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LONDON IRISH CENTRE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Prepared for London Irish Centre
October 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report has been prepared on behalf of the London Irish Centre (LIC). It supports LIC's proposals to reimagine, redevelop and reposition the LIC as a world class community and cultural Centre.
- 1.2. The LIC undertook a community conversation with Centre users, local residents, community stakeholders and members of staff at the LIC.
- 1.3. The consultation builds on analysis of the future needs of the Irish in London, the 2012 Fresh Perspectives report and the 2016 Community Survey in which 487 participated alongside 19 stakeholder interviews.
- 1.4. The consultation exercise took the form of:
 1. Design workshops with key stakeholders led by project architects Coffey;
 2. A community conversation launch meeting, attended by centre users and local residents;
 3. An online survey publicised on the LIC's dedicated project website and a physical survey available for completion at the Centre.
- 1.5. The consultation was advertised through the following means:
 - Invitation sent to the entirety of the LIC's internal mailing list;
 - A consultation website where people could submit their feedback online - the website received 1,602 visits overall;
 - Adverts on the LIC's website and social media accounts;
 - Invitations sent to local community groups and stakeholders;
 - A press release in the Irish Post;
 - Printed notices available at the LIC.
- 1.6. The consultation launch was attended by 103 people in total. Residents and attendees were encouraged to submit feedback at the launch event and on the online survey.
- 1.7. 371 people responded to the community conversation survey and 24 people submitted responses at the Community Conversation Launch.
- 1.8. What follows is an Executive Summary, a description of the consultation methodology and an analysis of the feedback received by the LIC.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Community Conversation Launch, the LIC Futures Survey and the Architect Workshop, has given a good initial understanding of user priorities for the future redevelopment LIC. 371 of members of the public, stakeholders and Centre users contributed to the online survey, the project website received 1,602 visits and 103 people attended the community conversation launch.
- 2.2. 133 respondents were under 45 years of age and the majority of those who contributed to the consultation were between 45-64, and were occasional visitors to the Centre, attending a couple of times a year, mostly for events or to go to classes. 65+ respondents were more likely to be frequent visitors to the LIC, going multiple times in a week, most commonly for wellbeing or social activities.
- 2.3. Cultural events were considered the most important service of the LIC, across all aspects of the consultation. This was the most frequent reason people cited for having visited the Centre last, and by far the most commonly requested feature when asked how the LIC could be improved.
- 2.4. Quantitative data from question 15 highlighted a significant amount of people would be encouraged to use the LIC more frequently, and qualitative responses to question 16 suggest that a wider calendar of cultural events may prompt higher visitation. The range of cultural events requested were broad, but the most commonly requested were live music, theatre, comedy and political & historical talks.
- 2.5. There was also a clear consensus for the need to physically redevelop the Centre, with 87% of respondents believing the current premises are in need of physical redevelopment.
- 2.6. 18% of respondents answered that they had struggled with attending the LIC in the past, and a significant number of those cited a lack of suitable disabled access as a reason. This was highlighted in the suggested improvements the LIC could make through redevelopment, with respondents requesting better disabled access including lifts and level access from the street.
- 2.7. The quality of current service provision was highly rated and culture events; performance space; the story of the Irish in London; wellness centre; advice services;

Irish language; Irish library and community café/bar were all highly ranked in terms of future service provision.

- 2.8. Other commentators suggested that physical redevelopment could bring about new facilities or upgrade existing ones, by providing a larger and more central library, flexible performance space, and improved toilet facilities. Several attendees of the Launch highlighted the need for 'cosy' spaces to maintain some of the heritage of the site.

3. Context & Background

- 3.1. The LIC is located at 50-52 Camden Square, in the London Borough of Camden, in Cantelowes ward. It is situated in a largely residential area, to the north of King's Cross Station and to the north east of the Centre of the Camden neighbourhood.
- 3.2. It was formed in 1955, and originally aimed to provide support and advice for young Irish emigrants in London. Since then, its purpose has evolved, acting as a community and cultural Centre alongside offering advice and support, serving the Irish in London, local residents and wider groups.
- 3.3. With greater demand and need, escalating repair costs and more pressures on the LIC, the current building is no longer fit for purpose.
- 3.4. To address these issues and more, the LIC are seeking a comprehensive redevelopment of their Centre. Reflecting their heritage as an important cultural and community Centre, the LIC are embarking on an extensive community consultation, which is seeking to gather input from its users and wider local community.
- 3.5. The LIC want to reimagine, redevelop and reposition themselves as a world class community and cultural Centre. The LIC is committed to ensuring that any redevelopment will continue to meet the needs of those whom it serves, now and in the coming years. The LIC wish to remain as a destination to foster friendship and support networks, and a place to celebrate Irish heritage, culture and community.

4. Approach & Methodology

To begin their public engagement, the LIC launched their 'Community Conversation' with an open event at their Centre and a community survey; to gather input from users on the emerging proposals.

4.1. Community Conversation Launch Event

- 4.1.1. The LIC launched their 'Community Conversation' at an event held at 18:30 on the 18th July hosted at their Centre. It marked the starting point for their consultation, and members of the public and staff at the LIC were invited to attend the event to offer their views during a public forum.
- 4.1.2. The event was hosted on Eventbrite where people could book free tickets in order to attend. For those who did not have access to the Internet, or those who did not want to use it, attendance could be registered by calling a member of the team or speaking with a member of staff at the LIC. The event was attended by 103 people overall.
- 4.1.3. The Community Conversation Launch was advertised through: an email to the LIC mailing list, on the LIC website (<https://www.londonirishcentre.org/>), and on all LIC social media channels.
- 4.1.4. The agenda for the launch designated the majority of its time towards an open discussion with attendees, facilitated by CEO Sean Kennedy, alongside opportunities for members of staff to speak, a special Irish musical performance, and refreshments.
- 4.1.5. Oral feedback was collected by a member of the team taking minutes.
- 4.1.6. During and after the event, attendees were invited to fill out a comment sheet, asking them to share their views on the future of the LIC. 22 feedback forms were handed in via the comment boxes provided.

4.2. LIC Futures Survey

- 4.2.1. The LIC Futures Survey launched on 23rd July on both Survey Monkey and as a physical copy available at the Centre. It closed on the 16th August with 371 responses, with 32 physical copies and 339 digital copies.

5. Analysis

5.1. Community Conversation Launch

5.1.1. Minutes were collected throughout the open discussion segment of the event (Appendix 1) and can be found summarised below:

- Members of the public wished to highlight the LIC as a venue for Irish culture and suggested that more dedicated provision could be made for arts events as part of the redevelopment, including a permanent stage and exhibition space.
- The concept of heritage was reiterated throughout the event, with many people speaking about the history of the Centre and asking for it to be preserved in any redevelopment.
- Multiple Centre users singled out the importance of the library for the LIC and asked if it could be placed in a more central position with increased space.
- A number of regular class attendees highlighted improvements that could be made to their current spaces, including a dedicated dance studio, more room, and better audio-visual tools.

5.1.2. Those who attended the Community Conversation Launch offered a great variety of ideas which can be broadly grouped into cultural events, heritage, the library and improved facilities.

5.1.3. There was a clear preference for more cultural events held at the LIC, alongside flexible arts space which could be used to host a variety of themed evenings. Attendees highlighted the LIC's position and importance as a cultural hub in London and sought for it to become the 'go-to' place for Irish culture in the city. The most popular events listed were Irish theatrical performances, live music nights, and historical & political discussions.

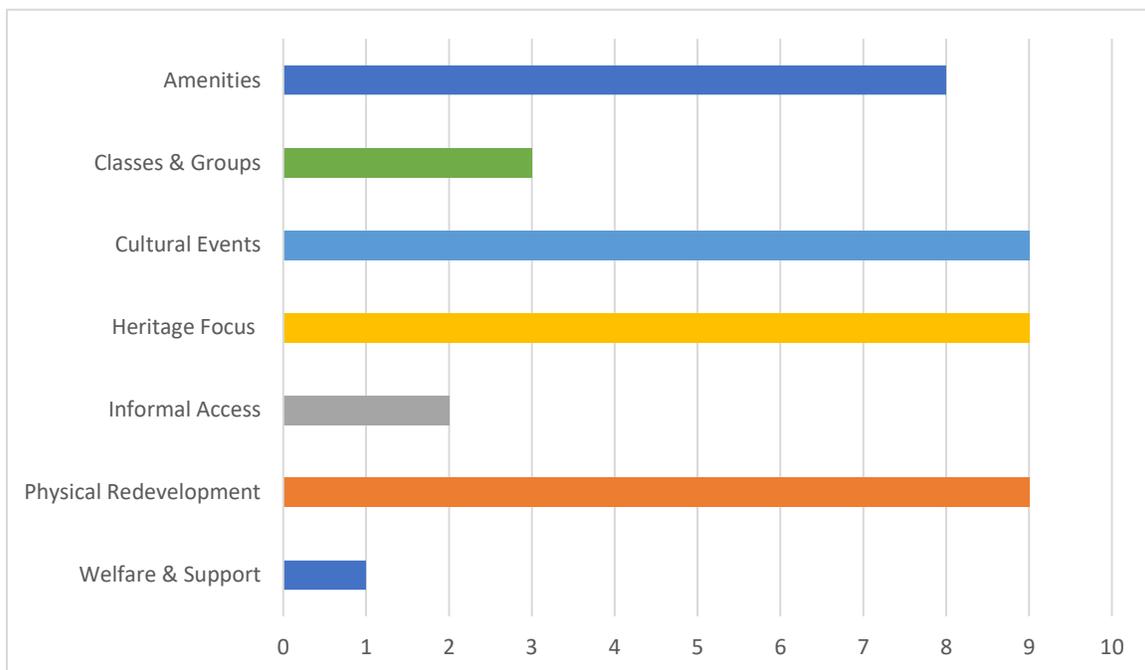
5.1.4. Many of those who attended the launch had seen the LIC grow from its inception, as well as being 1st generation immigrants. They were keen to preserve the legacy of those who built the Centre. Ideas voiced included creating an oral archive, a permanent museum space, and maintaining some of the feel of the original building.

5.1.5. The library and its importance was raised numerous times, both as a historical resource and as a function space for education. Suggestions included moving the library to a more central and accessible location, publicising it as a local resource, and expanding it so more groups could utilise it as a space.

5.1.6. Improved facilities for classes held at the LIC were mentioned on a number of occasions, with suggestions as to how these could be developed. For example: a dance floor with mirrors and space set aside for educational use. Improved facilities were also mentioned when discussing the bar, which attendees felt could be made larger.

5.1.7. Comments & Responses

5.1.7.1. The 24 feedback forms collected covered a variety of topics, which have been broadly broken down into seven categories, displayed below:



5.1.7.2. A focus on heritage was a prominent topic, with attendees encouraging any redevelopment to reference the history of the Centre. Comments highlighted the importance of heritage in future redevelopment, “Ensuring its history is not only kept but showcased”, “The re-development is a great opportunity to emphasise the cultural basis of the Centre by

developing a 'heritage museum' of the Irish in London's history, and the history of the Centre itself.", "Share stories, learn about family culture - history, socialise and bring much needed money to the Centre." and "The challenge is to honour the 'past + tradition' but also embrace the different country that Ireland has become".

