# THE PLACE SURVEY
# LESSONS FOR CONSULTATION

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# RELIABILITY OF PLACE SURVEYS

- Massive amount of data
  - Best available at national comparative level
- Questions about non-response bias
  - Effective samples less than achieved samples
- Questions about reliability – compared with:
  - More random methods
  - Personal interviews
- Considerable uncertainty about relative performance on key indicators!
  - Benchmarking not to be taken too seriously
- Need to keep in context

# Estimating the Overall Scale of PLACE

**Initial distribution sample = 1,315,000 addresses**

**Total questionnaires distributed = 3,365,000 items**

- Initial distribution = 1,315,000
- First reminder = 1,110,000
- Second reminder = 941,000
- Total = c. 3,366,000 questionnaires

**Achieved sample = 515,000 responses**

- Heavily biased towards some types of resident

**Effective sample = 229,000 cases**

**Direct costs (post and mail) c. up to £2.75M**

**PLUS** project management, questionnaire formatting, sampling, survey administration, data entry, data processing, reporting, etc

# PLACE Survey – Typical Response Pattern

## Multiple surveys

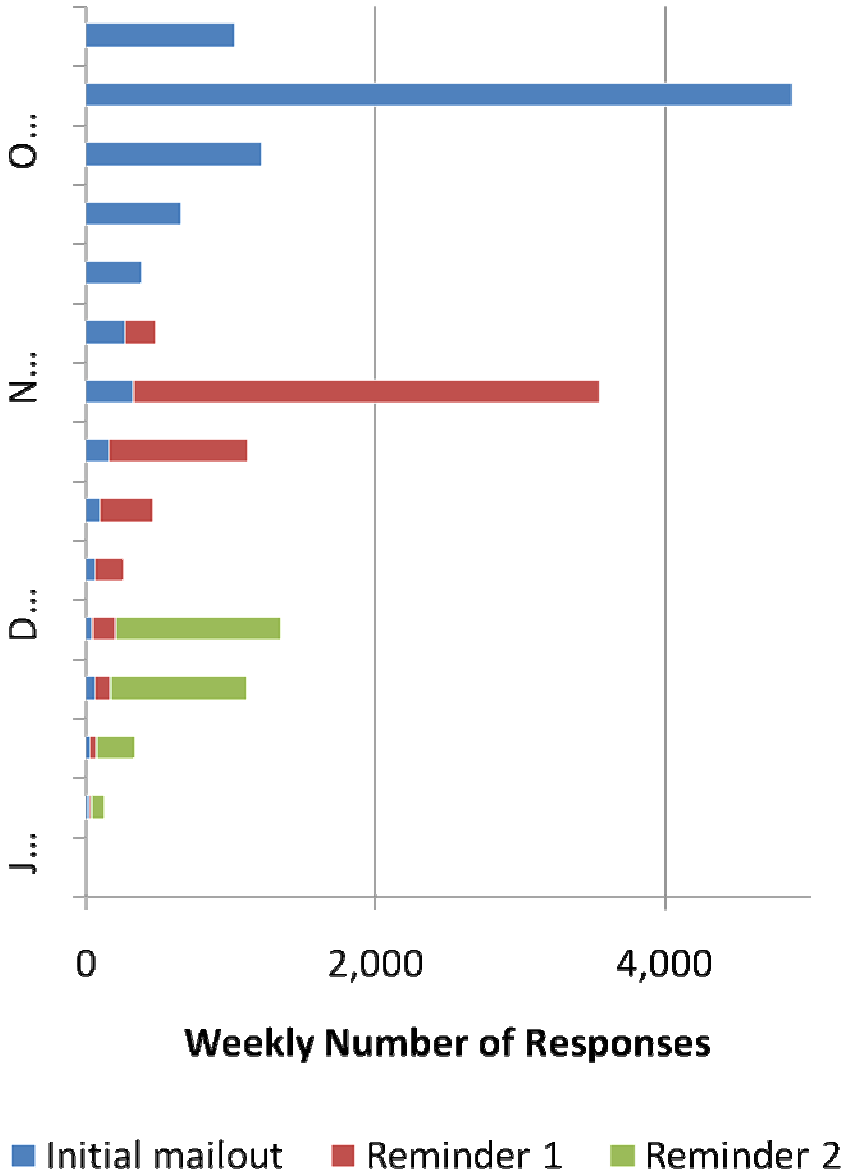
- 11-page questionnaire
- c.1.3M addresses used
- 2 targeted reminders

