

# Satisfaction and Expectations: Attitudes to public services in deprived areas

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## **Editorial Note**

Bobby Duffy is an Associate Director at MORI and leads its Regeneration Research Unit. He was a User Fellow at the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion in March and April 2000. This paper was written as part of the fellowship, which was supported by the ESRC's funding of CASE. The opinions expressed in this paper are the author's alone, and should not be attributed to MORI.

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## Abstract

Based on outcomes for residents and qualitative studies, it is widely thought that public services meet the needs of residents less well in deprived areas, and that this is due to both the demands placed on services being greater and the services themselves being of a lower quality. This paper looks at the use, importance and ratings of a range of services by residents in deprived and other areas, using data from a large national survey, the People's Panel. A straightforward analysis confirms points made elsewhere, and adds some new perspectives:

- there are very large differences in the demographic characteristics of residents in deprived and other areas. This is not much of a surprise, and has been highlighted elsewhere, but the scale of some of the differences (on factors such as qualifications, income and benefit receipt, car and PC ownership and voting levels) are striking.
- the analysis has confirmed very high levels of use of some social welfare services by residents in deprived areas, for example, GPs and hospitals, that will result in considerable additional pressure on provision.
- it confirms the lower use of banks and building societies by those in deprived areas, and their lower relative importance, even among deprived area residents that do use them.
- in contrast, it highlights the relative importance of post offices; protecting and expanding the provision of services at post offices is likely to have an important impact.
- education services are rated similarly in both deprived and other areas, but there are clearly differences in the importance attached to each, with primary and secondary schools seen as important by more users in other areas, but adult education more important to users in other areas. Comparing satisfaction and importance ratings, however, highlights secondary schools as rather more of a priority for improvement in deprived areas.
- the police and hospitals are seen as key services in need of improvement in both deprived and other areas, while bus service are much more important and a much greater priority for improvement in deprived areas.

Overall, the analysis suggests there are, however, relatively few services that deprived area residents are less satisfied with, and that these differences are generally small, particularly when we control for differences in the profile of residents between areas. Indeed, it suggests there are only six services (out of 40 considered) that are rated differently between areas; residents in deprived areas are more satisfied with local bus services, train companies and water services, and less satisfied with refuse collection, public parks and recycling facilities.

This may be at least partly due to the *expectations* of public services among those in deprived areas being lower than those in other areas. The analysis attempts to account for this by comparing the ratings of similar “high resource” groups between areas, as these are likely to have similar expectations. This suggests that there may be more services that perform less well in deprived areas, in particular GPs, the police, leisure centres, swimming pools, British Telecom, refuse collection, street cleaning, and road/pavement maintenance.

The research method employed will also partly explain the apparent discrepancy between the findings here and other qualitative studies. There is clearly value in both approaches, and the analysis of this survey data highlights some key priorities in deprived areas, including improvements to bus services, the police and hospitals, and extension of post office services.

## Introduction

There is widespread belief that public services meet the needs of residents less well in deprived areas:

[The] frustration for the poorest communities is when they get the poorest public services (e.g. police, schools, health). These services should be the Government's best weapons against deprivation – and they have the resources and experience for the task. But often they are less effective here.

Hilary Armstrong, Neighbourhood Renewal Update.

The concentration of poor and vulnerable people in a neighbourhood means it has *even more* need than most of strong community spirit and good public and private services. But in a sad irony, this very concentration of need can cause the support structures to cope less well or even disappear entirely.

Social Exclusion Unit, *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal – A Framework for Consultation*

In a sense the fact that public services are meeting needs in deprived areas less well is self-evident when we look at the outcomes for people living there. The 44 most deprived local authority districts in England have:

- nearly two thirds more unemployment
- 37% of 16 year olds without a single GCSE at A-C, compared with 30% in the rest of England
- more than twice as many nursery/primary schools and five times the number of secondary schools on special measures
- roughly a quarter more adults with poor literacy or numeracy
- mortality rates around 30% higher, when adjusted for sex and age
- two or three times the levels of poor housing, vandalism and dereliction.<sup>1</sup>

These figures are for districts, and the situation in smaller areas of more concentrated deprivation is worse. In Golborne ward in north

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1 Social Exclusion Unit (1998), *Bringing Britain Together*. London: HMSO.

Kensington, ranked as the 78<sup>th</sup> most deprived ward in the country, out of around 8,500 (according to the 1998 Index of Local Deprivation):

- 54% of working age residents have no qualifications at all, compared with 31% nationally
- crime is a serious problem for 43% of residents, compared with 18% in England
- vandalism and hooliganism is a serious problem for 36%, compared with 13% in England
- mortality rates are around 50% higher, when adjusted for age.<sup>2</sup>

The poorer outcomes in deprived areas suggest that public services may be worse at meeting the needs of residents, but to what extent is this a reflection of needs being greater, and starting positions lower? There are a number of reasons why the job may be harder in deprived areas:

- residents in deprived areas tend to be more reliant on public services, as they do not have the resources to purchase private services.
- residents also place more complex and intense demands on public services. It is more difficult to educate children who have nowhere to do their homework, arrive at school hungry, to work in classrooms where disruption and pupil turnover are high. Motivating the children is also likely to be harder, given the limited opportunities they see from living in areas of concentrated unemployment. Healthcare is made more difficult by poor diets, the stress of unemployment and poverty, and where patients do not speak the same language as their doctors.
- it is also the case that those in deprived areas lack access to some of the tools which make service delivery more straightforward – they are less likely to have internet access, and they are even three times as likely to have no telephone.<sup>3</sup> For example, 37% of those in the highest social classes have used a PC to get information, advice or purchase products compared with 9% of those in lower social classes.<sup>4</sup>
- it could be argued that deprived areas are themselves more difficult to manage; poor design makes many of them harder to police, and this, along with cumulative neglect, makes maintaining their appearance more difficult.

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2 Duffy, B and Williams, R. (1999), *This is Golborne*. London: MORI.

3 Social Exclusion Unit (1998), *Bringing Britain Together*. London: HMSO.

4 MORI/Cabinet Office (1998), *The People's Panel*. London: MORI.

- there are practical problems from operating in deprived areas with higher crime and disorder rates, such as damage to property and theft of equipment, along with the associated higher security costs.
- there is also evidence that the extent of local fundraising and certain types of volunteering is lower in deprived areas. This is part of a wider problem of greater mistrust or suspicion of public services in deprived areas, due to the nature of the relationship between residents and public bodies.

All of these do not automatically mean that services will meet needs less well in deprived areas. More resources should mean that greater needs can be met as well as anywhere else. However, there is a suggestion that services may not be sufficiently supported, lowering the quality of provision for all residents. The particular needs of deprived areas have not been a major focus of mainstream public service provision – government departments have until recently not been encouraged to prioritise these areas in some of the key mainstream services. The result is that, despite much greater need in deprived areas, little additional money has been spent. For example, deprived schools get just 8% more funding on average than other schools.<sup>5</sup>

There are other factors that suggest services in deprived areas may not only meet needs less well, but also be of a lower quality:

- residents in deprived areas do not have the extent of professional and political contacts of those in other areas, which can be important in exerting pressure for high quality services.<sup>6</sup>
- it can also be more difficult to recruit and retain high quality staff in deprived areas. The job is more demanding and difficult, and it can be difficult to attract professionals, even with significant financial encouragement; a study found that GPs were willing to give up over £5,000 per year on average not to work in a deprived area.<sup>7</sup> The consultation of service providers carried out by the Social Exclusion Unit highlighted the pressures on front line staff in deprived areas, in terms of poor or even dangerous working

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5 Quoted in Social Exclusion Unit (2000), *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal – A Framework for Consultation*. London: HMSO.

6 Power, A and Bergin, E. (2000), *Neighbourhood Management*. CASEpaper 31. London: CASE, London School of Economics.

7 Quoted in Social Exclusion Unit (2000), *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal – A Framework for Consultation*. London: HMSO.

conditions, inadequate levels of pay and career structures that provide incentives to move out to move up.<sup>8</sup>

The main concern of this paper is not whether poorer outcomes for residents are the result of lower starting points, a lack of sufficient resources, less effective or lower quality services. This would be useful to explore, but requires very sophisticated small area information on individual services, showing the value added per pound spent on services. A small selection of Audit Commission Performance Indicators are given in the appendices. These do show some signs that public services are poorer in the five most deprived local authority districts, when compared with the average for England. However, the pattern is far from consistent, and what they most clearly illustrate is that this type of information at this area level actually tells us very little about how services are experienced by local people, and how well needs are met.

Instead we focus on what residents themselves in deprived and other areas think of public services. Given the difficulties faced by public services in deprived areas (for whatever reason), we may expect those living there to be less satisfied with them. The focus of this paper is to look at evidence from a representative national survey – the People’s Panel, run by MORI for the Cabinet Office. This provides data on use, importance of and satisfaction with around 40 services, gathered during the set-up stage of the Panel in 1998 (4,376 interviews in England). The survey includes a range of public good, demand-led and needs-rationed services. It includes a number of key services provided by central and local government – from GPs and the police to refuse collection and road and pavement maintenance – but also privatised utilities, the post office, bus and train services and high street banks/building societies.