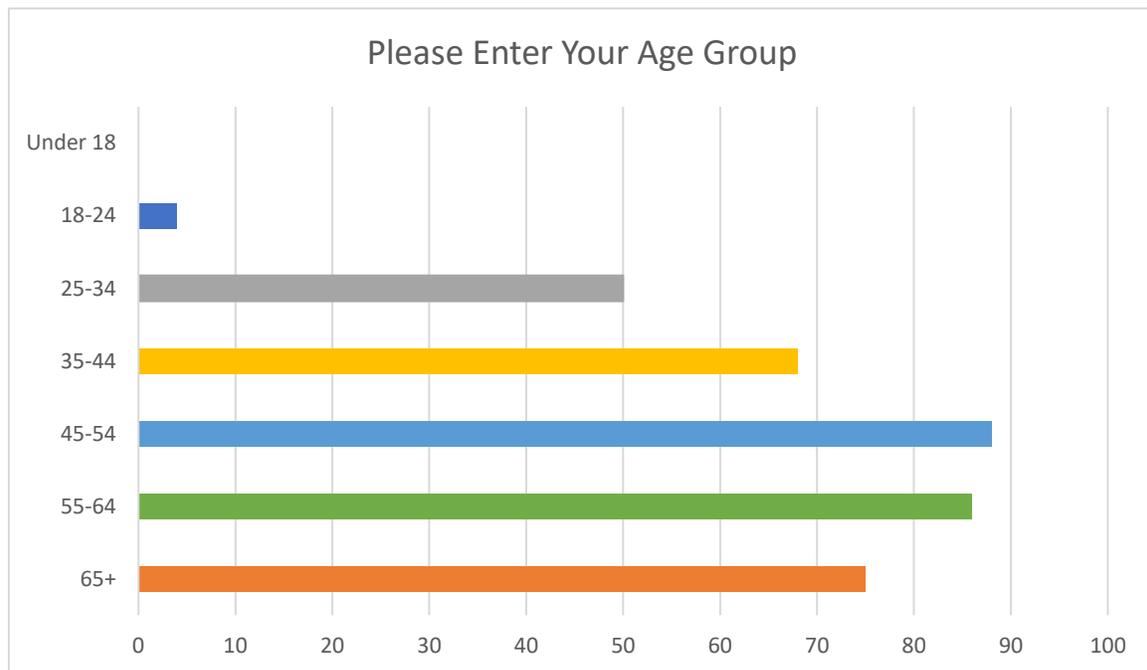
5.1.7.3. Another common topic was physical redevelopment, with attendees using the opportunity to suggest what they would like to see as plans developed. Comments were largely focused on what new facilities they would like to see developed in the Centre, or on more general structural changes to bring improvements to the building. New facilities requested included "Library, multimedia centre", "Consider a room for disabled children that will provide stimulation & respite for parents", and "Exhibition space that could give opportunities to Irish artists/visual arts about Ireland. - Clear commitment to environmental sustainability. - A library space that you could walk into off the street - including working spaces for students/professionals. - Rooms that can be appropriately used as therapeutic spaces (for therapy/counselling) - A space that could be used/rented for parties/events. - Creche or space suitable for small children - families". More general suggestions for improvements to the physical space included "Please put baby changing facilities in the male toilets as well as the female toilets", "How are you going to ensure the new place doesn't alienate the older visitors/volunteers? The feeling of history" and "A more open, cosy entrance with couches and a comfy café & bar to encourage conversation and community".

5.1.7.4. Providing a wider calendar of cultural events was another high priority, with many attendees suggesting that they would visit the LIC more frequently if there was a greater variety in the types of arts events offered. Some comments also offered suggestions as to which specific events they would like to see at the LIC. Examples included "a theatre + exhibition space. As a young Irish actor/artist we need a platform there to create our own work here - not a theatre that just brings in outside productions.", "Art exhibitions - to bring in younger as well as older people, to mix - including photography", "Contemporary discussion evenings - like the recent talks votes for Irish abroad/like to see worlds issues" and "Shows, theatre, outdoor cinema (can get headphones so no noise)"

5.2. Survey Responses

5.2.1. The online survey was hosted on Survey Monkey (Appendix 2), and the physical copy was printed and handed out at the Centre. 338 responses were collected online, and 33 physical copies were returned to the Centre, with a collective total of 371 respondents.

5.2.2. The first question asked respondents about their age:

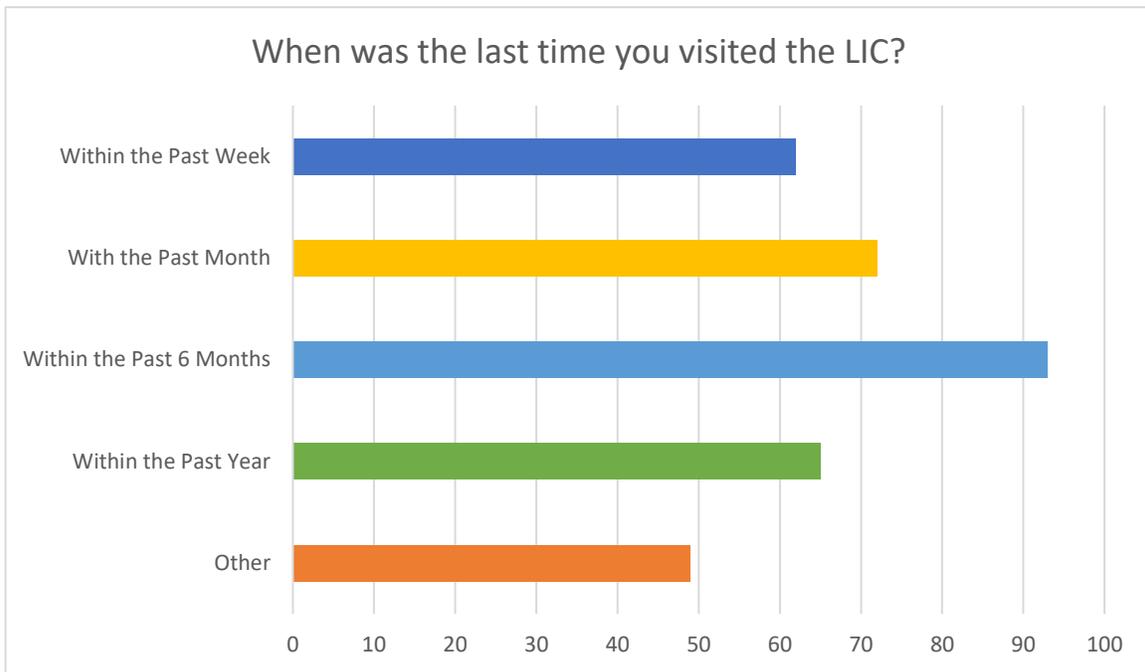


5.2.3. To better gauge the identity of respondents, the survey asked whether they saw themselves as having Irish heritage, to which 89% responded 'Yes', and 11% saying 'No'.

5.2.3.1. Within this, the majority of respondents clarified that they were either 'Irish Born' (61%), or '2nd Generation-Irish Parents' (32%). A smaller proportion either had some 'Irish Family Links' (2%) or were 'Beyond 2nd Generation' (5%).

5.2.4. When asked if they had ever visited the LIC, over 93% responded with ‘Yes’, with those answering ‘No’ most commonly citing that they currently lived in Ireland and had heard about the Centre, or they were neighbouring residents.

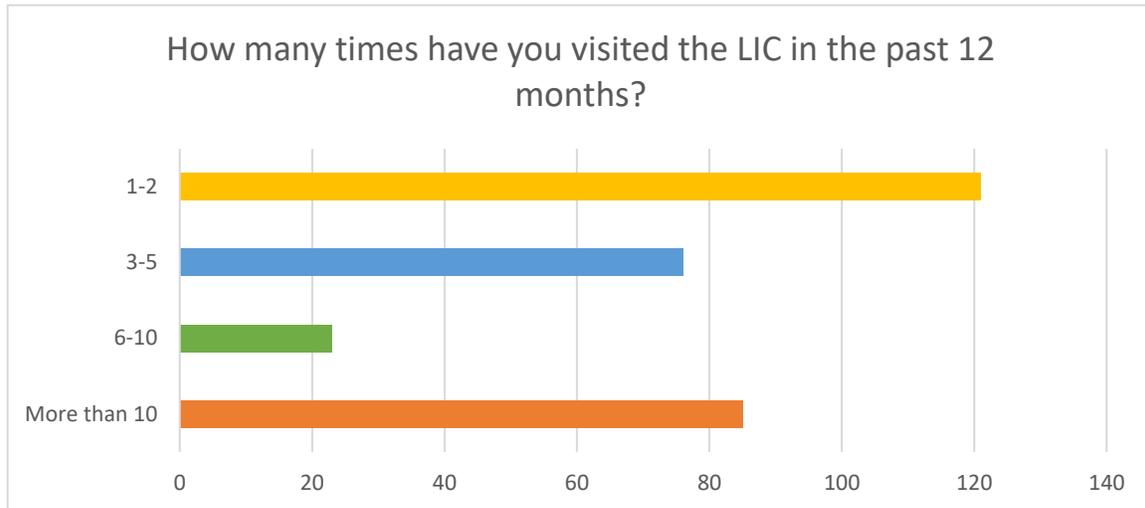
5.2.4.1. Asking the last time respondents had visited the LIC prompted varied answers:



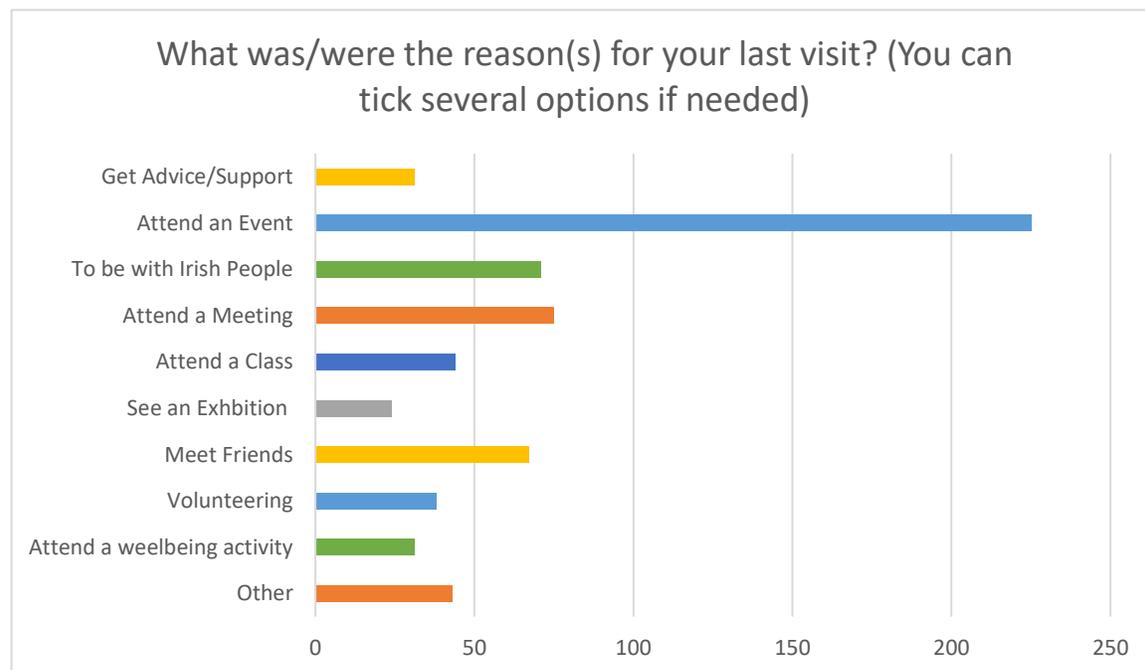
5.2.4.2. Those who responded with ‘Other’ most commonly stated that they had visited the Centre within the last 1-5 years (49%), with others listing some events that they had attended in previous years.

