



# **2023 GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEMES ANNUAL SURVEY REPORT**

# Introduction

**Good neighbour and voluntary car schemes provide support for people in the local community who need help with transport and some of the basics of day to day living such as shopping, moving heavy furniture or filling in a form.**

**The schemes are run by local volunteers for the benefit of their community and the type of tasks they undertake varies from scheme to scheme. The majority provide transport to medical appointments, but others may offer also other services or activities such as a handyman or tea parties or outings.**

**They all provide a lifeline to people who might otherwise be isolated or lonely and are of enormous social value, as they allow people to live independently in their own homes for longer. We estimate that the money saved by the NHS through the avoidance of missed appointments and hospitalisation thanks to the services provided by volunteer drivers across Surrey, is in the region of £3,000,000.**

**There are approximately 100 good neighbour schemes in the county, 74 of which actively engage in the support provided by Surrey Community Action.**

**This report sets out the results of the 2023 Surrey Good Neighbour Schemes Survey, which was completed in January 2024.**

**It provides an overview into how voluntary car and good neighbour schemes have operated, adapted and changed over the year. A total of 74 schemes were invited to take part in the survey and 41 responded - a response rate of 55%. Some answers were estimates, while others may have been for part of the year (April - December rather than Jan - December), so this report gives an insight rather than a robust measure of data. Generally speaking, these figures will be on the conservative side.**

# Summary

The number of requests are still below pre-Covid levels, (the 46 schemes who responded in January 2020 received 29,995 requests). In 2023, 41 schemes received **16,672** requests. However, 70.7% of schemes have reported that this year they are starting to see requests return to normal levels. As the NHS catches up with missed appointments due to Covid and industrial action, and as people (especially older people) become less fearful of Covid infection, and funding is reduced for community transport, we can expect to see requests continuing to increase. The number of requests to schemes ranged from 30 to 2,813. This disparity is not a reflection of need, but more the number of people in the catchment area that a scheme covers.

The vast majority of requests were for transport to medical appointments at a GP surgery or at a hospital. On average volunteers take clients a maximum distance of between 15-30 miles, but some schemes will take a client as far as a volunteer is willing to travel.

The 41 schemes who responded have approximately 3,891 clients between them and they have very rarely had to refuse a request, but when they do this is usually because of short notice and/or a lack of drivers.

Volunteer recruitment is still a challenge. Between them, 41 schemes have almost 1,500 volunteers which is a higher combined total than last year (in 2022, 55 schemes also had some 1,500 volunteers), but still far fewer than pre-pandemic (in 2020, 46 schemes had 2,474 volunteers). Almost two thirds (61.8%) are drivers. Schemes recruited 178 volunteers but lost 135 this year, so a net gain of 43 and far less of a drop than in 2022 (a decline of 377 volunteers). Recruitment is mainly through word of mouth, but schemes use a blend of methods including leaflets, social media and local events to recruit.

**More schemes are using technology to support their operations. 14 schemes (compared to 7 in 2022) now use WhatsApp to communicate with volunteers. An increasing amount - 50% - are using either a wholly computerised system or a partially computerised system for their operations (in 2022 this was figure was 36%).**

**Schemes continue to need the assistance of Surrey Community Action's Good Neighbour Scheme support to help with volunteer recruitment; administration; computerisation; publicity and websites as well as day to day queries.**



# **Survey results**



## **How far will you take clients?**

The maximum distance most schemes are willing to take clients ranges between 15 - 30 miles. A few schemes said that they will go any distance depending on the availability and willingness of their volunteers.

## **How many requests did you have in your last full year?**

Among the respondents, the number of requests varied depending on the size of the scheme - the highest was 2,183 requests and the lowest was 30 requests. The total number of requests in 2023 was 16,672.

## **Do you count a request as one journey? If it is a return journey, do you count this as two journeys?**

Nearly all of the respondents treat a request as one journey, whether it is a single or return. A small number of schemes have stated that it counts as two journeys under specific conditions, for example a long hospital appointment which requires two different drivers (one volunteer taking and another volunteer bringing the client back).

## **How many requests have you had to refuse this year?**

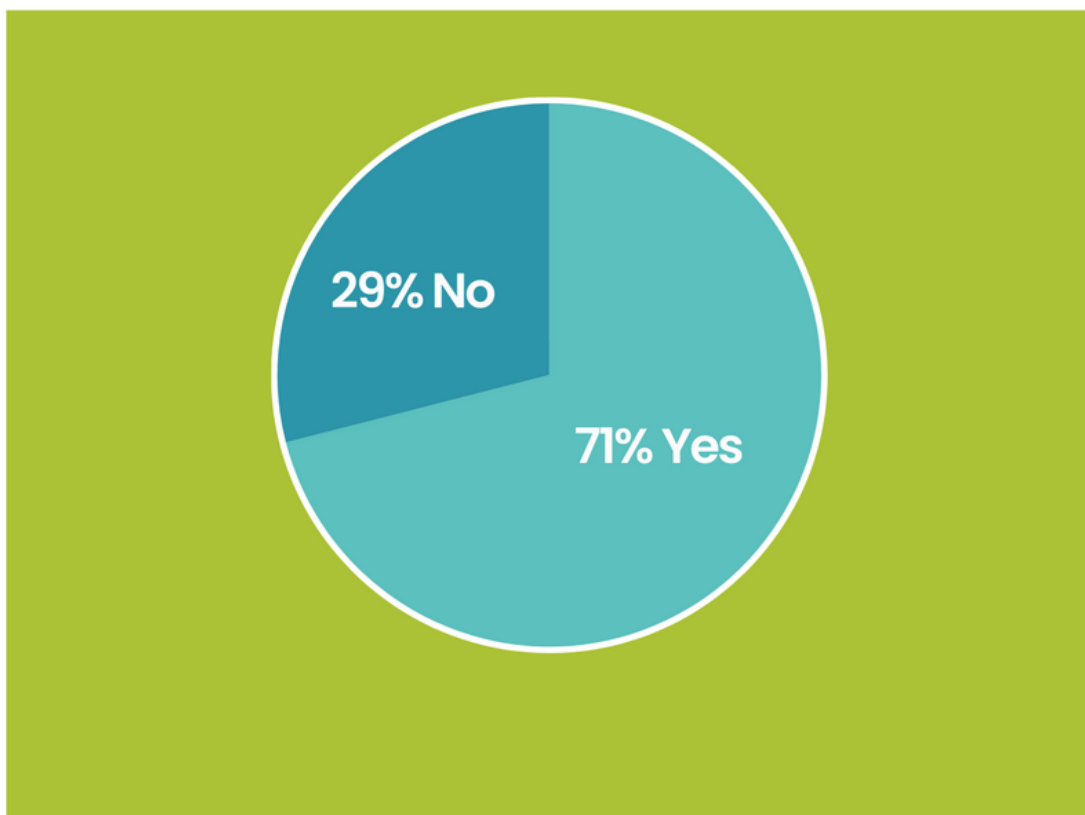
Respondents reported that they try to refuse “very few” of the requests that they receive. Last minute requests (which are, anecdotally, increasing in number as hospitals try to fill cancellations) and/or a lack of drivers is the most common reason for refusals. More than likely, the lack of a volunteer driver is because the request is short notice, rather than a general lack of volunteers. Some schemes have refused a request because the client lives out of the area, or because the journey is too far.

