

Newcastle City Council
Outer West Pool
Consultation Summary

A report by

Strategic Leisure limited



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report presents the findings from our consultation with members of the public and stakeholders about what they would like to see at the proposed new Outer West Leisure Facility. This took place during 12 January – 25 March 2022.

2. Background to the bid and timescale

- 2.1. Newcastle City Council (NCC) submitted a bid to the Government’s Levelling Up Fund (LUF) in June 2021 to develop a new leisure facility in the Outer West area of the City. The bid was successful and NCC was awarded £20m.
- 2.2. The project for the Outer West Area will replace the existing aging leisure centre and library on the West Denton Pool site, to provide a community facility offering physical activity facilities, a café and library on the same site.
- 2.3. The proposed facility mix for the new leisure facility is:



- 2.4. There are very specific criteria to be met for the Levelling Up Fund awards. These relate to the proposed timescales for delivering the project, and also to making sure that the project which is the focus of the original bid is delivered.
- 2.5. The award of Levelling Up Fund funding to Newcastle City Council was announced in December 2021. One of the key criteria of the Levelling Up Fund is the ability to start the project before 31 March 2022. This meant that both consultation and the planning application needed to be undertaken by then, allowing construction contracts to be awarded later in 2022, with the building period envisaged late 2022-2024.
- 2.6. The plans are for the new facility to open in late 2024. It will be operated by (Greenwich Leisure Limited, who operate under the name “Better”), the charitable social enterprise which has a long-term contract with Newcastle City Council for the operational management of several formerly council-run leisure facilities.

3. How we invited people to give us their views

- 3.1. The announcement of the award of Levelling Up Fund funded coincided with England still being subject to several Covid 19-related restrictions on gathering in person, and significant uncertainty about whether lockdown restrictions would be tightened, or relaxed in the immediate future. For these reasons it was decided to hold Round 1 of the consultation on this project online, to maximise the opportunity of gathering residents' views on the project proposals.
- 3.2. Round 1 of the consultation took place between 12 January – 25 February 2022. It included the following ways in which people could give us their views:
- A briefing for ward councillors
 - Online focus groups:
 - Two with residents' groups
 - One with schools
 - One with sports clubs
 - One with local community groups
 - Online survey via Let's Talk Newcastle Online, the council consultation website
 - Facebook
 - Printed survey distributed in the West Denton Library; we also put a version of this online.

4. How we publicised the consultation

- 4.1. The consultation opportunities were publicised through the following online media:
- Newcastle City Council's social media channels: Facebook and Twitter
 - Newcastle City Council's website
 - Invitations to registered members of Let's talk Newcastle Online living in the following wards: Callerton & Throckley, Chapel, Denton & Westerhope, Kingston Park South & Newbiggin Hall, and Lemington.

We used the following ways of contacting people offline:

- Councillor briefings.
- Leaflets sent to all residents.
- Information about this stage of the consultation was placed in the existing local library and gym.
- We asked our contacts within local communities to spread the word about this stage of the consultation and encourage their contacts to participate in it.

5. How many people took part and how

- 5.1. As shown in the table below, we received 585 responses, including 70 people (19 of whom were elected members for the Outer West wards) who took part by attending a virtual focus group. We cannot be certain of the exact number of individual people who took part, as people may have chosen to send us more than one response. For example, they may have taken part in a focus group, and also completed an online survey. We estimate that over 500 people have taken part.

Method of taking part	Number of responses
Let's talk Newcastle Online	425
Focus groups, including ward members	70
Facebook	40
Online survey	28
Printed forms	21
Email	1
Total responses	585

6. What did people tell us?

- 6.1. Detailed analysis of all consultation feedback is included in the appendices. The key feedback resulting from each opportunity is summarised below.
- 6.2. We have grouped together the feedback from all channels except the online focus groups and councillor meetings under the headings of the questions asked in the Let's talk Newcastle Online survey, as feedback received from all channels tended to cover the topics asking about in the survey – people's concerns about the new facility, and their ideas about what they would like to see in it:
- Do you have any concerns about the proposed new leisure centre?
 - Is there anything you would like to see us include in our plans for the new leisure centre, such as activities or facilities?
 - Do you use the existing leisure facilities in the Outer West, or have you done this in the past – if so, which ones?
- 6.3. The focus groups allowed for more detailed discussions with users around about their concerns about the proposals, and what they want to see, and these findings are shown in a separate section to present this detail.

