



Community Confidence Action Research – Wick Evaluation

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Executive Summary

This report summarises the findings of the evaluation in Wick as part of the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland’s [Community Confidence Action Research Project](#).

Since beginning initial engagement in the area in March 2023, we have conducted a survey gathering views on confidence in policing in Wick in April - May 2023 and held several events to gather ideas on how confidence in policing could be enhanced in the local area.

In Autumn 2023 local policing in Wick/Caithness implemented a range of initiatives based on this community feedback. After an initial 3-month period the project team engaged the community again to evaluate the community’s feedback and thoughts.

To evaluate the initiatives a two-pronged approach has been taken:

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- A survey conducted in December 2023 / January 2024 with those 16 and over mirroring one conducted in April-May 2023;
- Conversations with community representatives.

It should be noted that due to small sample sizes and the non-representative nature of the samples the findings of these surveys cannot be generalised to the entire Wick/Caithness population and should be considered indicative only.

Key findings:

- Over half of respondents were unaware of any of the five main initiatives undertaken by local policing. The main area for improvement relates to promoting/advertising events in a way that reaches people.
- Respondents reported having lower levels of trust and confidence in the police in December 2023 and January 2024 compared with 7-8 months earlier.
- Awareness of initiatives appears to have been very important in Wick. Although fewer than half of respondents were aware of the initiatives put in place, those who were aware reported higher levels of trust and confidence.
- People in the Wick / Caithness area continue to say there is a strong sense of community, although the proportion saying this has fallen slightly.
- Comments relating to Wick, and policing in Wick, generally relate to the following themes: policing is good but it is insufficient, with direct contact too limited; drug dealing and antisocial behaviour are leading concerns and are contributing to a reduced quality of life for people living in Wick; the centralisation of policing services is cited as leading to a poorer level of service.
- Feedback relating to the aims of this Project and the way the Project has worked in Wick is positive, with a view expressed that inviting people to structured, in-depth conversations about policing with materials published in advance, assists people to prepare and offer considered views rather than off-the-cuff comments.

Community Confidence Action Research – Wick Evaluation

Introduction

This report summarises the findings of the evaluation in Wick as part of the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland [Community Confidence Action Research Project](#).

Using a range of data (such as Scottish Government statistics) Wick was identified as an area for this project. Since March 2023, we have conducted a survey gathering views on confidence in policing in Wick in Spring and held a number of events over 2023 to gather ideas on how confidence in policing could be enhanced in the local area.

In Autumn 2023 local policing in Wick/Caithness implemented a range of initiatives based on this community feedback.

These new ways of working as part of the test of change are as follows:

- Coffee with a cop drop-ins
- Local policing newsletter
- Local recruitment campaign with commitment to base local applicants locally
- Local policing marquee based at local events
- Creation of a presentation to give an overview of modern policing.

To evaluate the initiatives a two-pronged approach has been taken:

- A survey conducted in December 2023 / January 2024 with those 16 and over mirroring one conducted in April-May 2023; and
- Conversations with community representatives.

It should be noted that due to small sample sizes and the non-representative nature of the samples the findings of this survey cannot be generalised to the entire Wick/Caithness population and should be considered indicative only.

Community Confidence Action Research – Wick Evaluation Survey 16 and Over

To gain insights into the impact of Police Scotland’s initiatives in Wick from those aged 16 and over, the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland designed a survey to gather views on these initiatives and views on confidence in policing (mirroring the questions asked in [Apr-May 2023](#)). Hosted on the Scottish Police Authority’s Citizen Space site, the survey contained 15 questions and ran from 4th December 2023 to 28th January 2024. In total 63 responses were received.

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents lived in the Wick area (73%, n=46). The highest proportion of respondents were aged 55-64 (21%, n=13) and the lowest aged 16-24 (3%, n=2). The sample is predominantly female at 57% (n=36), and the majority had no contact with police in the six months prior to survey (59%, n=37). It should be noted that in comparison to the initial survey carried out in Spring, a slightly higher proportion had had contact (40%, n=25) - in December 2023-January 2024 compared to 35% (n=48) in April-May 2023.

Table 1: Sample demographics (n=63)

Reason for being in/visiting Wick?		
I have family/friends in the area	4	6%
I work in the area	8	13%
I live in the area	46	73%
Other / Not Answered	5	8%
Age		
16-24	2	3%
25-34	9	14%
35-44	12	19%

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45-54	12	19%
55-64	13	21%
65+	11	17%
Prefer not to say / Not Answered	4	7%
Gender		
Female	36	57%
Male	25	40%
Prefer not to say	2	3%
Contact with police - 6 months		
No	37	59%
Yes	25	40%
Prefer not to say	1	1%

Awareness of Initiatives

Figure 1 shows that fewer than half of respondents were aware of any of the initiatives put in place by local policing. In total 36 respondents (57%) were not aware of any initiatives, whereas 27 (42%) were aware of at least one.