## What is the reason for refusing a request?

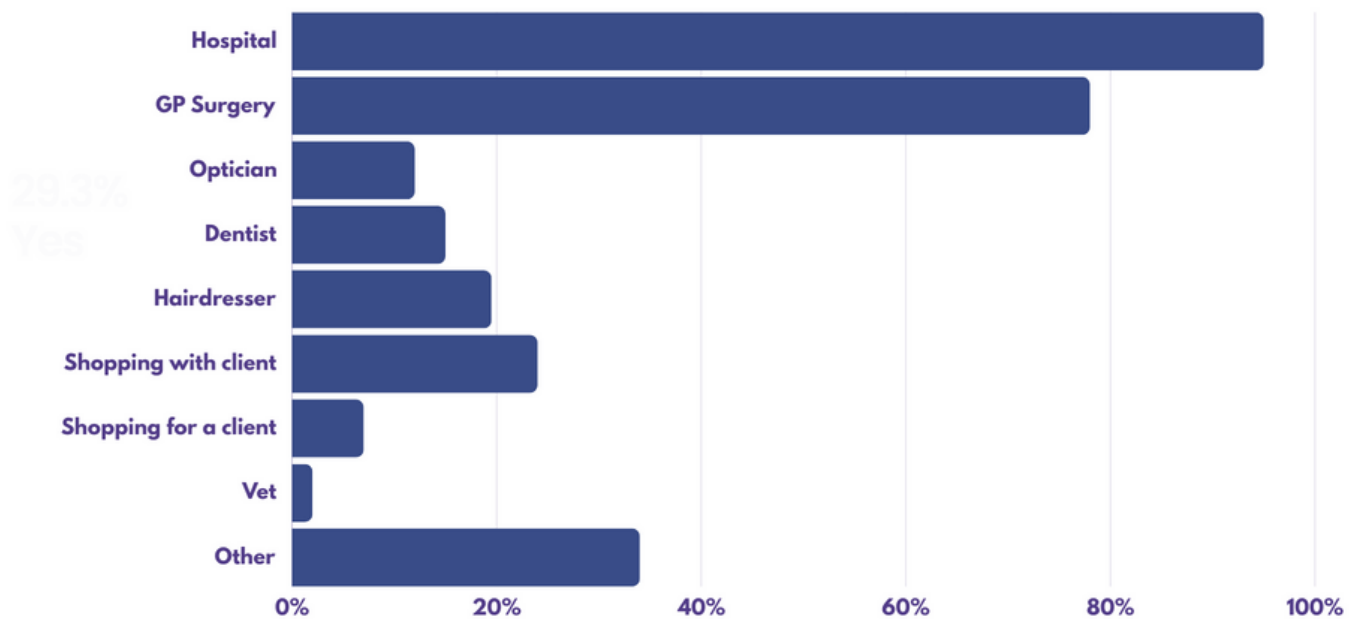
While schemes are reluctant to refuse a request for assistance, occasionally they are unable to accommodate clients. Schemes told us that this is mostly because the request is made at too short notice, or because they do not have a volunteer available (and perhaps the two reasons are connected as it's much harder to find a volunteer at short notice).

Other reasons given included clients living or needing to travel beyond the scheme's boundaries, or requesting a service that the scheme does not provide.

## Do you think your requests are starting to get back to normal levels since the pandemic?



## Can you give a rough percentage of the type of requests you receive?



### Other

- Visiting care homes
- Podiatry/chiropractic/osteopath/physio
- Social activity / event / church / day centre
- Pharmacy or collecting prescriptions
- Bank
- IT assistance

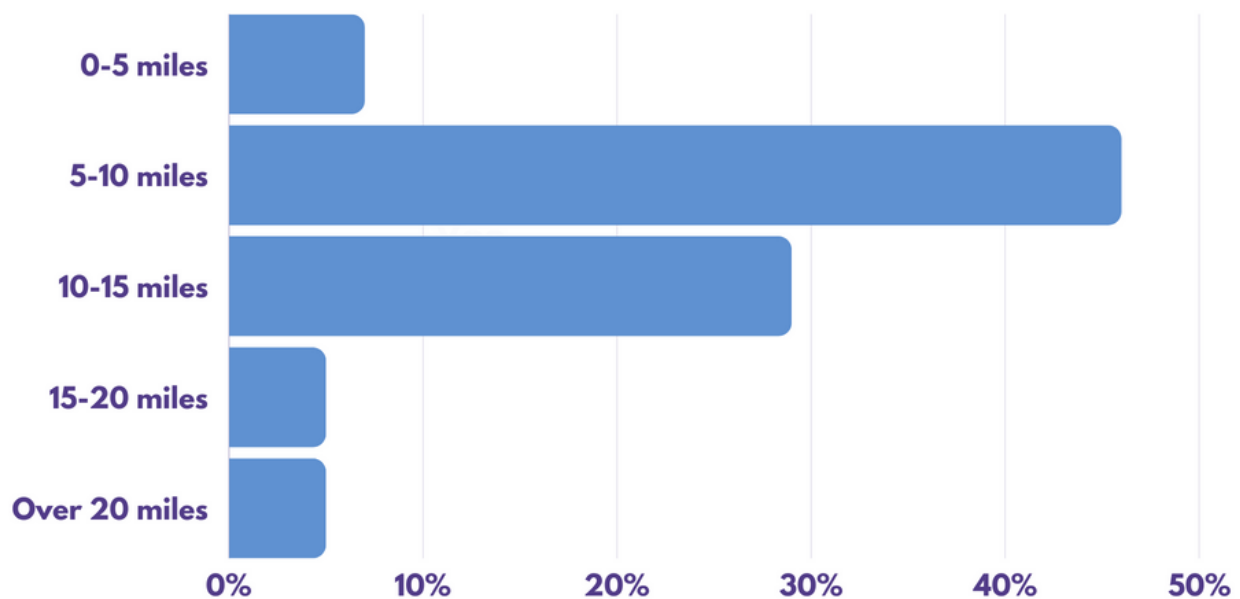
## Which hospitals do you take clients to?

Schemes across Surrey take clients to a wide range of hospitals and health centres. The Royal Surrey County Hospital is the most frequently visited with 85% of schemes taking clients there. Frimley Park and St. Peter's are also frequently visited.

Volunteers also drive out of Surrey to take clients to other clinical settings as far afield as London, Brighton, Maidstone and Slough.



## What do you estimate the average return mileage for a journey is?



## Finance and Administration

### Do you receive income from the following: Donation from the client/Suggested donation from client/Set charge from client?

Schemes are pretty evenly split with how they request donations/payment from clients to cover volunteer expenses. 45% request a donation and 45% make a suggested donation request (i.e. £4 to the local GP surgery). The remainder have a set charge.

