

West Lancashire Borough Council
Housing and Regeneration Division



Beechtrees Flats Option Appraisal

2013/14

Appendix H
Tenant
satisfaction
survey

Results and
analysis

"To be a top performing
landlord within an
economically vibrant
West Lancs"

Contents

	Page
Chapter 1 Introduction and purpose of the report	2
Chapter 2 Methodology	3
Chapter 3 Response	4
Chapter 4 Results	5
4.1 About where you live	5
4.2 About your home	9
4.3 About you	17
Chapter 5 Summary of outcomes	22
Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire	24

1 Introduction and Purpose of the Report

As part of the ongoing option appraisal of the flats on Beechtrees, Digmoor, a consultation exercise was carried out in August 2013

There are 56 flats on Beechtrees comprising of 8no Bedsits, 20no 1 bed flats and 28no 2 bed flats. 2 of the flats have been sold leasehold but they were included in the questionnaire.

They have suffered for many years with a high turnover of tenancies and high void levels. Combined with high repair costs, this has caused the flats to have a negative NPV (net present value).

The purpose of this report is to try to determine which issues are most important to the tenants in order to ascertain how any future investment may be most effectively used.

2 Methodology

The consultation took the form of a questionnaire. A copy of this questionnaire is shown in appendix 1.

The questionnaire was designed by the Option Appraisal team to examine the range of social problems and maintenance issues that are known to exist in the flats, and determine which are considered by the tenants to be the most serious. Additionally, general satisfaction with the properties and the area at large was included with a number of opportunities for the tenants to raise any further issues which may not have been specifically included.

To allow more effective analysis of the data, several questions regarding the circumstances of the tenants themselves were included. The survey itself was anonymous but includes identification of the block to allow any area specific data to be identified and analysed.

The questionnaire was printed using in-house printing facilities using mail merge data exported from our housing management system. This enabled the letters to be individually addressed.

The questionnaire pack included a return envelope which was pre-paid to encourage a good response.

The questionnaire was distributed using the standard Royal Mail second-class post.

After the initial responses over approximately 3 weeks this was followed up with a site visit to knock on doors and hand out questionnaires manually.

Finally, another letter and questionnaire was sent to all flats in blocks from which we had previously received no responses.

On its return the data was entered into a spreadsheet where it was analysed.

3 Response

This section shows the proportion of questionnaires returned.

Out of the 56 questionnaires distributed, 12 were returned – this equates to 21.4%.

With such a small survey it is important to obtain as many responses as possible. Using both postal distribution and door to door distribution is the best way to ensure this.

Table 2: Returns by Block

Block	Returned	Sent	Percentage Return
124-134	2	6	33.3%
136-146	1	6	16.7%
148-158	0	6	0%
160-170	1	6	16.7%
172-182	1	6	16.7%
184-194	0	6	0%
193-199	1	4	25%
211-217	0	4	0%
229-235	1	4	25%
42-48	1	4	25%
60-66	2	4	50%
Unspecified	2	-	

Outcomes

- Due to the size of the survey and the number of returns, the usual confidence level of 95% cannot be achieved within a reasonable confidence indicator. (Actual confidence indicator was calculated as 20.76%)
- With such a small number of actual returns, analysis of the spatial distribution of responses becomes difficult.
- Bearing these limitations in mind, the returns from the attached blocks constitute a far higher percentage of surveys sent out than in the detached blocks. This figure is 25% for the attached blocks compared to 14% for the detached blocks. In terms of actual surveys, however the numbers are the same
- Of the blocks where no returns were received at all, 2 were detached blocks compared to 1 attached block.

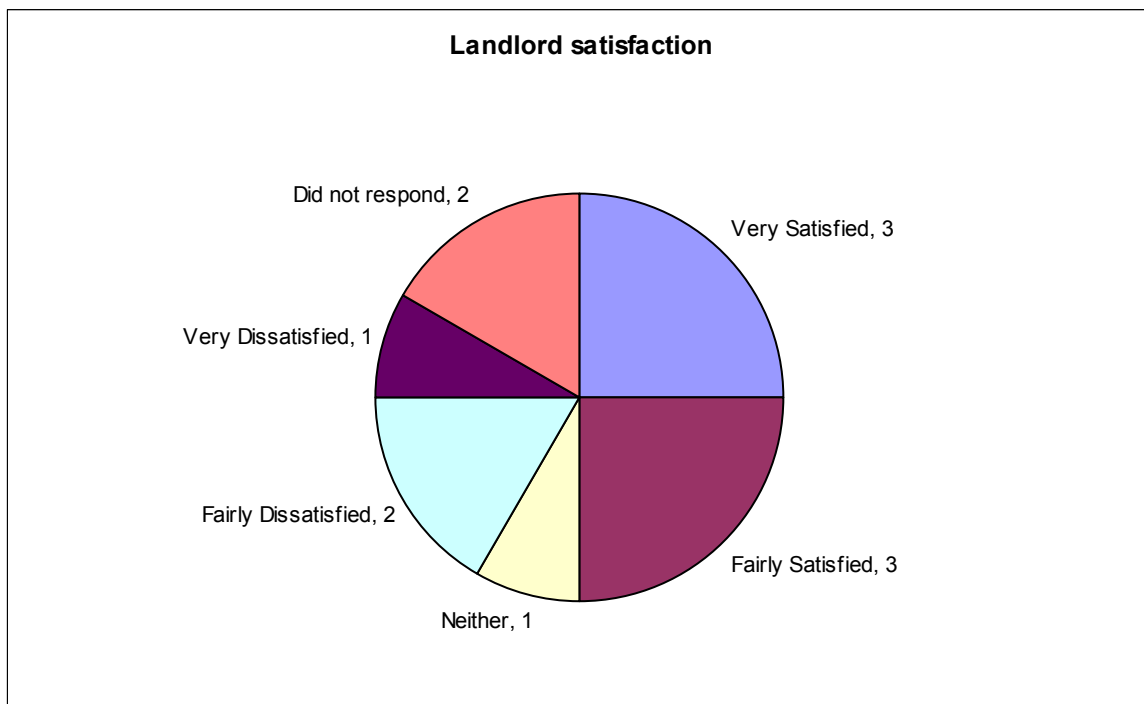
4 Results:

4.1 Section 1: About where you live

This section covers the first 4 questions asked on the survey, which relates to the area in general and what it is like to live there.

Question 1: Overall, How satisfied are you with WLBC as your landlord?

Of the 12 surveys received, there were 10 responses to this question. The chart below shows the results.