5.2.4.3. The survey would appear to have attracted a variety of users who utilise the Centre regularly, occasionally, and just for special events. Those who responded that they had attended the Centre within the last week tended to be more elderly and reported multiple visits a week. Conversely, those who had either visited the Centre within the past year, or multiple years ago were usually younger (35-44) and emphasised the importance of cultural events over welfare outreach.

5.2.4.4. The survey then asked how frequently respondents had visited the Centre (see below). In general, the survey captured a range of users, although the majority tended to either visit the Centre on a very regular basis, or only for certain events annually.



5.2.5. The next question asked why respondents had used the LIC last and gave the option to write in a different reason, several people used this space to clarify their answer; for work rather than volunteering, or a particular class they



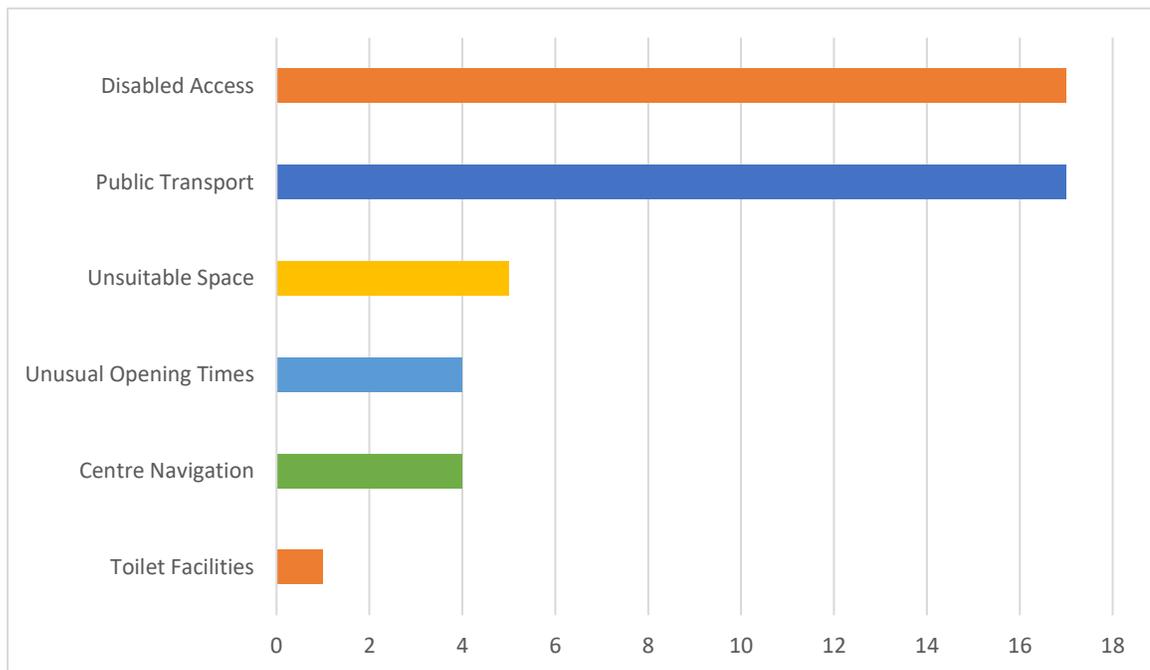
attended.

5.2.5.1. The preferred option selected was ‘Attend an Event’, which was chosen by 66% of respondents. Under the category of ‘Other’, multiple users chose to list the particular event they had attended, which included ‘St Patrick’s Day’ and dance events.

5.2.5.2. ‘To be with Irish people’ and ‘Meet Friends’ also featured highly and reinforces answers later on in the survey in question 11, where ‘Social activities for the Irish in London’ was one of the most popular services offered by the LIC.

5.2.6. When asked whether or not respondents had ‘Encountered any challenges in attending the LIC?’, 82% responded ‘No’, and 18% said ‘Yes. If answering ‘Yes’, they were prompted to give a reason.

5.2.6.1. The reasons given for struggling with access fell broadly into seven categories:



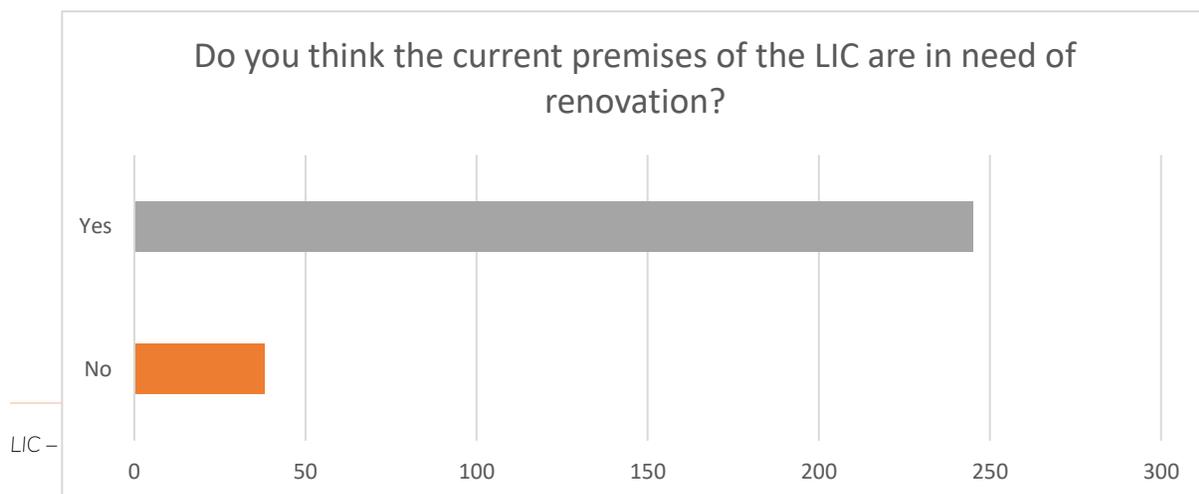
5.2.6.2. Disabled Access was cited as one of the most common reasons people struggled to visit the LIC, and their comments highlighted several issues they faced which hindered mobility and access. The most commonly cited issue was the lack of provision for wheelchair users: “Getting my

wheelchair-bound partner into the Irish Day Centre”, “My wife cannot always accompany me as she is in a wheelchair”, and “Poor access for a wheelchair using friend”. This was emphasised in comments which more generally highlighted poor access, such as “dodgy pavement”, the entrance being “not suitable”, and general “difficulty with access”.

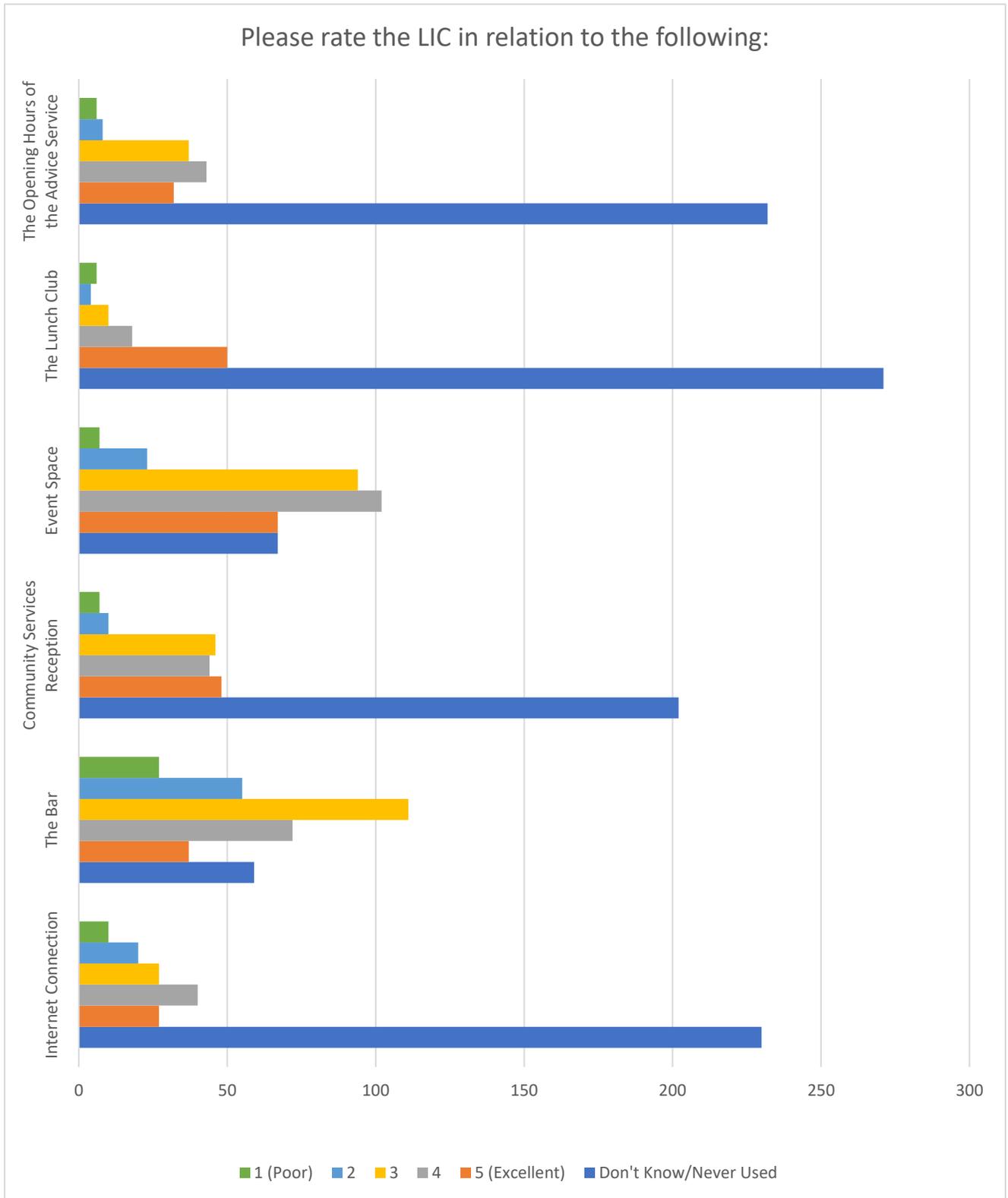
5.2.6.3. The other most common response was ‘Public Transport’, and related issues regarding travel to and from the Centre. The majority of these comments complained about issues outside of the control of the LIC, “Distance from tube”, “public transport is not close enough”, “bit far from stations” and “a long way from nearest train station”. However, others also suggested that the directions from nearby transport hubs could be improved, “signposting from tube”, and that “the directions need to be better”.

