

## 9 Local Services

### Main Findings

In 2016, 56 per cent of adults were satisfied with three public services: local health services, schools and public transport.

Satisfaction with the three public services is at its lowest level since first measured in 2007, and down from a peak of 66 per cent in 2011.

Satisfaction with the three public services among service users is generally higher than that of the whole adult population, and is more stable over time.

Adults living in urban areas were more satisfied with the quality of the three public services than those in small towns and rural areas – mainly due to greater satisfaction with public transport.

In 2016, 23 per cent of adults agreed that they can influence decisions affecting their local area. Just over a third (34 per cent) said they would like to be more involved in the decisions their council makes.

Generally, older adults were more likely than younger adults to say they are satisfied with local government performance and less likely to want to be more involved in making decisions. Forty-two per cent of 25-34 year olds said they would like to have greater involvement with decisions affecting their local area (compared to 28 per cent for 60-74 year olds, and 14 per cent for those aged 75 plus).

Adults living in the most deprived areas were less likely to agree that they can influence decisions in their local area (21 per cent in the most deprived areas, compared to 27 per cent in the least deprived areas) and less likely to want to be more involved in local decision making, (29 per cent in the most deprived areas, compared to 38 per cent in the least deprived areas).

## 9.1 Introduction and Context

High quality public services which work together and with Scotland's communities are essential to support a fair, prosperous and inclusive society. The Scottish Government's approach to public service delivery seeks to place people and communities at the centre of what we do. In particular, it is an approach designed to target the causes rather than the consequences of inequalities; and to make sure that our public services are sustainable. Scotland's 32 local authorities work closely with other organisations (in a range of partnerships, including Community Planning Partnerships) to plan and deliver a wide range of services that improve the lives of people living in their areas.

As part of the National Performance Framework (NPF), which is supported by local councils, one of the Scottish Government's national outcomes is that 'our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs'. There are also two National Indicators relating to public services: improve people's perceptions of the quality of public services (National Indicator 33) and improve the responsiveness of public services (National Indicator 34). Progress on these two indicators is monitored using data from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS). Many local authorities also use the SHS to assess progress towards their Single Outcome Agreements (a statement of the outcomes that they want to see for their local area). Under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, community planning is about how public bodies work together and with the local community to plan for, resource and provide or secure the provision of services which improve local outcomes in a local authority area, with a view to reducing inequalities. Each CPP must produce a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan which is collaboratively agreed and signed off by 1 October 2017, and these Local Outcome Improvement Plans supersede Single Outcome Agreements.

This chapter begins by exploring satisfaction with the quality of local services and attitudes to involvement in local decision-making. It then reports respondents' views on local authority performance. Breakdowns by urban rural classification and SIMD are provided.

## 9.2 Local Service Quality

- Just over half of adults in Scotland were satisfied with public services in 2016. This is the lowest level since first measured in 2007.
- Satisfaction levels rose from 2007 and peaked in 2011. Satisfaction has steadily fallen since then due to increasing numbers of adults being ambivalent about schools. The number of people who are very or fairly dissatisfied with local schools has remained stable throughout this period.
- Adults tend to be most satisfied with local health services.

The Scottish Government's National Indicator to 'improve people's perceptions of the quality of public services' is measured by the percentage of adults who say they are (very or fairly) satisfied with three public services: local health services, schools and public transport. In 2016, the percentage of adults who said they were very or fairly satisfied with these services was roughly stable once taking account of statistical significance compared to 2015 at 56 per cent, but has decreased from 66 per cent in 2011 (Table 9.1).

**56% of adults in 2016 were satisfied with 3 public services: local health services, schools and public transport, compared to 62% in 2014**



Looking at the services individually, adults tend to be most satisfied with local health services, followed by local schools and public transport. In 2016, 83 per cent of adults were satisfied with local health services, compared to 73 per cent who were satisfied with schools and 72 per cent with public transport. Satisfaction with schools has fallen over the last five years, from a high of 85 per cent in 2011 to the current level of 73 per cent, and this is the biggest factor in the corresponding trend in the combined indicator over this period.

