



# Leicestershire's VOICE

## Citizens' Panel Newsletter

Issue 1  
Autumn 2007

## How your views count

Welcome to the first newsletter of the new Leicestershire's Voice Citizens' Panel. Through this newsletter we aim to provide you with feedback and results about the surveys that you take part in. Listening to your views is important if the Council is to provide services that better reflect the priorities of its residents.

Over the last few months, we have been recruiting new panel members. This is progressing well and we now have about 750 members and counting towards our target of 1100.

Over the last year, some of you have helped us by taking part in surveys that tell the County Council about local services and how they can be improved.

This issue of the newsletter focuses on the results of the civil parking enforcement, access to NHS dentistry and school transport surveys that some of you took part in this year.

**We would like to thank you for your valuable contribution.**



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If you require this information in an alternative version such as large print, Braille, tape or help in understanding it in your language, please contact us on the details above

# Access to NHS Dentistry in Leicestershire

In January 2007, the Panel's views were sought by a County Council Scrutiny Review Panel in order to improve their knowledge and understanding about access to dentists.

The results found that 90% of people surveyed regularly attend a dentist. People tend to use dentists that were either near their homes or one that they have always used. Of those not visiting a dentist, cost was the main factor in this decision.

It was found also that of the 13% that had changed dentists in the last year, 6% did so because their dentist was no longer providing an NHS service. Around half of those respondents who had changed said that it was very hard to find a new dentist. The main reason given for this by the majority was that the surgery was 'full'.

Around 8% of people had difficulty obtaining an urgent appointment, 6% of these because the surgery was 'full'. The majority of people surveyed had never tried to access the out of hours dentist service.

19% of people surveyed had children and of these 4% said that they had difficulty in finding an NHS dentist. The main difficulty people had was that the surgery was full.

Out of those surveyed, half didn't know who to complain to if they were unhappy about NHS dental services. When asked where they got their information about NHS dental services from 18.9% said that they got this from friends and family.

55% were unaware of Government changes to NHS dental services which mean that they no longer have to register with a dentist in order to have an appointment.

## Using the Survey Findings

The Scrutiny Panel is concerned at the lack of information and understanding about access to NHS dentistry and is recommending that the Leicestershire and Rutland Primary Care Trust, with the support of local dentists, develop and deliver a Countywide publicity campaign incorporating the following:-

- The range of dental services available in Leicestershire
- Where dentists are located
- Dental charging
- The out of hours service
- The complaints procedure
- Support services such as Patient Advice and Liaison Services

The Leicestershire and Rutland Primary Care Trust is to review the Out of Hours Dental service as it is currently underused and the Panel has also recommended that they explore ways of improving the accessibility of the out of hours dental centre. The PCT is due to report back to the Panel on progress made in improving access to NHS Dentistry provision in twelve months time. For more details, visit [www.leics.gov.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.leics.gov.uk/haveyoursay), click on Recent Consultations – Results and Outcomes and Access to Dentistry in Leicestershire.





# Civil Parking Enforcement

In May 2007, we asked you what your views were on parking enforcement in the County.

The results showed that three quarters of you felt that drivers parking inconsiderately is a problem in the County and the majority (60%) felt that problems caused by inconsiderate parking had got worse.

There was strong agreement for parking restrictions for reasons of safety (95%), access (95%) and reducing congestion (81%). Restrictions for improving air quality had less support but there was still support amongst 57% of respondents.

One in ten felt that it is generally acceptable for drivers to park in restricted areas and less than a quarter of respondents (21%) said that they had reported an illegally parked car. Many of you didn't know who to report illegally parked cars to.

55% of respondents knew about the changes to the responsibility for parking enforcement and 43% didn't.

It was also found that the majority of respondents (90%) felt that it was important that Councils fully enforce existing legal parking restrictions.

## Using the Survey Findings

In May 2007, a website was launched to inform the public about parking related issues. The website address is [www.leics.gov.uk/parkingmatters](http://www.leics.gov.uk/parkingmatters). The website is part of an ongoing publicity campaign to educate and create better awareness of parking restrictions and the reasons why they need to be implemented. You can download information about changes from the website.

Since the survey was undertaken, a new parking attendant service has been launched. There are now 50 new parking attendants Countywide. This is sufficient to cover the 318 miles of parking restrictions in Leicestershire. To view the locations of all on-street parking restrictions in Leicestershire visit the section of the website on how and where to park.

A full programme of repair and renewal to make parking and waiting restrictions legally enforceable by parking attendants has been undertaken. In some cases, this included the replacement of lines and signs which had been missing or damaged for some time. Parking attendants are required to report on any problems with signs and such like.

There was strong support for enforcing parking restrictions and since 16th July when the County Council took over responsibility for enforcement, there have been 3982 on-street and 2354 off-street parking tickets issued.

The Council will use the survey results to further develop its enforcement policy, publicity arrangements and signing approach.

# School Transport

From March 2007 to May 2007, we asked for your views on the provision of mainstream home to school and college transport.

The Council was proposing to increase charges for post-16 transport. It was also proposing a charge for pupils for transport to faith schools, with the charge waived for low income families. It was also proposed that a minimum fare-paying charge be introduced for ineligible students and pupils who currently pay a fee per mile for using spare places on school transport.

The results showed that 82% of panel respondents agreed that parents of students attending faith schools who are not entitled to free transport should make a contribution to the cost of transport.

The vast majority of panel respondents (82%) agreed that a minimum fare-paying charge should be introduced to standardize charges for all students.

The results also showed that just over half of panel respondents agreed that transport to faith schools should be entirely paid for from Council Tax for families on low income. Only 14% agreed that transport to faith schools should be entirely paid for from Council Tax for all students regardless of family income or distance to school from home.

Key areas for concern included the disproportionate effect on large families and the Council have taken this on board in developing the policy.



## Using the Survey Findings

The Cabinet have listened to your views and agreed to increase some school transport charges but also to limit their impact by setting up a hardship fund and capping the maximum cost for larger families.

In detail, the Cabinet has agreed to:

- Charge pupils who use home to school transport to attend faith schools £240 per year from 2008, to contribute to the actual cost of £585 per pupil, per year - with the charge waived for low income families
- Increase the charge for post-16 transport from £60 to £180 from September this year and to £240 from September 2008, to contribute towards the actual cost of £426 per pupil, per year
- Introduce a minimum fare-paying charge of £180 from September this year and £240 from September 2008, for pupils who currently pay 17.5p per mile for using spare places on school transport.

After listening to comments raised during the consultation process, the Cabinet agreed to:

- Ensure that families who send several children aged up to 16 years to faith schools only pay a maximum charge equivalent to two children - £480 per year from September 2008
- Set up a £20,000 hardship fund, administered by the Catholic Diocese, to support transport costs for families just above the threshold for paying charges