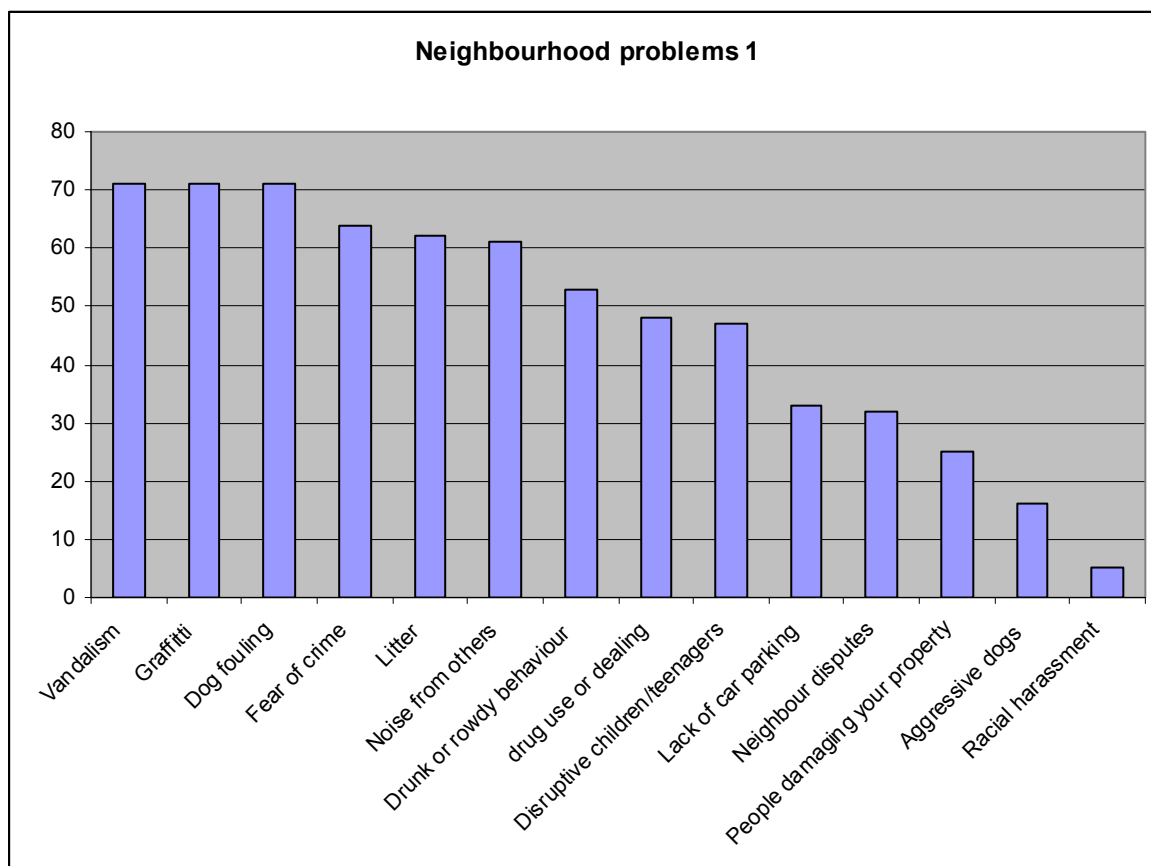


Outcomes

- As the chart shows, half of the responses fall into the positive category, being either very or fairly satisfied. This compares to one quarter negative responses. This demonstrates relative confidence, among the tenants on Beechtrees in the Council's ability to manage the problems in the area and perform the duties of landlord.

Question 2: Do you feel your neighbourhood suffers from any of the following problems?

In order to analyse the data from this question, the answers were given a numerical value. 10 for a major problem, 5 for a minor problem and 0 for not a problem. In addition, points were added for any items that were identified as one of the three biggest problem areas. The overall scores were then added together and the results are displayed below. The data has been sorted in order of score.

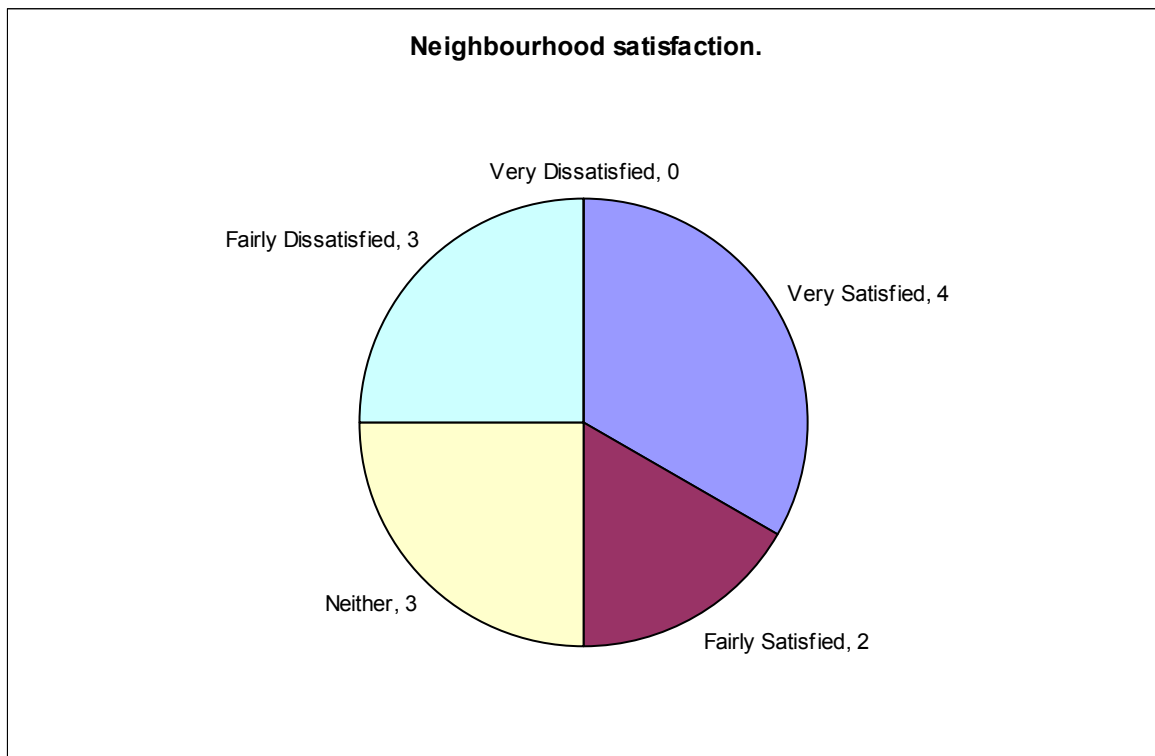


Outcomes

- All of the problems identified were considered to be present to some extent by at least one of the respondees.
- 4 of the top 5 scoring problems, Vandalism, Graffiti, Dog fouling, and litter concern the appearance and maintenance of the communal areas and the estate at large. This is reinforced by the fact that damage to individual property and disputes with neighbours score relatively low on the scale of priorities.

Question 3: How Satisfied/Dissatisfied are you with the neighbourhood as a place to live?

This question deals with the neighbourhood at large and follows on from the previous question. The results are shown in the chart below.



Outcomes

- As the chart shows, half of the responses fall into the positive category, being either very or fairly satisfied. This compares to one quarter (3) negative responses. This demonstrates relative confidence, among the tenants on Beechtrees in the Council’s ability to manage the problems in the area and perform the duties of landlord.

Question 4: What single thing would make your living environment better?

A variety of answers were understandably received for this question covering. To display the data the answers were grouped into 3 main categories.