**Table 9.1: Percentage of people very or fairly satisfied with the quality of public services delivered (local health services, local schools and public transport) by year**

Percentages, 2007-2016 data

Adults	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Local health services	81	85	86	86	88	87	85	86	83	83
Local Schools	79	81	83	83	85	83	81	79	74	73
Public Transport	69	73	75	74	76	72	71	75	74	72
% satisfied with all three services*	57.1	61.8	64.9	64.0	66.0	63.0	59.9	61.9	57.5	56.1
Base (minimum)	6,270	5,500	5,470	5,000	5,510	5,340	5,700	5,720	5,790	6,130

\* Percentages reported for all three services combined are those for which an opinion was given.

Respondents could express no opinion for up to two of the services. While the base minimum has been quoted here (for the three main services) the base size for the composite “satisfaction with all three services” is for the whole adult sample 9,640.

**Figure 9.1: Percentage of people very or fairly satisfied with the quality of public services delivered (local health services, local schools and public transport) by year**

2007 - 2016 data, Adults (min base: 5,000)

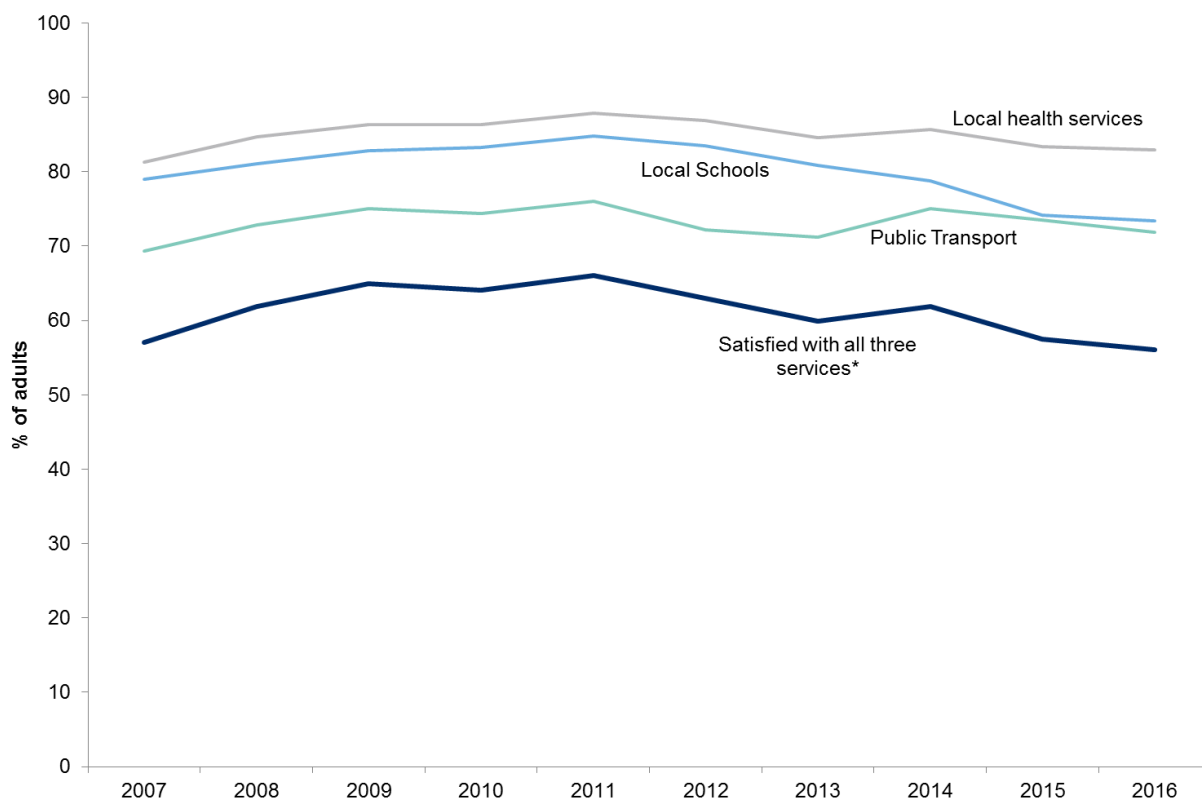


Table 9.2 provides a more detailed breakdown of satisfaction levels with each of the three public services. While the number very or fairly satisfied with local schools has fallen from 85 to 73 per cent since 2011, this is almost entirely due to a corresponding increase from 11 to 22 per cent in the number of people who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The number of people who are very or fairly dissatisfied with local schools has remained stable throughout this period.

**Table 9.2: Percentage of people very or fairly satisfied with the quality of public services delivered (local health services, local schools and public transport) by year**

Percentages, 2007-2016 data

Adults	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Local health services</b>										
Very or fairly satisfied	81	85	86	86	88	87	85	86	83	83
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7	6	5	5	4	5	6	5	6	6
Very or fairly dissatisfied	12	10	9	9	8	9	10	9	11	11
<b>Local Schools</b>										
Very or fairly satisfied	79	81	83	83	85	83	81	79	74	73
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17	14	12	12	11	13	15	18	22	22
Very or fairly dissatisfied	4	5	5	5	4	3	4	3	4	5
<b>Public Transport</b>										
Very or fairly satisfied	69	73	75	74	76	72	71	75	74	72
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	14	12	11	12	10	14	12	13	12	15
Very or fairly dissatisfied	17	15	14	14	14	14	17	11	14	13
