**(Appendix 2)**

**CONSULTATION REPORT ON PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE PROVISION OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICE FOR COMMUNITY ALARM ONLY CLIENTS**

1. **Purpose of the Report**

   A report was presented to Cabinet on 10 February 2022 which sought approval to undertake a public consultation on proposals for the future provision of the Assistive Technology Service for all community alarm only clients. Following Cabinet approval, the consultation took place between 21st February 2022 and 1st May 2022.

   The options for consideration were:

   - **Option One – New Model**

     Anyone who currently receives the DCC funded community alarm service because they are a legacy client would no longer automatically have their monitoring charge paid for by the Council. Instead, everyone whose current service is limited to a DCC funded community alarm would be subject to an assessment and would be reviewed in accordance with the Care Act (2014) to decide whether they are eligible under Section 2 or Section 18.

     Those people assessed as eligible for support under Section 2 would be provided with the equipment free of charge and would be required to pay the monitoring cost directly to the provider of the service.

     Those people assessed as Care Act eligible under Section 18 and requiring a wider package of care, which includes a community alarm, would be provided with the equipment free of charge but in relation to the ongoing monitoring charges, would be assessed in accordance with the Council's co-funding policy and the individual's personal budget would reflect this.

Those people assessed as Care Act eligible under Section 18 requiring a community alarm only and no wider package of care would be provided with the equipment free of charge, but in relation to the ongoing monitoring charges, would pay the monitoring cost directly to the provider.

The DCC funded community alarm service would continue to be provided free of charge (including equipment and monitoring charge) as part of the Council's short term service offer. At the end of the period of short-term support, people would be assessed, as set out above, to confirm whether they are eligible to continue receiving the community alarm service in the longer term.

Anyone not eligible under the Care Act (2014) and/or any self-funding clients would continue to have the ability to obtain a community alarm from available providers at their own cost and would be signposted accordingly.

Should a person become otherwise eligible for the DCC funded community alarm service in future, they would be assessed as set out above.

A transition period would be offered to all clients that are assessed as responsible for their ongoing monitoring charges, to identify any alternative arrangements they wish to put in place.

- **Option Two – no change**

    The alternative to the proposed new model is to continue with the current arrangements.  Under this model, new clients would continue to be assessed against Care Act (2014) criteria and ongoing monitoring charges are paid for by the client themselves or reflected in their personal budget, and legacy clients would continue to be funded by the Council.

## 2.  Methodology and Approaches

The report was presented 10 February 2022 to Cabinet and the public consultation took place between 21 February and 1 May 2022**.**  This report will summarise views and opinions submitted by the people of Derbyshire during this period.

The consultation used a quantitative and qualitative approach to gather people's views about the proposed changes.  Officers enabled as many people as possible to take part, by offering a range of ways in which they could share their views:
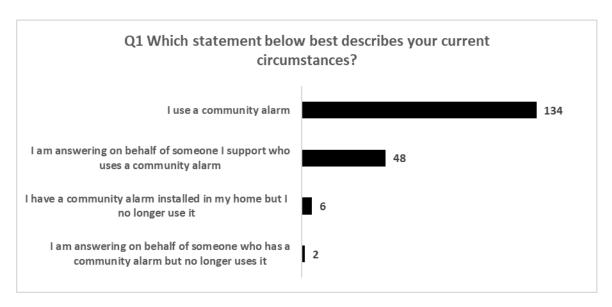
1. All clients who currently receive a community alarm only were sent a letter following the Cabinet decision to consult on the proposals for the Assistive Technology Community Alarm Service.
2. The questionnaire was made available in different formats on request, such as other languages or larger print if this was more appropriate.
3. Information regarding the consultation was available on the Derbyshire County Council Consultation webpage [Changes to the eligibility criteria for the community alarm system - Derbyshire County Council](#) which gave an outline of the proposals and the ways in which people could share their views.
4. People were also given the opportunity to request a paper copy of the questionnaire via the Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation Team and returned their response using the postal questionnaire.
5. There was also opportunity to write into the Council via a letter or email to a dedicated email address.
6. Telephone interviews were offered for those people requiring support to complete the questionnaire.
7. Staff from the Adult Care Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation Team arranged four virtual meetings co-hosted by a Service Manager from Adult Social Care Commissioning Team, in which participants were given the opportunity to give their views.  Only two meetings went ahead due to no bookings for the other two virtual meetings.