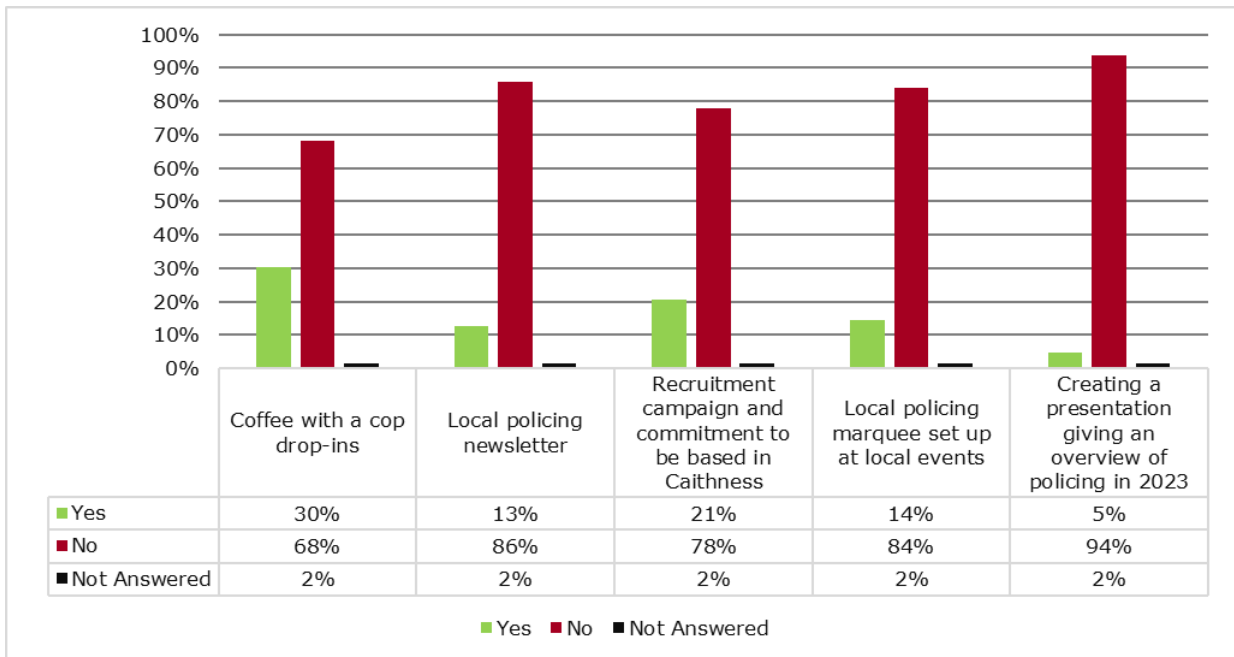
Respondents were more likely to have been aware of the Coffee with a Cop drop-in sessions taking place (30%, n=19), followed by the adjustments being made and publicised regarding the local police officer recruitment campaign and the commitment to base new officers from the Caithness area in Caithness if that is their preference (21%, n=13).

When asked to give their views on initiatives, 22 responses were received. Comments relating to the initiatives included:

- Advertisements for Coffee with a Cop seen on social media
- Advertisements relating to recruitment having been seen
- A pop up event in October at Caithness House was attended and well-received
- Positive views regarding the opening hours and staffing of the front desk at Wick Police Station
- Police presence at a local lifeboat day was well-received

If respondents were not aware of the initiatives, they were asked as to how they could be made aware in future. In total 34 comments were received. The main suggestions given related to enhanced advertising and promotion of policing initiatives via a range of channels including social media, mailshots and posters, local radio and newspapers. There was also the suggestion from number of people that more visible police presence, directly communicating with the public about policing matters, would help to raise awareness within the community.

Figure 1: Based on feedback from the community earlier in this project, Police Scotland have recently implemented initiatives to try and enhance confidence in policing in Wick. Have you noticed any of these initiatives in the area in the last few months? (n=63)



Confidence in Policing

In terms of confidence in policing in the area, the majority of respondents continue to have low confidence in various aspects of policing, and there are indications that the situation has worsened compared to earlier in 2023 – see **Figure 2**. For example, 60% of respondents reported having medium or high confidence in policing generally in April/May 2023, compared with 46% in December 2023/January 2024.

Across all 8 indicators the most common response is 'Low' – see **Figure 2**:

- Tackling Antisocial Behaviour (70%, n=44)
- Preventing Crime (67%, n=42)
- Being there when you need them (65%, n=41)
- Providing an appropriate and timely response (65%, n=41)
- Keeping Your Area Safe (62%, n=39)
- Tackling Crime (62%, n=39)
- Responding Quickly (60%, n=38)
- Policing in General (52%, n=33)

Figure 3 and **Figure 4** show confidence levels across the indicators broken down by whether individuals were aware of at least one initiative rolled out as part of the Test of Change (see **Figure 3**), or if they had no awareness (see **Figure 4**). Awareness of initiatives seemed to have a clear impact on levels of confidence in the police in Wick: 67% of those who had been aware of at least one initiative reported having high or medium confidence in the police generally, compared with just 31% among those respondents who hadn't been aware.

Figure 2: How much confidence do you have in the police in your local area (0-10, where 0 is 'No confidence at all' and 10 is 'complete