## 41% response = c. 515K

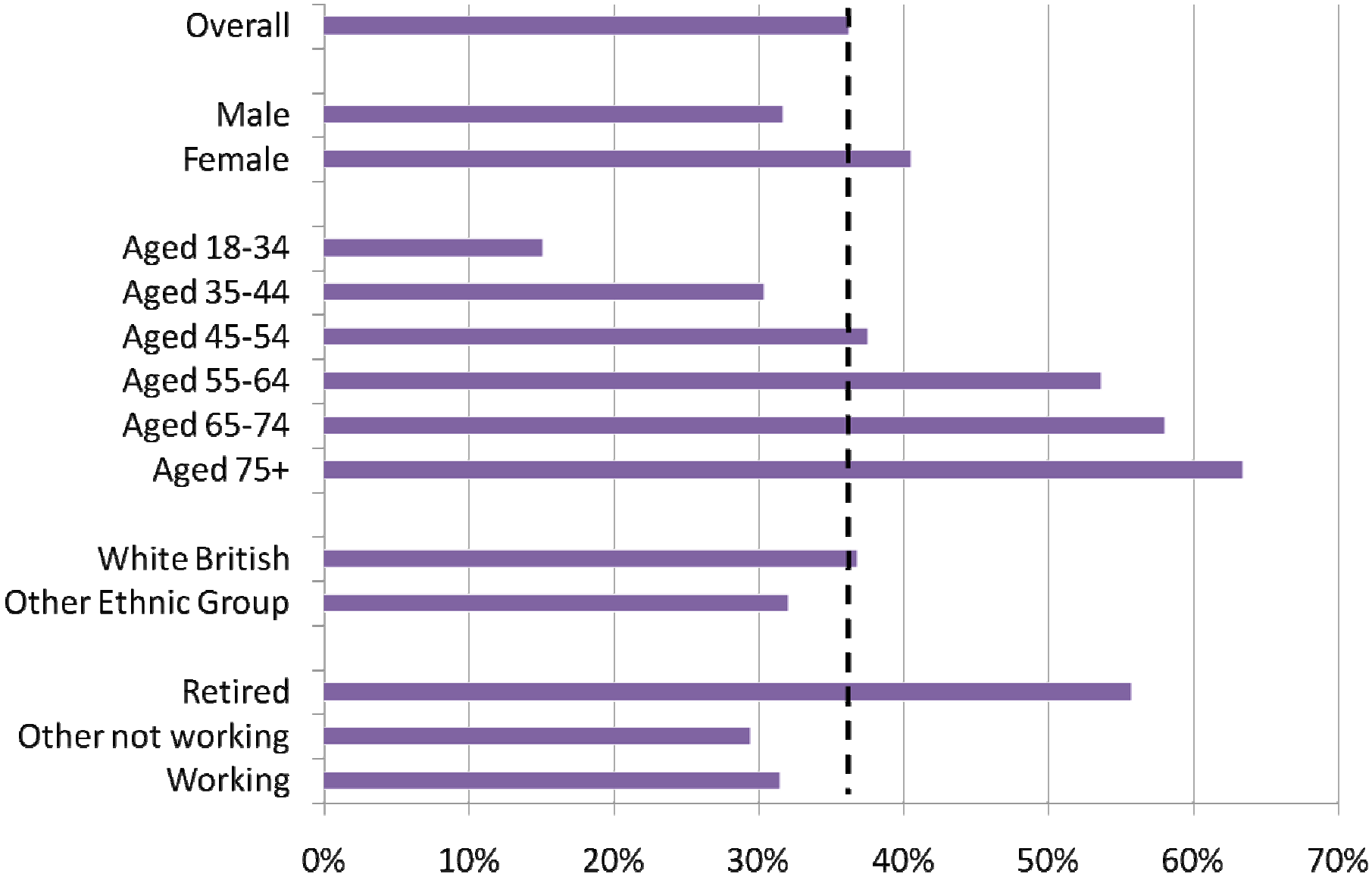
- Average of all 353 LAs
  - **Range from 22% to 62%!**

## Important indicative info

- Random postal sample – BUT...
- Achieved sample self-selecting
- **Best available data?**



# Implied PLACE Responses by Sub-Group (Example)



# KINDS OF SURVEY BIAS

## Sampling error

- Error margins etc
- **On biggish surveys, sampling error is less important than...**

## Sampling design (sample selection bias) eg...

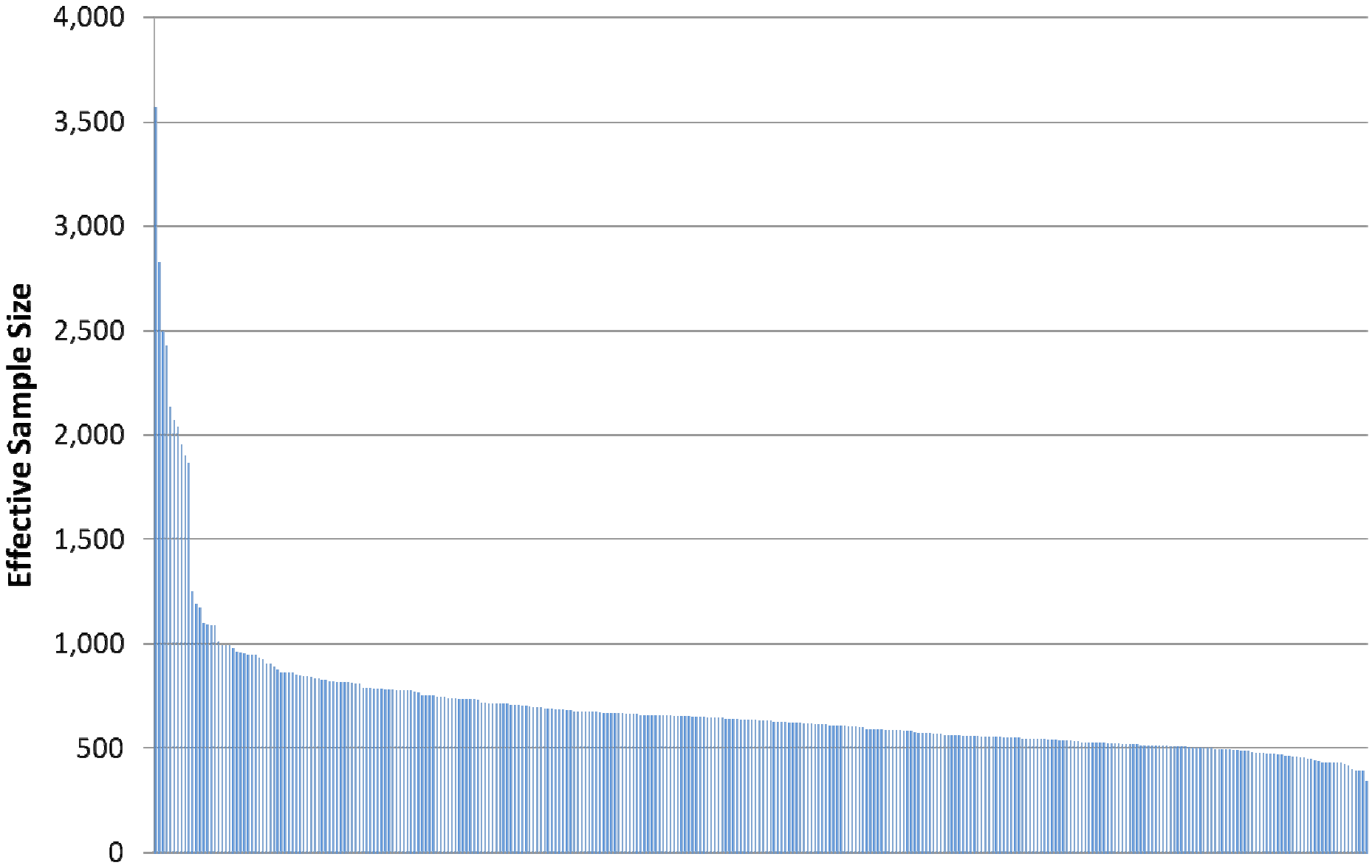
- Quota sampling
- Interview times/places/methods

