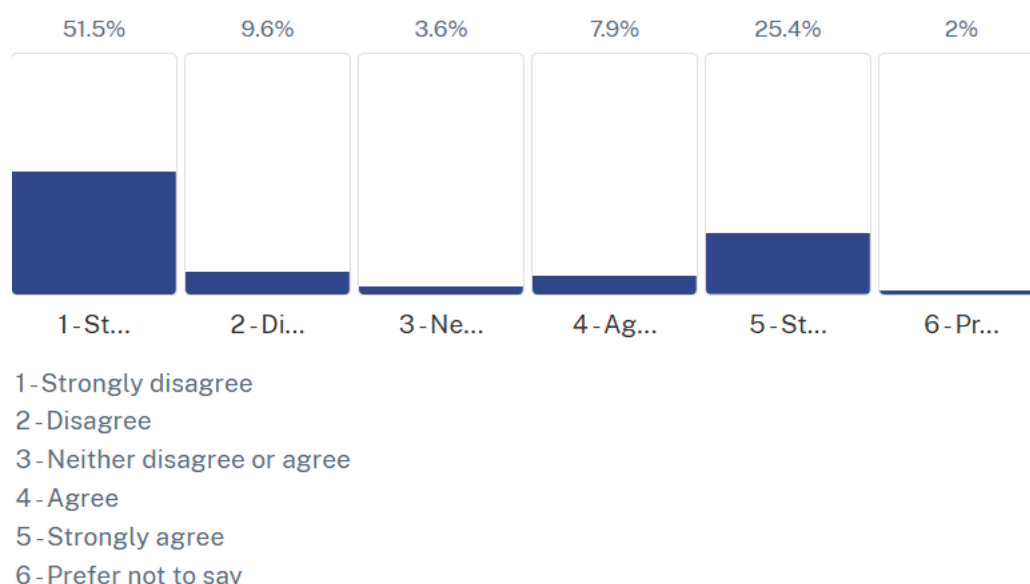
Some also questioned the fairness of the policy, arguing that it may disadvantage children facing financial difficulties but not eligible for free school meals – who would

benefit from a similar priority but are not able to get it through this policy. A concern was raised about whether this policy provided families with a disincentive to find paid employment and lose their FSM eligibility.

There were also concerns raised about whether the council's policy and its implementation had been adequately and clearly explained. Some respondents felt that the council's consultation communications had not been clear on this matter and therefore it made it difficult for people to understand the potential impact of the policy and this proposal. #

In summary, there is broad appreciation of the policy in principle but questions raised about its implementation and whether that had been explained clearly and the concerns about changing the balance of FSMs children at some schools.

Survey question: How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed introduction of a new Open Admission priority? This was a required question so all survey consultees provided an answer.



We then asked survey users to share any thoughts or comments about their answer to the question on introducing an open admissions priority. This was an optional answer and 1078 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

Some respondents believe that the changes could disadvantage children in dual catchment areas, as they may have less chance of getting into their local schools. This was accompanied by questions on whether it was unjust to prioritise children from outside the catchment area over those that live within it. There are also concerns that the changes could lead to a loss of parental choice and control over their children's education

Others argue that the changes could exacerbate existing inequalities, as children from more affluent areas may still have more choices than those from disadvantaged backgrounds. There were also comments questioning whether there would be

unintended consequences such as people leaving the city or not taking up the offer of other schools in the city.

Some felt there was a lack of clear evidence supporting the effectiveness of the proposed changes and the potential for increased absenteeism and associated reduced educational attainment.

Several comments highlight the potential negative impact on specific groups of children. For instance, there are concerns that children with special educational needs (SEN) could be disproportionately affected by the changes.

However, positive feedback was also received for this proposal. There was appreciation for the efforts to give children from less advantaged areas of the city a choice of schools and a belief that the proposals could create a more mixed and diverse school system.

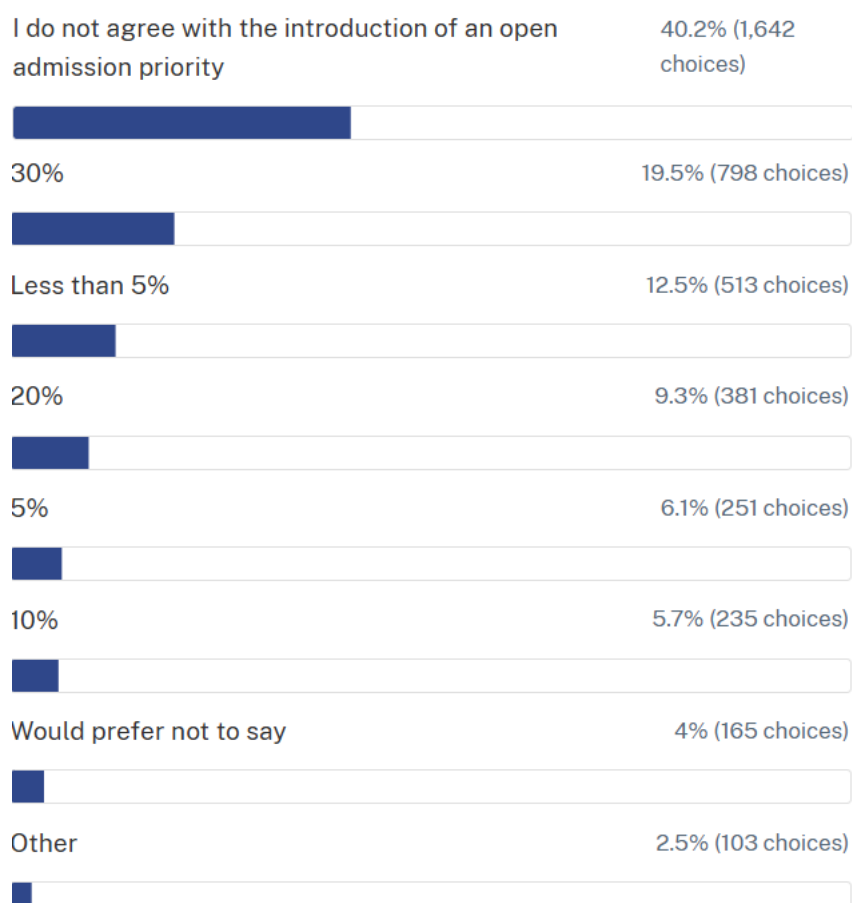
There are also comments that highlight the potential benefits of the changes for specific groups. For example, children from 'council estates' having the same opportunities as other children in the city. Other comments were about the increased opportunity for some families not eligible for free school meals but living in single school catchment areas.

There were calls from some for a more gradual approach, starting with a lower percentage for open admissions and assessing the impact of existing changes before introducing new ones.

The lack of a clear and published plan for safe and reliable transport for children who would need to travel further was also a common theme, with many worried about the safety of young children traveling alone and the financial burden on families.

Some respondents felt that the proposals were rushed and lacked sufficient consultation and impact assessment. There was a call for investment in underperforming schools and a more equitable distribution of resources to ensure high educational standards across all schools in Brighton & Hove.

Survey question: Regarding the proposed introduction of a new open admission priority, what % allocation do you think should be used for September 2026 entry into community secondary schools? This was a required question so all survey consultees provided an answer. It was a multiple choice answer and people could choose as many as they wished to.



40% of people answered that they didn't want to see an open admissions criteria introduced – however, a proportion of those also ticked 'less than 5%' or ticked '5%' too.

41% of consultees provided a response that said it should be 5% or higher. This includes where people said other and provided a response plus those that said 'would prefer not to say' but also provided a response for 5% or above.

We then asked survey users if they wished to leave a thought or comment on their answer to the question on what % of open admissions did they think the council should introduce. This was an optional answer and 696 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

There were a range of comments left for this question.

Some supported a gradual implementation of this new proposed policy – starting with a lower percentage and gradually increasing it. This was seen by some as a way of bringing it in without the stress and impact on the 2026 cohort. It also enables a better understand of its impact before making significant changes.

There were calls to wait and see what the impact of the FSM policy was before bringing in a further change.

Calls for inclusivity and fairness were made – saying that this may provide important choices to children in deprived areas.

There were positive comments made on the benefits of socioeconomic mixing in schools which can lead to a more balanced and inclusive educational environment.

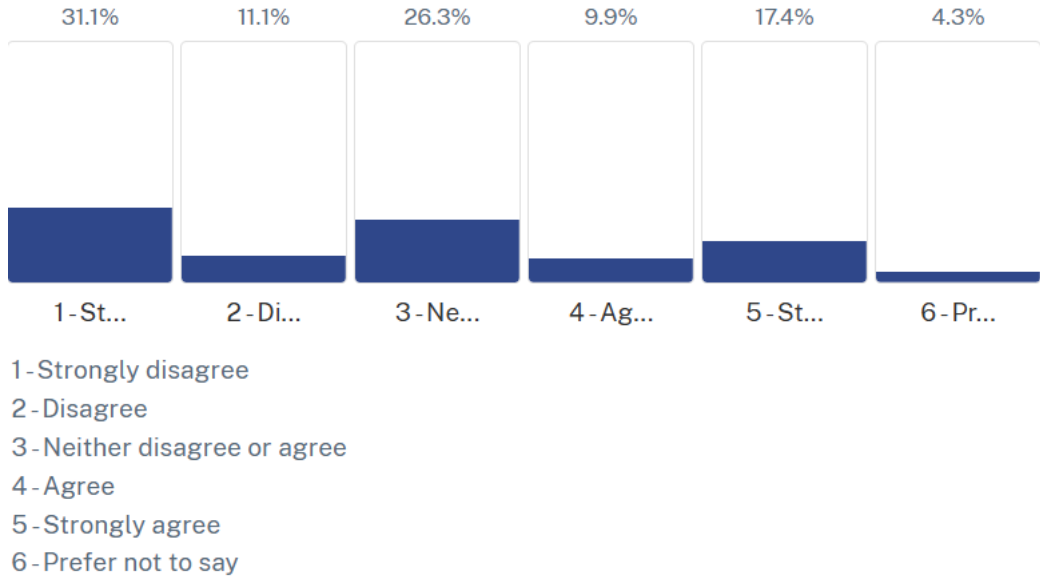
Many respondents were concerned about local children not being able to gain a place and the impact of this on the children and on the breaking up of communities.

