Littlehampton Museum

Stakeholder and Community Consultation Report

Pamela Kent, Director
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1. Introduction

1.1 About Pamela Kent Consulting Limited

Pamela Kent Consulting supports strategic, audience and organisational development to the arts, cultural and heritage sectors. The company was founded on a genuine passion to empower organisations within the arts, cultural and heritage sector to think strategically and foster an audience-first mindset.

PKC achieve this by offering support in, audience insight and development, data analysis, community engagement, evaluation and reporting, brand identity development, strategic communications and campaign building, and professional mentoring.

Recent clients include Anaesthesia Heritage Centre, Gate Theatre, Outside In Art, Norden Farm Centre for the Arts, Ado Ato Pictures, Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival, Sussex Past, Heads On NHS, Vincent Dance Theatre, The Audience Agency and Affordable Art Fair.

1.2 Consultation Aims

Littlehampton Museum are going through a unique period of development, having secured an 'Unlocking Collections' project grant from the National Lottery for 'Project Time Machine.' This funding will enable the museum to make the best use of their collections and better engage their community, placing them at the heart of future museum planning.

This has ignited a need to review and explore new ways of working including the development of their Audience Development Plan and Collecting Policy, with the community engagement consultation with audiences and stakeholders quantifying these strategic approaches.

The key aims of this community consultation is to:

- identify barriers to community participation and produce plans on how to remove or reduce these.

- inform how best to use the social history collections as effective community resources, allowing for greater connection and engagement.

- allow for the representation of invisible histories/exploration of identities that are currently 'hidden' within the collections.

- embed an interest, pride and ownership in the history and culture of Littlehampton.

The findings of the consultation will also inform the planning of the second part of the project: working with community volunteers to catalogue, review, and re-store their social history collection.

2. Methodology

The methods adopted aimed to be accessible and comprehensive, taking a double diamond approach to this work, using evidence and insight, and consulting stakeholders throughout the initial stages. This would generate insights and inspiration which could then be filtered into the report and inform the museums future planning, policy approach and strategy. The methods proposed to conduct the consultation work formed a community survey, one to one stakeholder interviews and focus groups to provide multiple touchpoints and methods for collecting responses and essential data, quantitative and qualitative.

2.1 Community Surveys

A community survey, taking approximately 10 minutes was created and available to complete online via Microsoft Forms by PKC, distributed by LM via their website, through their social media channels and on social media ads.

Additionally available as a downloadable PDF version on the museum website, a physical copy available at the museum reception desk and printed copies available in person through the museum team at several community events off-site during the consultation period.

A large print version and additional language versions were also made available and distributed to make the survey more accessible to all. The LM team offered in person support at events to complete the survey for those with additional needs or support requirements. The survey featured a mix of multiple-choice, rating, scale and open-ended questions to capture a wide range of feedback and was aimed at the public living in Littlehampton. The analysis included in this report is taken from data collected between 23rd May and 6th August 2024.

2.2 Stakeholder Interviews

A set of 16 interviews took place, facilitated by PKC, with a range of stakeholders who were selected due to their experience working with / close relationship with / support for the museum or other cultural activity within Littlehampton, which could provide valuable insight to the research aims. They were well placed to provide informed feedback on their individual needs and preferences and the range of communities they represented. Data gathered through the discussions has been analysed thematically to illustrate some of the analysis. Each interview lasted up to 30 minutes and took place via Microsoft Teams between 6th June and 9th July 2024.

2.3 Interview Topic Guide

1. Motivations and Barriers

How often do you visit Littlehampton Museum, and what typically motivates your visits?

If you don't visit often or at all, can you share the main reasons or barriers that prevent you from visiting?

What accessibility measures or features are important to you when visiting a museum?

What other local attractions do you visit, and how do they compare to your experiences with Littlehampton Museum?

Are there specific exhibitions or activities that would encourage you to visit more frequently?

What strategies could Littlehampton Museum employ to overcome barriers and enhance attendance?

2. Experience and Engagement

Can you describe your last visit to Littlehampton Museum? What activities or exhibitions did you engage with?

How do you feel about the range of activities and exhibitions currently offered by the museum?

Which types of collections (e.g., social history, art, natural history) are you most interested in, and why?

How would you rate your overall experience out of ten when visiting the museum, and what factors contributed to this rating?

What types of new activities or ways to engage with the museum would interest you the most?

3. Community Perception and Peer Analysis

How would you explain what Littlehampton Museum does to someone who has never heard of it?

Which other local museums or cultural organisations do you visit regularly, and what do you appreciate about their offerings?

In your opinion, how effective is Littlehampton Museum in engaging the community and delivering innovative experiences?

How well do you think Littlehampton Museum represents diverse voices and stories within its collections?

What three words would you use to describe Littlehampton Museum?

4. Communications and Content

How do you typically find out about events and activities at Littlehampton Museum?

Which communication channels (e.g., social media, newsletters, local newspapers) do you find most effective for museum information?

How engaging do you find Littlehampton Museum's social media content, and what types of content do you engage with the most?

How can Littlehampton Museum improve its communication and outreach to better reach you and the community?

After visiting the museum, how do you usually share your experience (e.g., social media, word of mouth)?

What suggestions do you have for improving the museum's communication and content to increase community engagement?

5. Final Thoughts

Do you have any additional thoughts or suggestions for Littlehampton Museum?

2.4 Focus Groups and Workshops

A set of 8 focus groups and workshops took place, facilitated by PKC, 1 focus group designed specifically for young people (yrs 13-19) in Wick and one targetted to museum volunteers at Littlehampton Museum, and with leading support from local charity Artswork who facilitated workshops with KS2 students from four primary schools within central Littlehampton and Wick.

Data gathered through the focus groups has been analysed thematically alongside comments from participants to illustrate some of the analysis. Focus groups and workshops were conducted at six locations within Littlehampton, in-person, lasting from 90 minutes to 2 hours tailored to the active participants, and took place between 27th May and 23rd July 2024.

2.5 Focus Group Activity Structure

1. Motivations and Barriers

Use green sticky notes to write down motivations for visiting the museum.

Use red sticky notes to write down barriers for visiting the museum.

2. Experience and Engagement

We want to gather feedback on your experiences and engagement with the museum.

Review the topics (1. Exhibitions 2. Lectures and Talks 3. Community Events 4. Digital / Online 5. Children / YP) then add your experiences using the provided sticky notes.

3. Communications and Content

Write down the communication channels you use to get information about the museum.

Next, note the types of content you prefer (e.g. social post on exhibitions, newsletter update on collections, team updates)

Finally, discuss the effectiveness of these channels and content and post suggestions for improvement

4. Perceptions and Peers

Use this scale diagram to help compare and rate other museums with Littlehampton Museum to answer the following:

How well do these museums engage with their community and deliver innovative experiences?

Use sticky notes provided and place each of the museums along the scale, finally place Littlehampton Museum along this scale. Discuss your ratings and why.

5. Golden Ticket and Final Thoughts

You have a 'golden ticket' to change one thing at Littlehampton Museum, what would it be?

Then with this change in place, how would you feel about visiting afterward?

Use this time to reflect on any subject discussed in the focus group

2.6 Workshop Structure

1. **Perception**

What words do you think of when you hear the word 'museum'?

2. **Experience and Engagement**

Have you been to Littlehampton Museum?

What do you like about the Littlehampton Museum?

3. **Motivations**

If you haven't been, what would make you want to go? Or what would make you want to return?

2.7 Sample Size and Margin of Error

A total of 471 participants took part in the consultation. 403 survey questionnaires were completed; this gives a margin of error of c. 4.5% at the 95% confidence level.

This means that we can be 95% sure that if we had asked any of the questions shown to the entire population (i.e. the population of Littlehampton as outlined in the 2021 census), a proportion of no more than between 4.5% higher and 4.5% lower than the one given would have also picked that answer.

A good margin of error for a survey typically depends on the context and the level of precision required, a common standard is around 3–5%. This range is used in public opinion polls and market research because it balances accuracy with practicality.

3. Findings

3.1 Motivations and Barriers

3.1.1 Survey Findings

The majority of respondents visit the museum up to three times a year (33%), with a significant portion also visiting annually (30%). Only a small percentage of respondents visit weekly (3%) and monthly (9%). There was a significant number of respondents who had never visited (14%).

