

**Dial-a-Ride  
stakeholders 2008**

**08242**

May 2009



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Research conducted by Synovate

## 1 Executive Summary

A postal survey was conducted with Dial-a-Ride Local Area Panel meeting attendees to assess their perceptions of the Dial-a-Ride Panel meeting format. Overall, around seven in ten felt that the Local Area Panel meetings met their needs. Although generally meetings were viewed positively, there was an issue with the removal of the ability for members to complain or feedback. Those in favour of the new format preferred the more ordered way the most recent meeting was run, particularly the reduction in complaints. While those preferring the old format felt that the ability to complain and air their views had been removed.

- Overall, over six in ten members who attended the last meeting were satisfied with the new format
- Views on preference of meetings were dispersed, with around a third preferring the new format whilst a similar proportion preferred the old. Around one in six had no preference either way
- The key reason for preferring the new format was the removal of the complaints session from the agenda. Those with a preference for the old meeting format felt aggrieved with the inability to complain during meetings
- Overall, a half of all members agreed with the exclusion of individual complaints from the new meeting, whilst around four in ten disagreed with the move
- Around six in ten found the London-wide information circulated at the last meeting useful. Roughly the same proportion found the Borough-specific information useful
- Suggestions for improving the format of the meeting were mainly focussed around tighter control of complaints and the agenda

- Over eight in ten were very satisfied with the transport provided for them to attend the last meeting. Nine in ten had been informed of the pick up time prior to the meeting
- Three quarters were satisfied with the venue of the meeting

## 2 Research Overview

As a way of keeping dialogue flowing between the organisation and members, Dial-a-Ride holds meetings at set intervals with members across London Boroughs. Dial-a-Ride has recently changed the format of these Local Area Panel meetings on a trial basis. In the past, meetings ran in the following order:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Matters arising from previous meeting
3. Service update
- 4. Passenger feedback**
5. Any Other Business (AOB)

The new trial format no longer includes **Passenger Feedback** as an agenda item, and has incorporated more items as listed below:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. What we have done since the last meeting
3. Current priority areas
4. Discussion and feedback (on one or two priority areas)
5. Future priorities
6. Round up

With this change in format, Dial-a-Ride commissioned Synovate to conduct research with members who attend the Local Area Panel meetings to assess their perceptions of the meetings. A postal survey was conducted with all those who had attended the last Local Panel Area meeting and a handful of telephone interviews were also conducted with member with visual impairments which prevent them from completing a self completion survey.

A total of 93 interviews were conducted, out of a possible 150. This equates to a response rate of 62%.

When questionnaires were mailed to Panel Area Panel meeting attendees, the meeting minutes were also mailed to remind the attendees of the issues discussed. Large print versions of all the materials mailed out were sent to those who needed documents in this format.

## **2.1 Objectives**

The specific objectives of the research were to:

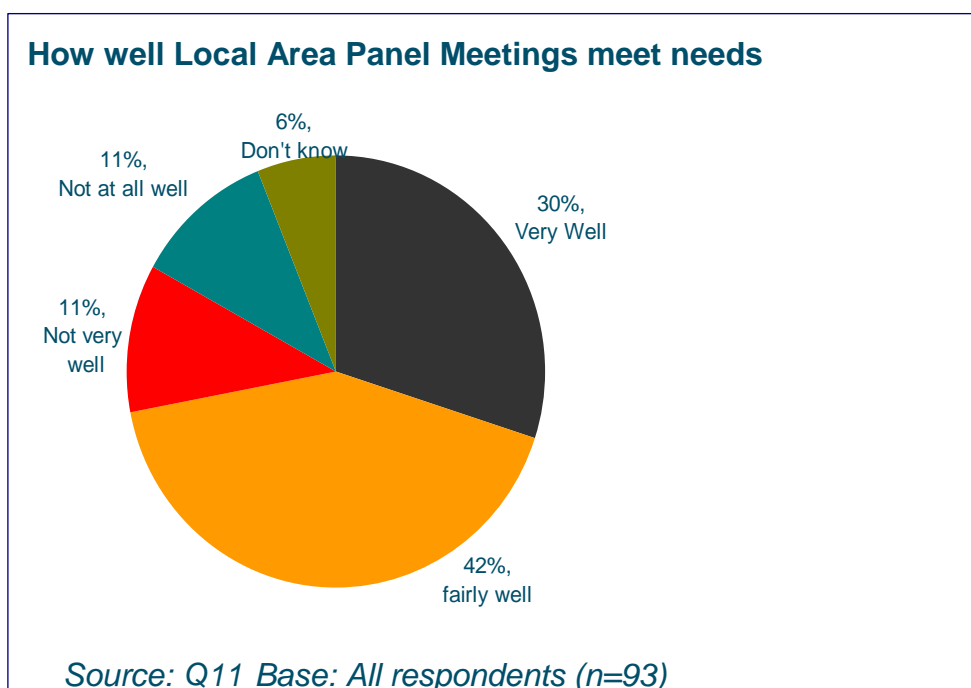
- Assess satisfaction with new format for Panel Area meetings
- Measure preference between old and new format
- Assess receipt and usefulness of London-wide and Borough-specific information provided at last meeting
- Measure satisfaction with aspects of last meeting
- Perceptions of Local Area Panel meeting
- Measure satisfaction with transport provided to attend the last meeting

