

Improving the Community Wheelchair Service in Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich

February 2026



- NHS South East London is reviewing the Community Wheelchair Service across Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich (BBG).
- The service plays a critical role in enabling independence, mobility, safety and quality of life for adults and children.
- Engagement was undertaken to understand lived experience of the current service including what works well and identify priorities for improvement.
- This presentation summarises engagement activity and what we heard and how it will shape the future service.

Improving Community Wheelchair Services: why engagement is important

- Wheelchair services support people with complex, long-term needs.
- Small delays or system issues can have significant impacts on health, wellbeing and independence.
- Engagement helps ensure the future service is:
 - person-centred
 - equitable and accessible
 - responsive to changing needs, particularly for children.



Engagement objectives

We wanted to understand:

- what works well in the current wheelchair service
- what challenges people experience when accessing or using the service
- what matters most to service users, carers and families
- what improvements would make the biggest difference to people's lives.





Online survey, including an easy read survey, across Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich – November 2025 – January 2026 (Bexley survey: October – December 2025)



Bexley face to face workshops - 19 November 2025



Online focus groups – 13,15, 30 January 2026



Recruiting people with lived experience to support the process as part of the steering group and be involved in the procurement evaluation process – November 2025 – January 2026

All engagement opportunities were promoted with members of the public using both face to face and online methods, including:

- [Let's talk online engagement platform](#) health and care online community
- #Get Involved newsletter (November & December 2025, and January 2026)
- Voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations
- Community champions groups across different boroughs in south east London
- Integrated Care System newsletter and social media channels including local social media channels
- ICS partners' organisations social media channels and newsletters
- Current patients – via the current providers
- Special schools to share with parents and carers.



South East London

Have your say on wheelchair service



We are reviewing how the service is currently working and what could be improved.

Your feedback is important in helping us understand what matters most to you.