Summary

- 6.4. Early analysis showed us that the majority of people who responded to the survey are in favour of the new facility. The main issues and concerns they raised are:
- Concern about the **time it will take to build** and how long the local community will be left with no leisure facility whilst this happens.
 - People felt that going from **three pools** at the old facility to one pool at the new one would not be enough to serve the community and all of the activities that people want to see at the new facility.
 - The proposed **pool should be bigger**.
 - A **children's pool** should be included.
 - People want to see **extended opening hours** so that people working and studying full-time or doing shift work can use the facility before and after work – for example, opening between 6am to 10pm.
 - The proposed **library space** should be bigger.
 - There should be a **café** included in the design.
 - The facility needs better **transport links** which are safe and reliable, including for people using public transport, cycling or walking.
 - Some people were concerned about the use of **glass panelling** in the proposed design making users of the pool feel uncomfortable or 'on display'.
 - Having **enough parking** was mentioned by many, including secure cycle storage and electric vehicle charging points.
- 6.5. People's **main concerns** were around opening hours (raised by 65 people), the swimming pool provision (43 people) and parking and transport (24 people commented on this). The main themes within these concerns, with having extended opening hours including late and morning opening, sufficient parking, and careful management of how the facility is used by different groups – people who took part in the consultation mentioned issues such as ensuring that both people who want to do lane swimming and training, and families and people who swim more slowly, can use the facility.
- 6.6. The **main things people wanted to see included** related to aspects of the design of the swimming pool (215 people commented on this), aspects of the leisure centre such as its layout, what facilities it has, and so forth (100 people), and services for early years, children and young people (92 people). In more detail, these included considerations of outdoor activity provision, aquatic provision (such as the size of the pool), health and fitness classes, dry-side (changing) facilities, wellbeing classes, the café, children and young people's activities, gym, dance studios, the library space, other facilities such as a climbing wall, and some general concerns about where this will fit into the Outer West, and issues around security, safety, and tackling anti-social behaviour.
- 6.7. The **most common activities** people either currently or previously did at the existing leisure facilities in the Outer West were swimming (152 people said they did this), using the sauna or steam room (76 people), and fitness classes (56 people).

- 6.8. The **focus groups** allowed for more detailed discussions with users around about their concerns about the proposals, and what they want to see. It was noticeable that many of the issues raised in the focus groups, such as the need for the facility to have good transport links and parking, and discussions over the size of the pool and spectator space, were similar to those raised in the online consultation and printed forms. Other concerns raised were specific to the groups attending the discussion – for example, schools asked about opportunities to link into the new facility to provide students with work experience, training, apprenticeships, and so forth.

1. Do you have any concerns about the proposed new leisure centre?

365 people responded to this question, and their main concerns were around opening hours (raised by 65 people), the swimming pool provision (48 people) and parking and transport (24 people commented on this).

Concerns raised	How often mentioned
Opening Hours Concerns	65
Swimming Pool Concerns	48
Parking and Transport Concerns	24
Swimming Lessons and Activities Concerns	21
Project and Cost Concerns	18
No Concerns	15
Community and Local Area Concerns	11
Accessibility	9
Swimming Clubs Concerns	9
Operator Concerns	8
Leisure Centre Concerns	4
Sports and Fitness Activities Concerns	2

Many people commented on more than one aspect of the proposal that they had concerns about, so the number of mentions totals more than 356.

