

Blueberry Marketing Solutions

City of York Council Micro Grants Scheme Evaluation Campaign Summary

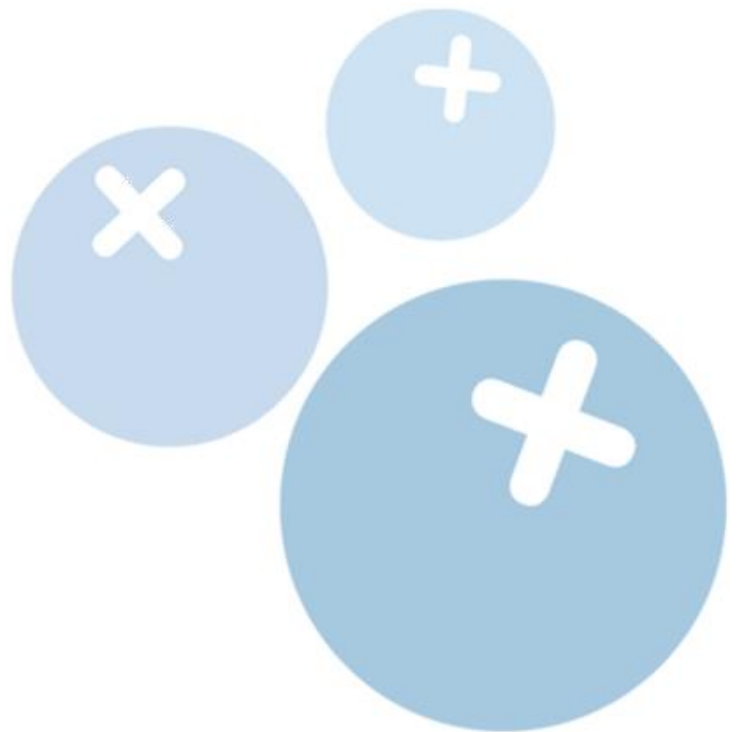
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1.0 Executive Summary

In 2020, City of York Council set up a pioneering Micro Grant scheme. The objective of the grant funding was to support small and micro businesses through the economic disruption resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic after the announcement of a national lockdown on 23rd March. In total, 1,114 small and micro business received grants through this scheme.

To evaluate the impact of the Micro Grants on the recipient businesses, in February 2021 City of York Council commissioned Blueberry Marketing Solutions (Blueberry) to conduct a telephone research project to evaluate the programme. This document provides an overview of the research and the key findings, trends and themes identified.

In total, 318 responses were gathered, equivalent to 28.5% of all grant recipients. The survey structure was designed to provide quantitative data and more in-depth qualitative insights, including more detailed case studies to illustrate the impact of the grant and how it supported recipient businesses through the economic disruption they faced.

The evaluation research identified that the scheme had a number of interlinked economic, welfare and wellbeing benefits. Firstly, 26.4% of business had been at risk of permanently ceasing to trade over the last year and had avoided this outcome. Across all grant recipients, this equates to ~294 businesses which avoided this outcome. Of these 66.7% were flagged as referencing the grant contributing to business survival, demonstrating a tangible impact from the grant in avoiding some of the potential risks generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, qualitative feedback from businesses demonstrated a wide diversity in the ways the grant was used to enable survival whilst also providing a platform for business innovation, adaption and growth. Our thematic analysis of these results demonstrates that in many cases the grant allowed recipients to invest in adapting or diversifying their businesses, ensuring they could continue trading through the pandemic period. In addition, the report highlights that many businesses identified innovative and creative avenues for generating revenue which could provide a platform for continued growth and innovation in the future. For example, 35.2% of respondents referenced the grant contributing to investment in equipment, technology or materials, 25.5% referenced the grant contributing to digitalisation of the business and 17.6% referencing the grant contributing to marketing investment. In some cases, businesses had highly positive stories to share of new client wins and continued growth throughout the past year.

In addition, the report highlights that the grant also had significant welfare and wellbeing impacts. 26.1% of respondents referenced the grant contributing to ongoing living costs. Given that 57% of the businesses provide the main household income and that 56% of the respondents reside in a household with three or more members, this demonstrates the widespread reach of the grant from a welfare perspective. Additionally, 10.4% of respondents referenced the positive wellbeing impact of the grant support.

This research therefore supports the conclusion that the Micro Grants scheme had a significant contribution to York's economy, and to the welfare and wellbeing of business owners and their dependents. This is reflected in the attitude and emotional response of the recipients, with 41.8% of respondents expressing a sense of gratitude towards City of York Council as a result of the grant support.

The research also contributes some useful findings on how small and micro businesses within the foundation economy have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they have adapted and diversified in response. In total, 57% of respondents had diversified or adapted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with 42.3% of these respondents having digitalised some or all of their products or services. It also provides insights into the ongoing support requirements of the small and micro business ecosystem across the City of York which will aid decision making on future support targeted at these businesses.

2.0 Background to the project

In 2020, City of York Council set up a pioneering scheme to help Micro Businesses in York through the COVID-19 pandemic. With a total pot of approximately £1 million dedicated to helping these businesses, City of York Council were able to give over 1,000 businesses access to Micro Grants of up to £1,000 each. A key aim of the grant was to provide support to businesses which were not eligible for the grants and support packages introduced at a national level, thus supporting small and micro businesses, and those that were self-employed, within the 'foundation economy'.

In order to assess the impact of the grants, City of York Council commissioned Blueberry Marketing Solutions (Blueberry) to conduct a research exercise evaluating the impact of the grants, to ascertain the effects of the grants from an economic, community, wellbeing and welfare perspective and to inform future support strategies for businesses across York.

2.1 Project Objectives

The objectives of the campaign were multi-faceted, however the primary objective was to understand not just the economic impact of the grants, but also to uncover its wider impacts. Given what has been a turbulent year, with many self-employed and small business owners affected by COVID, the research also aimed to understand how the support has affected the community and recipients' well-being and welfare.

Given the size and profile of the businesses receiving the grant, it was important to adopt a holistic approach and assess the grants in light of both their social and economic benefits to provide a fair assessment of the impact of the scheme on micro businesses. The aim of the research was therefore to unpick the impacts of the grant both from an business and a personal standpoint, to understand how the grant affected the recipients as individuals as well as businesses.

In addition, the research set out to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the grant process in order to provide recommendations for streamlining and developing future support of this nature.

As well as the primary objectives outlined above, the research also aimed to achieve the following:

- To map out the interconnections York businesses have within the region – with each other, the public sector and industry bodies.
- To identify future support provision needs and the thematic areas where support is required.
- To provide insights on internet and transport connectivity and its impact on the business community.
- To generate potential opportunities for collating case studies of the grant scheme's impact.

2.2 Survey Design Considerations & Fieldwork

Given the objective of the project was to provide a holistic assessment of the impacts of the grant, it was crucial that this survey could elicit as much information as possible both in regard to the economic impact and the social impacts on business owners.

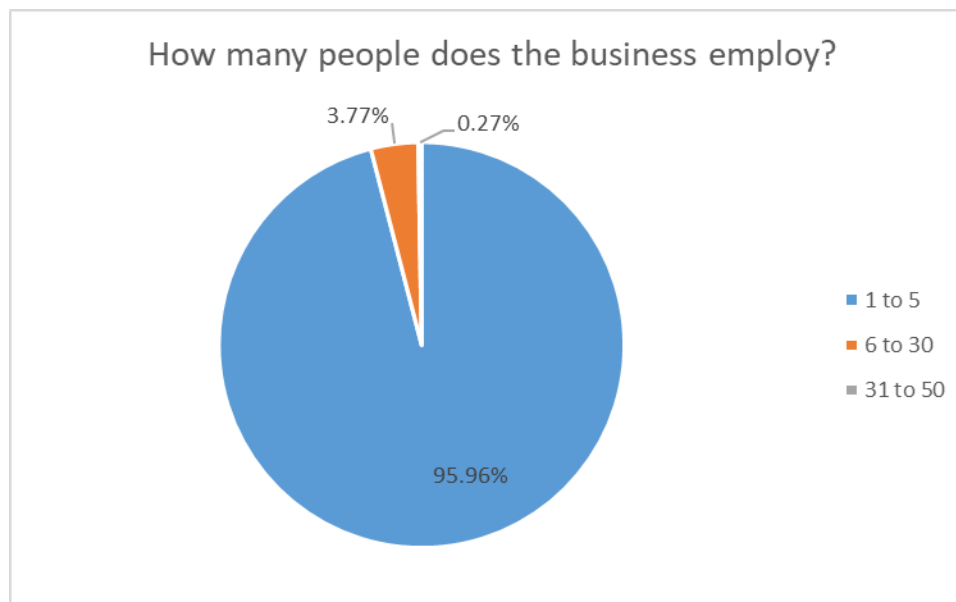
To provide survey data that could be used to inform future support and guidance, this research used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide both statistical analysis on key themes and trends, whilst also providing qualitative information to provide deeper insights into the impact of the grant. Some open-ended questions were therefore incorporated into the survey to elicit more in-depth feedback and provide detailed insights into the personal and business impacts of the scheme, as well as providing case studies showcasing the impact of the grant where this was appropriate.

