
**CITIZENS' PRIORITIES -
RESULTS FROM THE 2004 COMMUNITY SURVEY**

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor John Williams, Leader
Responsible Director – Barry Keel, Chief Executive**

Purpose of Report

1. To present headline results from the 2004 Community Survey on citizens' priorities to inform the work of the Council in business and service planning, the review of the medium term financial plan, and also our work with partners through Darlington Partnership.

Summary

2. In 2004 general satisfaction levels with the Council do not differ significantly with previous years. 69.3% of respondents said that they were satisfied with the way that the Council were running the Borough, compared with 66.3% in October 2003. Only 15.0% of respondents said they were dissatisfied, compared with 17.2% the previous year. However, 17.4% of respondents believed that the Council had got better at running the Borough, compared with 14.4% the previous year. Satisfaction with local neighbourhoods was high at 77.9%, which was not statistically different to results from the previous year.
3. Services receiving high levels of satisfaction include street lighting, security in the town centre (which included CCTV), upkeep and appearance of the town centre, the Civic Theatre, refuse collection, sign posting and libraries. Services, which received low levels of satisfaction, included road maintenance (including repairs), children's play areas, youth clubs and other facilities for young people, and car parking in the town centre.
4. With regard to which services should be given greatest priority, youth clubs and other facilities for young people was referred to by the greatest number of respondents, closely followed by children's play areas, road maintenance and repair, pavement maintenance, nursery and primary schools, secondary schools and social care for older and vulnerable people.
5. Compared with last year's data, there was an increase in net satisfaction levels in children's play areas, parks and open spaces, youth clubs and other facilities for young people, refuse collection and recycling facilities. There was a fall in net satisfaction levels with car parking – town centre, schools and council tax administration and collection.

Information and Analysis

6. A statistically representative sample of just over 1,000 Darlington residents was surveyed during August and September 2004 in the latest annual Community Survey, which is part of the Council's commitment to ongoing community engagement and consultation.
7. The results are useful across departments and to a range of partners in formulating and reviewing budgets, business and service plans. Following analysis of the results the key findings related to citizens' priorities are presented below.
8. The main issues and responses are presented in the following five sections:
 - (a) Background
 - (b) General Satisfaction with the Council
 - (c) Satisfaction at a neighbourhood level
 - (d) Satisfaction with Council services
 - (e) Priorities for improvement of Council services