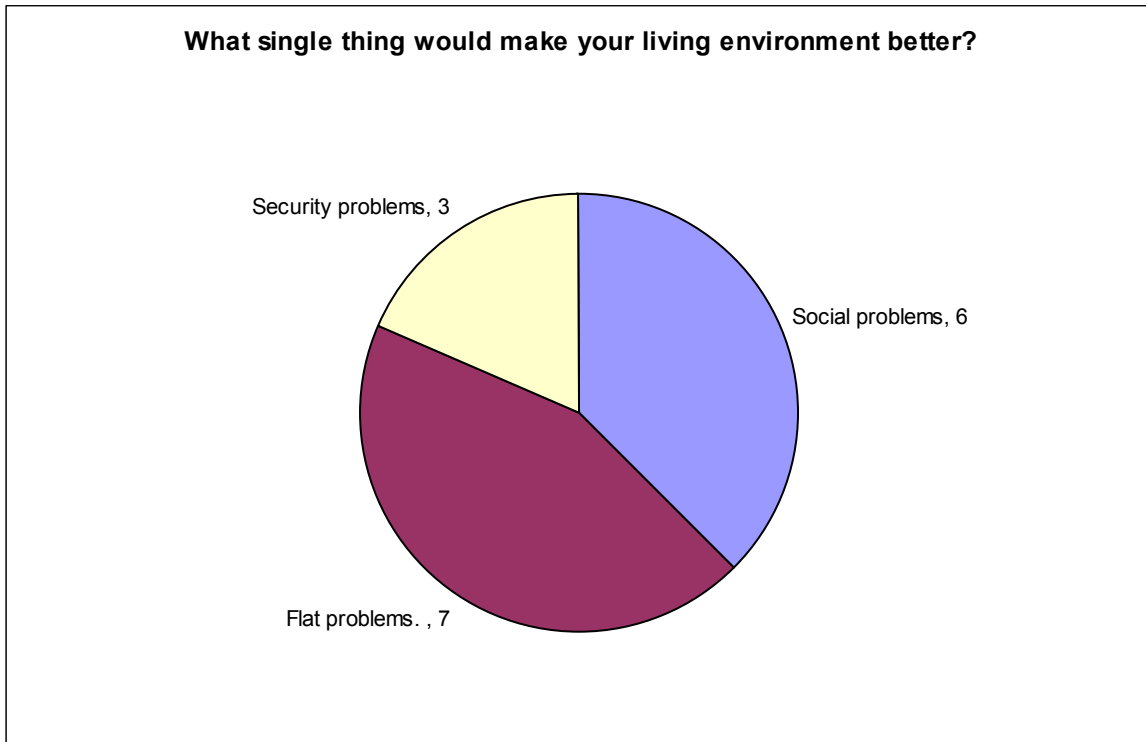
Social problems refers to removal of drug dealers, graffiti, vandalism and dog fouling. Also neighbour disputes and disruptive behaviour in the area.

Flat problems refers to repairs and upgrades perceived as being needed to the properties themselves. Replacement windows, communal doors and heating systems

were the most frequently mentioned but improved landscaping and general maintenance were also mentioned.

Security problems refers to indications of increased security needed such as more police and CCTV.

The number of responses exceeds the number of surveys received as, despite the wording of the question, the majority of the answers contained more than one point.



Outcomes

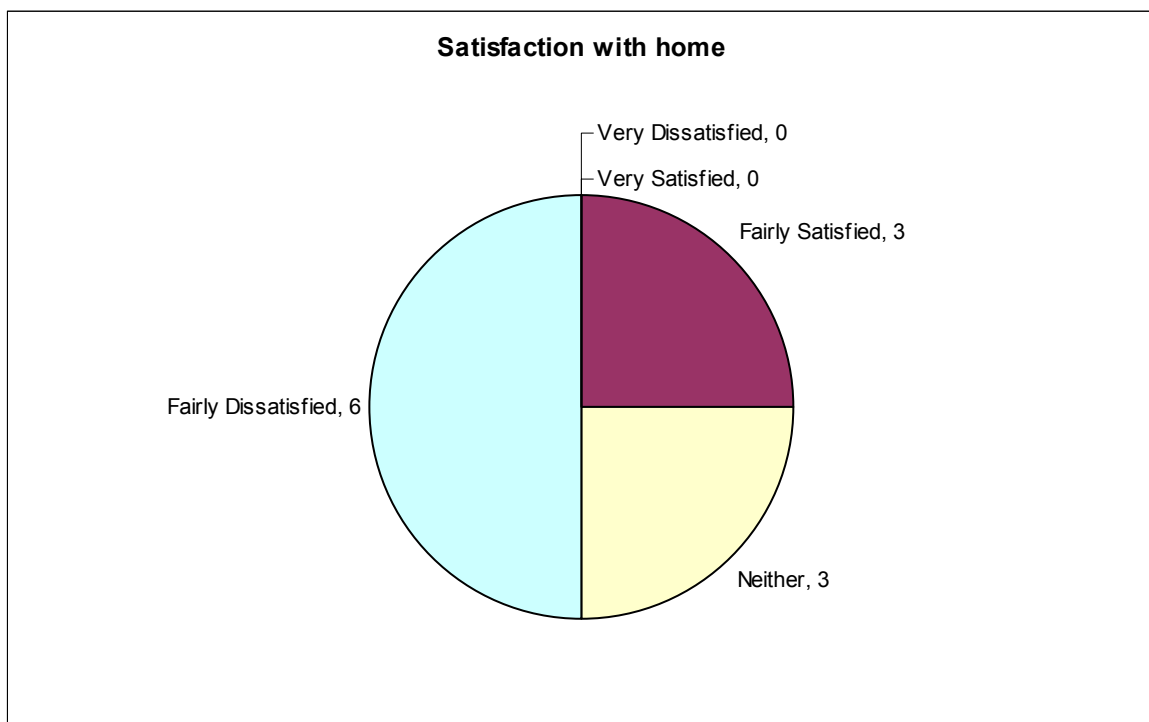
- As the chart shows, most of the responses fell into the category of either flat problems or social problems. It is difficult to draw conclusions from this due to the way in which most of the respondees chose to answer the question.

4.2 Section 2: About your home

This section covers the next 9 questions asked on the survey, which relate to the flats themselves and which are the most important issues to the tenants.

Question 5: Overall, how Satisfied/Dissatisfied are you with the quality and condition of your home.

This question deals specifically with the flats themselves such as disrepair and updating of major elements such as heating and windows.



- As the chart shows, half of the responses fall into the negative category, being fairly dissatisfied. This compares to one quarter positive responses. This clearly demonstrates a need to improve the quality of the accommodation.

Question 6: Is your home comfortable to live in? Please say why/why not.

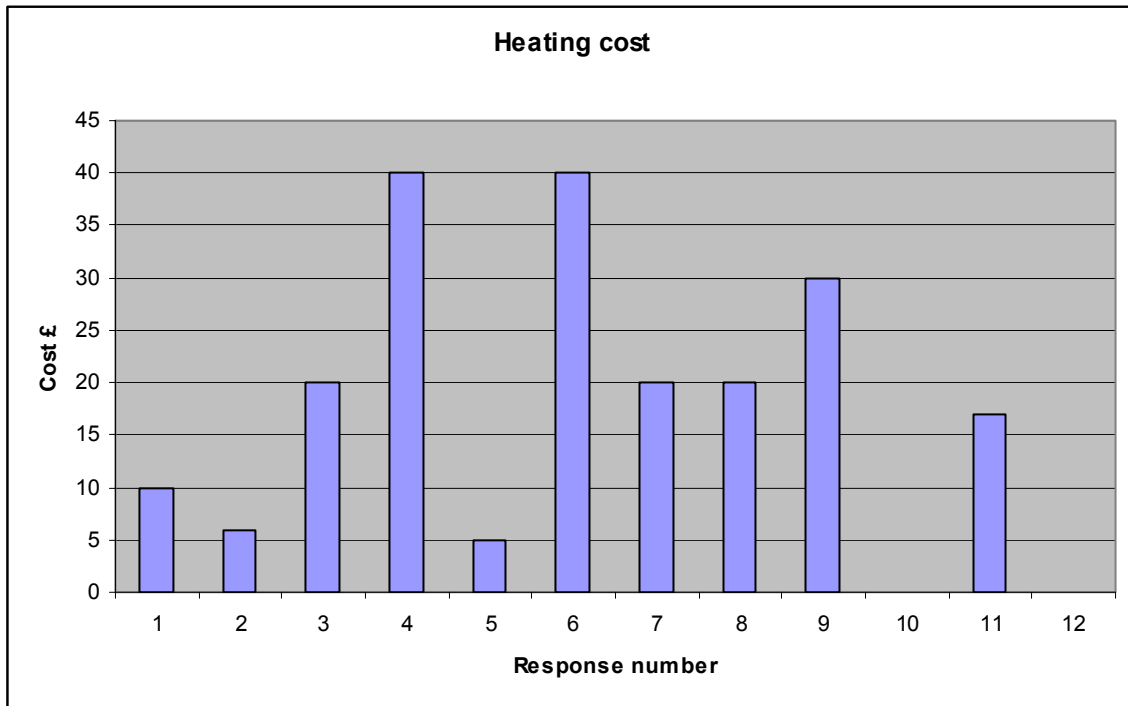
- Once again, a variety of answers were received to this question. Only 4 of the 12 responses were positive.
- Of the 6 respondees who answered 'fairly dissatisfied' to question 5, 5 indicated that difficulty to effectively heat the property was the reason it was not comfortable.
- Of the 6 other respondees, 2 indicated that difficulty to effectively heat the property was the reason it was not comfortable.
- One respondee declined to answer this question.