**Qualitative Approach**

There were 3 distinct areas from which qualitative information was analysed where the feedback was clearly coded and reported as information.

1. Information gathered during virtual meetings
2. Information from letters, emails and telephone calls
3. Information contained within the open text boxes on the questionnaire.

**The following chart shows the respondents by category:**

### Q1 Which statement below best describes your current circumstances?

| Category | Count |
|---|---|
| I use a community alarm | 134 |
| I am answering on behalf of someone I support who uses a community alarm | 48 |
| I have a community alarm installed in my home but I no longer use it | 6 |
| I am answering on behalf of someone who has a community alarm but no longer uses it | 2 |

## Combined analysis of the Qualitative information

In total, 268 comments were received about the consultation. These were made up of 151 from the qualitative data within the questionnaire and 17 comments from those who chose to respond via email, letter, at a meeting or via telephone call.

Overall, a total of 199 people responded to the consultation, including 190 respondents who completed questionnaires, and 9 who chose to respond via email, letter, at a meeting or via telephone call.

**Scope of the summary themes from the quantitative responses:**

**Service benefits**
The questionnaire asked people to consider the main benefits of the service. Respondents considered there to be multiple and almost equally important benefits to having a community alarm, in particular feeling safe, providing reassurance and getting help when needed.

**Importance of technology**
The questionnaire asked people to consider how important technology was as part of the overall social care support they receive. Almost two thirds of respondents answered that using technology is 'very important' or 'important'.

**Eligibility**

There was a mixed response regarding the proposed eligibility criteria for the provision of community alarms. This can be further seen in the comments provided by respondents which shows responses are based on individual circumstances.

Overall, 50% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposals to assess all those legacy clients currently in receipt of a community alarm only, in accordance with Care Act (2014) criteria, with 30.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 19.5% neither agreeing not disagreeing.

**Introduction of monitoring charges**

56.3% and 54.7% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal regarding monitoring charges, the higher figure being for those with a community alarm only and the lower for clients with a wider package of care. There were similar levels of overall agreement (24.2% and 23.2%), but with more respondents suggesting they neither agreed not disagreed with monitoring charges as part of a wider package of care.

Overall, 23.2% of respondents said they would be happy to pay the monitoring charges for their community alarm, with 25.3% being neither happy or unhappy and 51.6% being unhappy with only around half of these were extremely unhappy.

However, when asked what they would be prepared to pay, 52.6% said they would be willing to pay up to £5 per week, with a very small number of respondents saying they would be willing to pay over £5.  The remainder of respondents stated saying they did not want to pay.

**Scope of the summary themes within the qualitative approach**

SECT analysed the comments received, theming them under the following categories in alphabetical order.  In the development of the themes, some contained within them a range of responses rather than a set of tightly aligned responses. Others were responses highlighting the same issue.

**Agree with proposals**
Some respondents felt that the proposals were acceptable, and they agreed.  Largely, people want to continue using their community alarm but also agree this option should be available to more individuals who might need them.

**Alternatives available**
Some respondents indicated that people would use their mobile phone instead of continuing to use their community alarm.

**Appreciation of service**
Some respondents made comment that they were appreciative of the service that they were receiving. A large number of responses were related to the value of having a community alarm and provided examples of where this has been effectively used.  The community alarm provides peace of mind and is considered vital to helping people to feel safe, build their confidence and maintain their independence and avoids the need for additional services.

**Concern for vulnerable clients**
Some respondents felt that the proposals were a concern, and they had concerns for the new criteria's being addressed.  There is feedback suggesting that based on the age and/or individual circumstances of those people who currently have their monitoring charges paid for them that it would be inappropriate to leave them without this support, regardless of eligibility.

**Confusion over monitoring charges**
Some people appear to have been unclear about the way in which the monitoring charges would work and who would have to pay this, for example, if they receive a wider package of care.