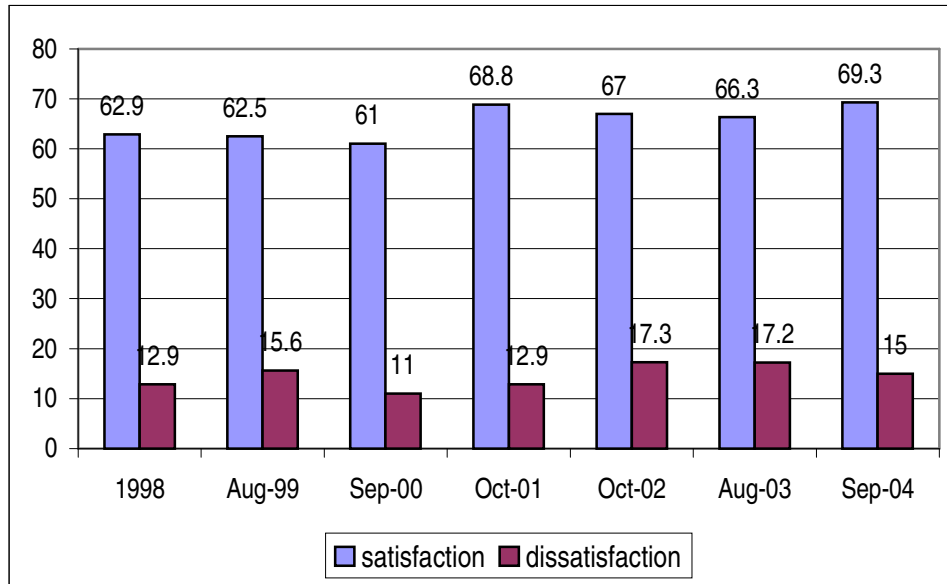
Background

9. Since 1998 the authority has carried out an annual Community Survey seeking the views of residents on overall satisfaction with the Council, satisfaction with its individual services, priorities for improving services and any areas where it is perceived that the authority is spending too much. Increasingly, quality of life issues have been picked up to address wider thematic considerations and the Council's contribution to partnership working.
10. Face-to-face interviews are conducted over the late summer/ early autumn of each year, using a structured questionnaire, with 1000+ residents of Darlington Borough aged 18 years or over. Interviewing takes place in all wards of the Borough, with the number of interviews conducted in each ward being proportionate to the population therein. Age and gender quotas are applied in order to ensure that the sample is representative of the Borough in terms of these variables.
11. In order to track changes in residents opinions over time, many of the questions are the same as, or similar to, those included in previous surveys.
12. In order to compare results between areas the whole sample is divided into four sub groups. The division used is taken from the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, i.e. 'NRS Phase 1 Wards' (the five most deprived wards), 'NRS Phase 2 Wards' (the next six most deprived wards), 'Non NRS Urban Wards' and 'Rural Wards'. [The full breakdown by individual wards is shown at **Appendix 1**].

General Satisfaction with the Council

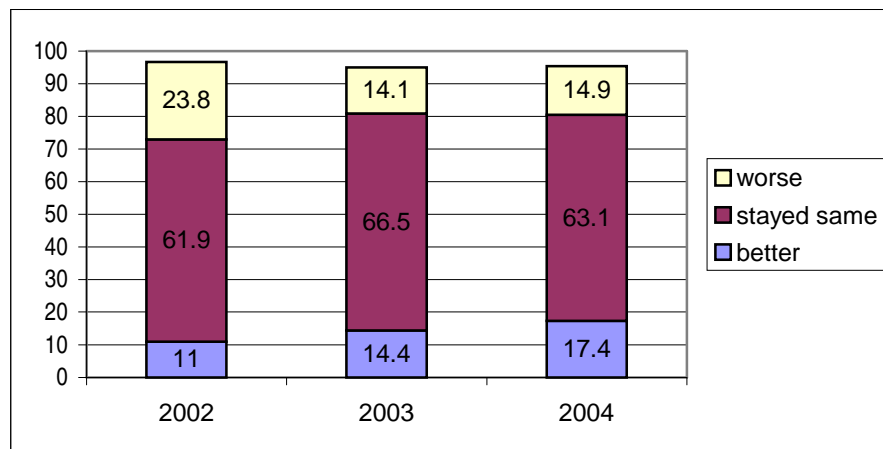
13. 69.3% of all respondents said that they were satisfied with the way the Council is running the Borough, and only 15% of respondents said that they were dissatisfied.
14. Whilst the current satisfaction level is not significantly different from that recorded by the 2003 Community Survey, it is the highest recorded since the 'Community Survey' tracking commenced, and there has been a small but statistically significant increase in satisfaction since 1998 to 2000 (when recorded satisfaction levels were around 61-63%).

Satisfaction with the way the Council is running the Borough
Comparison with previous 'Community Surveys': % response – all respondents



15. 17.4% of respondents were of the opinion that the Council has 'got better' at running the Borough over the last year, whilst slightly less (14.1%), believed it had 'got worse': the majority (63.1%), however, were of the opinion that 'it had stayed about the same'. This is a significant difference from the 2002 Survey results, when almost a quarter of respondents gave a 'worse' response. A noticeable improvement was achieved in 2003 and maintained in 2004.