confidence') – April-May 2023 - n=139; December 2023 – January 2024
 – n=63

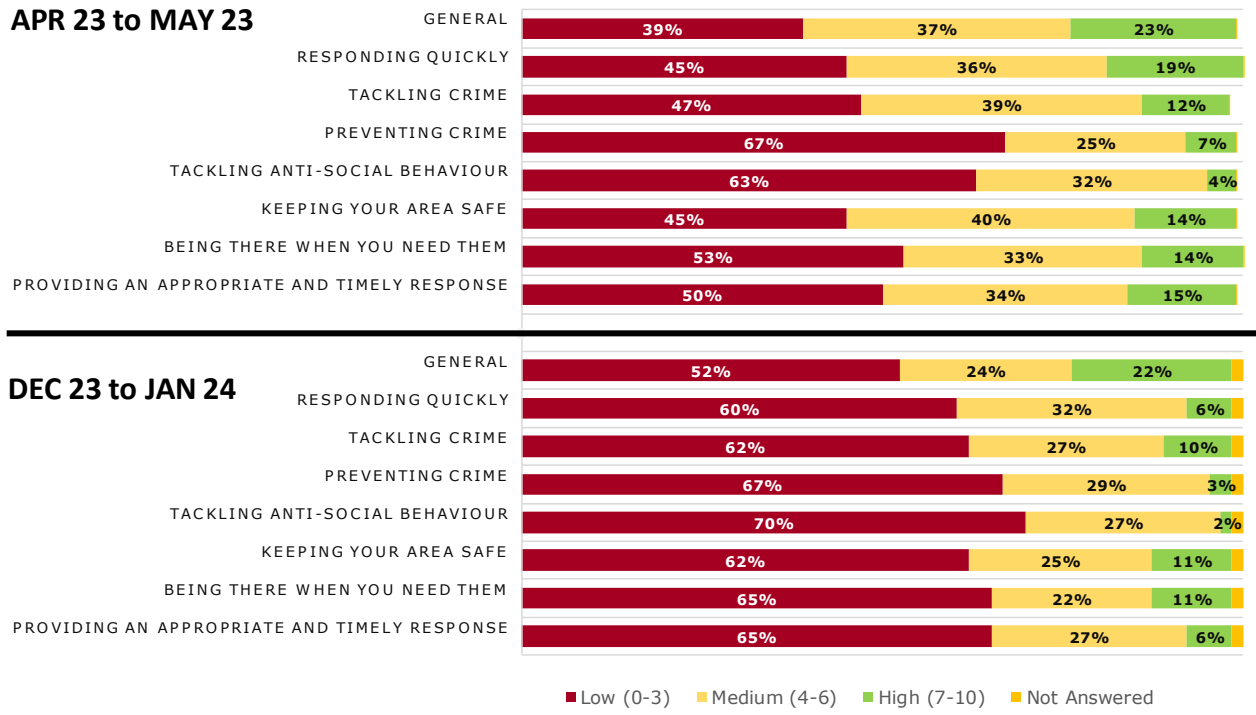


Figure 3: How much confidence do you have in the police in your local area (0-10, where 0 is 'No confidence at all' and 10 is 'complete confidence') – Dec 23 to Jan 24 – Awareness of one or more initiatives (n=27).

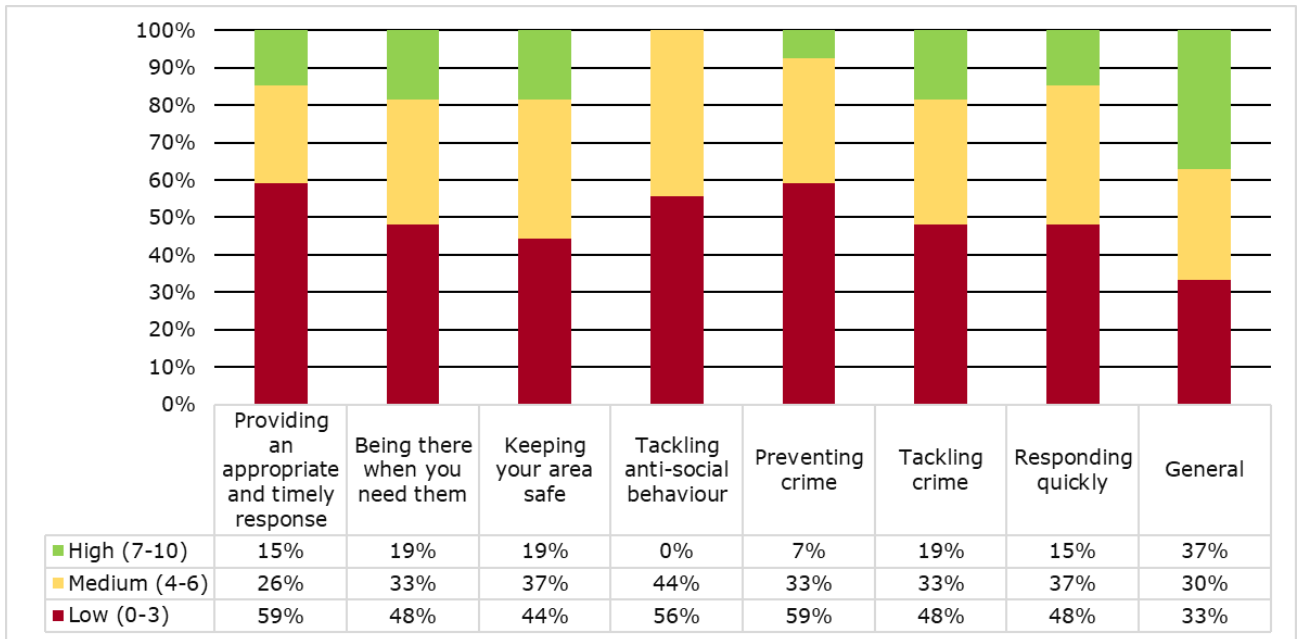
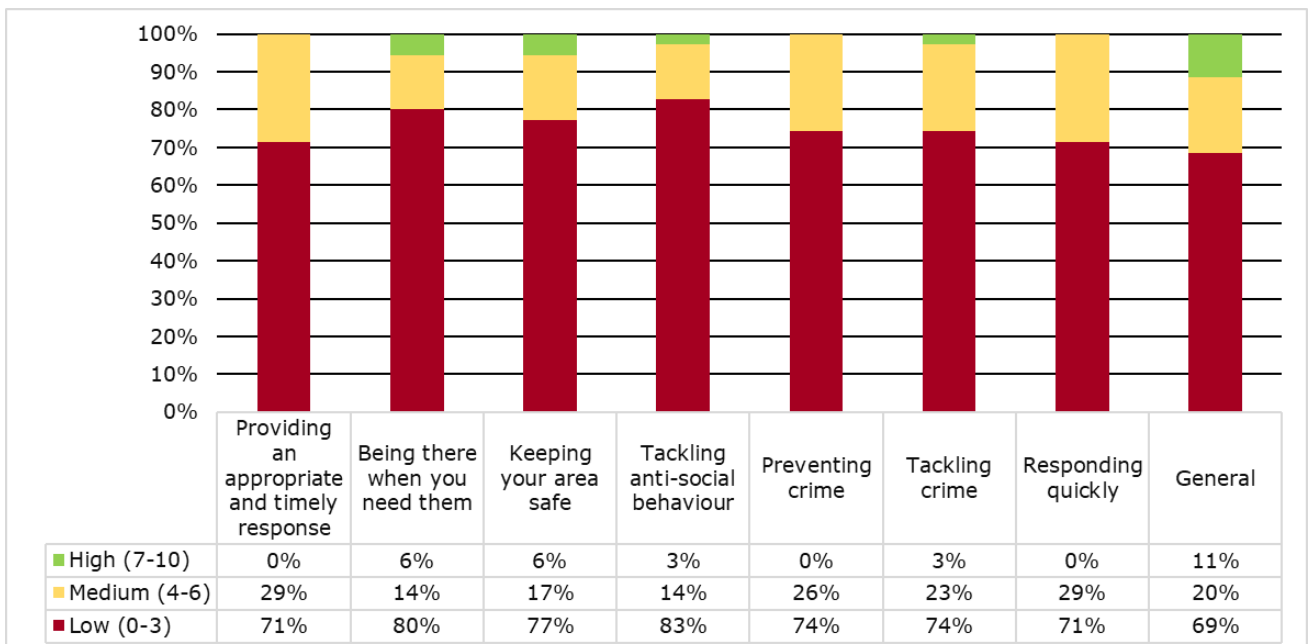