## Non-response bias – eg Place

- Genuine random selection of contacts
- Big non-response factor
- No control over who responds / how seriously taken
- Heavy weighting by age, gender, ethnicity

→ **Spurious precision?**

# LA sample sizes (after compensating for response bias)



Benchmarking based on NI scores

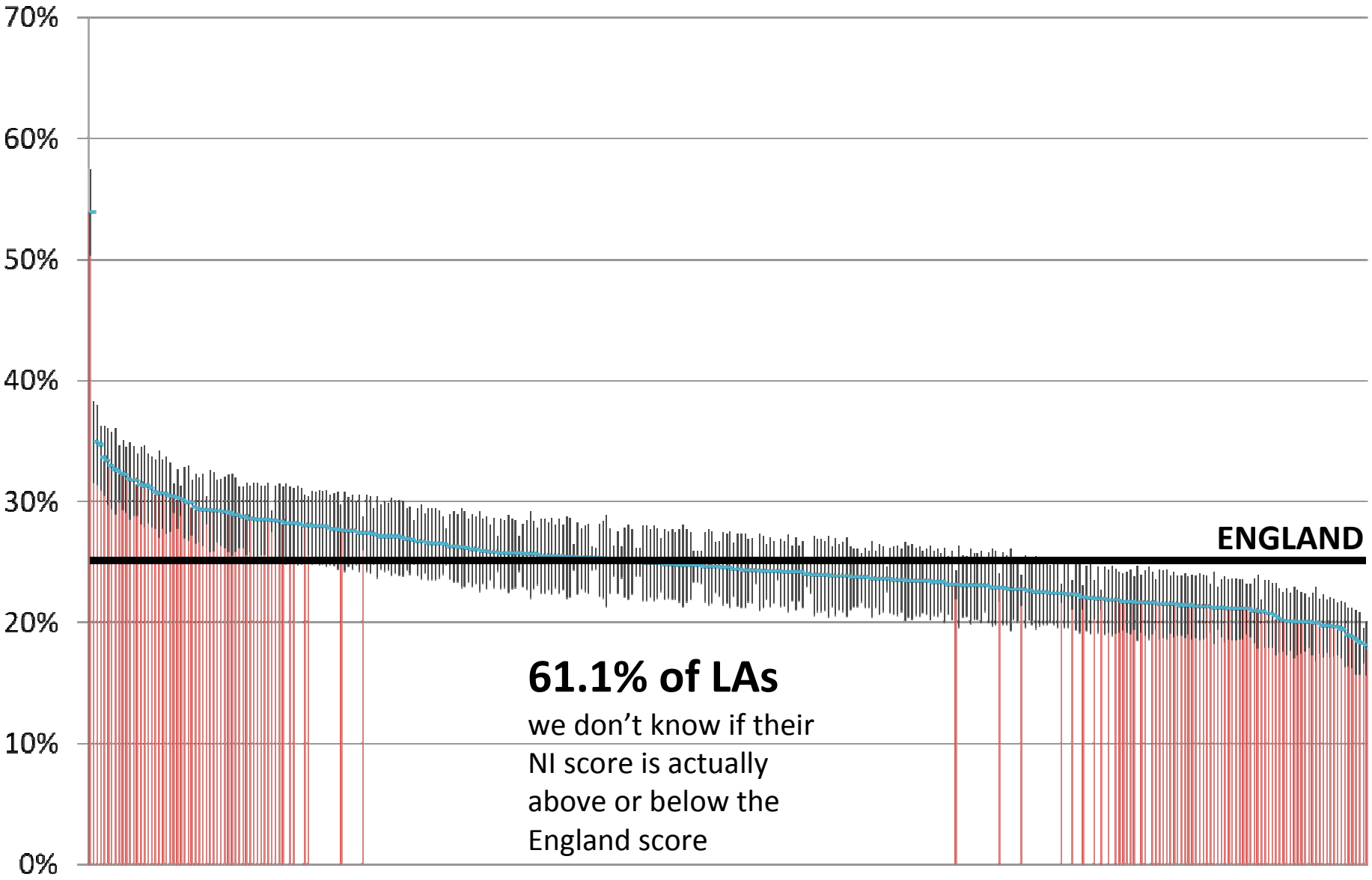
But minor differences in scores mean big differences in rankings

Big impact on benchmarking

Error margins mean many comparisons are impossible

Impossible to say if better or worse than average!