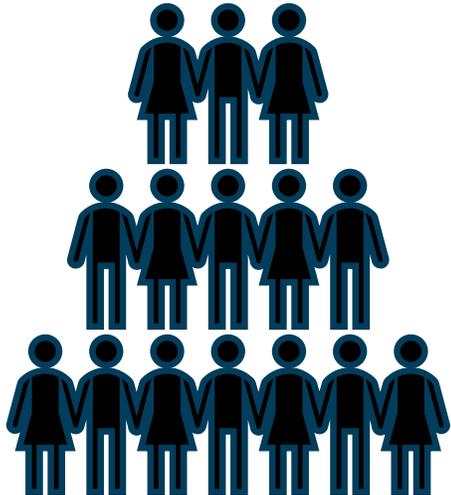
QUICK SURVEY



Scan Me

Gaining insight – responses and reach

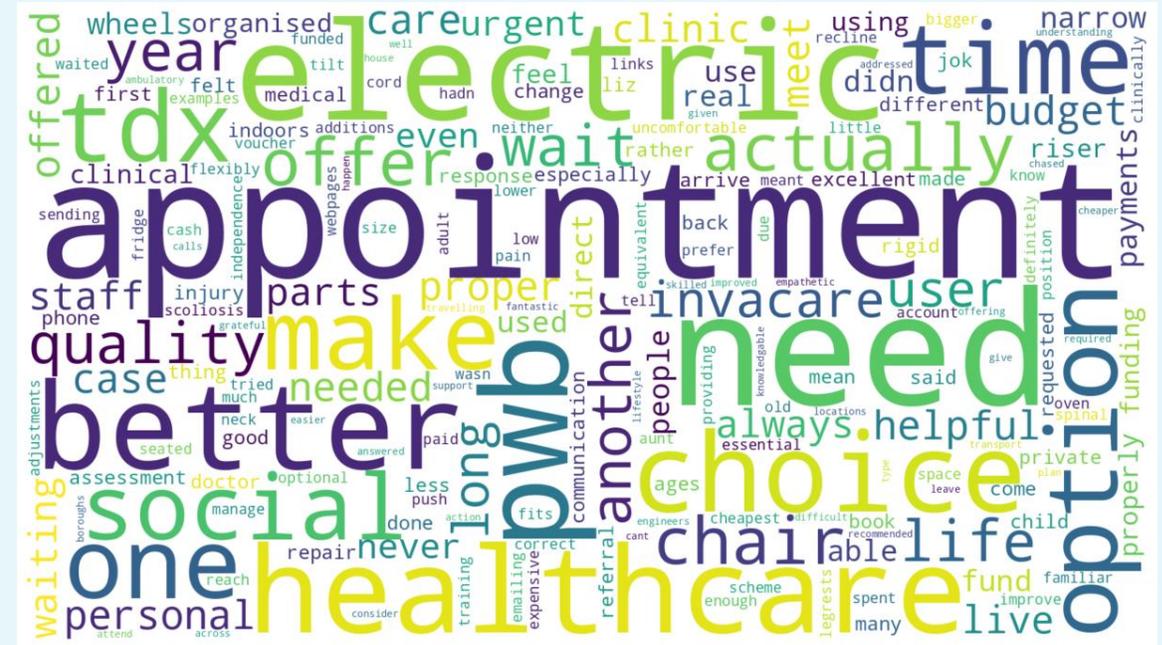
During the engagement we captured feedback and insight from people across diverse communities in Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich



- 1034 visits – Let's talk engagement project page
- 532 visits to the survey page and 204 survey responses (incl. 32 to the easy read survey)
- 1 face to face workshop (Bexley) (2 people involved in conversations)
- 3 online focus groups:
 - 14 participants attended the focus groups (including a local MP) from 40 people who booked (noting some problems with meeting link)
- Informal interviews to be held with people with lived experience
- 3 people with lived experience or carers with lived experience have been recruited to be part of the steering group and procurement process

Survey key insights 1 of 4: respondents indicated the following needed improvement

- Long waits for assessment; long waits for delivery; long waits for parts and follow-on appointment; “urgent” not treated as urgent.
- Slow repairs; wrong parts ordered; poor order tracking; limited weekend cover (manual chairs); lack of loan equipment.
- Phones not answered; emails unanswered; no call-backs; unclear “who to contact”; poor updates while waiting; unclear handovers when providers change.
- Narrow range; “one size fits all”; heavy chairs; small wheels; inadequate for terrain/hills; lack of foldable options; poor build quality; inability to trial chairs.
- PWB -Poor understanding by staff; discouraged conversations; voucher framed like old scheme; budgets too low; lack of care plan/lifestyle assessment; lack of integration with social care funding.



Survey key insight 2 of 4: respondents indicated the following needed improvement

- Parents not listened to; concerns ignored; dismissive tone; patronising behavior; “take it or leave it”.
- Only limited chair options; tilt-in-space needs not met; growth adjustments too slow; specialist seating costs exceed PWB; schools benefits; families forced to oversize chairs.
- Clinics too far/out of borough; poor signage; parking difficulty; home visit flexibility; NHS transport waits; care home clinics.
- No routine checks; annual contact requested; need posture monitoring; proactive follow-up.
- Not enough OTs/therapists; engineers stretched; rushed appointments; knowledge gaps in wheelchair terminology; equality training needed.