Figure 4: How much confidence do you have in the police in your local area (0-10, where 0 is 'No confidence at all' and 10 is 'complete confidence') – Dec 23 to Jan 24 – No awareness of initiatives (n=35)



Trust in Policing

When asked about levels of trust in policing, **Figure 5** shows that the highest proportion of respondents scored 'low' across all four categories at around 60% of respondents. This represents a downward trend from April/May 2023 where respondents expressing low levels of trust were in the minority.

A similar downward trend in feelings of trust in policing in Scotland as a whole has been documented in the SPA national polling between July 2022 and 2023.

Figure 6 shows a distinct relationship between those who were aware of at least one of the initiatives and having higher trust levels. Those who were not aware of any initiative scored 'Low' (71%) across all indicators – see **Figure 7**.

Figure 5: How much trust do you have in the police in your local area (0-10, where 0 is 'Do not trust at all' and 10 is 'Trust completely') – Dec 2023 -Jan 2024 - n=63; Apr-May 2023 – n=139

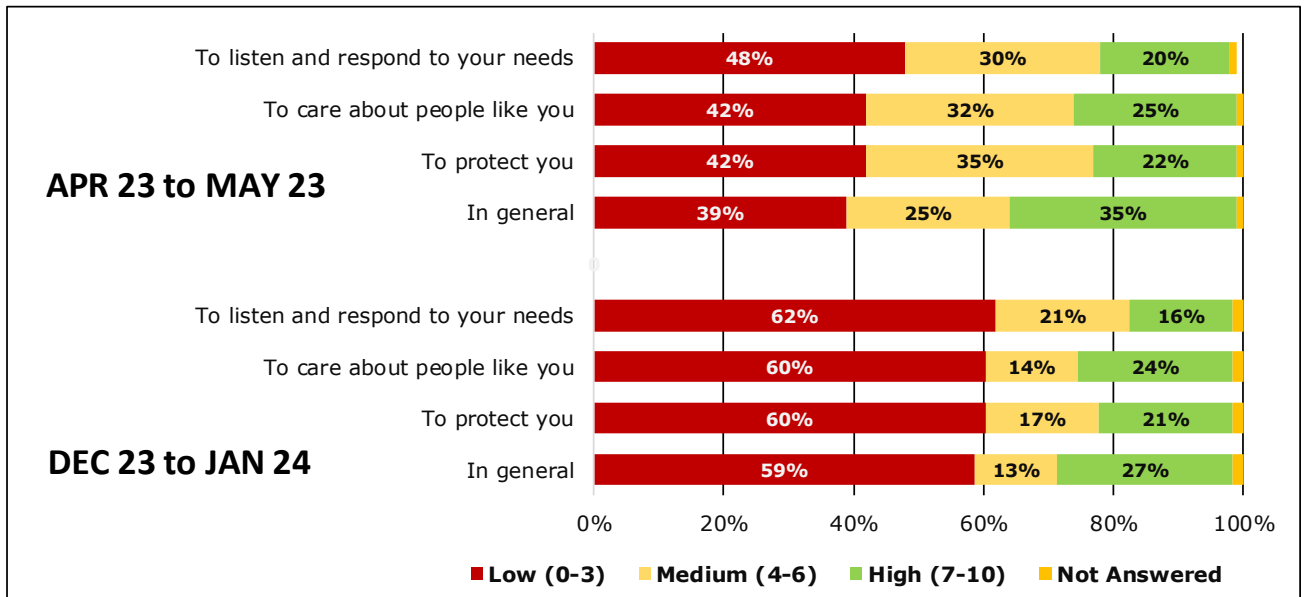


Figure 6: How much trust do you have in the police in your local area (0-10, where 0 is 'Do not trust at all' and 10 is 'Trust completely') – Dec 2023 to Jan 2024 – Awareness of one or more initiatives (n=27)