Some respondents highlighted the potential negative impact on disadvantaged children and particularly those with SEND. There were worries those children could be disproportionately affected by the changes.

Many comments gave concerns about the uncertainty and anxiety that the proposed changes could cause for families and children. Respondents felt that the changes could lead to increased stress and negatively impact children's education and well-being

Several respondents were critical on a lack of data and impact assessments, making it difficult for them to make informed decisions. Others felt that the proposals were confusing and lacked transparency.

Survey question: How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed PAN reduction at Blatchington Mill School from 330 places to 300 places? This was a required question so all survey consultees provided an answer.



We then asked survey users to share any thoughts or comments about their answer to the question on the PAN at Blatchington Mill School. This was an optional answer and 588 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

Many respondents highlighted that the school in question is performing well and achieving good results. Some believe that reducing the number of places at such a successful school would be detrimental to the pupils and the community.

Several comments were made in favour of allowing local children to attend their local school. If the number of places available were reduced there were concerns that the children will have to travel further.

Some respondents talked about the importance of being able to choose a school that best fits their child's needs. This led to comments of concern about the choice potentially being reduced in this proposal. There were concerns that this would lead to their children being sent to schools that are less desirable.

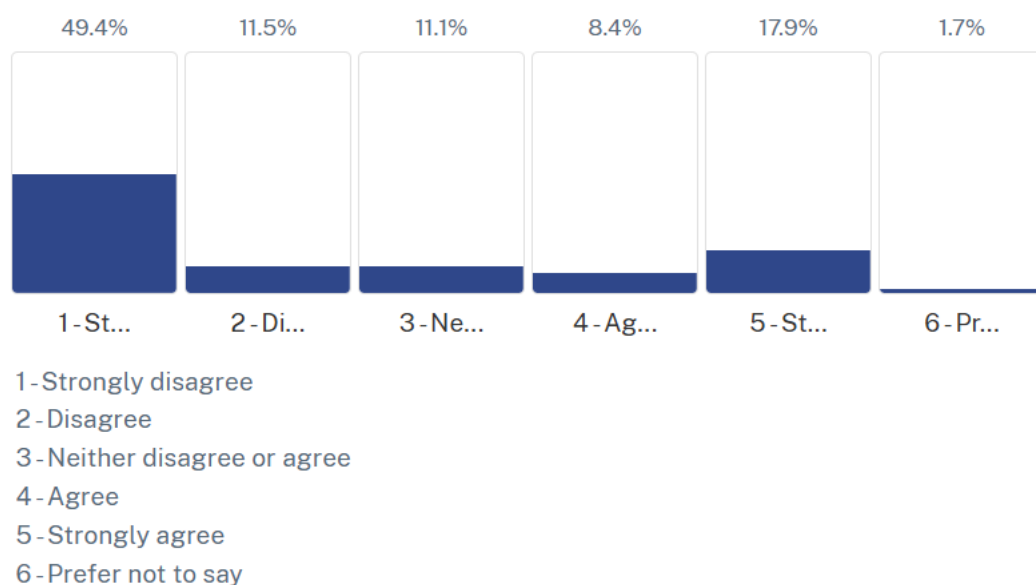
The school's popularity and reputation were cited as reasons to maintain or increase its PAN. Some respondents felt the schools' success should be supported and therefore the school should be expanded, not reduced. There were also comments about whether this proposal was counter to the intention of the School Admissions Code, which supports the principle of parental preference.

However some respondents were concerned about the potential for overcrowding at such a large school, if the numbers were not reduced. There were also arguments made that unless a reduction here was made, it could lead to lower pupils and reduced viability for other schools. Some felt this was a point of fairness – that reducing places here would help a more balanced distribution of pupils across all schools in the area.

Financial impact was mentioned with some being concerned about the budget reduction the school would face if the PAN reduction went ahead and with some suggesting that a reduction would help the school better balance its budget and help with its long term sustainability.

The governors of the school made a formal response to the consultation and said that they oppose the proposal for the 2026/27 academic year to reduce the PAN at Blatchington Mill. The reasons given were concerns about the financial impact of reducing the PAN and in whether a reduced PAN would negatively affect the school's ability to deliver the current level of attainment.

Survey question: How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed PAN reduction at Dorothy Stringer School from 330 places to 300 places? This was a required question so all survey consultees provided an answer.



We then asked survey users to share any thoughts or comments about the question on the PAN at Dorothy Stringer. This was an optional answer and 799 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

There was a strong feeling of opposition to the proposals based on the comments left. Dorothy Stringer School is seen as a popular and successful institution and many responses were concerned that this reduction, combined with other proposed changes such as open admissions and an increased catchment area, will lead to even more local children being unable to attend their preferred school.

Several comments were made about how this proposal may contradict the School Admissions Code, which generally favours parental preference.

While some respondents acknowledge that the school struggles with capacity issues, others argue that reducing the PAN is not the right solution and suggest other ways to manage overcrowding.

Concerns were raised around the potential impact of not being able to gain a place at a local school and the need then to travel a longer journey to another school.

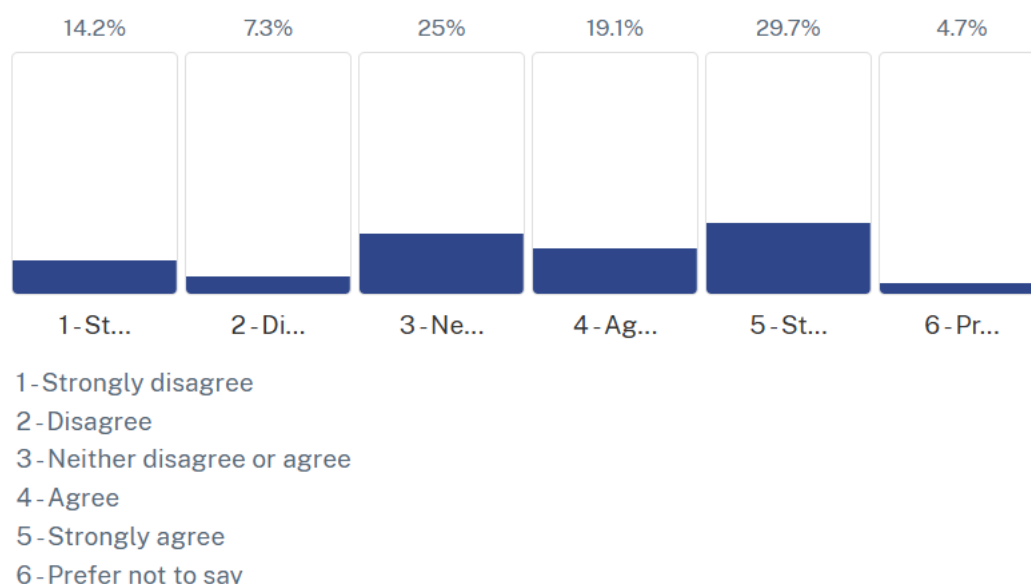
Some respondents suggest that instead of reducing PAN at popular schools, efforts should be focused on improving underperforming schools or managing the decline in student numbers more gradually.

For some there was a sense of frustration and disbelief at the perceived lack of logic in the proposals, with comments that the changes are poorly thought out and could lead to negative outcomes for children's education and well-being.

Where responses were supportive of this proposal there were comments about the current size being too large and about the perceived importance of ensuring all schools are able to survive with sufficient pupil numbers. Plus, support was given to the intention to avoid further school closures.

The Governing Board of the school provided a response to the consultation and within that they supported the proposal to reduce the PAN.

Survey question: How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed PAN reduction at Longhill High School from 270 places to 210 places? This was a required question so all survey consultees provided an answer.



We then asked survey users to share any thoughts or comments about their answer to the question about the Longhill PAN. This was an optional answer and 664 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

Respondents generally agreed with the reduction of the Published Admission Number (PAN) at Longhill High School, citing its consistent under-subscription and the school's location in an area with a lower population density.

Many respondents acknowledged the financial challenges faced by the school and agreed that reducing the Published Admission Number (PAN) was a sensible decision.

Some suggested the reduction should be greater, with some proposing a PAN as low as 150 to 180, reflecting the school's recent admission numbers which have not exceeded 200 for some years. Some noted that the school has been undersubscribed for many years, and reducing the PAN would help the school manage its resources more effectively.