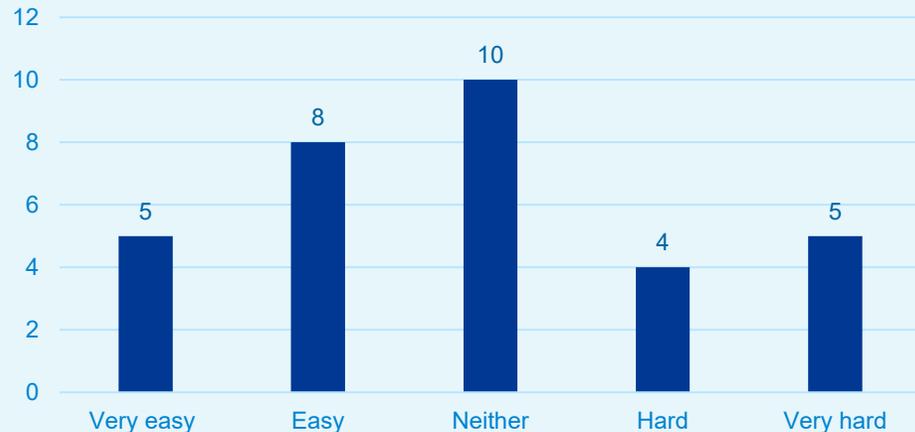
Survey respondents indicated different experiences of the services:

How easy was it to contact the wheelchair service when you needed support?



Main survey: n=198

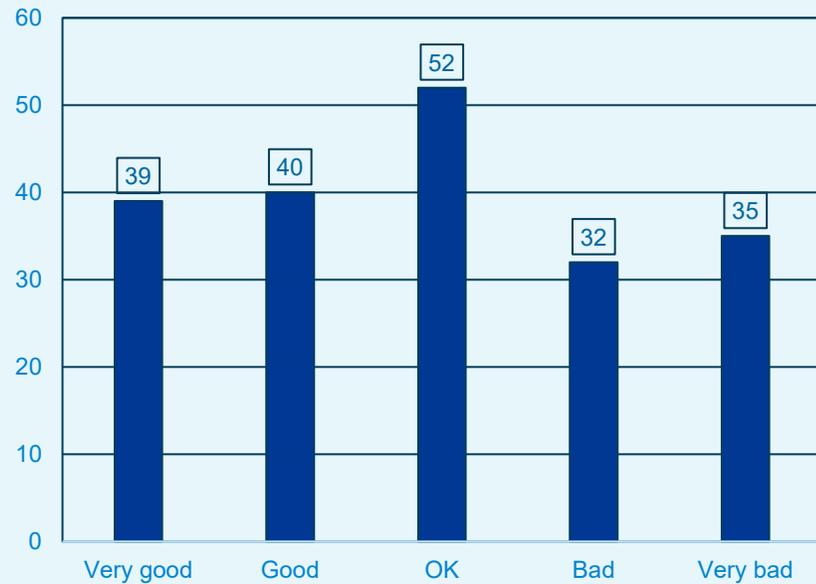
How easy is it for you to contact the wheelchair service when you need help?



Easy read survey: n=32

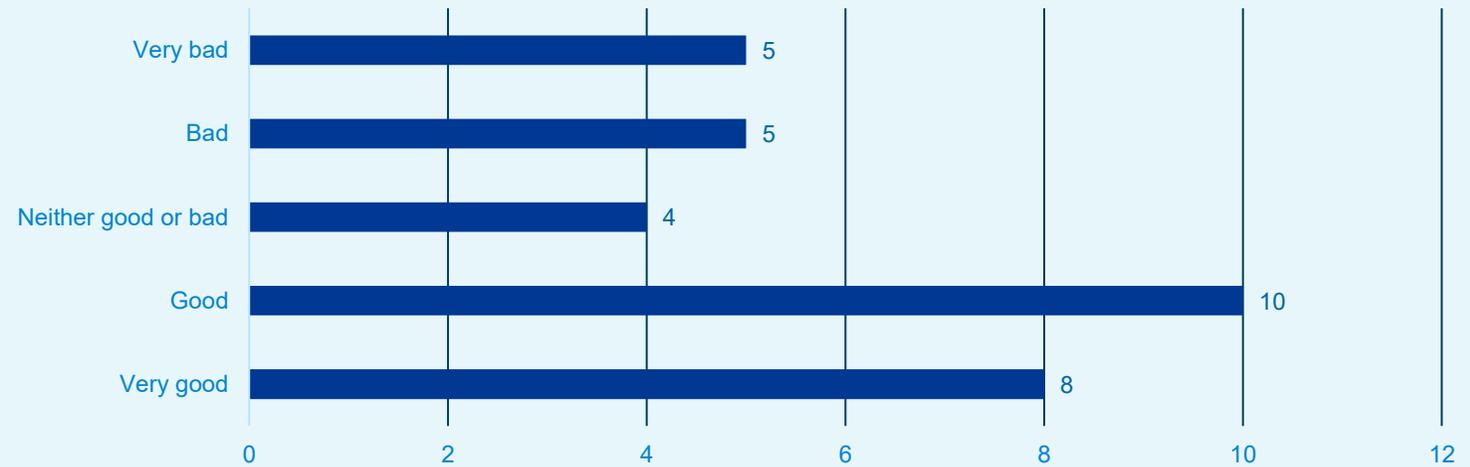
Survey respondents indicated different experiences of the services:

Overall, how would you rate your experiences of the service?



Main survey: n=198

Overall, how were your experiences of the service



Easy read survey: n=32

Easy access to services and flexible services

- Timely access to assessments, reviews and equipment
- Reduced waiting times, particularly for children and urgent clinical needs
- Clinics available in accessible locations across each borough
- Improved access to repairs and maintenance, including urgent and out-of-hours support

Clinical model of care

- Person-centred assessments that consider lifestyle, independence and quality of life
- Appropriate wheelchair and seating solutions that meet clinical and functional need
- Better joined-up working between wheelchair services, community therapy teams, hospitals, schools and social care
- Clear review and follow-up arrangements, including proactive reviews where needs change

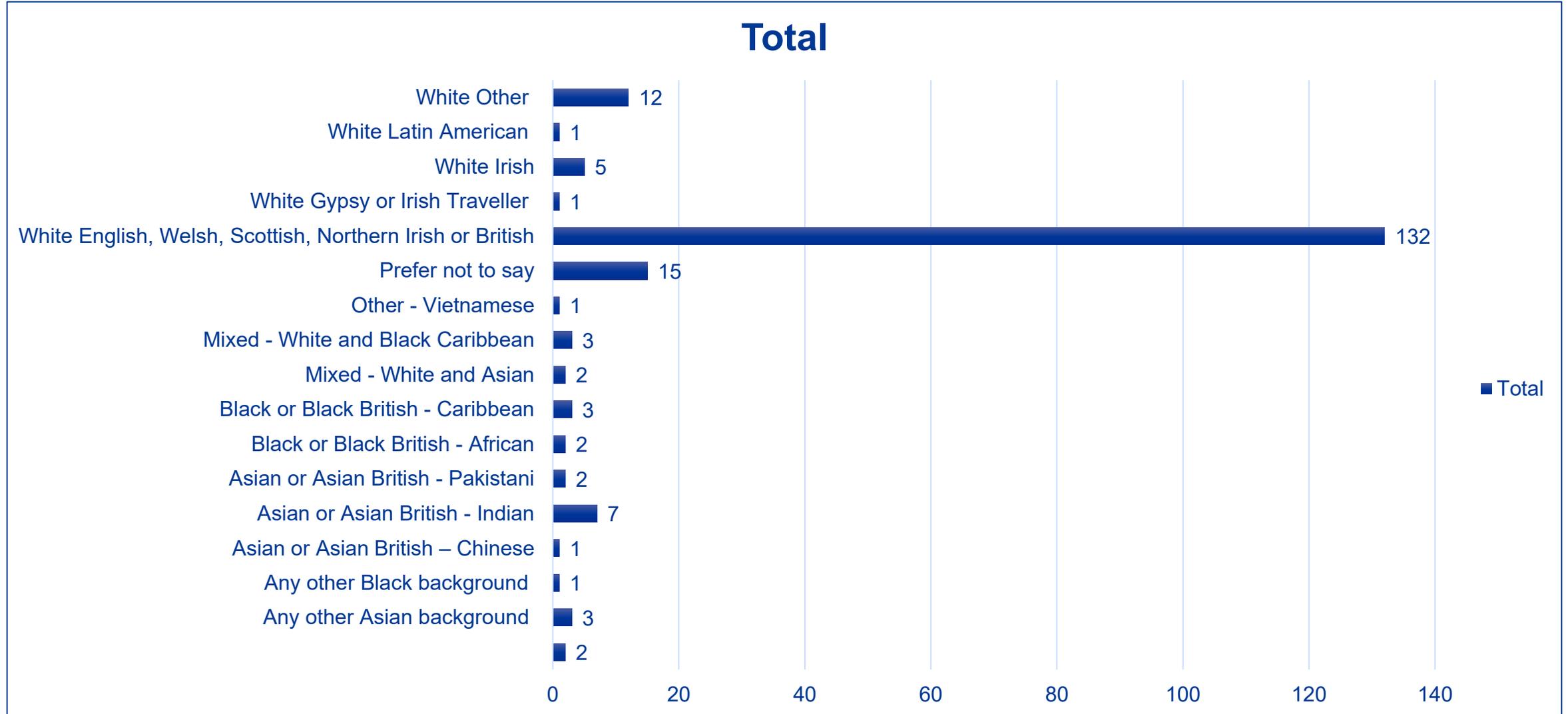
Person-Centred, safe and Equitable Care

- Service users and carers feeling listened to and involved in decisions
- Respectful, compassionate communication at all points of contact
- Consistent standards regardless of borough or provider
- A focus on safety, dignity and reducing inequalities in access and outcomes

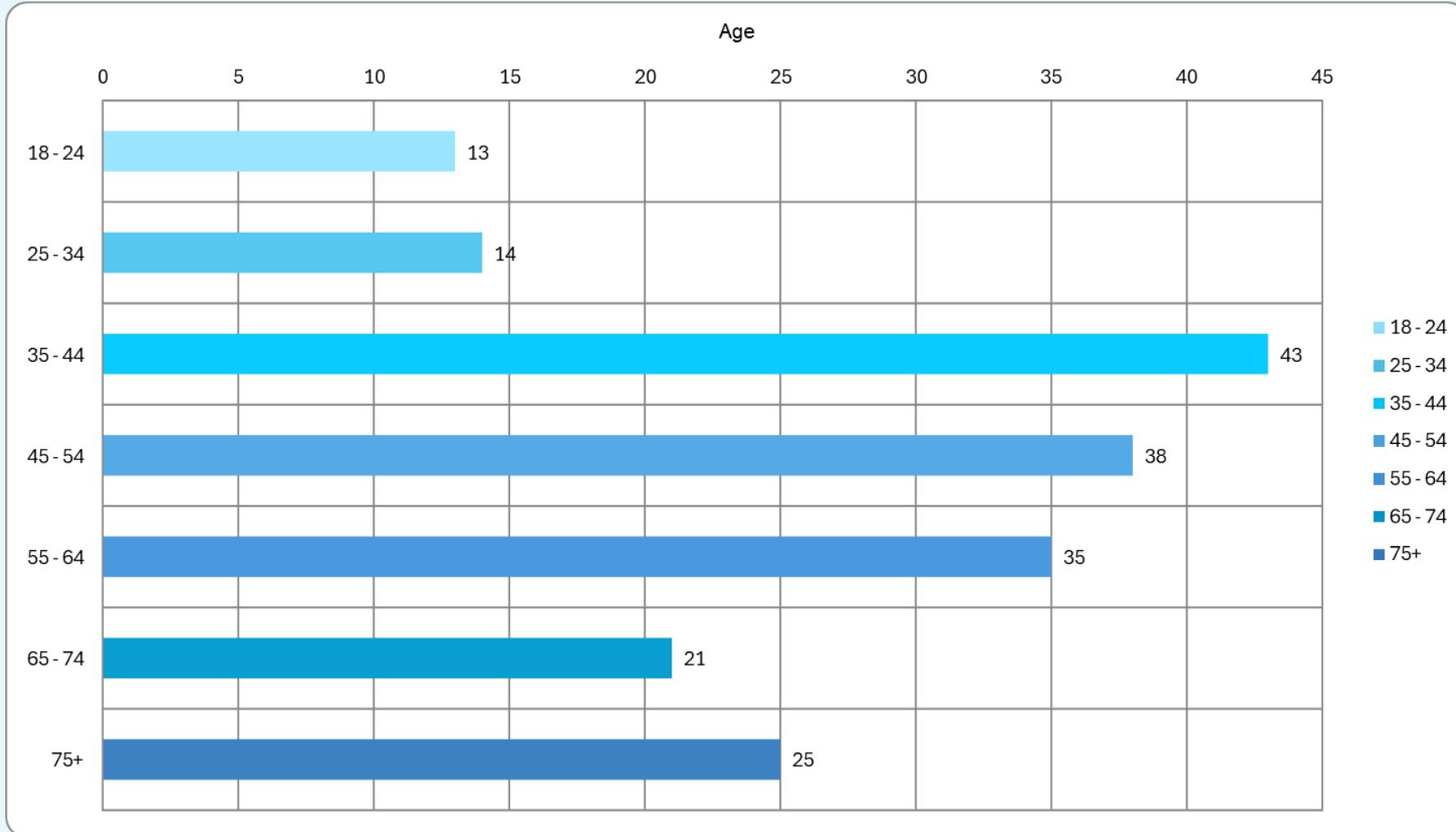
Information and communications about services

