

Social Care Survey 2023

A report by Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering



April 2023

“Daily living is starting to get more difficult.

But I’m reluctant at this present time, to bring in
Social Services.”

Local Resident

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1. Introduction

Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Dagenham and Havering is a local charity, which has been working with older people for over 50 years. We have dedicated, trained staff who are making a positive difference to the lives of older people through a variety of services. This includes the Voices of Experience Project, giving older people the opportunity to give their feedback.

2. Background

Social Care helps older people and those with special needs to access help with daily tasks, such as washing, dressing, eating and medication.

The Social Care system is currently under pressure across the UK, after past governments have failed to reform or fund the council-run system properly. Plus, there are added pressures on Social Care, due to an increased need since the Coronavirus pandemic. The UK has an ageing population and the pressures on the Social Care system will only increase in the future. While living longer is seen as a positive, many older people will develop health conditions, which mean they will need help with their daily living. For example, the number of people with dementia in the UK is expected to more than double to 1.6 million by 2040.

There is a knock-on effect for the health service if the Social Care system is supporting fewer people and only those with the highest needs. Often isolated older people end up in hospital due to a fall at home. When people are ready to leave hospital, a lack of care in the community can lead them to be stuck in hospital for longer than required. Therefore, Age UK is increasingly concerned about Social Care and wanted to find out about people's recent experiences and views on what care should be available to individuals in need.

3. Methodology

Participants who could access the internet were emailed a link to an online survey. Additionally, we sent paper copies in the post. Some participants even gave their feedback over the phone. We also visited supported living establishments and community groups to collect their feedback.

4. Strengths & Limitations

The flexibility of our approach in gathering feedback from people, and the variety of methods used are among the project's strengths. A limitation is that the majority of respondents hadn't used Social Services or Occupational Therapy Services in the past 12 months and therefore felt unable to comment without having firsthand experience.

5. Executive Summary of Findings

During January - March 2023, 81 local older people completed our survey on social care services in Redbridge.

This is a one-page summary of findings - see sections 6 - 7 for findings in full.

Survey Response: In Summary

Awareness of Social Care Services and Assessments

- Just 15% of respondents are 'confidently aware' of the support on offer, from local social services.
- Around a third (38%) know how to make contact, while a similar number (36%) do not.
- 38% know what a social care assessment is, while a smaller number (32%) do not.
- On carer's assessments, awareness is at a lower level (32%).
- A tenth of respondents (9%) are aware of the financial threshold for support.
- A fifth (21%) would not be willing to undertake a financial assessment, to receive services and support. There are concerns about privacy, and doubts about eligibility.
- A quarter of respondents (26%) are aware of occupational therapy support, while a significantly larger number (44%) are not.
- Around half of respondents (52%) would contact social services, if in need of support with daily living. Just a tenth (11%) say they would not.
- Looking closer at responses by age, the oldest respondents are significantly most likely to seek support, for help with daily needs.

Experience of Services

- In the last twelve months, 19% of respondents have needed help from social services, for themselves or others.
- Around a third (28%) were able to make contact easily, while a larger number (39%) experienced difficulty.
- The phone is clearly the most preferred method of contact (63%).
- Response times are variable, with over half of respondents (56%) receiving a response within 2 weeks, and 44% waiting longer.

Experience of Assessments

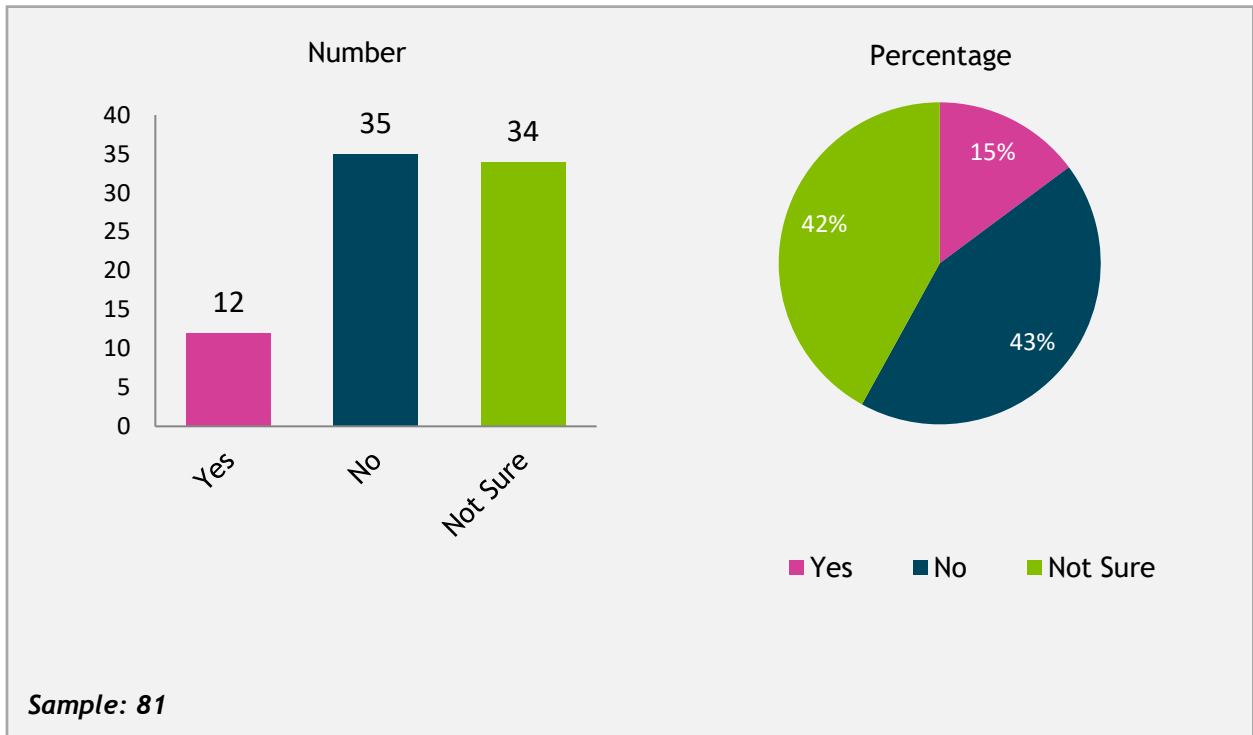
- Around a tenth of respondents (8%) have had a social care assessment in the last twelve months.
- Following assessments, around half (46%) were not given follow-on information (such as who to contact).
- A tenth of respondents (10%) have asked for an occupational therapy assessment.
- Waiting times are variable, some people were seen 'straight away' while others waited around two weeks.
- A third of respondents (30%) were happy with the assessment outcome, while a larger number (40%) were not.

6. Awareness of Social Care Services

During January - March 2023, 81 local older people completed our survey on social care services in Redbridge.

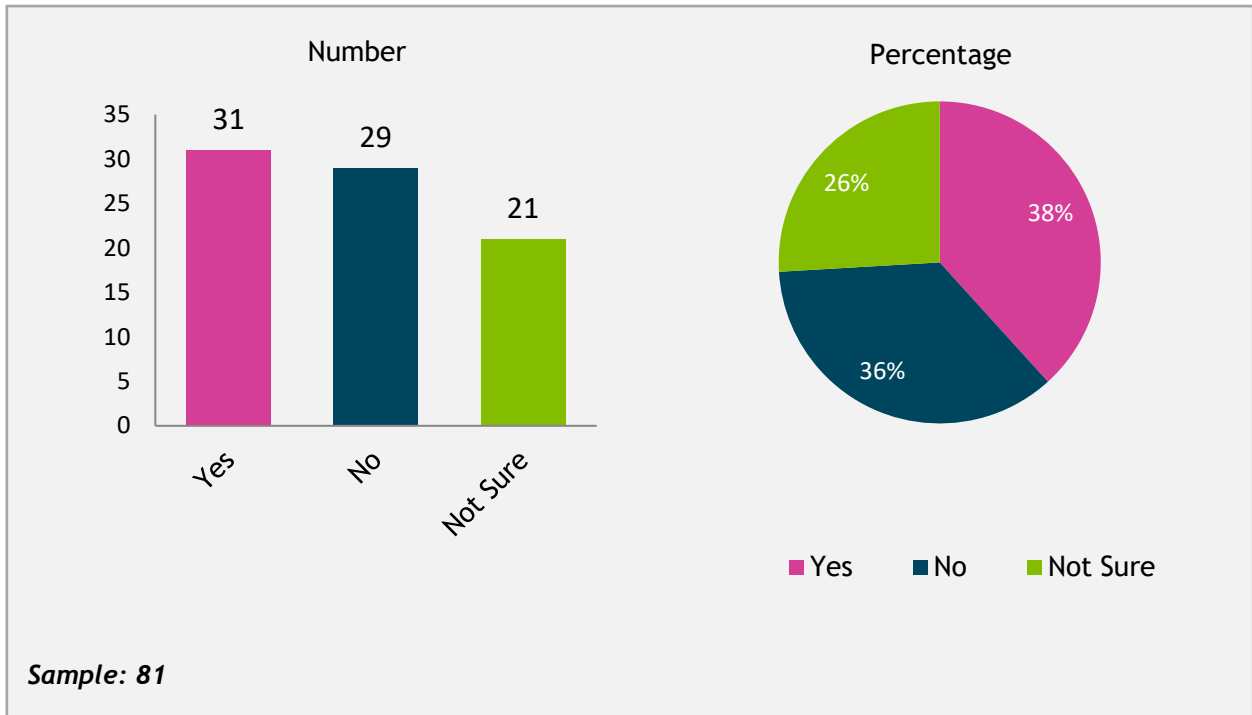
We asked questions on social services, carers and occupational therapy, with a specific focus on awareness, assessments, method of contact and response times. Participants were also asked for their general thoughts on, and experiences of local social care.