Following the project inception meeting, the survey question set was developed by Blueberry in consultation with City of York Council. A copy of the survey which formed the basis of this research is included in Appendix 1 of this document.

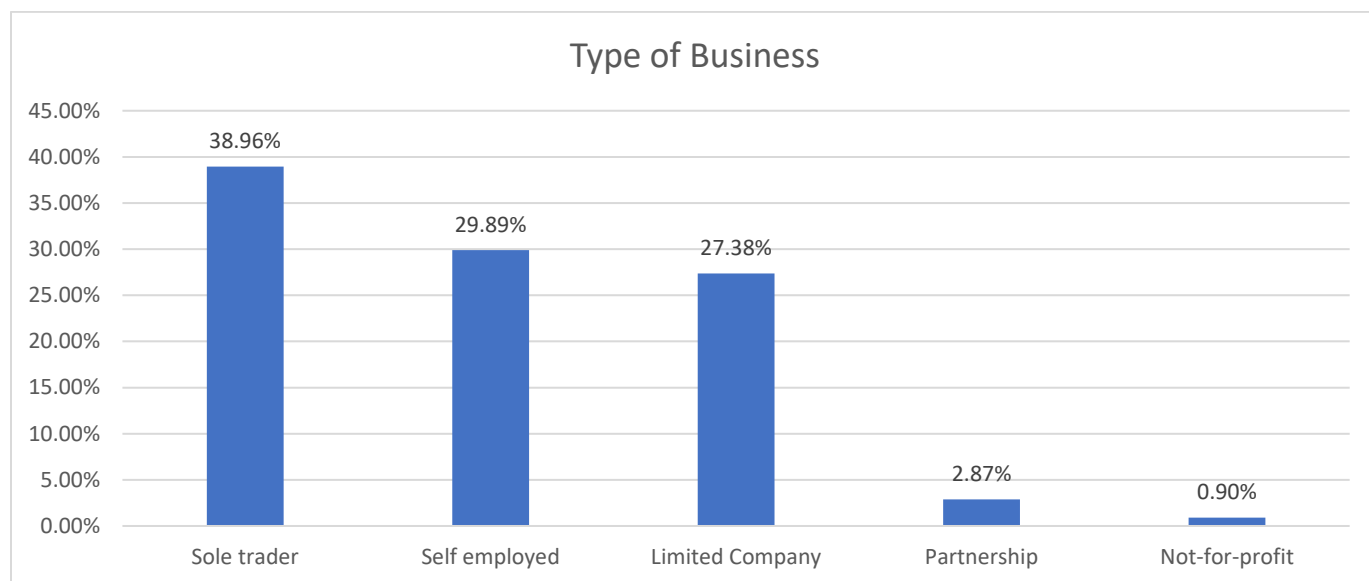
2.3 Overview of Grant Recipients

Blueberry were provided with details for all businesses who had received a grant, which totalled 1,114 businesses. Some data was gathered on the profile of the grant applicants as part of the online application process, which provides some initial insight into the profile of recipient businesses.

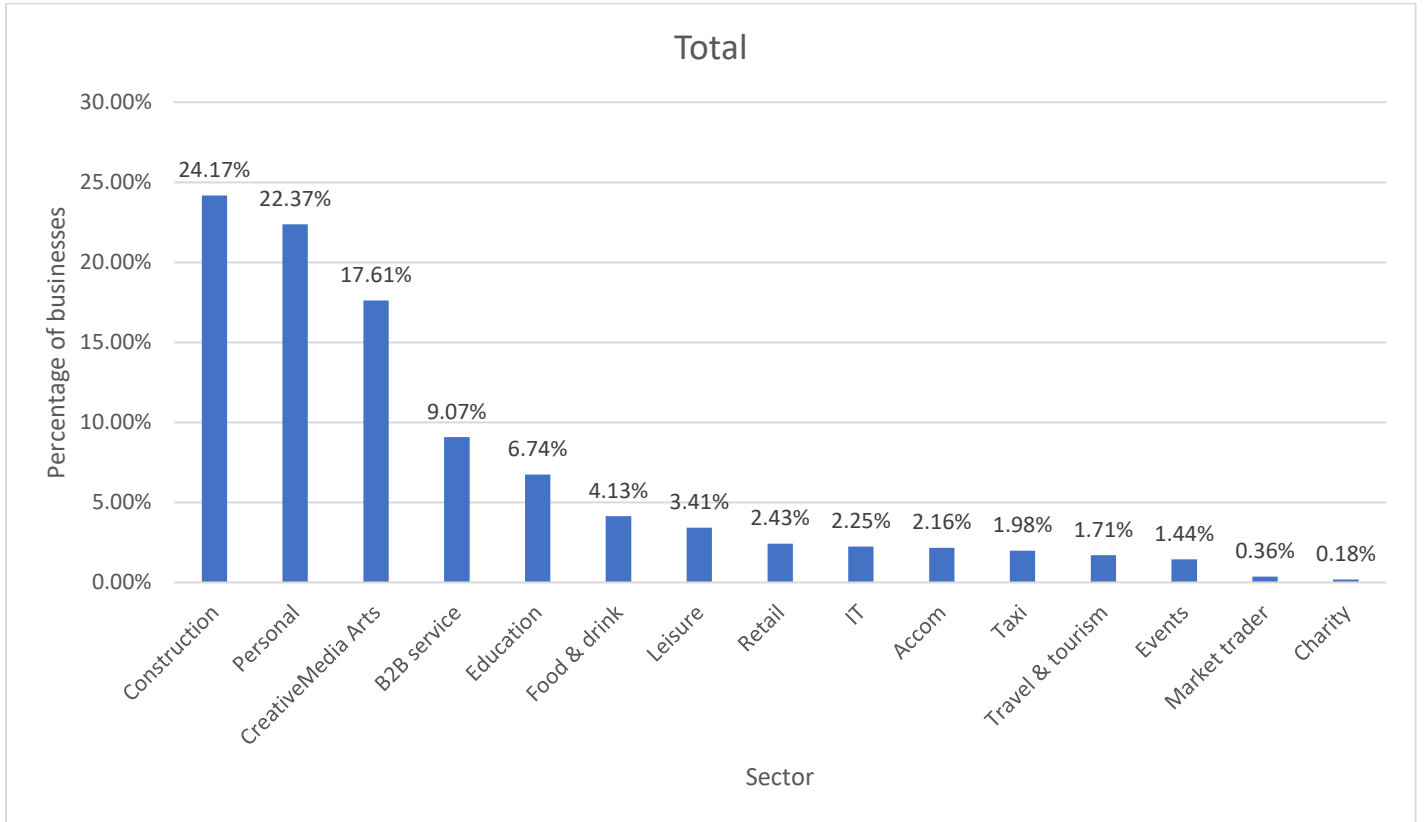
In terms of employee sizes, the recipients were heavily weighted towards micro-businesses (1-5 employee businesses make up 96.0% of the data).



In terms of the business type, a high proportion of businesses are sole traders (39.0%) or self-employed (29.9%) with only 27.4% being limited companies.



When applying for the grant, recipients self-reported their business activity within a free text field in the online form. This was aggregated into a number of top-level sector descriptions by the economic development team at City of York Council and these are summarised in the bar chart below. There was a cross sector mix of businesses, however 64.1% of grant recipients fall within three sectors: Construction (24.2%), Personal Services (22.4%) and Creative & Arts (17.6%).



3.0 Micro Grant Scheme Survey Results

This section summarises the quantitative and qualitative data gathered during the course of the survey, from across the 318 respondents. Further thematic analysis and discussion is provided in section 4.0.

3.1 Question One – Areas of support

The aim of this question was to act as an easy lead into the feedback, providing a soft opening to the survey and opening up the respondent to further conversation. Although this question did not require any detailed feedback from the businesses, it allowed us to identify which areas of support were of greatest relevance, so that this can inform any future support packages.