## 3 Research Findings

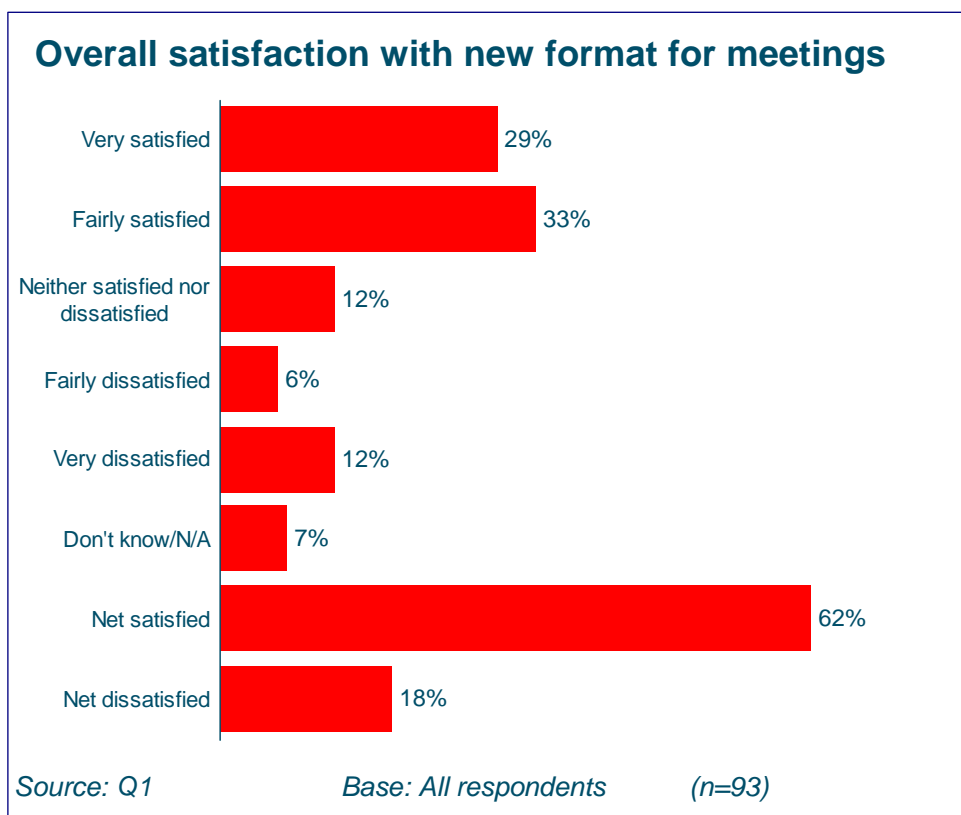
### 3.1 Meeting format

#### 3.1.1 Perceptions and satisfaction with meetings and format

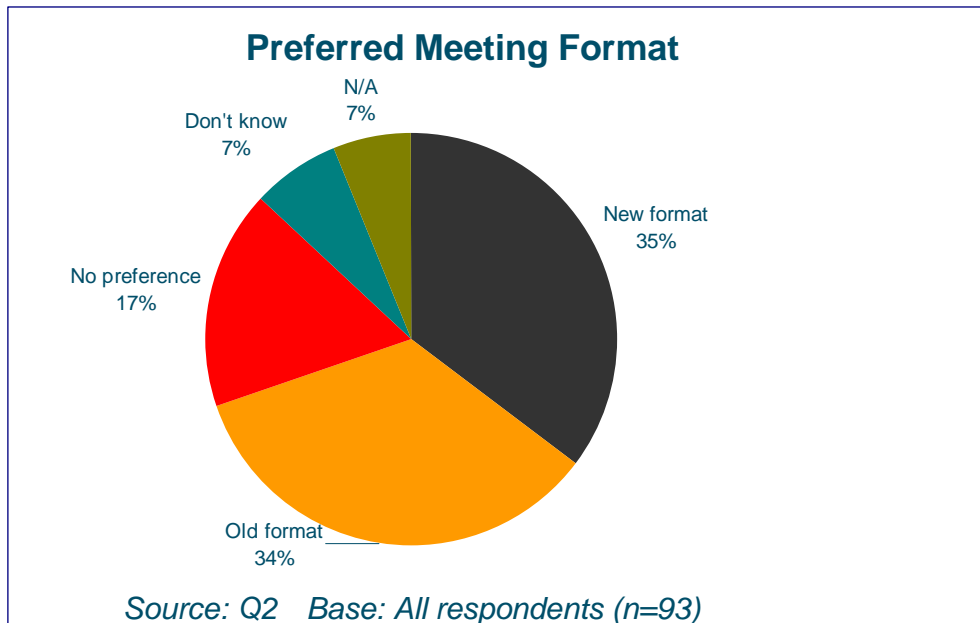
Seven in ten felt the Local Area Panel meetings met their needs either very (30%) or fairly (42%) well. Around one in five (22%) felt the meetings did not meet their needs. This suggests that despite the split views in format preference, the Local Area Panel meetings are well regarded and do go some way in meeting members needs. Most of the members who felt the Local Area Panel meetings did not meet their needs were likely to disagree with the exclusion of individual complaints from the meetings.



Overall, over six in ten were either very (29%) or fairly (33%) satisfied with the new format of the meeting. At the other end of the spectrum, around one in six were either fairly (6%) or very (12%) dissatisfied with the new format. A further 12% did not have a strong view either way.



Similar proportions preferred the new (35%) and the old (34%) format. The remaining had no preference either way or did not have a view.



All who preferred the new meeting format were also satisfied with the format. Views among those in favour of the old format were somewhat dispersed; only half of all those declaring a preference for the old format reported that they were dissatisfied with the new format. Indeed three in ten of those who declared a preference for the old format were satisfied with the new format.

The comments cited by members show that there are both advantages and disadvantages to both the new and the old format. Those in favour of the new format preferred the more ordered way the most recent meeting was run, particularly the reduction in complaints. Those preferring the old format felt that the ability to complain and air their views had been taken away from them.

Reasons for preferring the new format were that the meetings had more direction, and there was a reduction in the number of complaints (some of which were personal)



being raised during the meeting. Others also commented on the fact that the new format was less repetitive.