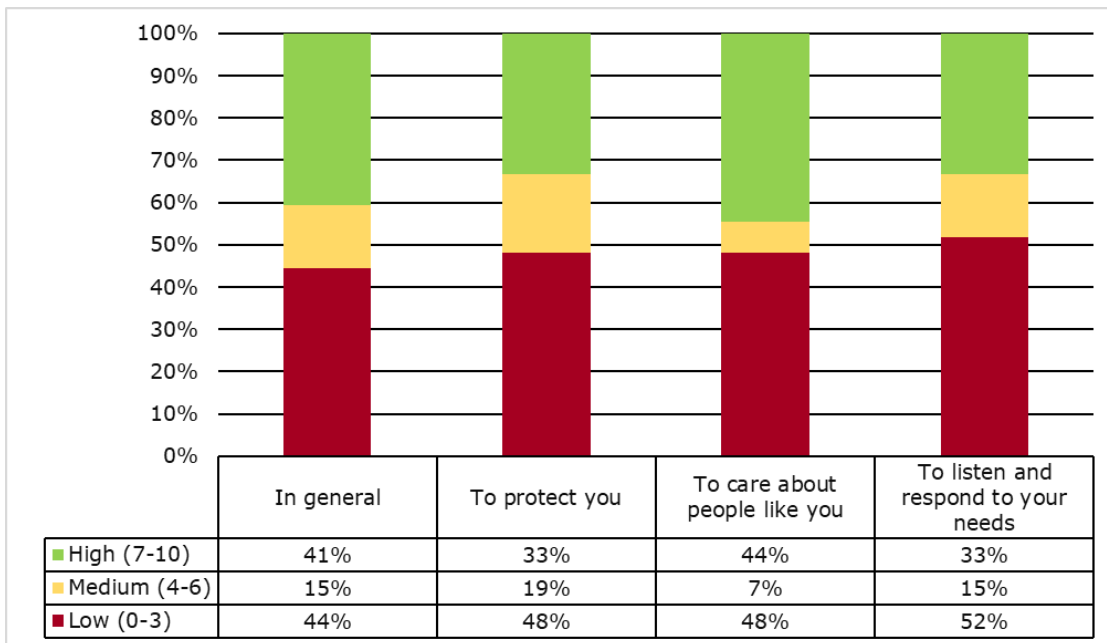
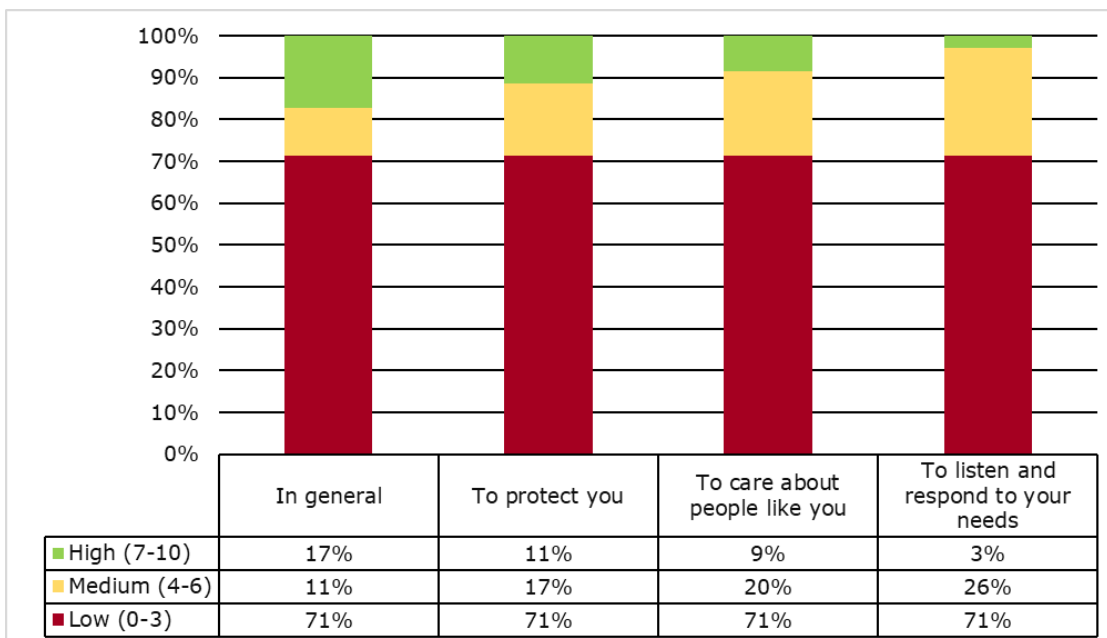


Figure 7: How much trust do you have in the police in your local area (0-10, where 0 is 'Do not trust at all' and 10 is 'Trust completely') – Dec 2023 to Jan 2024 – No awareness of initiatives (n=35)



Performance

Regarding the performance of police in their local area, the highest proportion of respondents selected 'a somewhat poor or very poor job' across all scenarios - see **Figure 8**.