Question 7: Do you pay for your electricity with a Key/Card meter or a bill?

- Of the 12 responses received, only 1 indicated the electricity was paid by Bill. This could indicate that either the current or previous tenants have had credit problems in the past.

Question 8: Approximately how much do you spend on heating per week?

The heating systems in the flats on Beechtrees are economy 7 storage heaters and have not been replaced as a scheme throughout the estate for many years. Combined with the single glazed windows still present in the flats and the relatively low amount of wall insulation, the heating systems are far from optimal. The chart overleaf shows the answers received from the 12 respondees.

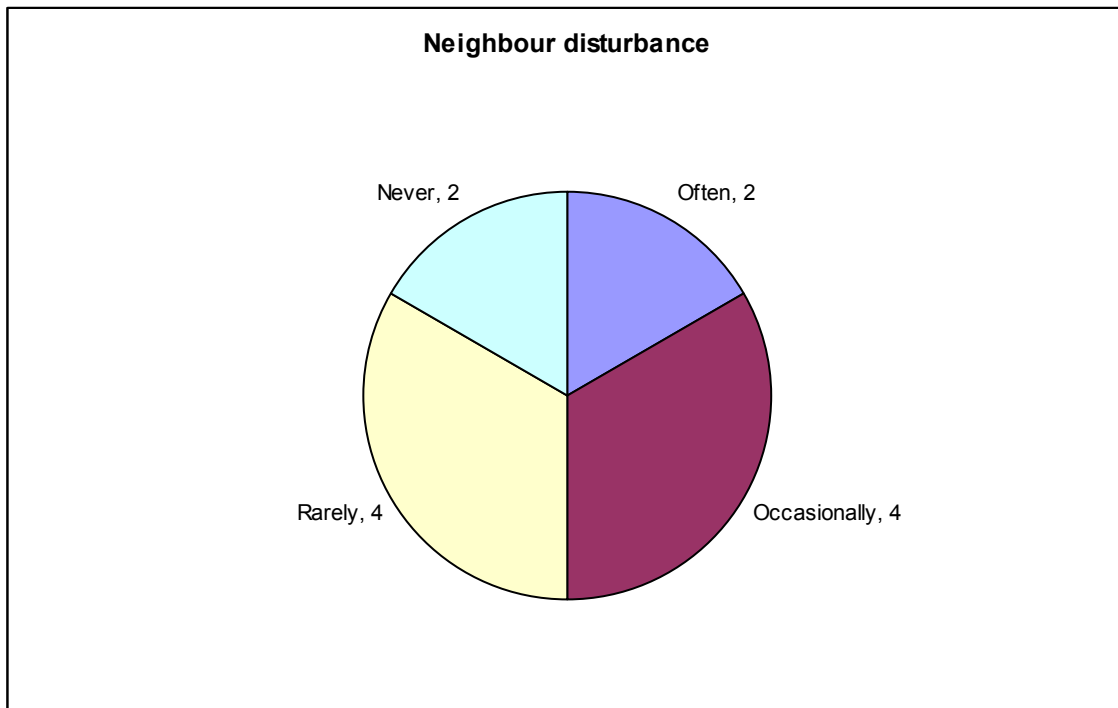


Outcomes

- There is a fairly large range of answers but the mean value is £20.80. The median and mode figures are both £20 so this provides reasonable confidence that the average weekly spend on heating for the Beechtrees flats would be around £18-£23.
- This survey includes bedsits, 1 and 2 bedroom flats. Taking the mean value, the yearly heating cost would average at £1,081.60 per year. This compares to an average throughout all homes in the UK of £587 (according to Uswitch.com)
- Despite the extremely high heating costs, many of the comments received in response to question 6 indicated that the flats were cold, damp or drafty.
- The survey was carried out in the middle of a very warm summer. This may have an effect on the responses of the tenants, especially if they had not been present through the last winter.
- The figures given are based on an estimate made by the tenants of what proportion of the overall electric cost would be attributed to heating. The accuracy of this estimate and therefore the assumed averages could vary greatly.

Question 9: Are you disturbed by noise from others living in the block?

This question follows on from question 2 which identified noise from others and neighbour disputes as potential problems in the area. The results are shown in the chart overleaf

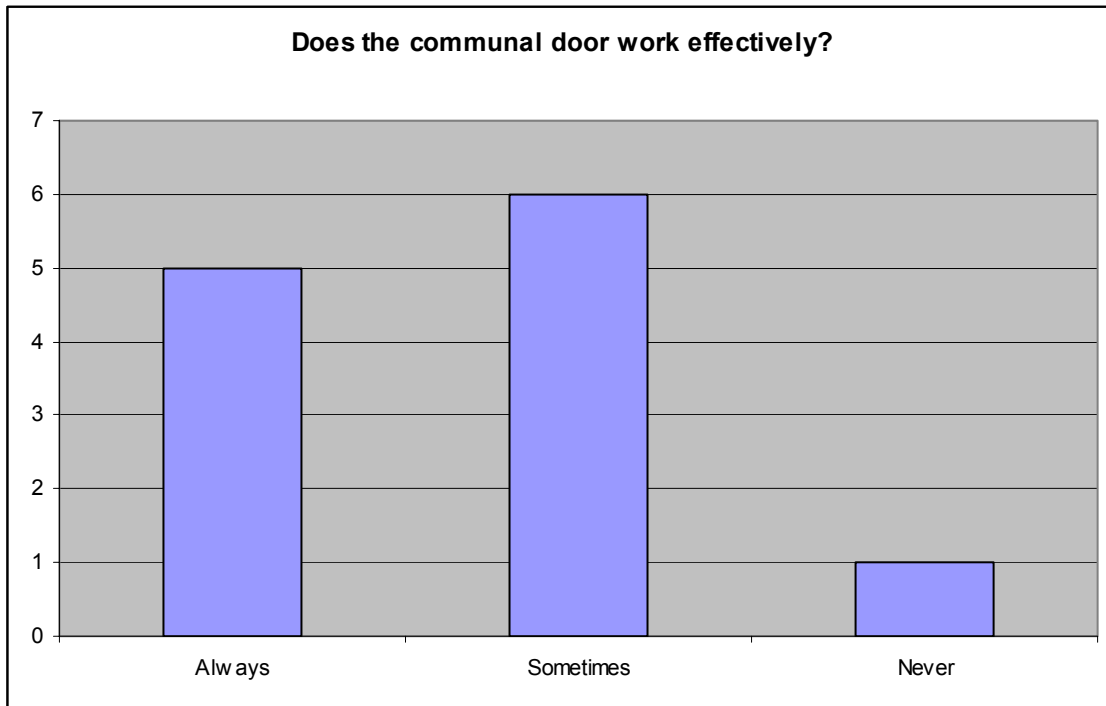


Outcomes

- Only 2 of the respondees answered 'often' to the above question. Both of these responses were received from people in block 124-134. This suggests a specific problem which may be addressed by housing management.
- Only 2 respondees answered 'never'. One of these did not specify which block they lived in so it is impossible to say whether there may a quieter area.

Question 10: Does the communal door work effectively?