**Disagree with the proposal**
Some respondents made comment that they were not in agreement with the proposals being addressed and did not want the changes to happen.  Some people commented that people shouldn't have to pay, by virtue of their age or need, regardless of Care Act eligibility.

**Distress to clients**
Some respondents felt that the proposals were causing them some distress and anxiety, due to the uncertainty as to whether they would have to pay their community alarm monitoring charges in the future.

**Prepared to pay**
A significant number of people commented that paying towards monitoring charges was reasonable in order to maintain a good service but requested that charges should be kept to a minimum.

**Pressure on personal finances**
Some respondents made comment that the proposed charges could not be paid for. There was particular concern around the charges in addition to the continuing rise of the cost of living. Many respondents stated that they are already struggling to make ends meet, without the additional pressure of paying for their community alarm.

**Regular assessment**
Some people felt that assessments should be ongoing to ensure the correct people are receiving the service.
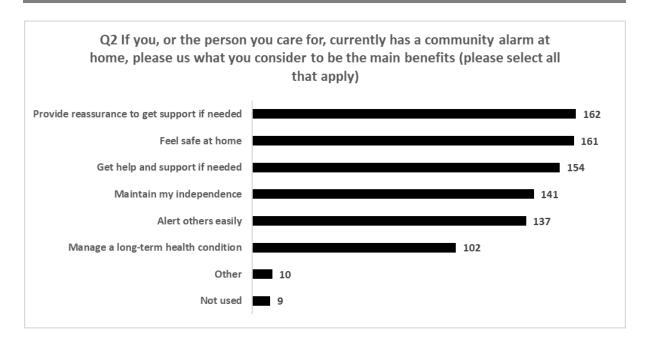
**Unused equipment**
Some respondents made comment that the equipment they have is not used.

**Other - Not falling into a theme**.
There were a number of comments captured which were of a random nature and did not fall into a theme.  Some responses particularly in the questionnaire were not addressing the question posed or the proposals in general and therefore were placed under 'other'.


**Analysis of the Qualitative and Quantitative datal within the questionnaire**

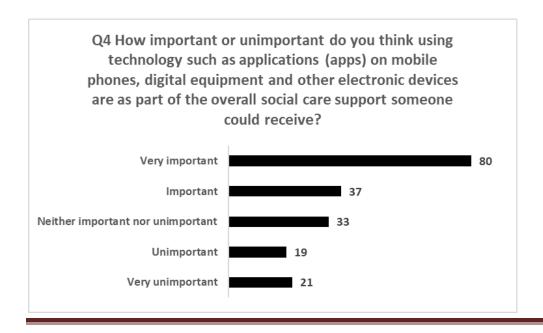The following highlights the quantitative and qualitative responses to the questions asked within the questionnaire. Tick boxes on the questionnaire both on-line and paper version were analysed, and graphs produced from the data.  The free text boxes, following questions that requested an explanation of the respondent's choice of answer, were analysed and coded by the SECT to establish themes from the individual questions.
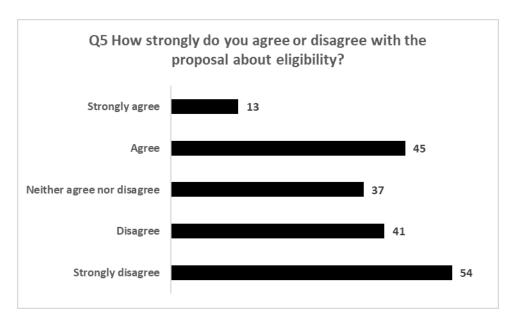
**Q2 If you, or the person you care for, currently has a community alarm at home, please us what you consider to be the main benefits (please select all that apply)**

| Benefit | Count |
|---|---|
| Provide reassurance to get support if needed | 162 |
| Feel safe at home | 161 |
| Get help and support if needed | 154 |
| Maintain my independence | 141 |
| Alert others easily | 137 |
| Manage a long-term health condition | 102 |
| Other | 10 |
| Not used | 9 |

**Question 3** - If you told us in Q2 that the alarm is not used please tell us why it is not used?

There were only 5 comments in the open text box, there was one overarching theme, which is, they currently don't need the alarm at their stage of lives. Below are 3 examples of comments:

- I am forced to pay for this by careline who insist I have it and pay for it and I have never used it and don't want it.
- Never needed it and feel I'd use my mobile phone
- I've only used to test if it's working. They are some distance away so if I had a medical emergency, I would call doctor or ambulance

**Q4 How important or unimportant do you think using technology such as applications (apps) on mobile phones, digital equipment and other electronic devices are as part of the overall social care support someone could receive?**

| Response | Count |
|---|---|
| Very important | 80 |
| Important | 37 |
| Neither important nor unimportant | 33 |
| Unimportant | 19 |
| Very unimportant | 21 |

**YOUR VIEWS ON ELIGIBILITY:** Anyone who currently receives the DCC funded community alarm only service because they are in receipt of Housing Benefit or Pension Credit will no longer be automatically eligible for the service. Instead, the consultation proposals are that all those currently in receipt of a DCC funded community alarm only, will be reviewed in accordance with the Care Act 2014 to decide whether they are eligible to continue receiving the service.

Q5 How strongly do you agree or disagree with the proposal about eligibility?

| Response | Count |
| --- | --- |
| Strongly agree | 13 |
| Agree | 45 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 37 |
| Disagree | 41 |
| Strongly disagree | 54 |

**Question 6** - If you have any other comments about the proposal regarding eligibility for the service, please put them in the box below.

Overall, 75 respondents explained their choice. The top themes were as follows:

**Appreciation of service,** with 32 comments such as:

- You depend on it, the older you get the more you need it
- I think it's essential that I've got the alarm
- It is a valuable lifeline to my elderly mother who has dementia
- I live alone. I cannot guarantee my neighbours will be home or the friends on my list will be home
- Well, I don't know what to say, this alarm is needed to keep me safe.

**Disagree with the proposal,** with 15 comments such as:

- It will put a lot of people in danger.  leave it as it is.  people are worried enough at is it, don't give them more to worry about

- Having this alarm service is very important to me as I have needed help in the past. I am in receipt of a State Pension and Pension Credits. I feel it is very unfair to have me having to pay towards this service. What with the cost of living and numerous other things taking up my money. I object to this alarm service doing the same.
- It will put a lot of people in danger.  leave it as it is. People are worried enough at is it, don't give them more to worry about
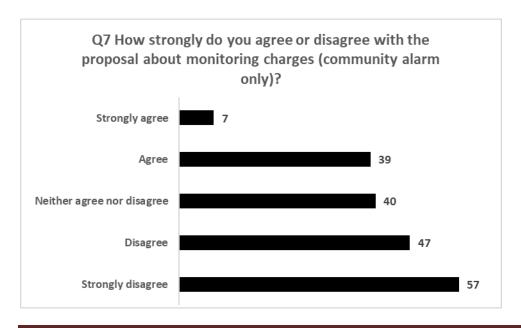
**Concern for vulnerable clients,** with 12 comments such as:

- I believe there are a lot of people that are struggling with funds already and may cancel if they have to pay and will put them at serious risk
- Anybody receiving housing benefit or pension credit has to be struggling financially already. To put another financial burden on these people is unfair. People who rely on these devices for their safety (possibly lives) could lose this service because they cannot afford it. Others may need to go into residential care because they are not safe without it which will be much more expensive to Derbyshire County Council.

**Other,** with 10 or less comments included:

- This is not taking in to account the age group of the people this affects.

**YOUR VIEWS ON PAYING MONITORING CHARGES** (community alarm only): People assessed as eligible to receive a community alarm that is not part of a wider package of care, will be provided with the equipment free of charge, but will need to pay the monitoring cost (currently £2.50 - £5.00 per week) directly to the provider of the service or the Council.



Q7 How strongly do you agree or disagree with the proposal about monitoring charges (community alarm only)?

| | |
|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 7 |
| Agree | 39 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 40 |
| Disagree | 47 |
| Strongly disagree | 57 |

**Question 8** - If you have any other comments about the proposal regarding monitoring charges (community alarm only) please put them in the box below.