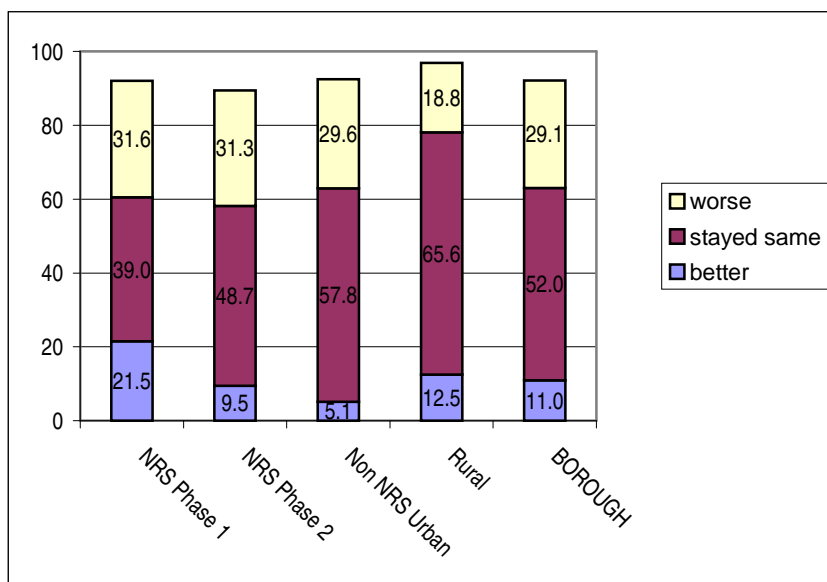
'Over the past year ...Council better or worse at running Borough?'
 (% response – all respondents)



Satisfaction at a Neighbourhood Level

16. Satisfaction with local neighbourhoods was high (77.9%), and only 16.4% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction: this was not statistically different to the 2003 Community Survey findings: 79.3% satisfaction, and 16.7% dissatisfaction.
17. As in 2003 Community Survey, satisfaction with neighbourhood was considerably lower in NRS Wards (NRS Phase 1 = 67.5%: NRS Phase 2 = 69.1%), than in Non NRS Urban Wards (87.1%), and Rural Wards (88.3%).
18. Whilst over half (52%) of all respondents felt that their neighbourhood had 'stayed about the same' over the past two years, 29.1% thought it had 'got worse' as a place to live, and only 11% felt it 'had got better'. Whilst this is a very similar result to that found in the 2003 Community Survey, there is a small but statistically significant increase (+ 3.3%) in the percentage of respondents who think things have 'got better' (2003: 29.7% 'worse'; 50.9% 'same', and 7.7% 'better').
19. Those who lived in 'NRS Phase 1' wards were more likely than others to think things had 'got better' over the past two years (21.5%), while those who lived in 'Rural' areas were least likely to think things had got 'worse'.

'Local Neighbourhood – got better or worse over the past two years?'
(% response – all respondents)