# NI 27: LAs where score is Better or Worse than England



Questions about reliability – compared with:

More random methods

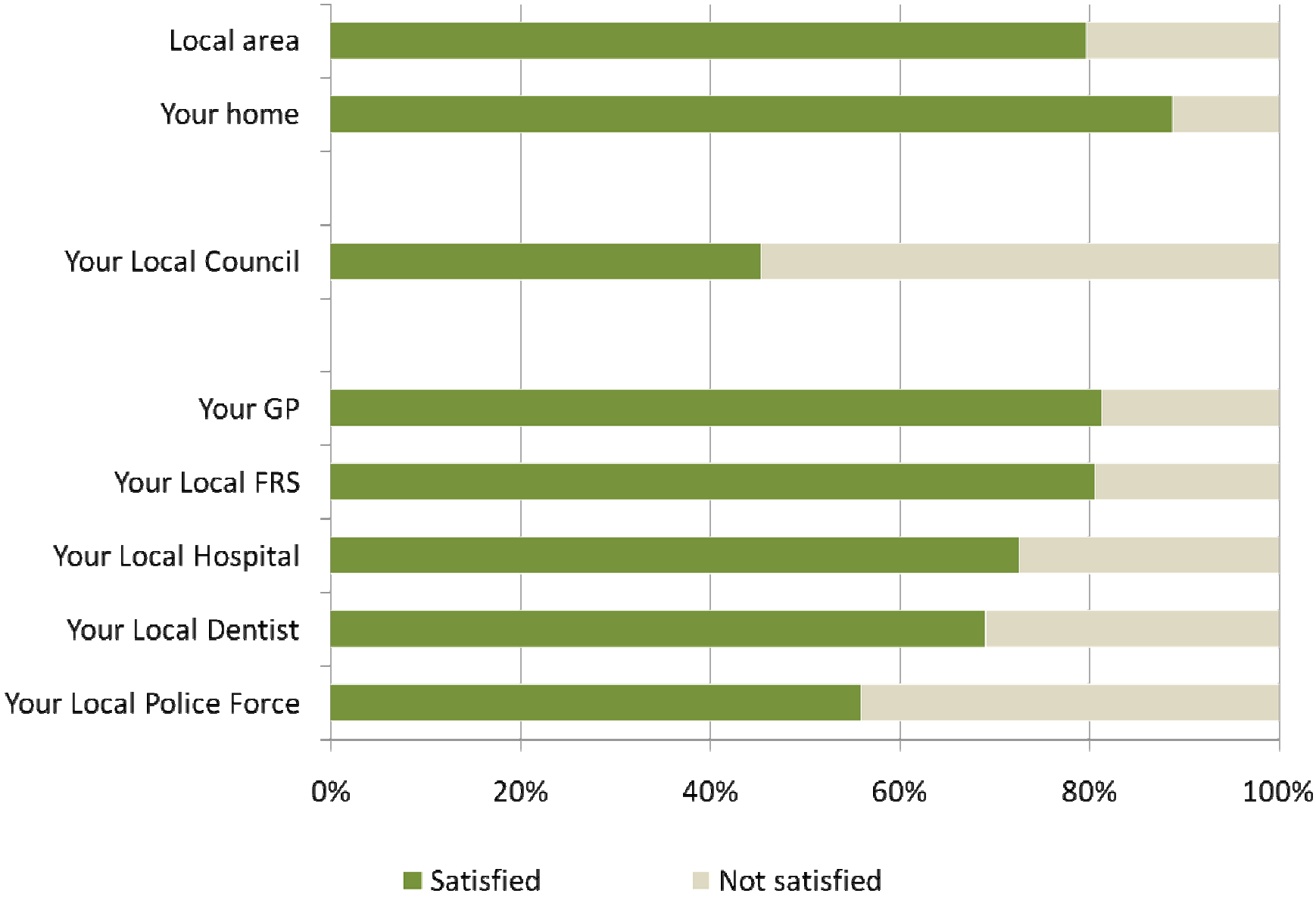
Personal interviews

Random interview methods likely to yield much more favourable findings than Place!

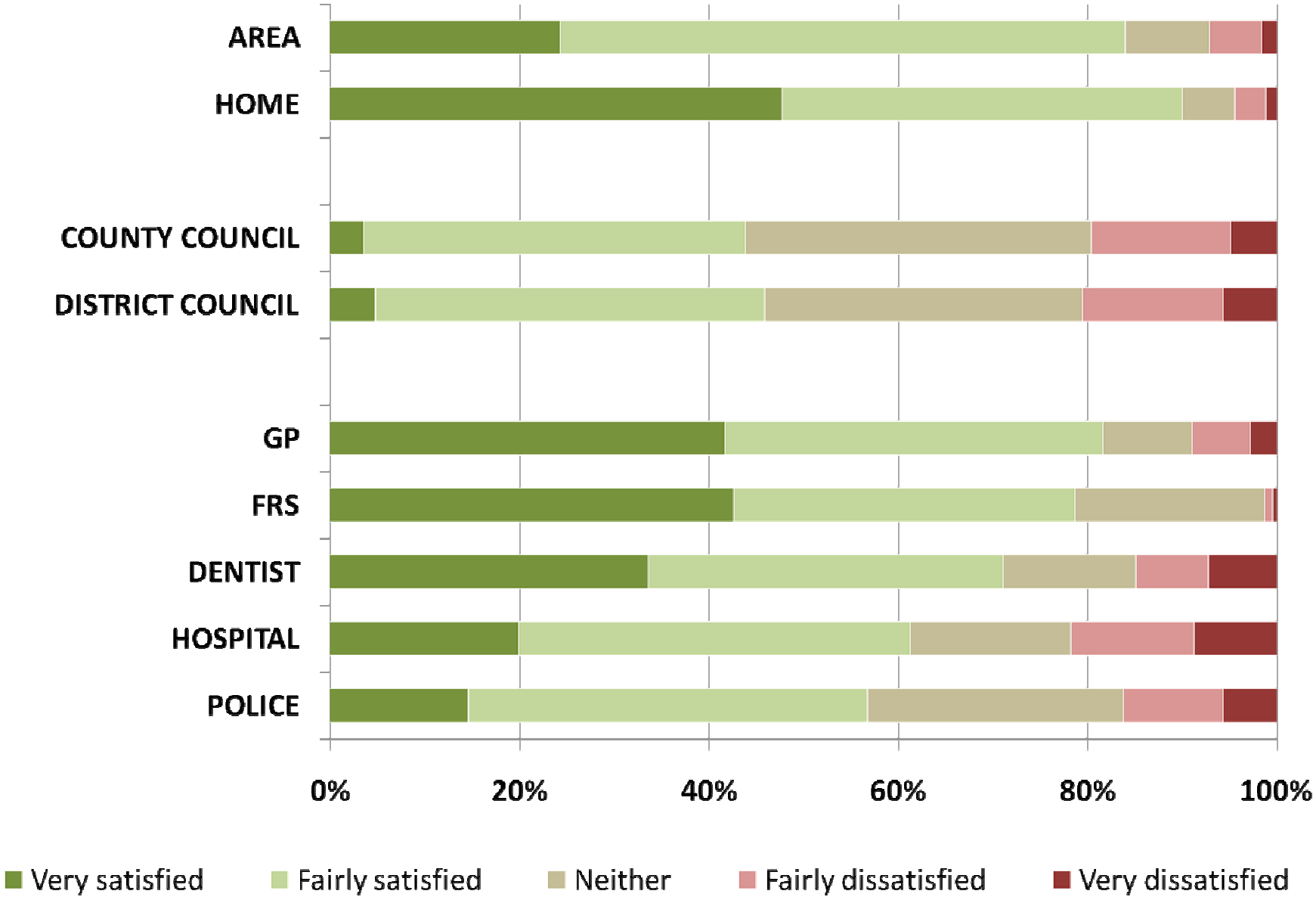
Is satisfaction with local government really lower than other public services?