In comparison with April and May 2023, the more recent results show that there has been a reduction in the proportion of respondents saying that the police are doing neither a good or poor job, and a shift towards saying a somewhat poor or very poor job. This sentiment is stronger in relation to tackling antisocial behaviour and bringing the community closer together.

Figure 9 shows once again that awareness of policing initiatives is linked to positive views of the police. A higher proportion of respondents who were aware of one or more initiatives felt police in their local area were doing either 'a very good or somewhat good job' or were ambivalent across three of the five indicators. However, **Figure 10** shows that among those who were unaware of any of the initiatives, 'a somewhat poor/very poor' was the highest response across two of the indicators ('bringing the community closer together' at 68% and 'tackling antisocial behaviour' at 63%), and was the dominant response for the other three aspects of policing.

Figure 8: How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in the following regards? – Dec 2023 -Jan 2024 - n=63; Apr-May 2023 – n=139

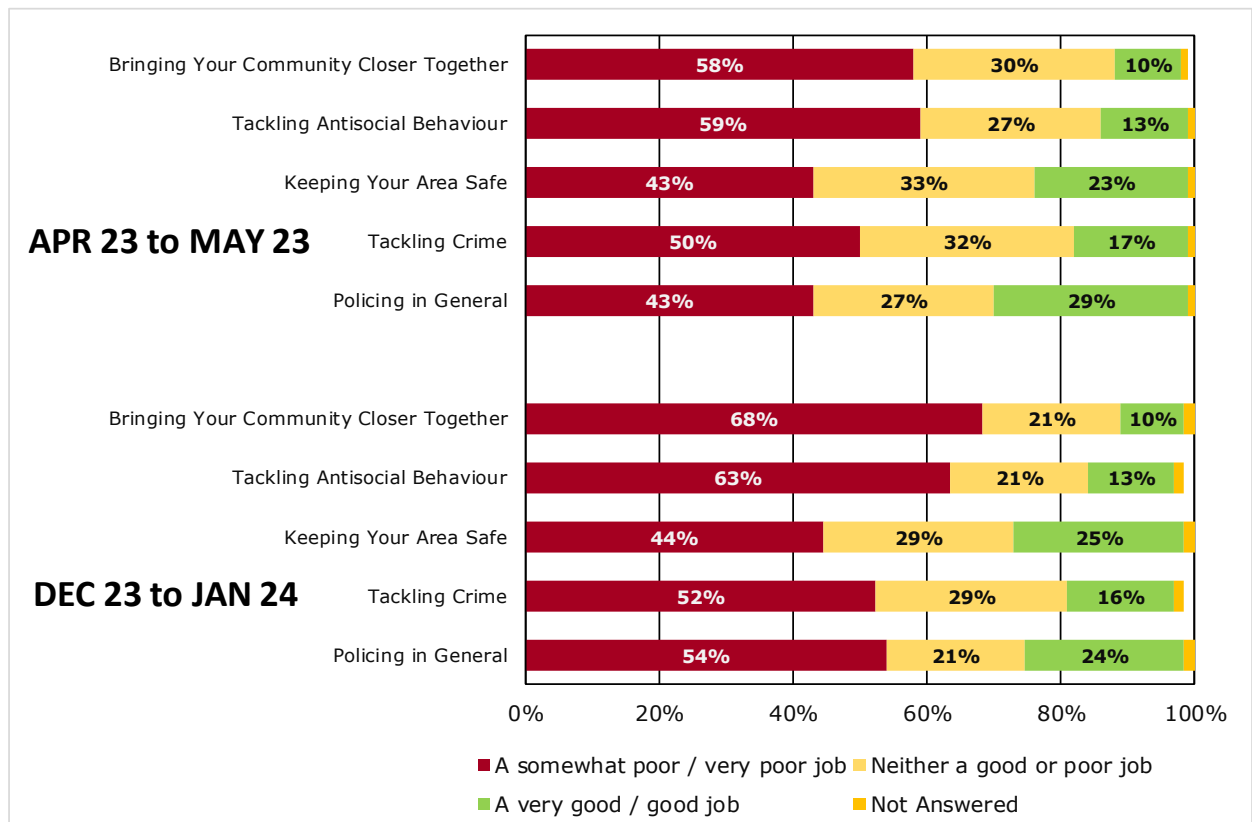


Figure 9: How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in the following regards? – Dec 23 to Jan 24 – Awareness of one or more initiatives (n=27)