<i>Base (minimum)</i>	6,270	5,500	5,470	5,000	5,510	5,340	5,700	5,720	5,790	6,130

### People's perceptions of public services by urban rural classification

- People in urban areas were more satisfied with the quality of public services overall than those in rural areas.

Table 9.3 shows the differences in people's perceptions of public services by urban rural classification. It can be seen that, overall, adults living in urban areas and accessible small towns were more satisfied with the quality of public services than those in remote small towns and rural areas. However, when we look at the individual services separately, it can be seen that it is the satisfaction with public transport in remote and rural areas that is mainly responsible for these overall results. Satisfaction with public transport in large urban areas was 80 per cent, compared to only 49 per cent in remote rural areas, whereas remote rural areas had higher levels of satisfaction with local schools (78 per cent compared to 67 per cent in large urban areas).

**Table 9.3: Percentage of people very or fairly satisfied with the quality of public services delivered (local health services, local schools and public transport) by urban rural classification**

Percentages, 2016 data

Adults	Large urban areas	Other urban areas	Accessible small towns	Remote small towns	Accessible rural	Remote rural	All
Local health services	84	82	82	80	82	83	83
Local Schools	67	76	82	79	73	78	73
Public Transport	80	73	69	66	57	49	72
% satisfied with all three services*	60.1	56.6	56.8	52.7	47.7	46.0	56.1
<i>Base (minimum)</i>	1,680	2,060	570	420	690	720	6,130

\* Percentages reported for all three services combined are those for which an opinion was given. Respondents could express no opinion for up to two of the services. While the base minimum has been quoted here (for the three main services) the base size for the composite "satisfaction with all three services" is for the whole adult sample 9,640.

## People’s perceptions of public services by level of deprivation

- Overall satisfaction with the quality of public services is broadly similar across all levels of deprivation.

Table 9.4 shows the differences in people’s perceptions of public services by level of deprivation, as defined using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and divided into quintiles<sup>59</sup>. Overall satisfaction with the quality of public services is broadly similar across all levels of deprivation, with satisfaction with schools and local health services in particular being very similar across all deprivation levels.

