

Brentford Fountain Leisure Centre

Phase 1 engagement report

FINAL VERSION (Spring 2025)

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Brentford Fountain Leisure Centre Survey ran from 6th November 2024 to 24th January 2025. A total of 826 responses had been submitted by the deadline. Three quarters of respondents are Hounslow residents and the postcode areas TW8 and W4 account for over two thirds of survey responses. Most respondents were regular users of the leisure centre though almost a quarter had not visited the centre in the last 12 months or ever.

Alongside the survey we ran a small number of focus groups with residents, hosted via community organisations. These were aimed at parts of the community where we anticipated survey response rates to be lower and/or where activity levels and health outcomes tend to be worse and therefore where the impacts of new leisure facilities might be especially significant. These sessions ran November to the start of February.

What to the engagement findings tell us?

People feel strongly about the important role that Brentford Fountain Leisure Centre plays in the community and the convenient access it gives them to a range of affordable facilities and activities – especially the swimming pools and the fact they provide dedicated space for children to play and adults to exercise.

Much that people don't like about the centre today relates to the physical condition of the facilities – their cleanliness, their outdatedness and the poor state of repair that people see around the building. This includes the condition of the changing rooms; the pool (and in particular the loss of the slides and wave machine); the gym and the exercise studios.

When asked to envisage a replacement leisure centre, people tend to prioritise replicating (or reinstating) the main elements of the existing centre – with improvements to address the shortcomings they had previously identified, especially around cleanliness and maintenance. Overall, responses to this question paint a picture of a leisure centre that is above all child- and family-friendly, affordable and accessible with facilities that give it a broad appeal to different ages and interests.

What people most like about the leisure centre now: Question 1 headlines

Its convenient and accessible location: The feature of the current leisure centre that respondents most frequently highlighted was the convenience and/or accessibility of its

location, with just over a third (35.6%) of those who responded commenting that this is what they most like.

Its swimming facilities: Around a third of respondents (32.2%) made comments about the swimming pool(s) in identifying what they most like. Many simply wrote ‘swimming pool’ but the specific facility most mentioned was the accessible leisure pool (10.5%). Respondents liked that the different pools accommodated different users. Many of these responses were also captured in the next most popular response category below.

Its child/family-friendly character: this was referred to in 13.2% of responses. Comments often relate to the swimming facilities specifically but also encompass soft play and a few mention classes and groups for children. Some comments refer to the combination of facilities and activities which makes the centre appealing for the whole family.

Its affordability: Around one in ten respondents (11%) liked the affordability of the leisure centre. Some of these responses did not elaborate beyond ‘It’s cheap’ or ‘affordable’, whilst others highlighted specific elements of the centre’s offer: gym membership, soft play, and hire of squash courts, for instance.

Also: 8-10% of responses highlighted the centre’s range of facilities, the gym, the staff and class instructors as features that they most like.

What people least like about the leisure centre now: Question 2 headlines

The great majority of responses to this question relate to the condition of the building and its facilities – mostly in terms of cleanliness, out-datedness and poor state of repair. In many responses these were interconnected and overlapping themes.

Its lack of cleanliness: Around a third of respondents to this question (32.4%) referred to lack of cleanliness. Some of these comments are general and do not relate to specific facilities or parts of the building.

Its tired, old and out-dated character: Almost a third of responses to this question (31%) made some reference to the facilities being tired, old or outdated. In many cases comments about the age and tiredness of the building blur into references about its cleanliness and state of repair.

Its changing areas: A quarter of respondents (25.2%) said the changing areas were amongst the features the liked the least. Most of these highlighted issues around hygiene and cleanliness (including smell). The changing areas’ state of repair – including specific points about broken showers and lockers – also received a lot of comment, and some respondents talked about the design and layout of the changing areas.

Its poor state of repair / maintenance: Some of these comments were made about the facilities overall whilst others relate to specific facilities: the changing areas (including lockers and showers); the gym and its equipment; the water slide and wave machine; and in a few cases, the exercise studios and racket courts.

What people most want to see from a new leisure centre on the site:

Question 3 headlines

Retained or improved swimming facilities: Close to half of respondents (44.4%) made some mention of swimming facilities in their response. Many emphasised their desire to retain and enhance the current combination of swimming facilities that catered for children and adults. One in five of these responses focused on a leisure or ‘fun’ pool including its step-free access and features such as slides and wave machine, whilst around one in ten focused on adults’ lane swimming – including more availability and provision of a training pool with the standard length and dept.

Clean and well-maintained facilities: Reflecting the preoccupation with upkeep evident in Question 2, one in five respondents (20.5%) said they wanted any new centre to be clean and / or well-maintained. Where they were more specific, cleanliness and functionality of the changing rooms was most mentioned, followed by the pool.

Retained or improved gym facilities: One in five respondents (19.5%) mentioned the gym in their answers. Points made about the gym being well-equipped with a range of machines suitable for different people – and that these machines should be well-maintained – reflected responses to Question 2 about lack of equipment or repairs taking too long.

Good / improved changing areas: Well above one in ten responses (13.9%) feature comments about changing rooms, with some focused on cleanliness and maintenance and others on overall design to provide good family changing facilities; or to improve separation between men and women or between school groups and individual users.

Retained / improved range of classes: The same proportion of respondents (13.5%) wanted to see the current classes either continued or expanded in range or availability. Some of these comments dovetailed with those about a desire for more / better studio space in which to host classes.

Continue to make this a child / family-friendly leisure centre: More than one in ten respondents said they wanted any new leisure centre to be child / family-friendly (12.6%). These often related to swimming specifically.

Also: Several other categories sit below the 10% mark, including provision of a good cafe, more spacious and well-ventilated exercise studios and an updated soft play. Some respondents also wanted to see the addition of a sauna, steam room or spa.

Key findings

Introduction

Survey

The Brentford Fountain Leisure Centre Survey ran from 6th November 2024 to 24th January 2025. A total of 826 responses were submitted.

The survey was available to complete online via the Council's Let's Talk platform. Promotional flyers along with paper copies of the survey were made available at local libraries, children's centres, community hubs and the leisure centre itself.

The survey was promoted through the Council's social media channels and through direct emails to local organisations and Lampton membership holders. It was also promoted by engagement team officers at the following, where we had c.150 one-to-one conversations with members of the public:

- two Area Forum marketplace events;
- Clayponds Community Centre and Mission Hall community events;
- West Thames College Christmas Fair;
- the leisure centre reception area.

Focus groups

Alongside the survey we ran a small number of focus groups with residents, hosted via community organisations. These were aimed at parts of the community where we anticipated survey response rates to be lower and/or where activity levels and health outcomes tend to be worse and therefore where the impacts of new leisure facilities might be especially significant.

Organisation	Participants	Number of participants
Hogarth Trust - youth club	8-12 year olds	12
Riana Development Network – youth club	12-16 year olds living on / close to Clayponds Estate	10
Polish Clan	Polish adults	9
Speak Out in Hounslow	Members with learning disabilities and/or autism	11
Hounslow Disability and Age Equality Partnership		10

Observations from one-to-one conversations

Through face-to-face outreach work at the leisure centre and in different community venues, we had conversations with c.150 people during the course of the survey period. Our primary aim was to raise awareness of the survey, answer any questions that people might have and encourage them to submit a survey response. Whilst we did not capture data from these conversations, they did provide additional insight into people's reaction to news about the planned redevelopment of the leisure centre and their concerns. We reference those comments here as they do not come through strongly in the survey findings (the survey did not directly ask for people's reactions to the planned redevelopment) but they are important to recognise. Those reactions can be summarised as:

Eagerness to know more: a lot of people wanted to know when the existing leisure centre would close and how long it would be until the new centre opened.

Anxiety about how long they would be without a leisure centre: associated with this was anxiety about what facilities they / their children would be able to use in the meantime.