## Schemes also receive funding from other sources



Donations family and friends/clients/other third parties



Donations from volunteers (unclaimed expenses)



Grant / gift



Parish council



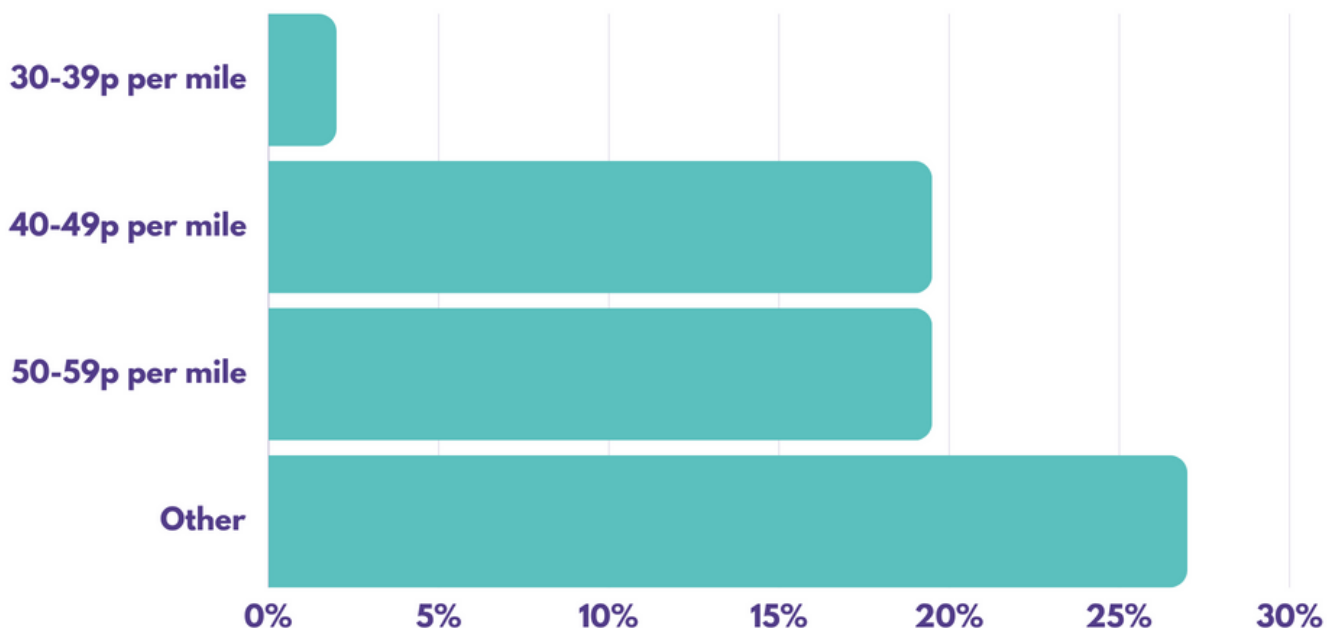
Donations from local organisations



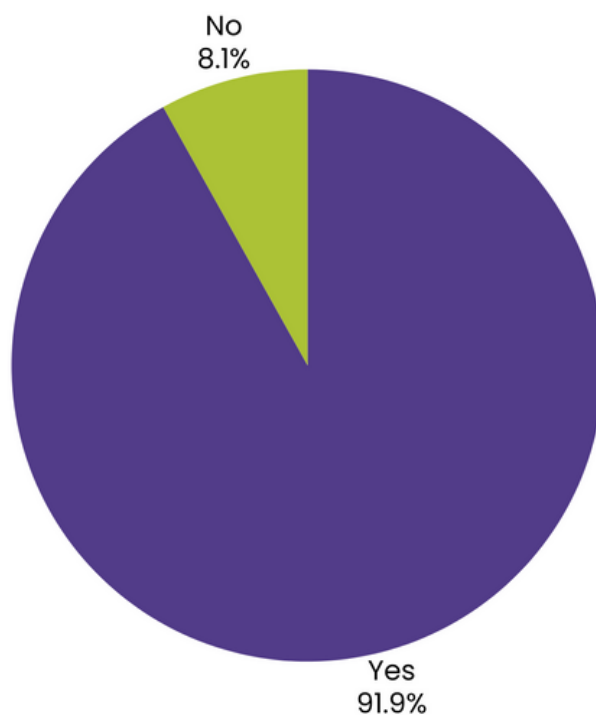
Bric a brack stall/local fete

## If you make a suggested donation or a set charge, how much do you suggest or charge per mile?

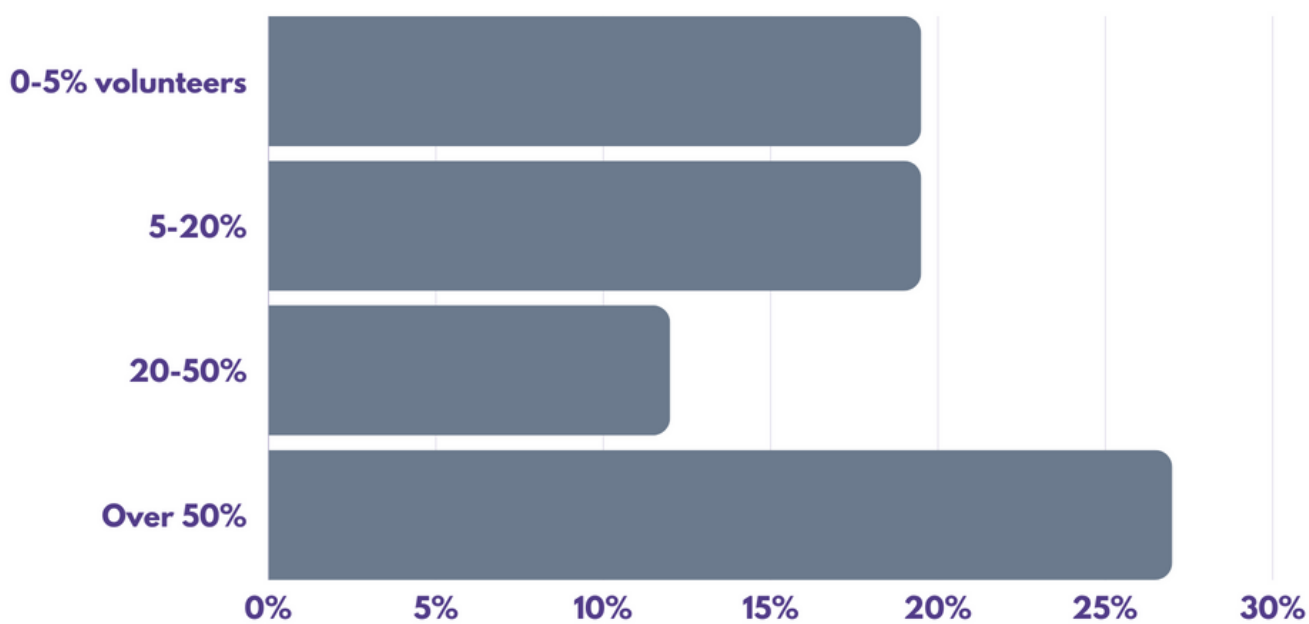
Most of the respondents say that they make a suggested donation of an average of between 40 - 60p per mile, whilst a few other schemes stated that they use separate set prices depending on the location type i.e. £4 for a return trip to a local GP surgery.