The most common reason for not visiting the museum is a lack of time (24%), followed by a lack of marketing or information about the museum (18%), followed by a lack of knowledge of the museum (11%).

The primary motivation for visiting the museum is to learn about the history of the town, accounting for 25% of multiple responses, this was closely followed by a specific interest in a collection or exhibition (17%).

In terms of alternative regular attractions to the museum, the beach is the most popular, accounting for 20% of the multiple-choice count, followed closely by Mewsbrook park (15%), the harbour (14%) highlighting the popularity of those high footfall areas within the town.

Respondents typically visit the museum with their families (42%), interestingly then followed by a preference to attend alone (22%) closely followed by attending with friends (21%) meaning the majority of those attending see this as a social space but one they can enjoy as a solo excursion perhaps as an educational experience.

Accessibility is hugely important to respondents; 80.9% viewing on-site toilets as very important (41.1%) or quite important (39.8%), with 77% viewing seating areas and benches as very important (38.4%) and quite important (38.6%) and improved wheelchair access also featuring high in importance across the top two (50.3%) and on-site parking (48.7%). It is clear the existing facilities, particularly toilets are not fit for purpose or appropriate for a public museum space.

Respondents highlighted several facilities and features that would encourage them to visit more frequently. The most requested additions include a café (19%) and improved toilet facilities (16%), both of which would significantly enhance the visitor experience. There is also a notable interest in exhibits that focus on local communities and cultures (15%), as well as adult workshops and creative activities (15%). Additionally, the desire for more comfortable seating areas (14%) suggests that visitors value spaces where they can relax during their visit.

3.1.2 Interview Findings

Stakeholders are driven by an interest in local history, family connections, and specific historical ties to Littlehampton. Many interviewees mentioned a strong personal connection to the area.

Exhibits that resonate with personal interests, such as the Roman Villa findings, Wicked Little Letters, archaeology collections, and events like the Roman's Day, are significant motivators.

Personal recommendations and word-of-mouth are crucial and awareness of events via trusted peers plays a significant role in motivating visits.

"Lots of people are interested in the family connections to Littlehampton and coming to see what information you've got on their family's history."

"The exhibits that resonate, like the Roman findings and local artifacts, drive visits."

A recurring theme is the difficulty in finding the museum due to inadequate signage and lack of visibility. Stakeholders suggested improved signposting and external banners to enhance visibility.

The museum's current location is perceived as less accessible and less visible compared to more central or high-footfall areas. Additionally, its position in a multi-use council building can create a perceived barrier of entry, as unsure if it's open / 'for them'

There is a lack of awareness about the museum and its offerings, particularly among new residents and younger demographics. Some stakeholders were unaware of the museum's existence until actively seeking it out.

"I've had lots of comments about people saying it was very difficult to find."

"It's not in a very visible place as you get into town. If it was on the seafront where all the stalls are, it would get all the foot flow from there."

"Honestly until I was looking for it, I didn't know that there was a museum in Littlehampton."

3.1.3 Focus Group Findings

Participants emphasised their motivation to engage with the museum due to a general interest in culture and history, particularly local history. Many felt that the museum plays a crucial role in preserving and showcasing Littlehampton's heritage.

There was strong support for the educational value provided by the museum, particularly for younger audiences. School programmes and interactive exhibits were seen as key draws.

Some attendees noted that the museum serves as a community hub, where people can connect over shared history and cultural experiences.

"School trips were fun, but I wouldn't have come otherwise. It's kind of hidden."

Consistent with the interviews, the location of the museum was highlighted as a barrier. Participants noted the difficulty in accessing the museum due to its somewhat 'hidden' location.

There was a consensus that more could be done to raise awareness of the museum and its offerings. Some participants suggested that the museum is often overlooked in favour of other attractions due to limited visibility and marketing.

Some participants mentioned that the museum's image might be outdated, with a need for modernisation both in exhibits and in how the museum markets itself.

"People don't even know it's there until they are told."

"It's a bit out of the way, not where people usually go unless they are looking for it."

"I only go when there's something specific on that interests me, like the Roman exhibit."

3.1.4 Workshop Findings

When asked what might motivate participants to go / return to the museum three clear themes appeared. Better advertising for enhanced visibility was suggested to attract attention.

The students also expressed a desire for creative games that would help them learn and make the museum experience more engaging and fun.

The children mentioned that a lot of the exhibits feel the same all the time, indicating a desire for more diverse and frequently updated displays.

'a bright, colourful sign'

3.2 Experience and Engagement

3.2.1 Survey Findings

Many respondents have engaged with exhibitions (38%), followed by community events (14%) and lectures and talks (14%). These activities are the primary ways in which visitors interact with the museum.

The most familiar collections among respondents are Social History (e.g., history of the town and its people) (23%), followed by Archaeology (e.g., Roman and Iron Age finds) (16%), and Art

(paintings, drawings, and prints) and Documents (both 15%). These collections seem to resonate most with visitors.

This is further reflected in the collections that respondents are most interested in learning more about or seeing in an exhibition; Social History (22%), followed by Archaeology and Documents (both 17%), and Art (15%).

In terms of introducing new activity to the museum, the most popular include History trails with audio guides and old photos (19%) and Community-led exhibitions (18%). Other notable interests include Pop-up exhibitions around town (16%) and an online searchable database of collections (14%). These preferences indicate a strong desire for both interactive, immersive experiences and opportunities for the community to play a more active role in the museum's offerings.

Many respondents rated their overall experience positively, with 44% giving it a rating of 4 and 30% rating it as 5 (excellent). Additionally, 24% rated their experience as 3 (neutral). Only a small percentage rated their experience as 2 or 1 (2%).

When asked to delve further into their rating, respondents provided further insights into those main factors that contribute to their experiences:

"Lovely layout, staff at reception are wonderfully friendly and welcoming!"

"It is a small space to be able to showcase the large amount of the resources available."

"As a newbie to the area, I enjoyed a small introduction to the history of the area."

When asked how they would prefer to support, 29% of respondents indicated a preference for contributing to donation boxes at the museum, making it the most popular choice. 23% expressed interest in volunteering their time, highlighting a strong community willingness to get involved. Smaller groups expressed interest in participating in fundraising events (15%) or making a one-time donation online (10%). However, 10% of respondents selected "None of the above," suggesting that some visitors may not be able to offer support.

3.2.2 Interview Findings

The personalised and friendly atmosphere of the museum is highly appreciated. Stakeholders value the interactive and engaging nature of the museum, especially during specific events and exhibitions.

Events like the Armed Forces Day, and the Wicked Little Letters exhibit have been highlighted as particularly engaging and successful. Interactive elements such as the letterbox with letters in the Wicked Little Letters exhibit were well-received.

Programmes and activities for children, such as the Roman's Day activities and holiday events, are seen as highly effective in engaging younger audiences.

"The Roman's Day which we did in the summer and we got people who were proper Roman's demonstrators and they came and they did Roman's fighting with kids and it was brilliant."

"We did the Romans last year which was good for schools and the kids loved that."

While the current range of exhibits is appreciated, there is a desire for more varied and regularly updated content. Stakeholders suggest modernising displays with better lighting and updated cases.

Developing more programmes that cater to a broader audience, including workshops on local history and genealogy, and increasing engagement with younger and middle-aged audiences, is recommended.

Issues with non-functioning technical equipment, such as TVs and audio guides, detract from the overall experience. Ensuring that all interactive elements are in working order is crucial.

"I think some of it looks a bit old. Well, old-fashioned. You know more modern museums have better display cases and better lighting and things like that."

"I think the range of activities could expand. Similar to Amberley or somewhere."

"There's interactive things like the TV at the war case which could be a lot better. They kind of, don't work very well."

3.2.3 Focus Group Findings

Participants praised specific exhibits, particularly those that were interactive or tied to local history. Focus group members wanted to see a focus in the museum's efforts to engage the community through events like lecture series, community days, and more children's activities.

There was a call for a greater variety of exhibits, including more frequent updates to keep the museum fresh and relevant. Participants also suggested expanding the scope of exhibits to include more contemporary history and cultural themes.