There are 3 types of communal door on Beechtrees. The detached blocks have steel fob entry doors with magnetic locks fitted within the last 5 years. 3 of the attached blocks have key operated polycarbonate faced doors which are around 10 years old. The remaining 2 attached blocks have newer aluminium doors fitted within the last 3 years. Most have suffered at least some vandalism but the degree of damage varies greatly.

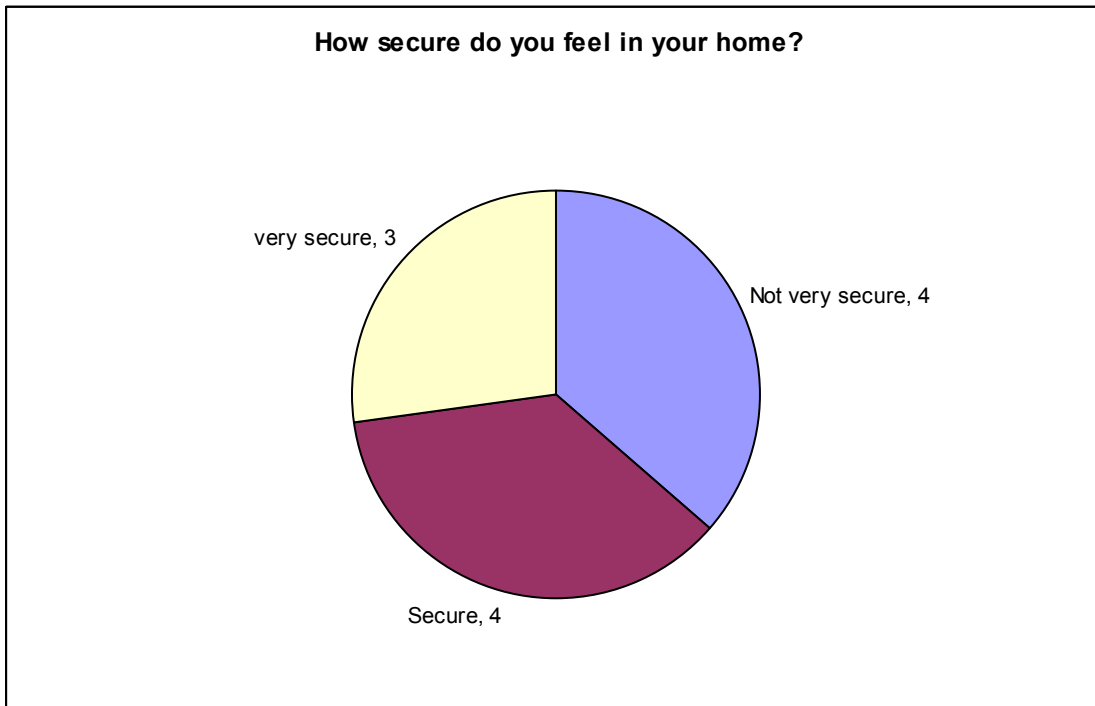


Outcomes

- The answers to this question are largely opinion based and therefore inherently unscientific. This is reinforced by the fact that the respondent that stated the door 'never' worked effectively lives in the same block as another respondent who chose 'sometimes' as the answer.
- It is discouraging that a relative minority of tenants perceive their communal door as always working effectively.

Question 11: How secure do you feel in your home?

This question follows on from the last as the effectiveness of the communal doors would have a direct effect on the perceived security of the tenants. In addition, the individual flat entrance doors and the social issues in the area will have a bearing on how secure the tenants feel.

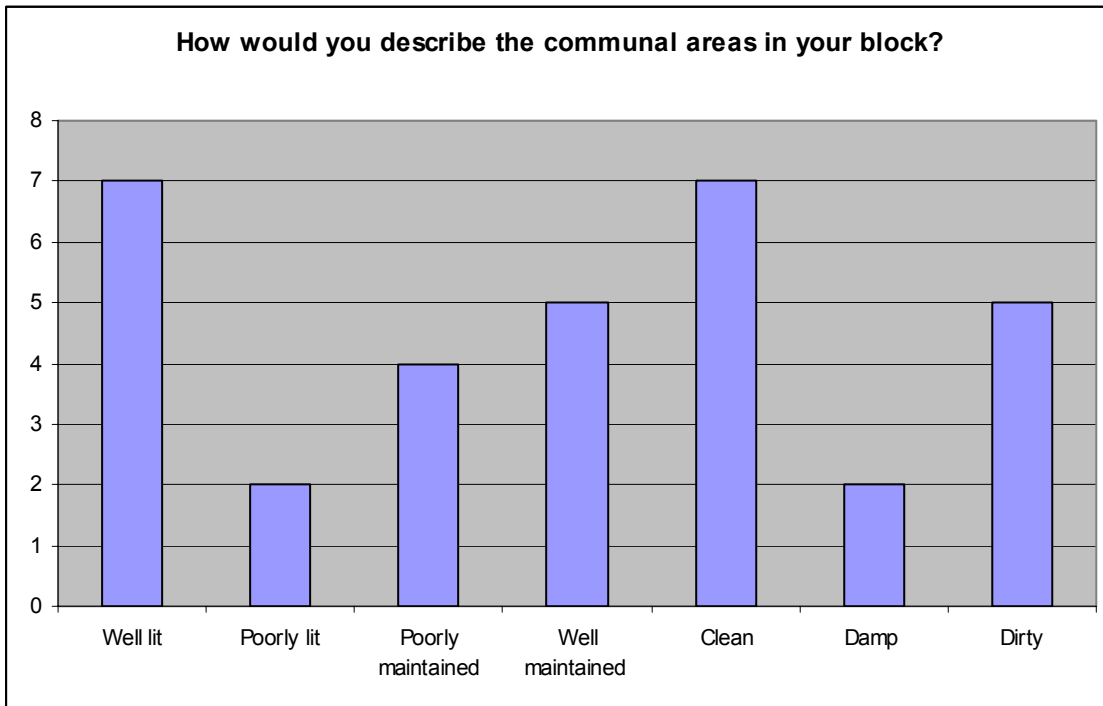


Outcomes

- The results displayed above could be viewed in 2 ways. If the answer 'secure' is viewed as a positive response, then the overall result is positive with 7 of the 12 respondees returning positive responses. If it is regarded as neutral, however, the opposite is true with more tenants feeling not very secure than very secure. Therefore, looked at in isolation, the results of this question overall are inconclusive.
- Looking at the results by block, 2 of the 3 respondees who felt 'very secure' in their homes were from the 5 attached blocks compared to 1 from the detached blocks. The results are reversed for the 'not very secure responses with 2 from the detached blocks, 1 from an attached block and 1 with no block reference.

Question 12: How would you describe the communal areas in your block?

This question was designed to assess the perception of the communal areas. Most of the blocks have not been fully refurbished for many years and there have been issues in the past with vandalism and cleanliness. There are no windows in the communal areas of the detached blocks so it was thought that poor lighting may be an issue. The results are shown overleaf.