Comments given in favour of the new format include:

*"A high proportion of the old format was repetitive, personal complaints from a few vociferous regulars. The non intent will perhaps give more positiveness"*

Male 70-79

*"I felt you heard more about D-a-R plans and goals"* Female 80+

*"I find it interesting to hear other people's comments from where they come from. Sometimes it makes people stop moaning and be grateful for what we get"* Female 70-79

*"It was more ordered and informative"* Female 35-59

*"Less room for what became individual complaints which is not really what this meeting should be about"* Male 65-69

*"Prefer new format. I would appear some people come almost for a battle. I believe new proposals are a significant step in the right"* Male 80+

*"The new format should enable the chair to have more control over the proceedings of the meeting"* Female 80+

*"I prefer the new format on account of receiving more information regarding D-A-R future processes. However as long as genuine complaints are dealt with satisfaction. I found the last meeting very rewarding".* Female, 70-79+

Those in favour of the old format tended to prefer the meetings because they felt they could raise issues of concern and complaints during the meeting. It was also felt that the format allowed members to make suggestions about the service and they could also ask questions. Some of the comments given in relation to their preferred format include:

*"I feel that if members have problems with the service these should be aired and discussed and possible solutions found". Female, 80+*

*"Meetings should be for users of D-a-R to comment on their views or problems not just to have D-a-R officials to talk about their issues. Users did not get the opportunity to speak in the last meeting". Female, 70-79*

*"I like the old format because all our questions are answered, also had time to raise any other matters. The last meeting, so much time was lost there was no time set as it used to be. Too many questions being asked at the same time, I am sure you will agree and this is the reason why I come to meetings to be aware of what's being planned, also asking questions I need to". Female, 60-64*