Several participants highlighted the need for better use of technology in exhibits. This includes improved audio-visual elements, interactive digital content, and possibly the incorporation of virtual reality experiences.

The lack of comfortable seating areas was mentioned a lot, particularly for older visitors. There were also consistent suggestions for a small café or refreshment area to enhance the overall visitor experience and increase dwell time.

"Interactive exhibitions make it fun. I loved the Roman's Day."

"More hands-on stuff, especially for younger kids and teenagers."

"The history is interesting, but the displays need updating to keep people coming back."

"Events like community days or themed weekends could bring more people in."

3.2.4 Workshop Findings

Less than 50% of the workshop participants had visited Littlehampton Museum, this suggests there may be a lack of outreach or awareness among this age group. This provides an opportunity for the museum to increase its visibility and appeal to those young audiences.

The students were particularly interested in objects that have a clear historical context, such as those related to different periods or conflicts. Additionally, exhibits related to local maritime history could be particularly engaging for young visitors.

3.3 Community Perception and Peer Analysis

3.3.1 Survey Findings

In evaluating how well various peer museums tell their stories, the Royal Pavilion in Brighton stands out, with 25.4% of respondents rating it as "Excellent," indicating a strong connection with its audience. Petworth House also received high ratings, with 24.4% of respondents rating it as "Excellent" and 33.1% as "Good," reflecting its strong appeal to visitors.

Amberley Museum and Fishbourne Roman Palace were similarly well-regarded, with 24.4% and 22.6% of respondents rating them "Excellent," respectively, highlighting their effectiveness in engaging visitors with their exhibits. In contrast, venues like Horsham Museum and Marlipins Museum had higher "Not at all" and "Unsure" ratings, with 7.8% of respondents indicating that Horsham Museum does not effectively tell its story. Marlipins Museum had 61.3% of respondents who were "Unsure," suggesting a potential lack of awareness with this museum.

When reviewing how well certain descriptive words reflect Littlehampton Museum, the term "Welcoming" stood out, with 46.3% of respondents feeling it completely encapsulates the museum's atmosphere. Similarly, 40.6% of respondents found "Interesting" to be a highly accurate descriptor, reinforcing the museum's appeal. The word "Safe" also resonated strongly, with 46.2% agreeing that it perfectly describes their experience at the museum.

The term "Boring" was overwhelmingly rejected, with 35.6% of respondents rating it as "Not at all" accurate. While "Fun" was seen as somewhat reflective by 37.2% of respondents, fewer (17.5%) felt it completely captured their experience. These insights suggest that visitors view Littlehampton Museum as a welcoming, interesting, and safe environment, while largely rejecting any negative associations.

Respondents were asked for three key descriptors they frequently associate with the museum. The most prominent words include "Friendly," "Local," "Welcoming," "Interesting," and "Relevant."

These terms reflect a strong positive perception of the museum's atmosphere and its connection to the community.

Similarly, the frequent mention of "Local" and "Relevant" indicates that visitors appreciate the museum's focus on local history and its significance to the community. These insights suggest that Littlehampton Museum is successfully creating an environment that is perceived as warm, engaging, and closely tied to its local heritage.

Many respondents feel that Littlehampton Museum tells the town's story effectively, when asked to rate between 1–5; 44% gave it a rating of 4 and 26% rating it as 5, indicating that the museum is perceived as doing a good to excellent job in this regard.

However, 27% of respondents provided a neutral rating of 3, suggesting that while the museum's storytelling is generally appreciated, there is still room for enhancement. Only a small portion of respondents rated it poorly, with 3% giving it a 2 and 1% rating it as 1, showing that dissatisfaction is minimal.

When responding to whether the museum represents diverse voices and stories in its collections that reflect the Littlehampton community today, the responses reveal that the community is evenly split between those who feel that it does (42%) and those who are unsure (45%). A smaller percentage (13%) feel that the museum does not adequately reflect diverse voices and stories. This indicates that while a significant portion of the community recognises the museum's efforts in this area, there is also a considerable amount of uncertainty. This provides an opportunity for the museum to better communicate and showcase its work in representing diverse perspectives or to engage more directly to improve these perceptions.

3.3.2 Interview Findings

The museum is seen as an important cultural and historical hub for Littlehampton, but there is a need to increase its visibility and perceived value within the community.

The personal touch of the museum is seen as a key strength compared to larger, less personal institutions. Stakeholders appreciate the local focus and the ability to engage directly with the museum staff.

Stakeholders suggested looking at other local attractions like Amberley Museum and Worthing Museum for inspiration on outdoor activities, seasonal events, and effective advertising strategies.

"Worthing Museum is a bit bigger but I do think Worthing doesn't have the personal touch that we have here."

"Amberley Museum's quite good for that because that's an open-air museum."

3.3.3 Focus Group Findings

Many participants felt that the museum is an undervalued resource within the community. There was a perception that not enough people are aware of the museum's offerings, and that it could play a more prominent role in the cultural life of Littlehampton.

Comparison with other museums: The museum was compared to other local museums as part of an activity. While participants recognised that Littlehampton Museum is smaller, they felt it could learn from the more modern and diverse exhibits offered by its peers.

Museums rated as excellent: Amberley Museum, Weald and Downland Living Museum

Museums rated as good: Worthing Museum, Arundel Museum

Museums rated as unsure: Rustington Museum, The Novium, Chichester.

Museums rated as somewhat: Fishbourne Roman Palace

Museums rated as not at all: Brighton Museum

Littlehampton Museum split opinion amongst participants but was placed within good and somewhat throughout, with participants expressing concerns about its outdated presentation, limited interactive elements, and insufficient visibility. The feedback suggests a clear need for modernisation and improved outreach efforts to better position the museum within the community and against its peers.

There was a strong recommendation to rebrand and modernise the museum's image. Participants suggested more dynamic marketing campaigns, possibly involving local influencers or collaborations with schools and community groups.

Building partnerships with other local cultural organisations was seen as a way to enhance the museum's profile and draw in more visitors.

"I didn't even know it was there until a friend mentioned it. It's not well advertised."

"Compared to other local museums, it feels a bit old-fashioned. They could learn from places like Worthing."

"It could be more modern, like using tech or apps to make the experience better."

"The museum could work more with local schools or youth clubs to get the word out."

3.3.4 Workshop Responses (KS2 groups)

Common words when the groups were asked of what you think of when you think of museums; Mystery (x3), Old, Artifact, Historic, Past, Magic, Fossils, Ancient, Egypt, Mosaic, Statues, Grand, Dinosaurs, Nature stuff, Bones.

The children associate museums with words that evoke a sense of mystery, history, and discovery. Words like "mystery," "magic," and "grand" suggest that they see museums as places filled with the unknown and the exciting.

Terms like "fossils," "bones," "dinosaurs," and "ancient" indicate a strong association with historical and natural history exhibits. This shows that the children are particularly drawn to exhibits that feature ancient civilisations, natural history, and unique artifacts.

3.4 Communications and Content

3.4.1 Survey Findings

Findings show that social media is the most common channel for finding out about Littlehampton Museum activities, with 15% of respondents using it. This is closely followed by the website at 14% and events when at the museum at 13%. Traditional channels like Leaflets / Posters and Local newspapers / magazines are also significant, representing 13% and 10% of responses. Other digital channels, such as search engines and email newsletters, account for a smaller share of 6% and

6% respectively. This suggests that while social media is key, a multi-channel approach is essential to reach a diverse audience.

Facebook emerges as the most used social media platform among respondents, with 35% reporting that they regularly engage with it. YouTube and Instagram are also significant, with 21% and 20% engagement, respectively, indicating strong visual and video content consumption, while 8% report that they "never use" social media.

Many respondents find Littlehampton Museum's social media content moderately engaging, with 41% rating it a 3 out of 5. A significant portion of respondents view the content more favourably, with 23% giving it a 4 and 14% rating it the highest at 5. However, 13% of respondents find the content not engaging at all (rating it 1). This suggests that while a good number of respondents appreciate the museum's social media efforts, there is still room for improvement to better engage the audience and elevate the overall content.