There were comments made about the schools' popularity and calls for further steps to be taken around. There were also comments made about the long term viability of the schools future without different interventions or models of governance.

There were comments made about fears the proposed policy was designed to force children to go to Longhill – with associated worries about long travelling distances, and a related impact on wellbeing.

Some comments highlighted the efforts of the current headteacher and staff, expressing confidence that the school is improving and could do further with the right support and investment.

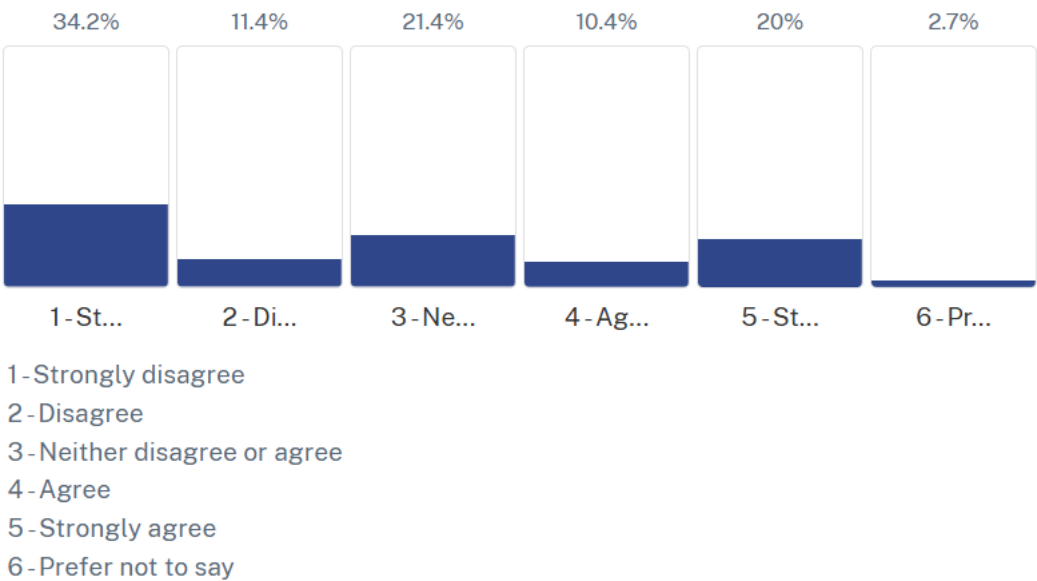
There was also a recognition that the school's location posed challenges, and some suggested that moving the school closer to the city centre or improving transport links could help attract more pupils.

Additionally, a few respondents mentioned that reducing the PAN could lead to a more focused and supportive environment for the pupils who do attend.

The Governing Board made a formal response to the consultation and within that they supported the reduction of the PAN. They made reference to concerns about open admissions but also in the need to improve elements of the transport arrangements for children to get to school across the city.

Overall, there is a consensus that Longhill's PAN should be aligned more closely with actual demand and that efforts should be made to improve the school's attractiveness to its local community.

Survey question: How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed catchment area changes? This was a required question so all survey consultees provided an answer.



We then asked survey users to share any thoughts or comments about their answer to the question about the catchment area change. This was an optional answer and 758 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

Many respondents expressed support for the inclusion of Whitehawk in the Dorothy Stringer and Varndean catchment area, believing this change will provide children from one of Brighton's most deprived areas with access to better educational

opportunities. Some said they were in favour of the changes due to the potential for improved access to high-performing schools for children from deprived areas.

However some concerns were expressed about the increase in catchment area may exacerbate the demand for schools that are already oversubscribed, like Dorothy Stringer and Varndean.

Many are worried about the implications of larger catchment areas, particularly in terms of increased travel times, safety, and the impact on community cohesion.

Comments expressed views that the consultation has been poorly managed, with a lack of clear, accessible information and insufficient evidence of community support for the changes.

There is also concern that the proposals are being rushed through without adequate consideration of their long-term impact.

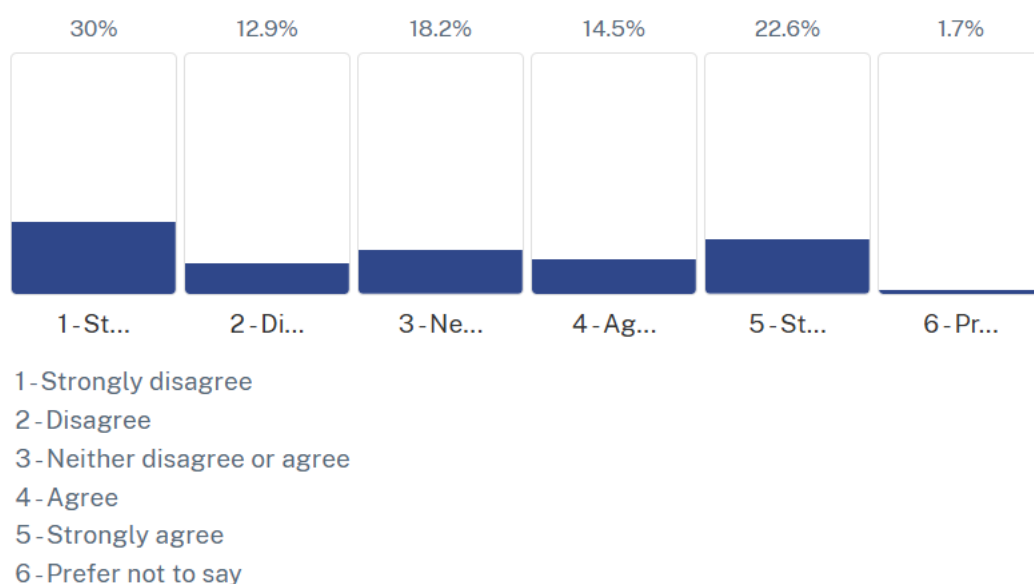
A significant number of respondents were worried about the potential negative impact on children who would have to travel long distances to attend school. A worry was expressed that proposed changes will put a strain and significant hardship on all families involved, as children will have to travel long distances to attend school. The potential for increased traffic and pollution, as well as the negative effects on children's education and well-being due to longer travel times, are also mentioned.

Some respondents suggest that instead of changing catchment areas, efforts should focus on improving all schools within the council to ensure equitable access to quality education.

Some noted that that the changes will reduce the number of places available for children in the catchment area, leading to more uncertainty for families.

Some respondents also question the rationale behind the proposed changes and whether they will actually lead to improved outcomes for disadvantaged students. It was questioned whether this was like social engineering and that the council should focus on improving underperforming schools rather than moving children around.

Survey question: How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed increase in the number of school preferences from 3 to 4? This was a required question so all survey consultees provided an answer.



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We then asked survey users to share any thoughts or comments about their answer to the question about increase the preferences from 3 to 4. This was an optional answer and 801 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

There were a number of responses which referred to this proposal being about an illusion of choice rather than it actually increasing options. Several felt that the additional preference is a way for the council to claim that more people received one of their preferred schools, even if it's not truly preferred.

There were comments around how the overall proposals meant that parental 'choice' was being limited and not expanded as is implied.

Some expressed the view that the proposals are designed to manipulate statistics rather than provide meaningful choices.

Some people felt they'd need to use the fourth option to explore how to avoid being sent to a school much further away. Others felt this was a cynical and intentional move by the council to force people to select a fourth school, to avoid being directed to an unwanted school and to reduce appeals for the council.

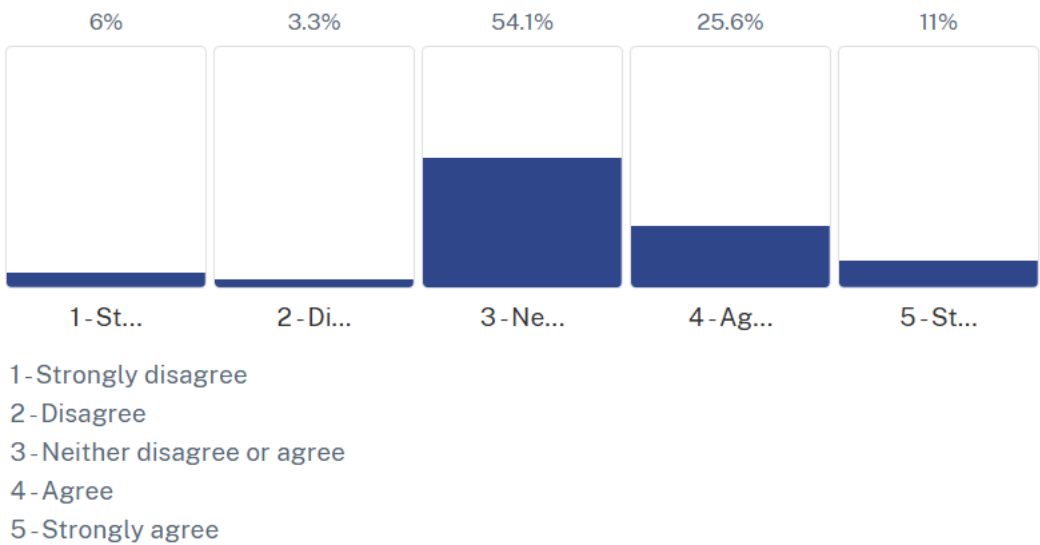
There were repeated views on the need to ensure all schools are improved and popular.

Several made the point that families prefer a local school, rather than a range of options further away.

