

# Digital consultation report

August 2023



**CHESTERFIELD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

## 1. Background information

- 1.1 As not all tenants will want to attend meetings in person the tenant engagement team looked to explore how they can develop a menu of digital engagement opportunities so tenants can 'get involved and have a voice' in a way which meets their needs. The conversation regarding digital engagement has been building for several years and the Housing Service wanted to understand how tenants felt about digital engagement to develop some recommendations for taking digital engagement forward.

## 2. Methodology

- 2.1 A survey was developed with input from the Council's corporate policy team and shared as both paper copies and online via the Chesterfield borough council website. Tenants were encouraged to take part within the consultation through discussions with members of the tenant engagement team when they were out on community visits. The consultation ran for one month from June 2023 to the end of July 2023.
- 2.2 A copy of the survey consultation is included as **Appendix 1**.

## 3. Survey results

- 3.1 A total of 35 tenants responded to the survey. The results are shown below.

### Access to digital

Do you have access to the internet? (Tick all that apply)							
Yes - on wifi		Yes - on mobile data		Yes on free WIFI		No	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
32	91.4%	13	37.1%	0	0%	2	5.7%

- 3.2 Most respondents confirmed they have access to the internet and for those who do not have access (2 people) they indicated this is due to having concerns about using the internet.

## Use of the internet

If you have access to the internet how often do you use it?											
Numerous times a day		Couple of times a day		Few days a week		Less than once a week		Less than once a month		Don't use it	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
27	79.4%	2	5.9%	1	2.9%	1	2.9%	0	0%	3	8.8%

## Confidence

How confident are you with using the internet?									
Very confident		Fairly confident		Neither confident nor unconfident		Fairly unconfident		Very unconfident	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
21	60.0%	8	22.9%	0	0%	3	8.6%	3	8.6%

3.3 30 respondents indicated that they use the internet a minimum of a few days per week with 29 respondents indicating they feel very confident or fairly confident with using the internet.

## Video calling features and programmes

Do you use video calling features?							
Yes		Sometimes		No		Wouldn't know how to	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
13	37.1%	12	34.3%	10	28.6%	0	0%

If yes, which video calling apps do you prefer to use?					
Zoom		MS Teams		WhatsApp	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
3	15.0%	1	5.0%	16	80.0%

3.4 Respondents also indicated they use Facebook facilities for video calling and Skype in addition to the above.

3.5 At present the tenant engagement team do not use WhatsApp for events and discussions with tenants, however this could warrant further discussion as 80% of respondents have indicated this is their preferred option. We would also need to understand any IT limitations of using WhatsApp as a platform for collaboration, as it may not have the facilities of MS Teams and Zoom.

### Social media use

Do you use social media?									
Yes, number of times a day		Yes, few times a week		Yes, occasionally		Wouldn't know how to		No	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
25	71.4%	2	5.7%	3	8.6%	0	0%	5	14.3%

If yes, which types of social media do you prefer? (Tick all that apply)					
Twitter		Facebook		YouTube	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
8	22.9%	29	82.9%	18	51.4%

3.6 Regarding the use of social media tenants appear to use Facebook mostly which reflects with the Ofcom findings in the online nation 2022 report which states: Comparing average daily visitors, Facebook was visited by 61%, WhatsApp by 50%, Instagram by 35% and Facebook Messenger by 27% of UK smartphone-owning adults who went online. Source: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/online-research/online-nation>

3.7 Respondents also indicated they use YouTube kids, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat in addition to the above. Chesterfield borough council has accounts on both Facebook and Twitter.

Do you follow Chesterfield Borough Council on social media?							
Yes		No		Don't know		Wouldn't know how to use it	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
17	48.60%	17	48.60%	1	2.90%	0	0%

3.8 Twenty-seven respondents have indicated they use social media, however a much lower proportion follow Chesterfield Borough Council on social media.

### Types of information

What types of information would you like to see within any digital communications from the housing service? (Tick all that apply)									
Housing performance		You said we did		Video / photos made by tenants		Newsletter		Work planned in your area	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
20	57.1%	15	42.9%	11	31.4%	17	48.6%	28	80.0%

3.9 As part of the social housing regulation changes, it is important to explore what information our tenants would like to see on the housing services. This is information we are collecting in many ways, however due to the importance of this question felt it needed to be asked within this survey.

3.10 A high proportion of respondents (80%) have indicated they would like to have more information about work which is planned in their area. At present informing tenants about work planned in their area takes the form of more targeted consultation, however the findings from this may indicate tenants would like to understand more general information about planned works.

3.11 The tenant engagement team are working with IT to look at how more film and video content can be created for our tenants; this content could be shared via YouTube in addition to the current digital platforms used.