After visiting, over half of the respondents (54%) share their experience through word of mouth, primarily with friends, making it the most common method of sharing. Additionally, 13% of visitors indicated that they don't usually share their experience, while 20% use social media to talk about their visit. A reasonable percentage, 8%, choose to share their experiences through online reviews or blogs. This indicates that Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are the primary platforms where the museum should focus its social media efforts to reach the largest audience effectively.

3.4.2 Interview Findings

Social media, local newspapers, leaflets, and newsletters are the primary ways stakeholders hear about the museum's events and activities. However, there is a call for more targeted outreach through community groups, schools, and high-footfall locations.

Personal recommendations and word-of-mouth play a significant role in raising awareness about the museum's offerings, suggesting a more structured ambassador scheme would be useful.

Suggestions for digital marketing were regular, improving the website and social media engagement by sharing behind-the-scenes content, stories about the museum's collections, and regular updates.

Some discussed increasing interactivity by asking questions and actively engaging with followers.

Interviewees suggested partnering with local schools, community groups, and high-traffic locations like train stations and supermarkets to enhance awareness and engagement.

Some suggested utilising local Facebook groups and community newsletters to reach a broader audience.

A number of participants suggested developing a dedicated museum newsletter separate from the town council's communications to focus on museum-specific news and events. Highlighting some are unaware this is currently running on a monthly basis already.

"I think social media is good. I think they have good stuff on Facebook."

"When I told them what they could find out about D-Day they were amazed, just didn't know."

"Having someone a bit more dedicated to social media, having a schedule for when to post regularly, making that an interactive thing by asking questions and actively engaging with people."

"More school involvement, then that would go out to the parents, that would filter down."

"Perhaps it would be better if the museum had a newsletter, to focus on museum-specific news."

3.4.3 Focus Group Findings

Participants noted that current communication efforts, particularly through social media and local press, have limited reach. Some felt that the museum's social media presence was not as engaging as it could be.

Flyers and posters were mentioned as effective tools for reaching older demographics, but there was a consensus that these need to be more visually appealing and widely distributed.

There was a clear call for a more robust and interactive social media presence. Suggestions included regular updates, engaging posts that encourage community interaction, and the use of more visual content like videos and photo galleries.

Some participants proposed the idea of a monthly or bi-monthly email newsletter to keep the community informed about upcoming events and new exhibits.

"Social media could be used better, maybe more engaging posts and stories."

"I heard about the Roman exhibit through a flyer, but I don't remember seeing much online."

"They need to send out more newsletters or maybe have a dedicated app to keep people informed."

"The museum should be on Instagram or TikTok more if they want younger people to notice."

3.5 Final Thoughts and 'Golden Ticket' suggestions

3.4.1 Survey Findings

There is a strong level of support among the respondents to recommend the museum to others. 43% of participants rated their likelihood to recommend the museum at the highest level (5), with another 35% giving a rating of 4. This results in an overall rating of 4.14 out of 5, indicating a generally high level of satisfaction and willingness to promote the museum.

Meanwhile, 17% of respondents provided a neutral rating of 3, suggesting some ambivalence, while a small minority rated their likelihood as low, with 2% rating it as 2 and another 2% as 1. This overall positive feedback reflects a strong base of support and satisfaction among the museum's visitors, though there is a small segment that may need more encouragement or engagement to become advocates for the museum.

We asked respondents to share more about their reasoning to recommend the museum:

"It's a lovely museum that effectively captures the essence of the town, its history and people."

"I would recommend the museum, however I feel like there could be more on the diverse history of the town, which is something I felt was lacking."

"I really like the Museum, although I would like to see it develop further. I'd like to know more about the history of politics in this area, and even more about the maritime role of Littlehampton."

"The museum should stay true to the roots and history of Littlehampton so that both tourists and residents can learn about where they are now living or visiting."

"The Museum could make more of the building (charming) and the maritime history of the town, as well as holding regular community workshops/talks/events."

"It's a great place to go and learn, but I think it could benefit from more space, bigger and better exhibitions, and more frequent updates."

3.4.2 Interview Findings

There is a call for the museum to better reflect the diversity of Littlehampton, including more exhibits and programmes that cater to different cultural backgrounds and interests.

"There seems to be a lot of room to include more about the different cultures and communities that are part of Littlehampton now. It's important that everyone feels represented."

Addressing physical accessibility within the museum, such as providing more seating for elderly visitors, is important. Suggestions also include adding a café to attract more visitors and provide a space for relaxation.

"if they had a café they would probably get lots of people coming in because you know, for sitting down"

Developing a "Young Explorers" club or similar initiatives could help build a lifelong connection with the museum. Focus on making historical stories relevant to present-day interests to attract more visitors.

"'Young Explorers' club could help engage younger audiences"

"It might be small but it's got a lot going for it. It's just getting that message out to people I think"

3.4.3 Focus Group Findings

Participants expressed a desire for the museum to expand its offerings, both in terms of the types of exhibits and the range of activities available. There was a want for more contemporary cultural exhibits and events that reflect the diversity of the local community.

Many felt that the museum could benefit from greater involvement with local schools, businesses, and community groups. This could include more collaborative events and outreach programmes designed to engage different segments of the population.

Groups consistently highlighted a strong desire for a larger, more versatile space or even a completely new venue, commenting that while the museum does an excellent job with its current resources, the limited space constrains its potential.

A bigger venue could allow for more diverse and expansive exhibits, including interactive and digital elements that appeal to younger audiences. This expansion would not only enhance the visitor experience but also help the museum serve as a more significant cultural hub in the community.

By moving to a more prominent and accessible location, possibly in the town's centre or near the seafront, the museum could attract a broader audience, including tourists who might otherwise overlook it. Such a development would enable the museum to host larger events, workshops, and

exhibitions, ultimately fostering greater community engagement and ensuring the museum's sustainability and growth in the long term.

There was also discussion about ensuring the long-term sustainability of the museum. Participants suggested looking into additional funding sources, such as grants or sponsorships, and possibly introducing a small entry fee for special exhibitions to generate revenue.

"I'd love to see more events where you can actually do stuff, like crafting or reenactments"

"It would be great if they did more themed exhibitions that change regularly, so always something new."

"For young people, maybe have gaming nights or something that mixes history with things we're into."

"A café would be a nice addition, a place to sit down after going through the exhibits."

4. Implications

From the consultation outlined above the following implications need to be considered for the development of Littlehampton Museum.

4.1 Location, Building and Space

4.1.1 Visibility and Accessibility

The museum's current location poses significant challenges in attracting visitors due to its lack of visibility and accessibility. The museum is somewhat hidden within a multi-use council building, which diminishes its presence. Relocating to a more central, high-traffic area, or improving signage and external banners could greatly enhance its visibility.

4.1.2 Space Limitations

The limited space within the current building restricts the range and scale of exhibits, workshops, and community events. The museum would benefit from a larger, more versatile space that could accommodate diverse and rotating exhibits, interactive displays, and larger community gatherings. Expanding the museum's footprint or moving to a more spacious venue could significantly improve its capacity to engage with visitors.

4.1.3 Lack of Toilet Facilities

The current lack of adequate toilet facilities is a major issue for visitors, particularly for families and elderly visitors. Many respondents highlighted this as a key factor that diminishes their overall experience. Addressing this by either improving existing facilities or adding new ones is crucial to enhancing visitor satisfaction and accessibility.

4.1.4 Outdoor Space

There is a strong desire for outdoor space associated with the museum that could be used for educational programmes, events, and as a social space. Such a space would provide an

additional attraction, allowing for events that cannot be accommodated indoors, thus broadening the museum's appeal and usability.

4.1.5 Review of Opening Hours

To better serve the community, the museum should review its current opening hours, including the possibility of opening on Sundays and extending hours into the evening, for special events or 'lates'. This would allow more people, particularly those who work during the week, to visit the museum and participate in its programmes. Offering late events, such as exhibition launches or themed evenings, could also attract new visitors and create a more vibrant community atmosphere around the museum.

4.1.6 Introduction of a Café and Shop

Introducing a café and shop within the museum would greatly enhance the visitor experience by providing additional incentives to enter the space and increasing dwell time. A café offers a place for visitors to relax, socialise, and reflect on their museum experience, while a shop with museum-related merchandise could serve as both a revenue stream and a draw for return visits. These amenities would make the museum a more attractive destination, encouraging both longer visits and repeat attendance and reaffirm the 'hub' experience.