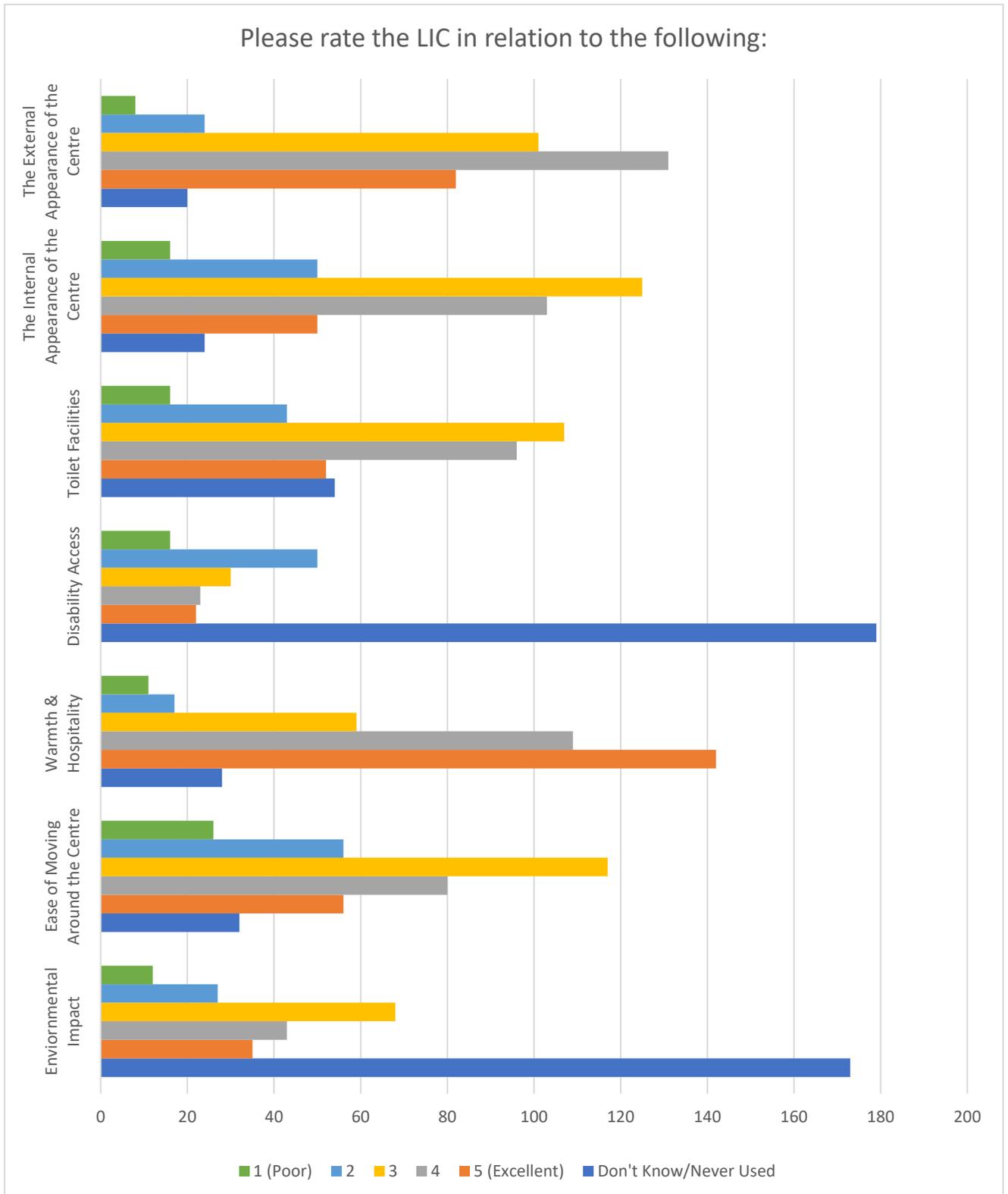
5.2.6.4. Other challenges including ‘Unsuitable Space’, ‘Unusual Opening Times’, ‘Centre Navigation’ and ‘Toilet Facilities’ all featured in the comments. Many of these issues could be rectified following redevelopment of the LIC, including: “cramped foyer bar space”, “upstairs room too small”, “locating entrance to Library”, and “Not enough loos”.

5.2.7. One question asked whether survey users believed the current premises of the LIC are in need of renovation:



- 5.2.7.1. Over 87% of those who expressed an opinion thought that the current premises of the LIC are in need of renovation, with only 10% answering 'No'. There was an overwhelming majority of those in favour of renovation, emphasised by reference to data from question 9, which highlighted the necessity of structural redevelopment.
- 5.2.8. Question 10 asked users to rate the LIC facilities, the results of which can be shown below:





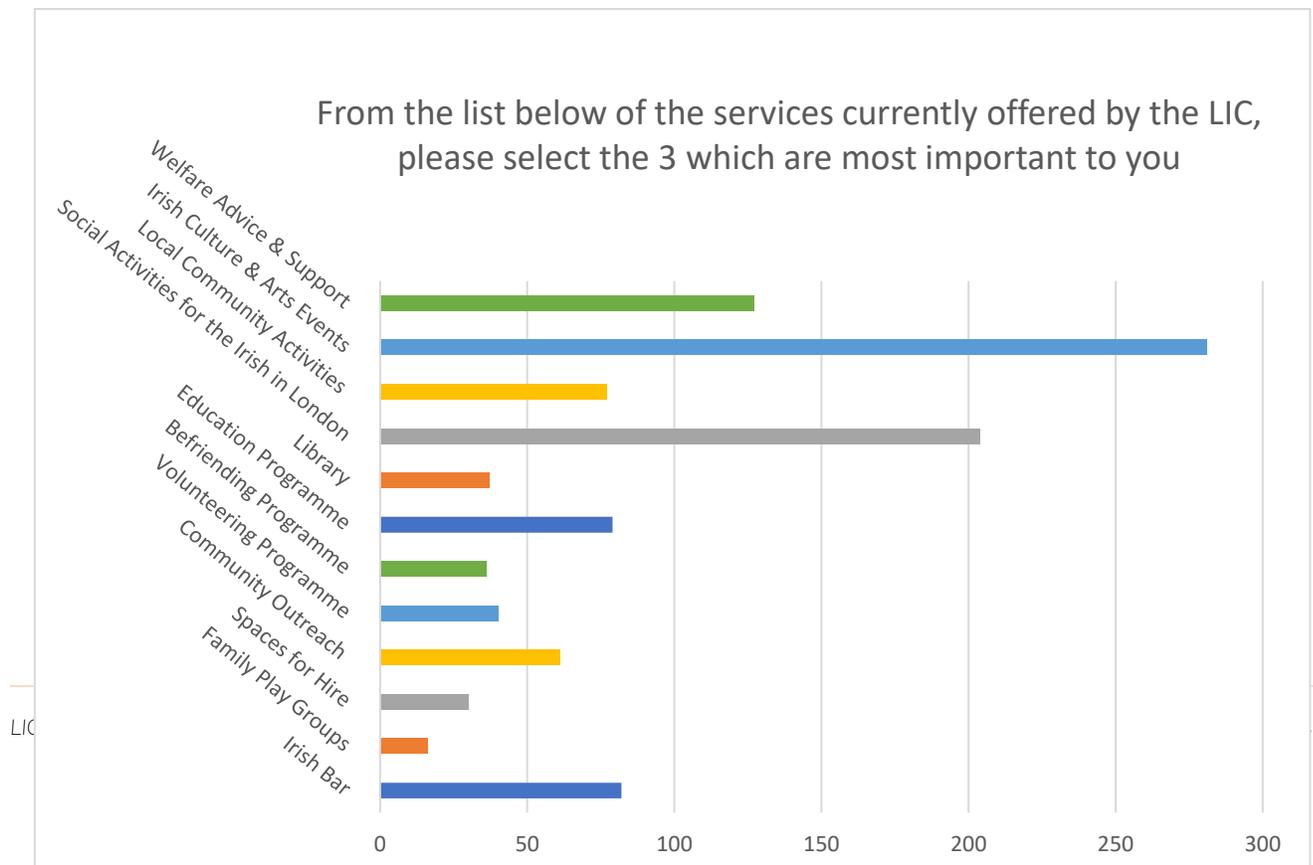
5.2.8.1. The most highly rated LIC facilities, as seen by the proportion of ‘Excellent’ ratings, were ‘Warmth & Hospitality’, ‘The Lunch Club’ and ‘Community Services’. However, it is worth noting that the latter two have been affected by the high proportion of ‘Don’t Know/Never Used’ responses.

5.2.8.2. ‘Warmth & Hospitality’ would appear to be the most highly rated LIC feature by a considerable margin, with a rating of ‘Excellent’ commanding 39% of the vote, with ‘Poor’ at 3%. It also had one of the lowest scores for ‘Don’t Know/Never Used’ at 7.5%, suggesting that warmth and hospitality is a key motivator for those visiting the LIC.

5.2.8.3. The high ratings for the Lunch Club and community services while considering the significant proportion of ‘Don’t Know/Never Used’ responses suggests that while those services may be currently used by a small number of attendees, they are greatly valued by them.

5.2.8.4. Disregarding the high number of ‘Don’t Know/Never Used’ responses means that 57% of responses rated the Lunch Club as ‘Excellent’, meaning it would have the most highly rated score according to those who use the service. Using the same metrics, the number of people rating Community Services as ‘Excellent’ stands at 31%.

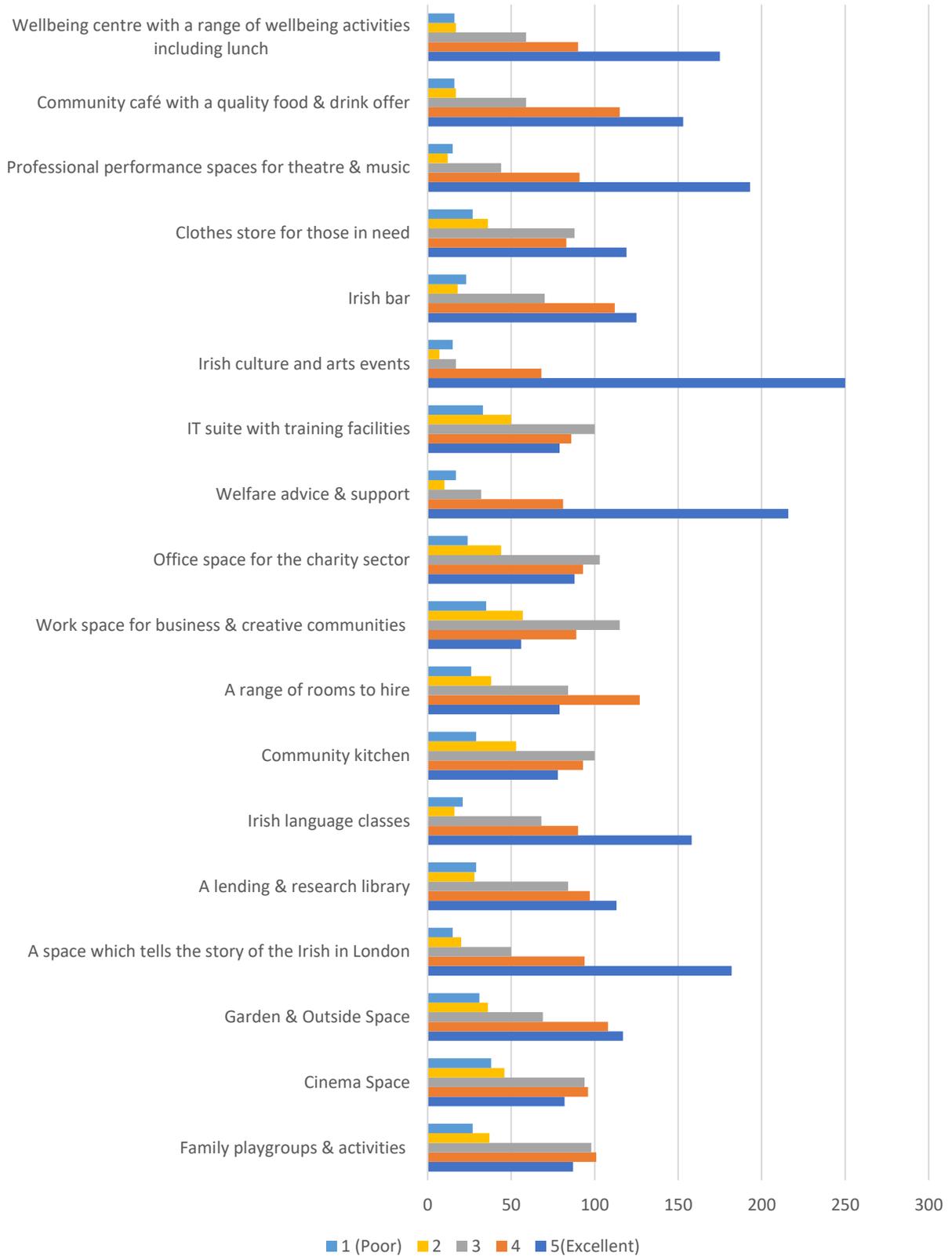
5.2.9. Question 11 asked users to select their top three services offered by the LIC



