

INVERCLYDE COUNCIL CITIZENS' PANEL NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2020/21

Dear Panel Member

Welcome to the latest Citizens' Panel newsletter.

Thank you for responding to the survey issued in Summer 2020. Fifty-nine per cent of you completed a questionnaire and provided valuable feedback that we will use to improve services provided by the Council.



Topics in the Summer 2020 survey were:

- *Inverclyde Council's Adoption Service*
- *free sanitary products*
- *West Blackhall Street and Walking and Cycling in Greenock town centre.*

The Winter 2020/21 questionnaire focuses on community safety; Inverclyde Council's performance; and tackling poverty. We look forward to receiving your completed survey.

This newsletter outlines the key results from the Summer 2020 survey and our response to your feedback.

1. Inverclyde Council's Adoption Service

This is the first time that questions about the Council's Adoption Service have been included in a Citizens' Panel survey. Some context and background about the Adoption Service was provided as an introduction to this section, and a leaflet about the Service was included with the questionnaire.

Sixty per cent of respondents said they were aware of the Council's Adoption Service before they received the survey. Twenty per cent of respondents had seen the logo of the Adoption Service before and, when asked where they had seen it, the most popular response was *on the public information screens in Council offices and health centres (64%)*.

Where Panel members were interested in finding out more about the Service and becoming an adoptive parent, they indicated the following top three preferences in terms of accessing more information: Inverclyde Council's website (43%); call the Council's Adoption Service on 01475 715367 (30%); and other websites (24%).

Respondents were then made aware of the free Adoption Service App that is available for download. When asked if they would use this if they were interested in adopting, 61% of respondents said they would download the App. Additionally, 84% of respondents said that they would find the additional information available through short films that explain the needs of children who require to be placed with adoptive parents helpful in the process.

Finally, Panel members were given information on the Inverclyde Birth Ties Project which provides advice and support to any birth family member who is affected by adoption. Only 4% of respondents said they were aware of the Project before the survey was issued.

Our response to your feedback

A key aim of the Council's Adoption Service is to raise awareness of the Service in the local community, firstly, with the aim of recruiting prospective adoptive families for

Inverclyde children who require an adoptive placement and, secondly, to ensure that everyone affected by adoption is aware of where they can access support, should they require it.

The Citizens' Panel questionnaire provided the opportunity to consult with the local community and the results will inform the future delivery of the Adoption Service Recruitment Strategy and the Continuous Improvement Plan. The results will also assist the Service to focus on the aspects of recruitment activity that have been effective.

The responses from Panel members also provided valuable insight into areas that we should focus on improving; for example, the profile of the Birth Ties Support Project needs to be raised locally, with the aim of ensuring that all birth family members affected by adoption are aware of it and can access support if they require to do so.

2. Free sanitary products

We introduced the second part of the survey by explaining that free sanitary products have been available in Inverclyde since 2018, with a range of items available for any citizen who needs them.

Only 6% of respondents told us that they, or someone in their household, had accessed the free products. However, more encouragingly, 49% of respondents were aware that, prior to the introduction of the pandemic restrictions in March 2020, these products were available to collect from all local schools (for pupils), libraries and other community locations in the area.

We then advised that, since May 2020, free sanitary products have been available to order online by completing a form <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/C3739JV>. Nine per cent of respondents were aware that this online option was available; however, only 3% of that group had actually used the service. Around half of those who had used online ordering would like this option to continue in future.

Finally, Panel members were asked to provide feedback on additional venues that would be suitable for the community-based provision of free sanitary products, to enhance the current provision in schools, libraries and other community facilities.

Our response to your feedback

The feedback from the Citizens' Panel provided useful information that the Council and its Partners will take forward to encourage residents to access free sanitary products, with the aim of improving the current uptake rate of 6%.

The online ordering option will continue for the foreseeable future and will be promoted to encourage people to access the service in this way, with the goal of increasing the very small number of respondents (9%) who have heard of the online option, as well as the 3% of Panel members who told us they had used it.