Is the comparison meaningful?

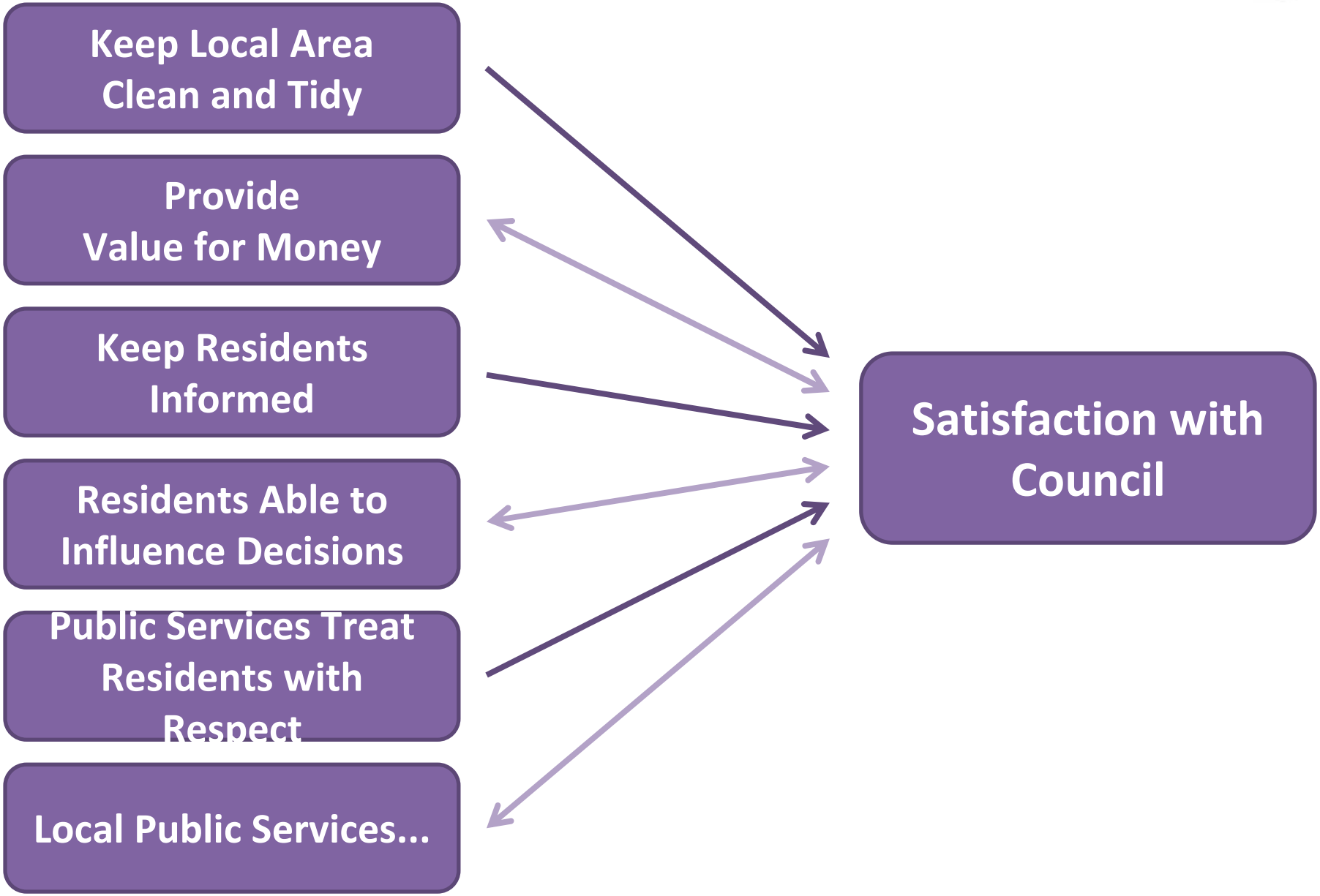
# England: Local Satisfaction/Non-satisfaction



