



Citizens' Panel

Frequently Asked Questions

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If you have any suggestions for these FAQs, email us at citizens.panel@n-somerset.gov.uk

Q: What is a Citizens' Panel?

A: A Citizens' Panel is a cross section of people who agree to take part in research and consultation with the council on a regular basis. The North Somerset Citizens' Panel will be a group of around 1,500 people from across the area who can regularly share their views on a wide range of issues.

Members of the Panel will be invited to participate in online surveys and also take part in optional focus groups and workshops throughout the year.

Panel surveys will ask members for their views on a variety of issues such as satisfaction with council services. The topics will vary but will generally focus on local issues.

Q: What's the benefit of having a Citizens' Panel?

A: The Citizens' Panel enables us to regularly consult with local people and to use their feedback to improve and develop services. Engaging and consulting with residents is a key part of the [North Somerset Corporate Plan](#), with the aim of being an open and enabling organisation.

Q: How does a Citizens' Panel work?

A: Panel members give their views through a number of online surveys. Panel members may also choose to get involved in other types of consultation activity such as focus groups or workshops.

Q: How can I apply to take part in the Citizens' Panel?

A: By completing [the application form](#).

Q: Who can be involved?

A: Anyone aged 16 or over who lives, works, or studies in North Somerset. The age minimum is there so we don't need to ask parental permission for participation.

Q: What will I be expected to do?

A: All we ask is that you take part in easy to complete online surveys with questions relating to the area. Taking part is voluntary. We may ask you about your satisfaction with services and ask your thoughts and ideas on new proposals for North Somerset. Being part of the Panel does not affect any other aspect of your dealings with the council.

Q: why do you ask about my age, sex, disability and ethnicity when I apply to join?

A: We need to monitor how representative the Panel is of the population on some key demographics. Also, these four things consistently have cross cutting effects on how people experience things the council does e.g. often show up as fault lines when looking at satisfaction or usage. So, instead of asking those four things every time we invite panel members to do a survey. we ask once. Of course anything else can be asked about on a case-by-case basis e.g. if the survey is about housing, it then might make sense to ask about housing tenure.

All answers are kept confidential and reported in an anonymised format. Your name, email, and address will never be shared outside of those administering the Panel.

Q: why do you use those ways of asking about age, sex, disability and ethnicity

A: We use the national census definitions so that we can compare the profile of the Panel with the profile of the population.

Q: How will I know that a survey is taking place?

A: We will send you an email each time there is a new opportunity to take part in a survey.

Q: How will my answers be used?

A: The results of these surveys will be used by the council to inform decision-making. Depending on the questions asked, the results may help improve the services you receive or help identify priorities to improve the local quality of life. Data gathered from the Panel may also be used to inform funding opportunities and bids.

You will be able to find the results of the surveys on our website after the survey has closed and been analysed. As a Panel member you will also receive an email telling you when results have been uploaded.

Q: What if I decide that I do not want to be on the Panel anymore?

A: We are initially asking Panel members to remain on the Panel for a two-year period, however if after that time you decide that you no longer wish to be contacted you can simply let us know and we will no longer contact you. Contact us at citizens.panel@n-somerset.gov.uk.

Q: How do you choose which people can join the Citizens' Panel?

A: Anyone can apply to join the Citizens' Panel if they live, work or study in North Somerset. We are encouraging a wide cross section of people to join the Panel in order to ensure we reflect the diversity of the area. We reserve the right to reject applications though have never actually done so (the rule's there to prevent e.g. the panel being inundated with members for a campaign group as part of a viral campaign).

Q: Is the Panel the only way the council considers the views of people living and working in North Somerset ?

A: No. There are many ways that the Council considers the views of local people. The Panel is just one way for the council to engage with our communities outside of formal consultations.

Contributing to council meetings, getting involved with Healthwatch North Somerset or Healthier Together, the planning process and connecting with elected Councillors and town and parish councils are just some of the other ways local people can have their views heard.

Q: Will my responses to surveys and other activities be kept confidential?

A: Yes. We will treat all your information confidentially in line with the General Data Protection Regulations. When results are shared publicly, or with other

organisations, your individual responses will be kept anonymous so that they cannot be linked to you.

Q: Will you give me feedback?

A: If a Panel member emails or phones a question about the Panel activity we will prioritise answering that. We can't answer questions about any general issues you might have with us (bins, potholes etc) – you'll have to go through the standard channels for that.

We will publish statistical summaries of the results of Panel surveys online and email Panel members when this is updated. This won't include any free text comments made as part of a survey response, just the tickbox questions summarised. It isn't possible to reply to such comments individually but they will be passed to the appropriate person within the council (without any means of identifying the individual respondent. however, we will regularly publish the results of different surveys on the council's website.