**Table 9.4: Percentage of people very or fairly satisfied with the quality of public services delivered (local health services, local schools and public transport) by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation quintiles**

Percentages, 2016 data

Adults	← 20% most deprived		20% least deprived→			All
	1	2	3	4	5	
Local health services	82	81	83	84	85	83
Local Schools	72	73	74	75	73	73
Public Transport	75	73	69	68	74	72
% satisfied with all three services*	56.2	56.1	53.8	56.4	57.9	56.1
<i>Base (minimum)</i>	<i>1,160</i>	<i>1,300</i>	<i>1,360</i>	<i>1,250</i>	<i>1,060</i>	<i>6,130</i>

\* Percentages reported for all three services combined are those for which an opinion was given.

Respondents could express no opinion for up to two of the services. While the base minimum has been quoted here (for the three main services) the base size for the composite “satisfaction with all three services” is for the whole adult sample 9,640.

## Service users

- Satisfaction levels are higher amongst those who have used the service.

People who have actually used the services i.e. those who travel on public transport, have children in school or have used the health service arguably have a more informed opinion of the service. Currently users of schools and of public transport can be identified.

Table 9.5 shows satisfaction with the 3 public services among service users only. Satisfaction with both schools (88 per cent) and public transport (80 per cent) was higher in 2016 among those who use these services than the corresponding satisfaction level for the whole adult population. Satisfaction of service users is also more stable over time than that of all adults.

<sup>59</sup> See Annex 2: Glossary

**Table 9.5: Percentage of service users very or fairly satisfied with the quality of public services delivered (local health services, local schools and public transport) by year<sup>60</sup>**

Percentages, 2007-2016 data

Service users	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Local health services	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Local Schools	90	89	88	88	90	92	90	90	90	88
Public Transport	77	80	81	80	82	80	78	82	79	80
<i>Base (minimum)</i>	<i>2,040</i>	<i>1,740</i>	<i>1,880</i>	<i>1,650</i>	<i>1,800</i>	<i>1,750</i>	<i>1,820</i>	<i>1,780</i>	<i>1,690</i>	<i>1,740</i>

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<sup>60</sup> User of Local health services not available. Analysis of these users will be possible from 2017 onwards

Users of Local schools identified by whether there is a school child present in the household

Users of Public transport identified by whether the respondent has used a bus or train within the last month

### 9.3 Perceptions of Local Authority Performance and Involvement in Local Decision Making

- People think their local authority is good at letting people know about the kinds of services it provides (45 per cent) and provides high quality services (45 per cent).
- Far fewer (just under a quarter) feel they are able to influence decisions in their local area (23 per cent) or that the council is good at listening to local people's views (25 per cent).
- More adults would like greater involvement in the decisions affecting their local area than those who perceive they can influence them.

The Scottish Government's approach continues to be informed by the findings of the Christie Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services in 2011<sup>61</sup>, providing consistent and clear strategic direction built around the four pillars of reform: partnership; prevention; people and performance. This approach places people and communities at the centre of public service delivery and policy making. Perceptions of local authority performance have been collected.

As well as satisfaction with local services, perceptions of local authority performance in the SHS are measured by asking people to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with various statements relating to the role of a local council and the perceived quality of communication and services, involvement in decision making, and value for money. These are as follows:

- A. My local council provides high quality services
- B. My local council does the best it can with the money available
- C. My local council is addressing the key issues affecting the quality of life in my local neighbourhood
- D. My council is good at listening to local people's views before it takes decisions
- E. My local council designs its services around the needs of the people who use them
- F. My council is good at letting local people know how well it is performing
- G. My local council is good at letting people know about the kinds of services it provides
- H. I can influence decisions affecting my local area
- I. I would like to be more involved in the decisions my council makes that affect my local area

Figure 9.2 shows the percentage of adults who agreed (strongly or slightly) with these statements about different aspects of their local authority's performance. The highest level of agreement was amongst the almost half who said their council is good at letting people

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<sup>61</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/27154527/0>