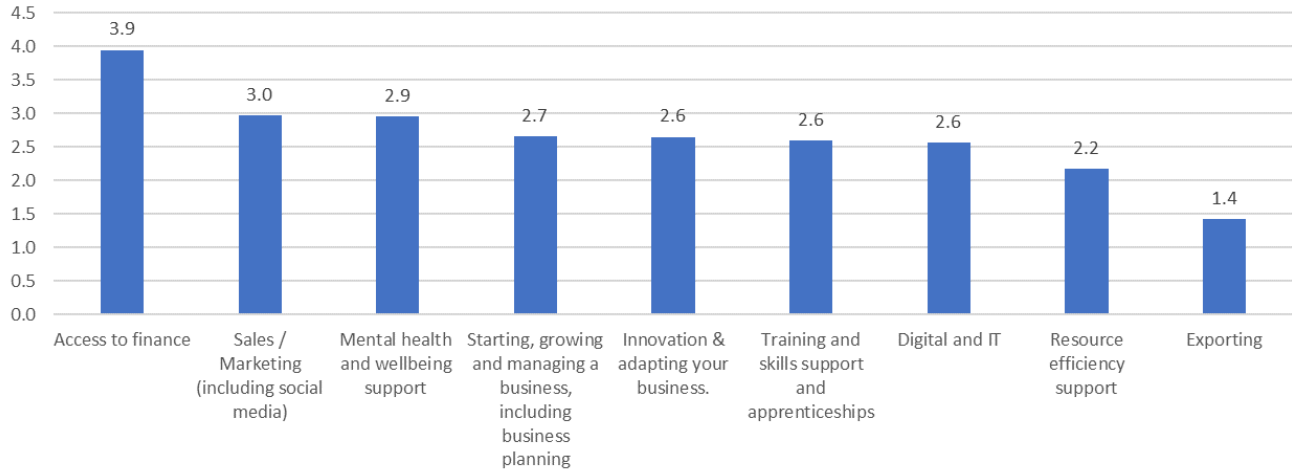
Question Wording: *Firstly, we're looking at what type of support is of most value to businesses across things such as skills, business resilience, climate change, networking, grants, exporting etc and so how valuable would you say the following things would be to you as a business, to help improve competitiveness on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is not very valuable and 5 is very valuable?*

- *Sales / Marketing (including social media)*
- *Starting, growing and managing a business, including business planning*
- *Digital and IT*
- *Exporting/Expanding into new overseas markets*
- *Innovation & adapting your business*
- *Resource efficiency / carbon reduction support (reducing your environmental impact, for example, reducing your energy consumption)*
- *Training and skills support and apprenticeships*
- *Mental health and wellbeing support (for you and your employees)*
- *Access to finance*

This question provided a lead into the rest of the survey, and also provides quantitative data to allow future support to be developed and tailored according to the needs of the business community. However, some caution should be taken when interpreting these results as representative of the full business population given the data sampled was specifically focussed on grant recipients.

As shown below, the most popular area of support was access to finance, with mental health and wellbeing, training and sales and marketing also proving highly rated. This looks to mirror some of the key themes explored in section 4.0.

Average Ratings for Different Areas of Support



Access to finance was rated the most valuable area of support with an average rating of 3.9, followed by Sales & Marketing (3.0) and Mental Health & Wellbeing (2.9). Exporting & Resource Efficiency support were the lowest rated with 2.2 and 1.4 respectively. Due to the size and sector profile of the businesses, resource efficiency may have been less relevant to these businesses given they may typically have relatively low overheads and were not necessarily based within resource intensive sectors. In terms of exporting, as many of the businesses are in the construction or personal services businesses with local client bases, these businesses may have been less relevant from an export perspective. However, as some of these businesses have digitalised as outlined in section 4.0, it could be that they may start to explore more national and international markets.

Where additional qualitative feedback was provided in response to this question, this was noted by Blueberry and some examples of the support requirements flagged by businesses are provided below.

On the resource and efficiency side of things where possible I have tried to get LEDS and look more at that side of things. What I did try and do before this kicked off was we were taking on work experience students- a lot of my career until 5 years ago I was high up in hotel senior management and did a lot of work experience stuff with students then. We took on a lot of students before the pandemic- I enjoy doing it and it is really good for students to see the real working world. I used to deal with Trident- they used to be governing bodies for work placements. I think it is a good thing to offer to support the youth and good for business. We did take the bounce back loan which really helped as well so I'm always open to financial support that is available.

We were going to look at taking on apprentices, but it fell through because of covid. I have had interns before as well, but it would be nice to get support in that area moving forwards. We only found out about the microgrant through a bit of luck, I think the arts guild put the word out there. More information on what is available would be really helpful. Access to a grant writer would be a really helpful thing. The bar is very high for getting into the system and then they complain no one applies for the money!

I wasn't eligible for any funding or grants from the government and didn't know the council was offering anything, so I did a bit of research and came across it eventually. I have only been going a couple of years and there is nowhere that gives support, no one is willing to share information on how to set up a company. I learnt the hard way by using the wrong people, had an accountant that screwed me over and gave me bad advice and put me in a financially difficult situation. If there is somewhere or something you can set up that can offer help and advice in that area that would be fantastic. I am currently looking at taking on 2 subcontractors to work some jobs with me, but they are asking loads of questions as they are new to it. I am directing them to the government website but it is really confusing and unhelpful so support for people like that knowing how to set up tax codes and things like that would be good. Reducing efficiency- as a builder waste is the biggest thing for us. I have a works vehicle so I can't come to the York tip, you can get yearly vouchers, but they don't always work for example if I did a job for an old lady and I needed to get rid of her carpet, I would have to hire a skip. It would be useful for the council to help in this area, we could pay for a separate licence to be able to get rid of things like carpets and fridges properly without having to hire a skip and might help with reducing fly tipping. I can't take my van to the tip but if there could be some assistance with being able to properly dispose of smaller items that have come out of house builds, I think it would be well received. Training and skills support and apprenticeships - I'm trying to take on an apprentice now and the lady at York college is helping with that, she is amazing. But I don't have information on how to take on an apprentice and what do you need to set up, paperwork, pensions etc. My accountant is really helpful, but it would be good to have a central source maybe online which gives information on the correct process. Mental health support is really important- as an employer though how do you help? I did what I thought was best at the time, but it would be really useful to have some support for employers that want to know how to offer suitable mental health support to their staff. Access to finance- small bounce back loans or something similar would be useful. Smaller businesses don't need massive loans they just need a small amount of help that is on a manageable repayment plan.

Voucher for Google Adwords would be a good idea. Help with exporting abroad would be really useful so maybe a link or an online resource with up to date information or some kind of point of contact that you can get advice from. Training and skills - would be really helpful you could have a system where people apply and they send you the course details they want to do, then you could subsidise it to help them expand and grow. Mental health- small businesses tend to be people who are self-employed and can feel quite isolated so a support network for those types of people would be a lovely idea. Maybe a resource with helplines in one place as when you aren't well, you feel like you can't reach out so making it easy for people to know where they can get help and speak to people. Maybe a business mentor scheme as well, someone with more experience could guide newer self-employed business owners which would support mental health as well.

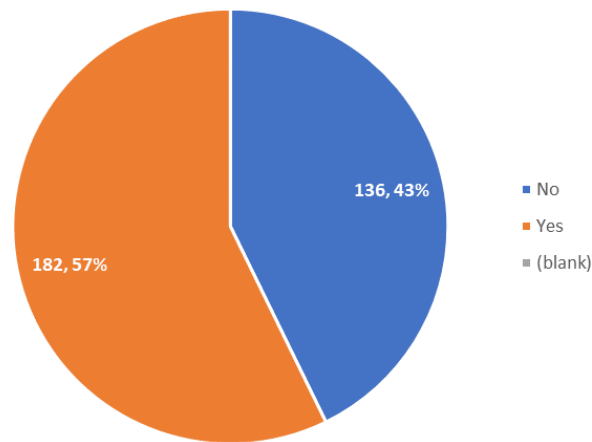
Sales/marketing and social media- this is a really important area now for businesses to gain knowledge and skills in, I do a lot of my work through LinkedIn so I would rate this highly definitely. Digital and IT- I would say that we have had to adapt to going online, there are opportunities for people using Teams and Zoom, and things like that which a lot of people struggled getting to grips with, and support moving forwards in that area would be of some benefit. When you go into the digital world there is a lot needed behind the scenes to manage teams and culture, it links into the digital side from a management level. Very easy for the culture of the company to change and lose the essence of what it is when people aren't working face to face every day. I am very passionate about education- not just for younger people and 16-18 year olds but also you can give higher level apprenticeships to older workers and longer term staff. It will help with succession planning for their own businesses- developing their workforce. People have misconceptions about apprenticeships, but I think they are great, you can do level 5 and level 7 in things like Leadership, I have worked with York college in the past on this area to promote it. Access to finance wise, it is important for people to know where the money is. I have been doing some work for the Voluntary Community Sector and my colleague was amazed by what is out there, but it is sad that people just don't know where to find it. Procurement isn't on the list, but I have done work with businesses doing tenders or training them to do tenders so that shows them how to be sustainable to search for funds and grants for themselves moving forwards. My success is that my client doesn't need me anymore, whilst I have been helping them, I have upskilled them along the way whether it's about managing change or doing a tender, it is always about 'you can now do it yourself' so you don't need me again. It is harder getting work that way, but it is my values. SMEs can't afford long term consultancy and I truly believe in knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer. I was a secondary school teacher and I think you have a different outlook on life and how you go about it. This is why sometimes I cringe when people say I'm a trainer- and they can't really say what they have got skills wise or how they work, I have years of experience in all types of training, but I am more concerned about sharing that knowledge to help businesses become sustainable and successful by themselves.