### Engagement with Chesterfield borough council digital platforms

3.12 Thirty respondents have indicated they will use the website for information. The website is currently being reviewed and content updated to modernise the look of this and to ensure it is more user friendly for our tenants, residents and others. The review includes exploring how we can make the website easier to navigate and make better use of video and how to guides for our tenants and residents.

3.13 Thirty-three respondents have indicated they are signed up for My Chesterfield, although we are aware that sign up to My Chesterfield is traditionally quite low by tenants. There is an opportunity to look at how we can promote My Chesterfield and the benefits of using this to our tenants more broadly.

Do you use Chesterfield Borough Council's website for information?							
Yes		Sometimes		No		Don't know how to use it	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
14	40.00%	16	45.70%	5	14.30%	0	0%

Are you registered for My Chesterfield? My Chesterfield is for residents in the Chesterfield Borough Council area, you can manage and track a range of services by signing up to My Chesterfield.							
Yes		No		Don't know		Wouldn't know how to use it	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
24	68.60%	9	25.70%	2	5.70%	0	0%

3.14 It may be beneficial to explore how we can increase the number of tenants who follow Chesterfield Borough Council on social media, as this is where information is regularly shared regarding the housing service.

### Digital training / support for tenants

Should we be looking at how training and support could be provided to tenants to promote digital engagement?					
Yes		No		Don't know / Not sure	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18	51.40%	6	17.10%	11	31.40%

3.15 As part of the development of digital engagement an element of support and training along with consideration of access to resources for both tenants and the tenant engagement team will need to be explored, to ensure digital engagement is accessible to those who wish to participate within this model. This need is reflected within the additional comments we received from respondents as detailed below.

## 4. Additional comments

4.1 Within the survey, tenants were given an opportunity to leave any additional comments and feedback about digital engagement. Comments received:

- *'Training for basic users'*
- *There are many people who have no access to the internet. That restricts them from knowing how to claim benefits etc.*

- *'Ones that aren't confident and it would keep them in the loop'.*
- *'How to use different things - e.g., My Chesterfield - I haven't got a clue'.*
- *'Helping people to set things up. I have Dementia and need someone to set things up and would like 1:1'.*
- *'To help residents who are not as confident using digital platforms'.*
- *'This would encourage communication with tenants with disabilities, both mental and physical, to engage with Chesterfield borough council in an attempt to give them a voice, without the difficulties of face to face or telephone calls. Some may feel less vulnerable communicating this way'.*
- *'Internet availability for all age groups'.*
- *'For people who don't know how to use the different types of digital media, it would be beneficial to them to be shown all of the different things that can be done online. It would save so much money to get tenancy information via email if you choose to receive it that way, or you have an account, you could log in and pay a bill, report a problem, look at your rent statement etc. It would save paper and money sending out the letters all of the time'.*
- *'General IT training, email etc. Ongoing basic training'.*
- *'Video/zoom calls, I feel, are an intrusion to my personal space. They would make me feel very uncomfortable. Also the older generation do not/cannot afford such tech to support such technology'.*
- *'Look at digital communications for people who are working instead of just sending a letter out to them'.*
- *'I would love to see less waste with letters being sent out annually on rent increases, rent schedules, late payments, appointments etc. An online account option where all of the information is available would be amazing as you would have a record of all past reports of work that has been done, any safety checks that have been done, payments made etc. It could be linked to your email address so you get an email if you have a new message to read, like you have a new appointment that has been set up, for instance. It should be an optional service so if people do want paper correspondence still, they can, just like any other service like a bank or energy company'.*
- *'What to do in an emergency in my property, so I can be prepared'.*
- *'Gardening'.*
- *'I don't do computers, I like to work with my hands'.*
- *'I don't even have a mobile phone since I retired'.*
- *The community team should be more interactive with tenants on a local level, like a surgery once a week or once a month. This would help nip problems in the bud and also develop a dialog to pre-empt future developments/needs for the area.*

## 5. Recommendations

- 5.1 While the overall the response rate to date has been low, the findings can be used as a starting point to inform our approach to digital engagement, and to gain an understanding of what our tenants may find beneficial. The next steps from the finding for the tenant engagement team to consider are:
1. Exploring the potential use of WhatsApp for digital engagement beyond video calling
  2. Look at resources for creating more video and audio materials for tenants.
  3. How to increase publicity and benefits of My Chesterfield for tenants and residents
  4. How to encourage tenants to use social media platforms to be informed about housing services but also to use this as a two-way interaction tool
  5. Look at how we can ensure tenants who wish to participate within digital engagement can be supported to effectively do so including through training and support.