Scepticism that either the existing centre would continue to operate or – most concerning – it would close and never be replaced: some people were very mistrustful of Hounslow Council and its ability to bring the project to fruition, referencing earlier unrealised plans for a new leisure centre.

A belief that the existing centre should be refurbished rather than rebuilt: this related partly to views about unnecessary cost and disruption and partly to the point above about mistrust that a new centre would ever materialise – or that if it did, it would be more limited in size and offer than the existing one.

How findings are presented in this report

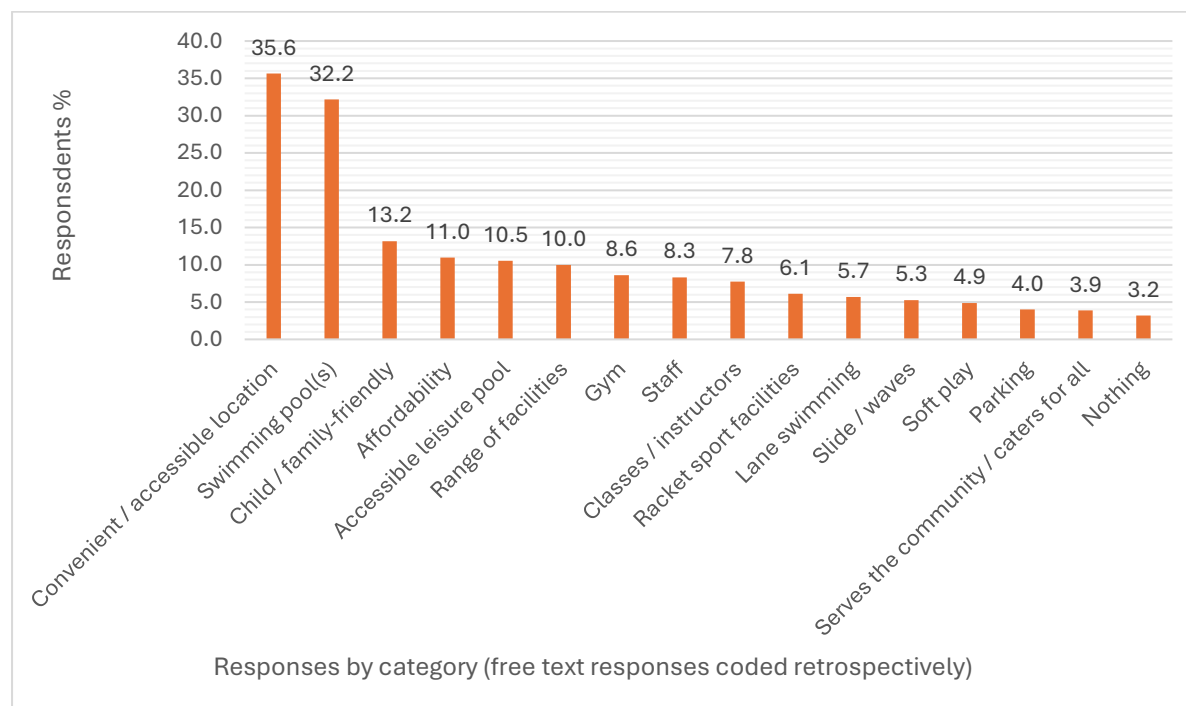
The survey posed three core open-ended questions. All have been analysed and coded. Most responses are coded to more than one category as respondents often made two, three or more points within their answers, hence percentages add to more than 100.

It is important to bear in mind that these questions invited free-text responses, rather than presenting respondents with a list of features to react to. These free-text responses have been individually read and categorised to produce the results illustrated in the graphs.

Focus group discussions were framed around these same core questions.

Question 1: What people most like about the leisure centre now

Respondents were asked what they most like about the leisure centre now.



Convenient / accessible location

The feature of the current leisure centre that respondents most frequently highlighted was the convenience and/or accessibility of its location, with just over a third (35.6%) of those who responded commenting that this is what they most like.

“It’s the closest public pool to my house (can walk / take bus easily).”

“It’s just local so easy with the children.”

“Location is really good and super accessible for those with disabilities or young children.”

Swimming facilities (all mentions)

Around a third of respondents (32.2%) made comments about the swimming pool(s) in identifying what they most like. Many simply wrote ‘swimming pool’ whilst those who gave more specific answers are also captured in other response categories related to

the leisure pool and the accessibility of the pool; the slide and wave machine features; or the training pool and lane swimming.

Swimming facilities: an accessible leisure pool

Where respondents did give more specific responses, the majority of these related to children's activities, swimming for fun or for leisure. One in ten respondents (10.5%) said they most like the leisure pool (or 'children's pool'), and in particular the fact that it has step-free access.

"The fact there is a swimming pool. There aren't many in the area. The graduated entry to the family pool is great for young children."

"Like the gradual slope of the pool, so little children can get familiar with water."

Whilst most comments about the step-free access linked this to children, some responses emphasised the value of this for disabled people and older people. The good accessibility of the pool was also highlighted in our focus group discussions with disabled people.

"Really good gradual walk in pool so perfect for disabled visitors."

Swimming facilities: water slide and wave machine

Comments about the pool's appeal to children overlapped with comments about the water slide and wave machine, with one in twenty (5.3%) commenting on these.

"The fun elements to the swimming pool - slide and wave machine."

Responses were often caveated with the disappointment that these are not currently working (see also responses to Question 2 below).

"The walk in pool, the wave machine and the slide when it's working."

Swimming facilities: lane swimming

One in twenty respondents (5.7%) said they liked being able to do lane swimming in the training pool.

“I enjoy the lane swimming.”

“Always being cleaned, great friendly staff and of course the lane swimming - this has really helped me return to good health.”

For some respondents, the fact that the existing pools catered for different activities and age-groups was the thing they liked most.

“I love the swimming pool for laps and also the fact that babies and toddlers can wade into the baby pool without having to navigate steps. I also absolutely love the slide.”

“Gym and pool facilities. Specially learning pool, practice pool and playing pool. Not often found in other centres.”

Child / family-friendly facilities

Another strong theme in the responses was the child-friendly or family-friendly nature of the leisure centre, which was referred to in 13.2% of responses.

These responses often relate to the swimming facilities specifically – and are thus captured in the categories discussed above. They also encompass soft play – which was cited by 4.9% respondents – and a few mention classes and groups for children, including swimming lessons and gymnastics.

“Swimming pool and soft play best combination for local family weekend. Onsite car parking.”

“There are some great classes and groups that my children participate in.”

Whilst some responses focus on the availability of facilities for children, others commented on the combination of facilities and activities which makes the centre appealing for the whole family.

“I like the swimming pools, the family pool with the graded entrance is great and the slide provides so much joy to my kids. Great gym with exactly what I need.”

“I can afford the gym membership and I also like that they are adding more activities for the whole family.”

Affordability

Around one in ten respondents (11%) liked the affordability of the leisure centre. Some of these responses did not elaborate beyond ‘It’s cheap’ or ‘affordable’, whilst others highlighted specific elements of the centre’s offer: gym membership, soft play, and hire of squash courts, for instance.

Most of those who commented on affordability combined this with other positive aspects of the centre, such as its convenience and location:

“Easy access and excellent pricing.”

“Easily accessible, affordable...”

“Location, close to public transport, reasonably affordable facilities.”

Range of facilities

One in ten respondents commented on the range of facilities provided by the centre. Respondents framed this in different ways. Some highlighted specific facilities and activities; some connected this with the idea of the centre appealing to a wide range of people and offering ‘something for the whole family’; and some talked about it in the context of how it catered for their own preferences.

“The centre offers almost all the facilities I need to ensure my life-long fitness routine.”

“Convenient, easy, big – has everything I need.”