4.2 Museum Collections and Displays

4.2.1 Content Modernisation

To stay relevant and engaging, there is a clear need to modernise the museum's exhibits. This includes updating display cases, improving lighting, and incorporating more interactive elements like digital screens and hands-on activities. Modernising the collections displays will not only attract repeat visitors but also appeal to younger demographics who expect more dynamic museum experiences.

4.2.2 Community Representation

There is a growing expectation that the museum's collections should better reflect the diverse voices and stories of the Littlehampton community. This includes curating exhibits that represent different cultural backgrounds, current social issues, and the evolving identity of the town, ensuring that their histories, contributions, and cultural narratives are included and highlighted within the museum's displays. A more inclusive approach to storytelling within the museum's exhibits is essential for resonating with all community members.

4.2.3 Interactive and Immersive Experiences

Visitors are increasingly looking for immersive experiences. Introducing features like history trails with audio guides or in person guides where possible, community-led exhibitions, and pop-up displays around town could significantly enhance visitor engagement. These initiatives would encourage more frequent visits and create a deeper connection between the museum and its community.

4.2.4 Focus on Local History and Stories

The museum's strongest appeal lies in its connection to local history. Expanding exhibits that focus on the town's maritime history, political history, and notable local figures could deepen this connection. Additionally, incorporating more contemporary stories and events would make the museum more relevant to today's audiences.

4.3 Capacity and Resources

4.3.1 Staffing and Volunteer Resources

The museum's current team is very small, which severely limits its ability to expand operations, develop new programmes, or increase opening hours. There is a clear need for additional staff, particularly in roles that support visitor engagement, educational programming, and exhibit development. Expanding the volunteer base could also help alleviate some of these pressures, but this will require a coordinated recruitment and management effort.

4.3.2 Financial Resources and Budget Constraints

The museum's financial resources are limited, which constrains its ability to implement many of the recommended changes. Exploring additional funding sources such as grants, sponsorships, or partnerships with local businesses is essential. Additionally, the council should consider further investment in their cultural assets and address an increased budget to allow for strategic growth, particularly in staffing and infrastructure to show their commitment to culture and heritage in the town.

4.3.3 Development of Educational and Research Facilities

To better serve its educational mission, the museum needs to enhance its facilities to support learning and research. This could include creating dedicated spaces for workshops, lectures, and interactive learning, as well as improving access to the museum's archives and collections for researchers and enthusiasts.

4.3.4 Lack of Dedicated Roles

Currently, there is no dedicated role within the museum team to manage marketing and communications, which is a significant gap. Hiring a professional in this area, even on a part-time basis, could vastly improve the museum's outreach and engagement efforts. This would also free up existing staff to focus on their primary responsibilities, improving overall efficiency and effectiveness.

4.4 Marketing and Communications

4.4.1. Enhanced Digital Presence

The museum's digital marketing efforts, especially on social media, need significant improvement to effectively engage with current and potential visitors. This includes creating regular, engaging content that tells the museum's story, showcases new exhibits, and interacts with the

community. Utilising platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and potentially TikTok, with more visual and interactive content, could draw in a younger audience and having autonomy over when to assign budget and boost posts via social media adverts in real time is essential.

4.4.2 Multi-Channel Communication

While social media is vital, the museum needs to maintain a robust multi-channel communication strategy to reach all demographic groups. This includes traditional media like local newspapers, leaflets, and community bulletin boards, alongside digital channels such as email newsletters and an updated, user-friendly website. Ensuring that these messages are consistent and reinforce the museum's brand is key. Outdoor media in high footfall areas to increase sight and awareness would help support this.

4.4.3 Building a Dedicated Marketing and Communications Role

As mentioned within capacity, the absence of a dedicated marketing and communications role within the museum is a significant barrier to improving outreach and engagement. Establishing this role would allow for more strategic and consistent communication efforts, helping to build the museum's profile and connect more effectively.

4.4.4 Audience Development Strategy

The museum needs support in developing a comprehensive audience development strategy that considers the findings from this consultation. This strategy should focus on growing and diversifying the museum's audience, ensuring that efforts are targeted, inclusive, and effective in bringing in new visitors and re-engaging past visitors.

4.4.5 Collaborative Partnerships for Outreach

Partnering with local schools, community groups, and cultural organisations could greatly enhance the museum's visibility and relevance. Collaborative events, cross-promotions, and shared resources can amplify the museum's reach and impact.

4.4.6 Support for Strategy Development

Given the need for a comprehensive approach to marketing and communications, finding external support or consultancy to help develop these strategies could be highly beneficial. This would ensure that the museum's marketing and audience development efforts are professional, cohesive, and aligned with its broader goals.

4.4.7 Development of a Unique Brand

The museum currently shares a visual identity with the council, which may cause confusion and dilute its impact. To stand out and resonate more strongly with the local community, the museum should develop a unique brand that is distinctive from the council's. This includes creating its own logo, tone of voice, and visual identity that reflect its mission, values, and the unique character of Littlehampton. A strong, independent brand will help the museum establish its own identity, making it more recognisable and allowing it to communicate more effectively with its audience.

5. Final Recommendations

5.1 Next Steps

These recommendations are drawn from what interviewees, focus group participants and survey respondents have shared with us; we recognise that some ideas may be financially impossible and others are already in your plans, however, they have the endorsement of your users, people with whom you have partnered, or will in the future, and of members of the public and so have interest and potential value.

Littlehampton Museum stands at a pivotal moment in its development, with a unique opportunity to transform itself from a 'hidden gem' into a central and celebrated cultural hub within the community, with its exceptional collections offering a strong foundation for growth and increased community engagement.

Central to this transformation is the need to enhance and better promote the museum's exhibits, particularly those that highlight Littlehampton's local history and famous figures. Developing dynamic, modern displays and introducing heritage tours that begin and end at the museum will deepen the connection between the museum and the community, making it an essential destination for both residents and visitors interested in the town's rich heritage.

The museum's current location within a multi-use council building, while offering certain conveniences, limits its visibility and accessibility. To overcome these challenges, the museum must either consider relocating to a more central, high-traffic area or significantly enhance its current venue. Improvements could include public toilets, better signage, and the addition of amenities like a café and shop, which would not only attract more visitors but also encourage longer stays and repeat visits. These changes are crucial for positioning the museum as a vibrant and welcoming space within the community.

However, to effectively manage and promote these enhancements, the museum needs to address its capacity issues by expanding its team. Adding dedicated roles in fundraising and marketing is essential to secure the resources needed for growth and to effectively communicate the museum's offerings to a wider audience.

The current team's dedication is commendable, but without additional support, the museum's ability to expand its operations and reach its full potential is limited. Moreover, establishing a unique brand identity, distinct from the council's, will help the museum resonate more strongly with the public, making it more recognisable and increasing its visibility and unique voice.
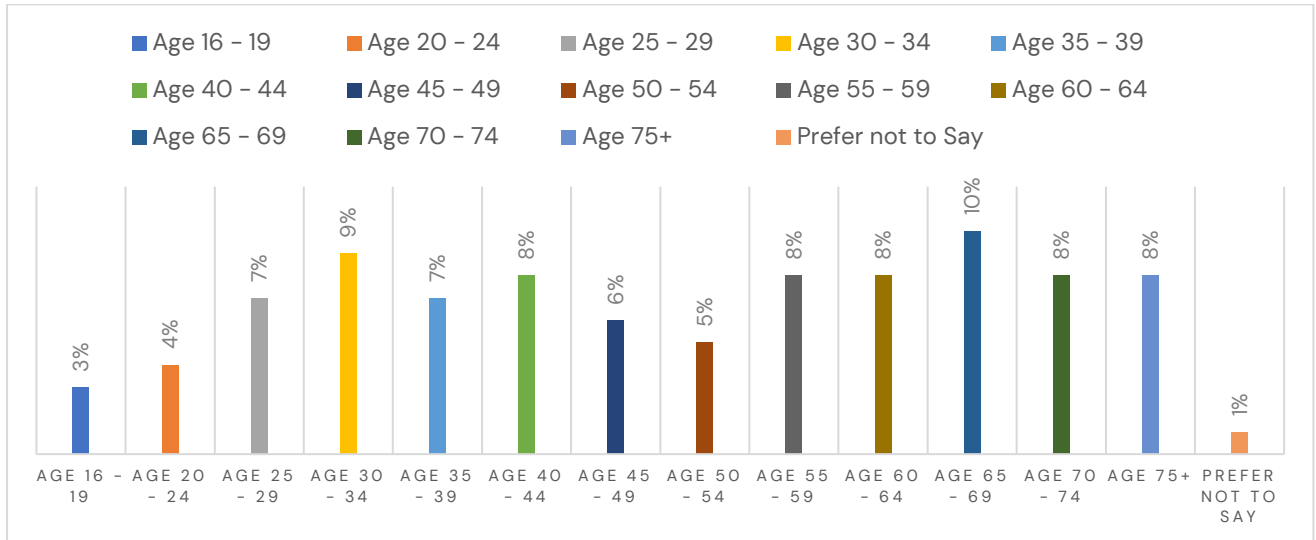
Finally, extending the museum's opening hours to include Sundays and special evenings, coupled with a programme of events such as exhibition launches, lectures, and themed activities, will make the museum more accessible and engaging for a broader audience.