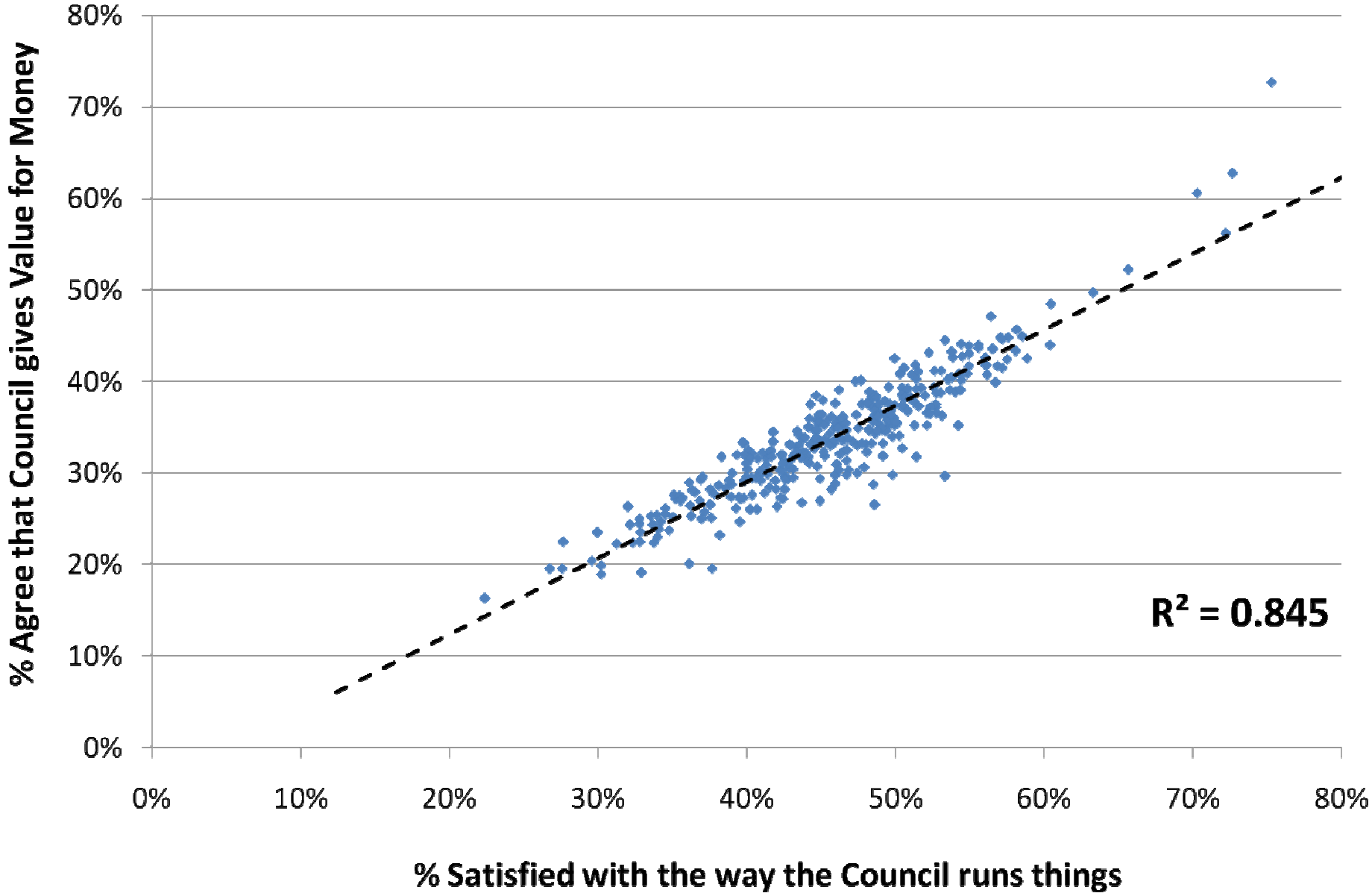
# Levels of Satisfaction / Dissatisfaction (Typical)



# Factors Correlating with Satisfaction with Council



# England LAs: Council Satisfaction / Value for Money



# Satisfaction with Council and Value for Money

## Strong direct correlation between these two factors

–Feeling of Value for Money leads to Satisfaction with Council?

–**or...** Satisfaction with Council leads to Feeling Value for Money?

–Two-way relationship?

## Thinking about the issues...

–Value for money is perceived value for money

–No relationship between perception and actual cost!

–Residents uninformed on value for money

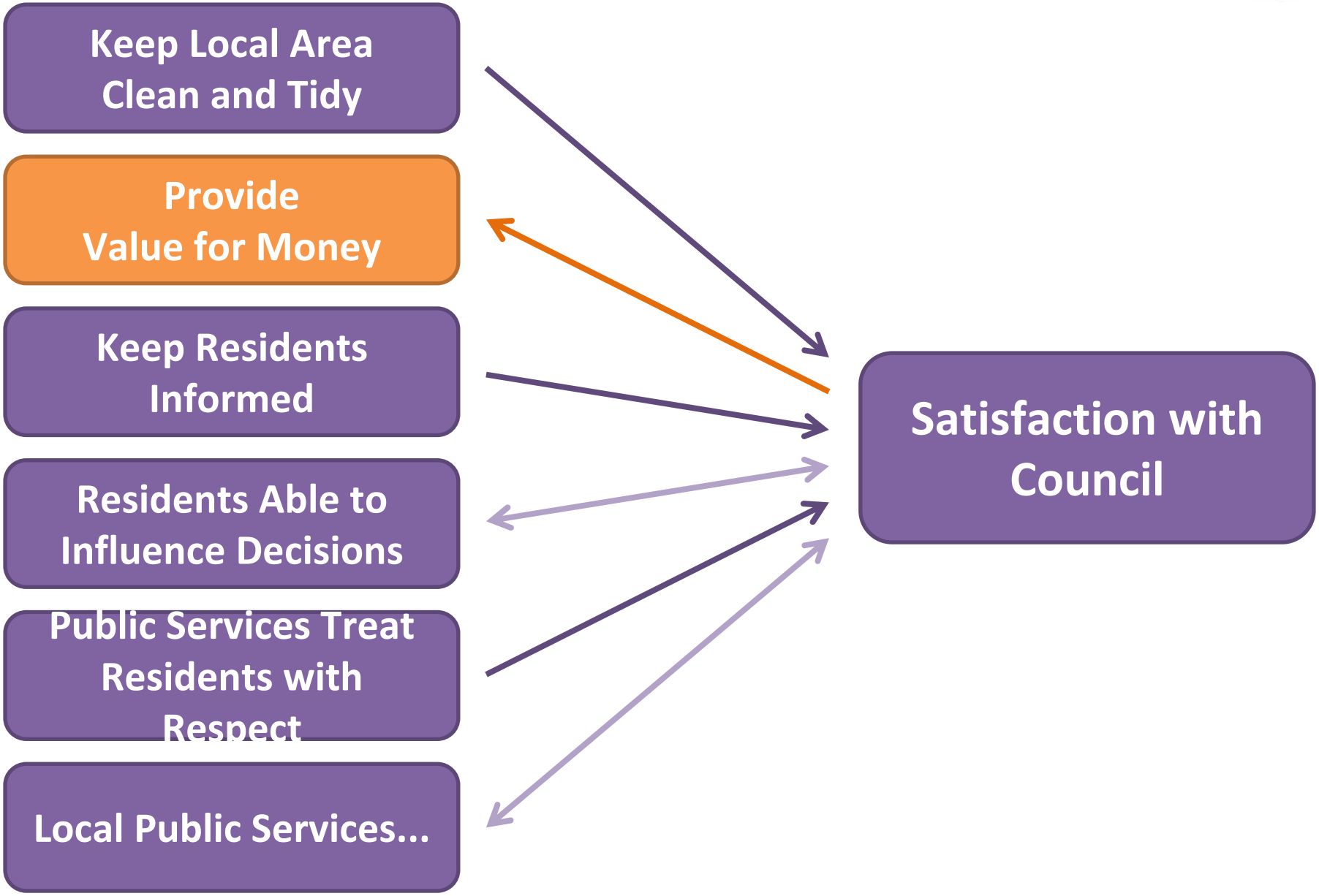
–Some Councils provide information to inform residents