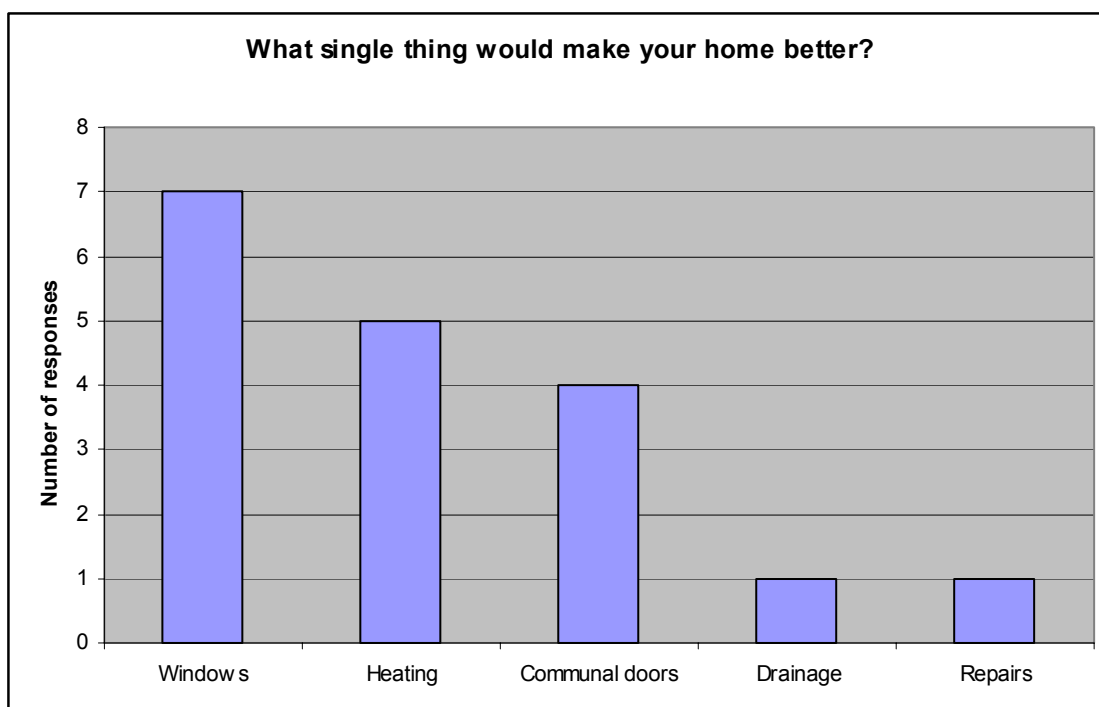
Outcomes

- The two most frequently recorded impressions of the communal areas are that they are clean and well lit.
- More respondents considered their communal areas to be well maintained than poorly maintained.
- The results are necessarily opinion based, as is demonstrated by the fact that of the 2 respondents from block 124-134, one considered the communal areas to be well maintained and clean, whereas the other considered them to be poorly maintained and dirty. Of the 2 respondents from block 42-48, one responded that the communal areas were clean while the other considered them dirty. These observable anomalies suggest that further detailed conclusions from specific results may not be reliable.
- Overall, the number of positive responses was 19 compared to 13 negative ones, suggesting the communal areas could be improved but generally seem to meet the expectations of the tenants.

Question 13: What single thing would make your home better?

As with question 4, a range of answers were received to this question. Due to the nature of the question, however, enough similar responses were received to allow the specific areas to be examined.

The results displayed below again show more responses than the number of questionnaires received because most responses contained more than one answer.



Outcomes

- The results show clearly that replacement windows are the highest priority to the tenants. The flats in Beechtrees have UPVC framed single glazed windows that were fitted approximately 25 years ago. They are among the last areas of single glazing in the WLBC housing stock. The houses on Beechtrees and other estates in the area have recently been included in the window replacement programme and many of the tenants of the flats were disappointed that they were not.
- Heating is also a very high priority due to the current system of storage heaters. As demonstrated in question 8, the heating costs for these flats appear to be very high and a more efficient heating system could greatly improve this.
- The inclusion of replacement communal doors in these results is in line with information from questions 4, 10 and 11 regarding the reliability of the communal doors and the relative sense of security they convey.

4.3 Section 3: About you.

This section deals with the respondees themselves to determine whether there is a link between the personal circumstances of the tenants and their experience of living in the flats

Do you have one or two bedrooms?

The attached blocks contain only 1 bedroom flats and the detached blocks are made up of 2 no bedsits and 2 no 2 bedroom flats. In the case of block 124-134 and 148-158, the bedsits have been converted into 2 bedroom flats. The responses were divided equally between 1 and 2 bedroom flats with 2 respondees giving no answer.

How long have you lived here?

One of the key aims of the estate management of the flats on Beechtrees is to combat the high turnover of tenancies so information regarding the current lengths of tenancy will help to understand the scope of the problem.

The range of answers received to this question was greatly varied and therefore fairly difficult to interpret but some of the main statistics are included in the table below. Of the 12 surveys received, 11 answered this question.

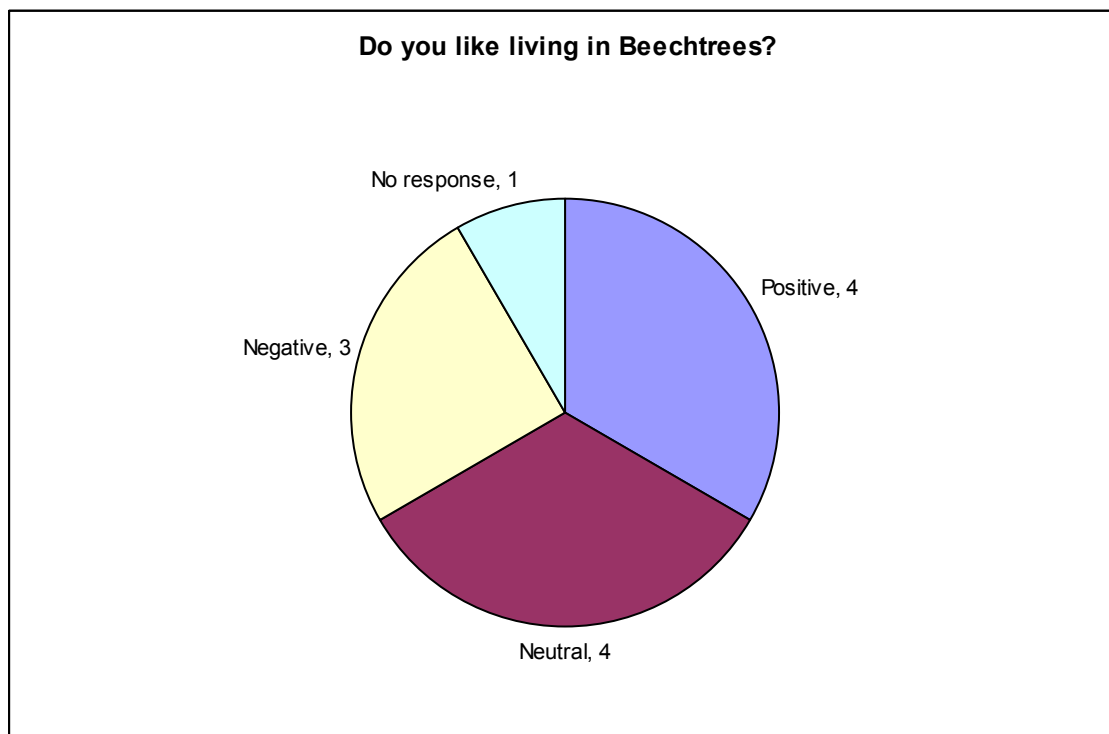
How long have you lived here?	
Lowest answer received	4 Months
Highest answer received	312 Months
Mean result	59 Months
Median result	30 Months
Modal result	12 Months
Mean result disregarding highest and lowest answers	43 Months
Percentage of answers 36 months or below	64%
Percentage of answers 72 months and below	82%

As the table shows, the average length of tenancy is very difficult to estimate and the results vary according to the method used.

It is clear that the majority of tenants have lived for less than 6 years in their current flat. A reasonable estimate of an average tenancy may be between 1 and 5 years. This reinforces the assumption that there is a high turnover of tenancies in this area.

Do you like living in Beechtrees?

A wide range of responses to this simple question were received ranging from fervent enthusiasm to complete indifference. To display the data the responses are categorised into positive, neutral and negative as shown below.