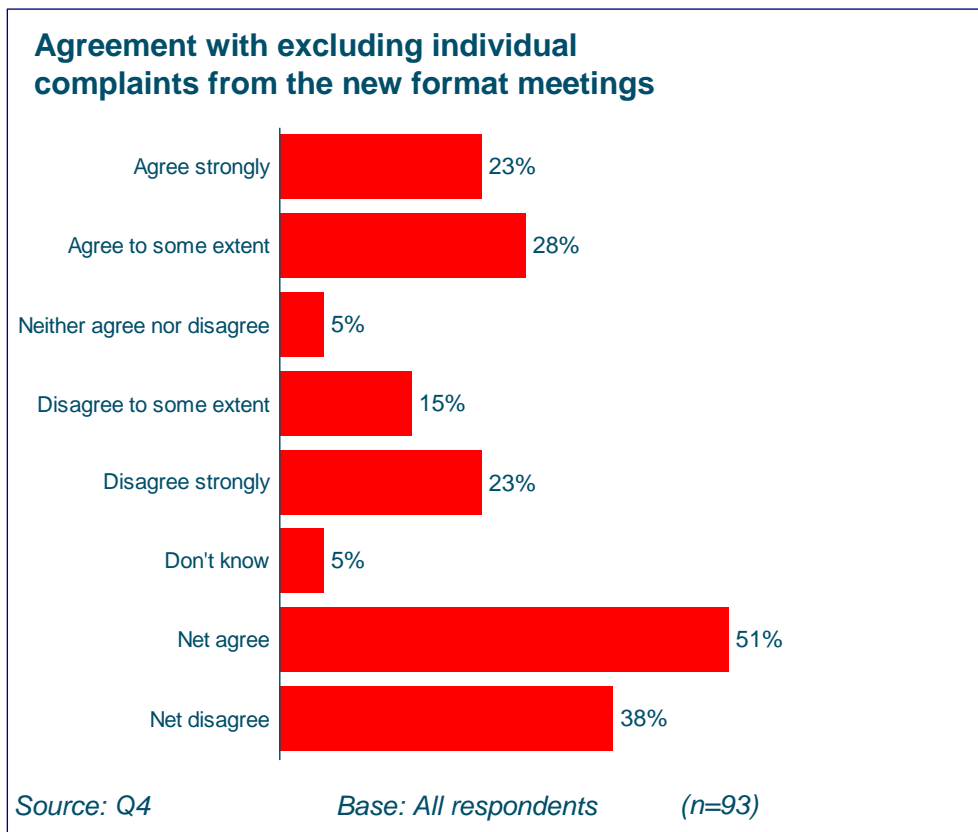
*"One had the chance to hear everyone's complaints and how members were dissatisfied with the service". Male 70-79*

*"Because it gave passengers an opportunity to feedback not that D-a-R took any notice any way". Female 35-59*

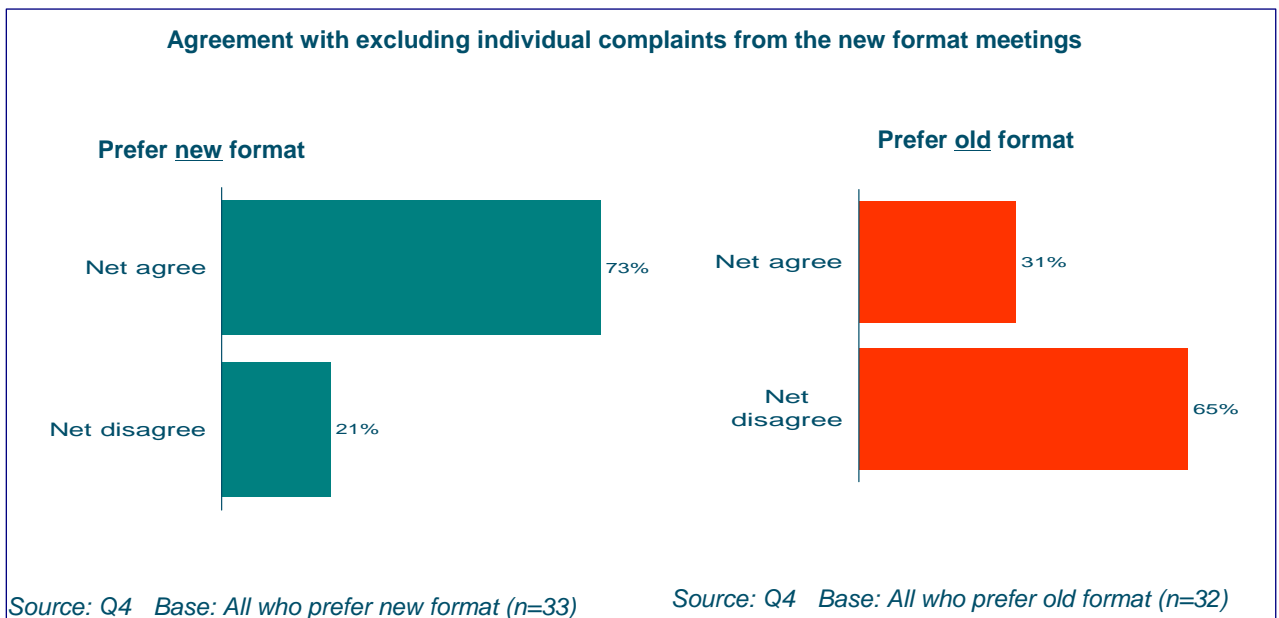
*"I represent a group of disabled people ...The new format does not allow me to raise their issues. The forum is now a vehicle for TfL and not users". Male 35-59*