6.1 Do you feel confident that you know what assistance Redbridge Social Services can provide?



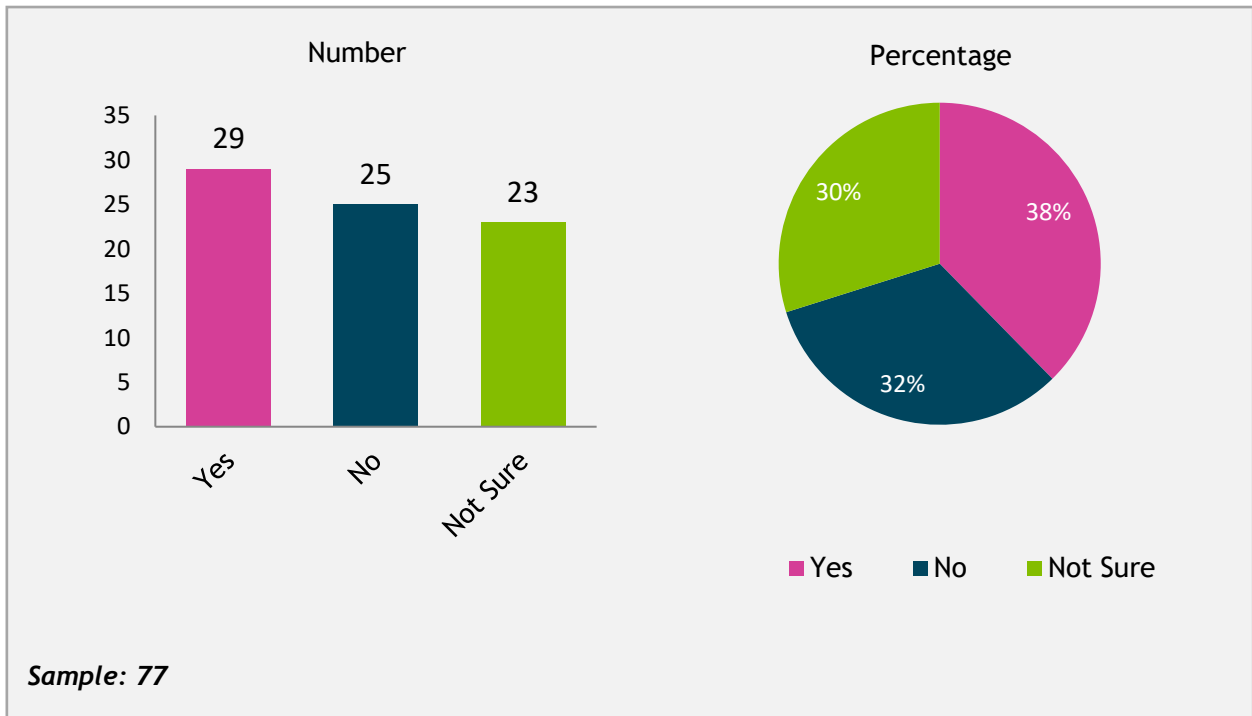
Just 15% of respondents are 'confidently aware' of the support on offer, from local social services.

6.2 Do you know how to contact Redbridge Social Services?



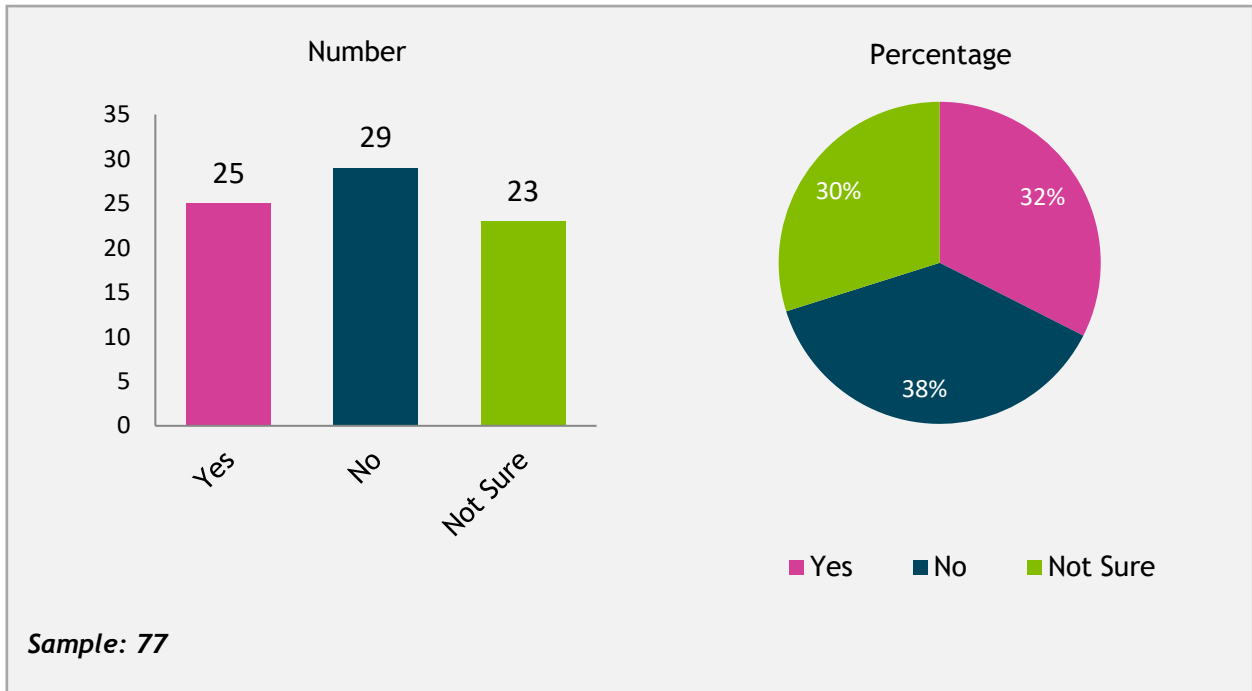
Around a third of respondents (38%) know how to make contact, while a similar proportion (36%) do not. A quarter (26%) are more unsure.

6.3 Do you know what a social care assessment is?



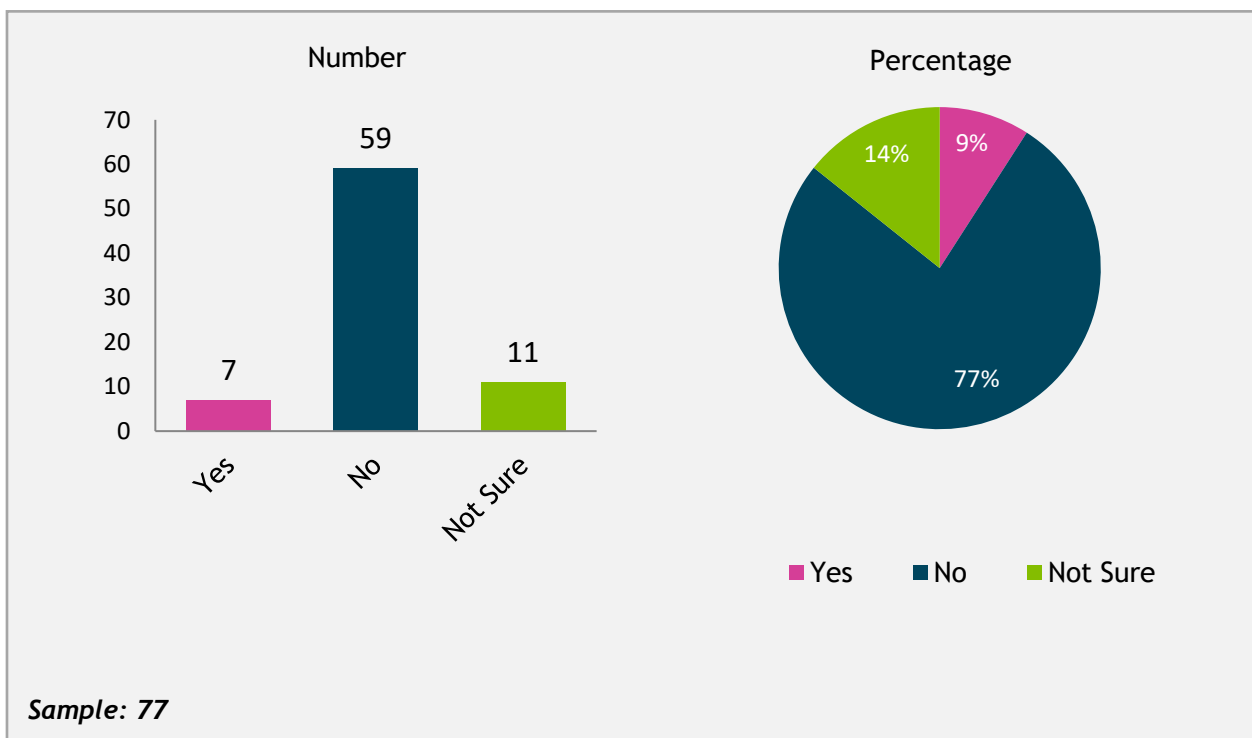
38% know what a social care assessment is, while a slightly smaller number (32%) do not. Around a third of respondents (30%) are unsure.