As the chart shows the answers were fairly evenly spread between the three categories. Given the relatively low confidence level in the answers due to the number of responses received it is essentially impossible to draw any meaningful conclusions.

Where did you live before here?

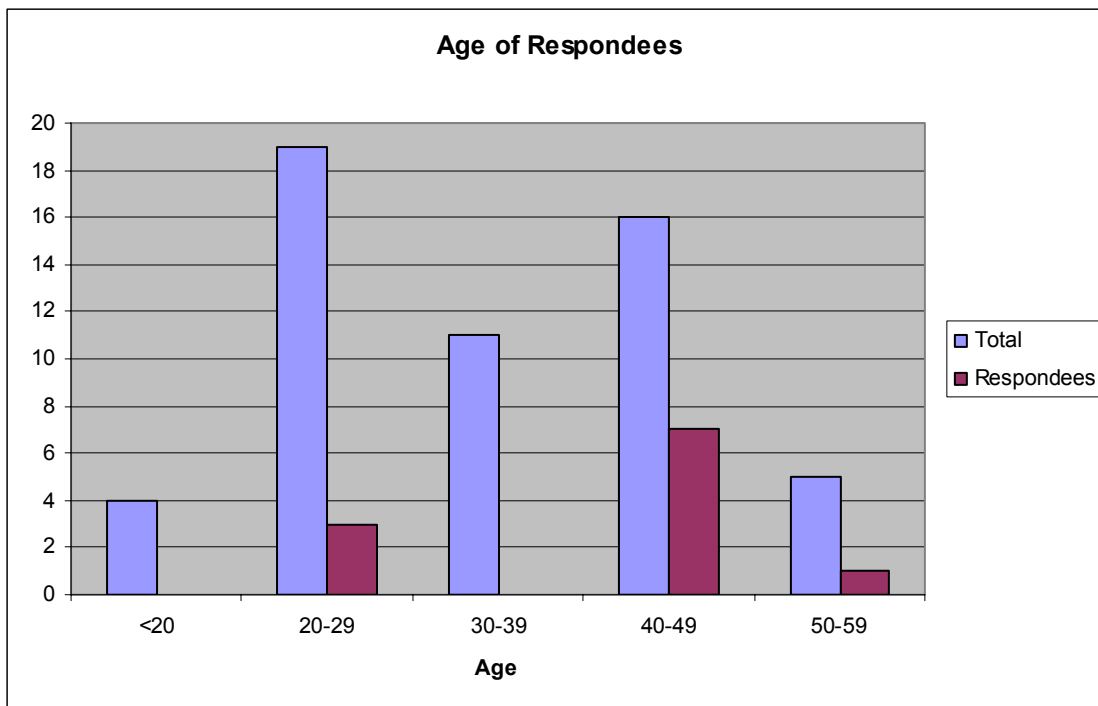
The table below shows a summary of the results received for this question. The answers are grouped to demonstrate geographical area.

<i>Where did you live before here?</i>	
<i>Total answers received</i>	9
<i>Within Digmaor</i>	2
<i>Within Skelmersdale</i>	6
<i>Within West Lancs</i>	7
<i>Within the North West</i>	8
<i>Within the UK</i>	9

- The majority of respondees have previously lived within a few miles of Beechtrees with two thirds from within Skelmersdale. This gives a fairly strong indication that relatively few tenants are moving in to Beechtrees from other areas.
- The survey was only sent in English so any tenants for whom English was not a first language may be less likely to respond.

What age are you?

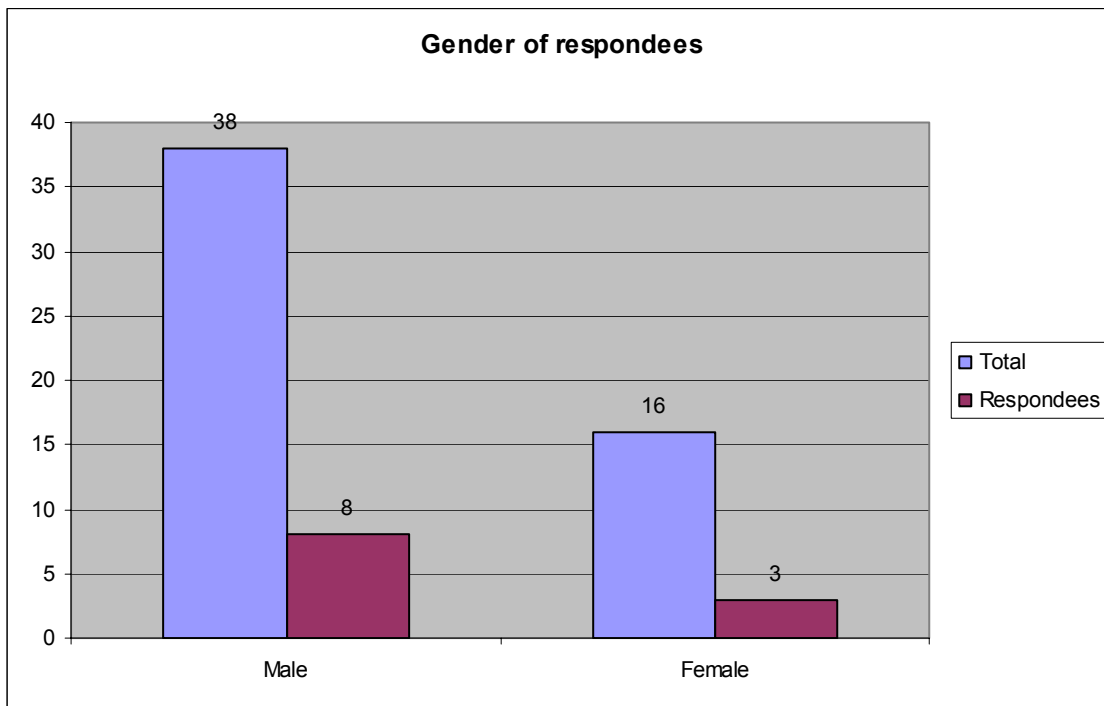
In order to assess how indicative the responses were of the Beechtrees flats at large, the results are shown in comparison to the ages of all of the tenants. The results are shown below



- As the chart shows, there was no response at all from tenants in the under 20 and 30-39 categories although these categories make up 27% of the tenants.
- 58% of the respondees were aged 40-49 whereas tenants in this category make up 29% of the total.
- 25% of the respondees were aged 20-29 whereas tenants in this category make up 34.5% of the total.
- 9% of the respondees were aged 50-59 whereas tenants in this category make up 8% of the total.
- One respondee did not answer which accounts for the last 8%
- The responses clearly did not represent an accurate cross section of the tenants in the Beechtrees flats. This could further reduce the reliability of the answers received although to what extent cannot be predicted.

Are you male or female?

