

July 2020

‘West End Online’ consultation results

There is a significant exclusion in the West End related to online access and associated problems, such as computer ownership. This has been known for some time but the Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the issue.

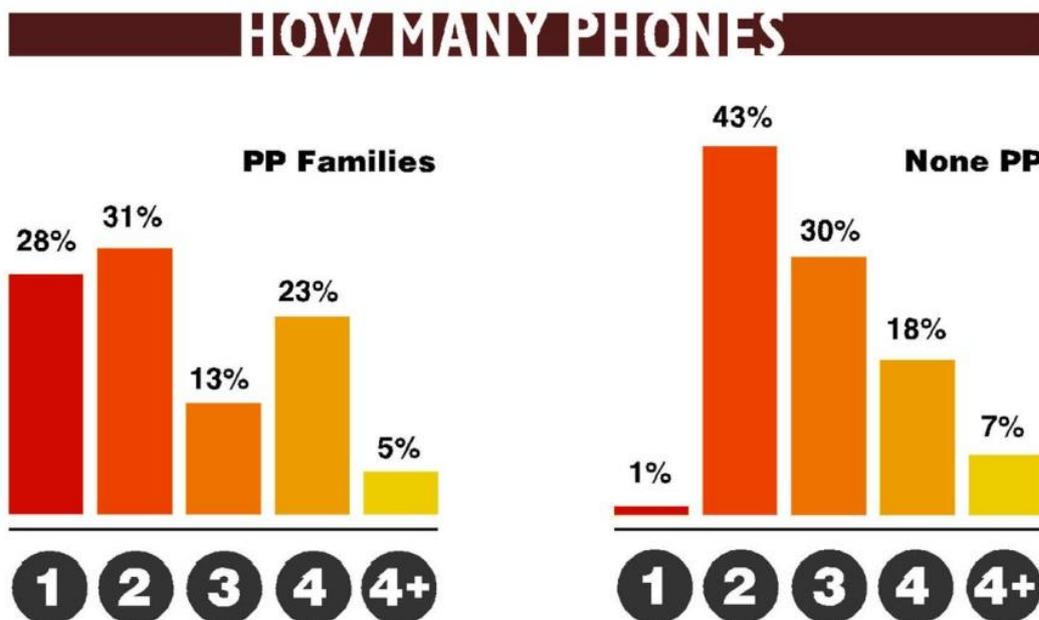
Amongst local organisations both primary schools in the area have experienced problems during the crisis with online exclusion of **school families** and have indicated a clear link with those already facing other forms of social exclusion. In order to better understand this one of the primary schools agreed to help with a survey of their families about online activity using ‘pupil premium’ support to schools (which helps improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils) as a rough metric for families that may also experience wider social exclusion.¹ The main results below have been broken down on that basis to see what conclusions may be drawn.²

With regard to this report we have used the more comprehensive phrase ‘social exclusion’ rather than ‘poverty’ although the issues related to poverty are clear.

Results

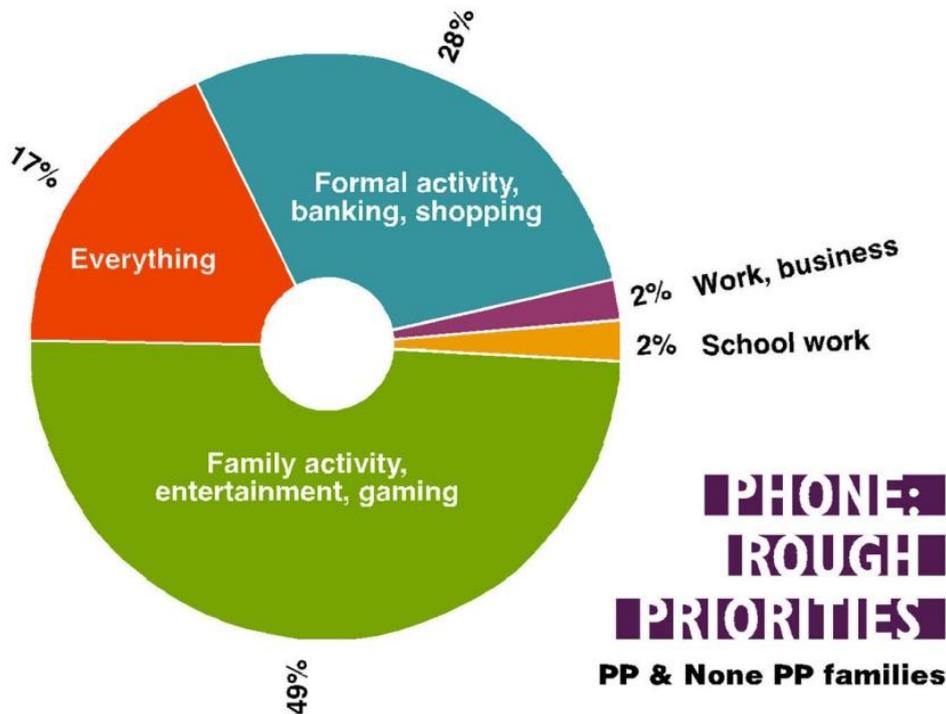
Families were asked to respond to some basic questions.