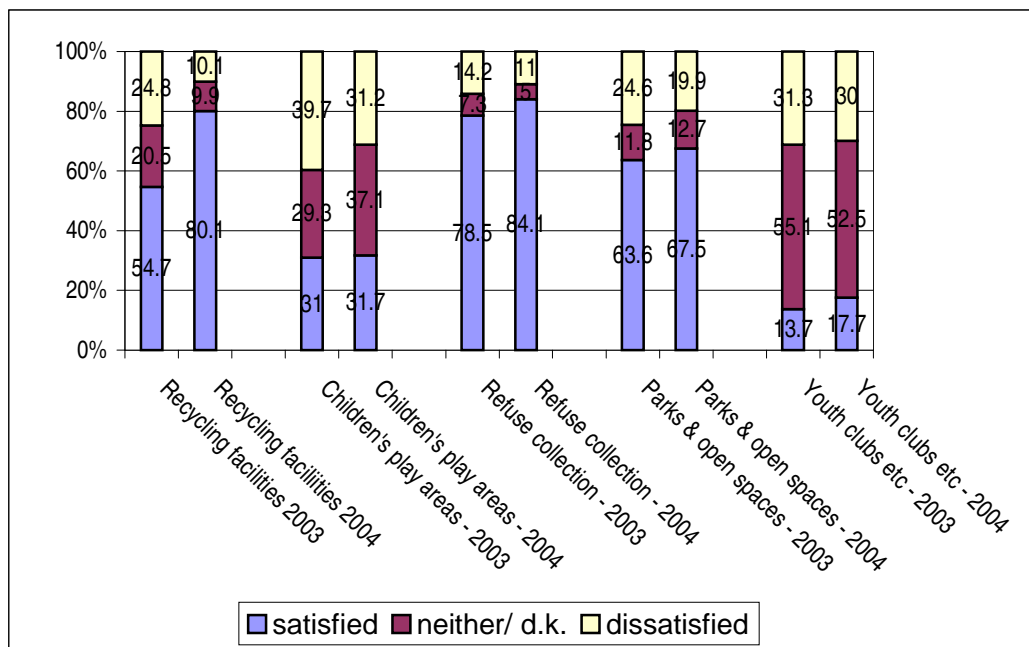


Satisfaction with Council Services

20. Services about which most (more than three-quarters) of all respondents expressed satisfaction were 'street lighting' (86.1%), 'refuse collection' (84.1%), 'upkeep of appearance – town centre' (81.9%), 'Civic theatre' (80.5%), 'recycling facilities' (80.1%), 'security, incl. c.c.t.v. in the town centre' (78%), and 'libraries' (75.5%).

21. Services about which most (more than a quarter) of all respondents expressed dissatisfaction were 'road maintenance & repairs' (50.3% 'dissatisfied'), 'pavement maintenance' (47.7%), 'car parking in Town Centre' (34.5%), 'children's play areas' (31.2%), 'youth clubs & other facilities for young people' (30%), 'car parking in residential areas' (26.9%), and 'street cleaning' (26.8%).
22. The most positive 'satisfaction' rating (as calculated by the 'mean' score which takes into account both the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, where 1 = very satisfied, and 5 = very dissatisfied, and the varying level of don't know responses) were achieved by 'civic theatre' (mean 1.68), 'libraries' (1.77) and 'security measures in town' (1.77). This is similar to the 2003 findings. A full listing is supplied at **Appendix 2**.
23. Services that achieved the most 'negative' satisfaction ratings (as calculated by mean scores) were 'youth clubs & other facilities for young people' (3.38), 'road maintenance & repairs' (3.36), 'pavement maintenance' (3.29), and children's play areas' (3.08). Again this is similar to the 2003 survey findings.
24. The principal 'positive' change was in relation to 'Recycling Facilities' ('net' + 40.1%), which showed a significant increase in satisfaction (from 54.7% in 2003 to 80.1% in 2004) and a concomitant decrease in dissatisfaction (from 24.8% in 2003 to 10.1% in 2004).
25. Other services which achieved positive 'net' satisfaction changes in excess of 5% were 'Children's play areas' (+ 9.2%), 'Refuse collection' (+ 8.8%), 'Parks & open spaces' (+8.6%), and 'Youth clubs & other facilities for young children' (+ 5.3%).

Major POSITIVE changes in 'net' satisfaction since 2003
(% response – all respondents)