6.4 Do you know what a carers' assessment is?



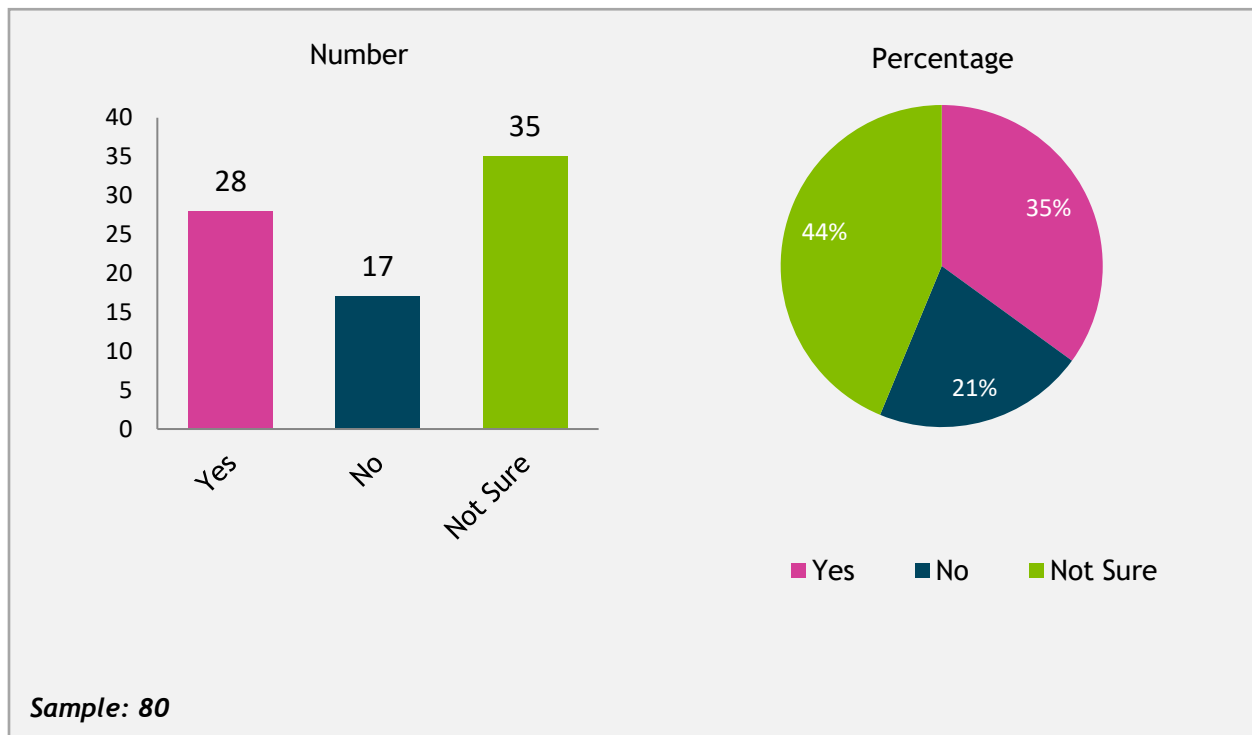
On carer's assessments, awareness is at a lower level (32%) with a similar number (30%) unsure.

6.5 Do you know what the financial threshold is in order to be eligible to receive funding for social care from Redbridge Council?



A tenth of respondents (9%) are aware of the financial threshold for support.

6.6 Would you be happy to complete a financial assessment in order to access Social Services?



A fifth of respondents (21%) would not be willing to undertake a financial assessment, to receive services and support.

When asking more about this, some indicate that support is not needed at the present time, while a larger number feel that financial matters are 'private' - with some concerns on confidentiality expressed.

There are doubts on qualification, with home ownership and savings cited as barriers.

Selected Feedback

"I don't need any help at the moment."

"My financial position is surely private, and personal."

"I don't wish to discuss finances."

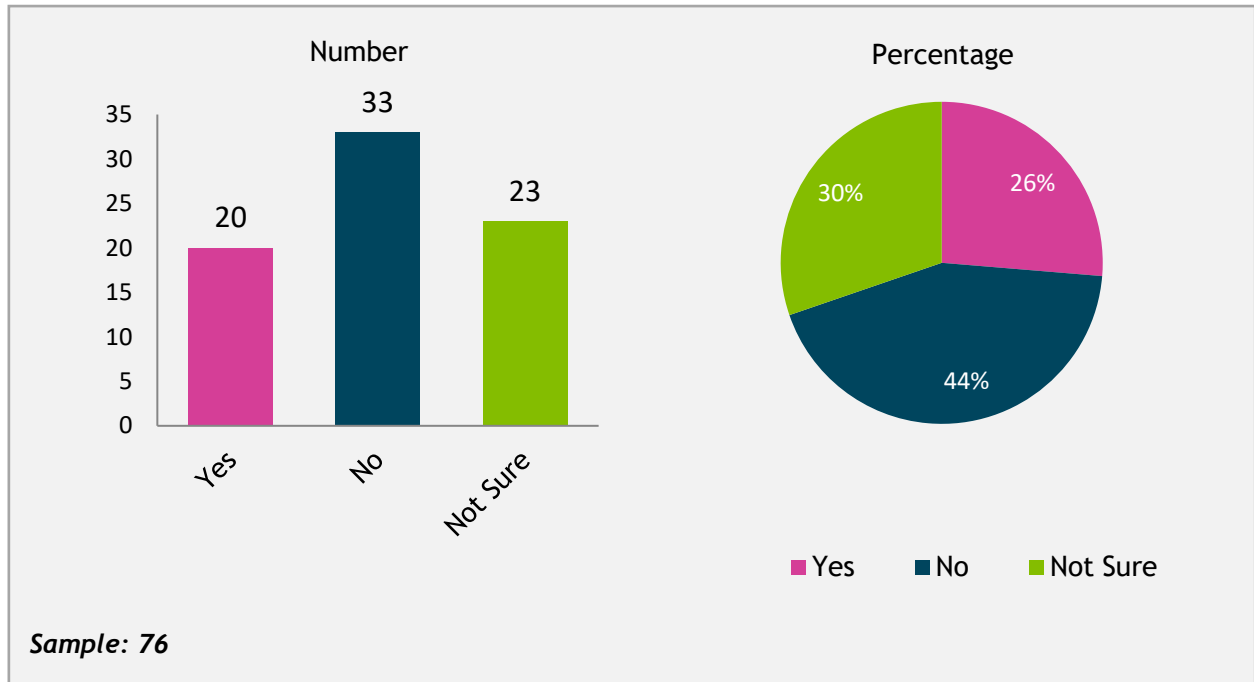
"It could be intrusive to give such personal information. How will this be handled?"

"It would depend on how many others are privy to the information."

"Unsure because I don't think my husband or I would qualify as we own our house and have savings."

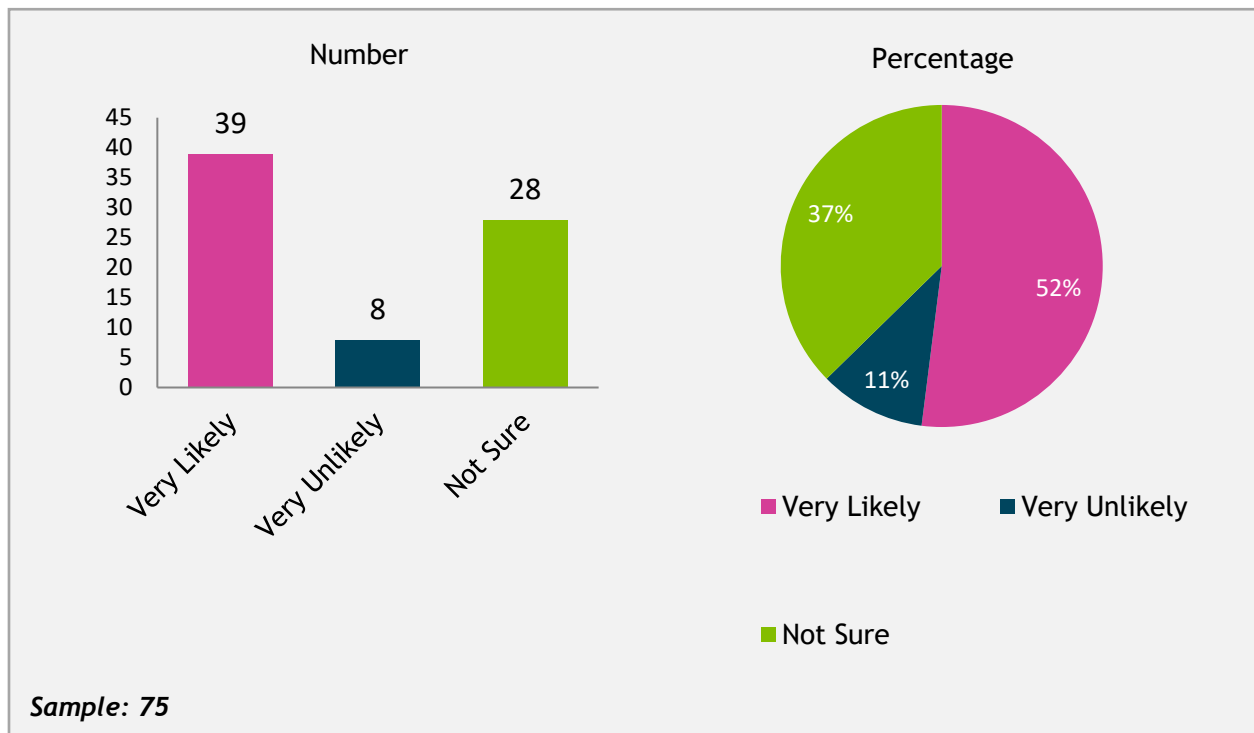
"I need more information."

6.7 Do you know what assistance Occupational Therapy can provide?



A quarter of respondents (26%) are aware of occupational therapy support, while a significantly larger number (44%) are not. Around a third (30%) are unsure.