Q1: How many people in your home family have their own phone?



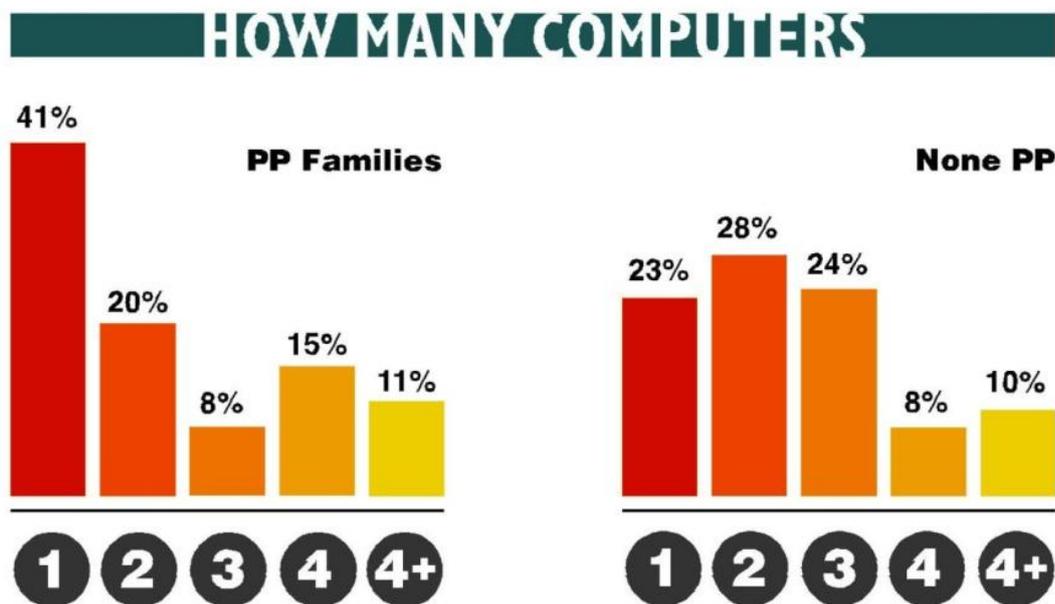
The results show a clear shift in emphasis for those having significantly less numbers of phones per family and therefore less potential access through them. It is of some note that 28% families within the pupil premium criteria had only one household phone compared to 1% of other families.³

Q2: Can you tell us what online activity those phones are used for...