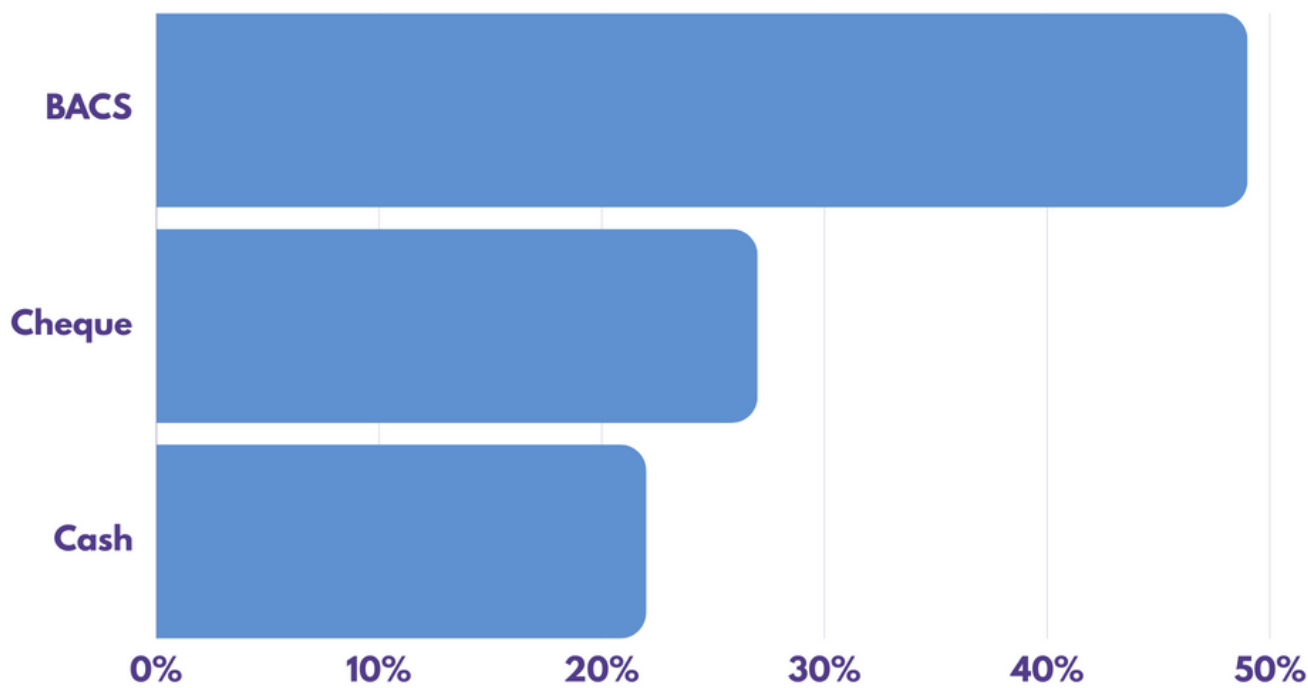
## Do you pay expenses to your volunteers?



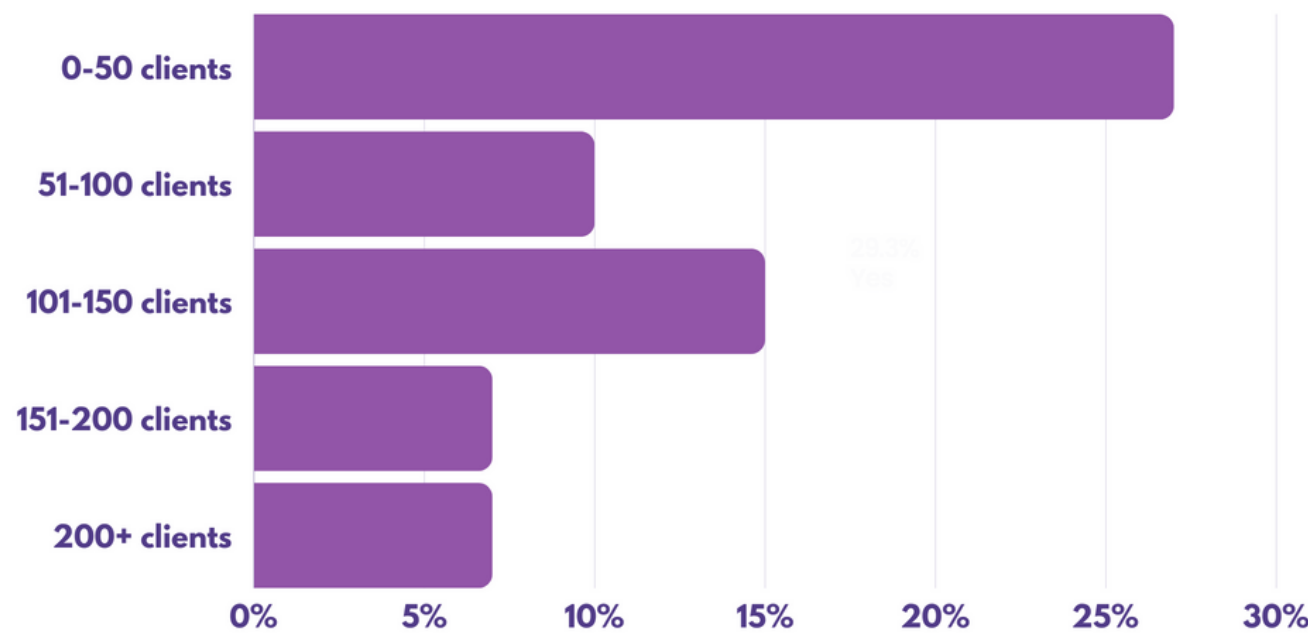
## How many of your volunteers claim expenses ?