- But keeping residents informed leads to increased satisfaction with Council

## Arguably...

–If residents are satisfied with the Council, they feel they receive Value for Money

# Factors Correlating with Satisfaction with Council



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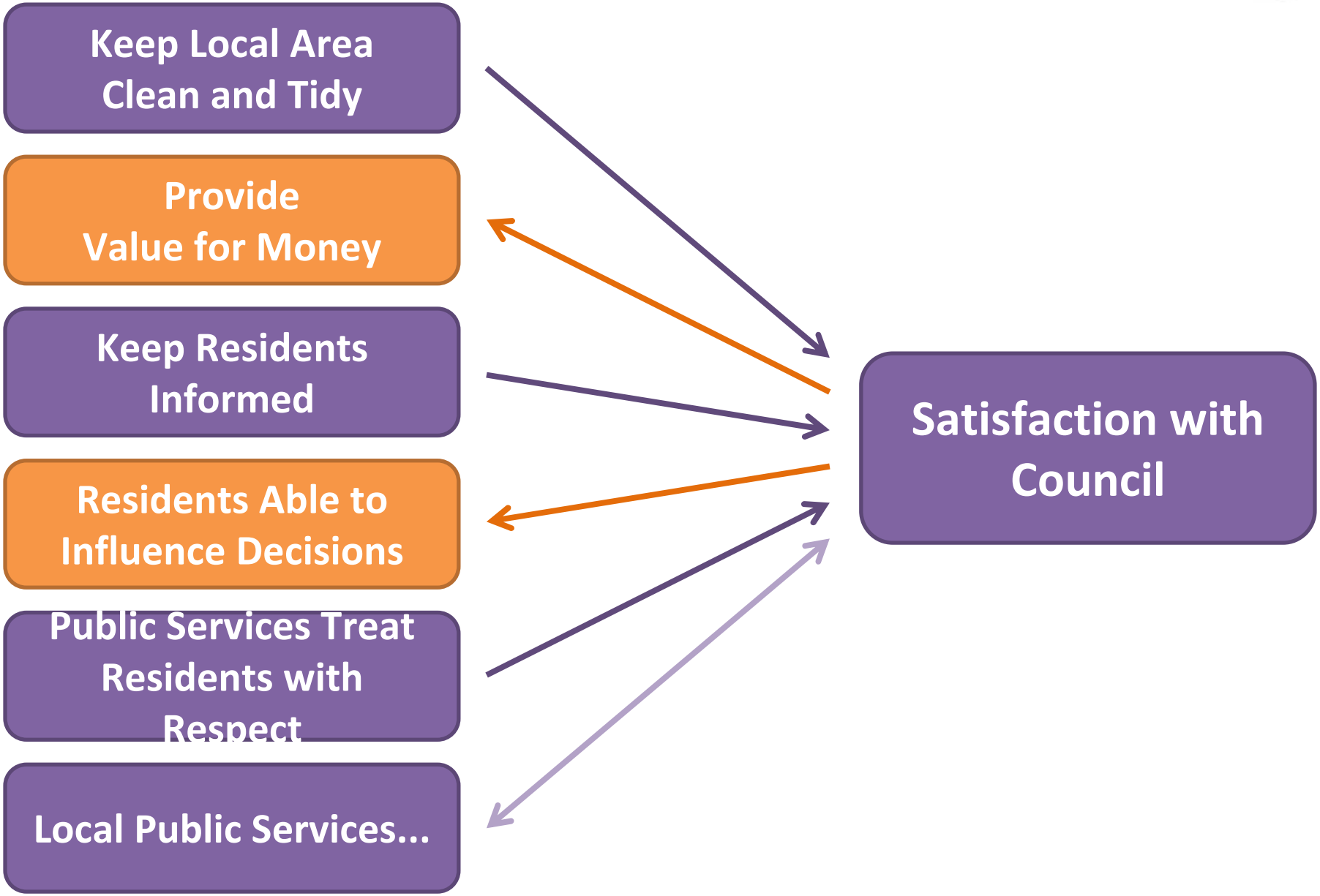