6.8 How likely are you to contact Social Services if you find you or a family member are in need of support with daily living in the future?



Around half of respondents (52%) would contact social services, if in need of support with daily living. Just a tenth (11%) say they would not, while 37% are more unsure.

6.8.1 ‘Very likely’ to contact social services, if in need of daily support.

	% Very Likely
Aged 90 or Over	83%
Aged 75 - 89	52%
All Respondents (Baseline)	52%
Aged 65 - 74	42%
Aged 50 - 64	40%

Looking closer at responses by age, the oldest respondents are significantly most likely to seek support.

When asking about motivation for making contact, many would like information and advice, from social services or other organisations, to explore and evaluate options.

Selected Feedback

“Might be some help and would explore all options.”

“It would seem to be a good place to get information.”

“Because I know little about it, I’d contact them to find out.”

“First call for information and/or other organisations who may be helpful.”

“Don’t know where/how to begin.”

Support needs mentioned include general cleaning and gardening, and mobility adaptations such as handrails. Some respondents do not have family close-by.

Selected Feedback

“My wife and I are both old and might need help because neither of us are healthy.”

“They could help with hand rails, in the house and garden.”

“There are certain things that I would not be able to do for myself and would therefore need help and support (gardening, hoovering, housework).”

“We do not have a cleaner or a gardener to help us.”

“Have no close relatives.”

“I live alone and my small family all live a distance away and would not be able to support me on a regular basis.”

On potential barriers to seeking support, there are perceptions of long waiting lists, and a lack of resources, staffing and continuity.

Selected Feedback

“I don't have much faith in getting any help that might in the future be needed.”

“I think there will be a long wait to get assistance.”

“Poor reviews from users, hard to contact, often no continuity, short staffed.”

“Would like to think the people would be kind and helpful, but knowing not enough time is available. Living alone.”

Previous experience of services, good or bad will influence some decisions, and we hear that memories during the pandemic are still relevant.

Selected Feedback

“My experience has been really good so I would contact them again without any doubt.”

“Because I never heard back from them.”

“Through the pandemic, nobody was interested.”

There are some concerns that accessing support, may ultimately lead to losing independence.

Selected Feedback

“I would want to be sure that I or a family member was ready to take such a step to ask for help, having acknowledged the need.”

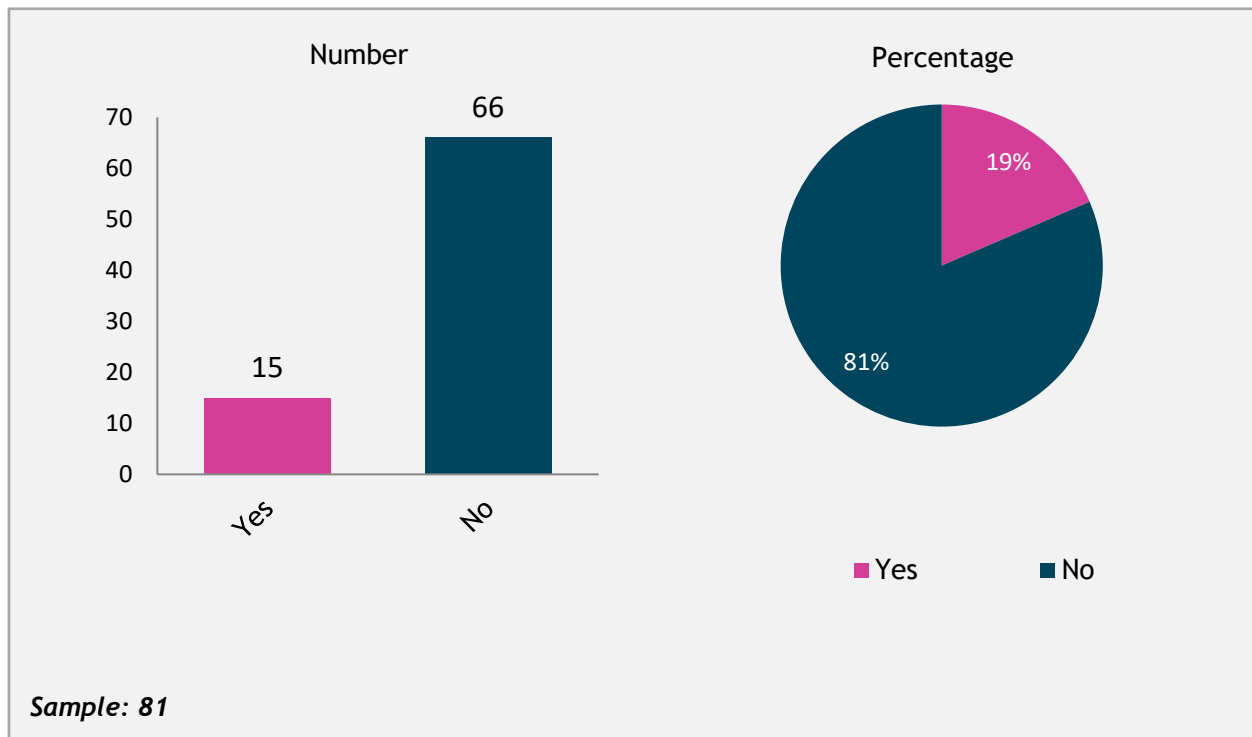
“Daily living is starting to get more difficult, but I'm reluctant at this present time to bring in Social Services.”

“I'm 86 and hope to stay in my own home.”

7. Experience of Social Care Services

This section evaluates the experience of services and assessments.

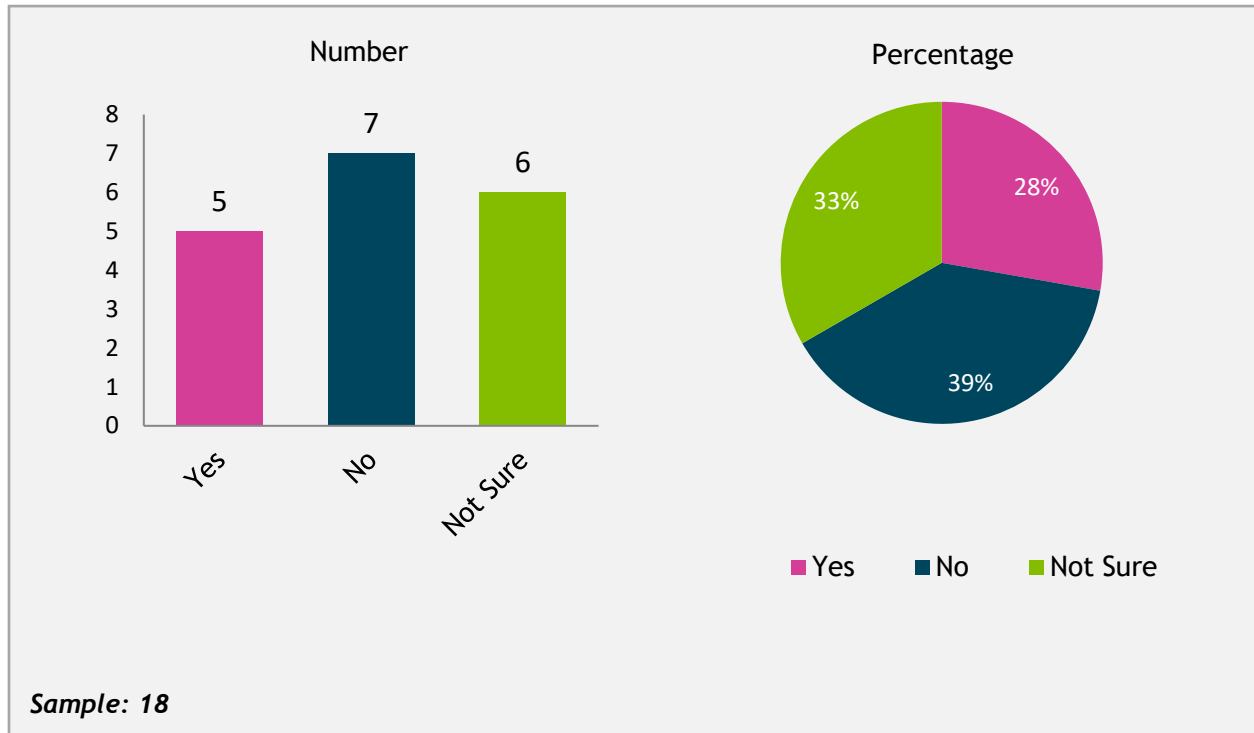
7.1 Have you or your family needed help from Redbridge Social Services in the last 12 months?



In the last twelve months, 19% of respondents have needed help from social services, for themselves or others.