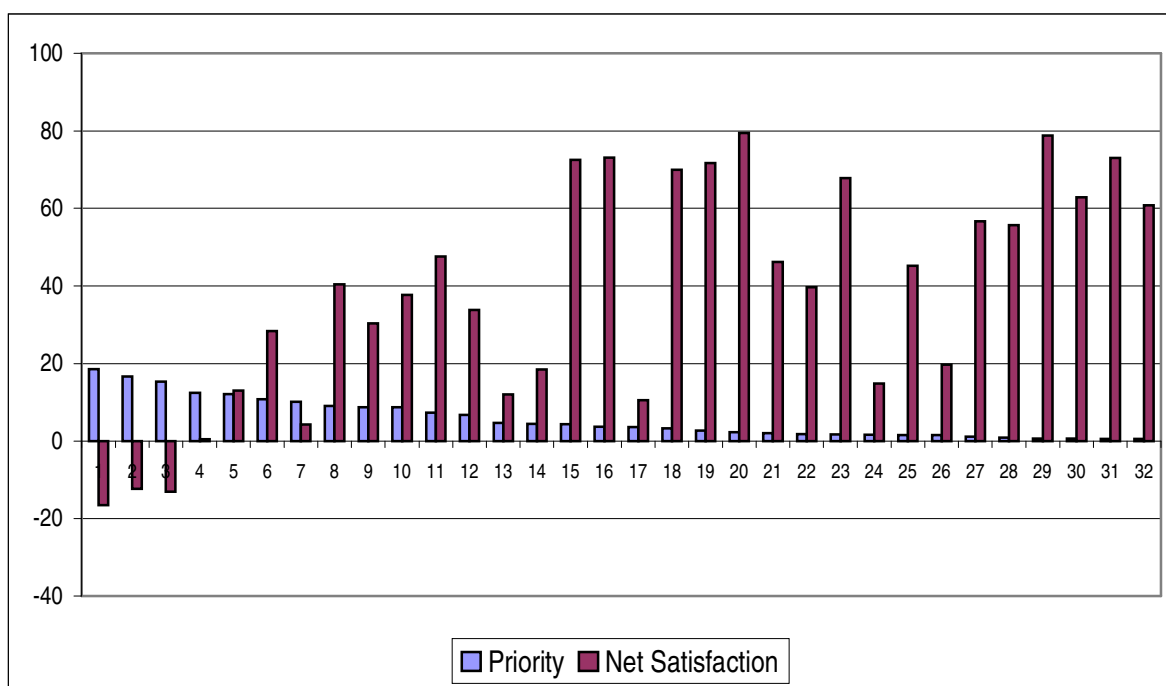


26. The largest 'negative' change in 'net satisfaction' was in relation to 'Car parking in the Town Centre' ('net' – 26.5%), for which 'satisfaction' reduced from 55.8% in 2003 to 38.7% in 2004, and 'dissatisfaction' rose from 25.1% in 2003 to 34.5% in 2004.
27. Other services which showed decreases in 'net satisfaction' of more than 5% were 'Council tax administration & collection' (- 19.4%), 'Nursery & primary schools' (- 11.4%), 'Upkeep & appearance in residential areas' (- 10.7%), 'Security incl. c.c.t.v. in Town Centre' (- 10.5%), 'Secondary schools' (- 9.5%), 'Adult education' (- 7.9%), 'Festivals & events' (- 7.1%), and 'Upkeep and appearance of Town Centre' (- 6.2%).

Priorities for Improvement of Council Services

28. Opinion was quite divided as to which service should be given the greatest (first) priority for improvement. 'Youth clubs and other facilities for young people' (9.9%), was referred to by most respondents, but was closely followed by 'Road maintenance and repairs' (8.8%), 'Children's play areas' (7.7%), 'Pavement maintenance' (7.2%), 'Nursery & Primary Schools' (6.5%) and 'Social care for older and vulnerable people' (6.1%).
29. When first and second priorities for improvements are added together, opinion is still quite divided, and only three services were referred to by more than 15% of respondents – 'Road maintenance and repairs' (18.5%), 'Youth clubs and other facilities for young people' (16.7%), and 'Pavement maintenance' (15.4%). These three services were rated a high priority in all sample areas, and they were also the three services which got the highest priority rating in the 2003 Survey. The full listing is supplied at **Appendix 3**.
30. There were some area differences however, with those living in 'Rural' wards being more likely than others to give a high priority to 'Car parking in the town centre', and less likely to rate 'children's play area' as a priority.
31. 'Service priorities' (1st plus 2nd) are shown opposite against 'net satisfaction'. As the chart illustrates, the three services which were deemed the greatest priority ('Road maintenance & repairs', 'Youth clubs and other facilities for young people', and 'Pavement maintenance'), all had negative 'net satisfaction ratings'.
32. The chart opposite shows a good correlation between the priorities attached by residents for service improvements against net satisfaction, with the first three top priorities having negative net satisfaction.
33. 72.1% of respondents did not mention a service on which they felt that Council spending could be reduced. The service mentioned most frequently as the one on which spending could be reduced was 'the upkeep and appearance of the town centre' (4.5% of all respondents): this was a similar result to that found in the 2003 survey, when 4.8% referred to this service.