3.2 Question Two - Adaptation and Diversification

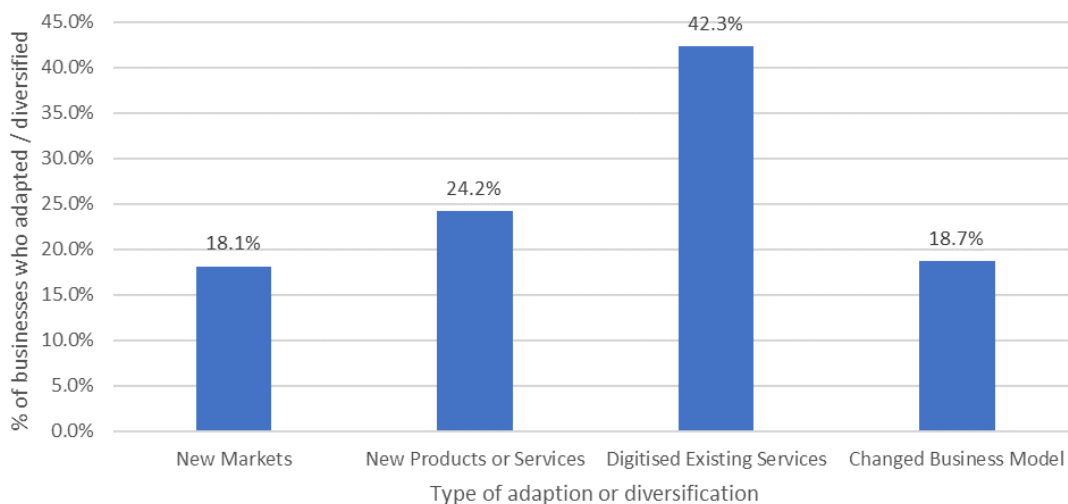
Question Wording: *Have you adapted or diversified your business during the pandemic? And if so how? So for example, started deliveries, going online etc – anything which involves changing the way you work or what you offer your customers.*

This question was designed to uncover valuable insights as to whether the businesses had adapted and diversified during the COVID-19 pandemic. From the businesses spoken to, it was encouraging to note that the majority of businesses had in fact been able to adapt or diversify during the pandemic, with 57.0% of businesses answering 'yes' to this question. Although respondents were not specifically prompted on the impact of the grant at this stage in the survey, a number also referenced the impact of the grant in enabling diversification.

Have you adapted or diversified your business during the pandemic?



Classification of Adaptions / Diversification undertaken by business (as % of businesses who said 'Yes' to Adaption / diversification)



Based on the qualitative information provided by the respondent at this stage, four flags were used to classify the response where specific forms of diversification were referenced on the call. A response could be classified under none, one or multiple flags. From these flags, the most common form of adaption was digitalisation of existing services, with 42.3% of respondents who had diversified or adapted falling into this category. From the qualitative insights gathered across the course of the project, it became clear that the adoption of digital technology and diversifying into new digital revenue streams was a recurring theme. The social distancing measures in place, and business restrictions resulting from national lockdowns, were cited as a key factor by many of the respondents in driving digital adoption and new ways of working. In addition, diversification and adaption was not limited by sector, with case studies of diversification within sectors where this may not typically be anticipated. For example, in the personal services, hair & beauty and tourism sectors, we witnessed a number of stories of adaption and diversification.

Included below are some example responses to this question. In cases of digitalisation, some respondents discussed this from a functional perspective, for example, switching to remote delivery purely to allow them to continue servicing existing clients. However, in some other instances, respondents discussed how digitalisation has allowed them to reach a wider audience, and in two instances specific client wins were also referenced. While at this stage we did not prompt respondents regarding the grant, in some instances the respondent mentioned the importance of the grant in facilitating adaption, diversification and digitalisation.

Last year when covid kicked off, I was on for the busiest year ever and in 3 days I lost all work. I got no government support whatsoever- I didn't qualify as hadn't been self-employed long enough. Your grant was the only support I got. I diversified and have now set up a home studio to enable me to do distance training and coaching for the motor industry. I have got equipment to do podcasts. I have got equipment that means I can do the training from home if I can't actually be there. I have more recently won a contract with Porsche GB to deliver a new program with them, the start has been delayed due to Covid unfortunately, but it should hopefully be up and running by May which will be brilliant.

I had to take everything online - whereas I would've done a facial in my therapy room, **I invited individuals and groups to do a facial online and sent out products and did online sessions. It has changed the way I do business.**

To be honest that's why the grants were so useful for us, we diversified into video work. We offered some video already and we got into it a few years back **but to be competitive in the market we now needed gear to support 4k** - stock photography and stock videos sell worldwide, there is a market for video but we moved into video stock provision, **it's early days but we are ramping it up in terms of output now.**

Yes, I have completely adapted my business which was hair and makeup for mostly brides and **have now turned towards a new business of organic skincare products.**

It has been a major thing of mine- I pivoted my business as they say because I had a standard video production company before and when the pandemic started, and lockdown came about all my business disappeared. I then started looking around at my resources and what I could be doing with the downtime and I had been involved with the University of York and XR Stories looking at things with 360 videos. I had all the equipment and the skillset for it, everyone was in lockdown and companies were unable to reach their audiences, **so I started creating virtual experiences for companies. I still offer the standard video production, but my new niche is definitely in 360 virtual experiences and it has been going very well. I just completed a project for Jorvik Viking centre** which has gone down really well and was used at the virtual Viking festival they held in Feb.

I'm glad you've phoned as you've been quite anonymous and I've wanted to praise you as a council and thank you, you were very helpful throughout, the application process was very rigorous but just right and very fair. As a council you've done fantastic, I can't praise you enough. I run a sports recruitment business and people haven't been hiring, the recruitment industry has really suffered. I've changed my business model, I was a traditional recruiter earning on percentage, but now I'm more working within a business, in other sectors (other than sport which is where I usually work) and looking more at local opportunities. **Your grants have enabled me to have the confidence and the money to adapt the business to move on and diversify.**

We do personalised tours of the wall and ghost walks [...] Diversification wise- **we are working on self-guided tours you can take yourself around using a smart phone.** Also doing games for kids as well so they can walk around York with parents and choose their own adventure. **I think going down the digital route is definitely more relevant moving forwards.** We used the grant towards that- you need to get people in to do the tech side of things and what we realised, even with Covid coming to a stop, we know in York that tourism isn't going to bounce straight back so focusing on people who already live here. We are trying to change the target audience from just outside tourists and make the locals aware of our existence.

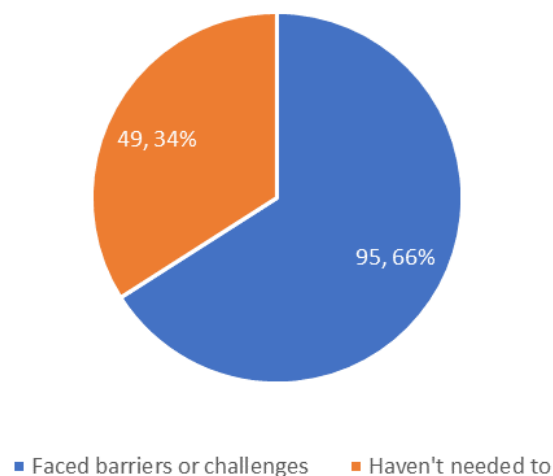
3.3 Question Three – Businesses not Adapting / Diversifying

Question Wording: *And is that because you haven't needed to do so, or because you have faced barriers or challenges to doing so?*

For those businesses that had not adapted or diversified, this question was designed to further probe the reasons behind this. The aim was to differentiate between those businesses that had not needed to adapt or diversify throughout the pandemic period from those businesses that had wished to do so but which were not in a position to do so. From this question, 66% of respondents stated they had not diversified or adapted due to barriers they faced in doing so, rather than because they didn't need to do so.