Some felt that the overall proposals were confusing and therefore offering an informed opinion on this and other questions was difficult. Some added that because it was difficult to ascertain the changes of their child gaining a place at a local school, it was likely the application process as a 'guessing game'.

However, positive comments were also made. Some respondents felt that increasing the number of preferences would give families more choice and flexibility in selecting schools. Some referred to this proposal helping reduce stress for families through that increased choice. Some felt that increasing the number of preferences would reduce the chance of a child being allocated to a school that was not a preference. Some who agreed felt the proposal should have gone further and that the preferences offered should be raised to 6 – meaning families do not need to be so strategic with their submitted preferences. Currently some feel that they have to omit a preferred school from the shortlist if the probability is very low.

Survey question: How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to keep the 'relevant area' the same? This was a required question so all survey consultees provided an answer.



We then asked survey users to share any thoughts or comments about their answer to the question about keeping the relevant area the same. This was an optional answer and 282 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

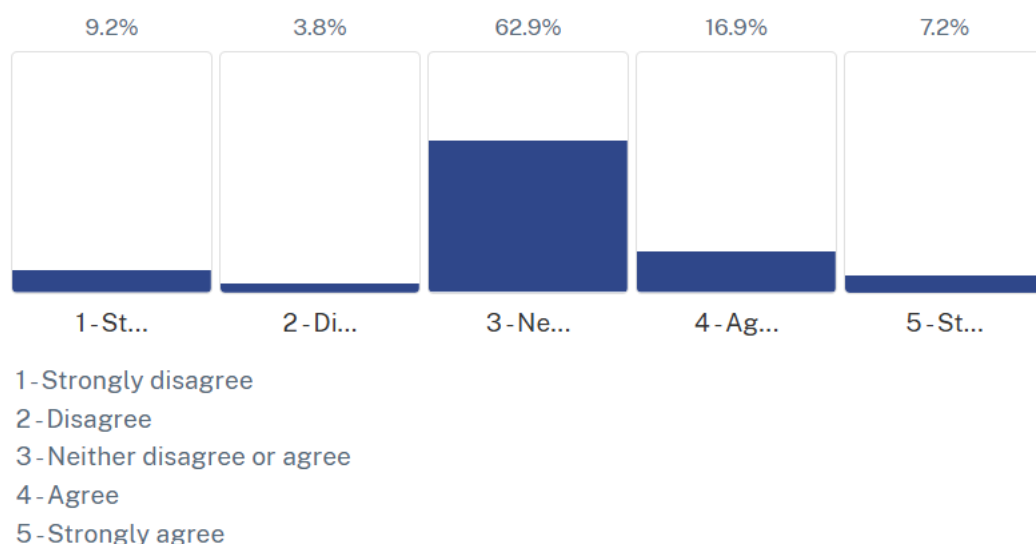
There was a view expressed that the relevant area (being the city boundary) was sensible with some saying it was a reasonable proposal. Additionally, there were comments supporting the idea that maintaining the current relevant area within the city boundary ensures that admission consultations remain focused on the local community. This approach was seen as promoting a cohesive educational environment.

Some respondents suggest that the city's tax-paying families should have priority for school admissions over those from outside the city boundaries, while others propose expanding the area to attract children from neighbouring towns.

There is also concern about the potential impact of unifying Sussex counties on the consultation.

A significant number of respondents expressed confusion and frustration over the lack of clarity in the question. Many indicated that they were not able to provide an informed view as they did not understand the question.

Survey question: How much do you agree or disagree with the proposed coordinated schemes of admission? This was a required question so all survey consultees provided an answer.



We then asked survey users to share any thoughts or comments about their answer to the question about the coordinated schemes of admission. This was an optional answer and 394 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

Some respondents felt that a coordinated approach seems sensible and could ensure that all children in Brighton & Hove have fair access to education.

Others support the idea of transparency and coordination.

Additionally, beliefs were expressed that all schools within the city should aim for the common goal of providing quality education to all children.

However, a significant number of respondents expressed confusion and frustration over the lack of clarity of this question and on the lack of detailed information provided by the council. Many comments felt that the questions in the survey are unclear, making it difficult for respondents to provide informed answers.

Survey question: In addition to feedback provided above, we invite you to share any general comments you may have about the proposed admission arrangements for 2026 to 2027 and the ordering of the proposed priorities for admission into community secondary schools. This was an optional answer and 1715 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

There were a wide range in comments provided in this answer.

Some respondents highlighted the potential positives behind many of the proposals and suggested that they would be a significant step forward in addressing inequalities. Others felt that perhaps with more time or amended proposals, more support could be gained from the city.

There was support for the FSM criteria and some respondents expressed strong support for creating a more equitable system, for some even where it did not favour their own children.

The idea of giving every parent a choice on secondary schools and empowering parents to get involved in consultations was also positively received.

There was recognition of the council's positive intentions and ambition in trying to address inequalities and disparities and create a fairer system. Some respondents appreciated the council's efforts to support disadvantaged children and families.

However a significant number of respondents felt the package of proposals was rushed, poorly thought through and believed more time was needed to develop a better solution. Concerns were also shared on the consultation being confusing and difficult to understand.

Many expressed worries about the potential impact on children and families – particularly those with additional needs and / or those who may now face a much longer journey to school. There were particular concerns raised about the risk of children not being able to access places at their local schools. Concerns about a negative impact on the environment (for example congestion and pollution) were made.

Concerns were raised about children with SEND and about those families who are not eligible for FSM but are struggling financially and whether these families would be disadvantaged by the proposals.

A number of comments were made on the council ignoring expert advice and waiting longer to assess the impact of the new FSM policy before making further changes.

Survey question: Any final thoughts or comments about proposed school admission arrangements in the city? This was an optional answer and 1379 written responses were provided and a summary of these is given below.

This question prompted a wide range of comments, reflecting positive and negative views on the proposals.

Many respondents criticised the package of proposals for being complex and difficult to understand. Concerns were expressed for families that didn't have the time or ability to understand the detailed proposals. There were questions about whether these were evidenced-based proposals and there were calls for more research and data to be needed on this subject.

Many comments were made about the potential for negative impacts on local communities. There were worries about not gaining a place at a local school and the disruption that could have on established social networks.

Particular concerns were raised about the potential for children to travel longer journeys to school and for the knock on effects that can have on children, their families and on the wider environment. Some also highlighted a contradiction with the council's active travel campaigns and environmental goals. Concerns were raised about the safety of girls on public transport.

Thoughts were shared on the potential for financial and emotional toll on families.

There was criticism of the consultation content and the process that had been undertaken with concerns that their feedback was not being taken seriously and whether the consultation was 'just for show'.

Some were highlighting the potential for schools to close as a result of the proposals and how the council may bring about what it is saying it is trying to avoid.

The impact on children's wellbeing was a common concern – long commutes, separation from peer and support groups and the potential impact on academic performance were all referred to. Concerns were raised about the impact on mental health this could have.

Many raised fears that proposals could lead to unintended consequences with more families choosing to leave the city, take up private school places or cause an increase in children being home educated.

Concerns were raised about the impact on children with SEND and whether this had been fully considered before the consultation was launched.

Some felt there were a lack of proper impact assessments conducted before the consultation meaning that there was a lack of data to support the proposals.

The importance of maintaining sibling links in school admissions was emphasised by some, with concerns that changes could separate siblings into different schools or effectively limiting the choices for some families where a sibling link couldn't be offered.

However, some respondents expressed support for the proposals' aim to provide equal opportunities for more children in the city. Appreciation was made for the efforts to provide children from disadvantaged background to have access to high-performing schools.

Some comments highlighted the importance of creating a more socially mixed environment in schools with respondents believing that a diverse school system would benefit all children by fostering mutual understanding and reducing social divisions.

Emails received to School Organisation inbox that have been accepted as a response to the consultation

Over 300 emails were received into the school organisation inbox that have been included as responses to the consultation.

The responses broadly mirror many of the comments shared in the survey free text responses.

Repeated themes are concerns about the impact on travel, on children with SEND and on the potential for children not to gain a place at a local school.

Summary analysis of enquiries received via the customer feedback team

26 enquiries were received via the council's customer feedback team during the timeline of the public consultation – relating to the consultation and the proposals.

The majority were concerns about the Council's handling of the secondary school admissions consultation. The main issues raised include:

- The Council has altered the information provided in the consultation papers while the consultation is live, leading to confusion and difficulty in responding.
- The consultation documents have been changed multiple times, and the explanations of the proposals are not clear or consistent.
- The Council initially used inadequate Cabinet papers for the public consultation and later added new documents with differently described content.
- There was an error in the estimated number of children affected by the proposed changes, which was corrected late, causing further confusion.
- The admission criteria for children receiving Free School Meals (FSM) is unclear, with contradictory information provided by the Council.
- The Council is not complying with the School Admissions Code, as it keeps changing its proposals and explanations.

The enquiries suggest pausing the consultation until a clear and accurate set of consultation papers is available and allowing the public to resubmit their comments based on the revised information.