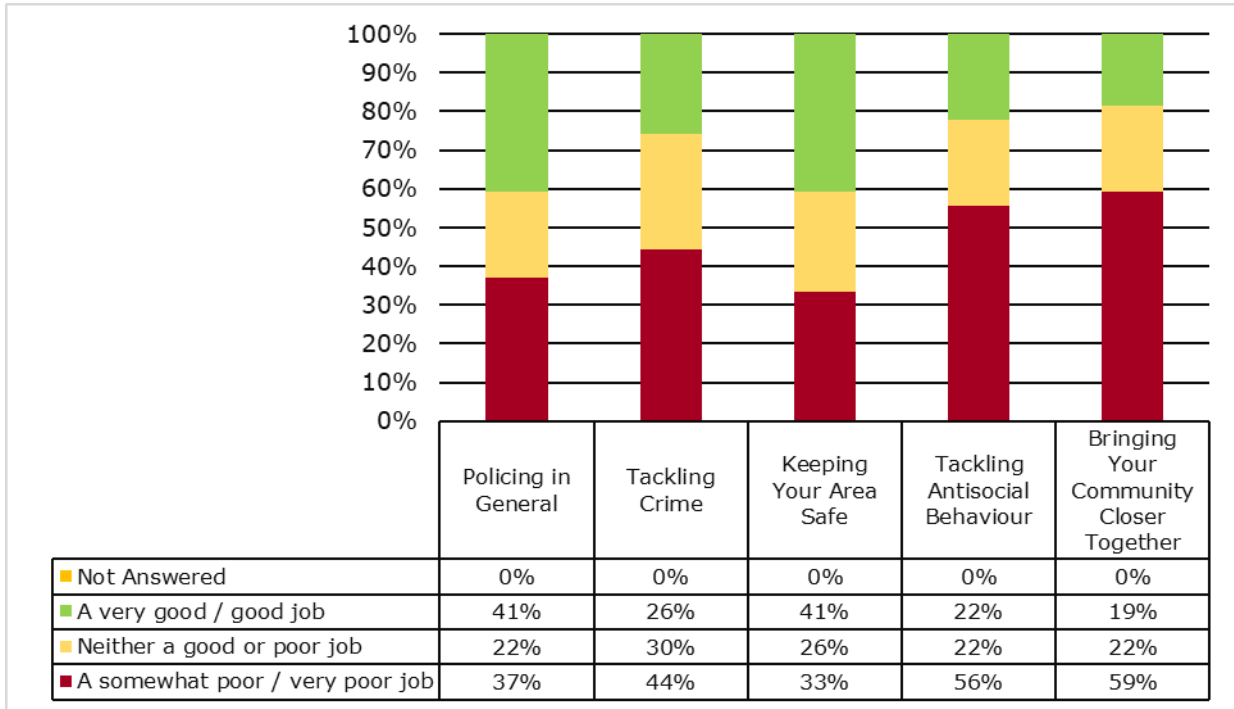
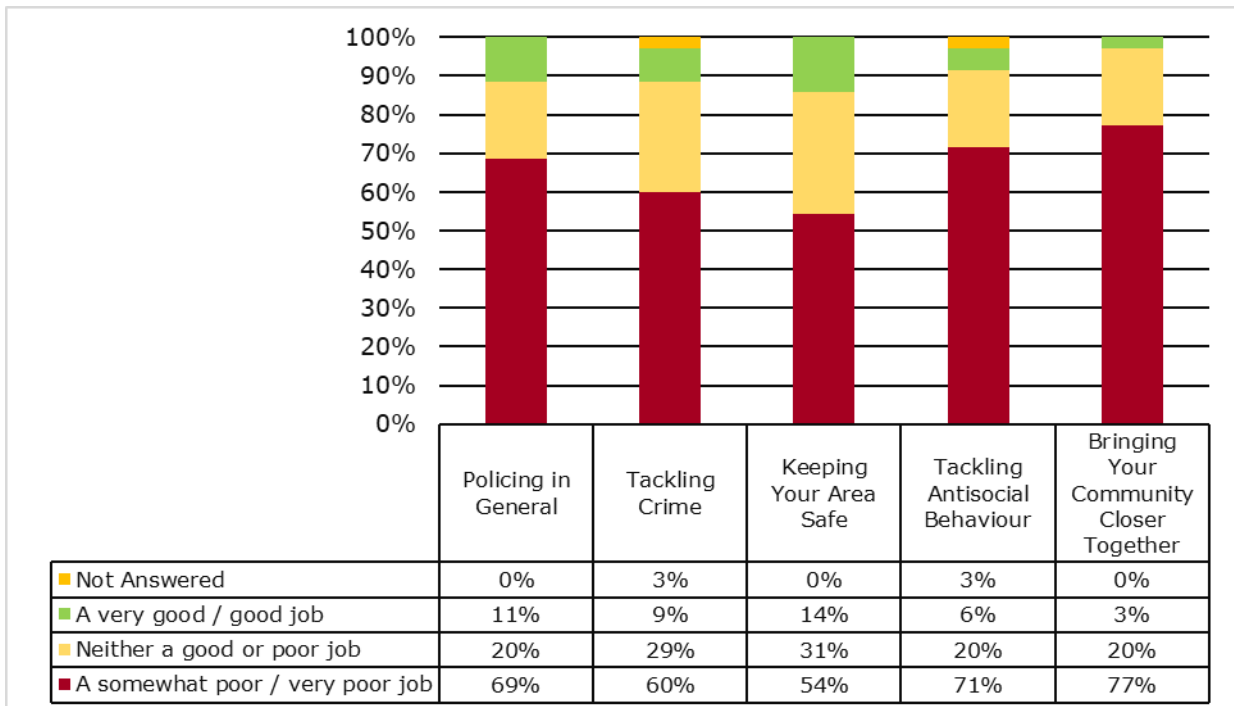


Figure 10: How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in the following regards? – Dec 23 to Jan 24 – No awareness of initiatives (n=35)



Community

Figure 11 shows that a higher proportion of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that Wick has a sense of community (65%, n=41).

The proportion of people who strongly agree/agreed that Wick has a sense of community decreased slightly since April-May 2023 and the proportion of those who strongly disagree/disagree has slightly increased.