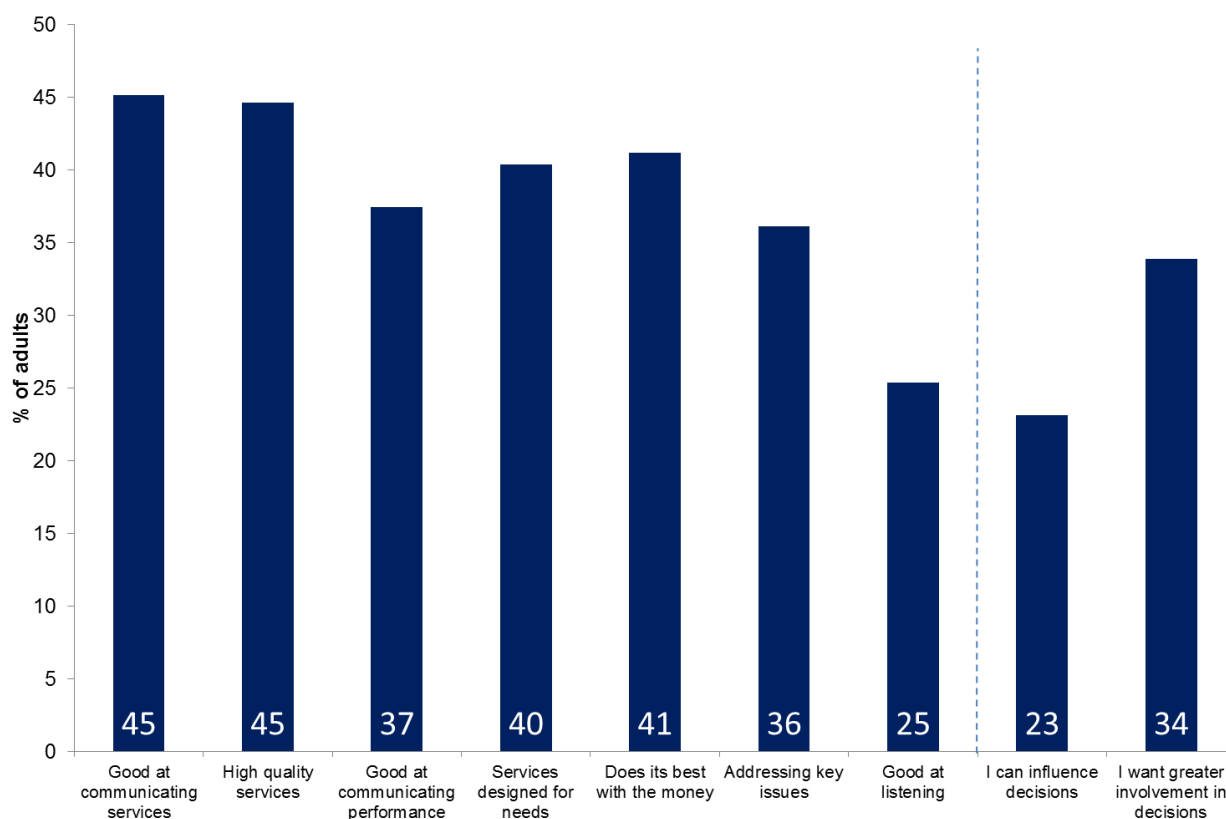


know about the kinds of services it provides (45 per cent) and provides high quality services (45 per cent).

The lowest levels of agreement were with statements about being able to influence decisions in their local area (23 per cent) and the council being good at listening to local people's views (25 per cent).

**Figure 9.2: Percentage agreeing with various statements about local authority services and performance**

2016 data, Adults (base: 9,640)



### Changes over time

- Less people want greater involvement in decisions affecting their local area since 2007.
- More people think that their local council is good at listening since 2007.

The National Performance Framework National Indicator 'Improve the responsiveness of public services' is measured as the percentage of adults in the SHS who agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area.