Again, comments often referenced other positives highlighted above, such as location and affordability.

“I like that there are so many activities in one centre. I go to different group classes there. My child also goes there to play and enjoy the soft play area. The most important thing is the affordable price, which allows us to attend the classes without worrying about the cost.”

Gym

8.6% of responses referred to the gym. A few respondents praised the gym facilities with words like ‘excellent’, but the predominant message from those positive about the gym was that its reasonable cost, lack of overcrowding and decent range of equipment provided a good experience overall.

Note that comments on price and value were also captured within the ‘Affordability’ category.

“Great gym with exactly what I need.”

“The light and open gymnasium that has a decent range of weights. It’s not super busy like Isleworth Leisure Centre.”

“Gym is spacious. Staff are friendly and approachable. Good choice of equipment. Gym fee not time-restricted.”

“Access to gymnasium without committing to a high monthly subscription.”

Staff

8.3% said that leisure centre staff were one of the things they most liked about Brentford Fountain. The majority of these described the staff as ‘friendly’, with others referring to their helpfulness, professionalism and in a few cases their positive attitude.

“Staff are friendly.”

“The staff always give me a smile when I enter.”

“Staff are very helpful.”

Some respondents linked this to sentiments about the leisure centre as a social hub with a good community feel.

“Fantastic staff and instructors. Real sense of community.”

*“It caters to a local population so you can meet friends and socialize...
the counter staff are friendly and known to everybody.”*

Classes / instructors

7.8% highlighted classes run at the centre and/or the instructors who run them. The strongest message here was about the range of classes available and their quality.

“The classes are run well with good instructors.”

“I like the excellent classes.”

*“Good exercise classes with great instructors. Adequate facilities
offering good value membership.”*

A few were positive about the scheduling of classes which made them accessible and convenient (although, for context, a greater number were negative about scheduling in responses to Question 2).

*“It has exciting day classes which retired people can access and helps
keep the elderly and vulnerable population fit and adds to their well-
being.”*

“Classes at suitable time for office workers.”

Only a minority of these responses specified particular types of class they liked, but Yoga, Zumba, spin, body pump, body balance and *Les Mills* classes were all mentioned,

as well as parent and toddler classes and children's gymnastics. Some identified specific teachers for praise as well.

A couple of positive comments about classes were again about price.

"The most important thing is the affordable price, which allows us to attend the classes without worrying about the cost."

Racket sports facilities

6.1% made some mention of racket sports. Some referred to racket sports or courts in general, but most specified either squash (19 of the 44 responses) or badminton (17 responses) or both. A couple mentioned table tennis. Respondents' positivity was mostly about the existence and availability of these facilities – rather than their quality – and they valued having these facilities in easy reach considering they were relatively scarce.

"The various racquet sport rooms that are hard to come by in most leisure centres."

"I like that I can basically play squash whenever I want on good courts. I have played at Brentford Leisure Centre for the last twenty years."

"Big hall for badminton etc."

Parking

4% said that parking – it's availability or, in some cases, reasonable cost – was one of the things they most liked about the centre.

"Easy to park."

"Adequate parking at a fair price."

"I'm disabled so the parking and it being free but could do with more disabled spaces."

Serves the community / caters for all

3.9% made comments about the leisure centre as a valued community facility that serves local people. This included reference to it being publicly-owned and accessible to all; the fact that it offers facilities and activities for a wide range of people – including schools; and that it plays an important role in the local community.

“It is a key public facility available to residents and state schools in the area. I have three children all of whom took there first steps in the pool and first parties in the soft play.”

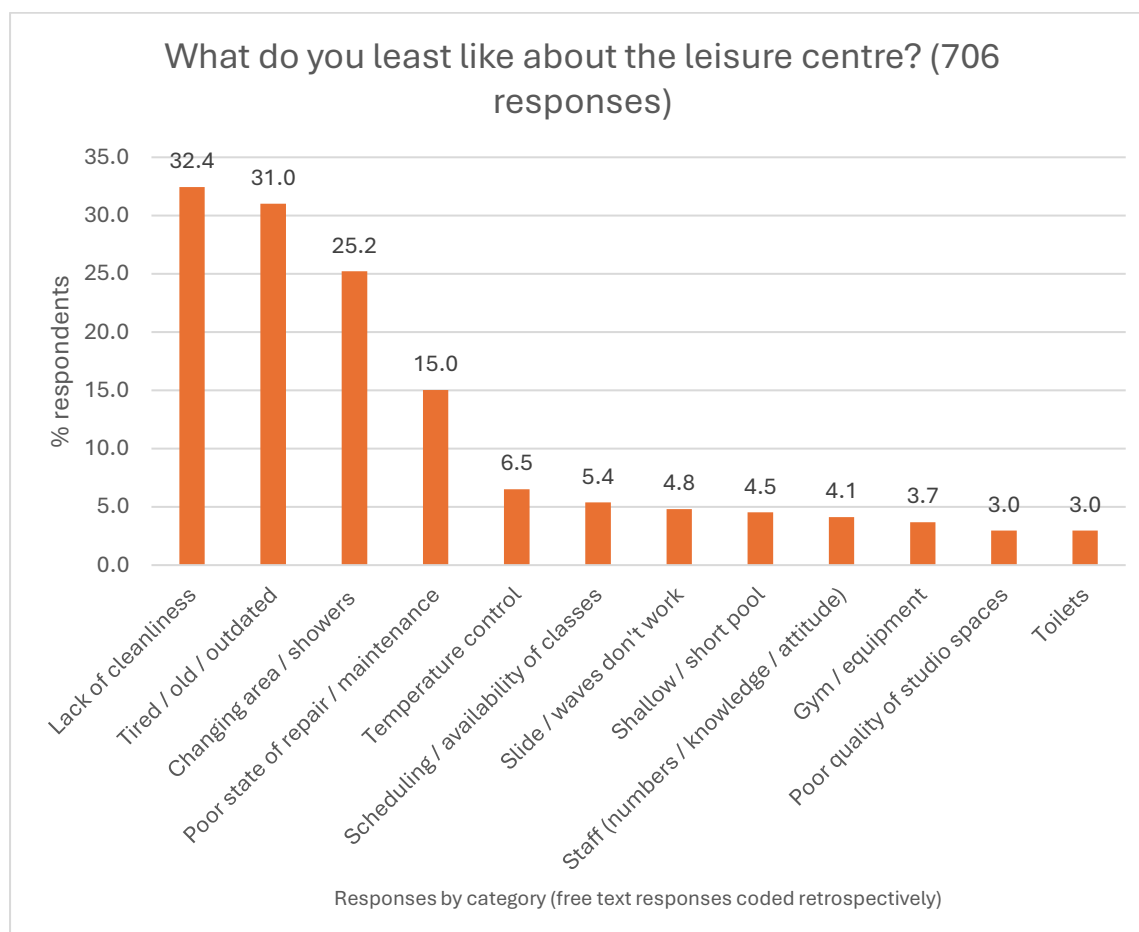
“That’s it’s there for the community when so many facilities are closing. There are not many swimming pools at all in this area.”

“It is an unpretentious space, with friendly and approachable staff, where I can exercise without any contention.”

“Accessible, good range of activities, foundational to the community.”

Question 2: What people least like about the leisure centre now

Respondents were then asked what they least like about the leisure centre now. Responses to this question can be grouped into fewer categories compared to those required for Question 1, the great majority relating to the condition of the building and its facilities – mostly in terms of cleanliness, out-datedness and poor state of repair. In many responses these were interconnected and overlapping themes.



Lack of cleanliness

Around a third of respondents to this question (32.4%) referred to lack of cleanliness. Some of these comments are general and do not relate to specific facilities or parts of the building.

Some comments about cleanliness appear to be based on past rather than recent experience.

Moreover, a small number of regular-visitor respondents had perceived improvements in cleanliness.