This re-analysis allows us to answer a number of questions:

- do people in deprived areas use public services more often? If so, which services?
- which public services do people in deprived areas view as most important, and which do they hold more important than people in other areas?
- which public services are residents in deprived areas more and less satisfied with than those in other areas?

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8 Social Exclusion Unit (2000), *Consultation on the Effectiveness of Public Services in Deprived Neighbourhoods – Summary of Responses*. London: HMSO.

In fact the most striking initial finding from the re-analysis is the apparent similarity in views between those in deprived and other areas, and the number of services that people in deprived areas are *more* satisfied with than those in other areas.

The paper goes on to look at why this similarity might occur and whether this is a true reflection of the services. Varying *expectations* of public services between different demographic groups and those living in different areas are important in this. It may be that public services meet need less well in deprived areas, but that the population of deprived areas taken as a whole expects less. This may in turn be principally because deprived areas contain more deprived people, who have fewer resources with which to purchase private services, and so more limited and less demanding benchmarks against which to judge service provision.

We explore this possibility by looking at the attitudes of higher income and social class groups living in deprived areas, and comparing these with similar groups in other areas. This suggests that some services in deprived areas should be viewed less positively than the initial analysis would lead us to believe.

We start by comparing the definition of deprived areas used here with others, and looking at some key characteristics of the deprived area population.

## **1. How have we defined deprived areas and who lives there?**

The definition of deprived areas used in this analysis is based on ACORN classifications, and is the one used in the DETR's Survey of English Housing (SEH). ACORN is a commercial geodemographic classification tool, based on linking Census data on tenure, car ownership, health, employment and ethnicity to postcodes. It clusters areas into 54 types that show similar characteristics; details of the types included in the deprived area definition used in SEH are shown in the appendices.

This results in around 13% of the People's Panel sample (580 respondents) being classified as living in deprived areas. This is a broader definition than used in many studies, but it is narrower than

estimates by the Social Exclusion Unit that at least 20% of all wards in England (possibly 30%) could be described as deprived. For example, in 20% of wards, rates of childhood poverty and household worklessness are double the national average.<sup>9</sup>

ACORN is one of a large number of area classifications that can be used to identify relatively disadvantaged, deprived or poor areas. Not surprisingly, given that each uses different sets of definitions and data, each comes up with a different number of deprived areas, and some areas are classified differently in each. The most widely used classification is the Government's own Index of Local Deprivation (ILD, now the Index of Multiple Deprivation<sup>10</sup>). The areas identified as deprived by the SEH/ACORN definition were checked against their 1998 ILD ranking, at ward level.

As Table 1 shows, those areas defined as deprived by ACORN are much more likely to have high deprivation rankings according to ILD than the other areas: 79% of the deprived area sample live in the 1,499 most deprived wards in the country (out of around 8,500) according to ILD, compared with 16% of those defined here as other areas.

This is clearly not a perfect fit; some areas in the deprived sample have low ILD rankings and some in other areas have high ILD rankings. This will partly be due to the different levels at which the area information has been matched. ACORN definitions are postcode based, which cover smaller areas than wards; an area identified as deprived from the ACORN classification may therefore be a smaller, more deprived area within a less deprived ward.

In any case, we would not expect a perfect match, and the ACORN classification does generally seem to have identified "deprived" areas.

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9 Social Exclusion Unit (2000), *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal – A Framework for Consultation*. London: HMSO.

10 ACORN was used in the original analysis for the Social Exclusion Unit in preference to ILD to allow direct comparisons with the Survey of English Housing. Given the less than perfect fit between the two classifications, it would be interesting to re-run key parts of the analysis using ILD.

**Table 1: ACORN deprived area definition and 1998 ILD rank, compared at ward level**

	Deprived areas	Other areas
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	<i>(580)</i>	<i>(3796)</i>
<b>ILD Rank</b>	%	%
1-99	11	<0.5
100-499	26	3
500-999	26	8
1000-1499	16	5
1500-1999	5	5
2000-2999	4	11
3000-3999	4	12
4000-4999	5	12
5000-6075	2	10
6076	2	33
	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Mean	1,228	4,029
Minimum	27	45
Maximum	6076	6076

**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998/ILD 1998.

This is confirmed when we look at the profiles of residents in the two area types. Table 2 shows there are some very clear differences in profile (throughout this paper, a figure in bold is significantly different from the figure it is being compared with). The population (aged 16 or over) in deprived areas are:

- younger
- more likely to have dependent children in the household
- less likely to be working or retired and more likely to be unemployed, long-term sick or looking after their family
- more likely to be in lower social classes
- less likely to have any qualifications
- more likely to be on lower incomes
- more likely to receive a number of benefits, apart from state retirement pension
- more likely to rent from the council and less likely to own or be buying their homes
- more likely to have a long-term limiting illness

- more likely to be from minority ethnic groups
- less likely to have a car in the household
- less likely to have access to a PC at home
- less likely to vote.

Table 2 also shows how the samples break down by a simple sparsity measure. This classifies areas according to population density; “urban” areas are those with two or more people per hectare, “rural” are those with less than two people per hectare. The table shows that deprived areas, using the SEH/ACORN definition, are almost exclusively urban.

**Table 2: Key demographics in deprived and other areas**

		<b>Deprived areas</b>	<b>Other areas</b>
<i>Base: All respondents</i>		<i>(580)</i>	<i>(3796)</i>
		%	%
<b>Age</b>	16-24	<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>
	25-34	<b>23</b>	<b>20</b>
	35-54	<b>26</b>	<b>34</b>
	55-64	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>
	65+	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Dependent children in household</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Work Status</b>	Working for an employer	<b>37</b>	<b>50</b>
	Unemployed (registered and not)	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>
	Long term illness/disability	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>
	Retired	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>
	Looking after the home or family	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>

<b>Social Class</b>	A	*	<b>4</b>
	B	<b>6</b>	<b>22</b>
	C1	<b>19</b>	<b>29</b>
	C2	21	23
	D	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>
	E	<b>30</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>No formal qualifications</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Average gross household income</b>		<b>£12,900</b>	<b>£23,800</b>
<b>Benefit Receipt</b>	Family Credit	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
	Income Support	<b>35</b>	<b>10</b>
	State Retirement Pension	<b>23</b>	<b>33</b>
	Housing benefit	<b>40</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Tenure</b>	Owner occupier	<b>33</b>	<b>79</b>
	Rent from Council	<b>54</b>	<b>13</b>
	Rent from Housing Association	5	2
	Rent from private landlord	5	5
<b>Long-term limiting illness</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Ethnic Origin</b>	White	<b>77</b>	<b>97</b>
	Black	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>
	Asian/other	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>No car in household</b>		<b>54</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Access to PC at home</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Voted in a General Election</b>		<b>59</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Sparsity</b>	Urban	<b>99</b>	<b>80</b>
	Rural	1	20

**Note:** Figures in bold indicate significant differences (at 95% confidence interval).  
**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998.

## **2. Use of Public Services**

The first question that the data allow us to address is whether those in deprived areas make more use of public services than residents in other areas.

Clearly some services are universal, such as the police, refuse collection, street cleaning, water companies etc. Use of these has not been asked, although contact with providers may differ. For all but these services respondents were asked about their household's frequency of use, although for some (schools, universities, and residential care homes), this only asked whether they were currently used by members of the household or not. Table 3 summarises the differences between deprived and other areas; apart from where noted, figures show the proportion who use the service at least once a month.

Those in deprived areas do use a range of services more frequently than those in other areas. Many of these differences in use are clearly linked to the differing demographic profiles and characteristics of residents in the two types of area. For example, the Benefits Agency and DSS are significantly more widely and regularly used in deprived areas, reflecting higher unemployment levels and benefit receipt. The greater use of nursery schools/classes similarly reflects the relatively large proportion of households in deprived areas with young children. The much more frequent use of local bus services and the (slightly less marked) higher use of train services reflect lower car ownership in deprived areas. The higher bus use will also partly reflect the urban/rural split of deprived and other areas; as seen above, deprived areas as defined here are almost exclusively urban, where bus services are much more available.

Those in deprived areas are also significantly more likely to use a range of health and welfare services such as GPs, hospitals, home helps, social services and CAB. Some of the levels of use in deprived areas for these services are worth noting; 51% of all households in deprived areas use GPs at least once a month (compared with 33% in other areas) and 14% use hospitals this frequently (8% in other areas). This is clearly likely to result in much greater demands on these services in deprived areas.

Some services are used less frequently in deprived areas, and in general these tend to be demand-led. They reflect the needs and priorities of those in deprived areas, their relative lack of resources in accessing

services and perhaps the withdrawal of some services from deprived areas. Banks and building societies, for example, are less frequently used in deprived areas, with 14% saying they have not used a bank in the last year and 10% saying they have never used a bank - two and a half times higher than in other areas (4%).