In 2016, 23.1 per cent of people agreed that they can influence decisions affecting their local area, as shown in Table 9.6. This is an increase of 3.5 percentage points since 2007,

and is unchanged since 2015 when the Community Empowerment Act 2015 came into force.

**Table 9.6: Percentage of people who agree with the statement 'I can influence decisions affecting my local area' by year**

Percentages, 2007-2016 data

Adults	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
I can influence decisions	19.6	21.7	21.8	21.3	22.4	21.5	22.0	23.0	23.6	23.1
Base (minimum)	10,230	9,250	9,710	9,020	9,660	9,890	9,920	9,800	9,410	9,640

The proportion of adults who agree that they would like greater involvement in the decisions affecting their local area is higher than those who perceive they can influence them. In 2016, 34 per cent of adults said they would like to be more involved in the decisions their council makes that affects their local area, compared to 23 per cent who felt they can influence decisions affecting their local area (Figure 9.2). In 2016, a quarter (25 per cent) of adults agreed that their council is good at listening to local people's views before it takes decisions.



Table 9.7 shows how level of agreement with the nine statements has changed over time. The percentage of people who agree that their local council is good at communicating services and good at communicating performance were both relatively stable between 2007 and 2014. However, since then the percentage who say that their local council is good at communicating services has declined (from 49 per cent to 45 per cent), as has the percentage who say that their local council is good at communicating performance (from 41 per cent to 37 per cent).

The percentage of people who want greater involvement in decisions affecting their local area has decreased since 2007 (from 38 per cent in 2007 to 34 per cent in 2016), while the percentage who think that their local council is good at listening has increased over the same period (from 21 per cent to 25 per cent).

**Table 9.7: Percentage of people who agree with the statement 'I can influence decisions affecting my local area' by year**

Percentages, 2007-2016 data

Adults	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Good at communicating services	47	48	49	48	49	48	48	49	46	45
High quality services	40	42	43	42	44	44	45	47	46	45
Good at communicating performance	42	42	41	41	40	41	40	41	38	37
Services designed for needs	32	34	38	39	39	40	40	41	40	40
Does its best with the money	35	38	36	39	39	40	40	41	41	41
Addressing key issues	33	34	34	34	34	35	36	37	36	36
Good at listening	21	22	23	23	23	25	25	26	25	25
I can influence decisions	20	22	22	21	22	21	22	23	24	23
I want greater involvement in decisions	38	37	36	36	36	33	35	34	34	34
Base (minimum)	10,230	9,250	9,710	9,020	9,660	9,890	9,920	9,800	9,410	9,640

All time series data is produced on a consistent basis. Figures published in the 2007 SHS Annual Report may differ slightly for some question statements