Due to the volume of feedback we received on what people would like to see, we are carrying out further analysis on the exact detail of the activities and facilities people would like to see, and the results of this analysis will shortly be available in Appendix 1 of this report, presented separately. Preliminary analysis, as shown in the table below, indicates that the main themes within these concerns were around having extended opening hours including late and morning opening, sufficient parking, and careful management of how the facility is used by different groups – people who took part in the consultation mentioned issues such as ensuring that both people who want to do lane swimming and training, and families and people who swim more slowly, can use the facility. Similar themes were raised by those attending focus groups to discuss this.

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Theme	How often mentioned
Facility needs extended hours so that people working and studying can access it	31
Facility will need late opening hours	11
Facility needs to have adequate parking	10
Facility needs to open from 6am	8
Use of pool by different groups needs to be carefully managed	8
A 25m pool is too small	6
Need to have separate training and children's pools	6
Concerned with performance of proposed operator	6
Need to have a small pool for children to use	5
There needs to be three swimming pools included in the design	5

One comment was: "I have no concerns, but I would be grateful if the centre could be open on weekends and late nights (even if only 2-3 evenings a week), as otherwise it will be difficult to access for those of us who work full-time hours".

2. Is there anything you would like to see us include in our plans for the new leisure centre, such as activities or facilities?

448 people responded to this question, with analysis of what they said they would like to see showing that the swimming pool (215 people mentioned this), aspects of the leisure centre such as its layout, what facilities it has, and so forth (100 people), and early years, play and young people (92 people) being the ones most commonly commented on.

What people would like to see	How often mentioned
Swimming Pool	215
Leisure Centre	100
Early Years, Play and Young People	92
Swimming Classes and Activities	89
Fitness Classes and Activities	77
Gym	54
Library	30
Local Area and Community	23
Accessibility	11
Parking and Transport	4
Project Plan and Consultation	2

Many people commented on more than one thing they would like to see at the new facility, so the number of mentions totals more than 448.

One comment was: "We need activities for young children such as soft play, groups and classes."

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Our analysis, as shown in the table below, indicates that the main themes within these headings were that a soft play area would be good (56 mentions), that a baby, toddler and children's shallow pool is needed (26 mentioned), and that people want to see swimming lessons being provided (22 mentions).

What people would like to see	How often mentioned
Soft play area would be good	56
Baby, toddler and children's shallow pool is needed	26
Swimming lessons are needed	22
The facility should have multiple pools	21
Sauna and steam room is needed	21
Learn from existing north east leisure centres	18
Swimming pool is very important	17
Need pool to have enough lanes and facilities to host swimming galas	16
8 lane pool is needed	13
Would like a 50m pool	12
Lane swimming would be good	12

Early analysis of what people told us they would like to see included the following ideas, and we have explored these further in the second stage of the consultation in March 2022. Appendix 2 explores these ideas in more detail under the headings in the table on the previous page.

<p>Outdoor provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community garden Seating area – extension of the café Outdoor sports facilities – football, skatepark, parkour Running track BMX track 	<p>Aquatic provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50m pool Teaching / toddler pool Splash pads Water slides
<p>Spa Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sauna Steam room Indoor jacuzzis Cold plunge pool 	<p>Dry-side provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fenced or gated playpen, baby seats provided in changing rooms for when parents are getting dried and changed. Separate male and female changing rooms Separate shower cubicles Larger changing rooms Spectators' area

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<p>Classes Children's' Adults Swimming club Mother and toddler Aqua fitness classes Lane swimming SEND classes Women-only sessions Aqua Deep workouts</p>	<p>Children's Activities Soft play (younger children) School holiday activities Parent and children's activities Creche Trampolining Karate Judo</p>
<p>Wellbeing Meditation Yoga Pilates Reiki Healthy eating courses Hydrotherapy Pool</p>	<p>Dance Studio Affordable, to be hired out, and with scope for group leaders to store equipment Dance classes on offer to all ages Fitness classes for all ages and ability</p>
<p>Café Seating area</p>	<p>Gym Women-only sessions New equipment</p>
<p>Other facilities Climbing wall Spin studio Library Squash court</p>	<p>General Make it the hub of the community Safe and secure location Disabled access to all areas and facilities Affordable memberships Earlier and later opening times Allocated times for SEND children, where it is quieter Women-only allocation of facilities Adequate and free parking More activities for teenagers and make activities available for all ages Programming to make use of the facilities throughout the day for example for people aged over 60. Room for hire for parties and meetings GP referrals</p>