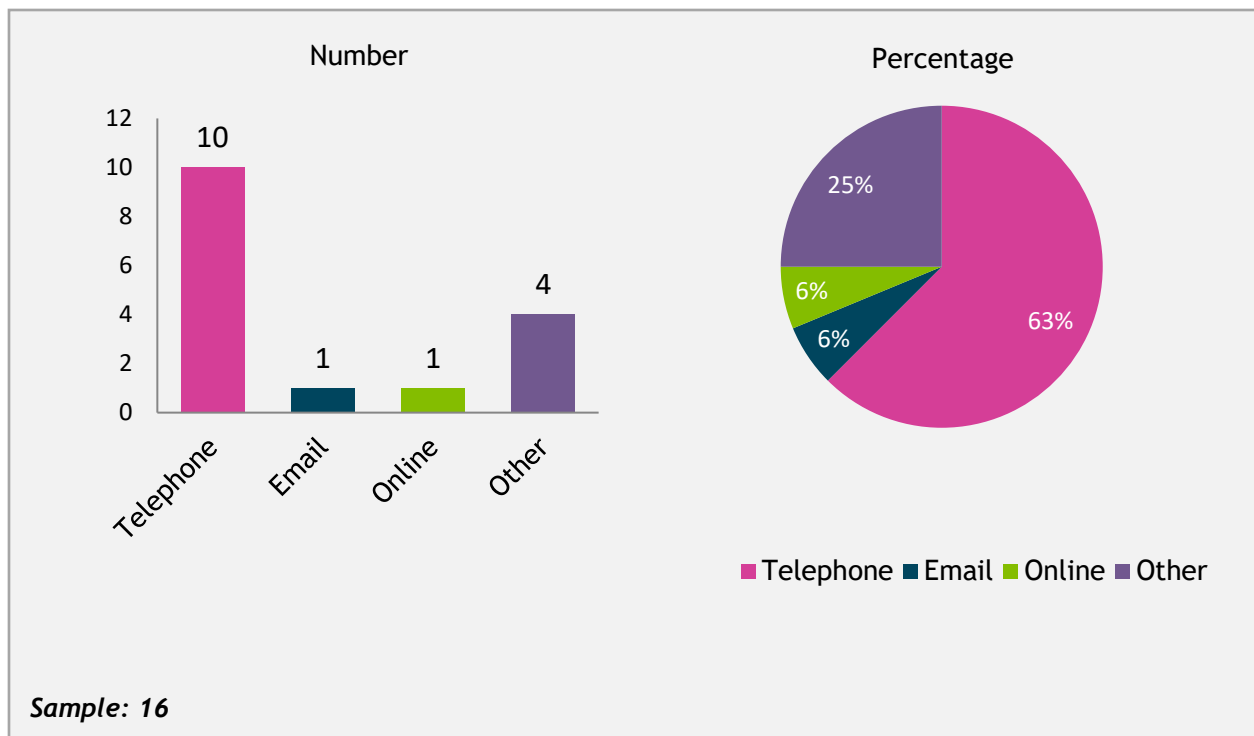
Reasons include disability, stroke, frailty and falls, mental health, and the need for occupational therapy, or home adaptations.

7.2 If you answered YES, were you able to contact them easily?



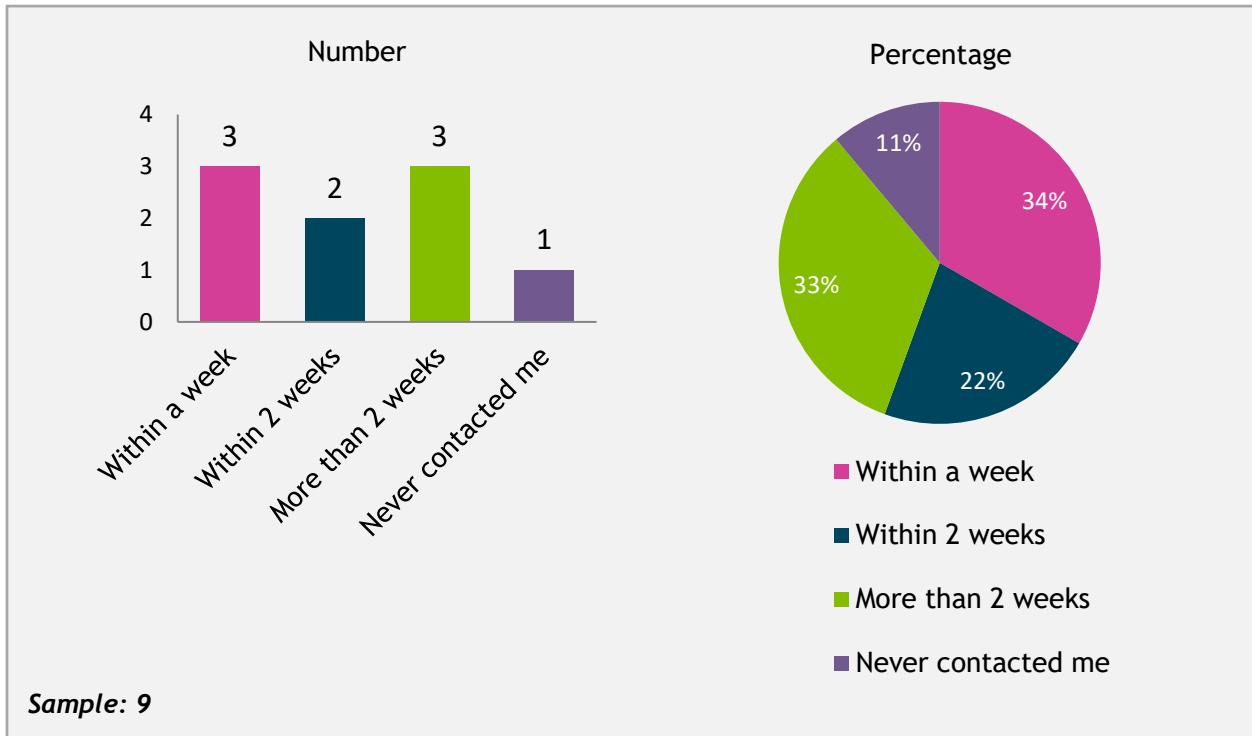
Around a third of respondents (28%) were able to make contact easily, while a larger number (39%) experienced difficulty.

7.3 How did you try to contact them?



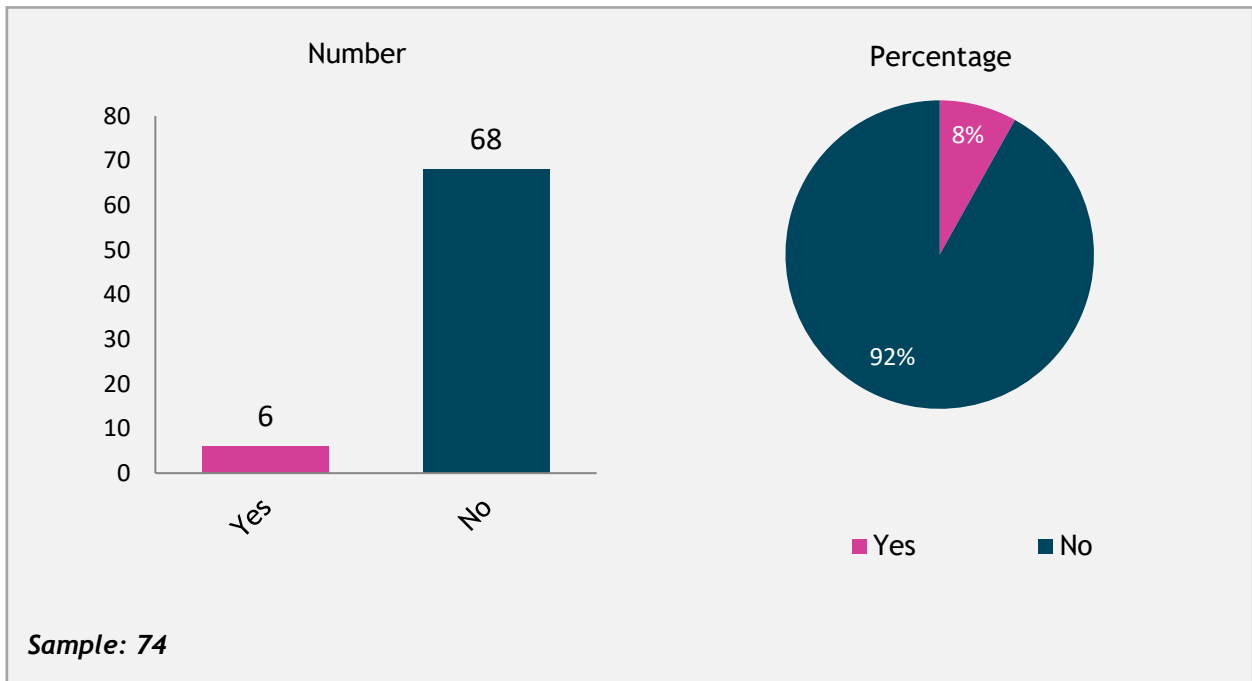
Phone is clearly, the most preferred method of contact (63%).