To ensure the museum's long-term sustainability, it is crucial to secure additional funding sources, including grants, sponsorships, and partnerships, while strategically planning for future growth. Through strategic improvements in its collections, visitor experience, and outreach efforts, the museum can enhance its visibility, engage a broader audience, and establish itself as a key destination for both locals and visitors. This evolution will ensure that the museum plays a central role in Littlehampton's cultural landscape, fostering a deeper connection between the community and its history while securing the museum's future as an essential institution.
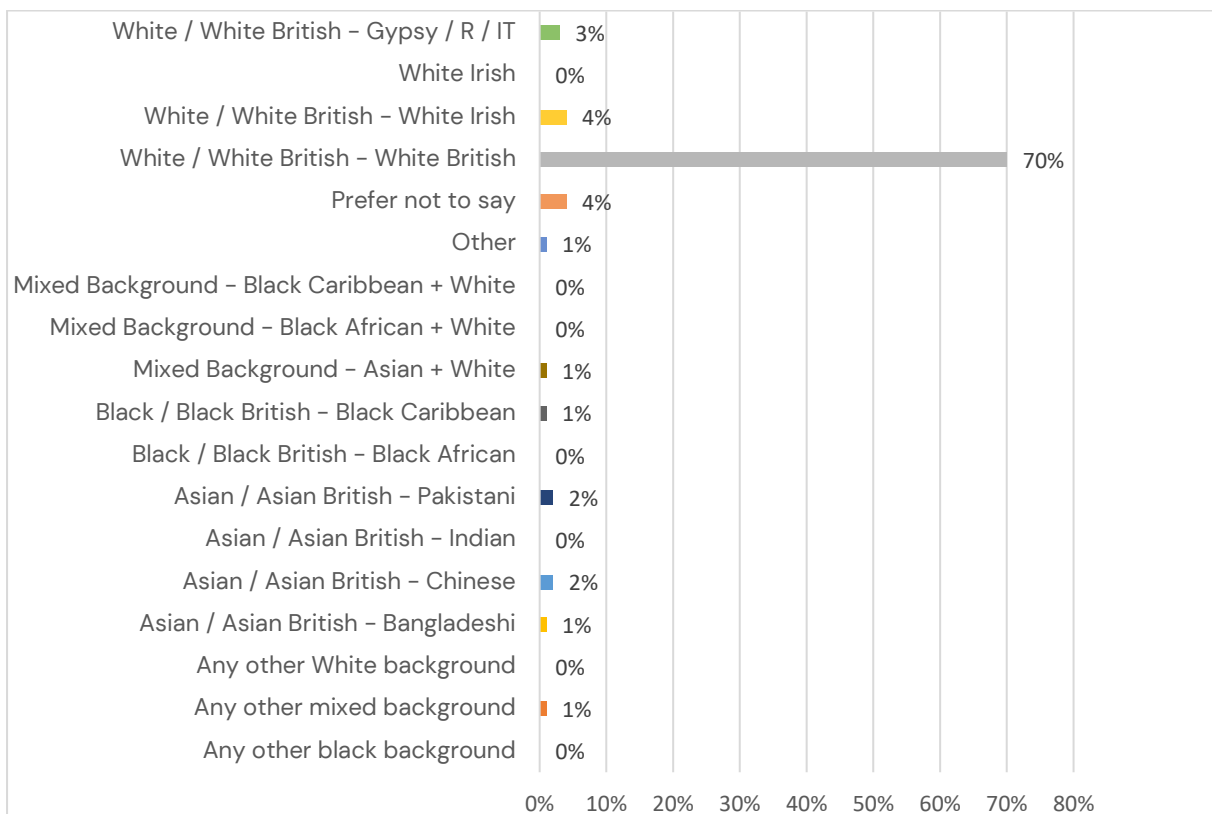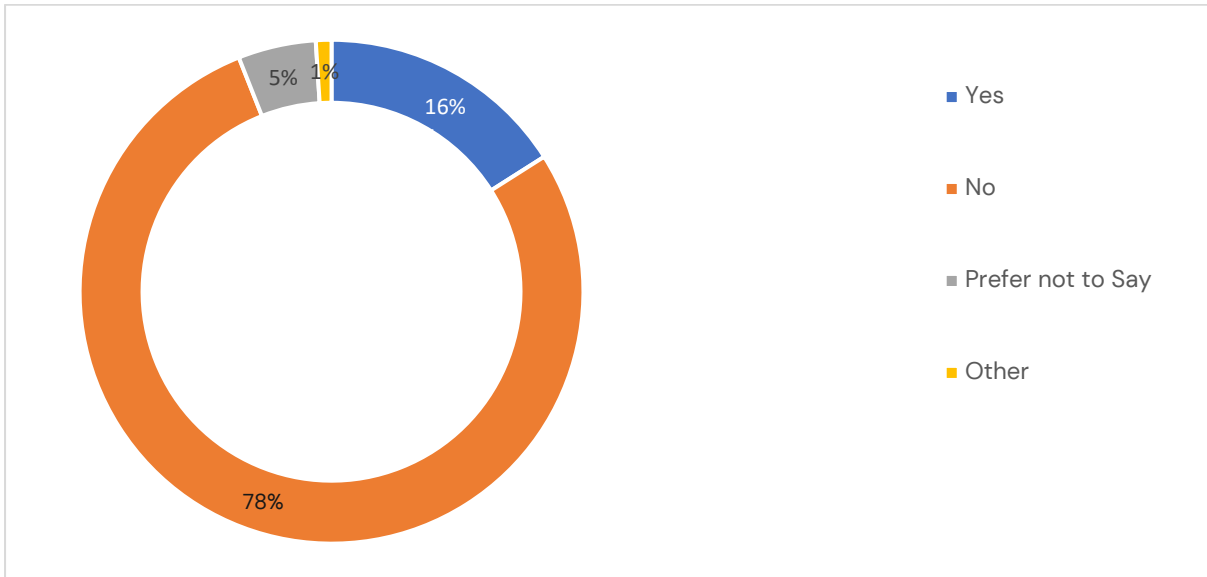
Appendices