Other points raised in the enquiries:

- Unfairness of a community group submitted consented responses in on behalf of other residents.
- Concerns around the objectiveness of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee item on this topic
- Concerns about the impact on the educational offer in the city

Summary analysis of enquiries received to Councillors and submitted through the Member enquiry system

45 Member enquiries were logged through the Member enquiry system during the consultation period.

A summary of the views/comments/questions shared are given below:

The enquiries list numerous concerns from parents regarding the proposed changes to secondary school admission arrangements. The main issues highlighted include the potential for children to be forced to travel long distances to attend schools outside their local community, which could negatively impact their mental health, well-being, and academic performance. Parents are worried about the disruption of established friendship groups and the increased risk of absenteeism due to longer commutes. There are also concerns about the environmental impact of increased car use and traffic congestion.

Many parents feel that the consultation process has been unclear and rushed, with insufficient time for proper impact assessment. They argue that the proposals do not adequately address the issues faced by schools in disadvantaged areas and may exacerbate existing inequalities.

Additionally, there is frustration over the lack of transparency and communication from the council, with parents seeking clearer information and more meaningful engagement in the decision-making process.

Submissions made by school Governing Boards

A number of schools responded directly to the council and their views have been represented in the main cover report.

A private joint letter from community secondary schools was received which supported the introduction of the FSM admission criteria 4 and 5 but opposed the proposed addition of an 'open admissions' criteria 6, whilst reiterating they remained committed to working collaboratively with the Council, families, and the wider community to develop a sustainable and inspiring long-term vision for education and the city child.

Summary analysis of submissions made by groups

The council received a number of submissions from groups. A summary of these are provided below.

Parent and Carer Council - they facilitated two discrete listening events for parents/carers as well as attended some of the public meetings. They submitted a response which can be read here: [Microsoft Word - PaCC Position Statement Schools Catchment 2024 - Updated Version.docx](#)

PaCC represents all parent carers in the city and therefore did not take a position on whether the proposals should be approved or not but sought a solution to ensure school placements do not place undue strain on children with SEND, young carers and their families.

Parent and carer feedback provided in a formal consultation submission from PaCC included the following themes:

- Complexity and lack of clarity about the proposals and hard to understand impact for their children
- Inequity in priority 2 of the admission arrangements – unclear how this priority will work
- Transport – concern about ‘child commuter burnout’ and whether this might trigger Emotional Based School Avoidance
- Impact on families and children with SEND with a concern about potentially not getting a school in their catchment area
- Accessibility and equity concerns - worries that these proposals do not consider the need for some children to have reasonable adjustments and some children will struggle with increased journeys
- Safety and mental health risks – concern about children being away from friendship groups and uncertainty making transition planning more difficult. Concerns about the risk of self harm.
- Parental burnout and emotional toll – families feel tired from fighting for what their children need
- Fractured SEN community – the risk of breaking up SEND support networks under the proposals and concerns about ‘competition’ between families for priority 2 places
- Lack of transparency and trust in the process – concerns that SEND needs and impacts have not been properly assessed and concerns about future decision making under priority 2
- Loss of stability and certainty – parents raising concerns about transition planning needing to be longer and under proposals placements may be more unpredictable, particularly affecting autistic children

Some suggestions from parents and carers included:

- Altering the random allocation tie-break to allow for greater certainty
- Improve certainty for families to assist better planning of transition for families
- Re-site school provision to that it better meets the geographical needs of the city, where children live
- Clarify priority 2 arrangements
- Ensure peer group stability for autistic children
- Improve co-production before final decisions are made.

The response concludes by asking all Councillors to ensure that sufficient time is given to debate the feedback from parent carers and that the needs of children with SEND remain at the heart of the decision-making process.

Youth reports

The council received feedback from youth work coordinated by Trust for Developing Communities and from the city's Youth Council.

The activities reached 190 young people from the city's secondary schools and from three youth club sessions.

The discussions show that the most important factor influencing school choice for young people was ease of travel, followed by peer networks and having an older sibling at the school.

While academic reputation, extracurricular activities, and facilities were valued, they ranked below logistical and social considerations. Concerns about bullying also played a significant role, with students emphasising the importance of feeling safe in their school environment.

Most young people felt they had some choice in their school selection, though many were influenced by family expectations, travel convenience, or school catchment policy.

Participants described a good school as one that is safe, inclusive, and supportive, with strong teaching, good facilities, a range of clubs of interest and a welcoming atmosphere.

Class Divide

Class Divide, a group of local residents, parents, education experts, and community members, supports the council's proposals in detail, which are looking to improve educational equity in Brighton and Hove.

They emphasised the need for fair access to education, particularly for working-class and low-income families. In their view the proposals aim to expand school choice, reduce barriers for disadvantaged families, and create a more integrated and sustainable school system.

Class Divide believe these changes will benefit all students by promoting social mixing and ensuring that every child has a fair chance at a great education.

Equity in Education

The submission from Equity in Education highlights the need for change in the city and the unfairness faced by families in single-school catchment areas and supports proposals to amend admissions priorities for disadvantaged pupils and increase school choice. The report also emphasises the importance of maintaining sibling link

priority, increasing the number of school preferences, and addressing the needs of children with special educational needs.

It also calls for more engagement with marginalised communities and a review of home-to-school transport to ensure safe and reliable options

Parent Support Group

The Parent Support Group response was developed from a working group, representing a wider group consisting of over 500 parents. It expresses concerns about the proposals to change secondary school admissions arrangements. The group is particularly worried about the displacement of children, which would require many to travel long distances to school. They argue that the Council's proposals lack evidence on the impact on various factors such as attainment, attendance, and wellbeing. The group also criticises the consultation process, highlighting confusion and misrepresentation of information.

They urge the Council to reconsider its approach and focus on ensuring enough places within each catchment area.

Port Hall / Prestonville families

The submission expresses strong opposition to the new 'open admissions' policy. The policy is criticised for potentially displacing 144 children from their local catchment area schools, exacerbating persistent absence rates, and creating a lottery system that lacks fairness.

The report highlights concerns about the consultation process, the impact on community cohesion, and the physical barriers to school attendance.

Parents from the Port Hall/Prestonville community argue that the policy will disrupt family life, increase absenteeism, and force some families to consider home education or moving away from the city.

Summary of questions/comments raised at Council facilitated meetings during public consultation

The following Council facilitated meetings were held. Thank you to schools, Hangleton and Knoll project and Jubilee Library for hosting meetings - these enabled a wide range of residents to attend.

Meetings were arranged in areas and at schools specifically affected by proposals such as PAN reductions and changes to catchment areas. Dorothy Stringer wasn't able to host the meeting due to events at the school., however Varndean were able to. We also invited schools to seek a meeting at their setting, for their community if they wished.

Typically the meetings comprised of a presentation at the start of the proposals, example of the presentation provided given below, followed by an opportunity for questions/comments/points of clarification. Where the meetings were smaller they tended to be more discursive and informal in nature enabling free conversation around the slides. The slides can be [viewed on YourVoice](#).

Below is a list of the meetings held and a summary of the main points and questions raised during the meetings.

- 12 December 2024_- Online open meeting
- 16 December 2024_- Online open meeting
- 11 January 2025_- public meeting at Jubilee Library
- 13 January 2025_- Public meeting at Varndean School
- 14 January 2025_-Public meeting at Blatchington Mill School
- 15 January 2025_- Public meeting at Longhill High School
- 16 January 2025_- Meeting for parents/carers at Queens Park Primary School
- 20 January 2025_- Meeting for parents/carers held in person at Mile Oak Primary School – hosted on behalf of the Portslade Primary School Partnership
- 21 January 2025_- Meeting for parents/carers held in person at Fairlight Primary School
- 24 January 2025_-Parent/carers consultation meeting hosted by Coombe Road primary schools
- 25 January 2025_-Open lunchtime workshop, facilitated by the Hangleton and Knoll Projected
- 27 January 2025_-Parent/carers consultation meeting hosted by City Academy Whitehawk (a primary school located within one of the catchment areas with proposed changes)
- 28 January 2025_-Parent/carers consultation meeting hosted by St Mark's CE Primary School (a primary school located within one of the catchment areas with proposed changes).
- 29 January 2025_- Parent/carers consultation meeting hosted by Bevendean Primary School

Comments and questions raised in the meetings

- Concerns about the fairness of the new school admission proposals, particularly regarding the low chances of children getting into certain schools without specific priorities.
- Issues raised about the impact of long travel times on children's mental health and the practicality of commuting across the city.
- Emotional trauma and safety concerns related to long commutes and crime rates.
- Concerns about the impact of the proposals on children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- The complexity and perceived unfairness of the proposals, leading to confusion and dissatisfaction.
- The potential stress and negative impact on families relying on the appeals process.

- The impact of travel time on accessing extracurricular activities and the overall well-being of students.
- The potential economic impact of increased traffic congestion due to parents driving their children across the city.
- Concerns about the impact of the proposals on statutory services and the holistic impact on families.
- The potential unintended negative consequences of the proposals, such as families choosing to home-school or move to private schooling.
- Recognition of the importance of consulting with teachers and the impact of travel on behaviour policies.
- Support for the efforts to balance the system and address educational inequalities.
- Appreciation for the council's efforts to reduce inequality and support disadvantaged communities.
- Acknowledgment of the council's work on improving school transport routes and policies.
- Support for the introduction of open admissions priority to give more choice to families living in single school catchment areas.
- Recognition of the council's efforts to address falling pupil numbers and make schools more viable
- Appreciation for the council's transparency and willingness to listen to feedback during the consultation process.
- Support for the council's efforts to improve the inclusivity and support for children with SEND.
- Recognition of the council's work on school improvement and collaboration between schools.
- Appreciation for the council's efforts to provide clear and accessible information to help families understand the proposals.