Service Priorities (1st + 2nd) and 'Net Satisfaction
(% response – all respondents)



Code

No.	Service	Priority	Net Sat	No.	Service	Priority	Net Sat
		%	%			%	%
1	road maintenance and repairs	18.5	-16.6	17	Housing & Council Tax benefits	3.6	10.5
2	youth clubs & other facilities for young people	16.7	-12.3	18	recycling facilities	3.3	70
3	pavement maintenance	15.4	-13.1	19	security measures – town centre	2.7	71.7
4	children's play areas	12.5	0.5	20	street lighting	2.3	79.4
5	social care – older/vulnerable people	12.1	13	21	adult education	2.1	46.2
6	security measures – other areas	10.8	28.4	22	Council Tax administration & collection	1.8	39.7
7	car parking – in town centre	10.2	4.2	23	Dolphin Centre	1.7	67.8
8	nursery & primary schools	9.1	40.4	24	school meals	1.6	14.9
9	secondary schools	8.8	30.4	25	community sports and arts	1.5	45.2
10	upkeep of appearance – other areas	8.8	37.7	26	planning & control of development	1.5	19.7
11	parks & open spaces	7.4	47.6	27	leisure and arts venues	1.1	56.7
12	street cleaning	6.7	33.8	28	Railway Centre & Museum	0.9	55.7
13	council housing	4.7	12	29	Civic Theatre	0.7	78.8
14	car parking – in other areas	4.5	18.4	30	Arts Centre	0.7	62.9
15	upkeep of appearance – town centre	4.3	72.5	31	libraries	0.6	73
16	refuse collection	3.7	73.1	32	festivals & events	0.6	60.8

(Net satisfaction = % 'satisfied' minus 'dissatisfied')

Conclusions

34. Results from the Annual Community Survey for 2004 are now available and are being used to inform a range of community planning, business and service planning activities.
35. Focussing on citizens' priorities here for the purposes of medium term financial planning the following results have emerged.
- 36.
- (a) General satisfaction with the Council (at 69.3%) has remained relatively stable in recent years;
 - (b) Satisfaction with local neighbourhoods is high overall (at 77.9%) but this is variable, decreasing from rural wards (88.3%) down to the most deprived areas (67.5%);
 - (c) Satisfaction with Council services shows that:

Services with the highest Satisfaction levels are	Services with the lowest satisfaction levels are
i) Street lighting	i) Road maintenance and repairs
ii) Refuse collection	ii) Pavement maintenance
iii) Upkeep of appearance – town centre	iii) Car parking in town centre
iv) Civic Theatre	iv) Children's play areas

- (d) Citizens' top priorities - identified as services most in need of improvement (with a correlating low or negative net satisfaction rating) are:
 - (i) Road maintenance and repairs.
 - (ii) Youth clubs and other facilities for young people.
 - (iii) Pavement maintenance.
 - (iv) Children's play areas.
 - (v) Social care for older and vulnerable people.

Outcome of Consultation

37. This report provides details on the results and analysis of the Councils pre-eminent annual corporate consultation exercise which is then used to inform numerous other initiatives and consultation activities.

Legal Implications

38. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

39. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

40. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

Decision Deadline

41. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter

Key Decisions

42. This matter does not in itself constitute a key decision. The results and analysis generated will, however, be used to inform key decisions relating to the work of the Council in future business and service planning.

Recommendations

43. It is recommended that Members and Officers: -
- (a) Note the results of the 2004 Community Survey summarised in this report;
 - (b) Use these results over the coming months to inform the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan, and related activities, specifically with reference to the citizens priorities identified.

Reasons

44. The recommendations are supported by the following reason: to ensure that citizens' priorities continue to be central to the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan and related planning activities.

Lorraine O'Donnell
Head of Policy

Background Papers

NWA Report – Darlington Borough Council Community Survey 2004 (10/11/04)