**Table 3: Service use: services used at least once a month by household**

	Deprived areas	Other areas
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	(580)	(3796)
<b>Used more frequently in deprived areas</b>	%	%
British Gas	<b>83</b>	<b>75</b>
Local Bus services	<b>75</b>	<b>44</b>
Public Parks	<b>59</b>	<b>53</b>
Council Housing*	<b>54</b>	<b>13</b>
Your GP	<b>51</b>	<b>33</b>
Train companies	<b>31</b>	<b>25</b>
Local Nursery Schools/Classes	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>
Department of Social Security (DSS Offices)	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>
Benefits Agency	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>
Home helps	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>
Youth and Community Centres	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>
NHS Hospitals	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>
Local Social Services (e.g. Social workers)	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>
Citizens Advice Bureaux	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Used less frequently in deprived areas</b>	%	%
High Street Banks/Building Societies	<b>76</b>	<b>92</b>
British Telecom	<b>76</b>	<b>86</b>
Libraries	<b>35</b>	<b>42</b>
Recycling facilities	<b>32</b>	<b>60</b>
Leisure Centres	<b>26</b>	<b>33</b>
Colleges and Universities**	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>

**Notes:** \*Council tenants; \*\*Household member currently attending.

**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998.

Leisure centres, libraries, recycling facilities and colleges and universities<sup>11</sup> are also used less by households in deprived areas. This pattern of lower use of libraries and leisure facilities by deprived and poor groups is also seen in analysis of the 1990 Breadline Britain survey. These services may be free or subsidised, but for some (such as leisure centres) there are charges involved, and others (such as libraries) may involve time and money costs in getting to them.<sup>12</sup> The authors of that analysis argue that the failure of these services to attract equal use is one of the ways in which deprived groups are excluded from the “normal life of the community”. The Social Exclusion Unit report on sports and arts highlights the benefits missed; improved physical and mental health and well-being, improved learning development in children and greater independence.

The particularly low use of recycling facilities in deprived areas is also worth noting – barely half the level in other areas. This could be the result of lower provision of these facilities in deprived areas, and/or the different priorities of residents. As we will see later, there is some evidence for both of these interpretations; those who use recycling services in deprived areas are less satisfied with them than users in other areas, but deprived area residents as a whole also think they are less important.

The People’s Panel data therefore largely confirm what we may have expected, that health and welfare services are more widely used in deprived areas, while banking and some leisure services are less used.

### **3. Importance of Public Services**

Respondents were also asked which four or five services are most important to themselves and their household. Table 4 shows the results for all services in deprived and other areas; services in bold are selected by significantly more in deprived areas, figures in italics are selected by fewer.

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11 The figures for attendance at colleges and universities may appear rather high, but it should be noted that they will include a wide range of types of higher and further education, including sixth form colleges and day and evening courses held at colleges.

12 Bramley, G. (1997), “Poverty and Public Services”, in Gordon, D and Pantazis, C. *Breadline Britain in the 1990s*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

GPs are the most important service in both types of area, but are selected by fewer respondents in deprived areas. This is a surprise, given the more frequent use of GPs in deprived areas, although the difference is not large. The next most important service in deprived areas is NHS hospitals, selected by a similar proportion as in other areas. The police and British Gas are also very important services to each group.

Some differences in attitudes do reflect differences in levels of use. Banks and building societies are significantly more important to those in other areas, chosen by 38% compared with 26% in deprived areas, reflecting their higher use. Local bus services are more widely used and much more important in deprived areas; indeed they are the 6<sup>th</sup> most important public service in deprived areas, compared with 12<sup>th</sup> in other areas.

Council housing, nursery schools/classes, the DSS and the Benefits Agency are also more widely used by people in deprived areas and more likely to be considered important. It is something of a surprise that council housing is considered among the most important services by only 13% of residents in deprived areas, given that 54% are council tenants. This may be because housing is not viewed as a service in the same way as others on the list, and may be taken as something of a given by respondents.

The pattern of greater use resulting in higher importance does not apply for all services. The post office is more likely to be important to those in deprived areas, despite residents being no more likely to use it; 30% say it is among the most important public services, and it is the 5<sup>th</sup> most important service in deprived areas, compared with 11<sup>th</sup> in other areas. Clearly importance is not only determined by the extent and frequency of use, but also the nature of use. Financial services, including cashing benefits, are likely to be more widely used in post offices in deprived areas, given residents' higher benefit receipt and lower use of banks and building societies. This is likely to become a more important feature of post offices in deprived areas when benefits are paid by automated credit transfer. Computerised post offices with the ability to deal with these financial transactions could have a large positive impact in these areas.

**Table 4: Most important services among all residents**

	Deprived areas	Other areas
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	<i>(580)</i>	<i>(3796)</i>
	%	%
<b>Your GP</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>48</b>
NHS Hospitals	39	37
British Gas	34	30
Police	34	32
<b>The Post Office</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Local Bus services</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>High Street Banks/Building Societies</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>38</b>
Fire and Emergency services	26	28
British Telecom	24	29
<b>Your Local Electricity Company</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Refuse collection</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Local Water Services</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>
Local Primary Schools	13	14
<b>Council Housing</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>
Your Local Council	10	10
Local Secondary Schools	9	11
Colleges and Universities	8	9
Public Parks	8	7
Street cleaning	8	5
<b>Local Nursery Schools/Classes</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Department of Social Security (DSS Offices)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Benefits Agency</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
Street lighting	6	6
Leisure Centres	5	4
Libraries	5	8
Swimming Pools	5	5
Train companies	4	6
Adult Education	3	2
Local Social Services (e.g. Social workers)	3	2
Citizens Advice Bureau	3	2
The Courts	2	1
DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority)	2	2
<b>Recycling facilities</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>

<b>Road and Pavement maintenance</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
Home helps	2	1
Inland Revenue	1	2
National Savings Bank	1	1
Immigration Service	1	*
Youth and Community Centres	1	1
Residential care homes for disabled and elderly people	1	2
British Embassies abroad	*	*
Other	1	*
None of these	*	*
Don't know	1	*

**Note:** Bold indicates services more likely to be considered important in deprived areas, italics more important in other areas (at 95% confidence interval).

**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998.

This picture changes somewhat when we look at the importance attached to services by those who have used each in the last year.<sup>13</sup>

The most noticeable shift is the large increase in the relative importance of education services in both deprived and other areas. These are used by relatively small proportions of the population, but are likely to be important to those that do use them.

There are some interesting differences in the priorities of users in the two types of area; for example, both secondary and primary schools are more likely to be important to users in other areas than deprived areas, something that is not seen when looking at the figures for residents as a whole. In contrast, adult education is more important to users in deprived areas than users in other areas.

Hospitals and GPs remain important in both types of area, with GPs still slightly more important to users in other areas than users in deprived areas. However, there are a number of cases where there are clear reductions in the differences between areas in the importance attached to services. Bus services, for example, are still more likely to be

<sup>13</sup> Clearly universal services, which all use or benefit from, remain based on all respondents. Some services with low use or importance are excluded.

important to users in deprived areas, and banks are still more important to users in other areas, but in both cases the differences are smaller. The benefits agency, nursery schools and council housing are all more likely to be important to those in deprived areas taken as a whole, but there are no significant differences between areas when we look at users only.

The main findings from this section are that:

- health services are the most important services in both types of area among residents as a whole, but education services overtake them when we look at the views of users only.
- the key differences between areas among all residents include the much higher importance of bus services and post offices in deprived areas, and the lower importance of banks.
- when we compare the views of users, those in deprived areas are less likely to prioritise schools, but more likely to view adult education as an important service.

**Table 5: Most important services among users only**

	Deprived areas	Other areas
<i>Base: All users of each service in the last year</i>	%	%
<b><i>Local Primary Schools</i></b>	<b>47</b>	<b>58</b>
NHS Hospitals	45	43
<b><i>Your GP</i></b>	<b>43</b>	<b>49</b>
<b><i>Local Secondary Schools</i></b>	<b>40</b>	<b>52</b>
British Gas	38	38
Colleges and Universities	37	34
Police	34	32
<b>Local Bus services</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>26</b>
<b><i>High Street Banks/Building Societies</i></b>	<b>31</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>The Post Office</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>
British Telecom	29	32
Fire and Emergency services	26	28
Local Nursery Schools/Classes	24	26
Council Housing	22	26
<b><i>Your Local Electricity Company</i></b>	<b>20</b>	<b>27</b>
<b><i>Refuse collection</i></b>	<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>
<b><i>Local Water Services</i></b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>
Benefits Agency	17	14
<b>Adult Education</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Department of Social Security (DSS Offices)</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>
Your Local Council	10	10
Public Parks	10	9
Leisure Centres	10	8
Libraries	10	13
Swimming Pools	9	9
Local Social Services (e.g. Social workers)	8	8
Street cleaning	8	5
Street lighting	6	6
Train companies	6	9

**Note:** most important services only shown. Bold indicates services more likely to be considered important in deprived areas, italics more important in other areas (at 95% confidence interval).