## How do you pay your volunteers their expenses?

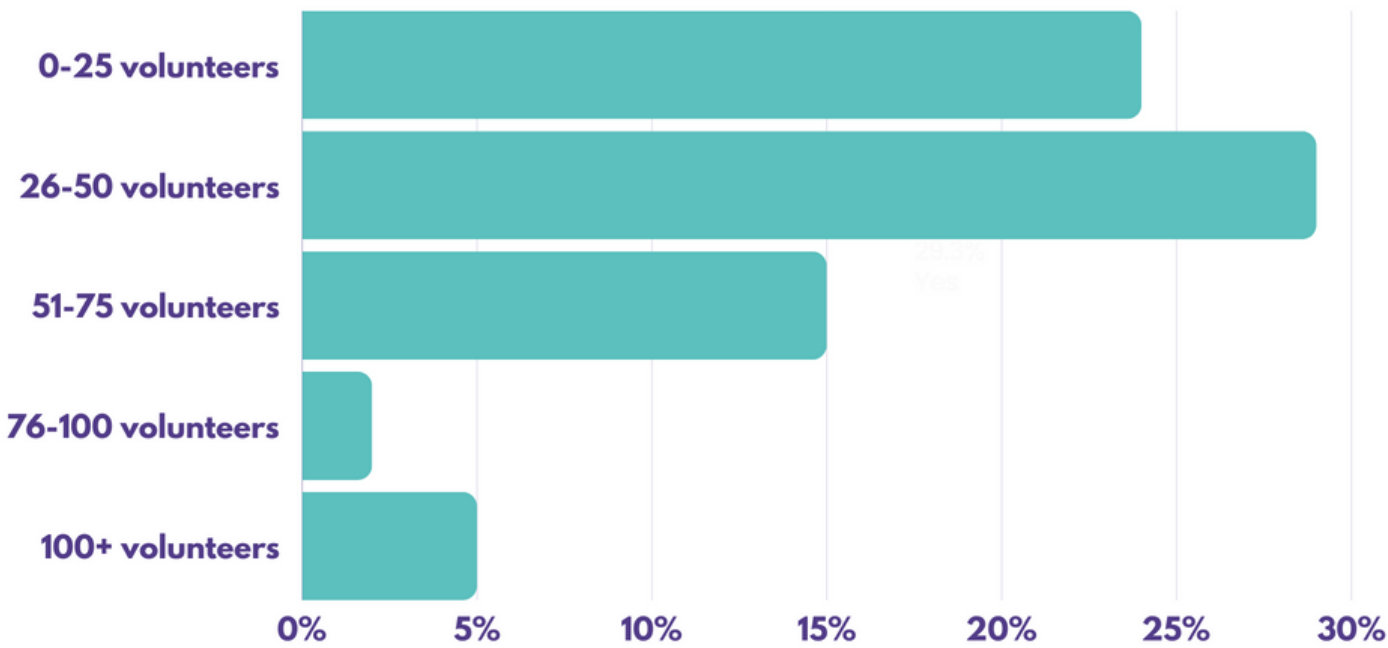


## How many clients do you have registered with your scheme?



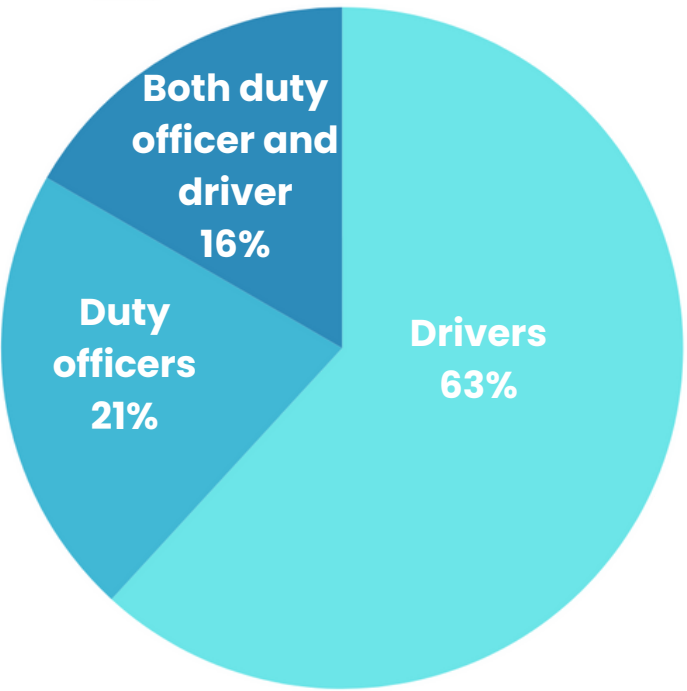
Total: 3,891

How many volunteers do you have registered?

