

Thank You from Life in Lancashire

What's inside?

This newsletter gives you information about how your views have made a difference to our lives in Lancashire. It tells you about changes and improvements made to services as a result of your opinions.



I would like to thank you for your contributions over the last two and a half years to this very important initiative. I hope you have enjoyed being a part of the panel, and feel that your contributions have made a difference to the way we all live here in Lancashire.

Being a member of Life in Lancashire means that you have played an important role in shaping the decisions taken by Lancashire County Council. You have provided the County Council and its partners with important views on how we can improve your local services and increase everyone's quality of life. You have told us what matters to you, your views on local services and how a wide range of issues have affected you.

Thank you once again for playing a vital role in the future of our wonderful county.

Hazel Harding
Leader of the County Council



Public County Council buildings

Your responses gave us a clearer picture of how satisfied you are with our existing public buildings, and what your priorities are for this type of public building.

We have changed the way we determine the fitness for purpose of our buildings as a result of your priorities for public buildings. This has helped us to:

- address areas where our buildings are not performing as well as they might;
- make sure that future buildings meet your needs better;
- show where we can improve access to the County Council's services.



Public safety

We asked you about how safe you feel where you live, priority issues for public safety and your perceptions of young people.

Your responses were used to decide priorities and themes for crime and disorder reduction strategies in each of the 12 Lancashire districts. You can find the strategy for each district and details of the work of each partnership at www.saferlancashire.co.uk, or by writing to Pam Smith, Community Safety and Communications Officer, Policy Unit, Office of the Chief Executive, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8XJ.

Your responses also informed a widescale review of community safety. As a result the County Council has agreed new targets to prevent youth offending, to reduce the rate of youth re-offending and promote more positive images of the majority of young people who do not get into trouble.

Social Services

Lancashire County Council has looked at how services are provided to vulnerable people and people with disabilities. These are services that are provided directly from the County Council and through working with other agencies such as Primary Care Trusts.

Your views have helped this process by giving us a broader view of disabilities, and not just from people who use the service. You thought that finding employment was the major problem faced by disabled people. We are anxious to support disabled people to be more independent and getting employment is a step towards this goal.

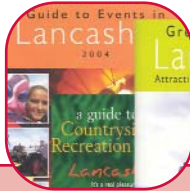


Emergency Social Services

You completed a questionnaire that looked at:

- knowledge and awareness of the service;
- when it is appropriate to contact Social Services;
- access to services at different times of the day.

The results have influenced the development of our Contact Centre (see access to information section) and flexible working practices. Flexible working will mean more services are available in the evenings and at the weekend, and will allow the Emergency Duty Team to concentrate solely on providing emergency services.



Access to information

The access to information survey provided us with a wealth of information about how people currently access services and how they would prefer to access services in the future. It has informed the way we are developing e-government, allowing a more local approach to the way we provide information and services and how we do this to suit the needs of different client and community groups.

You made us aware that we can, and must, do better to improve access to information and services for the people of Lancashire.

- The telephone is still the preferred method of contact, so we have developed a partnership to implement a Lancashire Contact Centre. Initially concentrating on telephone contact, the contact centre will make it easier for you to get in touch with us about a wide variety of services.
- You also said that we need to make sure information is available in a variety of formats. For example, the Internet, electronic kiosks and targeted leaflets.
- One in ten of you said you found it difficult to access information, especially those people with a disability. An example of how we are tackling this is that we are currently making our web site available in a larger font size for people with visual disabilities.



Provision for young people

You told us that it was important for children and young people to have places to go to. We are now looking at improving the services available to young people and young peoples' knowledge of these facilities. We are working with the Youth Council to find out the needs of children and young people in Lancashire.

Trading Standards

You highlighted several priorities that will be addressed in the next three years and we have tailored our plans to respond to the needs of Lancashire residents and businesses. Your comments have helped to:

- improve public awareness of Trading Standards and its responsibilities, in particular the improved web site www.tradingstandards.gov.uk and e-mail as additional forms of contact;
- develop consumer and business information packs to support our legal advice;
- target enforcement action against undesirable trading practices by analysing enquires/complaints data;
- introduce Stop Now orders, which will enable alternative enforcement methods to be used to speedily tackle scams and other undesirable trading practices.



Trading Standards

More changes are taking place including:

- A national helpline called Consumer Direct that is planned in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry. It will provide a point of contact for legal advice and support.
- New product safety regulations will improve public protection from dangerous/unsafe goods because manufacturers and importers of high-risk products will be required to work with Trading Standards to improve quality control and product recall procedures.



Transport

You told us what your priorities are for public transport policy. We have now targeted four main areas to:

- improve public transport;
- reduce road accidents;
- manage the network;
- encourage sustainable transport.



Transport

We found out that you have confidence in our services and liked much of what was being done. But, you told us we need to publicise our initiatives better. As a result of your comments we:

- now have traffic and safety web pages at www.lancashire.gov.uk that explain much of the work being carried out and list specific schemes by district to give people up-to-date information on local transport issues;
- visited local areas over three weeks in 2003 with a Road Show Bus to talk with people about what we do and discuss local transport problems;
- have improved timetable information at bus stations and publicised the Lancashire Traveline (available on 0870 608 2 608), which helps you to plan your journey;
- found out that we need to use new vehicles on quality bus routes to encourage more people to start using public transport;
- have introduced more innovative fare deals, which we have won a National Bus Award for innovative marketing for.

Lancashire Record Office

In 2001 the Lancashire Record Office questions were designed to find out how much you know about our service.

As a result of your comments we have published three new short leaflets aimed at raising awareness. The leaflets give opening times and contact details and highlight the key reasons for using the facilities at the Lancashire Record Office, which are to:

- trace family history;
- trace the history of a building;
- research local history.

We have distributed them widely, increasing circulation to West and East Lancashire because these were the areas where people knew least about what we do.



Libraries

In December 2001 you told us about your views on Lancashire's library service. Your responses have led us to make changes to the service.

- You told us that you wanted longer opening hours in libraries and in 2003 funding was given to do this.
- You told us we need to continue to improve and modernise library buildings. We have now installed automatic doors, door assists and lifts in 21 libraries over the last two years.
- We are looking at improving facilities by putting refreshments and toilets into larger libraries.

Local government budgets

Each year you have given us your views on the Council's budget and council tax for the coming year.

The councillors take this consultation very seriously. The overall views of Life in Lancashire members are taken into account at the time budget recommendations are made by the Cabinet. Your views are also given to all councillors as part of their final approval of the budget and council tax in February each year.



**For all of this,
thank you.**