7.4 If YES how long did it take for them to reply?



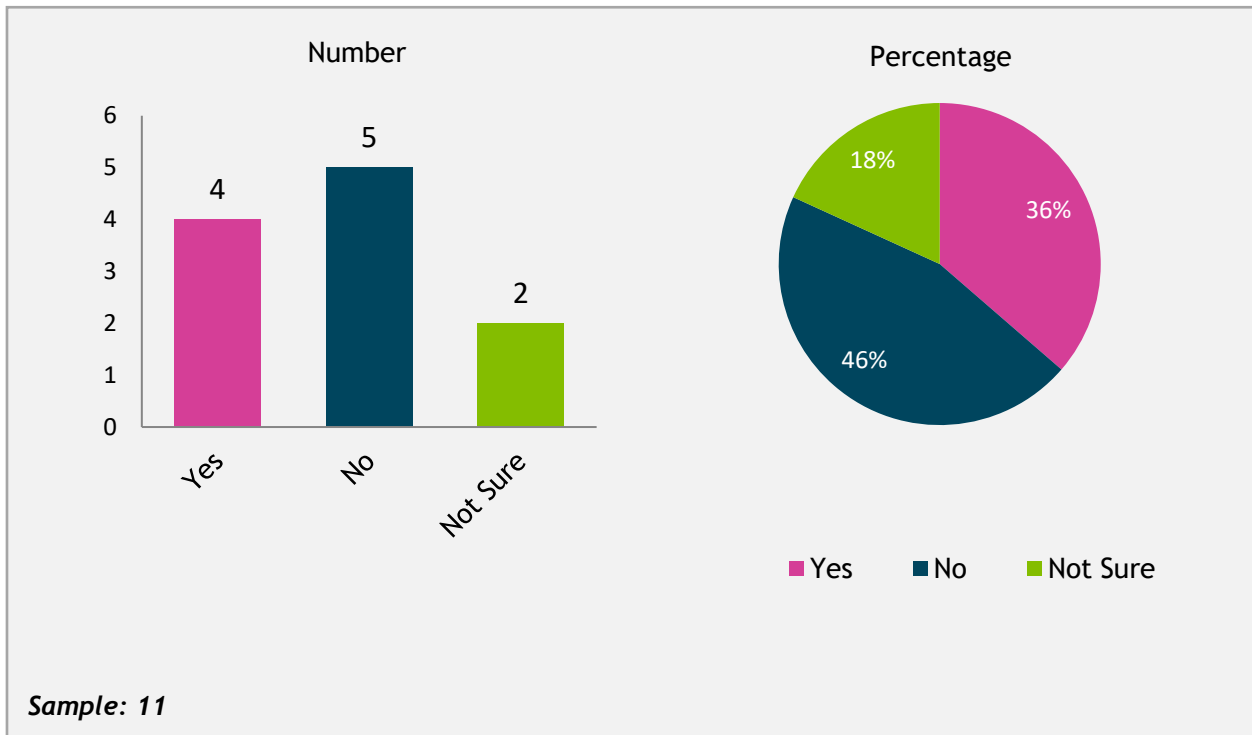
Response times are variable, with over half of respondents (56%) receiving a response within 2 weeks, and 44% waiting longer.

7.5 Have you or your family had a social care assessment or carers' assessment in the past 12 months?



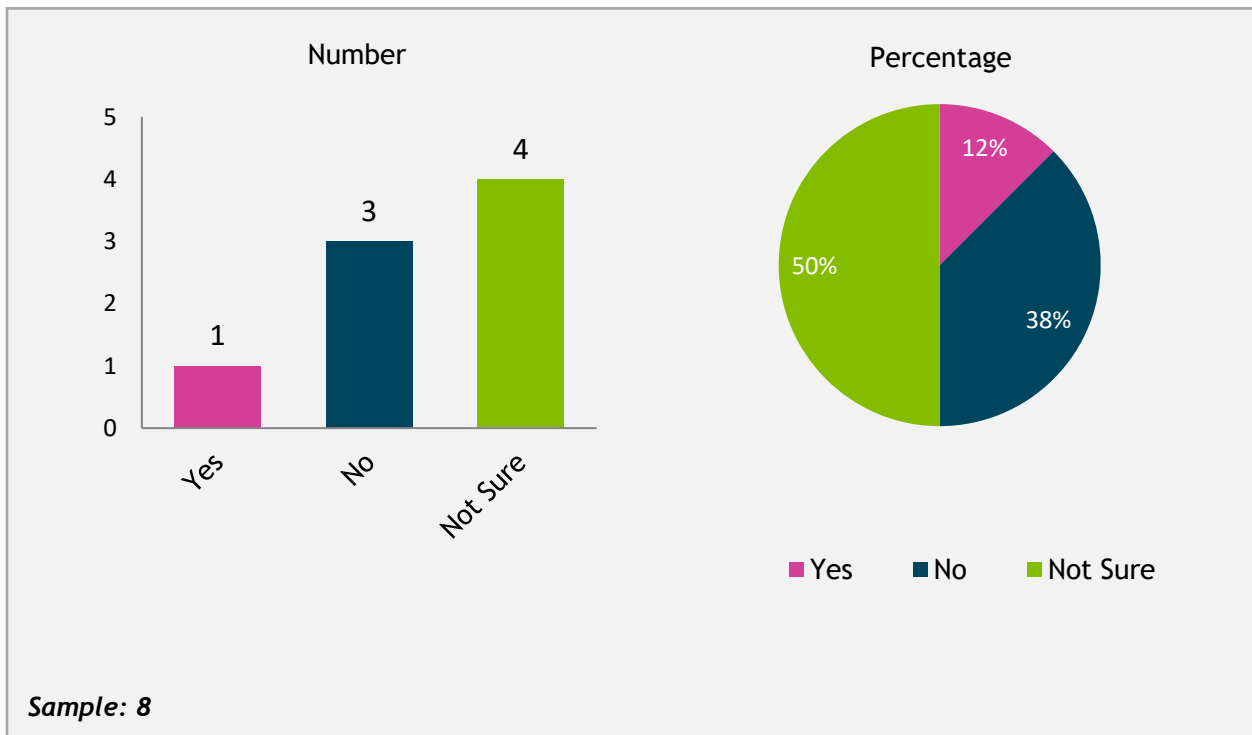
Around a tenth of respondents (8%) have had an assessment, in the last twelve months. All of the assessments were conducted in-person.

7.6 Did you receive contact details for further communication? (A name and phone number to ring someone back)?



Following assessments, around half of respondents (46%) were not given follow-on information (such as who to contact).

7.7 Were you satisfied with the outcome of the assessment?



Just one person was satisfied with the assessment outcome.

Feedback highlights a lack of information, one ‘incorrect assessment’ and delays in specialist care.

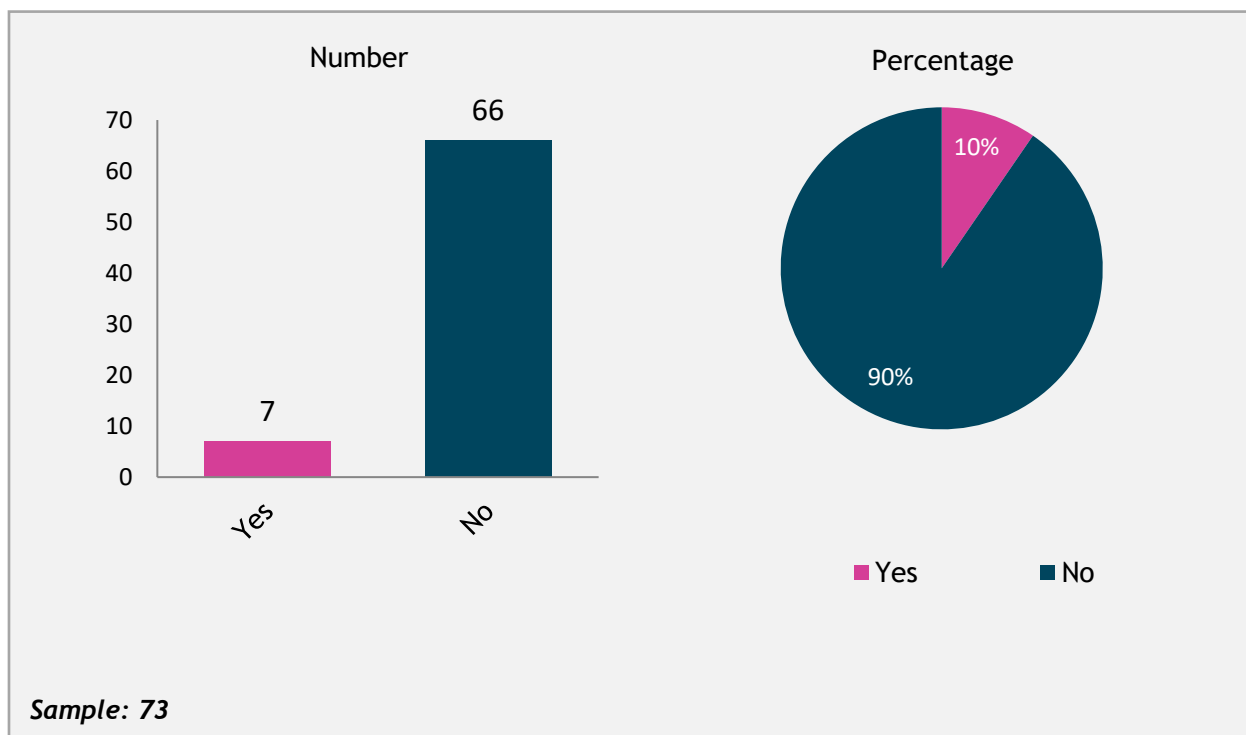
Selected Feedback

*“The assessment wasn’t done correctly and they didn’t provide the support required.”
“I was not given any details.”*

“My husband suffered from Parkinson’s but there was no Parkinson’s Nurse available in Redbridge until the week he died. I know he would have benefited from a visit.”