From the qualitative feedback gathered at this stage, a key barrier referenced by a number of respondents was a lack of diversification opportunities within their area of business, although in some instances this could perhaps point to underlying skills barriers in identifying relevant opportunities.

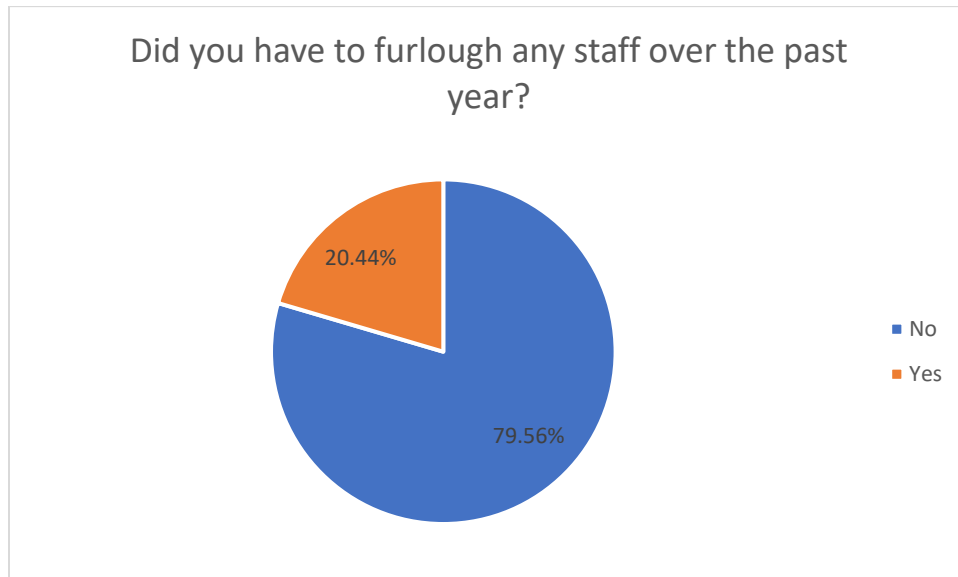
Is that because you haven't need to do so, or because you have faced barriers or challenges to doing so?



3.4 Question Four – Furlough

Question Wording: *Can I just ask, did you have to furlough any staff over the past year?*

To ascertain how businesses were surviving during COVID, respondents were asked whether or not they had staff on furlough to help with wage costs. As shown in the pie chart below, 79.6% of businesses did not have to furlough any staff. This is in line with expectation given the profile of the grant recipients outlined in section 2.3, with 95.9% falling into the ‘1-5 employees’ bracket.



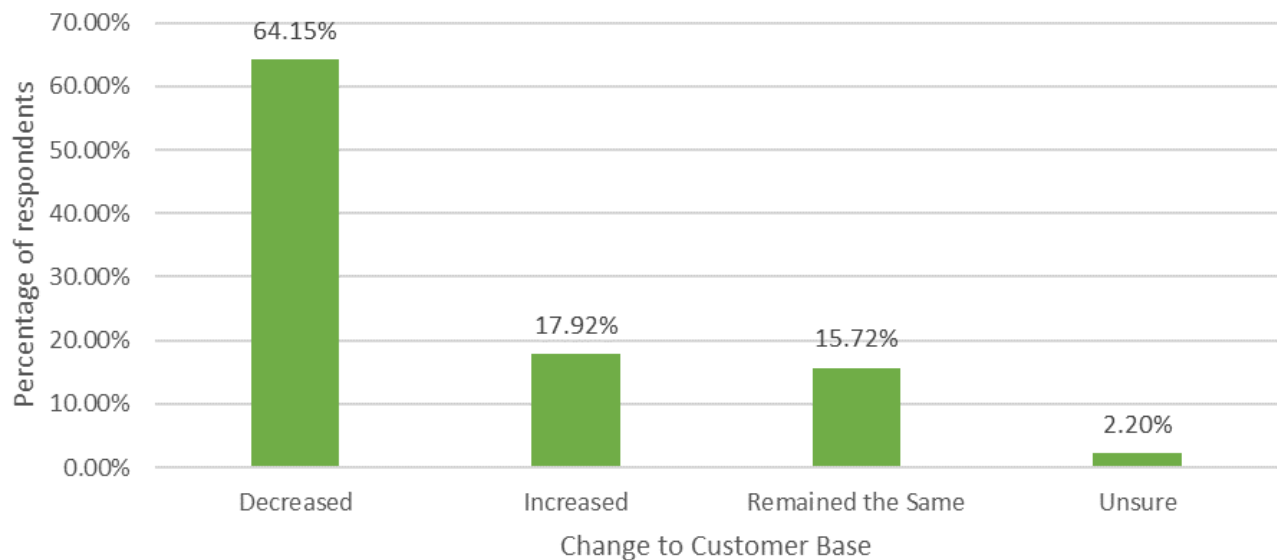
3.5 Question Five – Business Customer base

Question Wording: *In relation to your customer base, which of the following best describes your position now compared to February 2020?*

To assess the impacts of COVID-19 on the client base of the grant recipients, we asked respondents the size of their customer base and how this had changed over the course of the past year, comparing their customer base at the time of completing the survey to the number of customers they had in February 2020. Of the respondents, 64.2% noted that their customer base had decreased, with a further 15.7% noting no change. However, 17.9% of businesses noted an increase in customer base, which could be down to businesses adapting and offering new services as a result of COVID.

For this question, we included both quantitative insights as well as qualitative, as by speaking to businesses it was clear that there were some very varied business trajectories over the period, which reflects the unpredictable nature of the market and business landscape. For example, even where overall customer spending has remained constant, most businesses have noticed changes in spending patterns and types of spend.

In relation to your customer base, which of the following best describes your position now compared to February 2020?



Decreased Customer Base

Our main clients were for business meetings, airport runs, business people going out to events, sporting events. We also do artist travel for a lot of festivals and concerts and gigs but everything has come to a standstill so the business has literally dropped off a cliff.

Revenue at the height of the pandemic went from 250 active subscribers to 500 as local florists closed down and more people were at home and wanted flowers. Profitability halved though due to the increase in refunds and redeliveries we had to do, as well as the increased cost of flowers due to Brexit and resending things out and now everyone is penny pinching. We have now had a lot of cancellations over the last 6 months as people are really feeling it.

Increased Customer Base

It has increased and I had a lot of potential work and a few jobs lined up last Feb but they all disappeared overnight. Since November 2020 just before the second lockdown, I was starting to get enquiries which was unusual for me as I have only been in business for just under 5 years and it has been difficult building it up but this new niche and direction means I am getting quality enquiries through which are resulting in more work.

Only from the point of view that people are looking to make do and mend and that fits our business model as we are able to do that. A lot of companies in this industry are 1 dimensional - the ones focused on selling 1 product have gone bust whereas if a customer has 5 different niggles, we can sort all of them. I feel we have got more opportunities because our competitors have struggled and we fit in with what people are looking at now which is not spending 75k on a new play area, they want to adapt and fix up what they have.

Remained the Same

It has been quieter during some periods, but I think it is busier with bigger jobs. People have got excess cash from not going on holiday, so they are wanting to do bigger home improvement jobs. Smaller stuff not so much though, maybe only 1 or 2 a month or something. It has probably evened itself out.