**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998.

## 4. Satisfaction with Public Services

Given the very clear differences in profile between the two types of area, the different levels of use of services, and what we know about how well public services meet needs in deprived areas, we may expect substantial differences in satisfaction levels. The differences seen above and noted in the introduction suggest residents in the two types of area will have different needs from individual public services, and very different relationships with them.

Those who have used each individual public service in the last year were asked to rate how satisfied they are with the service they receive. As Table 6 shows,<sup>14</sup> there are in fact only a few services that show significant differences in satisfaction, and most of these differences are relatively small.

This may not be as great a surprise as it initially appears. The standard of service delivery is unlikely to vary greatly on a local area basis for some services, such as utilities. Others, such as colleges and universities draw users from a number of areas. It is notable that many of the services where we do see differences in satisfaction are among those with the highest local element to their delivery, although this is not the case for all.

It should firstly be noted that, among the sample as a whole, views on public services are generally positive – with more satisfied than dissatisfied in just about all cases. The post office is the most highly rated among users, along with electricity companies, while respondents are least satisfied with road and pavement maintenance. The latter is the only case where more are dissatisfied than satisfied, although we should note that this does not make it a key priority for residents; as we have already seen it is rated among the least important of the services asked about. The privatised public utilities are relatively well rated and, along with electricity companies, British Gas and British Telecom are near the

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14 All satisfaction ratings are shown as net figures, where the percentage dissatisfied is subtracted from the percentage satisfied. This is a useful summary measure, but clearly could hide some detail in the strength of opinions (i.e. whether certain groups are more likely to be *very* satisfied or *very* dissatisfied, or have no opinion). However, in this case looking only at those who say very (dis)satisfied actually paints a very similar picture.

top – although the water companies are some way behind. Transport services are seen as relatively poor in both areas, with bus services and train companies near the bottom of the list.

Looking at the differences in attitudes between deprived and other areas, as we may have expected, there are some clear relationships between frequency of use and satisfaction. Those in deprived areas are more satisfied with local bus services, youth and community centres and train companies, services they use more frequently.

The most surprising exception is banks; these are less frequently used in deprived areas, but users here are more satisfied with the service they receive. It is important to note that this is a rating among *users* only, and does not say anything about access to appropriate financial services in deprived areas. We have seen that 14% of those in deprived areas have not used a bank in the last year, and it is likely that some of these are excluded because of a lack of branches, problems with opening accounts and the lack of appropriate financial products.<sup>15</sup> The more positive attitude among users of banks in deprived areas may be related to the different uses made of banks by residents. Given the less frequent contact with banks of those in deprived areas, it is likely that they are more widely used for simple services than in other areas. For example, there will be significantly fewer with mortgages in deprived areas, given the differences in tenure profile.

There are no significant differences in the ratings of schools between areas, but the different stages of schooling are rated very differently; users in both deprived and other areas are significantly more satisfied with primary schools than secondary schools.

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15 Social Exclusion Unit (2000), *Access to Financial Services*, PAT 14 Report. London: HMSO.

**Table 6: Satisfaction with public services**

	Deprived areas	Other areas
	Net satisfied, ±%	Net satisfied, ±%
The Post Office	+90	+86
Your Local Electricity Company*	+88	+87
British Gas	+85	+80
<b>High Street Banks/Building Societies</b>	<b>+85</b>	<b>+76</b>
Local Nursery Schools/Classes	+85	+77
Local Primary Schools	+85	+83
Libraries	+83	+83
Your GP	+82	+85
Colleges and Universities	+81	+75
Citizens Advice Bureaux	+78	+72
Fire and Emergency services*	+78	+78
<b>Local Water Services*</b>	<b>+78</b>	<b>+66</b>
British Telecom	+77	+80
Local Secondary Schools	+74	+74
NHS Hospitals	+73	+66
Leisure Centres	+73	+71
Swimming Pools	+73	+71
National Savings Bank	+72	+70
<b>Refuse collection*</b>	<b>+69</b>	<b>+79</b>
DVLA	+65	+65
Adult Education	+63	+72
Street lighting*	+61	+63
Police*	+60	+63
<b>Public Parks</b>	<b>+60</b>	<b>+72</b>
<b>Recycling facilities</b>	<b>+58</b>	<b>+70</b>
Benefits Agency	+56	+52
<b>Youth and Community Centres</b>	<b>+54</b>	<b>+35</b>
Department of Social Security (DSS Offices)	+52	+45
Inland Revenue	+52	+51
<b>Local Bus services</b>	<b>+51</b>	<b>+33</b>
Council Housing	+47	+54
<b>Your Local Council*</b>	<b>+41</b>	<b>+34</b>
<b>Train companies</b>	<b>+40</b>	<b>+26</b>
<b>Street cleaning*</b>	<b>+33</b>	<b>+38</b>
<b>Road and Pavement maintenance*</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-6</b>

**Notes to Table 6:**

**Base:** \*Universal services (All); All other services (Users in the last year)

**Note:** some services have been excluded due to small bases

Bold indicates services that residents in deprived areas are more likely to be satisfied with, italics indicates those they are less satisfied with (at 95% confidence interval)

**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998

Residents in deprived areas tend to be less satisfied with services that are related to the physical appearance of the area – refuse collection, public parks and street cleaning. This echoes findings from analysis of 1990 Breadline Britain data, where attitudes to environmental factors were much less positive among deprived groups and in deprived areas.<sup>16</sup>

However, those in deprived areas are more satisfied with the local council in general. This appears difficult to explain, given that physical upkeep services are some of the councils' more visible responsibilities. But views on the council in deprived areas are much more likely to be influenced by views of council housing (given that 54% are council tenants, compared with 13% in other areas), and attitudes to council housing are more positive than views of the council in both area types.

**Multivariate Analysis**

This picture changes somewhat when we use a multivariate modelling technique, in this case logit models. We have seen that there are significant differences in the demographic profile of residents in deprived and other areas. From a simple comparison of ratings we therefore cannot be sure whether differences in ratings are due to differences in profile or an independent "area effect". Multivariate models allow us to control for these differences in profile.

Based on previous work by MORI for the Social Exclusion Unit on predictors of satisfaction, also using People's Panel data<sup>17</sup>, the variables included in the model are sex, age and a derived "high resource" variable, defined as those in social classes AB and/or with household incomes of £24,500 or above (see following section).<sup>18</sup>

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16 Bramley, G. (1997), "Poverty and Public Services", in Gordon, D and Pantazis, C. *Breadline Britain in the 1990s*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

17 Duffy, B and Skinner, G (2000) *Public Services in Deprived Areas*, London: MORI

18 The base sizes for users of services in deprived areas are too small for the model to work with more than three independent variables, and so we have

Table 7 presents the results for only those models that show a statistically significant differences in satisfaction by area, when we control for profile differences.<sup>19</sup> It is clear that there has been a further reduction in the number of services that show variations in satisfaction between areas; some services that appeared to be rated differently in deprived and other areas from a simple comparison of results show no difference when we control for variations in the demographic profile of areas. Three services that appeared to have higher ratings among users in deprived areas (notably banks, but also youth/community centres and the local council) do not when we control for differences in the profile between areas on sex, age and level of resources. One service that appeared to be more poorly rated – street cleaning - also shows no difference when these controls are incorporated. It therefore appears that any “area effect” on satisfaction is limited and weak.

The table shows the odds ratio, which in this case is the odds of someone in a deprived area being satisfied, compared with someone in other areas; a score above one shows that those in deprived areas are more likely to be satisfied, and a score below one that they are less likely to be satisfied. For example, the deprived area population as a whole are two-thirds as likely to be satisfied with recycling facilities than the population in other areas, when we control for sex, age and resource levels. We can see that the differences in the odds of being satisfied by area are relatively small, even among these services that show statistically different ratings. The notable exception is bus services, where those in deprived areas are much more likely to be satisfied (approaching twice as likely).

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selected the three that appear to be most related to satisfaction across a range of services. Given the small number of variables we are able to include, it is encouraging that the explanatory power of most models is fairly high (see appendices).

19 Differences for each service are significant at the 95% confidence interval.

**Table 7: Logit Model: odds ratios for deprived areas**

	Odds ratio
Local bus services	1.82
Train companies	1.44
Local water services*	1.32
Refuse Collection*	0.78
Public Parks	0.75
Recycling facilities	0.67

**Base:** \*Universal services (All); All other services (Users in the last year)

**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998

In summary, this section has shown that:

- most services are rated highly by residents in both deprived and other areas.
- the post office, utilities and banks are among the most highly rated in both areas, but local primary schools and GPs are also positively viewed.
- secondary schools, hospitals and the police are rather less well rated in each area, but still significantly more say they are satisfied than dissatisfied.
- the council, transport services (buses and trains), street cleaning and, in particular, road and pavement maintenance are the most poorly rated from the services asked about.
- there are few and small differences in satisfaction with services between deprived and other areas, and these are even less notable when we control for differences in the demographic profile of residents between areas, through multivariate analysis.
- the clearest exception is bus services, which residents in deprived areas are much more likely to be satisfied with. However, this does not mean that buses are meeting local residents' needs in deprived areas; satisfaction may be higher in deprived areas than other areas, but it is still low compared with most other services (as the next section demonstrates).