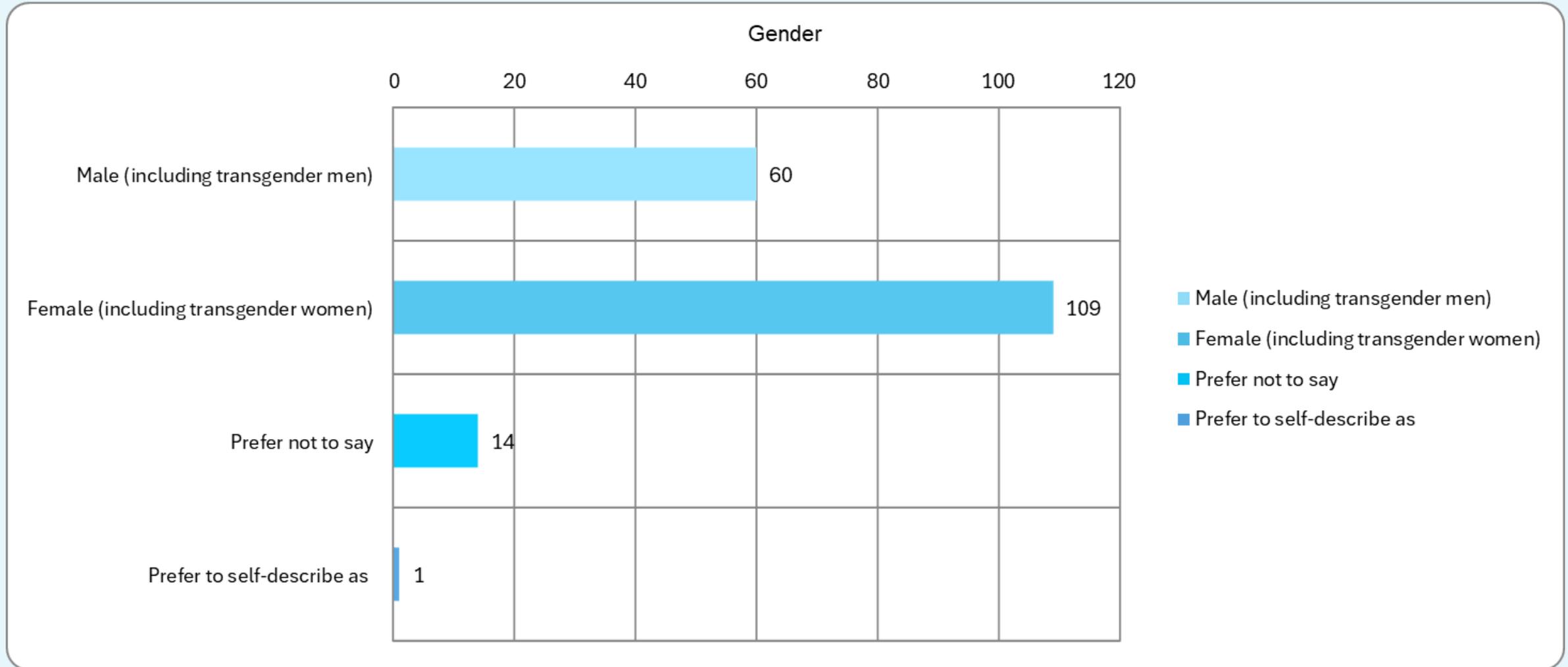
- Clear information about eligibility, referral routes and what the service provides
- Improved communication and updates while people are waiting
- Better explanation and support around Personal Wheelchair Budgets
- Clear contact routes for repairs, servicing and clinical advice
- Improved information about local clinic locations and how to access them