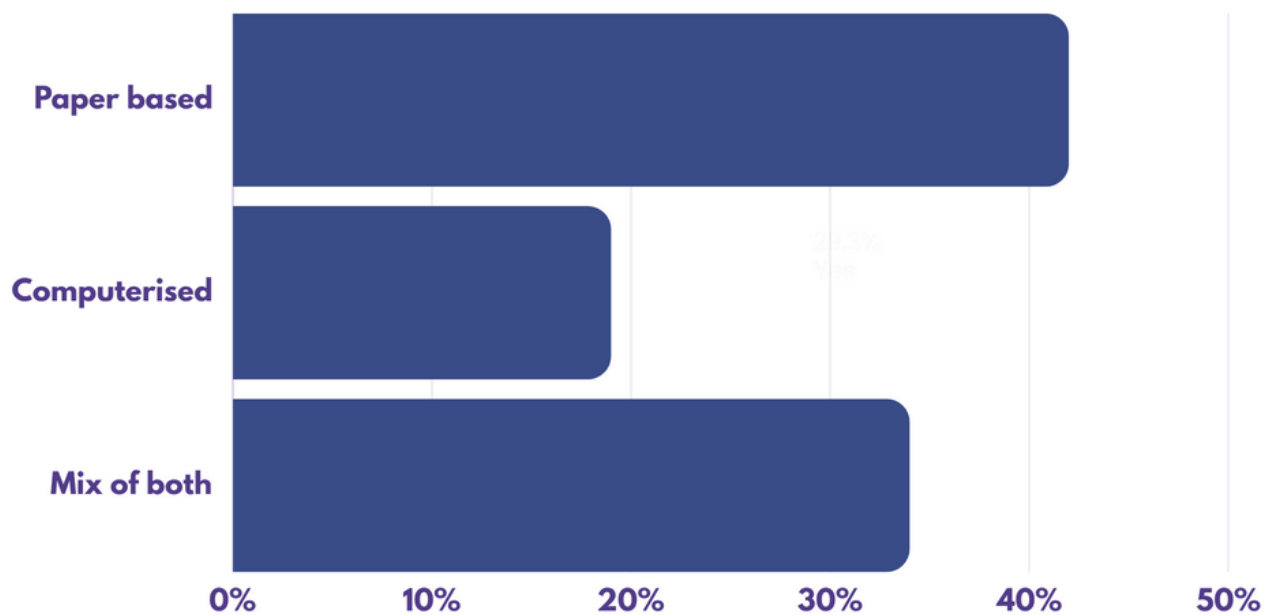


Total: 1,446

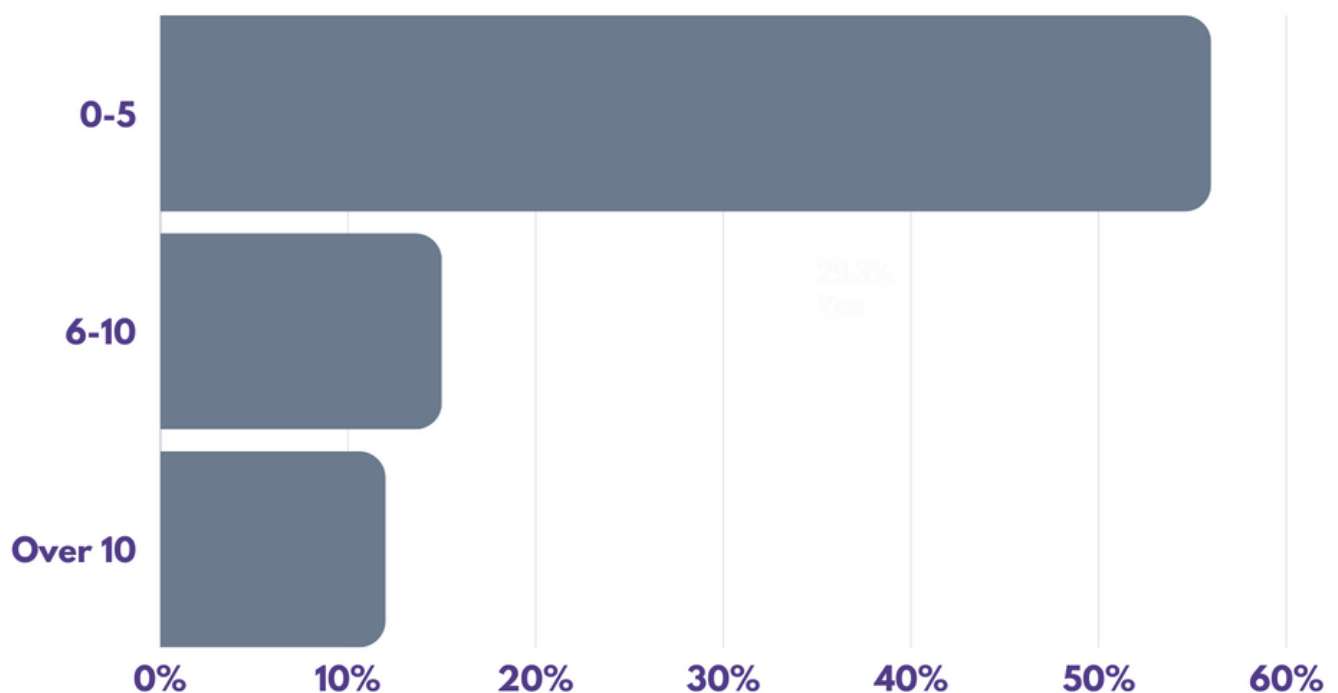
Duty officer and driver roles



## Do you use a paper based or computerised system for record keeping?



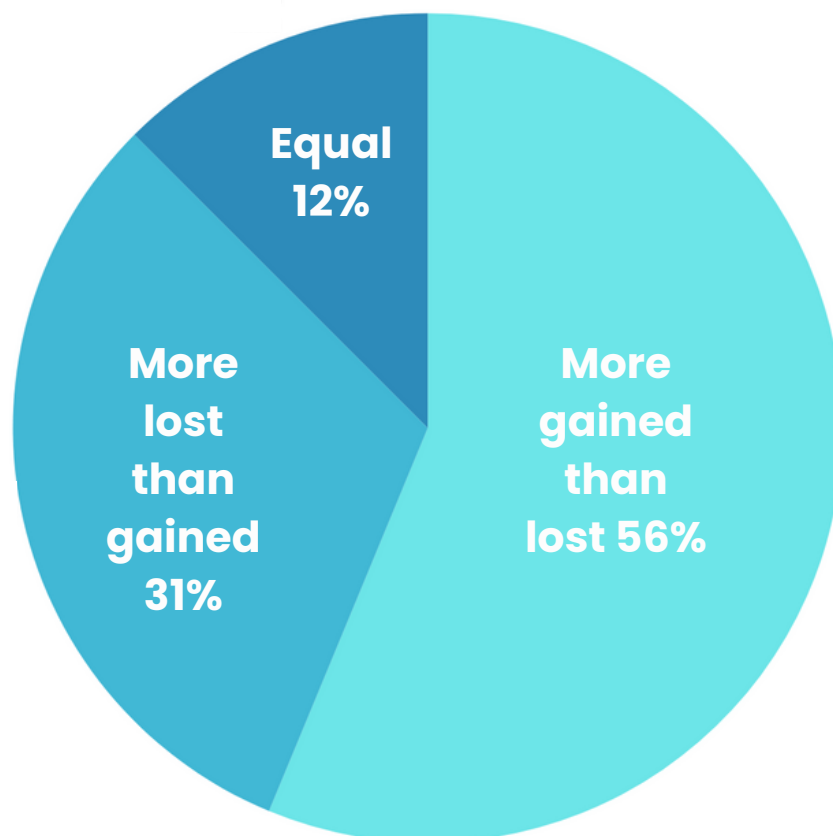
## How many volunteers have you recruited this year?



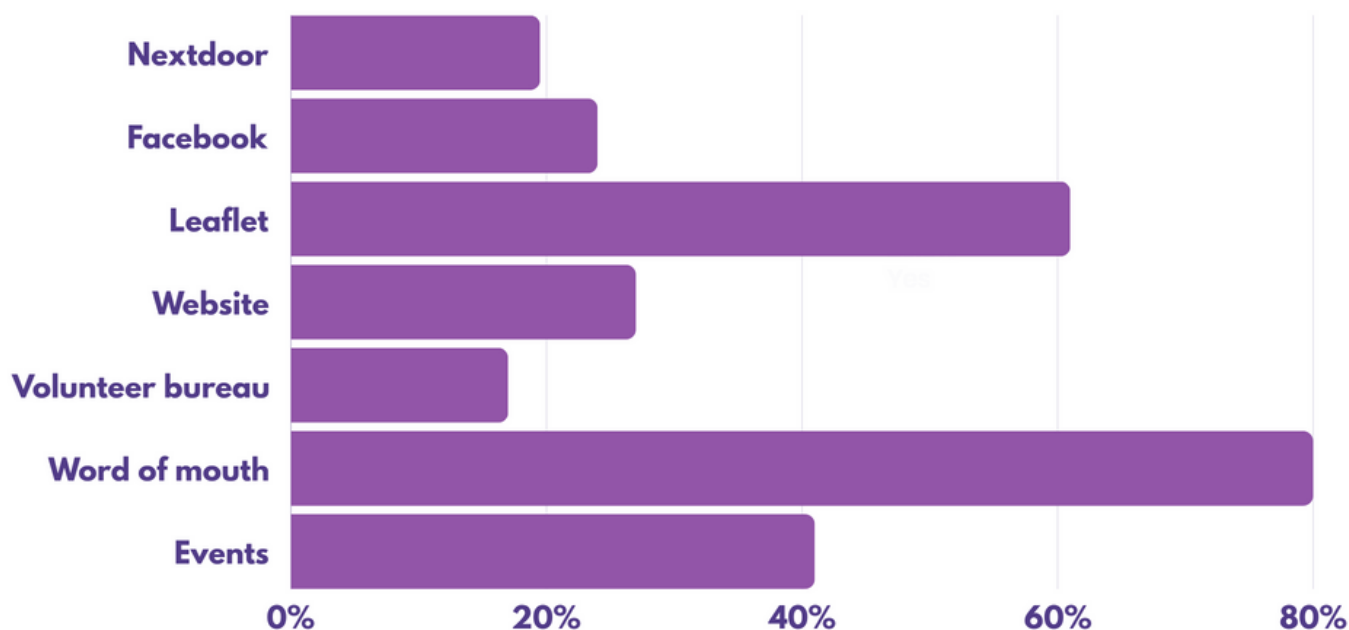
Total: 178

## How many volunteers have you lost this year?

The results show that there was a total loss of 135 volunteers this year. Almost 60% gained more volunteers than they lost but a third of schemes lost more volunteers than they gained. We'll provide additional support for those schemes which have lost more volunteers than they gained, to avoid recruitment affecting the viability of a scheme.