3. Do you use the existing leisure facilities in the Outer West, or have you done this in the past – if so, which ones?

As shown in the table below, the most common activities people either currently or previously did at the existing leisure facilities in the Outer West were swimming (152 people said they did this), using the sauna or steam room (76 people), and fitness classes (56 people). The table below shows the most common activities and fitness facilities people were using or had used.

Activities done and facilities used at the existing leisure facilities in the Outer West	Number of times this was mentioned
Swimming	152
Sauna or steam room	76
Fitness classes	56
Gym	39
Other	37
Five- or seven- a-side football	27
Library	10
Soft play	6
Gymnastics	5
Lane swimming	5
Swim for all	5
Swimming Lessons	5
Fitness studios	3
Sports hall	3
<i>I have not used the existing facilities either now or in the past</i>	22

7. Online Focus Groups

- 7.1. Five online focus groups with residents, sports clubs, schools and youth organisations, plus four Ward Councillor meetings, took place in January and February 2022, as follows:

Date	Event	Number attended
18/01/2022	Ward members** for Denton and Westerhope, Chapel, Lemington and Callerton & Throckley Wards	6
20/01/2022	Ward members** for Denton and Westerhope, Chapel, Lemington and Callerton & Throckley Wards	1
24/01/2022 10am	Residents*	18
24/01/2022 6pm	Residents*	15
25/01/2022	Sports clubs	9
26/01/2022	Schools and youth organisations	8
27/01/2022	Local Organisations	1
01/02/2022	All ward members***	4
03/02/2022	All ward members***	8

Total 70

*10,000 leaflets were sent to residents in Denton and Westerhope to invite them to take part.

** The same councillors were invited to events on 18 and 20 January 2022; they only needed to attend one event.

*** The same councillors were invited to events on 1 and 3 February 2022; they only needed to attend one event.

- 7.2. The key feedback points from each Focus Group are show in the table below. These sessions explored the points identified in the Let's talk Newcastle online and other early consultation channels in more detail, and we recommend reading through the key points below in detail.

Date and Group	Key points raised
24/01/2022 10am Residents*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for a bigger main pool. • Need to include soft play in the facility and make sure it's in the right location so it doesn't (for example) impact on the library. • There is a need for more spectator seating in the pool area than is proposed in the current design.

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Date and Group	Key points raised
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for community rooms and space to ensure the facility is a community hub. • Need to ensure there is enough car parking. • Need access for bicycles. • Affordability is important to ensure local people can use the facility. • Would like a reduction in the amount of glass so people can't be seen exercising. • Ensure sunlight doesn't impact the pool. • The future of the 3G pitches. • Future use of the existing sports centre (dryside), and whether there is potential for use of this by West Denton FC for changing or by the school.
<p>24/01/2022 6pm Residents*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for a bigger main pool; a 50m pool was specifically mentioned (N.B A separate meeting was arranged and held with the members of the Newcastle Swimming Club promoting a 50m pool). • Why is a library being included? • Is there a café? • Is there a floating floor in the pool? • Where is the sauna and steam? • Need for more spectator seating in the pool area than proposed. • Need for community rooms and space to ensure the facility is a hub. • There is a need to have outdoor green space where people can sit & relax and eat. • Affordability is important to ensure local people can use the facility. • Future use of the existing sports centre (dryside); how could the football fit into this? • Why hasn't an alternative site been considered? • Why isn't a bigger site being considered? With potential to expand with more facilities in the future?
<p>25/01/2022 Sports Clubs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for the pool to be bigger; this was specifically raised by the Swimming Club in relation to needing an 8-lane pool. This point was also supported by the representative of older swimmers so that safeguarding requirements can be met. • Need for more spectator seating in the pool area than proposed.