The multivariate analysis employed here is useful, but it does not help us to fully control for the impact of differing expectations; we return to this through an examination of the attitudes of high resource groups, after a quick comparison of satisfaction and importance levels.

## 5. Satisfaction and Importance

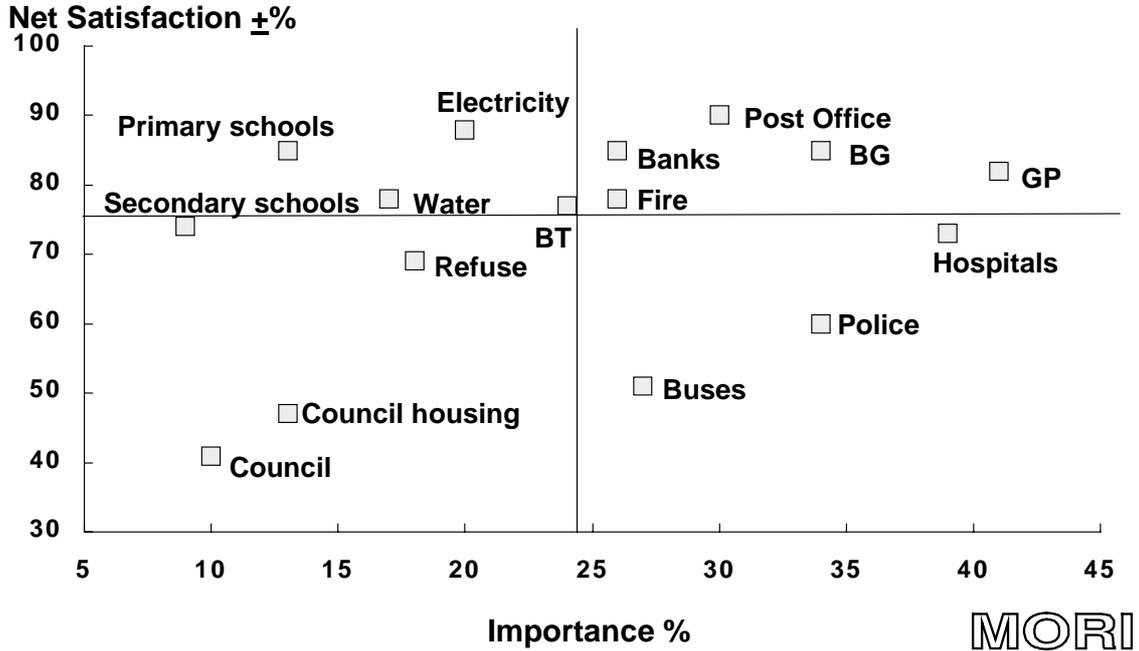
Before looking in more detail at satisfaction levels and expectations, it is useful to briefly compare satisfaction with services and importance of services between areas. The two charts below plot the importance of the 16 most important services (to all residents) against their net satisfaction score (among users). The mean net satisfaction and importance scores for these 16 services as a group are also plotted as lines that split the chart into four “quadrants”.

The two left-hand quadrants contain those services that are considered relatively less important among this 16. The top right hand quadrant contains services that are considered important, and which users are also relatively satisfied with. The bottom right shows those services that users are less satisfied with, which are also relatively important to residents.

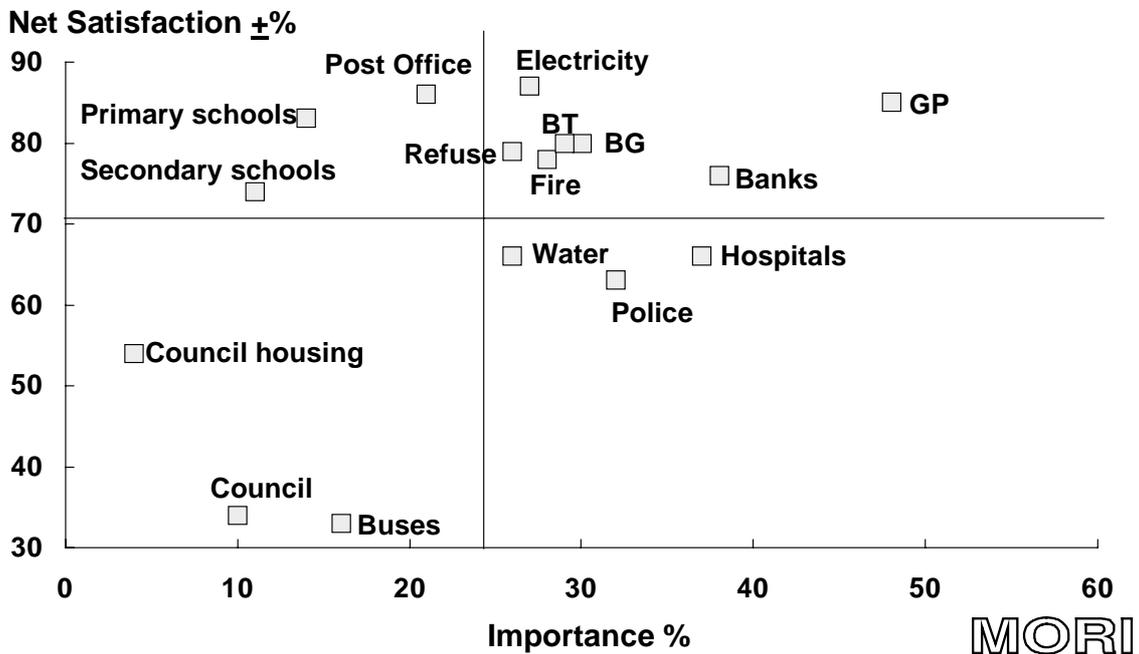
There are a number of differences in where services appear in deprived and other areas. For example, the post office is in the top left quadrant in other areas, but the top right in deprived areas, reflecting higher levels of importance. Refuse collection is in the bottom left quadrant in deprived areas but top right for other areas, showing the relatively lower levels of satisfaction and importance in deprived areas.

The quadrant of most interest is the bottom right – which can be seen as the services that most need to be focused on and improved from these 16. Police and hospitals come out here in both types of area. However, buses are clearly a greater priority for improvement in deprived areas, despite being significantly better rated in deprived than other areas. In other areas water services are more of a focus.