### Changes by age

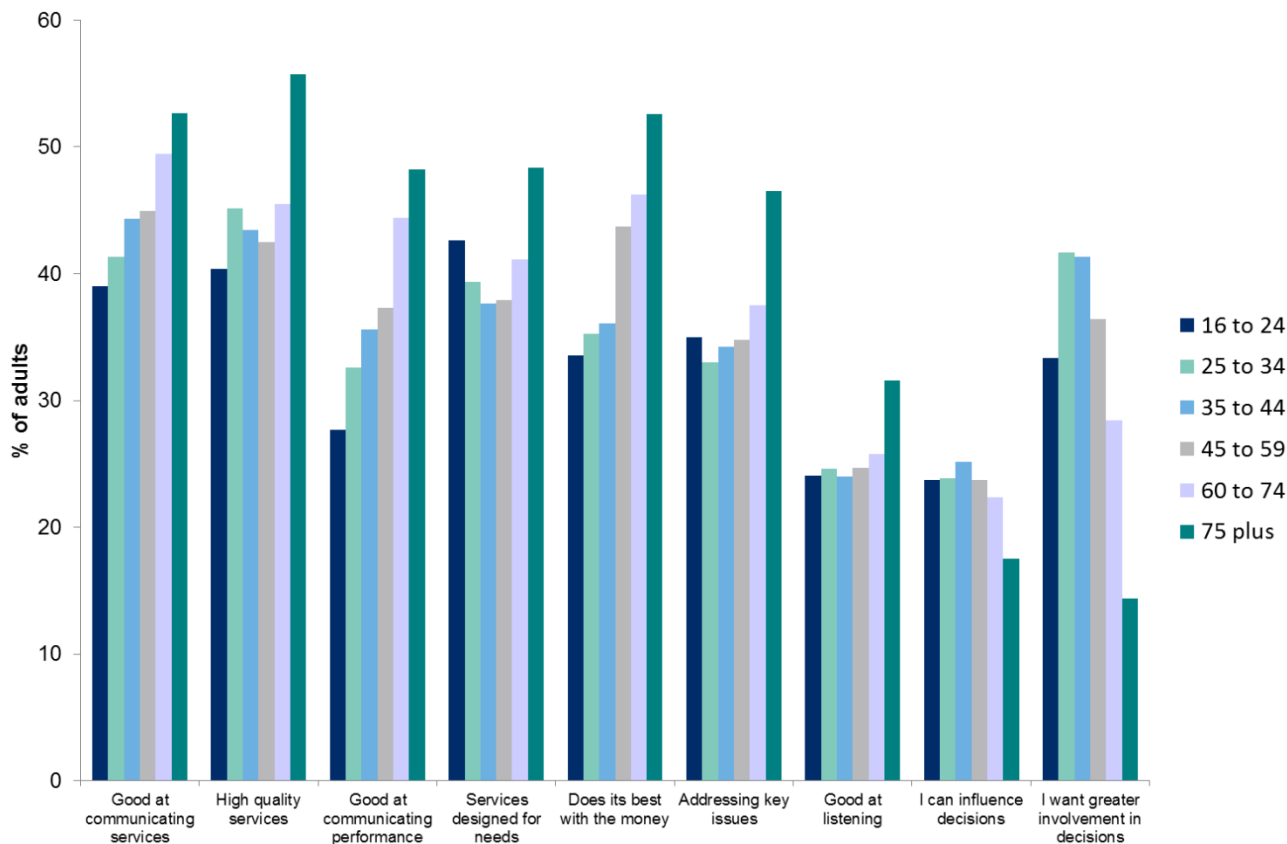
- Generally, older adults are more likely than younger adults to say they are satisfied with the performance statements about local government services and less likely to want to be more involved in making decisions.

Figure 9.3 shows that there are some differences by age group in agreement with statements about local authority services and performance. Generally, older adults are more likely than younger adults to say they are satisfied with the performance statements about local government services and less likely to want to be more involved in making decisions. Around half of 60 to 74 year olds and those aged 75 years and over agreed with the statement that their council does the best it can with the money available, compared to around one third of 16 to 24 and 25 to 34 year olds.

The strongest desire to participate in local decision-making was shown by those aged 25 to 34, with 42 per cent saying they would like to have greater involvement with decisions affecting their local area (compared to 28 per cent for those aged 60-74, and 14 per cent for those 75 and above). Those aged 75 and above were also least likely to feel that they can influence decisions (18 per cent, compared to 25 per cent for those aged 35-44).

**Figure 9.3: Percentage agreeing with various statements about local council services by age**

2016 data, Adults (min base: 730)