Overall, 80 respondents explained their choice. The top themes were as follows:

**Pressure on personal finances,** with 37 comments such as:

- That's a lot of money every month and when you are on pension credit that is a lot of money, particularly at a time when bills are rising
- I can't find money that I haven't got. My ground rent is huge, I just haven't got the money spare
- I have worked hard and paid my taxes all my life why should I have to start paying for a little luxury like this that helps to keep me safe in my old age. £5 a week is £240 a year which is a lot of money to a senior citizen.

**Disagree with the proposal,** with 19 comments such as:

- You have the nerve to put up council tax but are taking services away that are vital especially to the elderly
- I feel strongly it should be free
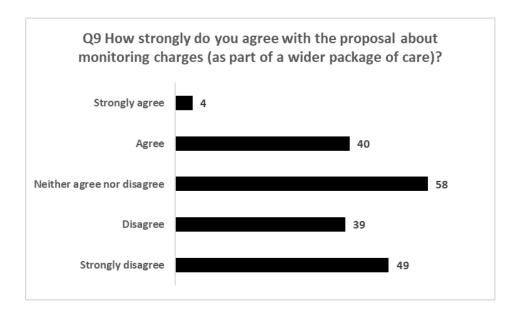- People who are eligible shouldn't have to pay.

**Prepared to pay,** with 12 comments such as:

- I would agree to be charged a small amount, as long as i receive the same service
- If I had to pay it, then I would pay it as I need it so desperately.

**Other,** with 10 comments or less such as:

- I live on my own with just a dog for company and no carers. Without my alarm I doubt I would be found if fallen unless I carried my mobile phone everywhere with me

**YOUR VIEWS ON PAYING MONITORING CHARGES (as part of a wider package of care):** People assessed as eligible and requiring a wider package of care, which includes a community alarm, will be provided with the equipment free of charge but in relation to the ongoing monitoring charges, will be assessed in accordance with the Council's co-funding policy. Further information about co-funding can be found on the Council's website.

## Q9 How strongly do you agree with the proposal about monitoring charges (as part of a wider package of care)?

| Response | Count |
|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 4 |
| Agree | 40 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 58 |
| Disagree | 39 |
| Strongly disagree | 49 |

**Question 10** - If you have any other comments about the proposal regarding monitoring charges (as part of a wider package of care) please put them in the box below.

Overall, 37 respondents gave an explanation for their choice. The top themes were as follows:

**Pressure on personal finances,** with 16 comments such as:

- I reiterate that we are elderly people with deteriorating health who really need this aid and should not have yet another cost to add to the already rising cost of living
- Again, it depends on a person's financial circumstances. If they can contribute, then fine - but if it means that they will no longer have the alarm that would be a worry.

**Disagree with the proposal**, with 12 comments such as:

- We don't have internet we want it to stay the same
- I've received it free since 2003 so why do I have to pay now

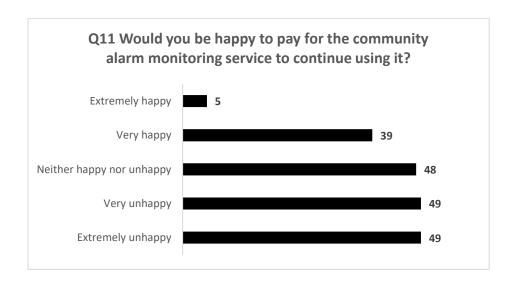**Appreciation of service,** with 6 comments such as:

- My illness worsens by the month, and I will rely on it more often
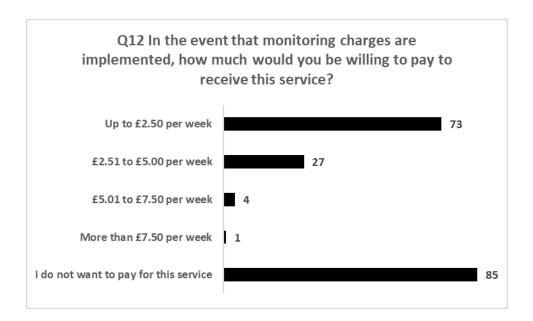- I want to be able to manage in my own home for as long as I can. The alarm helps with that

**Other,** with 10 comments or less such as:

- I feel I live independently without being a burden on anyone. I do get help from my family

**YOUR VIEWS ON PAYING FOR A COMMUNITY ALARM MONITORING SERVICE** Thank you for your comments on the proposals. Should the proposals be agreed by the Council's Cabinet following the consultation, some people who currently receive the service for free may, in future, be required to pay for the monitoring element of the service. In this section, you are asked for your views about this.