# Deprived Areas - All



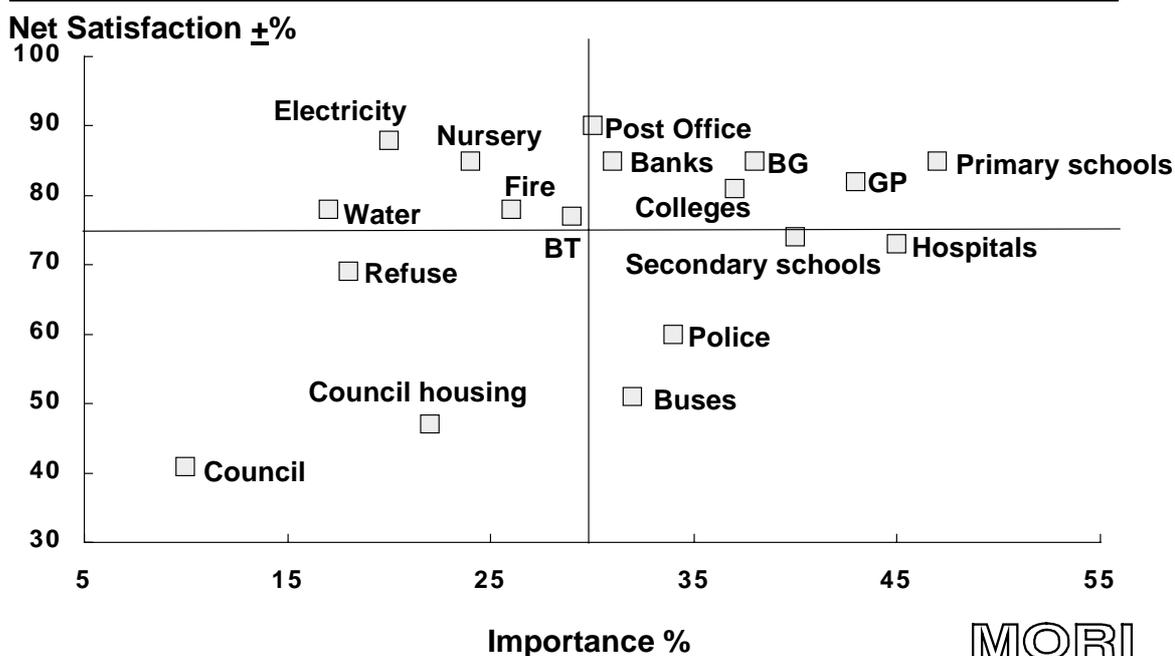
# Other Areas - All



### ***Satisfaction and importance among users***

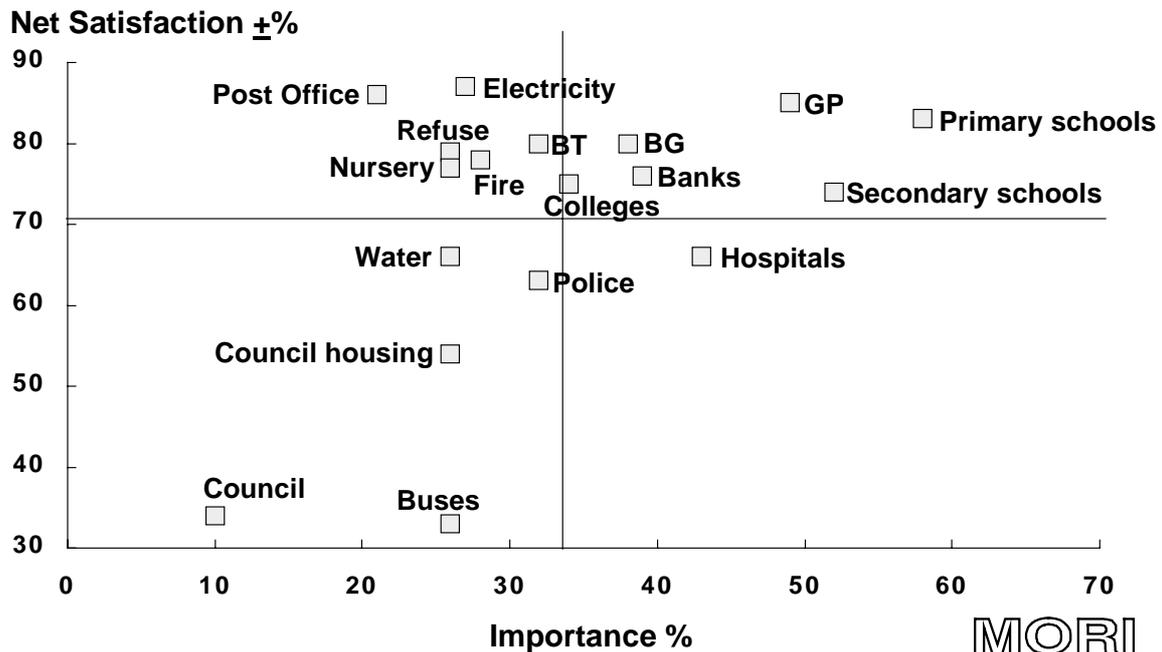
As the charts below show, the picture changes when we compare satisfaction and importance among *users only* in each area. As we would expect, given the high level of importance attached to education services among users, these now tend to appear in the right hand quadrants, although interestingly nursery schools/classes (added to these quadrants) are viewed as rather less important by users than the other education services in both areas. In deprived areas, apart from the change in position of education services, the pattern is fairly similar to that seen for all residents, although secondary schools now join hospitals, the police and bus services in the bottom right. In other areas the picture is also similar, although hospitals are now alone in the bottom right hand quadrant.

## **Deprived Areas - Users**



MORI

## Other Areas - Users



The key benefit of this comparison of satisfaction and importance is that it can highlight services that are relative priorities for improvement, i.e. those that are seen as relatively important, but which residents rate relatively poorly:

- among residents as a whole in both deprived and other areas, the police and hospitals are key priorities for improvement.
- in deprived areas buses are also a key priority, while in other areas water services are more of an issue.
- when we compare satisfaction and importance levels for those who have used each service in the last 12 months, education services in particular become more important, and secondary schools can be seen as a priority for improvement in deprived areas.

## 6. Satisfaction and Expectations

We have seen that the demographic profile and use of public services is very different in deprived and other areas, but that satisfaction only varies on a few services, and to a lesser extent than we may have expected. We now look more closely at how attitudes vary between sub-groups and, in particular, the role of variations in expectations.

### ***The Role of Expectations***

Expectations of services play a role in how they are rated.<sup>20</sup> Clearly people with low expectations are likely to be less critical of the same service than those with high expectations. Indeed, ratings of services in surveys such as this can be thought of as the difference between actual experience of service delivery and expectations of the service. The question then is whether expectations are systematically different between groups. If they are, a straight comparison of ratings of services will not necessarily provide an accurate reflection of service quality or how well needs are met. Variations in expectations are widely recognised as a factor that needs to be taken into account, particularly by those who make comparisons between areas or different populations:

If you condition tenants to accept...services that are crap, that is what they're expectations will be. We will see through that one: tenants must be openly consulted.

Roy Irwin, Audit Commission (Inside Housing, April 2000)

Expectations will be related to the extent to which users can exercise influence and choice:

The extent to which the clients perceive themselves to be powerless will influence the way in which they frame their expectations. Crudely... in situations where the client sees themselves as powerless, then expectations will be redefined to match the probable outcome.<sup>21</sup>

The analysis in the following sections looks at two key factors that impact on expectations – age and level of “resources”.

### ***Satisfied groups – older people***

Those in older age groups in both deprived and other areas are generally more satisfied with a range of services than residents as a whole, as Table 8 shows. There are some exceptions (notably emergency services and police in both, bus services in deprived areas and street cleaning in

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20 See discussion of the impact of expectations on satisfaction ratings in Wilson, G. (1995) *Community Care: Asking the users*. London: Chapman and Hall.

21 Carr-Hill, R (1995) in Wilson, G. *Community Care: Asking the users*. London: Chapman and Hall.

other areas), but it is clear that those in older age groups are less likely to criticise services, and that this pattern applies fairly equally in deprived and other areas. Indeed, from the logit analysis it is clear that there is a very strong positive relationship between age and satisfaction for just about all services, even when we control for the other factors included in the model (sex, resource levels and area).

This reflects lower expectations and a general lower propensity to complain among older groups, something that is often apparent in attitudinal research. This pattern is also seen, for example, in re-analysis of SEH data, examining attitudes to local areas as places to live. Older people are among those least likely to say they are dissatisfied with a number of aspects of their area.<sup>22</sup> A study among older recipients of health services reinforces this point about how marginalised groups may view services, and be discouraged from complaining: as the author notes, *why add to the stress of an already stressful existence by complaining about things that are perceived as unalterable?*<sup>23</sup>

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22 Burrows, R and Rhodes, D. (1998), *Unpopular Places? Area disadvantage and the geography of misery*. Bristol: Policy Press/Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

23 Wilson, G. (1995), *Community Care: Asking the users*. London: Chapman and Hall.

**Table 8: Satisfaction with services among older groups**

	<b>Deprived areas</b>	<b>Other areas</b>
	<i>Net satisfied, ±%</i>	<i>Net satisfied, ±%</i>
<b>Post Office</b>	+90	+86
Aged 65+	+95	+92
<b>Local Electricity Company*</b>	+88	+87
Aged 65+	+92	+93
<b>Banks and building societies</b>	+85	+76
Aged 65+	+88	+91
<b>British Gas</b>	+85	+80
Aged 65+	+90	+93
<b>GP</b>	+82	+85
Aged 65+	+94	+92
<b>Water services*</b>	+78	+66
Aged 65+	+80	+78
<b>British Telecom</b>	+77	+80
Aged 65+	+90	+93
<b>Fire and emergency services*</b>	+78	+78
Aged 65+	+75	+74
<b>NHS Hospitals</b>	+73	+66
Aged 65+	+86	+74
<b>Refuse Collection*</b>	+69	+79
Aged 65+	+91	+89
<b>Police*</b>	+60	+63
Aged 65+	+58	+66

<b>Local bus services</b>	+51	+33
Aged 65+	+46	+47
<b>Council housing</b>	+47	+54
Aged 65+	+79	+78
<b>Your local council*</b>	+41	+34
Aged 65+	+65	+43
<b>Road and pavement maintenance*</b>	-1	-6
Aged 65+	0	-5
<b>Street lighting*</b>	+61	+63
Aged 65+	+78	+74
<b>Street cleaning*</b>	+33	+38
Aged 65+	+46	+39

**Notes:**

**Base:** \*Universal services (All); All other services (Users in the last year)

**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998

***Dissatisfied groups – higher resources***

Higher income and social class groups tend to be among the most critical, but in contrast with variations by age, this is a much more marked feature in deprived areas. This is clearly seen in the following summary question, which asked all respondents whether public services exceed, meet or fall below their expectations. The overall results suggest that there is no difference in attitudes to public services between deprived and other areas. However, as Table 9 shows, those in higher social classes and those on higher incomes in deprived areas are much more likely than other groups in deprived areas to say public services fall short of their expectations. They are also much more critical than the same groups in other areas, where the pattern of higher resource groups being more dissatisfied does not exist at all.