Themed areas

There were a number of themes that came through the consultation responses and in the public meetings that apply across more than one of the proposals and in recognition of the interplay amongst them some broad themes are explored in the report prior to consideration of each individual proposal, detailed further in the main report to Full Council 27 February 2025. A short summary paper is also provided on YourVoice.

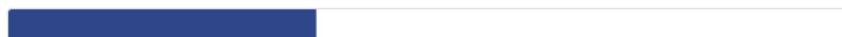
YourVoice survey – equalities monitoring questions and responses

Survey question: Do you wish to respond to the equalities questions. This was a required question, with an accompanying note to say that if Yes was selected, there was still an option at each subsequent question to decline to answer.

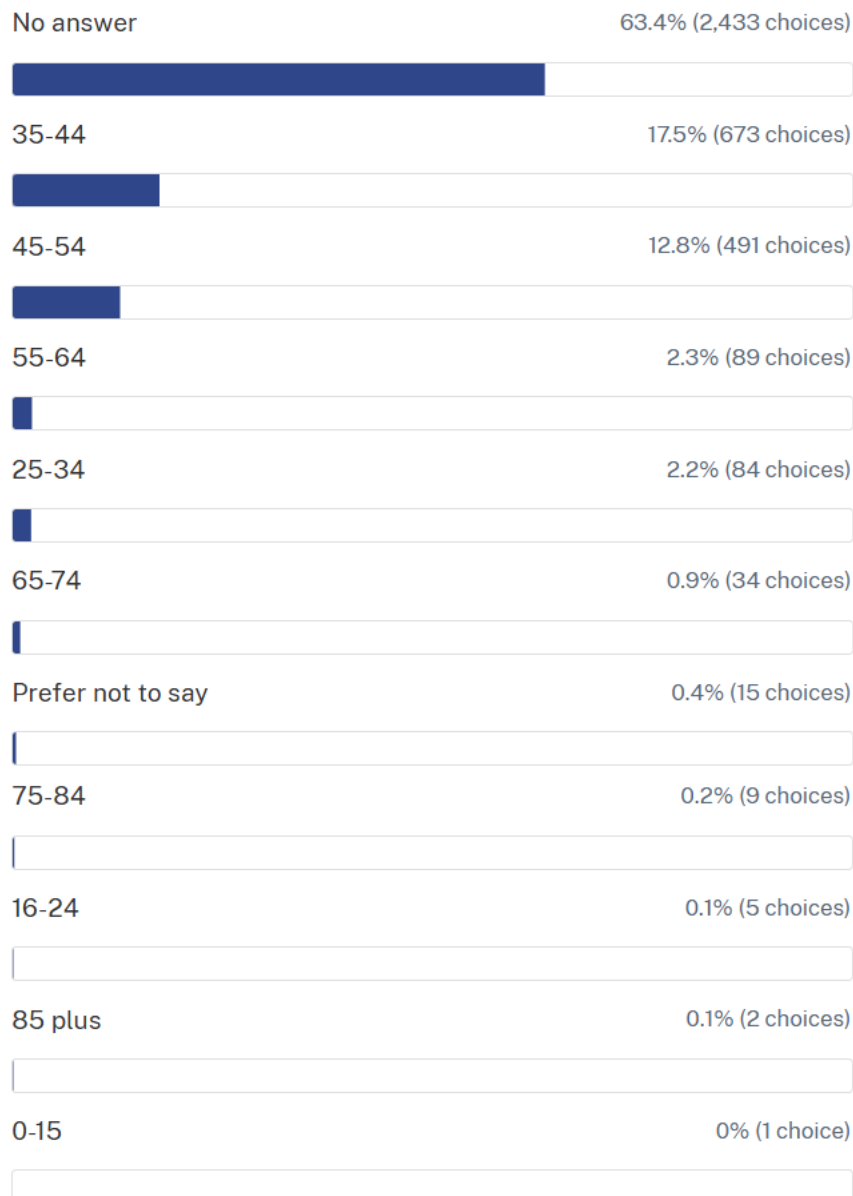
No 63.3% (2,427 choices)



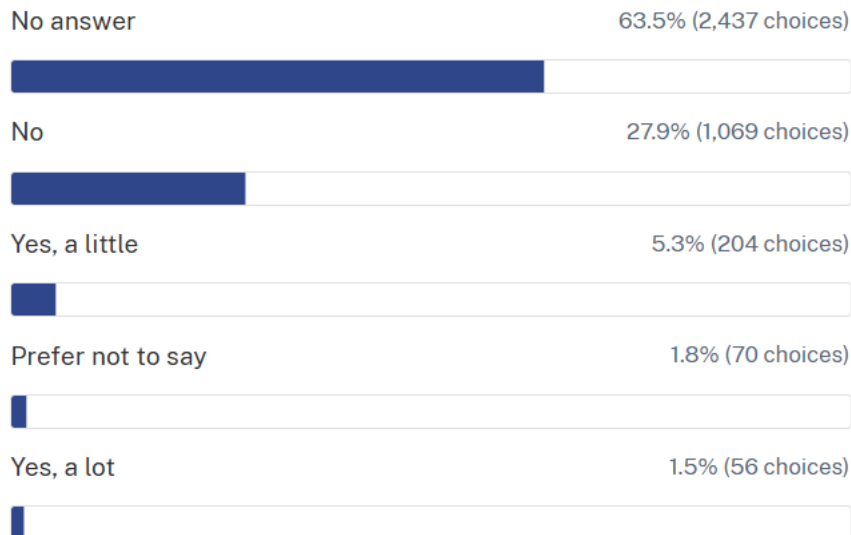
Yes 36.7% (1,409 choices)



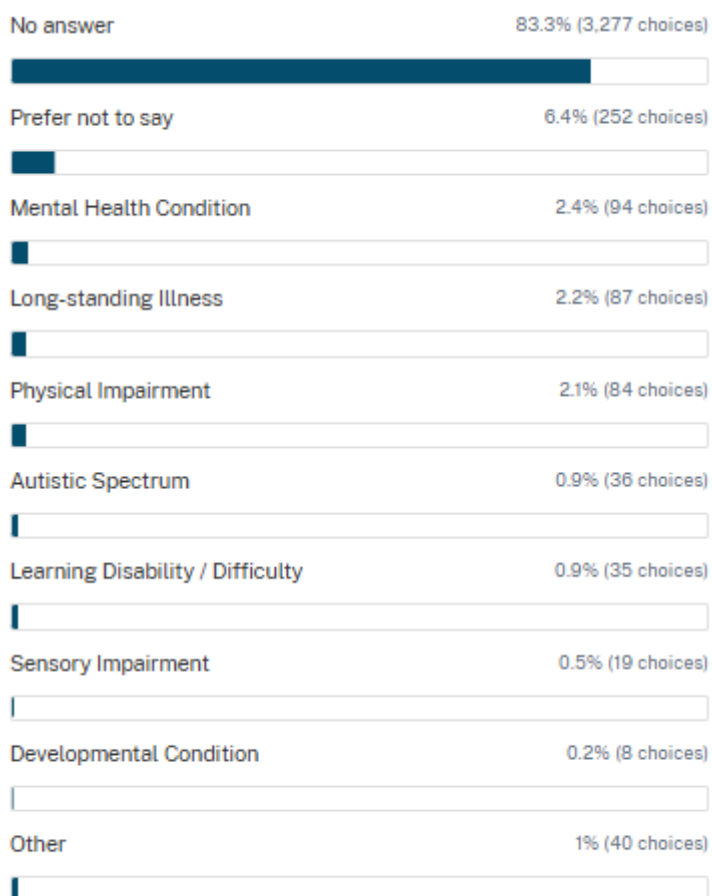
Survey question: What is your age? This was an optional multiple choice answer where one option could be chosen. 1403 responses were made to this question.



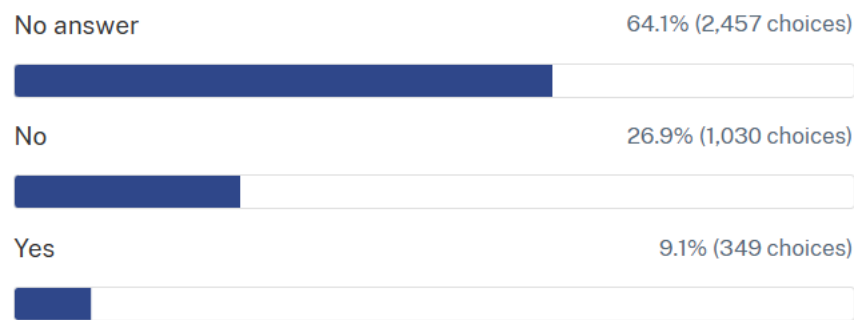
Survey question: Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? This was an optional multiple choice answer where one option could be chosen. 1399 responses were made to this question.