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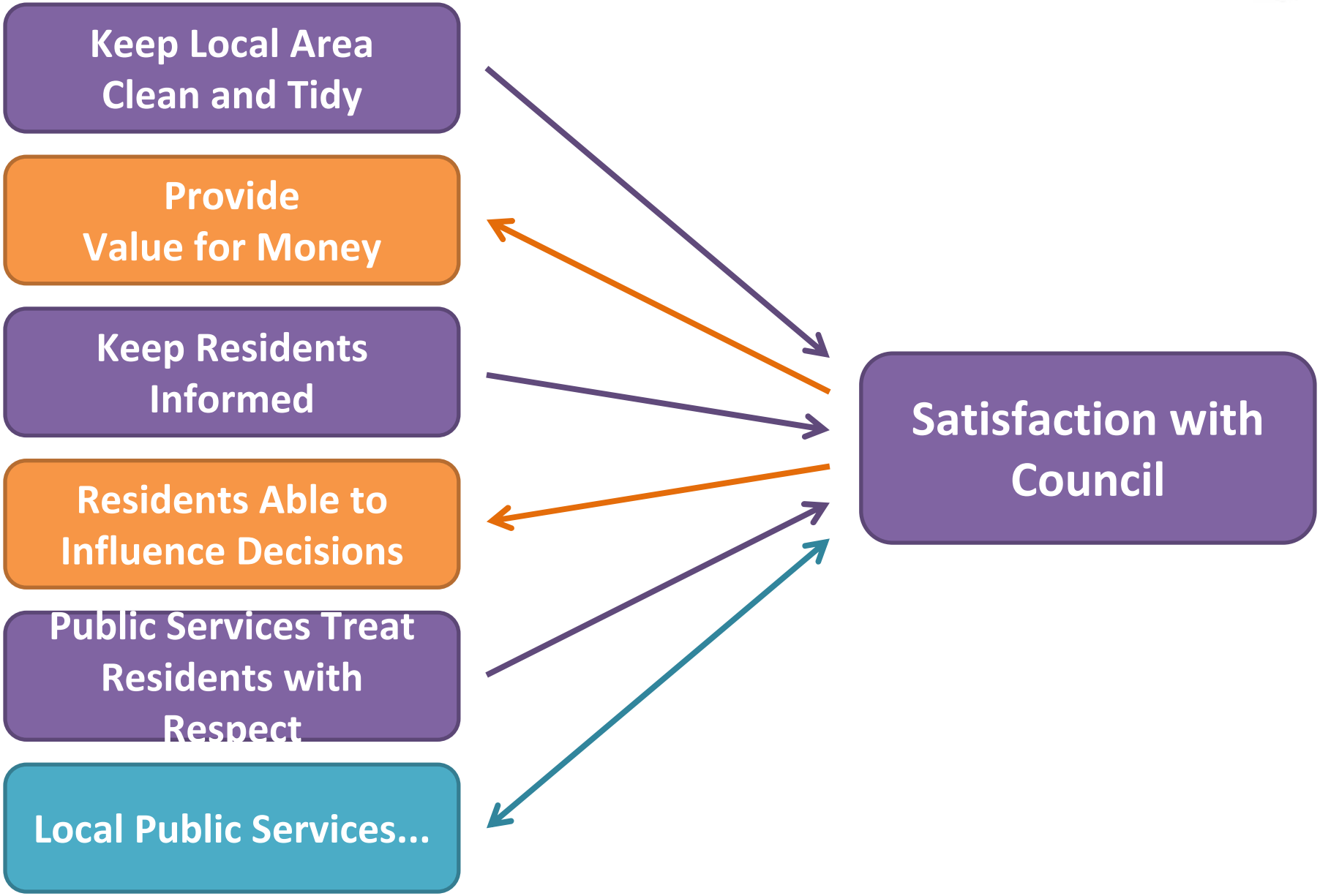

# Satisfaction with Local Council

## Those who are satisfied overall are...

- More likely to be satisfied with individual council services
- More likely to have been treated with respect by public services
- More likely to feel informed
- More likely to be satisfied with their local area

## Residents who are satisfied are more likely to...

- Feel they receive value for money
- Feel they can influence local decisions
- Feel that local public services
  - Are working to make the area safer
  - Are working to make the area cleaner and greener
  - Promote the interests of local residents
  - Act on concerns of local residents
  - Treat all types of people fairly

# IMPLICATIONS FOR TOTAL PLACE

**Main Place indicators are about area and community**

- IMD closely reflects many NI scores

**'Area/cohesion' views not closely related to Council services**

- Other than "keeping public land free of litter and refuse"

**Implications for CAA?**

- Difficult to improve performance for some NIs through service delivery or even value for money
- Problems of penalising good Councils in poor areas

**Implications for LA policies?**

- Partnership working
- Tackling deprivation
- Research on community problems
- Avoid spin by trying to manage perceptions

**Implications for the future of Place...?**

# IMPLICATIONS FOR TOTAL PLACE

- Significant costs to Place surveys
- Understand and *use* the information
  - Examining trends in satisfaction
    - Correlations with dissatisfaction
    - Community, demographic and service issues
  - Social cohesion in 'problem' areas/communities
  - Anti-social behaviour – evaluating campaigns
- Inter-agency workshop seminars

# IMPLICATIONS FOR TOTAL PLACE

- Use more rigorous survey methodologies
  - Phone/F2F interviews over postal surveys
- County/District trackers valuable
  - Samples to enable local-level analysis
- Use wider range of questions
  - Target problems in communities
    - Monitoring Social Cohesion with less bland measures
- Use qualitative research
  - Rigorous research design
  - Real depth of understanding

# Birmingham City Council

People's Panel

Recruited and trained 20 mystery customers

One day a week for three months

Housing services for tenants and private sector

Realistic, penetrating and insightful

Good basis for collaboration with 3rd sector

# Hertfordshire Public Engagement Partnership

Ambitious and distinctive

County, Districts/Boroughs, Police Authority and Constabulary, PCTs

Considerable co-ordination

Good basis for collaboration with 3rd sector

Single provider – partnership relationship

Fosters trust and collaboration

# THANKS FOR LISTENING...
# ANY QUESTIONS…

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