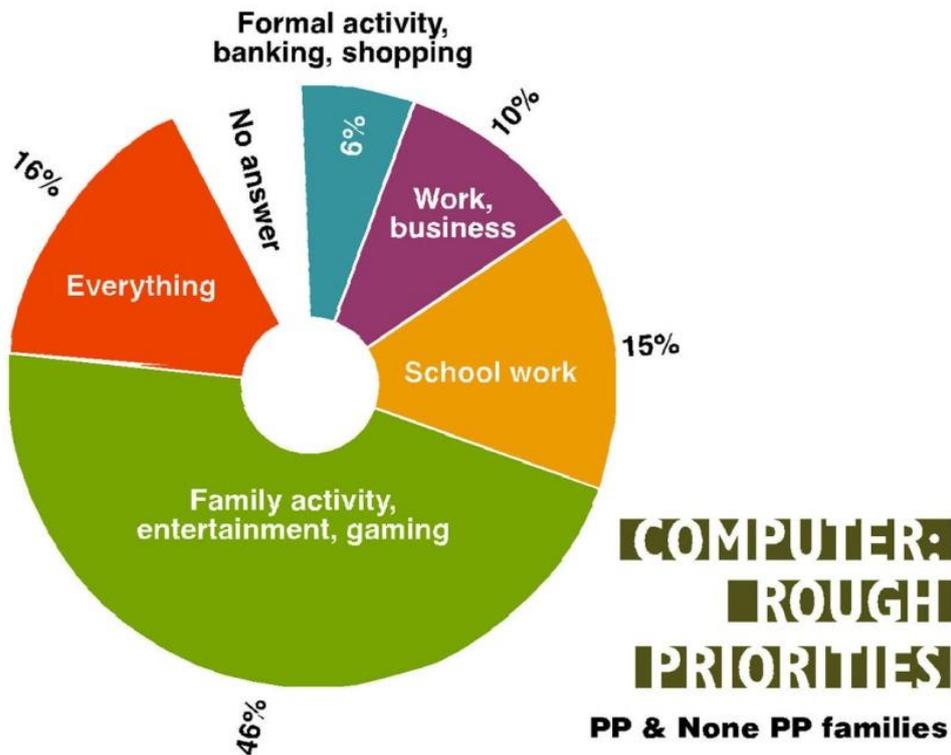
The layout of the questionnaire meant some responded to this question as a single choice and others followed the intended multiple options answers. Therefore we can only infer some potential prioritisation rather than any exact use of phones.

Q3: How many computers / tablets do you have in your family home?



Those families meeting the pupil premium criteria are far less likely to have multiple computers to use or share compared with other families that show a much more even spread. Breaking down the figures for those owning between 1 and 3 devices shows those meeting pupil premium criteria own approximately one third of the number of devices that other families own.⁴ A small percentage of families indicated having no computers at all.

Q4: Tell us what online activity those computers / tablets are used for...



Again the layout of the questionnaire meant some responded to this question as a single choice and others followed the intended multiple options answers, so we can only infer potential prioritisation rather than an exact usage of devices.⁵ Comparison with answers on phone priorities shows some interesting differences.

Two families indicated they had no computer devices at all and it may be useful to note for future reference that some respondents identified devices in their homes individually for purely work or recreational purpose, rather than combined function.

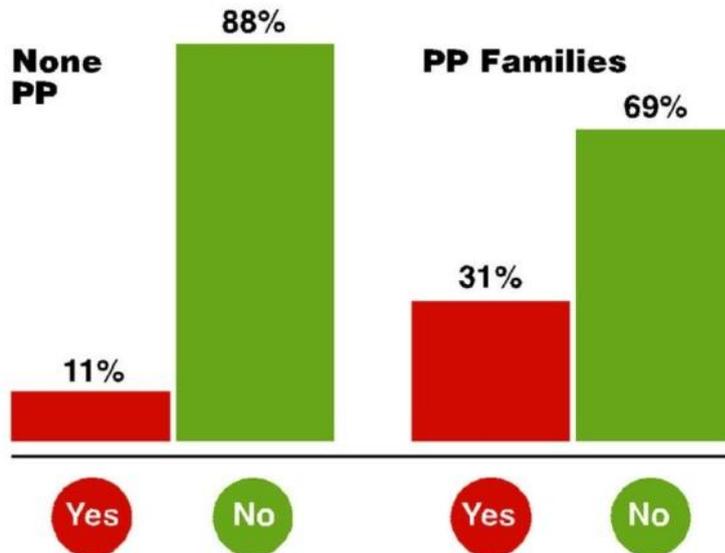
Q5: Do you have problems with either phones or computers in terms of access or working online? Please tell us what they are...