The results from this section of the Survey will also be shared with the Child Poverty Action Group, with the aim of engaging residents in the free service and increasing awareness of the locations where the products are available for collection. Finally, we note the additional collection points suggested by Panel members and will take action on the information provided, as appropriate.

3. West Blackhall Street and Walking and Cycling in Greenock Town Centre

To introduce the last section of the survey, Panel members were provided with some background on the work being undertaken by the Council in partnership with Sustrans (a charity that makes it easier for people to walk and cycle) to design improvements to West Blackhall Street. Two thirds of respondents (66%) said they were aware in some way of the improvement plans for that area.

When Panel members were asked to rate the current attractiveness of the physical environment in that area, considering things like the look and quality of paving materials, the availability and appearance of street furniture (for example, seating and bins), as well as space to walk/cycle safely, only one in 10 respondents would assess the physical environment of West Blackhall Street as attractive, while just over two thirds (69%) stated that it is unattractive; the remaining respondents did not have a view.

The next question asked Panel members about the frequency of their visits to West Blackhall Street, with around 31% of respondents saying they visited more than once per week. While there was a range of reasons for visiting the area, the focus was mainly on visiting local businesses, for example, a bank or other offices (67%), cafés, bars and restaurants (62%), and shops (60%). The average time spent in the area by respondents on each visit - less than an hour - reflects the business focus in the reasons for visiting.

Only 17% of respondents said they visit West Blackhall Street in the evening, with the main purpose of those visits being to go to a bar or restaurant, to eat out and socialise. For those who do not tend to visit the area in the evening, the reasons given for this ranged from a feeling of being unsafe, the shops being closed at that time and simply having no need to visit the area at that time of the day.

Panel members were also updated on the work progressing by the Council to explore options for improving walking/cycling/ accessibility in the wider Greenock town centre area and connect it to West Blackhall Street. Members were then asked how they normally travel to and within Greenock town centre. The most popular method of travelling to Greenock town centre was by car (as a driver) (64%) while the most popular method of travelling within Greenock town centre was walking (77%).

When Panel members provided feedback on improvement activities for Greenock town centre, indicating the level of priority they thought should be given to a number of factors, the top three responses were: improved pavement surface quality (89%); better access for disabled people (81%); and enhanced public space, for example, places to sit, town squares, plazas (80%).

Finally, Panel members were asked about reason(s) why they do not cycle more to/within Greenock town centre, with the top three most popular responses being: poor weather (40%); concerns about safety (34%); and living too far from where they need to get to (29%).

Our response to your feedback

West Blackhall Street

Awareness of and communication about the project are important aspects of the initiative for the Council and its delivery partner, Sustrans. The results indicated a reasonable level of awareness among respondents but also suggest there is work to do in raising awareness of the project in general, as well as the specific details of it.

A high percentage of Panel members (69%) described West Blackhall Street as unattractive. A similar number (68%) visit West Blackhall Street less than once a week, with the majority of visits (69%) lasting less than half an hour; the latter response validates the project's aims of making West Blackhall Street a more attractive place for people to visit more often and spend more time.

Greenock town centre connections

A car was the most common method of travelling to Greenock town centre, with walking and travelling by bus the next most popular methods of transport. It is perhaps surprising that only 2% of respondents indicated that they travelled to the town centre by train, given the close proximity of the location to the Greenock Central and West Station train stations. A low level of cycling to the town centre was also reported by Panel members, with only 3% of respondents travelling that way.

When asked how they moved around Greenock town centre once they arrived there, walking was, unsurprisingly, the most common means, with more than three quarters (77%) of Panel members choosing this response. All the other means of travelling within the town centre attracted low response rates which would suggest that there is room for improvement regarding encouraging people to travel in a more sustainable way in Greenock town centre.

Finally, when asked for their views on matters affecting how they perceive moving about the town centre area, the Panel identified issues including pavement surface quality and underpasses. The responses to this question will be used to prioritise projects being identified in the Greenock Town Centre Connections Study.