“Changing rooms often a bit dirty (though improved from a few years ago in my experience).”

Tired / old / outdated

Almost a third of responses to this question (31%) made some reference to the facilities being tired, old or outdated.

“Out of date, tired facilities.”

“Swimming pool and changing rooms are very old.”

“It is run down and not a great experience visiting it.”

A couple of respondents explicitly made a connection between the building’s age and the ability to keep it clean.

“Cleanliness due to aging facilities.”

Changing areas

The changing areas were the physical part of the building that received most mentions in relation to what respondents least liked. Some simply wrote ‘changing area’ or ‘showers’ so we cannot be sure what aspect of these facilities they did not like, but the majority highlighted issues around hygiene and cleanliness.

“The changing areas’ state of repair – including specific points about broken showers and lockers – also received a lot of comment.”

A small number of these responses relate to the design and layout of the changing areas rather than – or in addition to – their cleanliness or state of repair. This includes unease at the proximity of male and female changing areas or the potential confusion this can cause; the lack of family changing facilities; and views that school parties should have a separate changing area.

“Showers are unisex – need separate facilities.”

“Toilets and changing rooms are difficult to navigate.”

“There are not enough rooms for family changing.”

Poor state of repair / maintenance

This category includes all responses about repair and maintenance issues. Some of these comments were made about the facilities overall and without context so we don't know if respondents had particular areas of the building in mind.

“So many things break and repairing them takes ages.”

Many are also captured in other categories, however, as they relate to specific facilities: the changing areas; the gym and its equipment; the water slide and wave machine – this was mentioned in 4.8% of all responses to this question; and in a few cases, the exercise studios and racket courts.

“A state of disrepair, items being left broken for a long time that should be relatively easy to fix, lots of broken lockers.”

“I’ve never known the water slide to actually be open. Both pools are very cold. The wave machine hasn’t worked for 4-5 years.”

Temperature control

Linked at least in some cases to issues around repairs and maintenance, 6.5% of respondents commented on problems with heating and cooling in the building. These tend to focus on the water temperature in the pools; the temperature in the changing rooms; or the lack of air conditioning in the exercise studios.

“Swimming pool area (water, air, showers and changing rooms) too cold - we used to come much more often but my daughter keeps wanting to get out after only 10 minutes because she’s too cold.”

“The air conditioning in the classrooms tends to fail.”

*“Lack of properly functioning air conditioning in the studios,
particularly the spinning studio.”*

Scheduling / availability of classes

One in twenty respondents (5.4%) commented negatively about accessing the classes on offer and the scheduling of various activities. This related either to inconvenient timings; to inconsistencies in facilities or instructors being available; or to insufficient range of classes.

“The group class times are not convenient, they don’t start early enough.”

“It did also go through a very unreliable phase at one point with either the facilities or the swim teacher team constantly not being available - which was incredibly frustrating as the ‘catch-up’ sessions were never conveniently timed.”

“The schedule for the swimming pool means that when I do want to go, most of the time it’s not available for public swim.”

Shallow / short pool

Whilst most of the negative points raised under Question 2 relate to the condition of the facilities, some responses relate to fixed elements of their design. In the section above on the changing areas we have seen that the configuration of the changing rooms was an issue raised by some respondents, for instance. The other – and raised by almost one in twenty respondents (4.6%) was the length and depth of the training pool.

“The fitness pool is too small and too shallow. There ought to be decent swimming facilities for people who love to swim, both children and adults.”

“I think a fitness pool should be more than thigh deep throughout its length - it's just not a swimming pool as it is.”

Staff

4.1% commented negatively on staff or staffing levels (for context, this was half the number who cited staff as amongst the things they most liked about the centre under Question 1). Some respondents perceived that there was an insufficient number of staff – either at certain times or as a rule – and that this was impacting on the service that the centre could offer.

Other comments referred to staff lacking knowledge or information for customers, or to unfriendliness and attitude.

“I tried to go once but the soft play was shut. The staff didn't have any info on when it would be open.”

Gym

3.7% of respondents mentioned the gym in their answers about what they least liked at the leisure centre now. Most of these comments related to the age and state of equipment or the need for quicker repairs to broken equipment. In some cases the state of the gym area itself – including cleanliness and temperature control – was also mentioned.

“The equipment in the gym, and the gym itself, is old and run-down. The air conditioning is often not working, meaning it is too hot even in winter. Machines and other equipment breaks and it is often not replaced or attended to (much like the air conditioning).”

“Gym equipment is broken and takes a long time to be replaced.”

Some comments were about the need for more equipment or a greater range of equipment.

“Could have more extensive gym facilities and weight selection.”

“The range of gym machines for women.”

“Not enough machines at the gym.”

Studio spaces

3% of responses talked about the studio spaces at the leisure centre. The majority of these are about the studios being dark, gloomy or stuffy, with respondents describing lack of air conditioning and lack of natural light.

Some comments talked about the size of the studios, the insufficient number of studios or – in a few cases – their cleanliness.

“There is insufficient space in the classrooms, which impacts the overall learning environment.”

“Rooms too small.”

Toilets

3% of responses highlighted the toilets as a feature they least liked at the leisure centre. These comments are mostly about lack of cleanliness / smell, with some about their general state of repair.

Summary: likes and dislikes about the centre now

Some features of the leisure centre appear as response categories both for Question 1 (most liked) and Question (least liked). In some cases, this reflects that there is affection and support for a particular facility but also frustration or disappointment at aspects of its current state. A lot of people like the pool facilities, for instance, so these score highly under ‘things that people most like,’ but a lot of people – including many of the same people – are also negative about aspects of its maintenance. The same is true of specific elements of those pool facilities – such as the slide and wave machine, which are treasured by some respondents but also criticised for not working.

In other cases, the fact that some features appear on both lists reflects the different perspectives of respondents. Whilst some are complimentary about the gym and its equipment, others think it is inadequate or poorly maintained. Whilst some find the facilities affordable and good value, others do not see them as affordable or good value. And whilst some think parking is one of the centre’s benefits, others see lack of parking as one of its worst features.