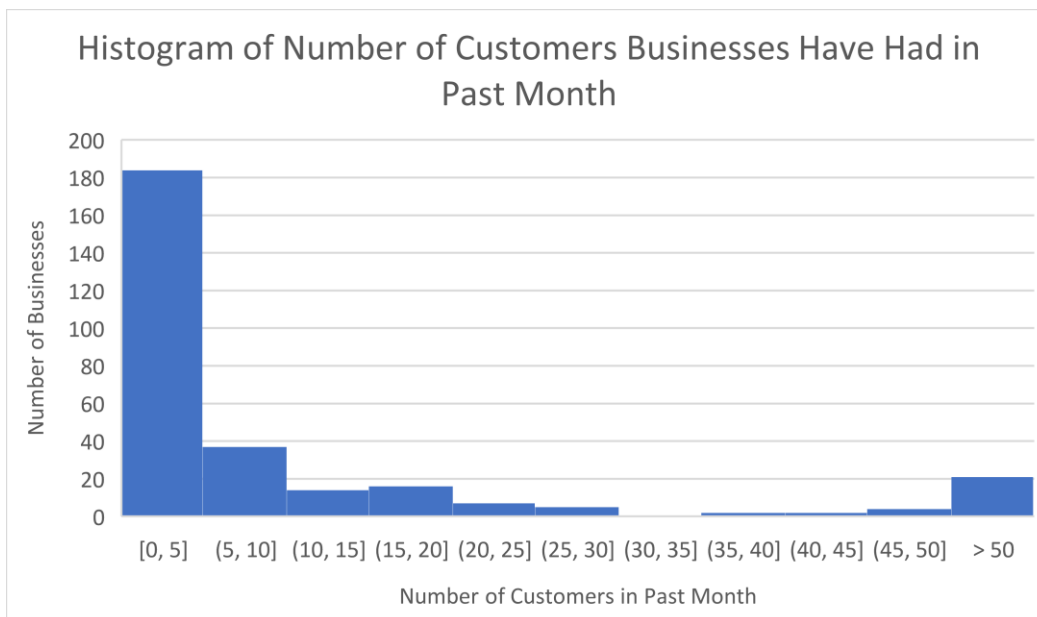
I have been lucky, I support the construction industry in planning a lot of the work that they do so with construction continuing to trade, it has meant that work has carried on. In some respects, it has slowed but perversely it has given me more work as I have had to relook at all the plans as we assumed we would have 20 people on site and because of covid there can now only be a third of that, so I've had to reassess plans and go back to old plans to make amendments. So, a lot of the same customers but the work has slightly changed.

3.6 Question Six – Estimated customers

Question Wording: *Roughly speaking, can you provide an estimate of the number of customers you've had in the past month?*

As well as looking at the overall trend in customer base, this project aimed to uncover how many customers the respondents had in the month prior to participating in the survey. Interestingly, 27.0% stated they had zero customers within this timeframe. This is noteworthy as it demonstrates the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic were still current for a significant number of businesses. This should be taken into consideration when planning current and future business support provision and grant funding schemes.

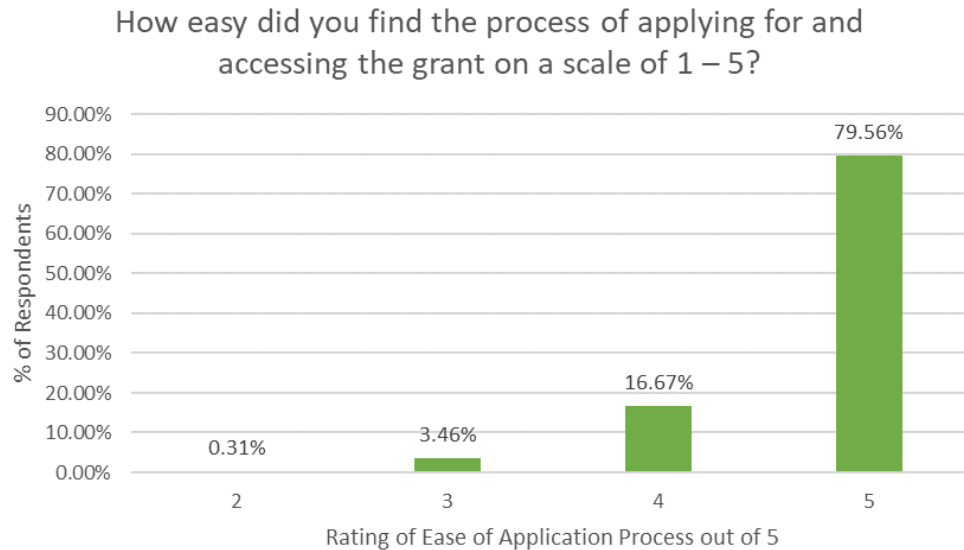
The histogram below provides a summary of the responses, excluding those businesses that were unsure or could not provide a figure. For those businesses that provided an approximate range, we have used the mid-point of that range in the below histogram. As shown below, 180 businesses reported having between 0-5 customers, with only 20 businesses having over 50.



3.7 Question Seven – Grant Application Process

Question Wording: *In relation to the COVID-19 micro-grant you received specifically – how easy did you find the process of applying for and accessing the grant on a scale of 1 – 5 where 1 is very difficult and 5 is very straightforward and simple.*

A key objective of the research exercise was to gather feedback on the grant application process to help inform the development of future grant provision. In the first question, we got respondents to rate the ease of the application process on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is very difficult and 5 was very easy and straightforward. Of the respondents, 96.2% rated the process as 4 or 5 and only one respondent (0.3%) rated the process as less than 3 out of 5.



3.8 Question Eight – Changes to process

Question Wording: *What would you suggest in terms of any changes to the process if you were to apply again?*

Following on from the quantitative rating of the application process the survey also asked respondents to share any suggestions for improving the process in future. In line with the quantitative findings, a significant proportion of the respondents did not feel any changes were necessary.

However, two individuals suggested the process could have been more accessible for those with dyslexia, suggesting more consideration may be required for future application processes to ensure accessibility. A number of respondents also referenced issues with the page timeout when completing the form, which is a further design consideration for online application processes in future.

Additionally, some respondent feedback included providing contact details for an individual at City of York Council for any questions or queries, or for on-going updates on the status of their grant application.

York were fantastic- it wasn't too complicated and it was actioned really quickly as well. We also applied for a tech grant from Leeds as well, we have had to innovate substantially on the website and the way we are doing things but that has been a complete nightmare, for the £1000 we got out of it, it probably wasn't worth it as we applied in Sept and they agreed to it end of Feb. That was Leeds City Region and we won't apply for anything now.

I thought it was a really good form, I thought it would take forever when I initially sat down as I have filled in some previous government stuff in an old job, and it was really time consuming but this was exceptionally easy. I was frustrated when I had sent it to friends and colleagues and they said they didn't do it as they thought it would be tough, but it really wasn't at all, thank you for making it so accessible.

Really straightforward. I wasn't a technical person but I found it easy. What I particularly liked was that it didn't ask a million questions. Sometimes you question whether you are going to get it as this has happened on funding bids in the past that ask for so much detail and you just feel that you are wasting your time as you probably won't get it anyway.

It was very easy and straightforward because I had applied for the business bounce back loan and you had to jump through hoops [when applying for that] and that was [only] a loan, but even so you had to provide every single thing. Because I was new to being self-employed, I couldn't give them some of the things they needed. Luckily, they allowed me a really small amount. I will have to give it back though from next business year, but you can't live on fresh air.

For me it was very hard because I am dyslexic but my wife did it ok I think.

It was fairly easy and straight forwards, but the ten minute time frame was panicky, and we wanted to get it right - I don't understand why there is only ten minutes when its important information.

3.9 Question Nine - How exactly did you use the grant?

Question Wording: *How exactly did you use the grant?*

To ascertain the direct impacts of the grant both economically and socially, the survey asked businesses how they used the grant. In section 4.0, we explore these themes in more depth, and have included a full thematic analysis of responses. To facilitate a thematic analysis, once all responses had been collated, Blueberry identified common themes from the collated narratives. These identified themes were then used to tag the responses according to the themes which were referenced in each response. Each response was flagged under at least one theme, although multiple flags could be included for a response. To note, this data processing was conducted after completion of fieldwork by Blueberry, so these themes were not provided to the respondent at the time of the call.