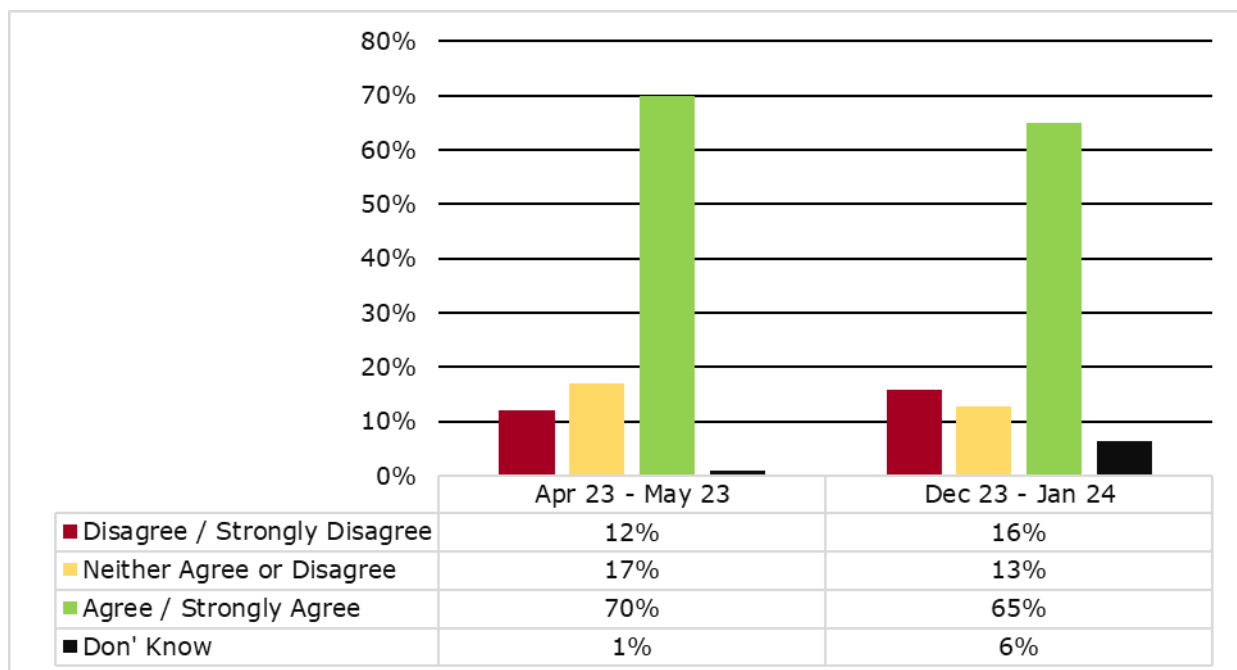
When asked on their general thoughts and feelings of Wick, 41 comments were received of a diverse nature. Positive comments and themes included:

- Strong community spirit and sense of pride based on better times in the past
- Lots of volunteers helping out
- Community supports local events
- Nice to see the police being more visible in the community

More negative themes were raised by multiple respondents, summarised as:

- Serious issue with drugs in the community, and a perceived lack of police proactivity and response to community intelligence about drug dealers
- Not enough policing, and what resourcing there is, is spread too thinly to be effective
- Antisocial behaviour is increasing
- Wick has been neglected through centralisation of public services
- Lack of investment in the town, dirty streets and shops closing
- Police station front desk is not resourced properly and no local police station phone number

Figure 11: Do you agree that Wick has a sense of community? – Dec 2023 to Jan 2024 - n=63; Apr 2023 to May 2023 – n=139



General Comments

In total, 24 comments were received when respondents were asked if they had any comments on the topics raised within the survey. Here is a summary of the main themes raised:

- Reporting matters to the police is pointless because nothing gets done, or it takes too long to see change
- Long wait times when calling 101
- More foot patrols in hotspots
- Calls centre staff do not know the local geography
- When reports are made, there isn't any follow up by the police so the person reporting is unaware of the outcome
- Many individual officers are highly regarded but there are too few of them

The Project Team also invited comments relating to the Community Confidence Action Research Project itself, with comments received including:

- This has been a good start and hopefully it can extend to other parts of Caithness
- The Project's approach to holding formal and structured Community Conversations has been positive, as it has helped people with an interest to prepare for the meetings and share considered views, rather than just capture off-the-cuff remarks

Conclusions and Key Findings

- Over half of respondents were unaware of any of the five main initiatives undertaken by local policing. The main area for improvement relates to promoting/advertising events in a way that reaches people.
- Respondents reported having lower levels of trust and confidence in the police in December 2023 and January 2024 compared with 7-8 months earlier.
- Awareness of initiatives appears to have been very important in Wick. Although fewer than half of respondents were aware of the initiatives put in place, those who were aware reported higher levels of trust and confidence.
- People in the Wick / Caithness area continue to say there is a strong sense of community, although the proportion saying this has fallen slightly.
- Comments relating to Wick, and policing in Wick, generally relate to the following themes: policing is good but it is insufficient, with direct contact too limited; drug dealing and antisocial behaviour are leading concerns and are contributing to a reduced quality of life for people living in Wick; the centralisation of policing services is cited as leading to a poorer level of service.

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- Feedback relating to the aims of this Project and the way the Project has worked in Wick is positive, with a view expressed that inviting people to structured, in-depth conversations about policing with materials published in advance, assists people to prepare and offer considered views rather than off-the-cuff comments.