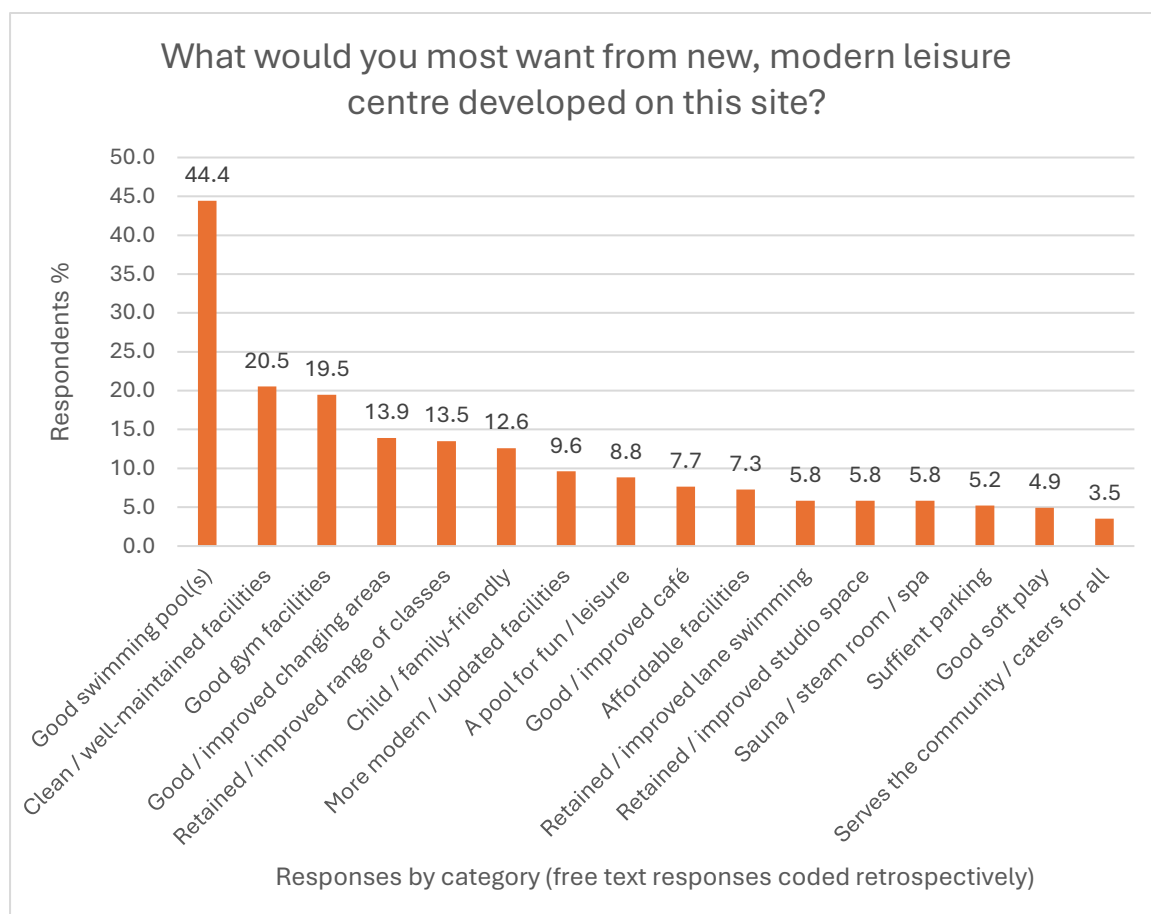
On these issues where the survey shows opposing perspectives on the same issue it is useful to bear in mind the strength of feeling on both sides. In the table below, the

features colour-coded green received more positive mentions overall whilst those colour-coded red received more negative mentions.

FEATURE	MENTIONS IN 'MOST LIKED' (%)	MENTIONS IN 'LEAST LIKED' (%)
Affordability	11	2
Gym facilities	8.6	3.7
Staff	8.3	4.1
Soft play	4.9	1.4
Parking	4	2.1
Ease of booking / entry system	2.9	1.5
Scheduling / operating hours	1.7	5.4
Cleanliness	1.5	32.4
Changing areas	1.1	25.2

Question 3: What people want from a future centre on the site

Finally, respondents were asked what they would most want from a future leisure centre developed on the same site.



Swimming facilities

Close to half of respondents (44.4%) made some mention of pool facilities in their response to this question. Many emphasised their desire to retain and enhance the current combination of swimming facilities that catered for children and adults. This for many is a special feature of Brentford Fountain which they want to retain in any future redevelopment.

“Different swimming options, as were available in the pool’s heyday – working water slide and wave pool. A great and healthy option for teenagers to socialise and children the play as well as a good lane pool for serious swimmers.”

“Pool with area for swimming but also area for young children. Water slide or interactive pool features.”

One in five of these (or 8.8% of the total) chose to focus on the desire for a leisure or ‘fun’ pool. Many of these comments are also captured in the ‘child / family-friendly’ category, explored below, reflecting respondents’ appreciation of the existing pool facilities in terms of their offer for children.

“Somewhere that my children can go and enjoy. New slides, cafe, large swimming pool.”

A few respondents referenced other leisure centres as examples of what they wanted to see, or as evidence of why child-focused facilities at Brentford Fountain were especially valuable.

“A fun pool to take the kids, something unique, not just lanes. The Coral Reef in Bracknell is always popular and well attended.”

“Isleworth pool has a good amount of lanes so there is more of a need for a fun swimming pool on this site.”

Around one in twenty specified their desire for retaining and / or improving the provision for lane swimming. These comments tended to emphasise the need for a full-size pool with a standard depth, reflecting the issues raised by some in Question 2 about the existing pool being too short and too shallow.

“Separated dedicated pool for practice and learning.”

“Nice, big pool deeper than 1.2m on lane swimming.”

“Still a pool! With plenty of times for lane swimming.”

Clean and well-maintained facilities

Reflecting the preoccupation with upkeep evident in Question 2, one in five respondents (20.5%) said they wanted any new centre to be clean and / or well-maintained. Where they were more specific, cleanliness and functionality of the changing rooms was most mentioned, followed by the pool.

“Same facilities just modern and cleaner.”

“Nice swimming pools, good for children, clean and modern facilities.”

“Clean changing rooms. Ensuring facilities are kept to a high standard and fixed quickly.”

Good gym facilities

One in five respondents (19.5%) mentioned the gym in their answers.

“A gym with state-of-the-art equipment.”

“A really good gym that provides the same facilities as private gyms but at affordable prices with well trained staff and lots of classes spinning, yoga, pilates, dance based upon the needs and demographic of our entire community.”

“Big spacious gym floor with a plenty of machines for all muscles groups, good air conditioning.”

The vast majority of these referred to other facilities too – most often swimming, followed by exercise classes. For most, a well-equipped gym appeared as not necessarily the most important feature of any new leisure centre but one of a suite of features that it should include. Points made about the gym being well-equipped with a range of machines suitable for different people – and that these machines should be well-maintained – reflect responses to Question 2 about lack of equipment or repairs taking too long.

Good / improved changing areas

Well above one in ten responses (13.9%) feature comments about changing rooms, with some focused on cleanliness and maintenance and others on overall design to provide good family changing facilities; or to improve separation between men and women or between school groups and individual users.

“Clean changing areas with functioning showers, plenty of changing space and a functioning air con system.”

“Family friendly changing facilities, baby changing areas.”

“Decent size changing cubicles for when trying to get my kids and me changed.”

Retained / improved range of classes

The same proportion of respondents (13.5%) wanted to see the current classes either continued or expanded in range or availability.

“To have more classes at different times... to offer Reformer Pilates classes.”

“Longer opening hours and programmes that are fit for users such as early evening lane swimming, early morning classes at 6.30 - it’s got to work for working people.”

Some of these comments dovetailed with those about a desire for more / better studio space in which to host classes.

“Multiple studios for group exercise classes with good flooring, lighting and temperature control.”

A child / family-friendly leisure centre

More than one in ten respondents wanted any future leisure centre to be child / family-friendly (12.6%). These often related to swimming in particular (see above), but also retention or improvement of the **soft play** (4.9%).

“Continuation of a really child-friendly pool, just with much better quality and cleaner facilities. Bigger family changing.”

“Bigger soft play. Children’s party package – pool or soft play – then snack time at private party room sounds great.”

Our focus group with Polish parents reinforced the message from the survey findings that Brentford Fountain was especially valuable for children and families, due largely to

the leisure pool, and they wanted to see that offer strengthened in a redeveloped centre. They also wanted to see other facilities for adults – such as a sauna and steam room – but their priority was for enhanced facilities for children and young people which other local leisure centres didn't offer.

More modern, up to date facilities

One in ten (9.6%) wanted to see facilities which are more modern and up-to-date. Some of these comments were non-specific:

“Modern facilities... it's stuck in the 1970s.”

“State-of-the-art leisure facilities for all.”

“A more modern look with modern quality colours added to the interior of the building. Outdated things to be improved and obviously much more improved hygiene.”

Others were focused on certain facilities within the centre – most often the pool, the gym or the changing areas, also the exercise studios.

“Swimming pool, modern gym facilities and co-working spaces.”

“A comprehensive modern gym and swimming pool.”

“Family changing areas that are more modern and accessible.”

Some comments relate to the building itself and the desire for a more sustainable building that provided users with a better overall experience and/or was more energy efficient.

“Spacious modern premises with excellent equipment and exercise studios with windows to allow in natural light. Electric power should from green energy.”