### 3.1.2 Exclusion of Complaints

When D-a-R meeting attendees were asked to what extent they agreed with excluding individual complaints from the last meeting, overall a half either agreed strongly (23%) or to some extent (28%). Just under four in ten either disagreed strongly (15%) or to some extent (23%).



As shown in the table below, preference for the new or old meeting format was highly linked to the issue of excluding individual complaints. Those preferring the new format were likely to be in favour of excluding individual complaints, whilst those preferring the old format were much more likely to disagree with the exclusion.

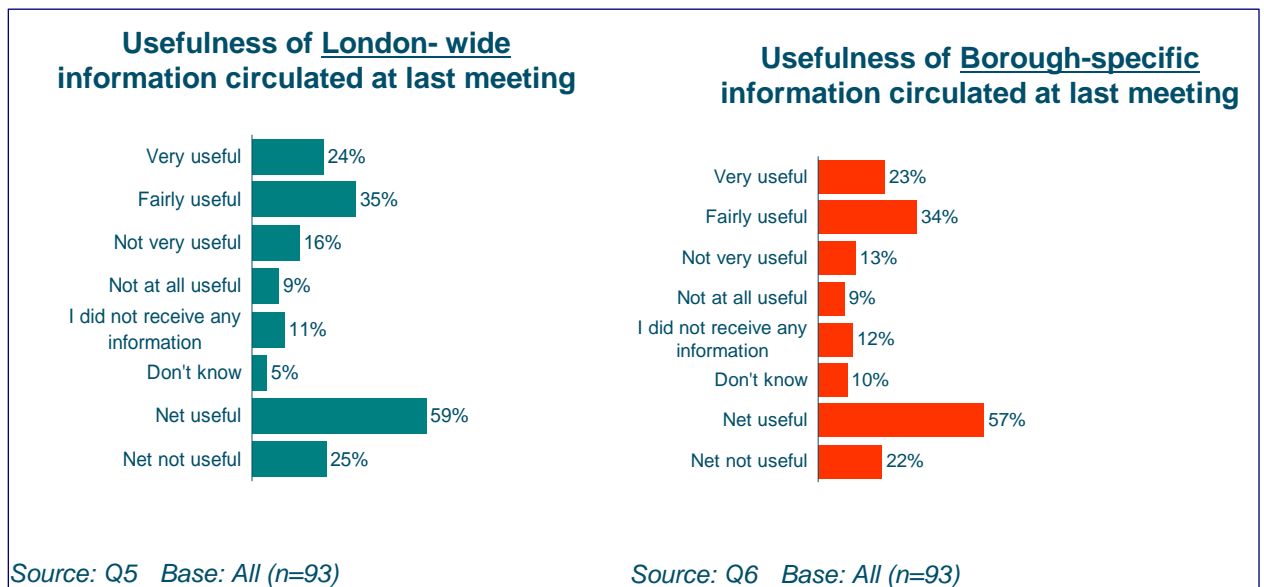


### 3.2 Perceptions of information provided

Generally, the information provided at the meetings was seen as useful.

Six in ten of all meeting attendees found the London-wide statistical information circulated at the last meeting either very (24%) or fairly (35%) useful. A quarter felt the information they received was either not very (16%) or not at all (9%) useful. One in ten (11%) did not receive this information.

Just under six in ten felt the Borough-specific information received at the last meeting was either very (23%) or fairly (34%) useful. One in five felt it was either not very (13%) or not at all (9%) useful. Around one in eight (12%) reported that they did not receive any of this information.



### 3.2.1 Meeting Format improvements

Key suggestions mentioned to improve the format of the meetings were around complaints, feedback and tighter control of the agenda.

The issue of complaints was one which was of particular interest to meeting attendees. The consensus was that there should be a platform for members to complain. However, there were differences in opinion about the handling of this issue. Some felt complaints should be aired during meeting times, with the suggestion that there should be a limited time set to deal with any such issues. Other members felt that complaints should still be aired, but outside of the meeting, with some suggesting that there should be a suggestion box which would allow complaints to be dealt with at a later time.