(see results below).

- 5.2.9.1. The three services most highly rated in the survey were 'Irish culture and arts events', 'Social activities for the Irish in London', and 'Welfare Advice and Support', demonstrating a mix of the cultural and charitable outreach the LIC provide. This suggests that the LIC is viewed as a cultural, charitable and community hub, with each aspect being valued by its user base.
- 5.2.9.2. Irish culture and arts events were selected by 76% of people who filled out the survey, highlighting the perceived importance of cultural outreach undertaken by the LIC. This is further emphasised by the responses to question eight which demonstrated the high volume of people visiting the LIC for its events, suggesting they are a highly valued and utilised part of the LIC.
- 5.2.9.3. Social activities for the Irish in London was picked by 55% of those who completed the survey, signalling that they saw the venue as a community hub for interaction between the Irish population in the city. This was corroborated by answers found in question eight, where 'To be with Irish people' and 'Meet friends' were popular reasons for visiting the LIC.
- 5.2.9.4. Welfare advice and support was selected by 35% of users, highlighting the perceived importance of outreach undertaken by the LIC. As the LIC offer a number of welfare outreach programmes, those answering the survey may have selected alternative options while still supporting this service of the LIC.
- 5.2.10. Question 13 asked 'Thinking of what the LIC could do in the future, please rate the following options in terms of importance with 1 being low and 5 being high'. The results can be found below:
- 5.2.10.1. Based on the proportion of ratings of '5', 'Irish culture & arts events', 'Welfare advice & support', 'Professional performance space for theatre & music', and 'Wellbeing Centre with a range of wellbeing activities including lunch' were the top four facilities considered important.

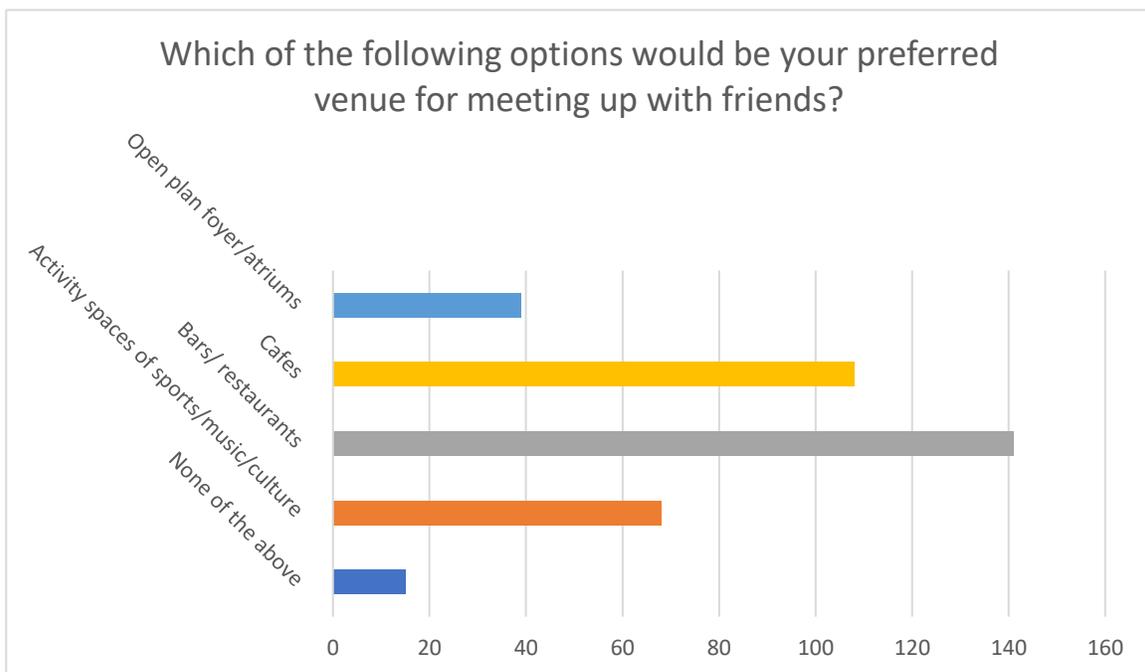
Thinking of what the LIC could do in the future, please rate the following options in terms of importance with 1 being low and 5 being high:



5.2.10.2. The overwhelming preference was ‘Irish Culture and arts events’, with 70% of those asked rating it a ‘5’, with only 4% giving it a ‘1’. An emphasis towards providing a platform for Irish culture is a consistent theme throughout the feedback, with the importance of cultural events highlighted in question eight and eleven, where the majority of respondents had last visited the LIC to attend an event, and most valued its arts provision. It also links to ‘Professional performance space for theatre and music’, another highly rated choice. There would appear to be a large base of support for providing an improved arts platform, with a variety of potential uses.

5.2.10.3. ‘Welfare advice & support’ and ‘Wellbeing Centre with a range of wellbeing activities including lunch’ were two of the most popular responses, reflecting the LIC’s current work with community welfare outreach. The popularity suggests that any future redevelopment must consider how it can be utilised to further enhance its welfare support. This is corroborated by the responses gathered in question ten, which saw the Lunch Club and Community Services rated very highly.

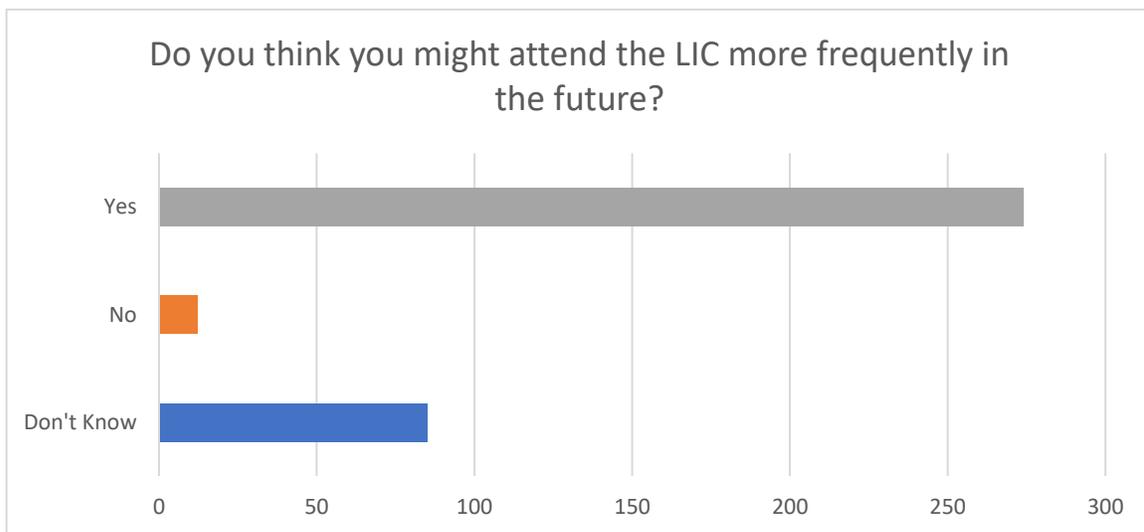
5.2.11. Question 14 asked users what their preferred venue for meeting with friends would be:



5.2.11.1. The most popular venues were ‘Cafes’ with 30% of the responses, and ‘Bars/ restaurants’ with 38%. The majority of users signified that they prefer to utilise spaces with provision of food and drink to meet friends in. In addition, multiple users who selected ‘Other’ opted to write in “Cafe/Restaurants - not Bars/restaurants” to signify a space for food and drink without alcohol.

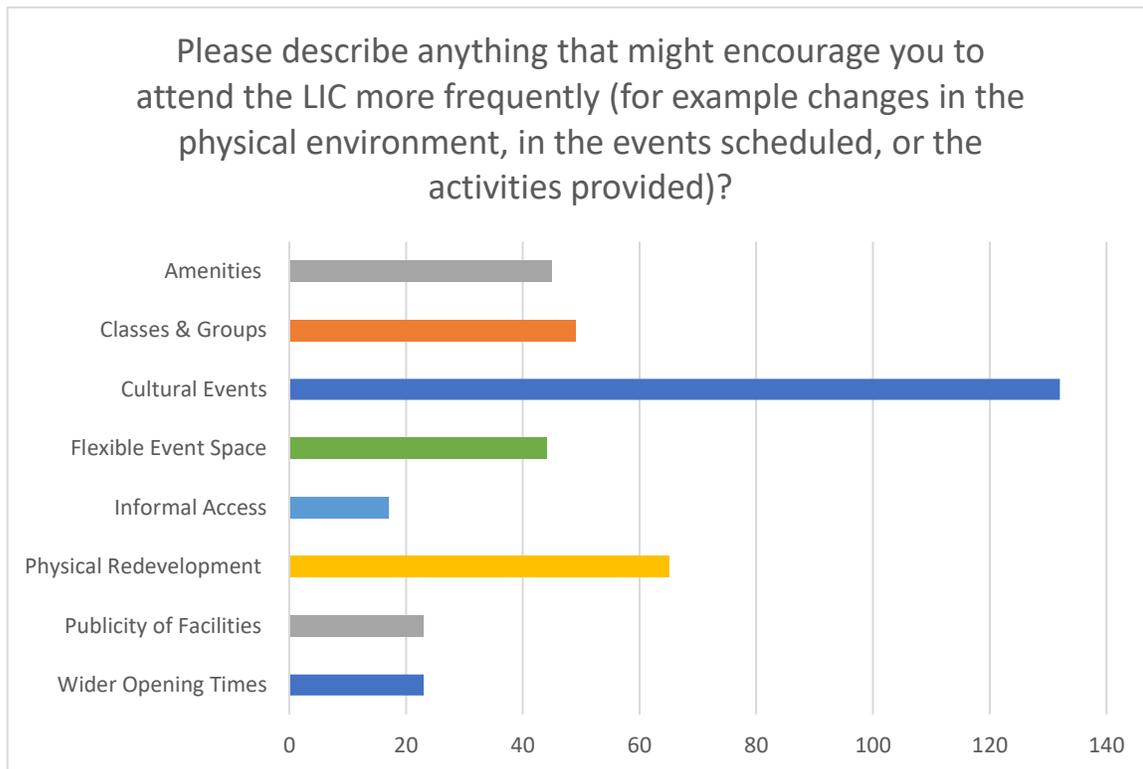
5.2.11.2. Qualitative responses to the question also often suggested that users would be willing to go to any space “as long as it is welcoming and affordable for all members/users, especially elderly and families”, or “Quiet and cosy spaces that aren’t noisy or echoey.”. These responses suggest that those questioned would prefer a certain atmosphere rather than a specific function or use.