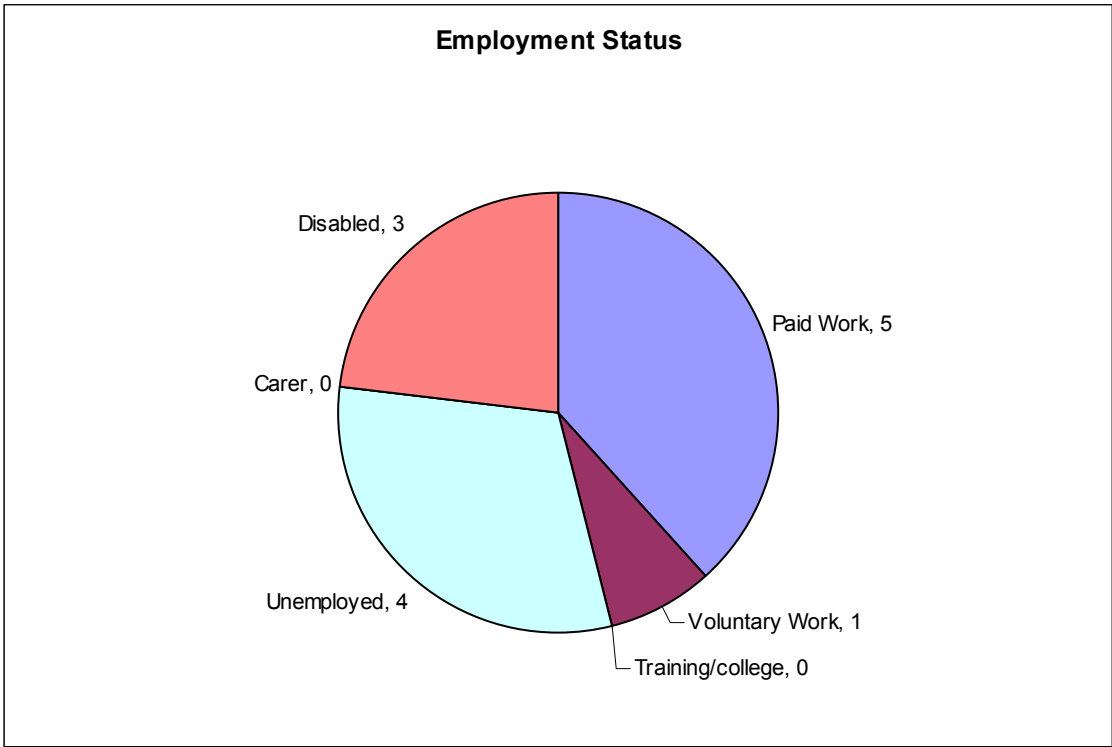
As with the previous question, the table below shows the results from the questionnaire responses compared to the overall figures for the Beechtrees flats.



- Male respondees make up 67% of the responses received while male tenants make up 70% of all of the tenants in the Beechtrees flats.
- Female respondees make up 25% of the responses received while female tenants make up 30% of all tenants in Beechtrees flats.
- One respondee did not answer this question which accounts for the last 8% of the responses. So the male and female populations on the flats in Beechtrees are proportionally represented by the responses received.
- The data used for this information comes from the rent account names and does not taken into account other members of a household who may be living there.

Employment status

This question examines the level of employment and training within the flats.



- A slight majority of respondees are in paid employment.
- No clear trends are presented in overall occupation type.

Do you own a car?

Only one of the 12 respondees was a car owner. Of the responses to question 2, 3 respondees considered lack of car parking to be a minor problem and one considered it to be a major problem and the rest did not consider it a problem. The car owner was one of the respondees who did not consider lack of parking to be a problem. It can only be assumed that the problems perceived by the other respondees relate to visitors to the flats having trouble parking.

It is difficult to draw any reliable conclusions from this seemingly anomalous information. Combined with the extremely high void rate of garages on the estate it may be reasonable to assume that car use on the estate is relatively low.

Do you have any health or disability issues?

This question was covered by a tick box in the employment status section and with a specific question. Of the 12 respondees, 3 (25%) considered themselves disabled as shown in the previous pie chart. 4 respondees (33%) considered themselves to have health or disability issues.

Of these responses, 2 were potentially serious mobility issues while 2 were more social and nervous problems.

5 Summary of outcomes.

5.1 Survey design (Response)

Whilst having a reasonable overall response the survey under represents customers in a number of age brackets. This needs to be considered when assessing the data, with consideration being given to more than one method of consultation to increase the reliability of the data. One possibility would be to carry out additional surveys over the telephone, focused on areas and groups with a low return of postal surveys.

5.2 Section 1: About where you live.

Overall reasonably high satisfaction levels with both WLBC as a landlord and Beechtrees as a neighbourhood seem to be tempered with an acknowledgement by the tenants that the area does suffer with a number of social problems.

Environmental problems appear to be of high importance to the tenants so measures to improve the general appearance of the area would be highly beneficial. These could include action to combat antisocial behaviour such as vandalism and graffiti as well as physical action to improve the area.

Almost half of the respondees identified the resolution of problems with their individual flats to be the single thing that would make their living environment better. This suggests greater satisfaction with the area than the accommodation itself.

5.3 Section 2: About your home

This section represents the area in which WLBC has the most chance to improve. It is clear from the results that the ability to effectively heat and make comfortable the flats is of the highest importance to the tenants. More efficient and effective heating systems combined with improved thermal performance of building elements such as windows and insulation would equate to substantial improvements in tenant satisfaction with their homes.

These benefits could lead to further improvements to the area in the form of increased desirability of the accommodation and less churn of tenancies.

The other main tenant concern is security. As previously mentioned the communal doors frequently come under attack from vandals and this affects both their appearance and the security performance. Any improvement in the security specification of the doors themselves would need to be combined with measures to combat antisocial behaviour in order to make the tenants feel more secure and avoid the situation from simply repeating itself.

5.4 Section 3: About you

The results of this section demonstrate the previously observed trends of relatively short term tenancies and high turnover.

The tenant population in the Beechtrees flats is largely young males although the representation by age of the respondees was not proportionate. This may demonstrate that some tenants do not see the flats as potential long term homes and so are less inclined to take part in surveys such as this.

Other than the comments above there was no clear trend to illustrate the types of tenant present in the flats on Beechtrees. In order to gain an accurate view of this, further separate, more in-depth research would be necessary.

Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

This is an anonymous survey aimed at helping us improve our services and identify areas of tenant concern.

ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE

1. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with W.L.B.C. as your landlord?
(please choose and tick boxes below)

Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
----------------	------------------	---------	---------------------	-------------------

2. Do you feel your neighbourhood suffers from any of the following problems:

Major problem Minor problem Not a problem

	Major problem	Minor problem	Not a problem
Vandalism			
Graffiti			
Litter			
Neighbour disputes			
Fear of crime			
Noise from others			
Racial harassment			
Aggressive dogs			
Dog fouling			
People damaging your property			
Drunk or rowdy behaviour			
Disruptive children/teenagers			
Drug use or dealing			
Lack of Car parking			

From the list above, which would you consider to be the three biggest problem areas?

1.	2.	3.
----	----	----

3. How Satisfied/Dissatisfied are you with the neighbourhood as a place to live?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
----------------	-----------	---------	--------------	-------------------

4. What single thing would make your living environment better?

ABOUT YOUR HOME

5. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality and condition of your home?
(please choose and tick boxes below)

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
----------------	-----------	---------	--------------	-------------------

6. Is your home comfortable to live in?

Please say why /why not

--

7. Do you pay for your electricity with a key/ card meter or a bill?

Key/Card	Bill
----------	------

8. Approximately how much do you spend on heating per week?

£	
---	--

9. Are you disturbed by noise from others living in the block?

Often (more than once a week)	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
-------------------------------	--------------	--------	-------

10. Does the communal door work effectively?

Always	Sometimes	Never
--------	-----------	-------

11. How secure do you feel in your home?

Very secure	Secure	Not very secure
-------------	--------	-----------------

12. How would you describe the communal areas in your block? (again, please tick)

Well lit?	Poorly lit?	Clean?	Dirty
Poorly maintained		Well maintained	Damp

13. What single thing would make your home better?

--

ABOUT YOU:

Please circle which block you live in:

42-48 60-66 124-134 136-146 148-158 160-170 172-182 184-194 193-199 211-217 229-235

Do you have one or two bedrooms?

How long have you lived here?

Do you like living in Beechtrees?

Where did you live before here?

What age are you?

Are you

or

Are you currently:

	YES	NO
Working earning		
Voluntary worker		
In training/college		
Unemployed		
Carer		
Disabled		

Do you own a car?

YES	NO
-----	----

Do you have any health or disability issues?

YES	NO
-----	----

If yes, what are they?