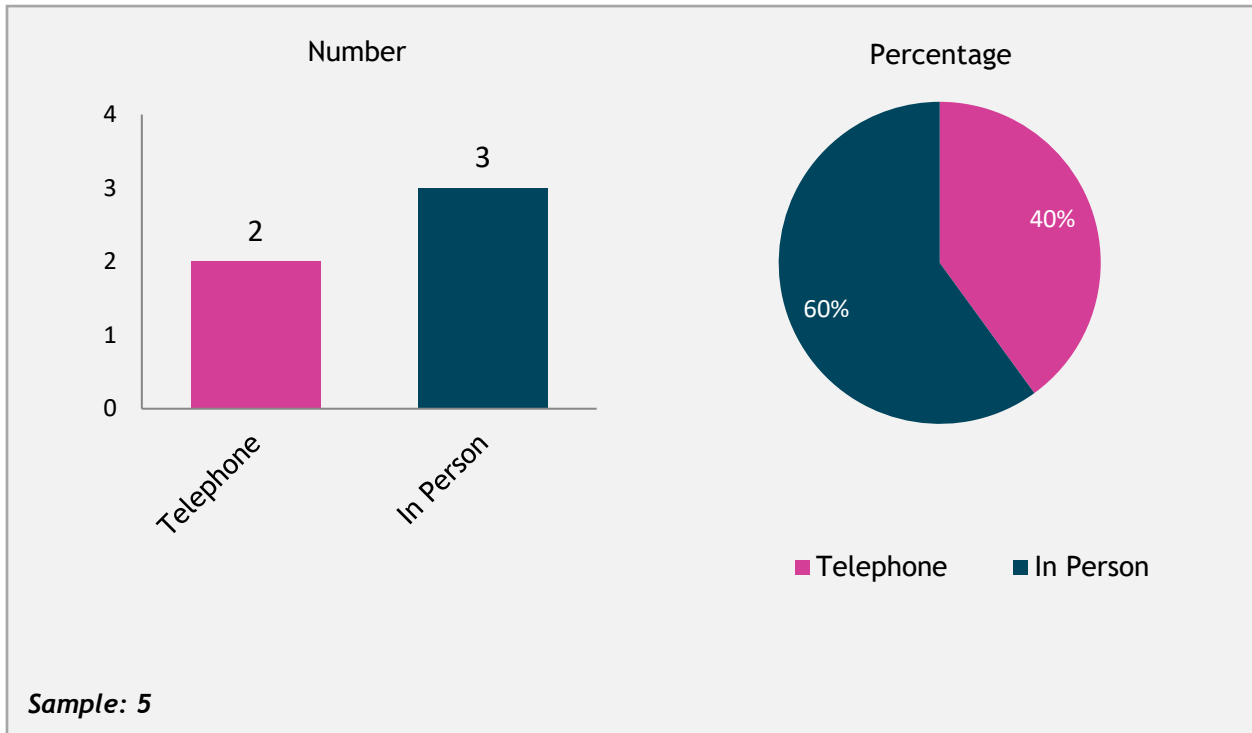
“Whipps Cross Hospital organised social services on discharge. However, they did not set up reablement until 6 days after discharge. There was none, only care watchers.”

7.8 Have you or any of your family asked for an occupational therapy assessment over the last 12 months?



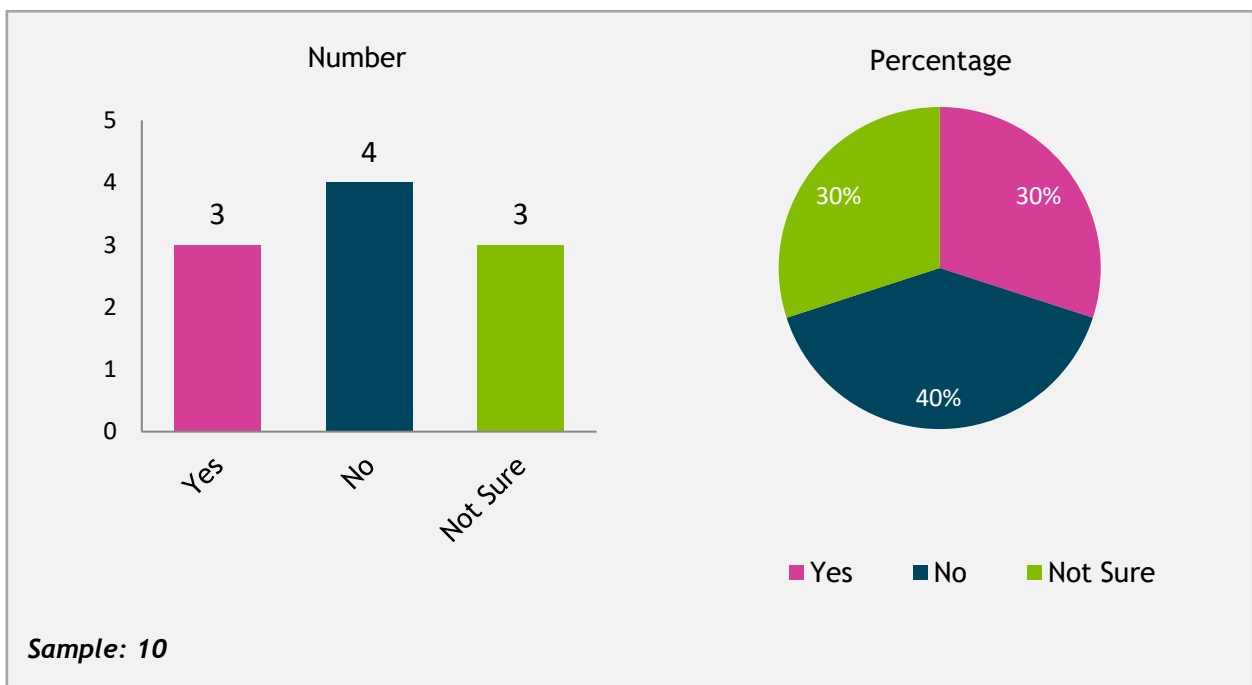
A tenth of respondents (10%) have asked for an occupational therapy assessment, in the last twelve months.

7.9 If you answered YES was this completed by telephone or in person?



Assessments were conducted in-person, and by phone. Waiting times are variable, some people were seen 'straight away' while others waited around two weeks.

7.10 Were you satisfied with the outcome of the Occupational Therapy Assessment?



A third of respondents (30%) were happy with the assessment outcome, while a larger number (40%) were not.

Some respondents have received home adaptations including handrails and stools, however more expensive items - such as stairlifts have been declined. Others also complain of eligibility criteria, and support that is located 'too far away'.

On the therapists, we receive both compliments and complaints.

Selected Feedback

"I got stools and a toilet raiser straight away."

"Got the rails put up but not the stairlift."

"The hospital doctor's assessment and the therapist's recommendations were correct but Redbridge Social Services don't want to provide unless paid."

"Their assessment said I did not qualify."

"Offered the pain clinic but it was too far to go, so had to refuse."

"The Occupational Therapist was lovely and very informative and was able to provide invaluable support."

"I had both an Occupational Therapist and a Physiotherapist visit for a couple of weeks. They then made up a report on me which I found patronising and insulting."

7.11 Any Other Comments

Finally, we asked for any other comments. We detect themes on service access and information, personal care, equipment and adaptations, and wider resourcing.

Selected Feedback

Access

- More staff answering the phones.
- Need to have a direct line which makes it easier to contact Social Services.
- More staff, more face to face contact, not everyone is computer literate.
- Replying when leaving a message.
- From what I can see, some people get quite a lot of help, whilst others seem to slip through the net.

Information

- The website is not clear. The main thing we needed was a department name and telephone number.
- Identify the members of Redbridge Social Services by badge or photo.
- More special information given to the elderly who live on their own and don't have regular visitors but are able to live on their own with support.

- More information available - leaflets in libraries and other public places. Posters. But not if the help is not there due to lack of funding.

Personal Care

- But didn't want an unknown or even familiar man to wash/bathe me.
- Better planning! I didn't need a female carer to see if I could cook a meal or get my breakfast.
- Morning care should start 6.30am - 9.30am. Patients don't want to wait until 9.30am to use the toilet and have breakfast. The evening meal call should be 6.30pm - 8pm, bed call from 9pm - 11.30pm.
- A lack of continuity - 'never know who is coming, never the same person twice'.
- Please provide a home help service.

Equipment and Adaptations

- It was 11 months to take a look only and I was without a chairlift.
- My friend is still waiting for an occupational therapy assessment. She needs carers, a stair lift and other mobility aids - has been housebound for nearly 3 months.

Resourcing

- They need more funding from government so they can help more people who need them.
- More people are needed with better pay and perhaps qualifications
- They need more resources and a joined up approach with health and housing provisions.
- Possibly more funding would increase staffing levels, also looking at areas of waste.
- They should pay staff between calls, improve training and support.
- Social Services need more staff and more money so that they can provide care plans/aids and adaptations to people who need it.

8. Recommendations

Based on the analysis of all feedback, Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering would like to make the following recommendations:

Based on Evidence

Just 15% of respondents are 'confidently aware' of the support on offer, from local social services.

8.1 While some of the respondents are not currently in need of services or support, a large proportion are - and would benefit from a range of information, through a variety of sources (social services and partner organisations) for maximum coverage. The respondents suggest 'leaflets in libraries and other public places', posters, and targeted information for those who live alone, but are independent - and may remain so with support.

Around a third of respondents (38%) know how to make contact, while a similar proportion (36%) do not. A quarter (26%) are more unsure.

8.2 Again, proliferation of concise information would enable more residents to get in touch. It is noted that the website does not specify individual departments or contacts.

When asked about Carer's Assessments or Occupational Therapy, those with good levels of awareness are in a minority.

8.3 This suggests that information specifically on these topics should be more widely publicised, so residents with a current, or future need may access support as required.

A fifth of respondents (21%) would not be willing to undertake a financial assessment, to receive services and support. There are concerns about privacy, and doubts about eligibility - by home owners and those with savings.

8.4 Ideally, residents should be encouraged to seek a financial assessment, so a greater level of assurance - especially around confidentiality is needed. Promoting information about eligibility (just 9% are aware of the financial threshold) would encourage those who doubt qualification, to step forward.

Around half of respondents (52%) would contact social services, if in need of support with daily living. Just a tenth (11%) say they would not. The oldest respondents are significantly most likely to seek support.

8.5 As the oldest respondents clearly have the greatest need, we would ask if communication and interventions are appropriately targeted. Is there a system to help those who may be more isolated, or more difficult to reach?

When using services, the phone is clearly the most preferred method of contact (63%).

8.6 Some respondents complain of poor telephone access, and a lack of response after leaving a message. This is concerning, as those with poor experiences are less likely to seek support in the future, if needed. We hope that telephone services are maintained at good levels, as older people in particular are less likely to use alternative methods, and these are the very people who need timely support and response.