“A new, modern, sustainable building with lots of natural daylight.”

A good / improved cafe

7.7% referred to a café or, in a small number of cases, a snack shop / shop. Most talked about a better food and drink offer or a more inviting space where people would be more likely to want to spend time.

“Nice cafe / pool to give a community feel to be wanting to meet friends.”

“Cafe with good coffee and a range of options for kids snacks and meals.”

“I never knew why a health club sold crisps and chocolate. So maybe offer out local independent cafes to tender for a cafe area.”

Affordable facilities

The response to Question 1 demonstrated that the centre’s affordability was an important feature (more than 1 in 10 mentioned this) and this was a theme in the Question 3 responses too, where it was a feature of 7.3% of responses.

“Affordable activities as they are now for 'normal' working class people who are local to the area. A chance for local schools to make use of facilities and a space that can be used by others groups.”

“The same level of affordability as we have now.”

Some respondents were ambitious that a new centre would have the best state-of-the-art facilities but at current or affordable prices. Others emphasised that affordability was their priority and that they would be happy with the same sorts of facilities as now if it meant prices could be kept to a minimum.

“New high-tech building with all the latest equipment and classes/facilities to offer premium first class leisure services within the borough at an affordable price.”

“A really good gym that provides the same facilities as private gyms but at affordable prices with well trained staff and lots of classes spinning,

yoga, Pilates, dance based upon the needs and demographic of our entire community.”

“The same prices and the same stuff.”

Some respondents wanted to see lower prices than at present and some explored how pricing plans could enable certain groups of people to make more use of the centre. This message also came through in focus groups with young people and disabled people / disability organisations, where cost was identified as a barrier to more use of the leisure centre.

*Affordable reduced fees for residents, incorporating and targeting teenagers in particular. Maybe evening youth club type events...
Affordable football pitch hire/rates per hr for teenagers.”*

“More affordable activities and swimming lessons for people that can't afford them like myself with 5 kids and two child with disability.”

Some respondents expressed anxiety that a redeveloped centre will mean higher entry and membership fees. Several emphasised the importance of this remaining a public facility that local people could afford to use.

“Good cheap gym access for those who can't afford private options.”

Retained / improved studio space

One in twenty respondents (5.8%) want to see the studio rooms retained and improved. In response to Question 2 people said they thought the existing studios were small, dark and stuffy, and their ambitions for future studio space reflect this with most envisaging rooms that larger, brighter and airier. Some also refer to sprung floors.

As a group ex instructor, I'd like a beautiful new studio with floor to ceiling mirrors on at least one wall.

Multiple studios for group exercise classes with good flooring, lighting and temperature control.

A brighter studio with windows!

Sauna / steam room / spa

One in twenty respondents (5.8%) wanted to see some sort of health suite at a redeveloped leisure centre, with sauna, steam room and spa facilities.

“Steam room and jacuzzi like Isleworth.”

“Definitely consider adding a sauna room and hot tub as well as they do wonders for sore muscles. And perhaps massage rooms as well, like a spa, to hire for some post work out deep tissue work.”

Serves the community / accessible for all

3.5% of responses to this question imagined a future leisure centre that in offer and character is a public facility serving its whole community.

“Not something that will alienate the regular customers - not something intimidating. Want something welcoming to all!”

“Accessibility for ALL DISABILITIES, consultation with the RNIB for suitable lighting as they have expertise to advise.”

“That it serves the community, has multi-generational facilities.”

Some of these responses painted a picture of how the centre could be appealing and accessible to a wide range of people.

“The leisure centre is a wonderful space for residents and especially for growing community in Brentford... Space for young people playing games i.e. table tennis, perhaps a chess room. A crèche while mums are using the spa.”

Accessibility was an important theme in our conversations with Speak Out in Hounslow and Hounslow Disability and Age Equality Partnership. Respondents in these groups wanted to see a building with maximum accessibility on the approach and at the

entrance; and inside the building. That would be supported in part, they said, by a building that is easy to navigate with good zoning and signage.

Expanding the range of facilities for children and young people

In the two focus groups we held with school-aged children and young people, participants' ideas about future facilities in part reinforced messages from the survey. They talked about wanting to see a more modern, fully-functioning centre that was cleaner and well-maintained, for instance. Like survey respondents, young focus group participants wanted to see the water slides and wave machine reinstated, as well as a deeper pool.

They suggested that a wider range of activities for teenagers beyond swimming would attract more interest. Some of the sports and activities they highlighted had received just a few mentions in the survey: indoor football, for instance, climbing; basketball; trampolining; kickboxing and wrestling. One idea was an area like soft play but for teenagers, with bungee ropes and a climbing wall.

Conclusions

The unusually high level of response to the survey itself indicates the importance of Brentford Fountain Leisure Centre to local people, and this comes through clearly in the content of those responses. Whilst a lot of people are negative about aspects of the building and its some of its facilities – particularly in relation to upkeep – the survey and focus group feedback reveal a lot of affection for the centre and strength of feeling about the role it plays – or should play again – in the community.

People's responses – both about the centre today and its potential future – build up a picture of what people most value, most want to protect and most want to enhance.

One element of that is the breadth of activities the centre provides – including its combination of swimming for fun and for fitness, as well as its gym provision, exercise classes, soft play and racket sports. Some expressed anxiety that a redeveloped centre will necessarily be smaller, less diverse in its offer and less well-equipped, but argued that as new housing development brings more people into the area – especially families – the ambition should be to create somewhere that serves that growing population well. Survey responses about the range of facilities and activities tended to emphasise the desire to maintain the existing mix, though some want to see new features added – from a health suite (e.g. steam room) to a climbing wall, a paddle court to football pitches.

Another element is the leisure centre as a public facility that serves its whole community in terms of age, ability and income level. We can see this in responses that talk about the importance of affordability and accessibility; about its family-friendly or child-friendly nature; about its value for schools and clubs and for people of all ages keeping fit. Some respondents argued that in contrast to other local provision, Brentford Fountain has traditionally offered, still offers or should seek to offer something especially appealing to families.

And whilst most responses focused on retaining or enhancing the existing types of facilities and services, a few suggested that redeveloping the centre should be an opportunity to broaden the centre's offer in ways that make it more of an **all-around hub for the community** – whether that's an improved cafe where friends can socialise, space for community meetings and events, public health and wellbeing services or workspace for remote workers.

Appendix

Profile of survey respondents

Background

This was an open survey intended for a wide range of stakeholders, from frequent users of the leisure centre to those who live locally but never use it; as well as those who work at the centre.

The leisure centre has no clearly defined catchment area around which we can draw a line and so when assessing how closely the survey respondents reflect the local population we look at data for the three closest wards (Chiswick Riverside, Brentford East, Chiswick Gunnersbury); and also 'Within 20 minutes' walk.'

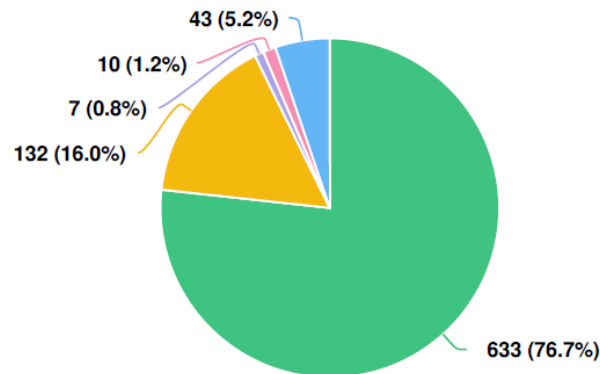
Headlines

- Three quarters of survey respondents are London Borough of Hounslow residents. Almost all respondents are current or past leisure centre customers or non-visiting Hounslow residents, with just 2% of responses coming from centre staff or those delivering services from the centre (such as fitness instructors).
- 43% tend to visit the leisure centre at least once a week – and one in ten most days. At the other end of the spectrum, almost a quarter (23.7%) have not visited the centre in the last 12 months or ever.
- The postcode areas TW8 and W4 account for over two thirds of survey responses. Around half of these live in TW8 (Brentford, Kew Bridge, Syon Park) and the other half in W4 (Chiswick, Gunnersbury, Turnham Green, Bedford Park).
- Compared to the local area, survey respondents are disproportionately female, disproportionately white and weighted towards midlife age groups (35-64). Disabled people or those with a life-impacting health condition are slightly over-represented in the survey sample.