### Q11 Would you be happy to pay for the community alarm monitoring service to continue using it?

| | |
|---|---|
| Extremely happy | 5 |
| Very happy | 39 |
| Neither happy nor unhappy | 48 |
| Very unhappy | 49 |
| Extremely unhappy | 49 |

### Q12 In the event that monitoring charges are implemented, how much would you be willing to pay to receive this service?

| | |
|---|---|
| Up to £2.50 per week | 73 |
| £2.51 to £5.00 per week | 27 |
| £5.01 to £7.50 per week | 4 |
| More than £7.50 per week | 1 |
| I do not want to pay for this service | 85 |

**Question 13** - If you have any other comments about the proposed changes, please put them in the box below.

Overall, 59 respondents gave additional comments. The top themes were as follows:

**Pressure on personal finances,** with 27 comments such as:

- Worried that people who can't afford it will end up without one
- Elderly people often worry about money to pay for food heating etc. Charging for this service may put people who need it off getting it installed
- I would sooner have it taken out than pay for it.  I can't afford it. I have enough debt

**Disagree with the proposal,** with 11 comments such as:

- People requiring help that are proved not fit to care for themselves should definitely not have to pay
- The gentleman for whom I am completing this for lives on his own, does not have a landline phone, a mobile phone, or a computer. His community alarm is his ONLY method of communication in an emergency. To expect him to pay for this service is shameful
- The service should be available without having to pay if you are vulnerable to falls or disabled.
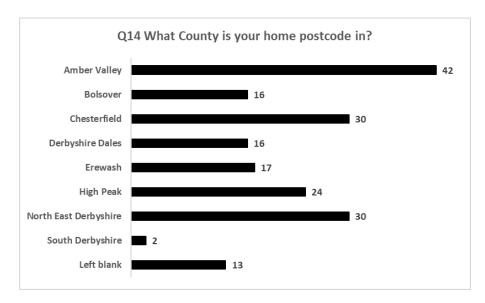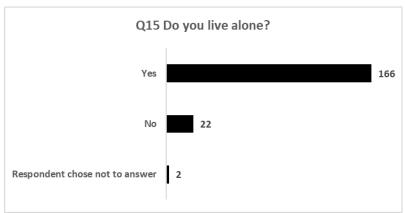
**Prepared to pay,** with 8 comments such as:

- If I have to pay, I want the charge as small as possible
- I haven't paid so far but would be willing to contribute £10 month. As you are aware all other services are increasing and £10 would be my limit
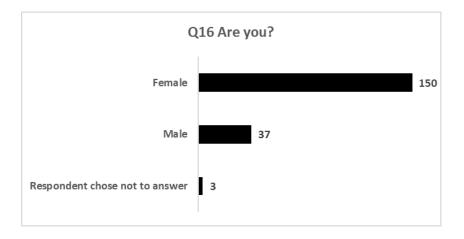
**Other,** with 10 comments or less such as:

- I'd like my personal information to stay within DCC rather than be out sourced to other people

**About you section:**

## Q14 What County is your home postcode in?

| County | Value |
|---|---|
| Amber Valley | 42 |
| Bolsover | 16 |
| Chesterfield | 30 |
| Derbyshire Dales | 16 |
| Erewash | 17 |
| High Peak | 24 |
| North East Derbyshire | 30 |
| South Derbyshire | 2 |
| Left blank | 13 |

## Q15 Do you live alone?

| | Value |
|---|---|
| Yes | 166 |
| No | 22 |
| Respondent chose not to answer | 2 |