## Which methods do you use to recruit volunteers?



## Other methods of volunteer recruitment



Giving presentations



Local noticeboards



Leaflets in shops and surgeries



Village email



Stalls at fairs



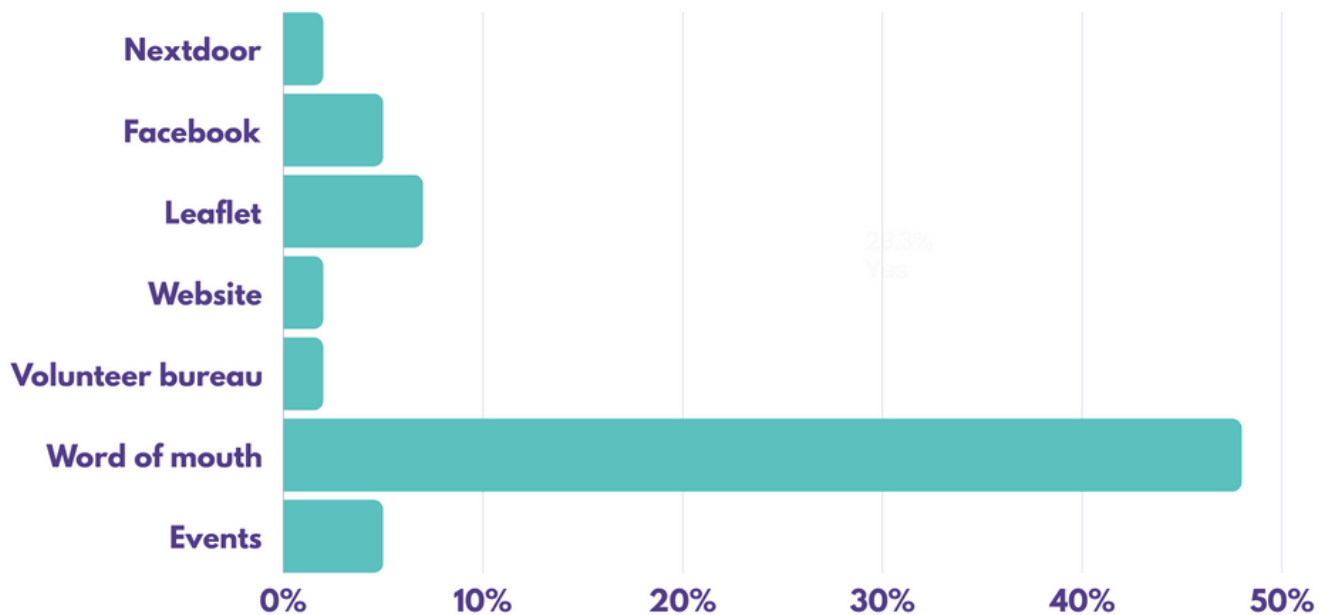
Posters



Local magazines

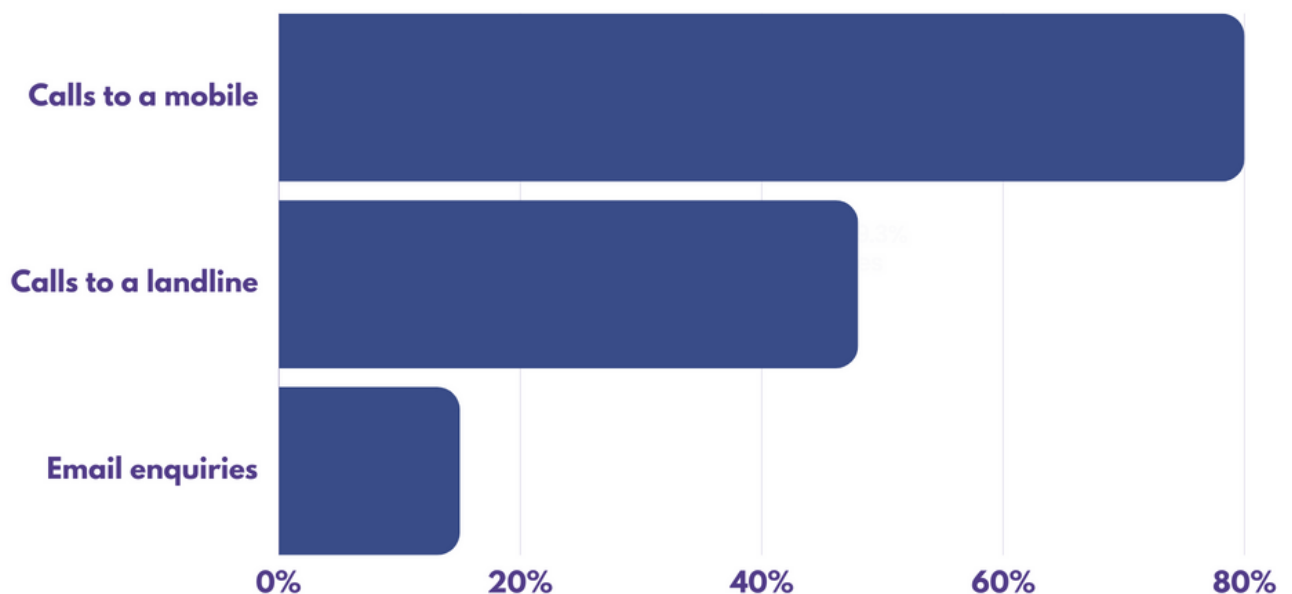


## Which is your most successful method of volunteer recruitment?



## Communication and Activities

There has been a slight increase in the number of schemes who are beginning to use technology for communication. Do your clients make enquiries via:

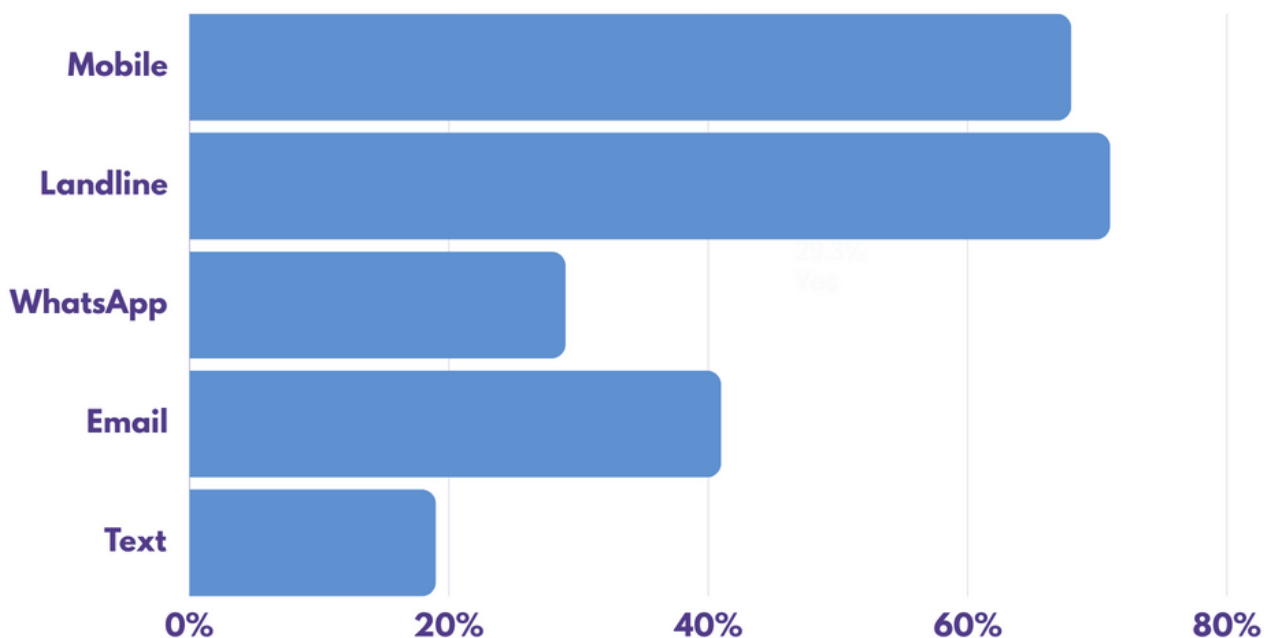


Other schemes receive enquiries via text. Some schemes would like to switch from a landline to a mobile phone to receive enquiries, but poor mobile reception or slow broadband is a barrier to making the change.