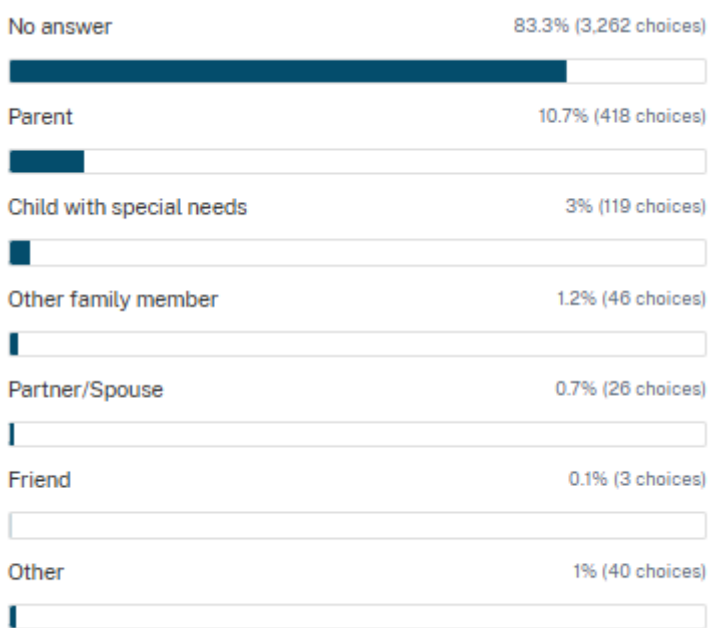
Survey question: Do any of these conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities? This was an optional multiple choice answer where as many options as required could be chosen. 560 responses were made to this question.



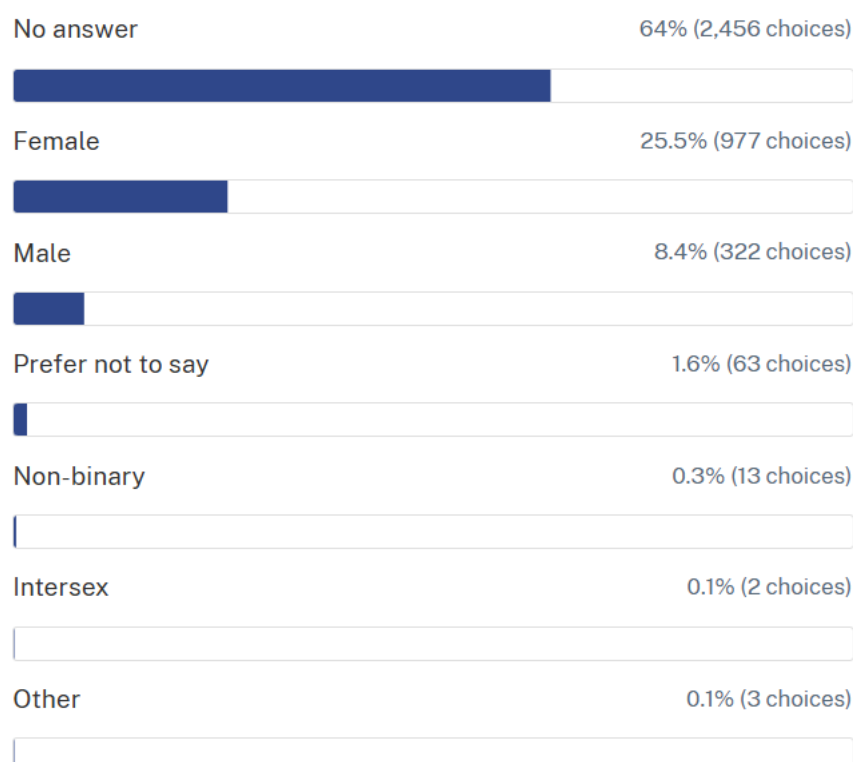
Survey question: Are you a carer? This was an optional multiple choice answer where one option could be chosen. 1379 responses were made to this question.



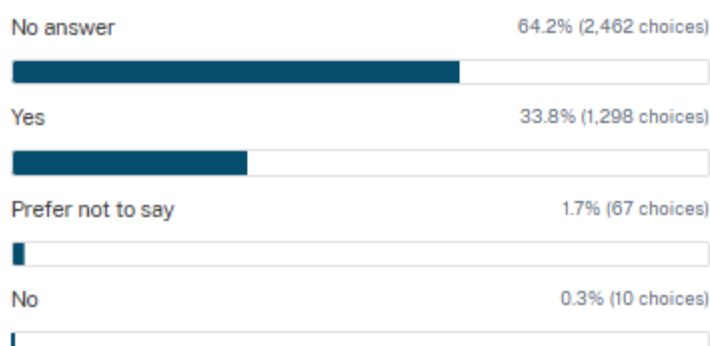
We then asked, if ‘Yes’ was provided to the question about being a care, we asked who they care for. If they care for more than one person, all that apply could be ticked. We asked people to mark other if none apply. 575 responses were made to this question.



Survey question: What best describes your sex and gender? This was an optional multiple choice answer where one option could be chosen. 1380 responses were made to this question.

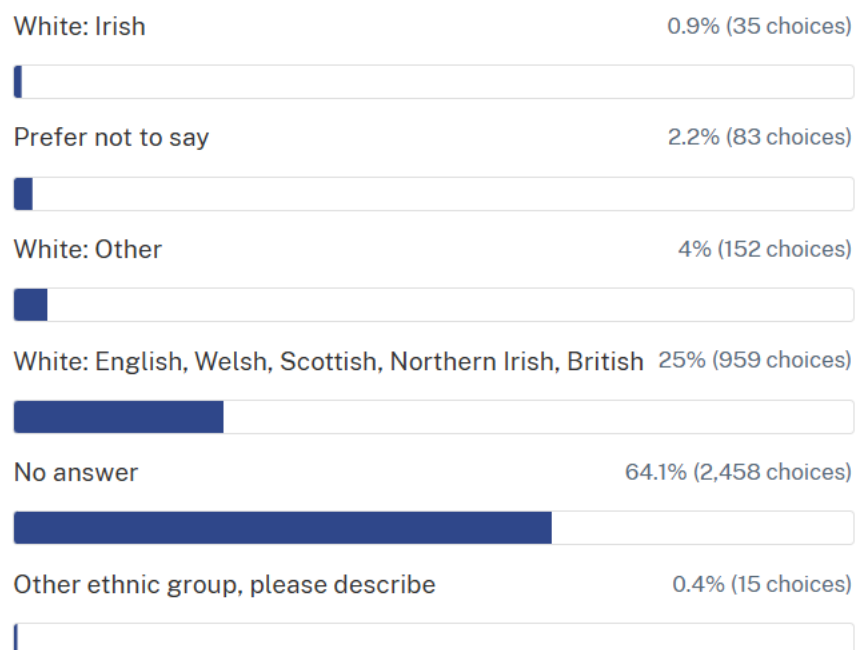


Survey question: Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth? This was an optional multiple choice answer where one option could be chosen. 1375 responses were made to this question.

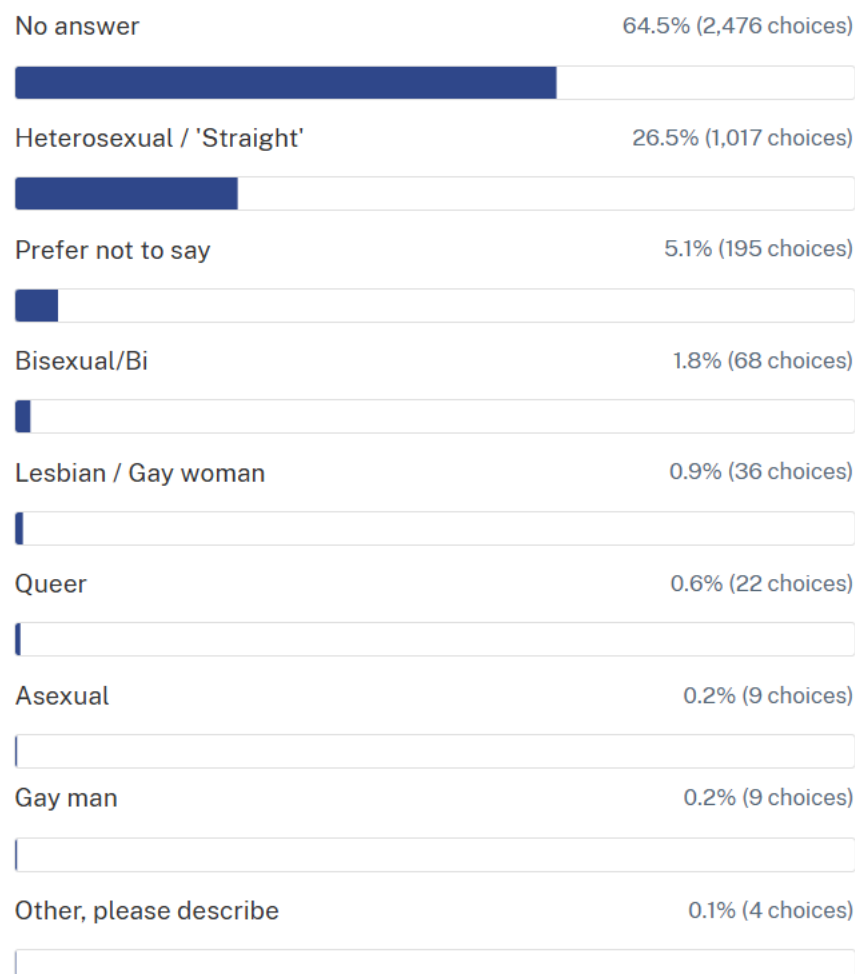


Survey question: How would you describe your ethnic origin? This was an optional multiple choice answer where one option could be chosen. 1378 responses were made to this question.