## Q16 Are you?

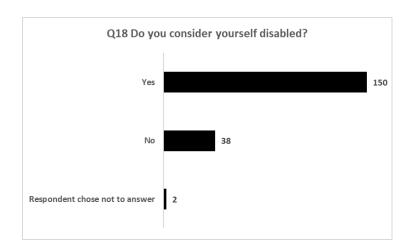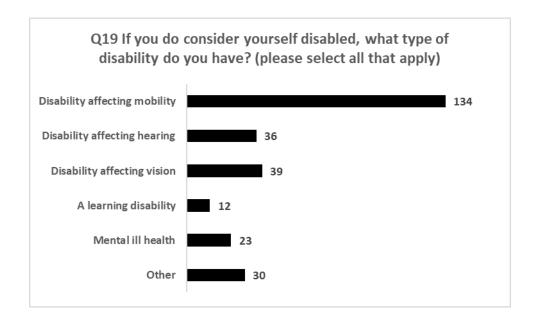| | Value |
|---|---|
| Female | 150 |
| Male | 37 |
| Respondent chose not to answer | 3 |

**Q17** What was your age at your last birthday?

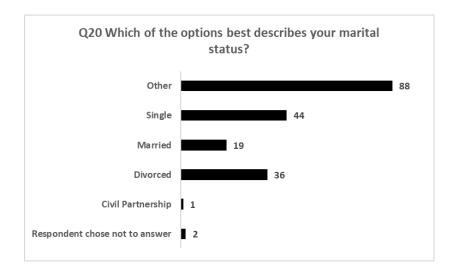186 people answer this question. The minimum age was 27 and the maximum age was 101. This gave an age range of 74 and an average age of 75.

| Count | Sum | Mean | Minimum | Maximum | Range |
|-------|------|------|---------|---------|-------|
| 186 | 3308 | 75.2 | 27 | 101 | 74 |

4 respondents chose not to answer

**Q18 Do you consider yourself disabled?**

- Yes — 150
- No — 38
- Respondent chose not to answer — 2

**Q19 If you do consider yourself disabled, what type of disability do you have? (please select all that apply)**

- Disability affecting mobility — 134
- Disability affecting hearing — 36
- Disability affecting vision — 39
- A learning disability — 12
- Mental ill health — 23
- Other — 30

## Q20 Which of the options best describes your marital status?

| Option | Value |
|---|---|
| Other | 88 |
| Single | 44 |
| Married | 19 |
| Divorced | 36 |
| Civil Partnership | 1 |
| Respondent chose not to answer | 2 |

## Q21 What is your sexual orientation?

| Option | Value |
|---|---|
| Hetrosexual | 147 |
| Bisexual | 2 |
| Lesbian | 2 |
| Other | 7 |
| Prefer not to say | 22 |
| Respondent chose not to answer | 10 |

## Q22 What is your ethnic group?

| Option | Value |
|---|---|
| White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British | 184 |
| Other White background | 3 |
| Other ethnic group | 1 |
| Respondent chose not to answer | 2 |

**Letters, Emails, Telephone Calls, and Meetings:**

Overall, 17 comments were captured from the 9 respondents who chose to respond via email, letter, at a meeting or via telephone call. Of the 17 comments that were captured the following were the top themes:

**Appreciation of service**, with 6 comments such as:

- It allows me to live more independently in the home, yes. I feel safe with it and knowing it's in the place. I still want the system there because it's my lifeline, stops me worrying. You know you've got something and its piece of mind
- I had vertigo; it was causing me to lose cells in the brain. Yes, it did save my life. Otherwise, these brain cells would have died off and I would have been dead.

**Pressure on personal finances**, with 3 comments such as:

- Every year, even when we had a rise, everything goes up by more than the rise in pension. So, we get less than the rise. Get less and less, big worry on gas and electric. I need more as I don't have immune system to keep warm. Every time you have a rise it's taken off you, supermarket puts price up. Before you've got it, it's taken. It's going to be difficult; I pay £60 per month for gas and electric. I know I haven't got enough in. Always had money as a standby. By time it goes up

The remaining 8 comments were stand-alone comments and did not fit in with or constitute any other themes e.g.

- "I understand. It's very little pension when you think about it. There's no rise this year. £5 a week, don't even buy bread and milk. When you've worked all your life from 15 to 60. I had cancer and couldn't carry on, had no choice."