**Table 9: Attitudes to public services in general: % saying they *fall short of expectations* in deprived and other areas**

		Deprived areas	Other areas
<i>Base: All respondents</i>		(580)	(3796)
		%	%
<b>Total</b>		41	40
<b>Class</b>	AB	57	39
	C1	52	40
	C2	51	41
	DE	32	38
<b>Income</b>	Under £11,500	38	39
	£11,500-£24,499	51	40
	£24,500+	74	42

**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998

This is notably different from the variations by age seen above, where the pattern of older people being more satisfied is much the same between areas. Two potential explanations appear most likely:

- it could be because higher social class/income groups in deprived areas have generally higher expectations of public services than the same group in other areas (for example, because they have a different demographic profile on other factors that influence expectations, such as age)
- it could be that higher income/social class groups have similar expectations in each area, and public services are performing less well in deprived areas. That is, comparing ratings of services between these groups could provide a more accurate view of the quality of services in deprived areas, because they have similar benchmarks from experience of private services, and therefore expectations are similar.

Before looking at this in greater detail for individual services, we need to refine the analysis. Firstly, the sample sizes for high income and high social class groups in deprived areas are small, as they form small proportions of the deprived area population. Given this, and the similarity between the groups in ratings of a range of services, we have

combined those in social classes AB and those with household incomes of £24,500 or more to create a single “high resource” group.

Expectations will be related to a whole range of other factors, including other demographic characteristics. As the first explanation outlined above suggests, it may be that differences in the profile of these two groups on other aspects – such as sex and age - contribute to the observed differences in attitudes. As the profiles below show, this high resource group does have different demographic characteristics in each area. In particular, the high resource groups in deprived areas are younger and more likely to be women. A straight comparison between the two groups is therefore not comparing like with like. Most importantly, the younger age profile is likely to result in the groups in deprived areas being more critical than in other areas, given the positive relationship between satisfaction and age.

We have therefore attempted to control for these differences by weighting the profiles to match. This has been done by matching the profile of other areas to that in deprived areas on sex and age (to minimise the amount of weighting applied to a fairly small base). In general, this weighting does reduce the differences in ratings among high resource groups between areas, but a number of differences remain significant, as the following results demonstrate.

The tables show the ratings of services for the overall sample and for the re-weighted high resource group in each area. Table 11 shows those services that high resource groups in deprived areas are *less* satisfied with than the equivalent group in other areas. This includes two services that residents as a whole in deprived areas are less satisfied with – refuse collection and street cleaning. However, it also includes GPs, British Telecom, leisure centres, swimming pools, the police and road and pavement maintenance.

Table 12 shows that the apparently more positive ratings of banks, local water services, the council and train companies also may not be an entirely fair reflection of service provision in deprived areas. Residents as a whole in deprived areas were more satisfied with these than those in other areas, but there are no differences in the ratings of high resource groups between areas.

**Table 10: Profile of high resource group**

		Deprived areas	Other areas
<i>Base: All high resource group</i>		(102)	(1501)
		%	%
<b>Sex</b>	Male	41	58
	Female	59	42
<b>Age</b>	16-24	28	11
	25-44	42	46
	45-64	25	32
	65+	5	10
<b>Work status</b>	Working full or part time	75	72
	Unemployed	4	1
	Retired	5	13
	Other inactive	16	14

Source: MORI/People's Panel 1998

On the other hand, Table 13 shows that there remain a large number of services where the relative ratings between those in high resource groups in deprived and other areas are actually fairly similar to that seen among users as a whole. All services in this table are rated the same in deprived and other areas, except buses, which, as with residents in general, are more positively viewed by high resource groups in deprived areas.

Finally, Table 14 shows that two services that residents in deprived areas were less likely to be satisfied with (public parks and recycling) are actually viewed very similarly by high resource groups in deprived and other areas.

This analysis of high resource groups may appear to contradict the logit modelling discussed earlier, as it identifies a larger and different list of services that have different levels of satisfaction between areas. However, the two approaches are in fact doing different things. The analysis in this section identifies services that are rated differently among high resource groups between areas; it does not say that if deprived and other areas had the same resource group profile that the ratings of these services among residents as a whole would be

significantly different between areas. For example, GPs can be rated significantly lower by high resource groups in deprived areas than the same group in other areas, but there can still be no statistically significant difference between areas among residents as a whole, even when the two areas are controlled to have the same resource group profile. This is particularly likely to be the case in instances such as this, where high resource groups make up relatively small proportions of both populations.

**Table 11: Satisfaction with services among (re-weighted) high resource groups: lower satisfaction in deprived areas when comparing high resource groups**

	<b>Deprived areas</b>	<b>Other areas</b>
	<i>Net satisfied, ±%</i>	<i>Net satisfied, ±%</i>
<b>GP</b>	+82	+85
High resource group	<b>+62</b>	<b>+80</b>
<b>British Telecom</b>	+77	+80
High resource group	<b>+59</b>	<b>+74</b>
<b>Leisure Centres</b>	+73	+71
High resource group	<b>+57</b>	<b>+71</b>
<b>Swimming pools</b>	+73	+71
High resource group	<b>+54</b>	<b>+70</b>
<b>Refuse Collection*</b>	<b>+69</b>	<b>+79</b>
High resource group	<b>+57</b>	<b>+74</b>
<b>Police*</b>	+60	+63
High resource group	<b>+38</b>	<b>+65</b>
<b>Street cleaning*</b>	<b>+33</b>	<b>+38</b>
High resource group	<b>+12</b>	<b>+42</b>
<b>Road and pavement maintenance*</b>	-1	-6
High resource group	<b>-18</b>	<b>-1</b>

**Base:** \*Universal services (All high resource group); All other services (Users in the last year).

Bold indicates services that residents in deprived areas are more likely to be satisfied with, italics indicates those they are less satisfied with (at 95% confidence interval).

**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998.

**Table 12: Satisfaction with services among (re-weighted) high resource groups: higher satisfaction among all users, but similar satisfaction between high resource groups**

	<b>Deprived areas</b>	<b>Other areas</b>
	<i>Net satisfied, ±%</i>	<i>Net satisfied, ±%</i>
<b>Banks and building societies</b>	<b>+85</b>	<b>+76</b>
High resource group	+73	+74
<b>Local Water Services*</b>	<b>+78</b>	<b>+66</b>
High resource group	+59	+62
<b>Your local Council*</b>	<b>+41</b>	<b>+34</b>
High resource group	+29	+28
<b>Train Companies</b>	<b>+40</b>	<b>+26</b>
High resource group	+28	+22

**Base:** \*Universal services (All high resource group); All other services (Users in the last year).

Bold indicates services that residents in deprived areas are more likely to be satisfied with, italics indicates those they are less satisfied with (at 95% confidence interval).

**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998.

**Table 13: Satisfaction with services among (re-weighted) high resource groups: no change in ratings**

	<b>Deprived areas</b>	<b>Other areas</b>
	<i>Net satisfied, ±%</i>	<i>Net satisfied, ±%</i>
<b>Post Office</b>	+90	+86
High resource group	+79	+82
<b>Local Electricity Company*</b>	+88	+87
High resource group	+78	+82
<b>British Gas</b>	+85	+80
High resource group	+74	+72
<b>Libraries</b>	+83	+83
High resource group	+67	+79
<b>Fire and emergency services*</b>	+78	+78
High resource group	+72	+77
<b>NHS Hospitals</b>	+73	+66
High resource group	+52	+57
<b>Street lighting*</b>	+61	+63
High resource group	+49	+58
<b>Local bus services</b>	+51	+33
High resource group	+53	+22

**Base:** \*Universal services (All high resource group); All other services (Users in the last year)

Bold indicates services that residents in deprived areas are more likely to be satisfied with, italics indicates those they are less satisfied with (at 95% confidence interval)

**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998

**Table 14: Satisfaction with services among (re-weighted) high resource groups: lower satisfaction among all users in deprived areas, but similar satisfaction between high resource groups**

	<b>Deprived areas</b>	<b>Other areas</b>
	<i>Net satisfied, ±%</i>	<i>Net satisfied, ±%</i>
<b>Public parks</b>	<i>+60</i>	<i>+72</i>
High resource group	+64	+71
<b>Recycling</b>	<i>+58</i>	<i>+63</i>
High resource group	+52	+58

**Base:** \*Universal services (All high resource group); All other services (Users in the last year)

Bold indicates services that residents in deprived areas are more likely to be satisfied with, italics indicates those they are less satisfied with (at 95% confidence interval)

**Source:** MORI/People's Panel 1998

What this part of the analysis suggests is that if expectations of high resource groups are similar between areas, and comparing their ratings is a more accurate indication of the relative quality of services, we should be more concerned about the quality of some key services in deprived areas (for example, the police and GPs) than the initial analysis would suggest.

However, there is an important drawback in taking this approach to assess the relative performance of services in deprived and other areas: those in high resource groups have very different characteristics to those in deprived areas as a whole, and so are likely to have different needs and priorities. Therefore, the analysis may give us a more complete understanding of the relative performance of services in deprived and other areas, as it controls for some of the impact of varying levels of expectations, but we may not want to make recommendations for the focus of service improvements on the basis of it. For example, road and pavement maintenance is rated more highly among residents as a whole in deprived areas than in other areas, but less highly by high resource groups in deprived areas than the equivalent group in other areas. However, it is wrong to conclude from this that road and pavement maintenance should be a higher priority for improvement in deprived than other areas, as attitudes among the high resource group will be related to their priorities, which in turn will be affected by their profile, such as their much higher ownership of cars.