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Date and Group	Key points raised
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constraints on the growth of the Newcastle Swim Club due to lack of water space (note that a separate meeting was held with the committee of Newcastle Swim Club). • Opportunity to design sports hall so indoor cricket can be accommodated – nets, flooring and lighting. • West Denton FC would like to be able to train indoors, especially for the younger children – is there an opportunity for them to use the existing dryside leisure centre sports hall if this building is retained? • Need for community rooms and space. • Could there be a license in the new facility? • Support for pool pod access. • Are separate studios being provided? • Timescale for facility development?
<p>26/01/2022 Schools and Youth Organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project timescale. • Opportunity for Studio West school to use the existing dryside leisure centre? • Opportunity for Studio West school to link into the new facility – work experience, training, apprenticeships, etc. • Walking routes and access so the Studio West students' route does not impact on access to the leisure facility. • Will there be a broad programme and opportunities for block bookings? • Potential for a Youth Club (Inspire Youth) use.
<p>27/01/2022 Local Organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an opportunity for older residents in the locality to be engaged in consultation, particularly those that can't access online meetings? • Very supportive of the opportunity provided by the new facility.

8. What happens next?

- 8.1. The results of the Round 1 consultation are now informing the next iteration of the plans and design for the new leisure facility. There will be a second round of consultation, undertaken both in person and online during March 2022, to present the revised design and plans. This will then be submitted for planning permission by the end of March 2022.

9. About the people who took part

9.1. Based on the consultation opportunities made available where it is possible to record demographic data, the Round 1 Consultation achieved the following:

Consultation Media	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability	Resident / Non-resident
Let's Talk Newcastle Online	Majority of responses were from people aged 30-49	70% female; 28% male	Majority of responses from White British people	10% of responses were from people with a disability	<i>Question not asked</i>
Online and printed forms	Majority of responses were from people aged 65+	80% female; 20% male	<i>Question not asked</i>	<i>Question not asked</i>	Nearly all responses were from residents
Facebook	<i>Question not asked</i>	60% female; 38% male	<i>Question not asked</i>	<i>Question not asked</i>	<i>Question not asked</i>

The charts on the next pages present the demographic information we have about all the participants in the consultation, showing that, of the people who provided this information:

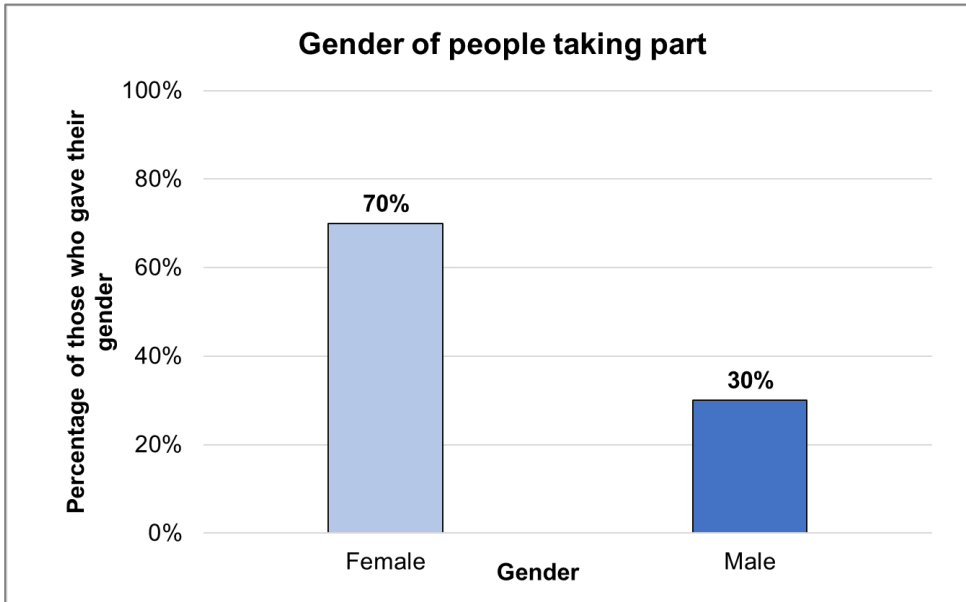
- 70% were female
- 29% were aged 30-39 (the single largest age group)
- 99% were White or White British
- 11% were disabled.
- 78 people lived in Denton and Westerhope ward.