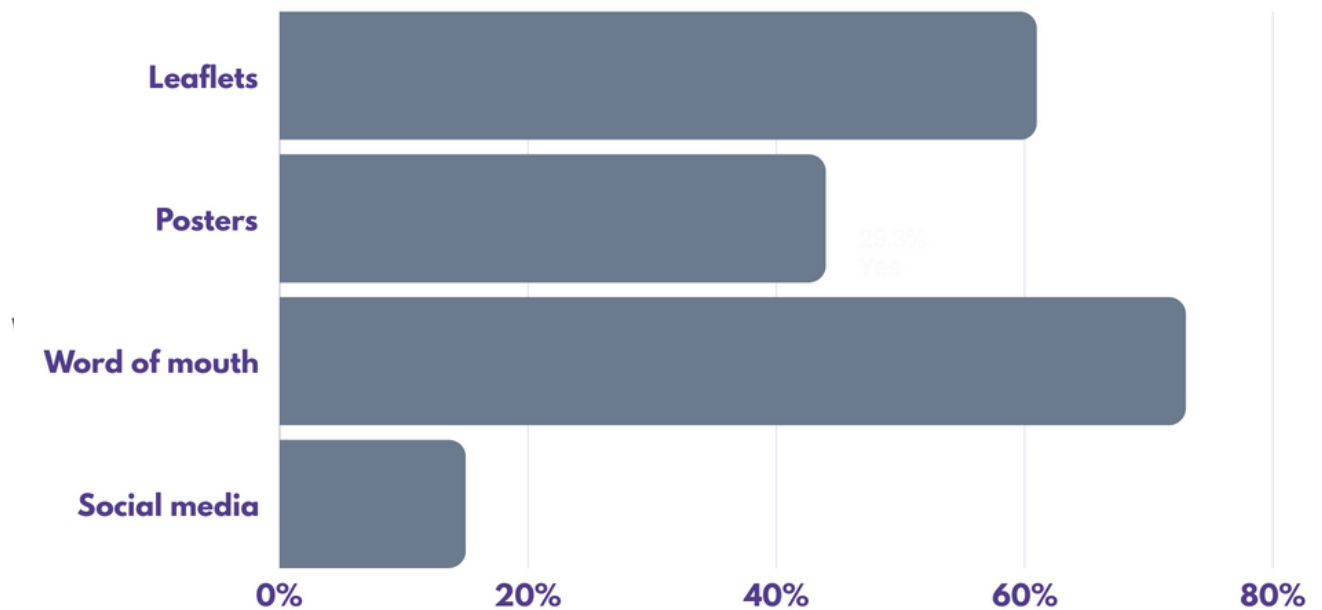
## How do you contact your volunteers?

WhatsApp has grown in popularity as the preferred method to contact volunteers, with a 50% increase in schemes now using the app compared to last year. Texting is less popular than in previous years, with 10% fewer schemes using this to contact volunteers.

Calls to volunteers using a phone (either from mobile or a landline phone) is still the most used method by duty officers.



## How do you advertise your scheme to clients?



## Other methods



Business cards



Notice in community centre or surgery



Events



Village email



Local magazine

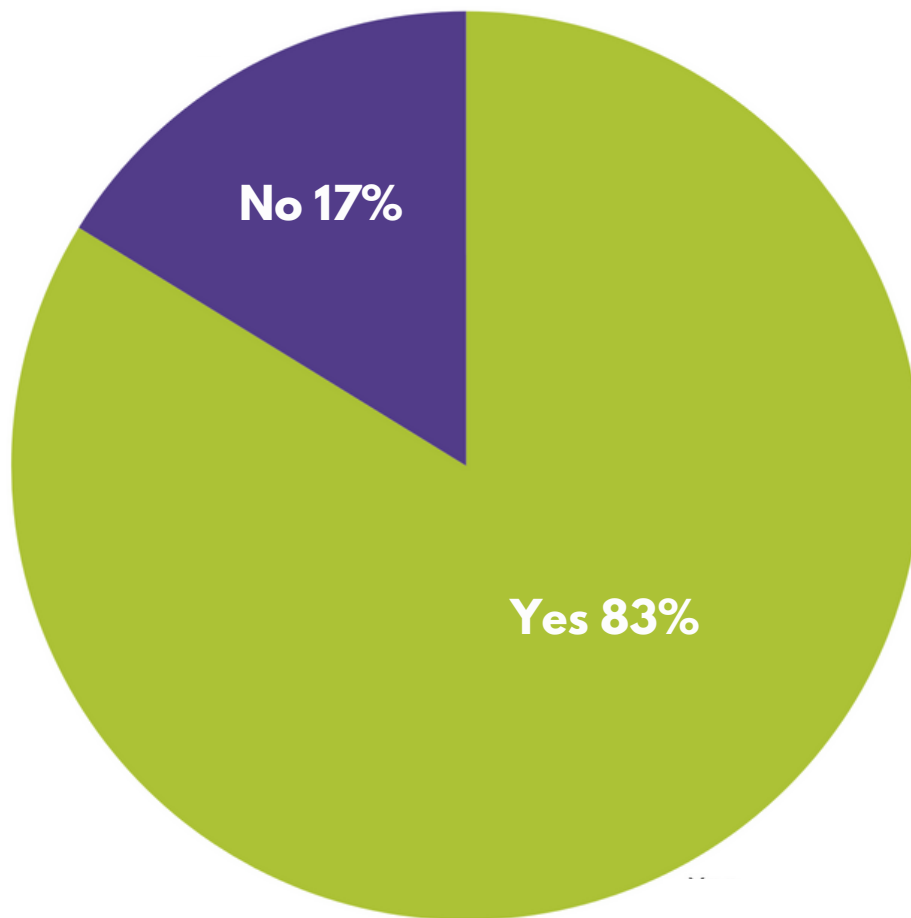


Websites



Stalls at local fairs

## Do you offer your clients or volunteers any social events?



## What kind of events do you offer?



**Lunches**



**Tea parties**



**Groups**



**Annual/seasonal parties**



**AGMs**



**Social meetings**



**Volunteer thank you events**

## **Is there anything else Surrey Community Action can do to help you?**

- DBS checks
- Volunteer recruitment
- Social media training
- Help with a computerised system
- On-line or in person safeguarding courses
- Scheme administration
- Website
- Publicity

## **Do you have any other comments?**

- Many thanks for all the support
- Happy to share our system with anyone else. For us it works well, is pretty simple and I'm sure there are bits others could use.
- Grateful for ongoing advice and support from Surrey community action
- Re: the rise in numbers post Covid, it is quite small.
- Surrey Community Action is a fantastic organisation and Clandon Good Neighbours would not exist without it. We use Surrey Community Action as a sounding board for queries and value your advice and help. Many thanks for your support - much appreciated.
- Recruiting is our biggest problem.
- Thanks for your support. We are currently converting from an unincorporated charity to a CIO.
- It seems that the culture of volunteering is disappearing slightly with the younger generation, which is a concern for the longer term.

## Conclusion

Over the next 12 months we expect to see demand continue to rise for the vital services provided by Surrey's good neighbour and voluntary transport schemes.

At the same time, we expect to see some schemes struggle as more committee members consider stepping down from their roles due to age and/or length of service, and as volunteer numbers remain below the pre-pandemic average.

These risks (increased demand v fewer volunteers) means that the support provided by Surrey Community Action remains just as vital as ever.

As well as responding to the day to day queries that schemes have, we provide practical support and equipment (such as DBS checks, lanyards, hi-vis vests and Driver on Duty Discs to enable volunteers to park at hospitals with greater ease). We will continue to liaise with system partners (such as Surrey County Council, district councils and the NHS) on behalf of the schemes, provide training, create publicity materials and recruitment campaigns and research technological solutions to help schemes to survive and thrive.