It was deemed important that there should be feedback, so as complaints get resolved, the outcomes need to be disseminated in meetings or posted to members. Some members felt that it was important that they felt involved in the process. The dissemination of information could go some way in member engagement.

Although not universal, other suggested areas of improvement included the punctuality of meeting attendees as well as those with responsibility for running the meetings.

Some of the suggested comments include:

*“While complaints still form a large part of each user’s experience there should be some form of feed back surely. The forums were set up to allow users to report their problems and expectations - perhaps in writing or a separate committee to avoid overwhelming the forums”.* Male, 65-69

*“More meetings during the year. Definitely bring the old format back the new format is useless”.* Female, 70-79

*"More or less as they used to be - we felt part of the meeting - not just listening".*

Female, 80+

*"I would suggest that at the meetings that we have time set for answering questions, as this is the reason we all attend meetings I hope the next meeting will be run on this basis - timing questions".* Female 60-64

*"Make sure we get the latest info straight away".* Female, 70-79

*"Use slides for presentations and give people hard copy/ handout. Time for the meeting need to be extended".* Female 35-59

*"I still think that they should have some drivers at the meetings; their input could make a great difference".* Female, 70-79

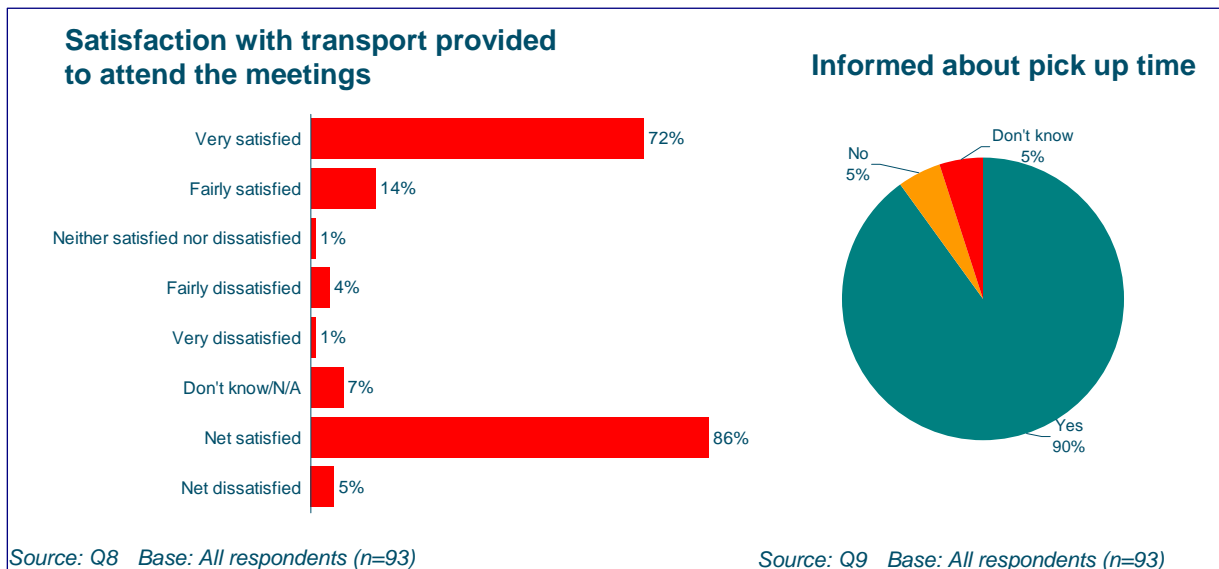
*"More defined agenda at the prior notice - possibly with ... time allotment varied at the chair person's discretion".* Male 70-79

*"Why not have a complaints box because some people tend to go on and on about trivial things. I know you could never please everybody but I don't think a lot of them realise how lucky we are".* Female, 70-79