Looking at the graph (below) we can again note the contrast for those within the pupil premium criteria is marked, with 31% experiencing problems compared to 11%. Even collectively the results show that nearly one fifth of families in the West End experience problems of one kind or another in term on online access.

The problems identified were the same across all families. Reasons included old or failing equipment and software, along with poor connectivity of device or the location.

The practical challenge of not having enough devices to share was a noted response. One comment summarises this - "One laptop between myself and three children causes arguments. My laptop was provided by my work to assist me when working from home. The children also need it for school work."

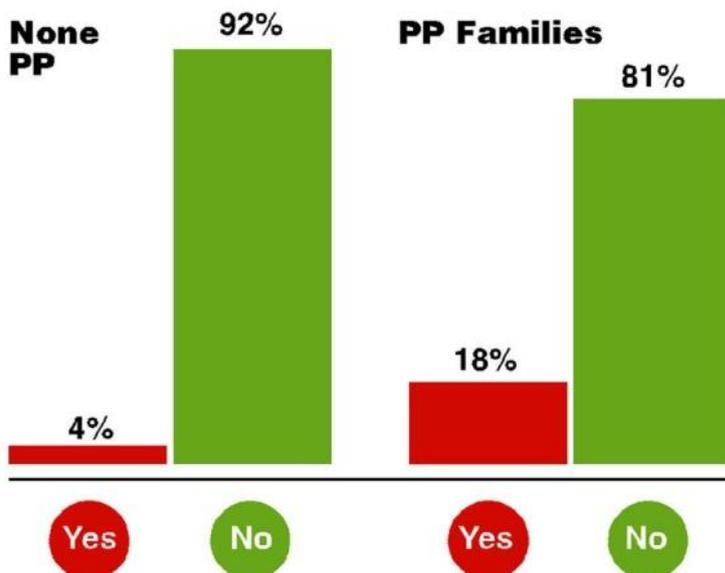
ACCESS PROBLEMS?



Q6: Do you have problems with costs of equipment or things like data costs and charges? Please tell us what they are...

The contrast between families meeting pupil premium criteria is again marked with 18% experiencing problems compared to 4%. Problems included (a) unaffordability of additional devices, (b) low income and (c) the high cost of data / installation.

COST PROBLEMS



Q7: If there was one thing someone could do to help solve those problems what would it be?

The majority of solutions indicated gaining access, loan or assistance to get another computer. A limited number of responses mentioned help with other access and internet costs. These answers were across all families responding (irrespective of pupil premium) and it was interesting to note that 7% of those who said there was no problem indicated another device or loan of one would still be of help.

Conclusion

This survey was done both online and via one to one phone calls. 175 families responded and this provides a solid foundation in terms of results. Approximately one third (35%) of families responding met the criteria for pupil premium.

A summary of the basic findings are...

- Digital and online exclusion is an issue for West End families with anywhere between one fifth and one third of all families experiencing problems.
- Families experiencing social exclusion suffer a significant increase in problems related to online exclusion compared with other families, with less phone access and significantly less access through computer devices.
- Phones are clearly not a meaningful replacement for school work computers.
- Problems are caused by lack of enough computers, sub-standard devices and the cost of new or additional equipment. Limits on shared usage is an issue.
- All school families may benefit from assistance or loan of computer devices.
- These results cover **school families** and findings for other groups or individuals within the West End would likely be different.

We offer our appreciation and thanks to all those who helped deliver this piece of work. Any reference to these findings should seek permission from and properly credit West End Morecambe, Big Local. www.westendmorecambe.co.uk

JR July 2020

¹ Pupil Premium is known metric for those experiencing social exclusion or problems related to poverty. More information about pupil premium can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-premium/people-premium

² Percentages have generally been rounded up or down with the exception of single responses. These results are drawn from a basic questionnaire and as such are open to some margin of error but they provide robust enough results to justify the findings.

³ The figures on ownership are useful even if some mistakenly included none smartphones.

⁴ The numbers indicating 34 devices compared to 96.

⁵ There was some initial imbalance with 'work, employment and business' and the priority of 'school work' but these were ironed out when 'all of the above' responses were factored in.