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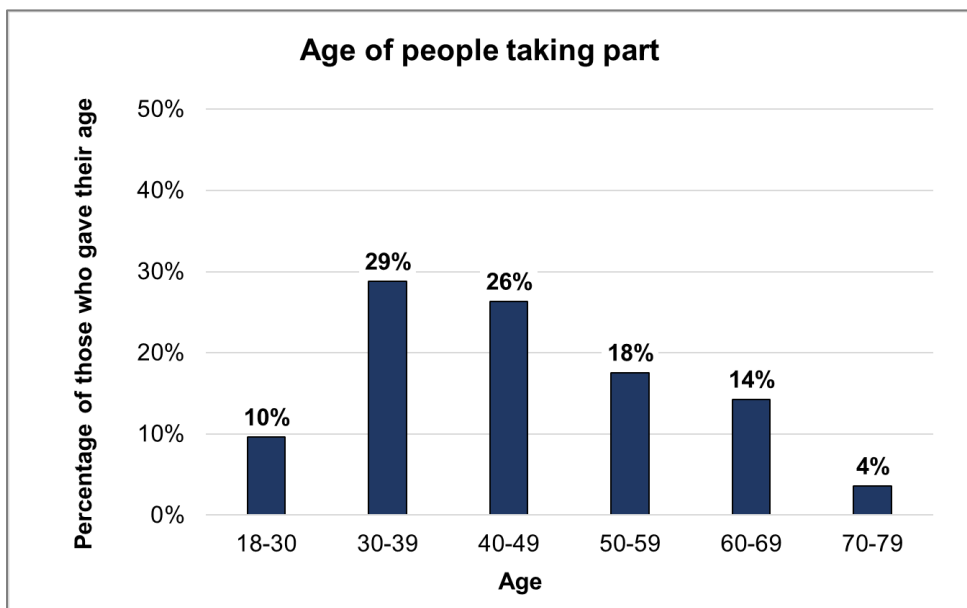
Gender

The majority of the responses from people who took part in the consultation (496 out of 585 responses) provided information about their gender. The majority (70%) were female.



Age

The majority of the responses from people who took part in the consultation (496 out of 585 responses) provided information about their gender. The majority (70%) were female.