5.2.12. Question 15 asked if the survey users might attend the LIC more frequently in the future:



5.2.12.1. The overwhelming majority of responses (75%) signalled that they would want to attend the LIC more frequently in the future, with just 3% saying ‘No’. This would demonstrate a clear potential user base for the LIC to engage through the design process.

5.2.13. Following on from the previous question, Question 15 asked survey users to describe anything which might encourage them to attend the LIC more frequently. A summary of the most common responses can be found below, broken down into nine themes.



5.2.13.1. Mentioned in 36% of comments, ‘Cultural Events’ was the most common answer by a significant margin, reinforcing the results from earlier in the survey.

5.2.13.2. A significant number of those comments referring to cultural events offered suggestions as to which particular events would encourage them to attend the Centre more frequently in the future. Examples included:

- Art exhibitions
- Live music performances
- Irish theatre
- Historical and political discussions
- Book launches
- Irish dancing
- Irish book fairs

- Irish comedy nights
- Irish films and documentaries

5.2.13.3. Other comments relating to the calendar of cultural events provided a more in-depth response, and more general feedback as to the type of events they feel would benefit the LIC. Multiple comments highlighted specific groups which they felt the LIC could reach out to: “more events scheduled that cater specifically to the younger generation who have moved to London within the last decade”, “The amount of 1st Generation Irish who are isolated in London is a problem which needs to be tackled further”, “Events for LGBT Irish people” and “I believe the Irish Centre should look into doing more of the comedy nights/social events for the 40-50 age group... events which are more family inclusive”. However, the majority of comments relating to cultural events focused more generally, “More cultural events”, “More events”, and “Cultural activities”.

5.2.13.4. The second most common theme was ‘Physical Redevelopment’, mentioned in 18% of responses. These comments can be generally broken down further, as the vast majority featured either on improved accessibility, or the provision of particular spaces in the redevelopment.

5.2.13.5. Improving access to the Centre for young families, the elderly and the disabled featured prominently in calls for the physical redevelopment of the LIC. This was reinforced by the qualitative responses to question 9, which highlighted the lack of suitable disabled access as a barrier to attending the Centre. Comments included “Better disabled access”, “Disability access across the houses is important”, “An open/street level entrance would feel more welcoming in terms of access” and “Greater accessibility”.

5.2.13.6. Other respondents gave their preferences for the future design of the LIC, offering suggestions as to the type of spaces they would like to see included. Some focused on existing spaces within the Centre that could be built upon: “The facilities there at present are very tired, especially the bathrooms”, “The front of house area/reception does need upgrading”, and “Change the small bar as it’s too small.”. Other comments suggested that redevelopment should focus on upgrading the Centre with a newer atmosphere: “A new look Irish Centre”, “Better interior design and possibly to be, dare I say it a bit cooler?”, “environmentally sustainable facilities with neutral or zero carbon footprint.” and “Although it currently has a nostalgic

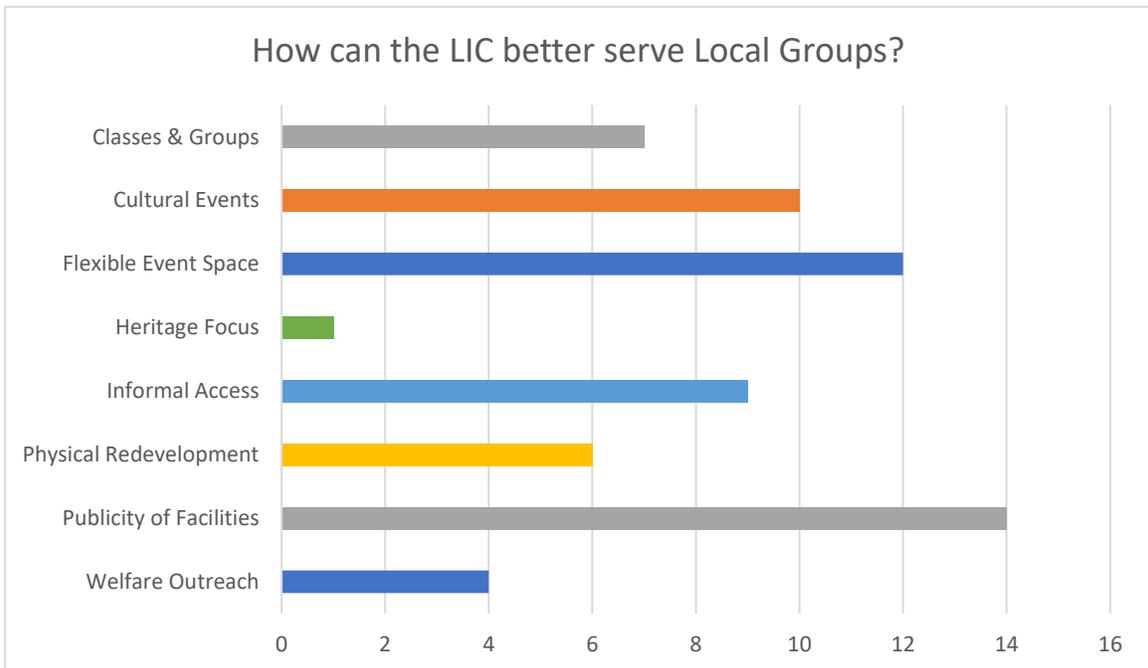
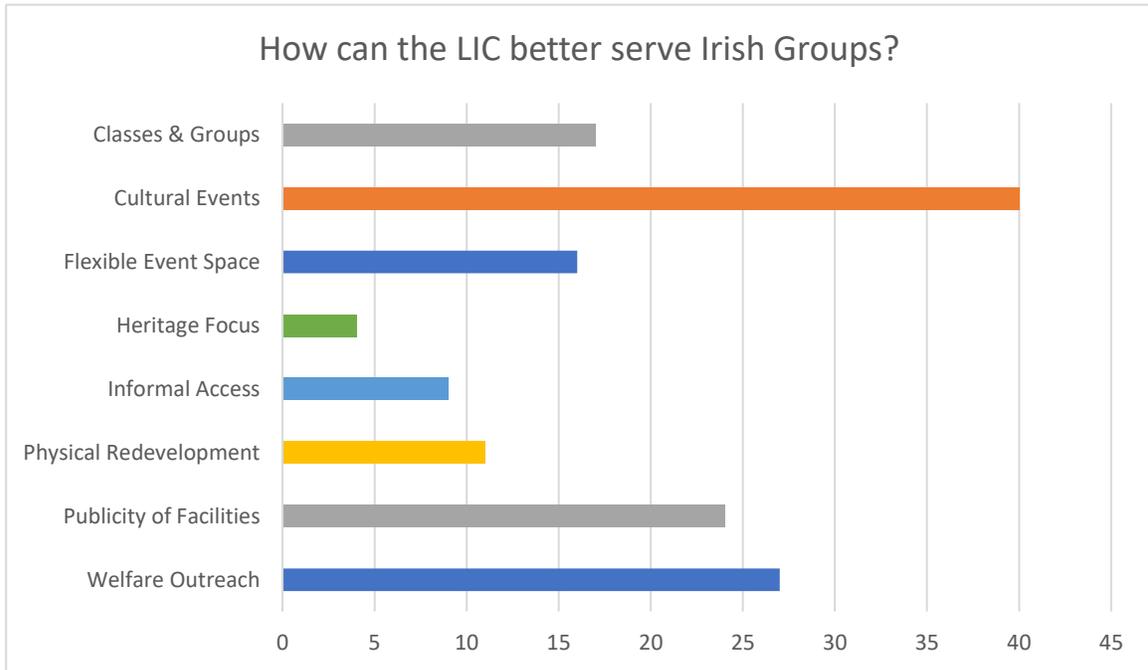
‘1985 GAA club function room’ atmosphere. But let’s leave nostalgia as is and upgrade the space!”.

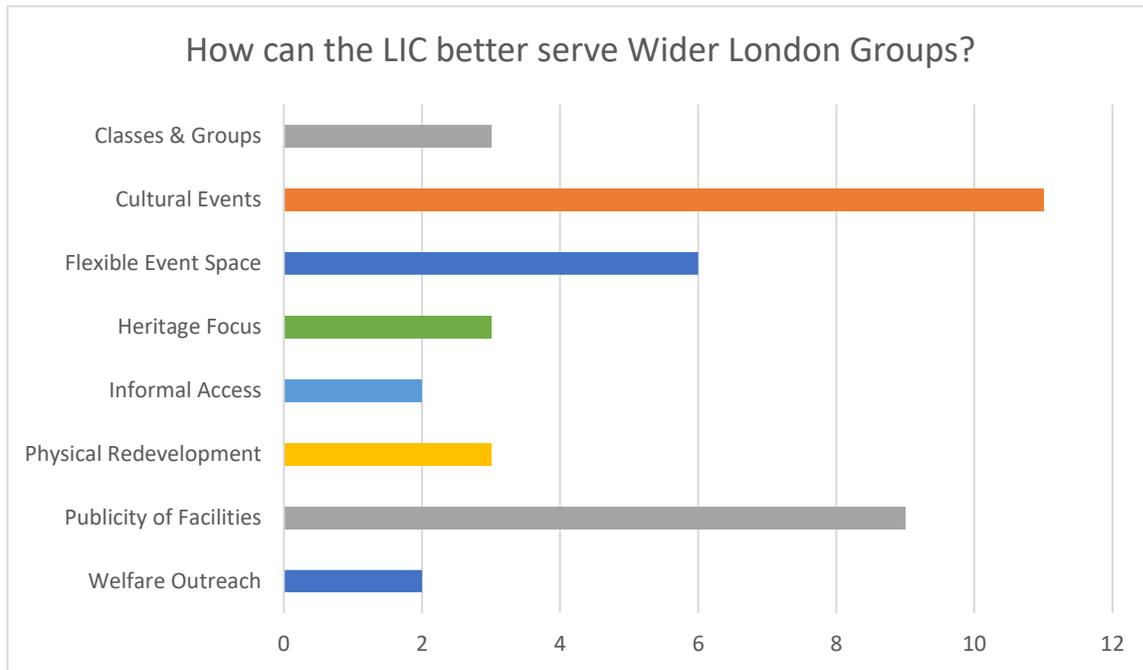
5.2.13.7. ‘Classes & Groups’ also appeared frequently within the comments, having been mentioned in 13% of responses. The vast majority of these gave suggestions as to which classes they would prefer attending at the LIC, examples included:

- IT classes
- Irish language classes (of multiple levels)
- Irish dance lessons
- Writing workshops for theatre
- Singing and music groups
- Irish history groups
- Exercise classes
- Wellbeing and mindfulness groups

5.2.13.8. These comments were often connected to those also mentioning ‘Cultural Event’: “Events / activities”, “more events and classes” and “More Irish language classes and Irish language-based events”. It would suggest that there is clear public precedent for a wider calendar of events. This is corroborated by previous responses to earlier questions, demonstrating that a large proportion of the LIC’s users visit the Centre for classes and events.