9. Glossary of Terms

This report does not contain any acronyms.

10. Distribution and Comment

This report is available to the general public, and is shared with our statutory and community partners. Accessible formats are available.

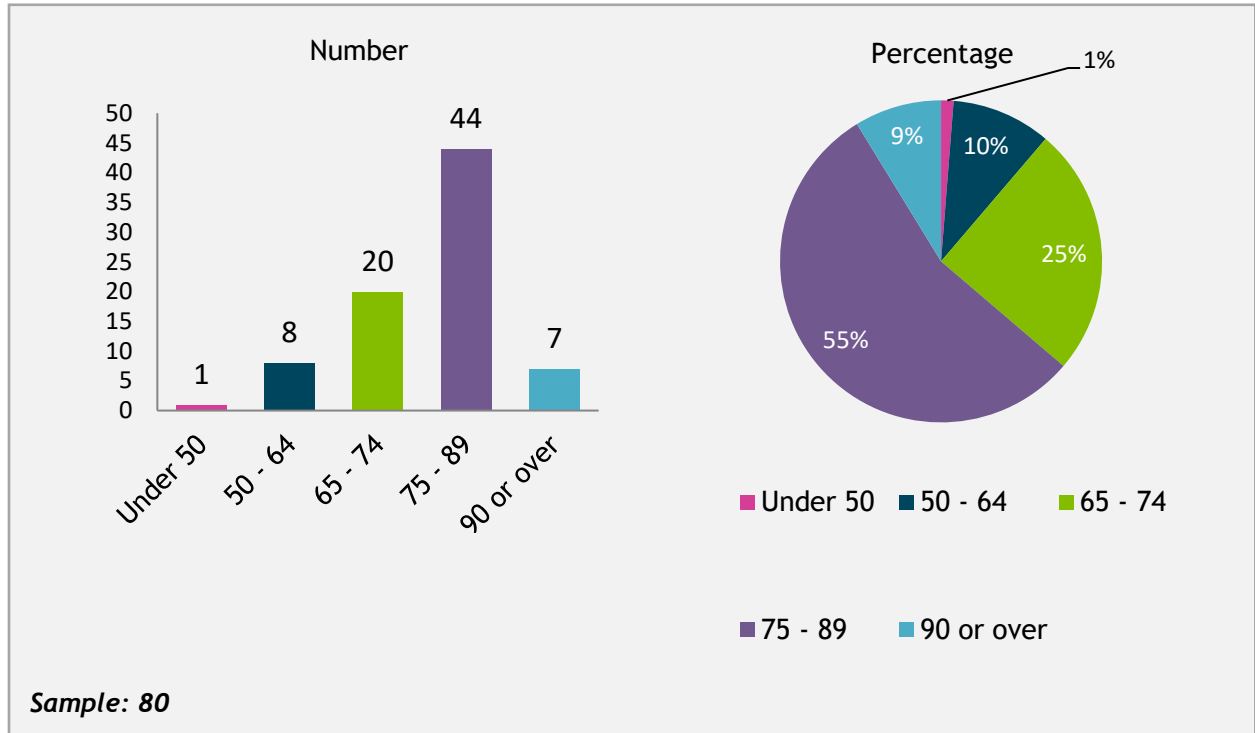
If you have any comments on this report or wish to share your views and experiences, please contact us.

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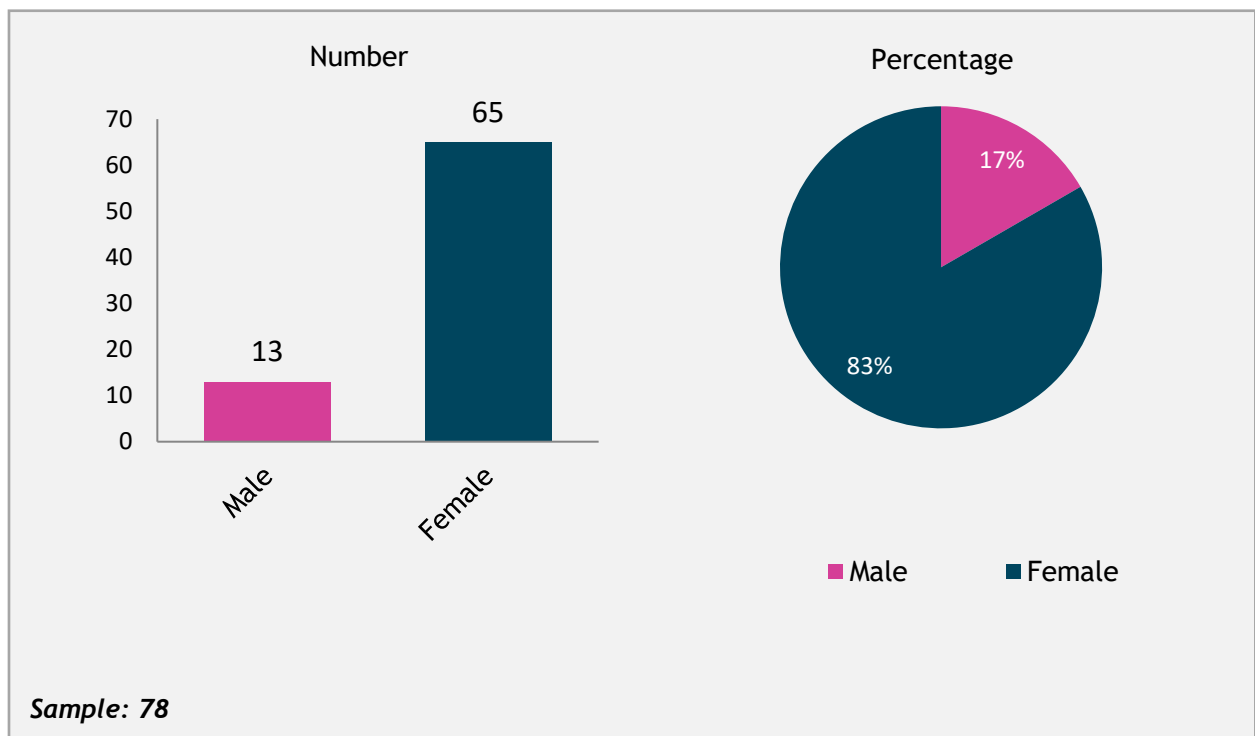
Appendix - Demographics

The demographics of participants are stated as follows:

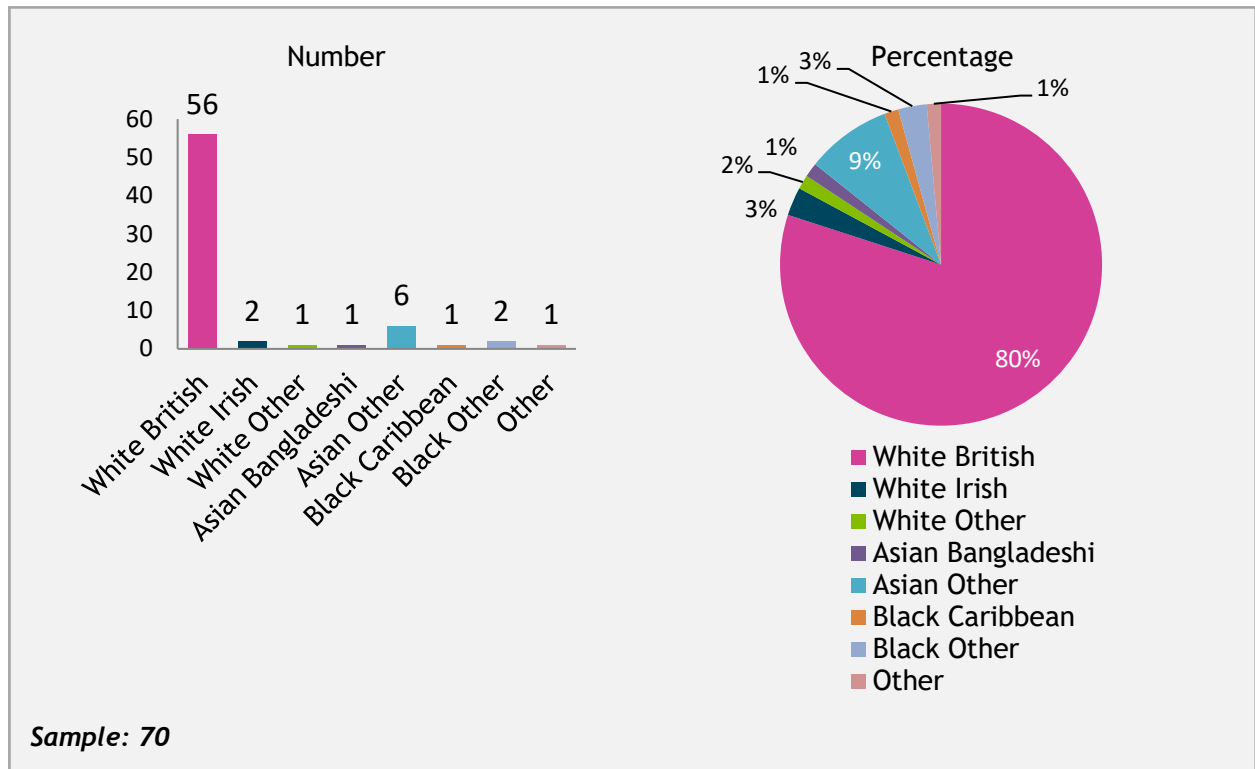
Age



Gender



Ethnicity



“The Occupational Therapist was lovely and very informative - and was able to provide invaluable support.”

Local Resident