*"We want resolutions not statistics".* Female, 70-79

### 3.3 Satisfaction with transport provision and venue

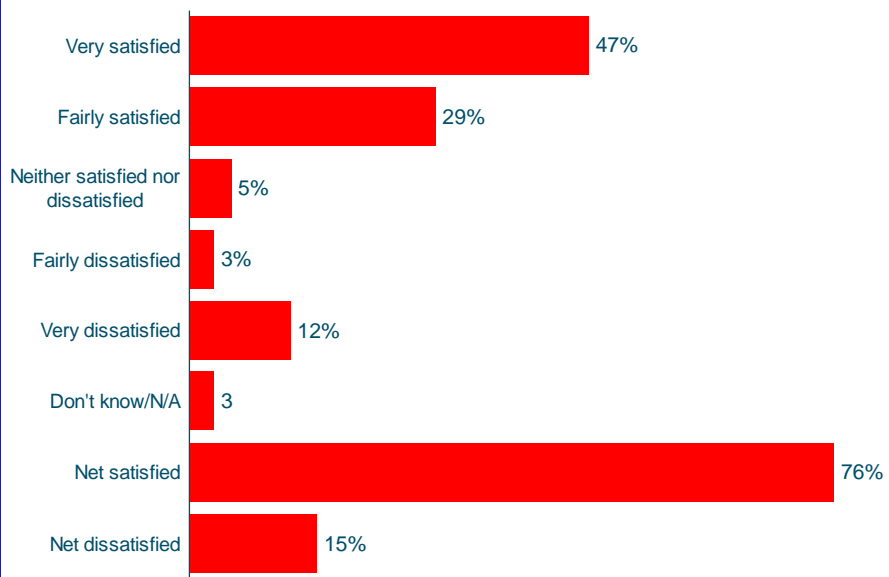
Most attendees were likely to be very (72%) or fairly (14%) satisfied with the transport provided to attend meetings. Just one in five (5%) were dissatisfied with the transport provided. Similarly, most (90%) reported that they had been informed of the pick up time prior to the meeting.



Overall satisfaction with the venue stood at three quarters, with 47% saying they were very and 29% fairly satisfied. Around one in five were either fairly (3%) or very (12%) dissatisfied with the venue.



### Satisfaction with venue for the meetings



Source: Q10

Base: All respondents

(n=93)

### 3.4 Other suggestions

Members were asked if there were any other issues they wished to highlight. The issues raised were wide ranging, but one of the key themes was that the service needed to be more efficient, with specific comments about the service not operating to full capacity or vehicles only carrying one passenger at a time. There were also comments around expanding the routes and the times the service was provided. Other members took the opportunity to praise the Dial-a-Ride service and bus drivers.

Other issues highlighted include:

*“It is obvious this new system is far from effective and efficient when two buses are sent for husband and wife living together going to the same place. I myself had had 15 seater contract bus to attend same venue as 5 other people who also had separate buses”. Female, 80+*

*“I feel very strongly about the venues for the meetings as a good proportion of the D-A-R members have disabilities we don't expect a long walk to the hall”. Female, 80+*

*“I would like to say that the D-A-R has been a real help over the years to myself and my disabled daughter, who is not able to travel on her own and we are able to attend her social events, also church and shopping the only outings we miss in once a month going to the seaside like we used to do and quite a lot of users will miss this trip in the summer. I hope it can be considered in the future”. Female, 60-64*

*“First we used to have panel meetings quarterly, then it came down to three times a year, then it came down to twice a year. At the last meeting in January <<name removed>> said it was going to be once a year from now. I think it makes no sense*

*because a lot of our many many complaints will be brushed under the carpet". Female, 70-79*

*"Where seating space permit; the option of a family friend or neighbour escort to ensure safety and security in the event of emergency such as accident, vehicle breakdown, sickness etc. can be adequately covered". Male, 70-79*

*"It would be nice if the subjects the service users brought up were reported back on, as it feels as if most of our queries are binned". Female, 35-59*

## 4 Sample profile

	Total	%
Base: 93		
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	18	19
Female	69	74
Refused	6	6
<b>Age</b>		
16-34	1	1
35-59	11	12
60-64	6	6
65-69	6	6
70-79	32	34
80+	32	34
Refused	5	5
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	70	75
BAME	15	16
Refused	8	9

<b>Panel area</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Barnet	6	6
Bexley Heath, Greenwich & Lewisham	5	5
Brent, Ealing and Harrow	13	14
Bromley	6	6
Camden, Westminster, Fulham, Hammersmith, Kensington and Chelsea	16	17
Croydon & Sutton	3	3
Hackney, Haringey and Islington	11	12
Havering	7	11
Hounslow and Hillingdon	5	5
Kingston, Richmond and Merton	3	3
Tower Hamlets, Redbridge and Waltham Forest	5	5
Wandsworth, Lambeth and Southwark	5	5
Woodford	7	11

## 5 Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this short survey to assess the new format of the DAR local area panel meetings.

For each question please tick clearly inside one box using a black or blue pen. Sometimes you will find the box you have ticked has an instruction to go to another question. By following the instructions carefully, you will miss out questions that do not apply to you.

Don't worry if you make a mistake - simply cross out the mistake and put a tick in the correct box.

The questionnaire should take no more than 10 minutes to fill in. Everything you tell us will be treated in the strictest confidence.