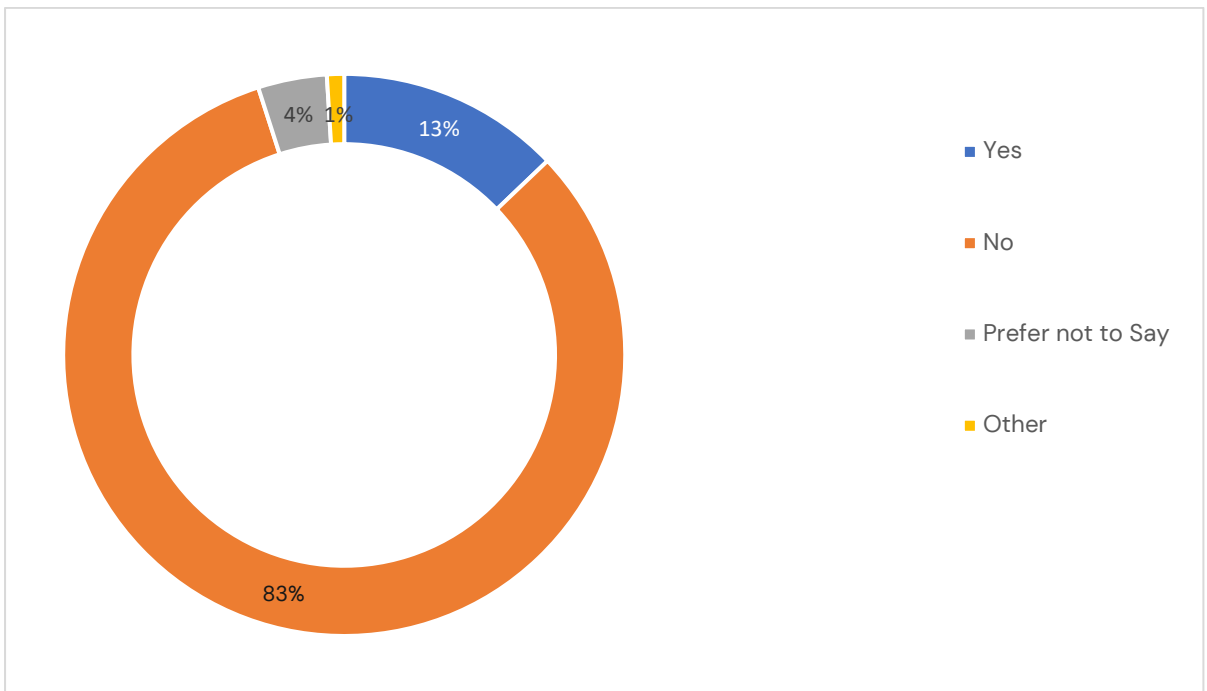## Appendix 1: Survey Data Demographics
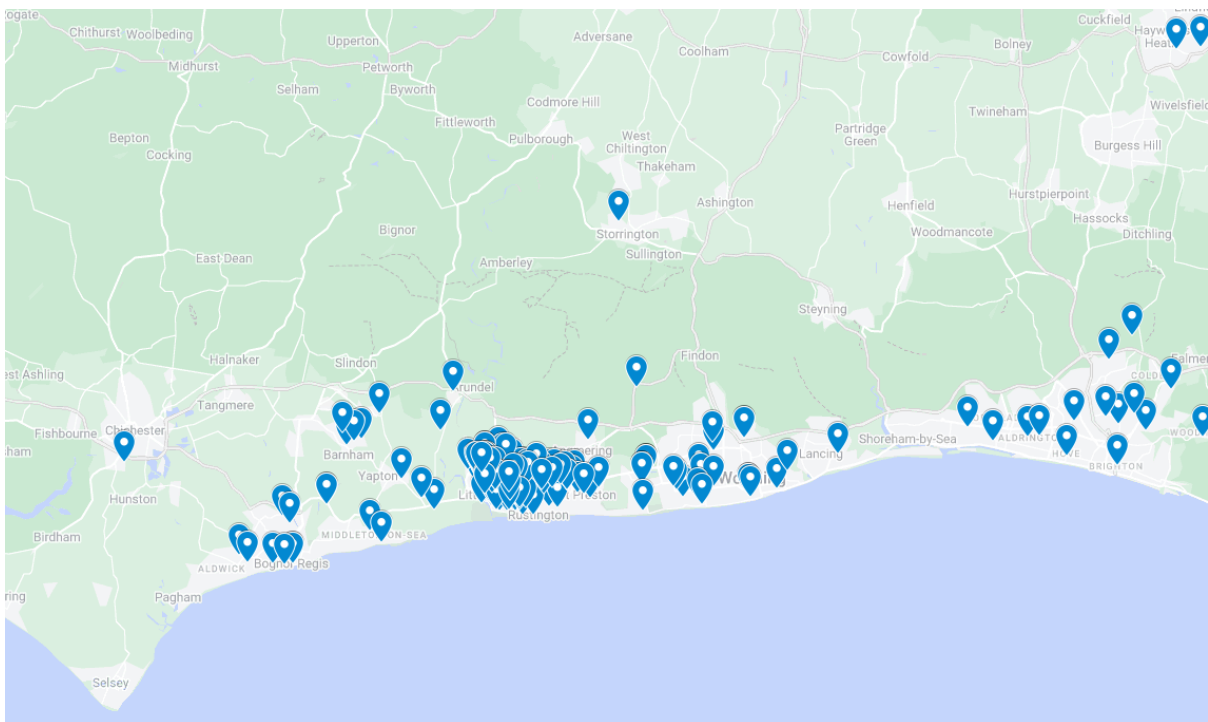
Age