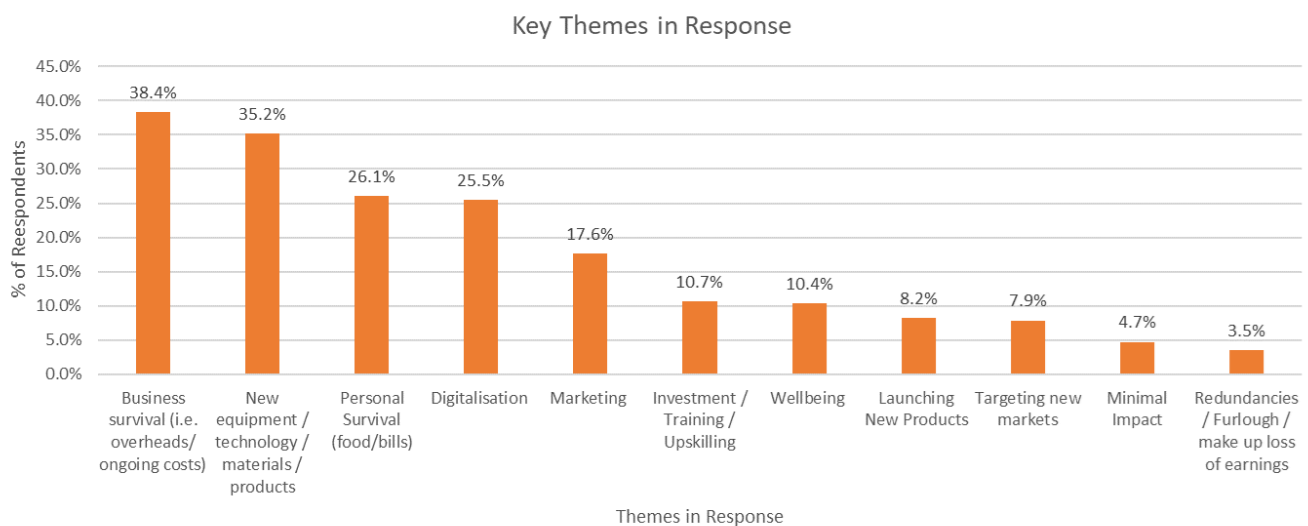
Overall, 38.4% of the respondents referenced the grant contributing towards business survival and 26.1% referenced the grant contributing to personal survival. However, 35.2% referenced the grant contributing to new equipment, technology, materials and products and 25.5% referenced the grant contributing towards digitalisation. These results demonstrate that the economic impact of the grant is complex and multi-levelled, contributing both to immediate costs and overheads – and thereby business survival – whilst at the same time supporting investment in future business growth, adaptation and innovation.

In addition, many of these themes intersect. For example, we grouped the themes into investment and growth-related grant spending (everything from investment, marketing, launching new products and services and training)

and survival linked grant impacts. In total, 55.3% respondents referenced grant spending relating to personal survival, business survival or both. However, of these, 33.0% also referenced one of more themes relating to business growth and investment. This demonstrates that even in instances where the grant was required for immediate business or personal costs, there has still been some investment in the medium to long term future of the business.

One key takeaway from the qualitative feedback is that that even in instances where the grant money itself may have gone on covering immediate costs, this may still have provided a springboard for the business to ultimately invest in the future of their business. Therefore, it is important to consider the grant impact broadly – not only what the money went on to support directly but how this may have indirectly contributed to business growth.

These themes are explored further in section 4.0.



3.10 Question Ten – Impacts

Question Wording: *What differences has the grant made to you and your business?*

In order to assess the success of the Micro Grant scheme, we assessed the impact of the grant on each business. In order to do this, we grouped the responses based on themes indicated by the respondent across their response. These themes are explored in more depth in section 4.0.

3.11 Question Eleven – Economic Impacts

Question Wording: *Did any of these outcomes happen over the last year?*

In order to assess the economic impacts of the grants, we asked each business whether they had experienced the following outcomes over the last year:

- Ceasing to trade (temporarily)
- Ceasing to trade (permanently)
- Letting go of premises you rent or own
- Letting go of employees
- Losing customers

The below bar chart summarises the percentage of respondents experiencing one of the above outcomes, compared to the percentage of respondents who were at risk of the outcome, but ultimately managed to avoid it. The majority of businesses were unable to avoid the short-term impacts such as ceasing to trade temporarily and losing customers. However, the majority of businesses were able to avoid the longer-term impact of permanently ceasing to trade. When asked, 26.4% of respondents stated they were at risk of permanently ceasing to trade at some point in the last year but managed to avoid this risk. Whilst the risk of closing was very real to almost a quarter of businesses, only six (1.89%) of the respondents had permanently ceased trading. Extrapolating this across the 1,114 total grant recipients this equates to ~294 businesses who were at risk of permanently ceasing to trade but avoided this outcome.

Comparing the response to this question to the thematic analysis conducted, of the 84 businesses that were classified as at risk of ceasing to trade, 66.7% were flagged as referencing the grant contributing to business survival. This evidence supports the conclusion that the grant played a significant role in safeguarding these businesses and avoiding some of the business risk which resulted from the pandemic.

Letting go of employees and losing premises were relatively minor risks, primarily due to the profile of business receiving grant funding.



3.12 Question Twelve – Wider Support

Question Wording: *Are you aware of or do you engage with any of the following?*

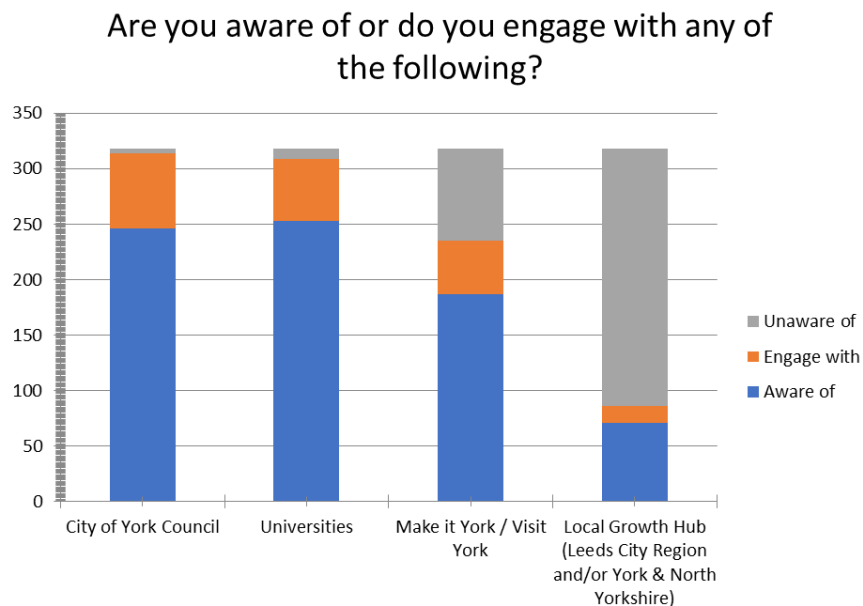
- *York Chamber of Commerce*
- *Local Growth Hub (Leeds City Region and/or York & North Yorkshire)*
- *Federation of Small Businesses*
- *Institute of Directors*
- *Trade Associations*
- *City of York Council*
- *Universities*
- *Make it York*
- *Other business networks*

IF YES TO ENGAGE WITH FSB – “Have you found the FSB membership useful?”

Would you be interested in more information on membership of the FSB or local Chamber of Commerce going forwards?

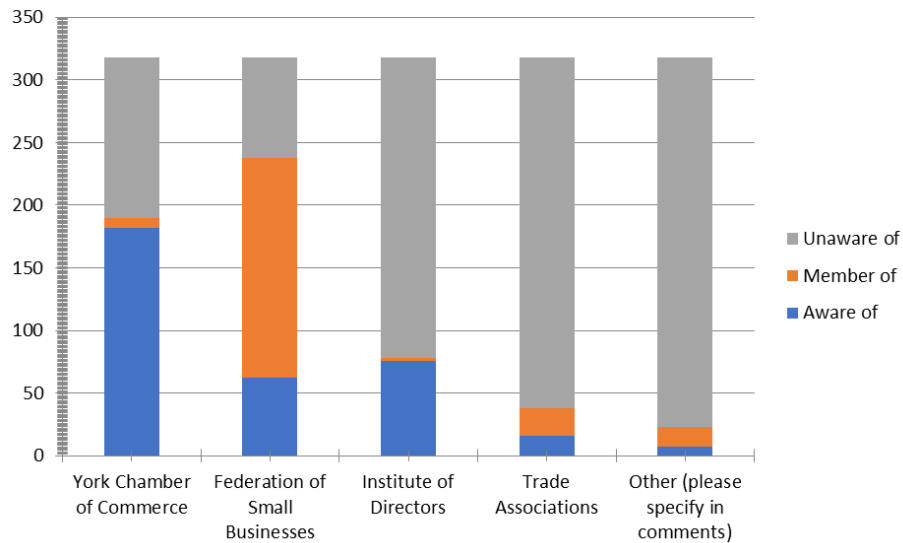
As well as looking at the impacts the grants had on businesses, there were additional questions in the survey to identify future support needs as well as to understand how well networked the grant recipients were with other local organisations, public sector bodies and business networks. These questions provide valuable insights into the connections within the business ecosystem and how these can be nurtured and supported in future.

We also gathered feedback on the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) membership which was available to grant recipients.