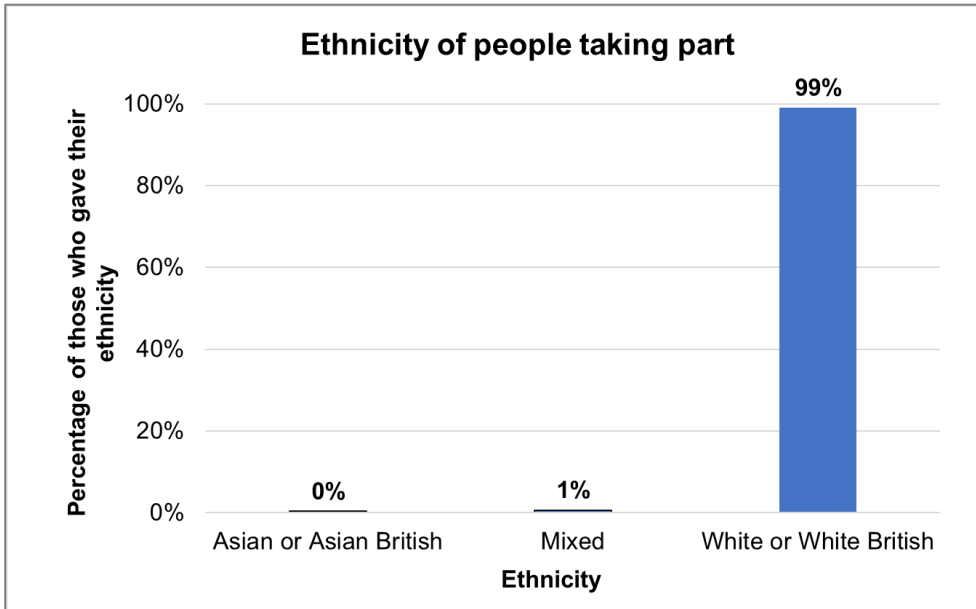


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Ethnicity

More than of the responses from people who took part in the consultation (318 out of 585 responses) provided information about their ethnicity. Nearly all (99%) were White or White British.



Ward

Just under half of responses from people who took part in the consultation (257 out of 585 responses) provided information about their ward, nearly all of whom took part via Let's talk Newcastle Online. The largest number (78 responses) came from people living in Denton and Westerhope.

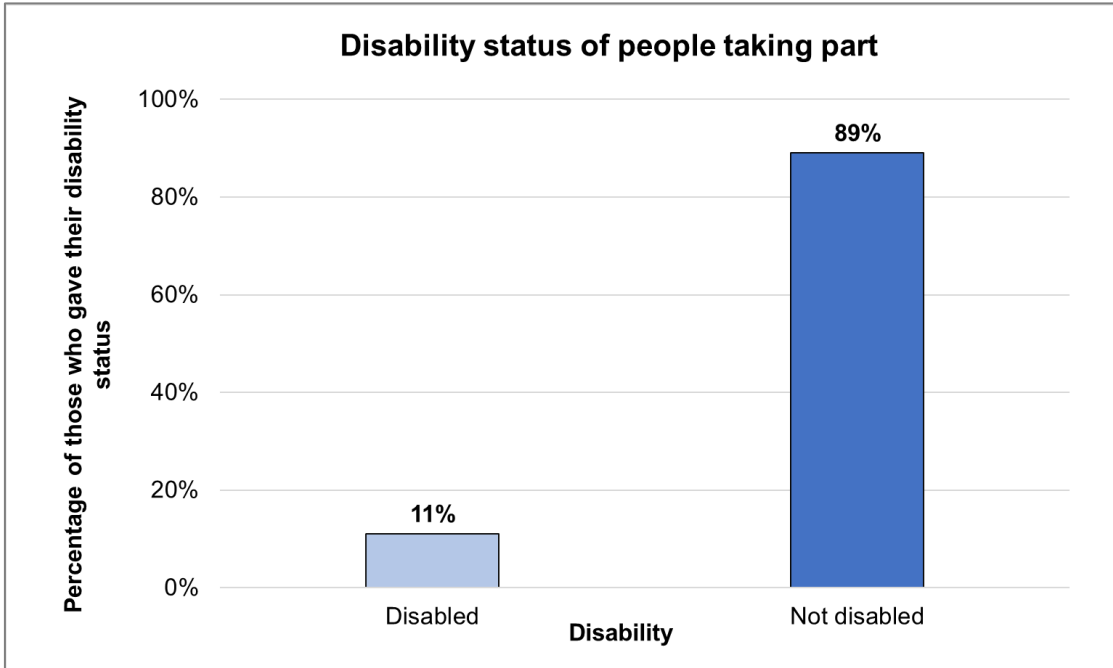
Ward	Number of responses
Denton & Westerhope	78
Chapel	61
Lemington	43
Kingston Park South & Newbiggin Hall	19
Callerton & Throckley	16
Blakelaw	10
West Fenham	9
Benwell & Scotswood	7
Fawdon & West Gosforth	4
Dene & South Gosforth	3
Castle	2
Gosforth	2
Byker	1
Parklands	1
Wingrove	1

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Disability

Over half of the responses from people who took part in the consultation (301 out of 585 responses) provided information about whether they were disabled. The majority (89%) did were not disabled.



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