Survey demographic data: ethnicity



Survey demographic data: age





Access and waiting times

- Long waits for assessments, equipment provision and repairs
- Children outgrowing equipment before replacement arrives
- No clear timescales or visibility of progress

Communication

- Difficulty contacting the service and calls not returned
- Families repeatedly chasing for updates

Repairs and reliability (highest impact)

- Broken wheelchair leaves people housebound
- Missed school, work and medical appointments
- No loan equipment available
→ Users experience repairs as an urgent service, not maintenance

Children and complex needs

Delays impacting posture, pain and development
Poor coordination with schools and therapists
Parents sometimes funding equipment privately

Choice and personal wheelchair budgets (PWB)

Limited awareness of PWB options
Users feel allocated equipment rather than involved in decisions

Assessment experience

Assessments feel rushed and inconsistent
Home environment and daily living needs not always considered

Staff

Positive feedback about clinicians
Concerns relate to the system and pathway, not individuals

Next steps - turning insight into action

- Insights gathered through the engagement process will directly inform priorities for improving the Community Wheelchair Service, particularly in relation to **timeliness, communication, choice of equipment and responsiveness to changing needs**.
- Key themes from engagement will be used to strengthen expectations around **assessment and review timescales, equipment provision, repairs and maintenance, and patient and carer experience**.
- Engagement findings will be considered alongside **national guidance, clinical standards and operational data** to ensure the future service model is **safe, equitable and sustainable**, with particular focus on **children and people with complex needs**.
- Feedback will inform the development of **monitoring and performance requirements**, including measures relating to **waiting times, equipment downtime, patient experience and responsiveness to urgent clinical need**.
- Engagement outcomes will be shared with stakeholders to demonstrate **how feedback has been heard, considered and used** to shape service design and commissioning decisions.
- These insights and recommendations will directly inform the **development of the service specification and procurement process** for the Community Wheelchair Service across Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich.
- People with lived experience will continue to be involved, where appropriate, in **shaping, reviewing and evaluating** the service to support ongoing improvement.

- To ensure the new Community Wheelchair Service is shaped by real experience and not only organisational perspective, the ICB continues to work with people with lived experience / carers.
- Three people with lived experience of using the Wheelchair Service (including carer/family perspective) have now been recruited to:
 - participate in ongoing service development and procurement activity
 - support evaluation of proposals from a service user perspective

Their involvement will continue into mobilisation and early contract monitoring.

Why this matters

Focus group feedback highlighted that many of the issues relate to how the service is experienced day-to-day. Embedding lived experience helps ensure the future service is designed around independence, communication and reliability, not just clinical process.

Our commitment

The new service will be developed *with users, not for users*, and lived experience will remain part of governance and quality review after contract award.