Resident, staff, activity lead or organisation?

Around three quarters of respondents are Hounslow residents (76.7%) whilst 16% live in other boroughs.

Q1 Which of the following statements best describes you?



Question options

- I am a Hounslow resident ● I am not a Hounslow resident ● I deliver a service or activity at the leisure centre
- I am a member of staff at the leisure centre ● My organisation uses the leisure centre

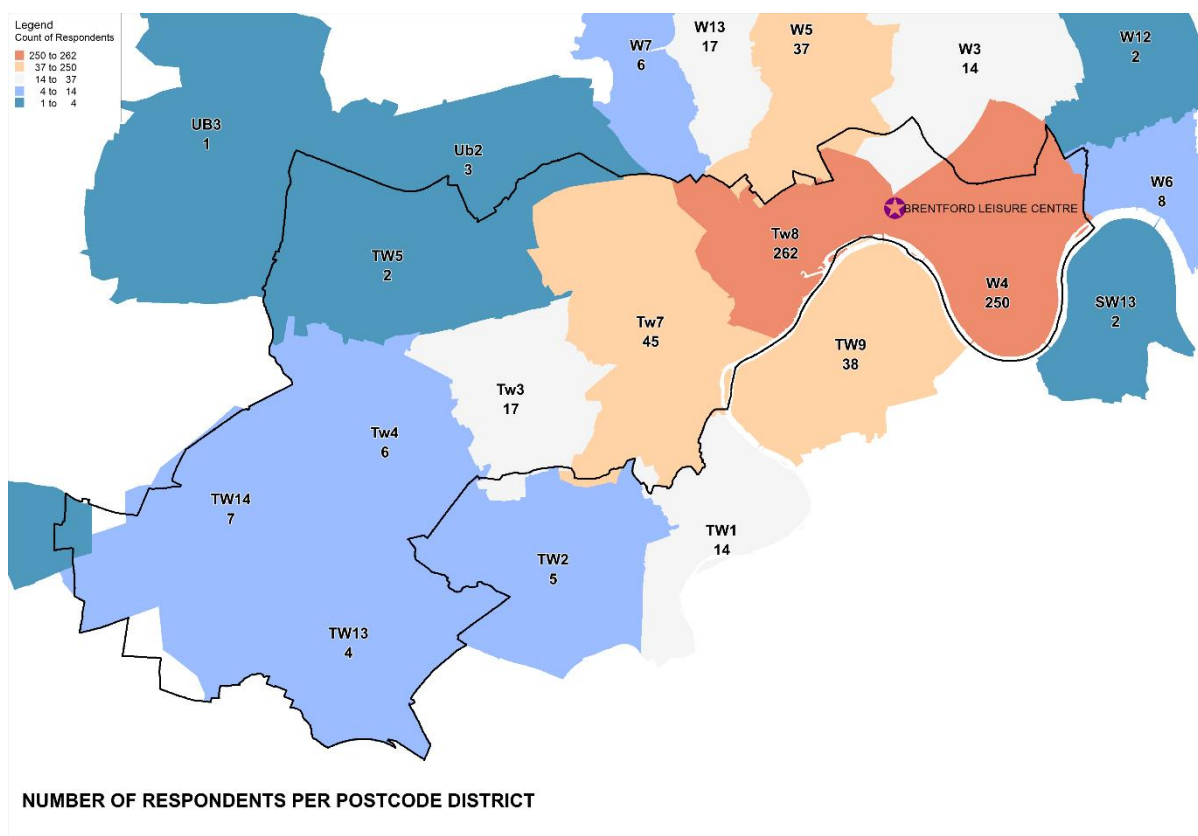
Mandatory Question (825 response(s))

Of the 825 survey respondents who answered this question:

- 76.7% are Hounslow residents (633 responses)
- 16% are not Hounslow residents (132 responses)
- 1.2% are staff (10 responses)
- 0.8% run a service from the centre (7 responses)
- 5.2% from an organisation that uses the centre (43 responses)

Location

The vast majority of survey respondents live in postcode districts closest to the leisure centre. The postcodes TW8 and W4 account for over two thirds of survey responses. Around half of these live in TW8 (Brentford, Kew Bridge, Syon Park) and the other half in W4 (Chiswick, Gunnersbury, Turnham Green, Bedford Park).



Postcode area	Responses	%
TW8 (Brentford, Kew Bridge, Syon Park)	262	35.4
W4 (Chiswick, Gunnersbury, Turnham Green, Bedford Park)	250	33.7
TW1, TW2, TW3, TW4, TW5 (Twickenham, St Margarets, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham Riverside, East Twickenham, Whitton, Fulwell and South Twickenham, Hounslow, Hounslow West, Lampton, Maswell Park, Isleworth, Hanworth, Heston)	45	6.1
TW9 (Richmond, North Sheen, Kew)	38	5.1
W5 (Ealing, Park Royal)	37	5.0
Other	32	4.3
Unclear	17	2.3
W13 (West Ealing, Northfields)	17	2.3
TW7 (Isleworth, Osterley, Whitton)	15	2.0
W6,7	15	2.0
W3 (Acton, East Acton, West Acton, Park Royal)	14	1.9
TW13,14	11	1.5
W12,14	5	0.7

Sex

A disproportionate number of respondents are women, with more than twice as many women responding as men. This disparity is *not* explained by the profile of existing leisure centre members, where there is a small predominance of men.

64% female	4% prefer not to say
31.6% male	0.4% non-binary or transgender

Age

Respondents are drawn from across all age groups, with over half aged between 35-54 (58%). The survey was not aimed at children and under-18s are extremely under-represented in the responses compared to the local population. Amongst adults, those under 34 – and especially those under 24 – are under-represented in the responses and other adult age groups up to age 64 – especially those 35-54 – are over-represented. Those aged 75+ are under-represented in the data.

Age	Survey sample (%)	Chiswick Riverside (%)	Brentford East (%)	Chiswick Gunnersbury (%)	Within 20 minutes' walk
Under-18*	9.1	22.5 + (up to 19)	25.6 (up to 19)	20.6 (up to 19)	22.7 (up to 19)
18-24*	3.2	4.7 (20-24)	6.2 (20-24)	6.6 (20-24)	5.8
25-34	9.6	15.3	18.6	17.4	17.9
35-44	27.1	17.2	19.3	16.7	18
45-54	26.8	15.3	12.9	14.2	14.2
55-64	22.2	11.3	9.3	10.7	10.2
65-74	7.8	8.5	4.6	7.9	6.7
75+	2.8	5.3	3.4	6.9	3.4
Prefer not to say	1.5				

*Note that data is not directly comparable as age categories are cut differently in the ward data up to age 24.

Ethnicity

Seven out of ten respondents are White and one in ten Asian. This closely reflects the profile of Chiswick Riverside and Gunnersbury wards whilst being markedly different to the more diverse profile of Brentford East. In comparison to all three wards, Black people are under-represented in the responses. This overall picture of a sample less diverse than the population is reinforced if we use '20 minutes' walking distance' as our proxy for local catchment.