## ***Summary***

This section has shown there are good reasons to believe that expectations will have an important impact on ratings of services, and these are likely to be systematically different between demographic groups. For example, older people are less likely to be critical, and this is consistent between areas.

In contrast, those in high resource groups are more critical of services, but this is much more of a feature in deprived areas. For example, high resource groups in deprived areas are much more likely to say that public services in general fall below their expectations than the same group in other areas, where the pattern of higher resource groups being more dissatisfied does not exist at all. The argument is that comparing the ratings of these groups between areas may provide a more accurate measure of the relative quality of services, as expectations are likely to be at a similar (relatively high) level. This cannot be identified by simple multivariate techniques, as even if the proportion of high resource groups in each area are equalised, they are too small to have a great impact on overall levels of satisfaction. However, this analysis still identifies relatively few services that are viewed as significantly worse in deprived areas (GPs, the police, British Telecom, leisure centres, swimming pools, refuse collection, street cleaning, and road and pavement maintenance).

## **Conclusions**

A straightforward analysis of data from the People's Panel has provided some useful insights into the characteristics of residents in deprived areas, and their use of and attitudes to public services. It has confirmed some points made elsewhere, and added some different perspectives:

- there are some very notable differences in the demographic characteristics between residents in deprived and other areas. In a sense, this is not much of a surprise, as the deprived area definition used is based on a classification system designed to identify contrasting areas. However, the scale of some of the differences (on factors such as qualifications, income and benefit receipt, car and PC ownership and voting levels) is worth emphasising.
- the analysis has confirmed the greater use of some key social welfare services by residents in deprived areas. The results show very high levels of use that will result in considerable additional

pressure on some services in deprived areas, for example GPs and hospitals.

- it confirms the lower use of banks and building societies by those in deprived areas, and their lower relative importance, even among deprived area residents that do use them.
- in contrast, it highlights the relative importance of post offices; protecting and expanding the provision of services at post offices is likely to have an important impact in deprived areas.
- education services are rated similarly in both deprived and other areas, but there are clearly differences in the importance attached to each, with primary and secondary schools seen as important by more users in other areas, but adult education more important to users in deprived areas. When we compare satisfaction and importance ratings, however, secondary schools are rather more of a relative priority in deprived areas.
- the police and hospitals are seen as key services in need of improvement in both deprived and other areas, while bus service are much more important and a much greater priority for improvement in deprived areas.

Users across different types of area mostly say they are satisfied with the majority of public services, and some services receive very high ratings. Despite the need to improve health and education services always featuring particularly prominently among the most important issues facing Britain,<sup>24</sup> ratings among users of the services provided by GPs and primary schools, and even hospitals and secondary schools, are considerably more positive than negative. There are some services that are rated relatively less well, notably road and pavement maintenance and street cleaning, but also transport services (buses and trains). People are also somewhat less positive about council housing and the council in general.

Taken as a whole, residents in deprived areas are not as critical of public services as might have been expected from qualitative evidence from a number of sources and observed outcomes for local people – and differences are generally even fewer and smaller when we control for profile differences between areas.

When interpreting this we need to bear in mind the method of the research that has led to these contrasting conclusions. A survey such as

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24 *Political Aggregates* (1999). MORI/Times Data.

the People's Panel, where respondents are asked to rate a large number of services in a relatively short, highly structured interview is likely to elicit a very different response from the qualitative methods employed elsewhere. As Wilson notes in a qualitative study that found frightening examples of poor service in hospitals, these same patients "*would have said they were satisfied with the health services if the question had been asked directly*".<sup>25</sup> In general, while the structured survey is likely to encourage a certain "blandness" in response, qualitative methods are likely to lead to a somewhat exaggerated view of the problems, by encouraging residents to recall instances of poor service. It is very likely that a similar apparent discrepancy in views would be found when comparing qualitative and quantitative evidence of attitudes to services in "non-deprived" areas.

This is less of a concern, therefore, when the main aim is to look at relative ratings of services between groups within a survey, as the impact of the research approach should be consistent for all. However, it is important to attempt to take some account of differing levels of *expectations* of public services when comparing ratings between different groups, as these are not likely to be consistent. One of the key factors that will impact on expectations is experience of private sector services, and this is related to the level of resources that people have access to. It is clear that those in deprived areas are much more likely to be from low resource groups, and have less experience of a range of private services. Just as we have seen a general increase in expectations of public services as private services such as banks have become more customer-focused, so those that have more contact with these types of services are likely to expect more from public services. In contrast, those who remain reliant on public services will have more limited and less demanding benchmarks.

Responses to an overview question on general attitudes to public services show that those in higher social classes and on higher incomes in deprived areas rate public services more poorly than the equivalent groups in other areas. The analysis of ratings of individual services among these "high resource" groups shows that, if we can assume their expectations of services are similar and comparing their attitudes provides more accurate relative ratings, our views on the quality of some key public services in deprived areas should be somewhat less

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25 Wilson, G. (1995), *Community Care: Asking the users*. London: Chapman and Hall.

positive – in particular, GPs, the police, British Telecom, leisure centres, swimming pools, refuse collection, street cleaning and road and pavement maintenance.

But do we want to base decisions on priorities for improvement to services in deprived areas on the views of a very small sub-group of the population? On the one hand, we can interpret their ratings as a useful indication of the relative performance in deprived and other areas, and the service areas where provision is relatively weak.

However, high resource groups are likely to have very different needs and priorities from the majority of residents in deprived areas. This includes practical considerations, such as road maintenance being a more direct concern to those with cars, but it also extends to a range of other factors, such as a lack of qualifications making adult education a greater priority, post offices being more important to those receiving benefits etc. It would be difficult for a newly appointed Neighbourhood Manager, with complete control over the focus of local services in a deprived area, to argue that the services identified as relatively poor by those with the highest resources in his/her area should be priorities for local service improvement. This approach can therefore be used as one way of more accurately identifying relatively poor performance in deprived areas, but decisions on actions to improve services need to be firmly based on the importance of services to local people as a whole. This analysis suggests four key priorities – improvements in police, hospital and bus services, and the extension of services provided by post offices.

## Appendices

### **A1 – Performance Indicators**

Audit Commission Performance Indicators (1997/8) – National Average and five most deprived local authority districts (based on ILD 1998)

	Missed bin collections (per 100,000)	Housing repairs completed within government target (%)	Street lights not working (%)	Highways of high standard of cleanliness (%)
National average	133	87	1.31	45
Liverpool	4,364	87	3.03	10
Newham	24	96	0.45	48
Manchester	484	93	1.66	16
Hackney	557	79	1.51	34
Birmingham	116	83	1.78	17

### **A2 - ACORN Definitions**

The following ACORN categories are defined as deprived areas (all others are non-deprived):

#### **Category C – Rising**

Group 8 – Better off executives, inner-city areas – Following type

Type 24: Partially gentrified multi-ethnic areas

#### **Category F – Striving**

Group 13 – Older people, less prosperous areas – All types

Group 14 – Council estate residents, better off homes – Following types

Type 43: Council areas, young families, and many lone parents

Type 44: Multi-occupied terraces, multi-ethnic areas

Type 45: Low rise council housing, less well-off families

Group 15 – Council estate residents, high unemployment – All types

Group 16 – Council estate residents, greatest hardship – All types

Group 17 – People in multi-ethnic areas, low income areas – All types

### **A3 - Social Class Definitions**

- A Professionals such as doctors, surgeons, solicitors or dentists; chartered people like architects; fully qualified people with a large degree of responsibility such as senior editors, senior civil servants, town clerks, senior business executives and managers, and high ranking grades of the Services.
- B People with very responsible jobs such as university lecturers, hospital matrons, heads of local government departments, middle management in business, qualified scientists, bank managers, police inspectors, and upper grades of the Services.
- C1 All others doing non-manual jobs; nurses, technicians, pharmacists, salesmen, publicans, people in clerical positions, police sergeants/constables, and middle ranks of the Services.
- C2 Skilled manual workers/craftsmen who have served apprenticeships; foremen, manual workers with special qualifications such as long distance lorry drivers, security officers, and lower grades of Services.
- D Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, including labourers and mates of occupations in the C2 grade and people serving apprenticeships; machine minders, farm labourers, bus and railway conductors, laboratory assistants, postmen, door-to-door and van salesmen.
- E Those on lowest levels of subsistence including pensioners, casual workers, and others with minimum levels of income.

### **A4 – Logit Model Technical Details**

The models are mostly good fits, particularly considering the small number of variables included (note that, unusually, in SPSS logit models the goodness of fit increases with significance level). The model for local bus services in particular provides an excellent fit, while the model for recycling facilities is fairly poor.

	Chi-square	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Local bus services	9.26	18	.95
Train companies	15.3	18	.64
Local water services	20.2	18	.32
Refuse collection	20.6	18	.30
Public parks	15.8	18	.61
Recycling facilities	25.2	18	.12