### **ABOUT THE FORMAT OF THE MEETING**

DAR has recently removed one of the items from the local area panel meeting agenda. In the past, local meeting ran in the following order:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Matters arising from previous meeting
3. Service update
- 4. Passenger feedback**
5. Any Other Business (AOB)

The local panel meeting agenda no longer has **Passenger Feedback** as an item. Everything else remains unchanged. The new Local area panel meeting now runs in the following order:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. What we have done since the last meeting
3. Current priority areas
4. Discussion and feedback (on one or two priority areas)
5. Future priorities
6. Round up

**GO TO NEXT PAGE TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY**

Q1. Overall how satisfied were you with the new format for the meetings? Would you say you were..

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Very satisfied	
Fairly satisfied	
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	
Fairly dissatisfied	
Very dissatisfied	
Don't know	
Not applicable- haven't previously attended	
Net satisfied	
Net dissatisfied	

Q2. Now thinking about both the new format and the old format for meetings. Which do you prefer, would you say the new format, the old format, or have you got no preference?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

New format	
Old format	
No preference	
Don't know	
Not applicable- haven't previously attended	

ANSWER Q3 IF YOU PREFER THE NEW OR THE OLD FORMAT (AT Q2)

Q3. Why do you say this?

PLEASE WRITE IN YOUR REASON IN THE BOX BELOW

Q4. In the old format people would raise general complaints about DAR. To what extent do you agree with excluding individual complaints from the meetings?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Agree strongly	
Agree to some extent	
Neither agree no disagree	
Disagree to some extent	
Disagree strongly	
Don't know	

Q5 At the last meeting, some LONDON wide statistical information was circulated. Did you find this information useful?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Very useful	
Fairly useful	
Not very useful	
Or not at all useful	
I did not receive any information	
Don't know	



Q6. At the last meeting some BOROUGH specific statistical information was circulated. Did you find this information useful?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Very useful	
Fairly useful	
Not very useful	
Or not at all useful	
I did not receive any information	
Don't know	
Net useful	
Net not useful	

ANSWER Q7 IF YOU FOUND THE INFORMATION USEFUL OR NOT USEFUL (AT Q6)

Q7. What suggestions, if any, can you make to further improve the format of the meetings?

PLEASE WRITE IN YOUR SUGGESTION IN THE BOX BELOW

Q8. How satisfied were you with the transport provided for you to attend the meeting? Would you say you were...

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Very satisfied	
Fairly satisfied	
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	
Fairly dissatisfied	
Very dissatisfied	
Don't know	
Not applicable- haven't previously attended	

Q9. Were you informed about your pick up time before the meeting?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Yes	
No	
Don't know	

Q10. How satisfied were you with the venue for the meeting? Would you say you were...

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Very satisfied	
Fairly satisfied	
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	
Fairly dissatisfied	
Very dissatisfied	
Don't know	
Not applicable- haven't previously attended	

Q11. Overall how well do Local Area Meetings meet your needs? Would you say...

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Very well	
Fairly well	
Not very well	
Not at all well	
Don't know	

Q12 Are there any other specific issues you would like to highlight?  
IF YES PLEASE WRITE IN THE ISSUES IN THE BOX BELOW

--

**ASK ALL**

Finally, I would just like to ask some questions about. All the following questions will only be used to help us analyse the survey results. If you don't wish to answer a particular question just answer refused.

**Q13. Are male or female**

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Male	
Female	
Refused	

**Q14. Which of the following age groups do you fall in to?**

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

16-24	
25-34	
35-59	
60-64	
65-69	
70-79	
80 or over	
<b>(Refused)</b>	

**Q15. How would you describe your ethnic origin?**

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

White – British	
White – Irish	
White – Other	
Mixed Race – White and Black Caribbean	
Mixed Race – White and Black African	
Mixed Race – White and Asian	
Mixed Race - Other	
Asian or Asian British – Indian	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	
Asian or Asian British – Other	
Black or Black British – Caribbean	
Black or Black British – African	
Black or Black British – Other	
Chinese	
Other (SPECIFY) PLEASE WRITE IN	
<b>(Refused)</b>	
White	
BAME	

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE.  
PLEASE POST THE QUESTIONNAIRE BACK TO SYNOVATE IN THE  
FREEPOST ENVELOPE PROVIDED.

## 6 Quality Assurance

- This work was undertaken in accordance with the standards laid out in ISO 20252
- Ensuring consistent quality of work to the highest standards in the industry and annual inspection by external assessor
- Over 6,000 market researchers globally
- Membership of all key MR bodies



Thank You For Your Attention  
Our Curiosity Is All Yours