## Deprivation

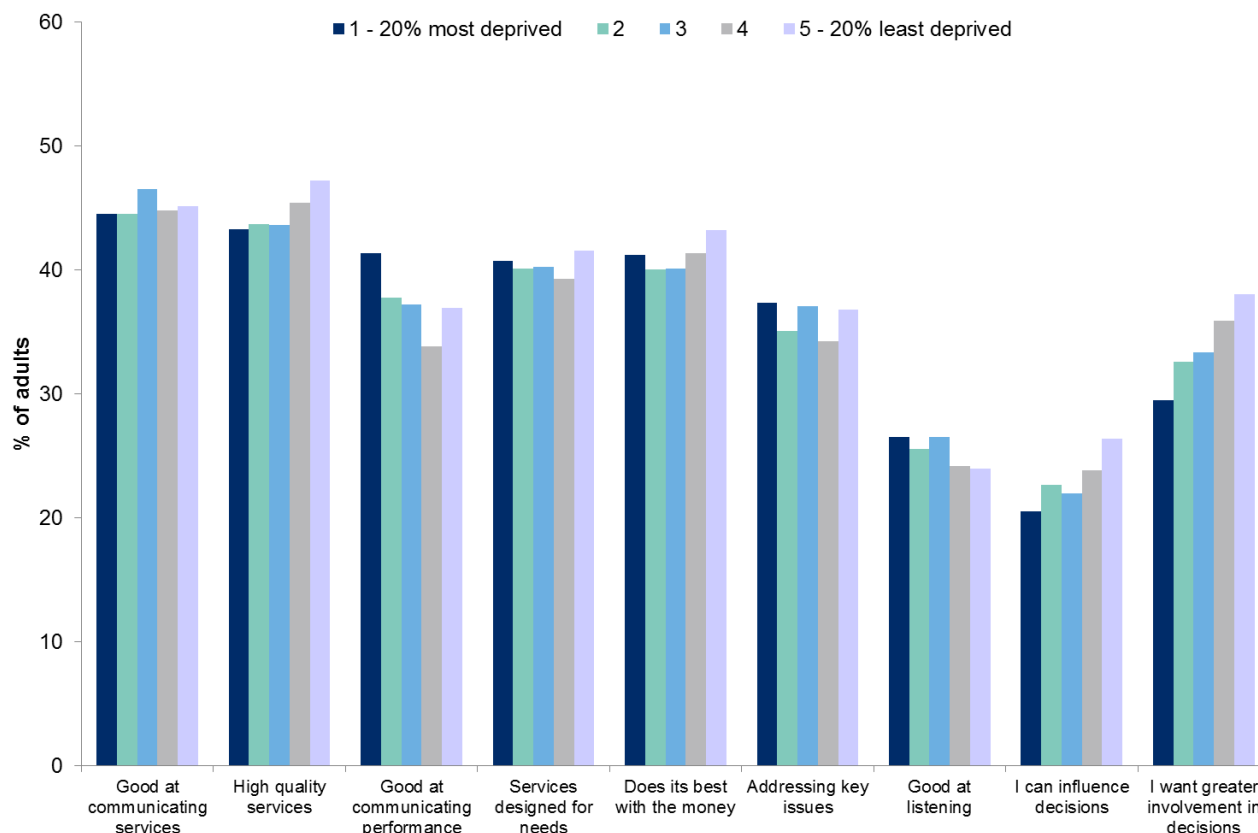
- Perceptions of being able to influence decisions and the desire to be involved in decision-making were lower in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived areas.

Figure 9.4 looks at differences in agreement with statements about local authority performance by the level of deprivation of the area, as defined using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and divided into quintiles as above. Levels of agreement with most statements were similar across areas, regardless of deprivation levels.

Perceptions of being able to influence decisions and the desire to be involved in decision-making were lower in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived areas. Adults living in the most deprived areas were less likely to agree that they can influence decisions in their local area (21 per cent in the most deprived areas, compared to 26 per cent in the least deprived areas) and less likely to want to be more involved in local decision making, (29 per cent in the most deprived areas, compared to 38 per cent in the least deprived areas).

**Figure 9.4: Percentage agreeing with various statements about local council services by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)**

2016 data, Adults (min base: 1,730)



Columns may not add to 100 per cent since multiple responses were allowed.

### Conclusion

This chapter has explored satisfaction with the quality of local services and attitudes to involvement in local decision-making. It has reported respondents' views on local authority performance.