5.2.14. Question 17 was split into three parts, asking how the LIC could serve different communities: ‘Irish Groups’, ‘Local Groups’ and ‘Wider London Groups’. The qualitative responses to these questions have been broken down broadly into nine themes, a summary of which can be seen below:





- 5.2.14.1. Across the responses for the three different groups, 'Cultural Events', 'Publicity of Events' and 'Flexible Event Space' came up most frequently, again reflecting the interest in a wider calendar of events at the LIC.
- 5.2.14.2. The importance of cultural events was once again reinstated across the three groups, most prominently for the Irish and Wider London. The nature of the events mentioned across the three groups were very similar, and included: *“more live events comedy nights”, “Continue increasing number of cultural and social events” and “To be a recognised focal point for some key cultural activities.”* For Irish groups in particular, the focus was on the general provision of events, while for Local and Wider London communities, comments suggested opportunities to involve wider participation: *“ Opportunities to engage with and participate in cultural activities and events even if you are not from an Irish background”, “Invite to attend cultural activities” and “Better facilities that help promote Irish cultural events to the whole of London”.*
- 5.2.14.3. Comments which mentioned cultural events also referred to 'Publicity of Events' particularly with Local and Wider London groups. Responses encouraged the LIC to engage more through social media channels and advertising, especially those who may not already be familiar with the Centre. For example, *“Ensure they are made aware of events and facilities”, “Make the LIC more widely known. People want to be involved and have fun too”, “Well thought out Comms Strategy” and “Better marketing and promotion of the venue”.* This response featured less prominently in the 'Irish groups' section, but responses still highlighted the importance of being kept up to date with LIC events: *“Being in constant touch”, “work with other Irish groups to publicise events well in advance”, “More advertising to let the Irish community know that the Centre exists” and “keep up the good work, through Catholic schools and through asking Irish visitors on their airlines to attend the Centre”.*
- 5.2.14.4. Welfare outreach featured prominently in response to serving the Irish community, but less frequently in regard to the other groups. They largely referred to outreach for the elderly and vulnerable Irish who already use the services, for example *“continue with lunch club important for older communities”, “Ensure that the elderly and isolated are provided with support and a sense of community” and “Social Functions for the more elderly & isolated members of the Irish community in London”.* In response

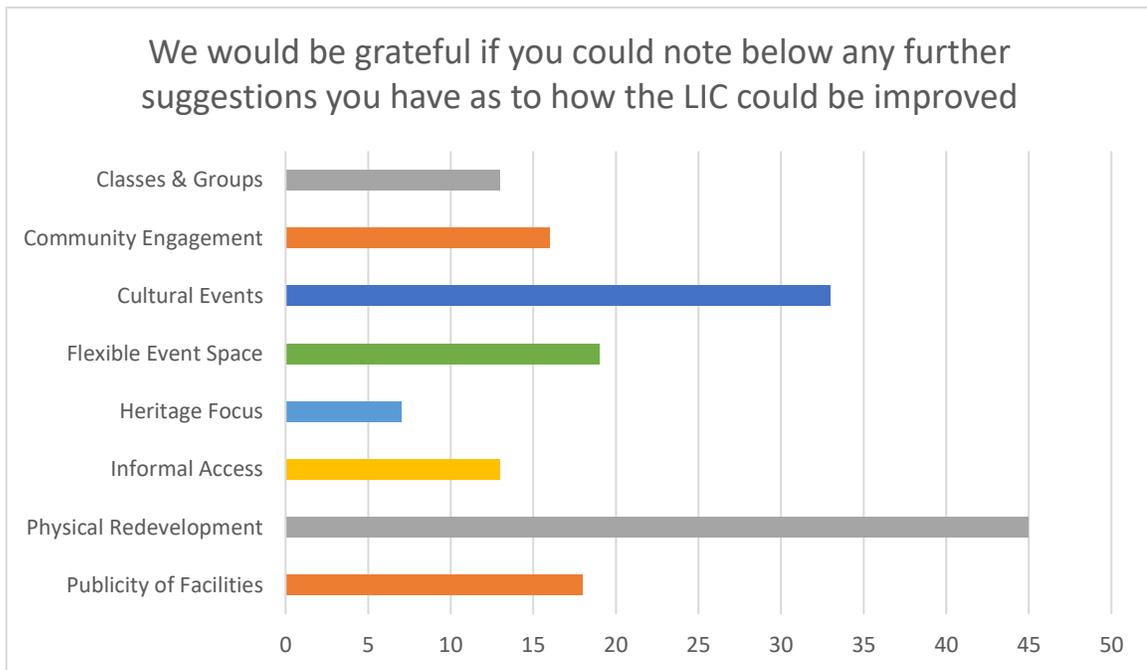
to the other groups, comments suggested widening the remit for outreach: “Encourage connection between unemployed, low income and vulnerable groups” and “Mixing with others with similar issues (seen as outsiders) United in the cause against loneliness and prejudice. Joint events/campaigns?”, although these comments were far less frequent.

5.2.14.5. The provision of flexible event space as part of the redevelopment featured prominently in response to all the groups, albeit with different functionality. For the Irish in London, comments requested better space for Irish performers and better spaces for classes and groups: “Better facilities for Irish artists and performers.”, “somewhere for up & coming artists to use as a platform” and “offer rooms, spaces etc”. Local and wider London groups had a greater emphasis on the potential for renting out flexible space and using LIC venue for wider community groups: “Special (low!) rates for local groups”, “Providing space for them to hire/use” and “Providing more space for local community groups”.

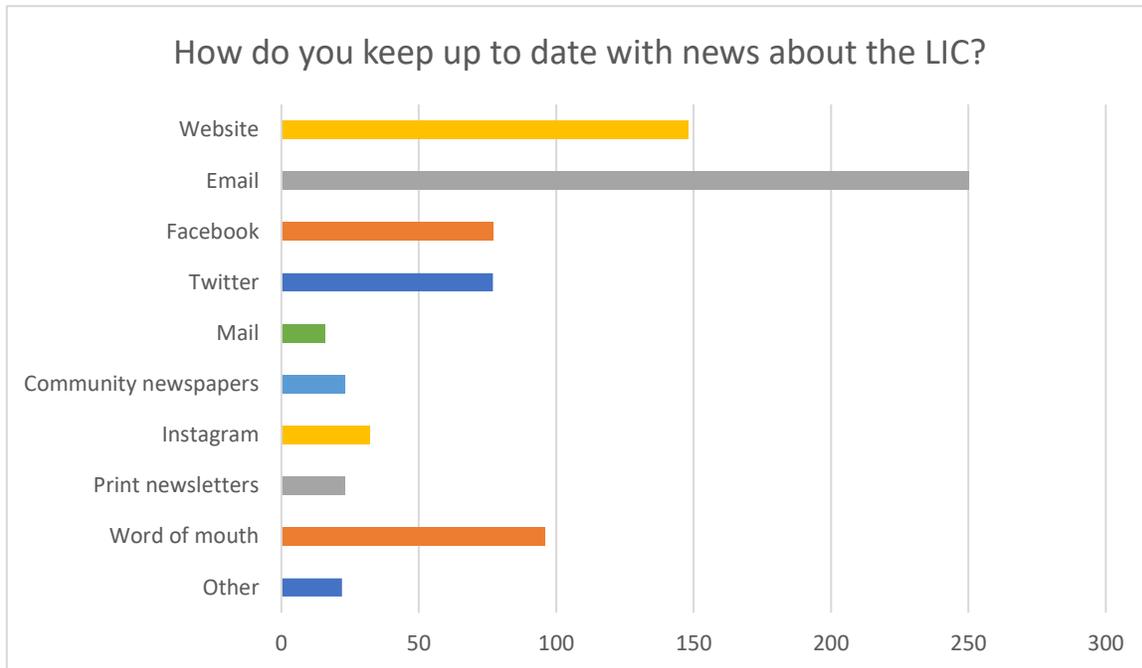
5.2.15. The last qualitative question in the survey asked for further suggestions as to how the LIC could be improved. Comments have been broken down broadly into nine themes, a summary of which can be found below:

5.2.15.1. The majority of comments here focused on ‘Physical Redevelopment’ and made suggestions as to how the Centre could be improved following the redevelopment programme. Reflecting the responses to question 16, answers were largely split between those calling for better access and requests for updated facilities. Suggestions for improvements to accessibility included “Lifts for old Irish women like my mum. Disabled access”, “Disabled facilities. Lift access” and “The bar to be more accessible”. Requests for updated facilities were more varied and included suggestions to improve both the physical layout and atmosphere of the LIC: “the building feels a bit chopped up in places with different levels. can be confusing to navigate”, “I would welcome changes to the physical appearance to make the building more coherent as a piece of design and architecture”, “It would be better to walk straight into a cafe/restaurant with bar facilities”, “Needs to be more light/open/warm in the environment it’s creating itself.” and “Solar panels- Spiral staircase in the Centre with glass dome. Roof garden. Good restaurant with in-house catering. Two story library, reference, study and research upstairs. A theatre that doubles as a conference and lecture space and a chapel, for weddings etc”.

5.2.15.2. Reinforcing responses earlier in the survey, ‘Cultural Events’ was the second most common comment made, with users listing more events they would like to see held at the Centre. Echoing earlier comments, responses included “I’d like more plays. History nights would be nice”, “More music More poetry, More events to attract younger people with immigrant histories”, “regular Irish cultural events i.e. music, set dancing, etc.” and “Provide more 1950s classic films and music for elderly” .



5.2.16. Question 19 asked users how they kept up to date with news about the LIC. Responses can be found below.



5.3. Architect Workshops

5.3.1. The workshops were conducted and led by Coffey Architects on behalf of the London Irish Centre. Stakeholders were invited to share their thoughts and ideas on emerging design proposals.

5.3.2. Overall six workshops were held with a variety of stakeholder groups including:

- Members of the Lunch Club
- Cultural and community users
- Staff managers
- Centre operators
- Business users
- Neighbours

5.3.3. The six workshops were held at the following times and dates:

- 23rd March 2019 – Workshops 1, 2 and 3
- 4th April 2019 – Workshops 4 and 5
- 8th April 2019 – Workshop 6

5.3.4. Workshop 1 – Lunch Club

5.3.4.1. Members of the Lunch Club highlighted several key themes during the workshop including space for potential dinner dances, green space for Centre users, audio visual facilities for musicians, diverse spaces for social events and an improved bar area. A priority for the lunch club was for any new building to feel like a “home from home” or “like an Irish village”.

5.3.5. Workshop 2 – Cultural and community users

5.3.5.1. Cultural and community users also reinforced the importance of diverse and flexible space. Further comments focused on the permeability of the Library and the importance of ensuring the Centre’s identity is preserved, whilst remaining inclusive.