John Bosson: Extension 2016

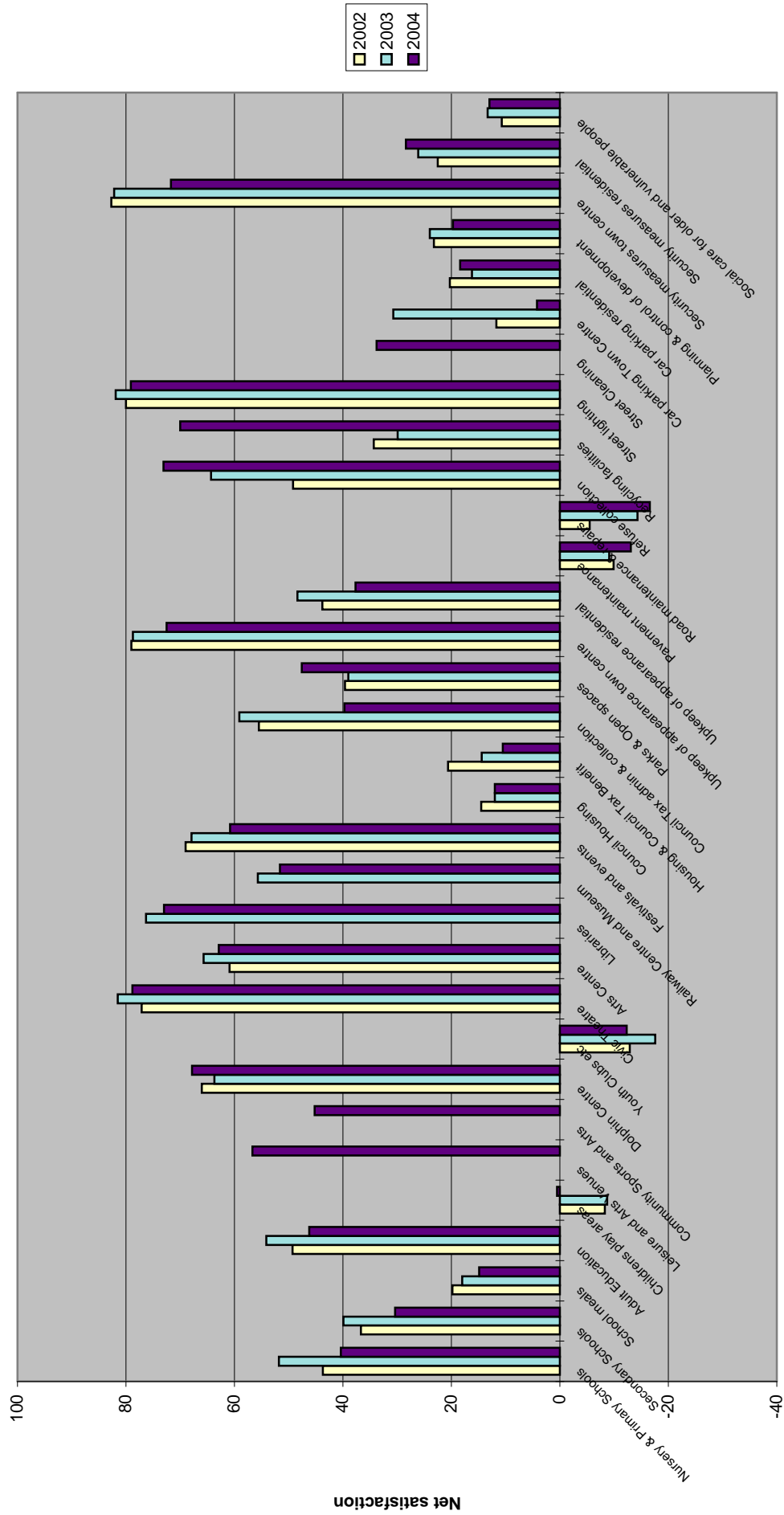
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2004 Annual Community Survey - Area Analysis/ Ward Groupings

In order to develop a Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (NRS) for Darlington, the Council has identified the eleven most deprived wards – and these have been split into ‘Phase 1’ (the five most deprived wards), and ‘Phase 2’ (the next six most deprived wards). This sample was therefore divided into four sub-groups – ‘NRS Phase 1 Wards’, ‘NRS Phase 2 Wards’, ‘Non NRS Urban Wards’ and ‘Rural Wards’.

<u>NRS phase 1</u>	<u>NRS Phase 2</u>	<u>Non NRS Urban</u>	<u>Rural</u>
Central	Bank Top	College	Heighington & Conniscliffe
Cockerton West	Cockerton East	Faverdale	Hurworth
Eastbourne	Lascelles	Harrowgate Hill	Middleton St George
Haughton East	Lingfield	Haughton North	Sadberge & Whessoe
Park East	North Road	Haughton West	
	Northgate	Hummersknott	
		Park West	
		Pierremont	
		Mowden	

Net satisfaction of All Services asked about in Community Survey over the last three years



Service

Appendix 3

% Priority 1+2 given to Services over the last three years