Ethnicity

Disability

Legend: Yes, No, Prefer not to Say, Other

16%
78%
5% 1%

Neurodivergence

Legend: Yes, No, Prefer not to Say, Other

13%
83%
4% 1%

Location

96% of respondents live in the UK

Sex

- Female
- Intersex
- Male
- Prefer not to Say
- Other

63% Female, 32% Male, 4% Prefer not to Say, 1% Intersex, 0% Other

Gender

Category	Percentage
Gender Fluid	1%
Female	60%
Intersex	0%
Male	30%
Non-binary	0%
Prefer not to say	5%
Transgender	0%
Prefer to self-describe / other	1%
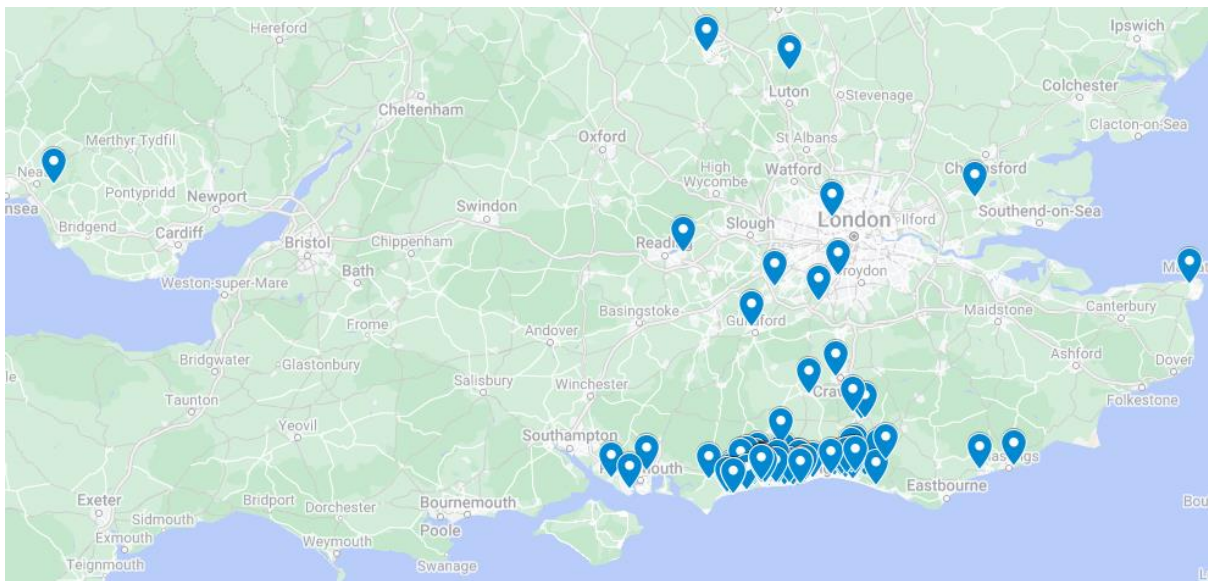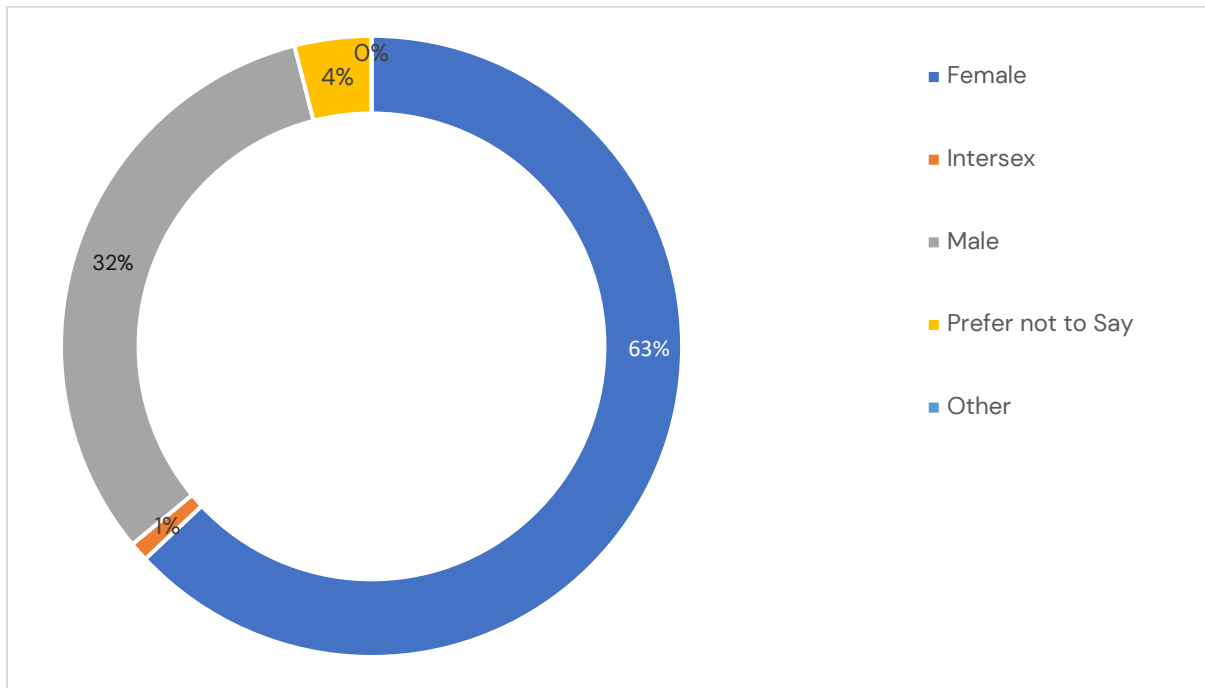
- Gender Fluid
- Female
- Intersex
- Male
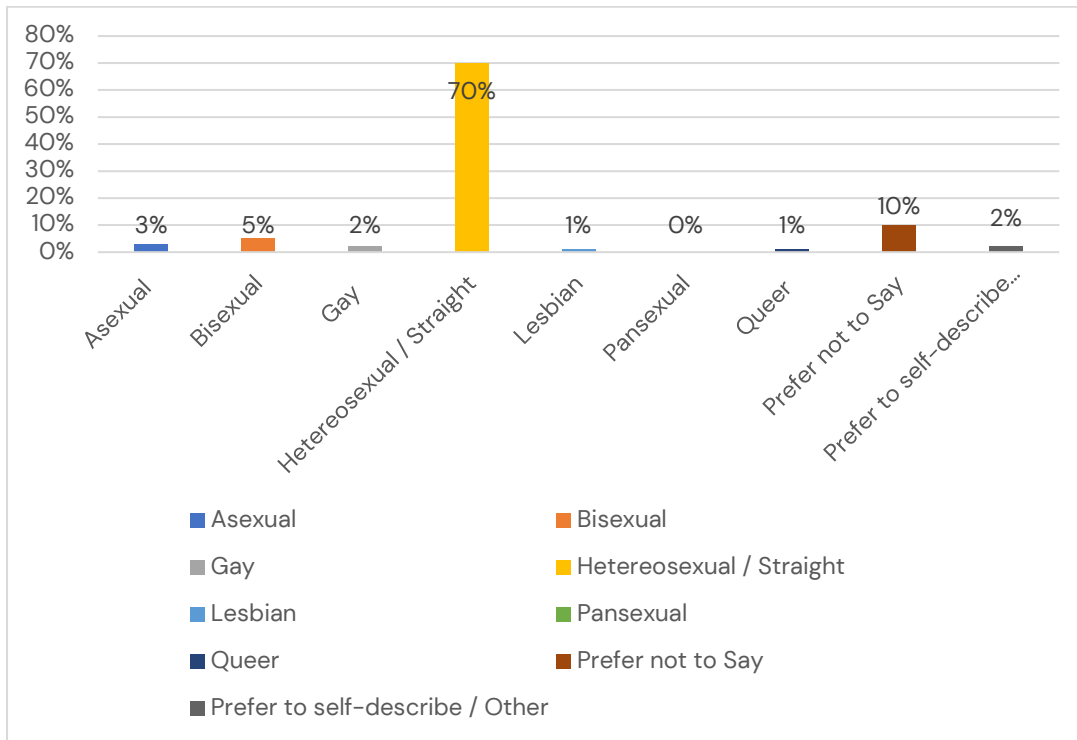- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Transgender
- Prefer to self-describe / other
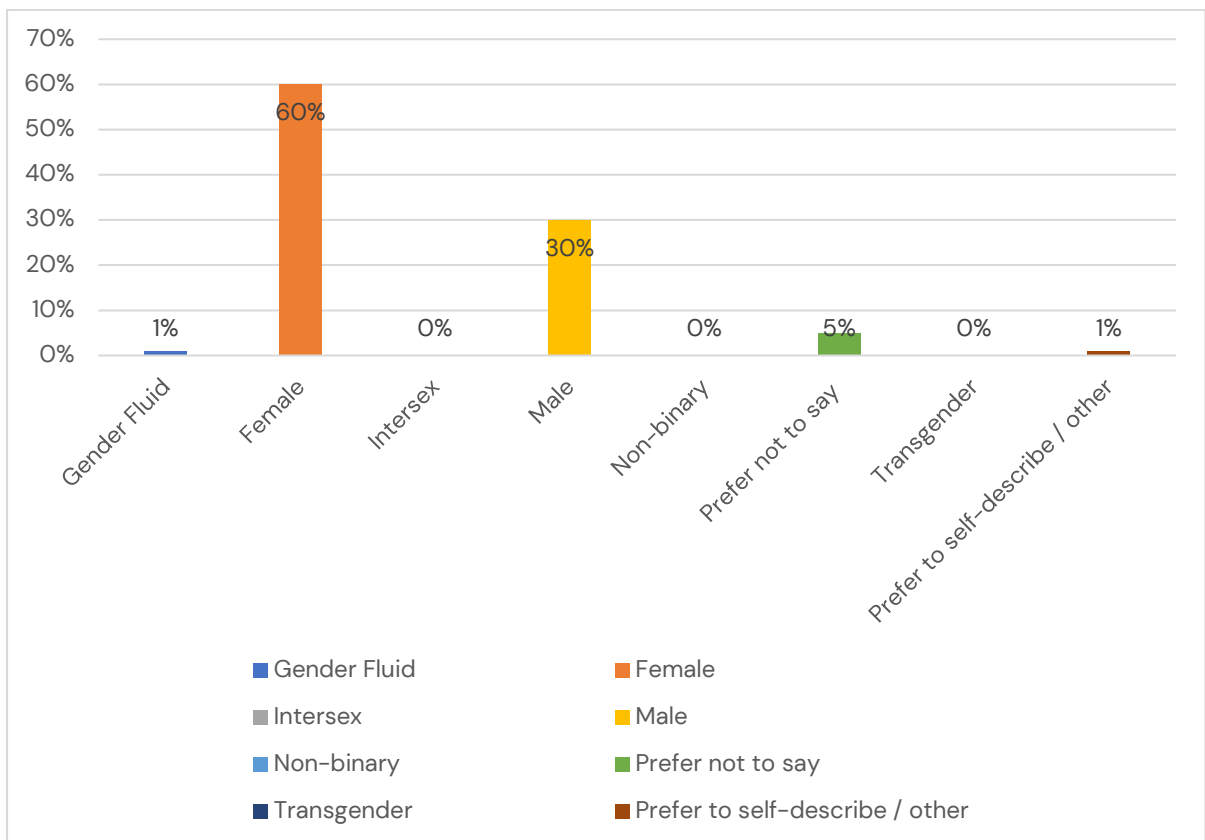
Sexual Orientation

Employment Status