5.3.6. Workshop 3 – Managers

5.3.6.1. Staff managers focused their comments on several areas for improvement including the lack of a clear main entrance to the Centre, the potential for a new black box theatre space, impact of noise on neighbouring residents, distance between the day Centre and welfare services, the lack of storage space, need for green room facilities and the importance of an entrance that is distinct from the bar.

5.3.7. Workshop 4 – Operators

5.3.7.1. Respondents made a clear preference for a shared entrance to the Centre, the need for diversity in the range of hireable space, further enthusiasm for green room facilities and storage space for the use of the wider operations team.

5.3.8. Workshop 5 – Business users

5.3.8.1. Users of the space reinforced the views of earlier workshops, confirming the importance of a “homely” environment with a distinct Irish

identity. A casual space which provided an opportunity to meet friends was a clear priority for the respondents. Business users referred to a possible “South Bank Centre” for the Irish.

5.3.9. Workshop 6 – Neighbours

5.3.9.1. Neighbouring residents emphasised a preference for a variety of facilities and improvements including an improved frontage for the building, a contemporary design, flexible multi-form space and the facilities for a local history club. The importance of a design that would minimise the noise from events and users was also raised.

Appendix 1: London Irish Centre (LIC) Community Conversation Launch discussion minutes

- **Gary LIC Director of Culture:** learning from people who work there
- **Anna, Art and Culture Manager:** runs the cultural programmes, talks about propagating Irish arts and culture throughout London, past the Centre . Emphasises multi-culturalism in London. Uses this to reflect on herself; her parents are Irish, and she is proud of how their culture has shaped the city. The Centre makes her proud of her parents and their achievements, and she wishes to celebrate that through the promotion of Irish culture and arts at the LIC.
- **Ruth, Wellbeing Manager:** Wants to use the redevelopment to build on existing services which could benefit from more space, as currently capacity is limited.
- **M, Volunteer:** Centre is a home away from home which was a lifeline after the death of her husband. Support schemes which would encourage more young people to better utilise the Centre.
- **James:** Supports more traditional Irish music at the Centre, more Irish language courses – important to have ‘safe spaces’ where people can come to learn the language. Importance of integration of new Irish immigrants into the city. Notes clear accessibility issues when moving around the site.
- **Matthew:** Works with Irish benefit claimants and wants the building to be redeveloped to make it easier for disadvantaged groups to arrive.
- **John:** would like touring arts and culture shows, and events which keep users up to date with current affairs, especially political movements within Ireland. Wants to encourage a younger demographic to attend the Centre.
- **Mary Allen:** Wants to bring it back to the origins of the LIC and remember those who started it. Main concern is the lunch club. Shouldn't forget the role of the priests in founding the Centre. Should incorporate the history of the LIC into plans.
- **John:** Suggests moving the library upstairs to encourage usage. Would like permanent theatre space to help develop new Irish talent.
- **Karen:** Regularly attends music classes at the Centre. Wants more and better-quality space to be made available for education. Requests separate space for specific activities. Suggests the possibility of opening up space which is currently used as offices- can it be used for something else?
- **Sally:** As the redevelopment is a large-scale project, it should be owned by the community and shaped by it, with all of their views incorporated into it. Emphasises the benefits of a democratic process to allow for people to have their say. Project should not be decided by just the Board and must be an engaging process- an exchange between the Centre owners and users. Proposes and assembly of users created to share their views. Argues that those involved with the original creation of the Centre should have a larger voice in its redevelopment, with a continued emphasis on older people. Keen to have goof music performances in a dedicated venue.
- **Mary:** Would like the plans to attend to the history of the LIC, as well as having an attractive and accessible design. Rejects the phrase ‘world-class’ and she believes it seems empty. Currently in the LIC there is a lack of dedicated function space as it is all either too large or too small. Suggests moving the library to a more central position in the Centre, as well as creating a dedicated education space within it.

- **Architect:** First priority is establishing better accessibility into and around the building. Heritage is being incorporated in a large way into the plans .
- **John:** LIC must retain the sense of heritage & history of when it was built. Suggestions include a gallery or a museum at the heart of the Centre near the front. Would appreciate a small outdoor function space with a BBQ. To attract a younger and more diverse audience, suggest showing sports matches. Most important feature of the Centre is its support for Irish culture and arts, and thus the new designs should include a permanent stage for concerts and films etc.
- **Mary:** Wants more educational + writing workshops at weekends and evenings to encourage wider participation. Questions whether there could be information on genealogy so people can find out about their Irish heritage in more detail.
- -: Teaches Irish history in London. Would like to see a museum in the plans , that would seek to join London and Irish history and tell the story of earlier immigrants.
- **L:** Teaches dance at the LIC, thanks the staff and requests a non-stick dancefloor and mirrors.
- **Alice:** Suggests the possibility of creating an audio guide and history for the Centre made by its users.
- **Catherine:** New building should be sustainable for the events, remember those who came before to London as a refuge. 'Preserving the flame rather than the ashes'
- **Sue:** teaches creative writing at the LIC. Emphasises the importance of the library for her groups and would like more space for it to be included in the plans to allow for educational and creative groups to use it. Main focus should be providing support for those who feel alienated in the city.
- -: Wants to highlight the warmth felt in the Centre currently.
- -: Every space in the redevelopment should be special, as it encompasses many different uses. Should have full disabled lift access. Doesn't want a strictly Irish cultural Centre- instead the LIC should focus on benefits and housing advice to provide welfare spaces. Agrees with earlier speaker that there should be an 'assembly' of users to feedback into designs.
- -: Architects should design a space where people can come together. More provision for music groups and opportunities for them to perform with specific function space . Important that with the redevelopment users should not get priced out of using the Centre, spaces and classes should be affordable/ for all users.
- -: Recognises that change can be difficult for old users of the Centre. Wants more facilities and opportunities for those who do not have a computer and do not want one .
- **Richard:** Centre was created by the Catholic Church and argues some may feel uncomfortable with that history.
- **Patsy:** Laid back room with comfy chairs
- -: Faculties for theatre space. Find some way of honouring the women who came to establish the LIC.
- **Claire:** important to reach out to the Irish community- as she'd never heard of the place until recently. Backs up the idea of preserving the heritage in a museum of gallery. LIC should be seeking to engage with young Irish creatives and giving them a platform.

Appendix 2: The London Irish Centre (LIC) Future Survey

The London Irish Centre – Future Survey

The London Irish Centre (LIC) requires re-development to continue providing outstanding care, culture and community to the people it supports.

From this need, we want to reimagine, redevelop and reposition the LIC as a world-class community and cultural Centre.

The LIC is committed to ensuring that any redevelopment will continue to meet the needs of those whom it serves, now and in the coming years. We want to continue to be a destination to foster friendship and support networks, and a place to celebrate Irish heritage, culture and community.

So, before any plans for the Centre are finalised, the LIC is embarking on a wide-ranging conversation that involves our service users, members of the local community in Camden, and all other stakeholders invested in the LIC.

To ensure the future LIC is the best Community & Cultural Centre it can be, we want to encourage as many members of the community to join the conversation and share their ideas.

We would appreciate you taking the time to fill it out and leaving it in the feedback box provided in reception, or with a member of our team before August 17th.



Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme



An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



10. Please rate the LIC in relation to the following:

Please put an 'X' in the circles

	1 (Poor)	2	3	4	5 (Excellent)	Don't know/ never used
The external appearance of the Centre	<input type="radio"/>					
The internal appearance of the Centre	<input type="radio"/>					
Toilet facilities	<input type="radio"/>					
Disability access	<input type="radio"/>					
Warmth and hospitality	<input type="radio"/>					
Ease of moving around the Centre	<input type="radio"/>					
The range of social activities on offer	<input type="radio"/>					
The opening hours of the advice service	<input type="radio"/>					
The Lunch Club	<input type="radio"/>					
Event space	<input type="radio"/>					
Community services reception	<input type="radio"/>					
The bar	<input type="radio"/>					
Internet connection	<input type="radio"/>					

Environmental impact

11. From the list below of the services currently offered by the LIC, please select the 3 which are most important to you:

Please put an 'X' in the boxes

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Welfare advice & support | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering Programme | <input type="checkbox"/> Befriending Programme |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irish culture & arts events | <input type="checkbox"/> Library | <input type="checkbox"/> Spaces for hire |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local community activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Education Programme | <input type="checkbox"/> Family play groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Outreach | <input type="checkbox"/> Irish bar | <input type="checkbox"/> The Lunch Club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social activities for the Irish in London | | |

12. Do you think the current premises of the LIC are in need of renovation?

Please put an 'X' in the box

Yes No Don't Know

13. Thinking of what the LIC could do in the future, please rate the following options in terms of importance with 1 being low and 5 being high:

Please put an 'X' in the circles

	1	2	3	4	5
Wellbeing Centre with a range of wellbeing activities including lunch	<input type="radio"/>				
Community Café with a quality food and drink offer	<input type="radio"/>				
Professional performance spaces for theatre and music	<input type="radio"/>				
Clothes store for those in need	<input type="radio"/>				

Irish bar	<input type="radio"/>				
Irish culture and arts events	<input type="radio"/>				
IT suite with training facilities	<input type="radio"/>				
Welfare advice and support	<input type="radio"/>				
Office space for the charity sector	<input type="radio"/>				
Workspace for business and creative communities	<input type="radio"/>				
A range of rooms to hire	<input type="radio"/>				
Community Kitchen which can be hired out or used for education	<input type="radio"/>				
Irish language classes (lessons)	<input type="radio"/>				
A lending and research library	<input type="radio"/>				
A space which tells the story of the Irish in London	<input type="radio"/>				
Garden and outside space	<input type="radio"/>				
Cinema space	<input type="radio"/>				
Family playgroups and activities	<input type="radio"/>				

14. Which of the following options would be your preferred venue for meeting up with friends?

Please put an 'X' in the box

Open plan foyer/atrium Bars/restaurants

Cafes

Activity spaces for sports/music/culture

None of the above. Please describe your preferred venue

15. Do you think you might attend the LIC more frequently in the future?

Please put an 'X' in the box

Yes

No

Maybe

16. Please describe anything that might encourage you to attend the LIC more frequently (for example changes in the physical environment, in the events scheduled, or the activities provided)?

17. How can the LIC better serve the following communities?

The Irish Community

The Local Community

The London Community

18. If you have further comments in relation to ways in which the LIC might be improved, please note them below:

19. How do you keep up to date with news about the LIC?

Please put an 'X' in the box

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website | <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter | <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email | <input type="checkbox"/> Mail | <input type="checkbox"/> Printed newsletters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth |

LIC - Community Conversation Other, please describe below (optional)

This information is compiled by Quatro Public Relations Ltd. on behalf of The London Irish Centre. The information you provide will be treated in strict confidence and will not be used to identify you personally. The analysis is done on an anonymous basis and your personal details will not be passed on to any other third parties. The information you provide will be stored for the lifecycle of the project.

20. I would like to be kept informed and/or contacted regarding this consultation via email:

Please put an 'X' in the box

Yes

No

If yes, please enter your email address here:

Your responses will help us to improve the LIC and we appreciate the time you have taken to share your views.

Thank you

Go raibh míle maith agat