Asian / Asian British: Pakistani	0% (1 choice)
<input type="text"/>	
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0% (1 choice)
<input type="text"/>	
Other Ethnic Group: Arab	0.1% (3 choices)
<input type="text"/>	
Asian / Asian British: Bangladeshi	0.1% (4 choices)
<input type="text"/>	
Asian / Asian British: Other (please share details below)	0.1% (4 choices)
<input type="text"/>	
Black / Black British: Other (please share details below)	0.1% (4 choices)
<input type="text"/>	
Mixed: Black African and White	0.1% (4 choices)
<input type="text"/>	
Black / Black British: Caribbean	0.1% (5 choices)
<input type="text"/>	
Asian / Asian British: Chinese	0.2% (6 choices)
<input type="text"/>	
Black / Black British: African	0.2% (8 choices)
<input type="text"/>	
Mixed: Black Caribbean and White	0.3% (10 choices)
<input type="text"/>	
Asian / Asian British: Indian	0.5% (18 choices)
<input type="text"/>	
Mixed: Asian and White	0.8% (32 choices)
<input type="text"/>	
Mixed: Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background	0.9% (34 choices)
<input type="text"/>	

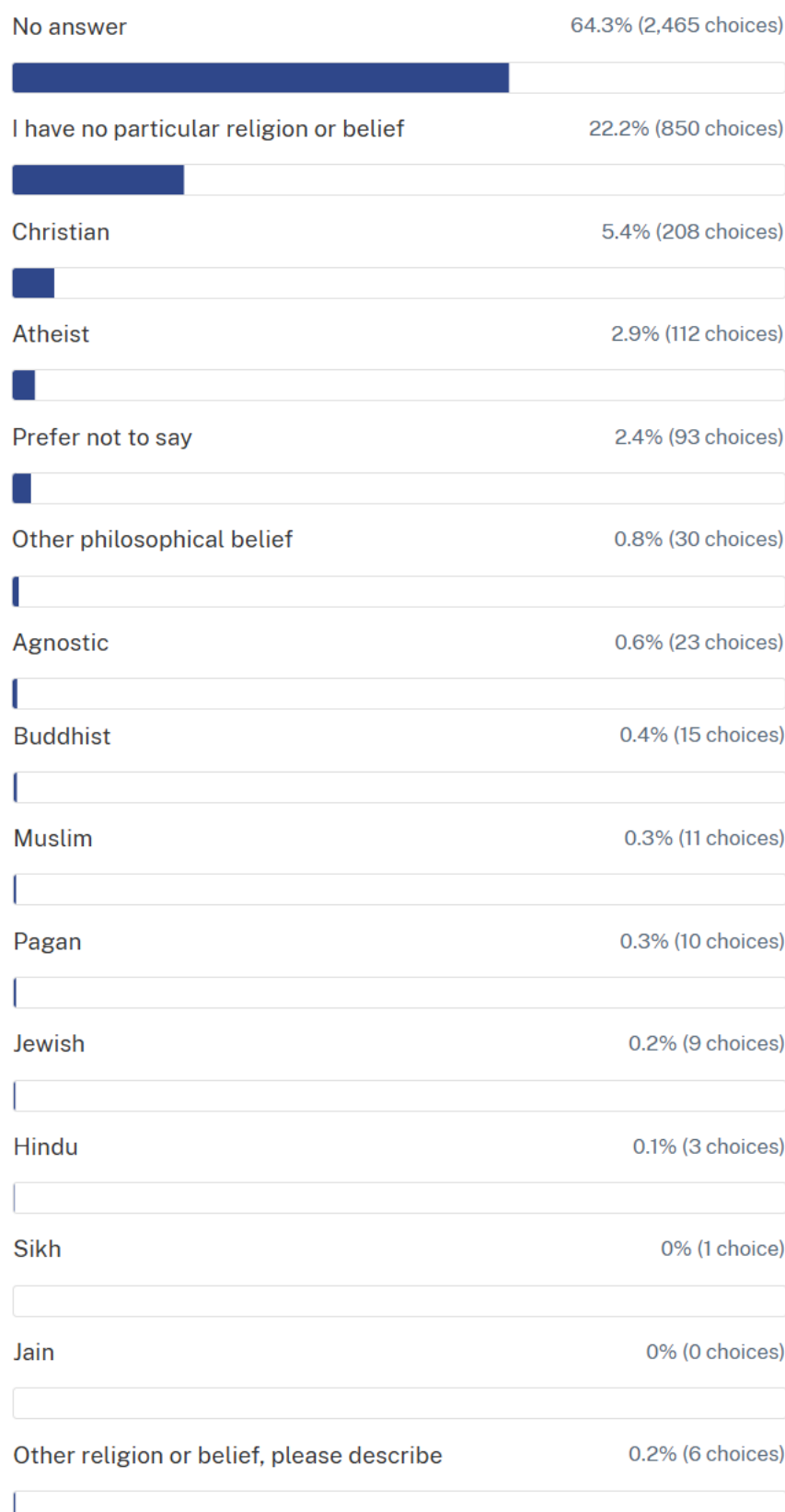


Survey question: Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? This was an optional multiple choice answer where one option could be chosen. 1360 responses were made to this question.



Survey question: What is your religion or belief?

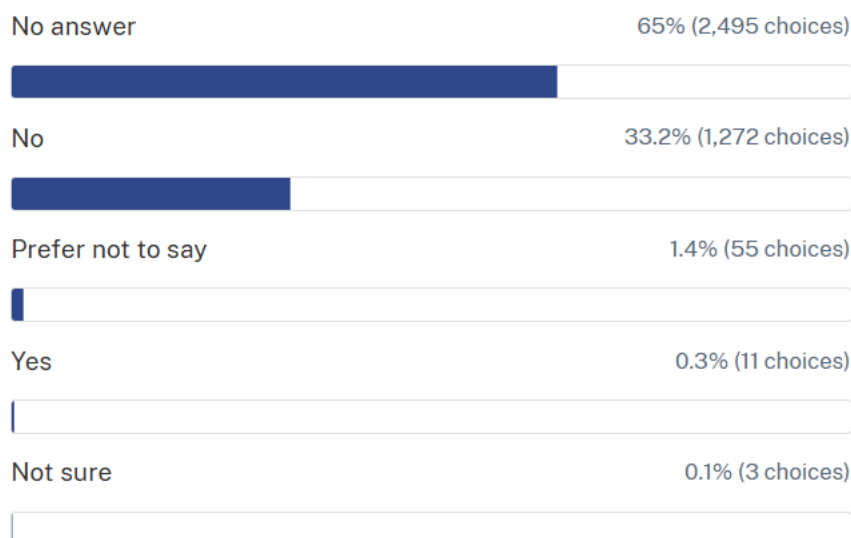
This was an optional multiple choice answer where one option could be chosen.
1371 responses were made to this question.



Survey question: What is your legal marital or registered civil partnership status? This was an optional multiple choice answer where one option could be chosen. 1329 responses were made to this question.

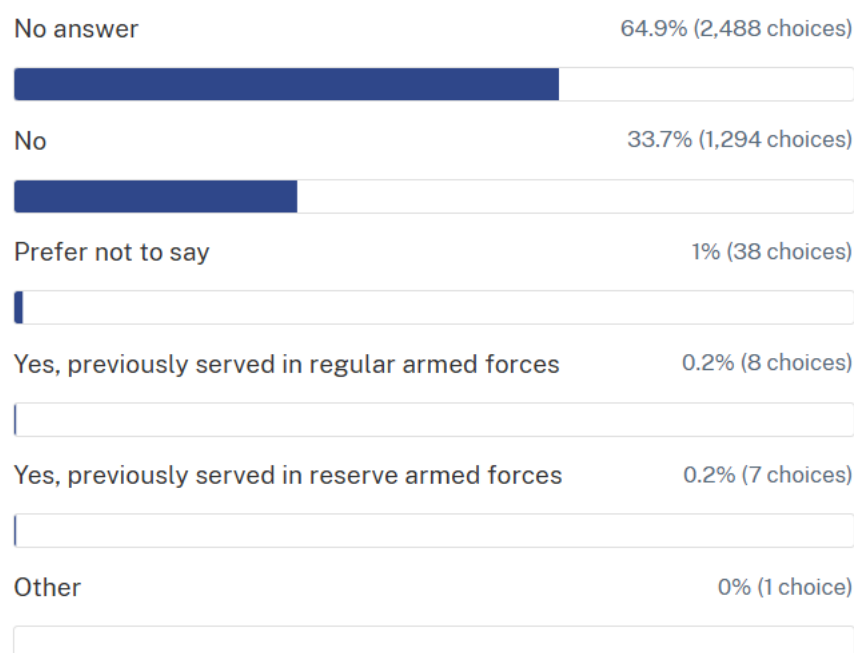


Survey question: Are you, or have you been, looked after by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14? This was an optional multiple choice answer where one option could be chosen. 1341 responses were made to this question.



Survey question: Have you previously served in the UK armed forces?

This was an optional multiple choice answer where one option could be chosen.
1348 responses were made to this question.



This equalities information needs to be considered alongside the Council's Equality Impact Assessment, appendix 9 of the report to Full Council.