Ethnicity	Survey sample (%)	Chiswick Riverside (%)	Brentford East (%)	Chiswick Gunnersbury (%)	Within 20 minutes' walk (%)
White	71.1	73.1	49.6	68.6	62
Asian	9.2	9.7	16.9	13.1	13.8
Mixed	6.7	7.2	7.7	6.9	7.2
Black	2.2	4.5	15.2	4.1	8.9
Other	2.6	5.5	10.6	7.3	8
Prefer not to say	8.2	-	-	-	

Disability

17.2% report having a disability or long-term health condition. This is higher than the number in the three closest wards who state their day-to-day activities are limited – a little or a lot – by a health problem or disability. It is important to bear in mind the differences in the questions asked; the census shows that 4.4% of Hounslow residents do have a long-term condition but do *not* consider their day-to-day activities limited.

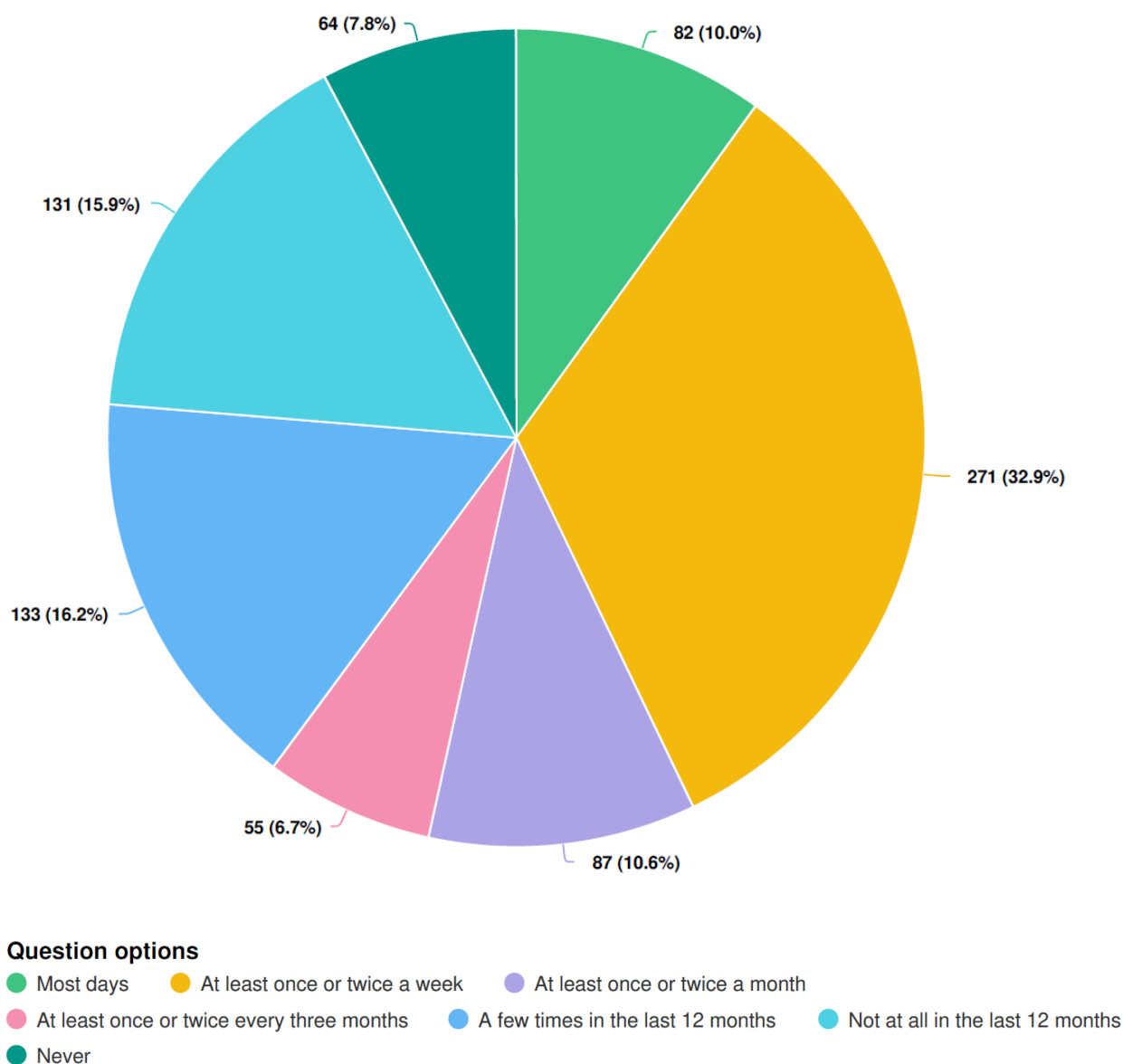
Disability, mobility issue or health condition?	Survey sample (%)	Chiswick Riverside (%)	Brentford East (%)	Chiswick Gunnersbury (%)
		Day to day activities limited a lot or a little?		
Yes	17.2*	11.6	16.1	13.4
<i>(Physical)</i>	<i>(11.5)</i>			
<i>(Mental)</i>	<i>(5.0)</i>			
<i>(Learning)</i>	<i>(2)</i>			
<i>(Sensory)</i>	<i>(2)</i>			
<i>(Neurological)</i>	<i>(2.3)</i>			
Prefer not to say / no reply	3.7			

* Note that the sum of the individual scores for each disability / condition / impairment (in italics) exceed the 'Yes' total as some respondents ticked more than one.

Leisure Centre usage

Frequency

The survey reached a wide range of respondents in terms of how often they use the centre. Of the 823 who responded to this question, 42.3% use the centre at least once a week – including the 1 in 10 who use it most days. At the other end of the spectrum, almost a quarter (23.7%) have not used it at all in the last year – and some of these, never.



The 132 non-Hounslow residents were less likely to be daily visitors (3.4% compared to 10% across all respondents) and more likely not to have visited in the last 12 months

(15.9% compared to 9.6%). Otherwise, differences in frequency of use between Hounslow and non-Hounslow residents were not great.

Facilities used

Of the 759 who responded to this question, the great majority have used the pool within the last year. A third have used the gym, almost a quarter have used the café and a fifth have attended the exercise classes.

- 70.1% - have used the pool
- 33.7% - have used the gym
- 23.8% - have used the café
- 20.4% - have used group exercise classes
- 19.2% - have played racket sports
- 17% - have used the soft play
- 5.3% - have used something else
- 8.8% - haven't used any of the facilities

Cutting this data by demographics reveals some different patterns in the use of facilities amongst different types of respondent.

- **Swimming pool:** Of all age groups, 18 to 34 year-old respondents were most likely to have used the pool in the last year and 35-54 year-olds a little more likely than the average. Black and minority ethnic respondents and disabled respondents were slightly less likely than average to have used the pool.
- **Gym:** Gym use was weighted towards older respondents, with half of over-65s having used the gym in the last 12 months compared to a third overall. Only a quarter of 18 to 34 year-olds had used the gym during that time.
- **Group exercise classes:** attendance at group exercise classes was also weighted towards older respondents. Over a third of over-65s had used these and a quarter of 55-64 year-olds, compared to a fifth overall and fewer than one in ten 18-34 year-olds. Correspondingly, respondents who were disabled or living with a long-term condition or limited mobility (and who tended to be older) were above average users of group exercise classes.
- **Cafe:** Respondents aged over-65 were much more likely to be users of the cafe – four in ten compared to one in four – and respondents from black and minority ethnic backgrounds or who were disabled were slightly more likely to use the cafe.
- **Racket sports:** Over-65s were much less likely to have used racket sports facilities in the last year – 3% compared to 19.2% overall – and black and minority ethnic respondents slightly more likely than average at 25.4%.

- **Soft play:** use of the soft play corresponded closely with parental age. A quarter of those aged 35-44 had used the soft play in the last year compared to 17% overall, whilst the figure for over-65s was just 3% and for 55-64 year-olds, 7.3%.