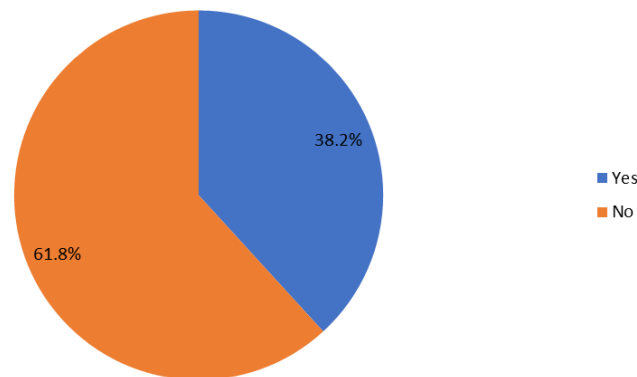
As demonstrated in the above bar chart, awareness of City of York Council, Make it York / Visit York and Universities was high, although the number of businesses engaging with these bodies was significantly lower. In addition, a relatively low number of businesses were aware of, or engaged with, the local Growth Hubs. This may partially be because of the profile of businesses receiving this grant, given that historically they may have fallen outside the eligibility for Growth Hub support.

Are you aware of or are a member of any of the following?



The survey also gathered feedback on the membership organisations businesses were members of. Compared to the other membership organisations, a significant proportion of respondents stated they were aware of, or a member of, the FSB. This may suggest that the FSB membership offered with the grant has been successful in raising the profile of the FSB amongst grant recipients.

Would you be interested in more information on membership of the FSB or local Chamber of Commerce going forwards?



For those respondents that stated they were a member of the FSB, the survey went on to ask whether the membership was useful and to gather qualitative feedback on the membership. There was some positive feedback on the member benefits, although some businesses were unsure, or were yet to use many of the membership features. Therefore, we would suggest better promotion around the uses of the membership to increase uptake of the scheme.

Not particularly, I find it is quite a political lobbying group and you get bombarded with emails so I found it more of a hindrance than a help.

Yes I have in various ways. Had it for years. My wife had membership for the shop. Used the legal team in the past and you get shop insurance on discounted rates. It is really good and have I have recommended it to a lot of companies. Their legal assistance is second to none if you get caught up in anything with small print which is easily done!

I like it for the opportunity to network but I'm not a great networker- in my line of work it is quite difficult, a lot of it comes from referrals. It is nice to have it but if you aren't using it, it can be quite an expense.

Yes it is nice to get emails from them and they gave me a call recently to check in and see how I was getting on so I think it is good.

Yes, they've been great at giving information and make us aware of available opportunities. Helped us with marketing and promotion and helped us get free promotion with the Daily Mail and other papers.

I have found odd things quite useful as it can be relevant to your particular business at certain times, but I have listened to some of the podcasts and read all the emails they send, not everything is relevant, but it is a good thing to be a part of, I think.

I have been a member for 35 years, but you have to be a member to have a voice, at the same time and all due respect, they don't shout loud enough.

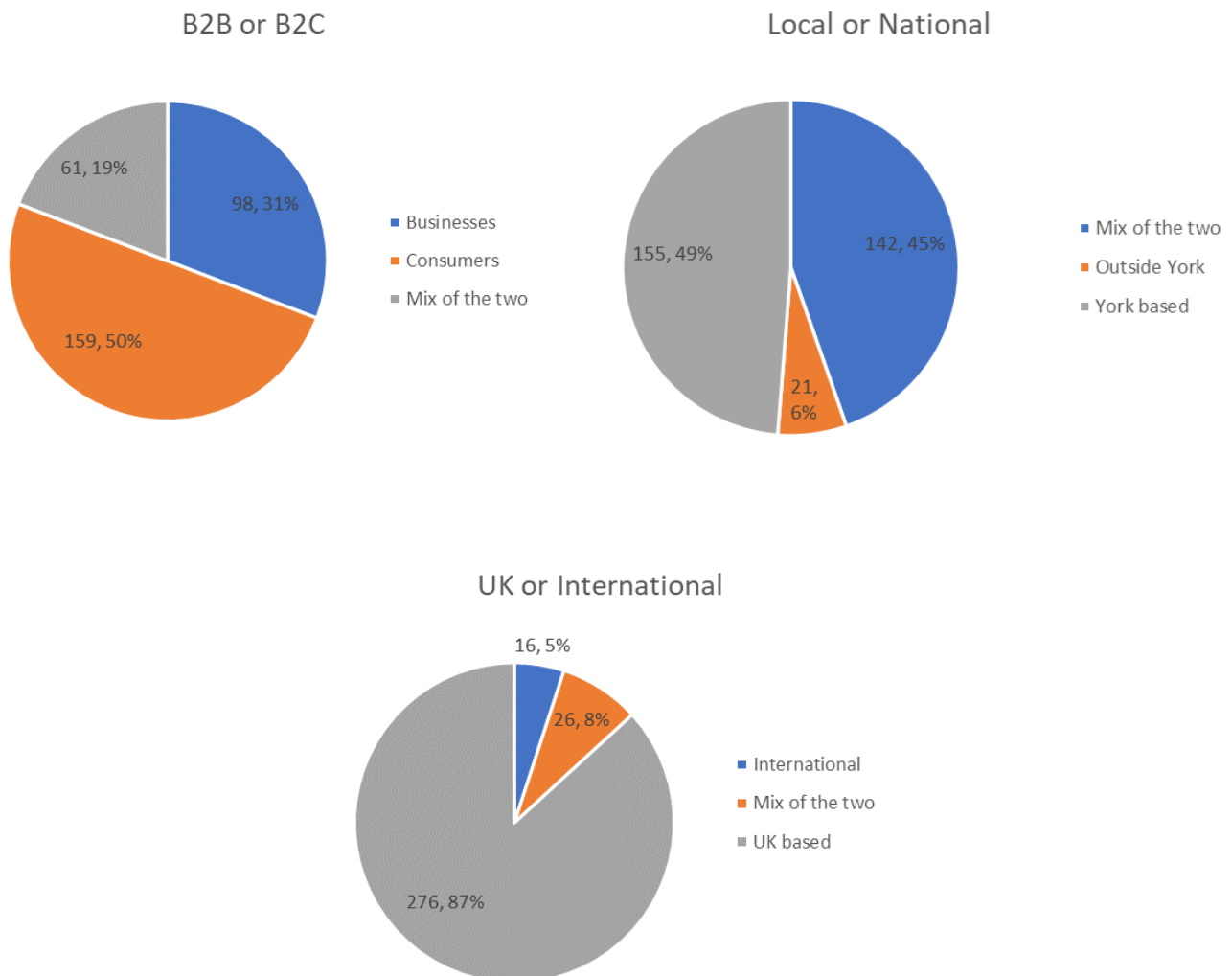
It would've been more useful if I had been trading, I want to carry on but the stuff I would've used has been a bit irrelevant really. I would definitely consider it moving forwards as I see that it would be useful and my plan isn't to try and stay stagnant, I want to grow the business and I think the help from the FSB will be very important when I get to that stage.

3.13 Question Thirteen – Customer Make-Up

Question Wording: Just to help us understand more about your business and the type of customers you work with, can you just let me know:

- Are your customers mostly businesses, mostly consumers or a mix of the two?
- Are your customers mostly York based, mostly outside of York or a mix of the two?
- Are your customers mostly UK based, mostly international or a mix of the two?

This question was designed to understand the profile of businesses in the city received the Micro Grant, and their supply chains. Whilst many businesses that received the grant are small in size, together they make up part of the ‘foundation economy’, and this question therefore aimed to uncover the interconnections between businesses in the city and thus the wider impact on the overall business ecosystem as a result of the grant. 93.4% of respondents have a customer base which is fully or partly York-based, and 69% of the respondents trade business to consumer either in part or full.



3.14 Question Fourteen – Main Household Income & Size of Household

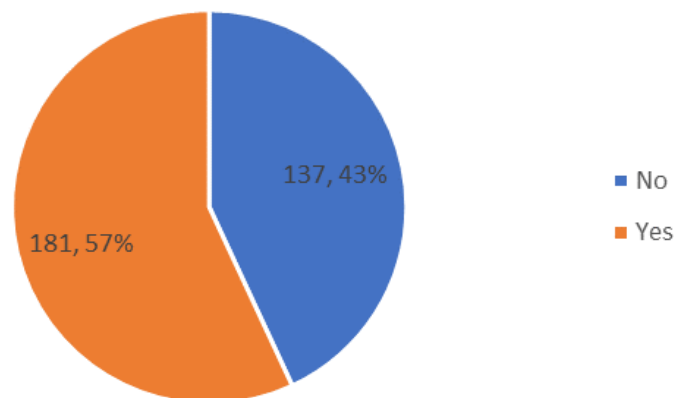
Question Wording: *Finally, can I ask how many people live in your household...?*

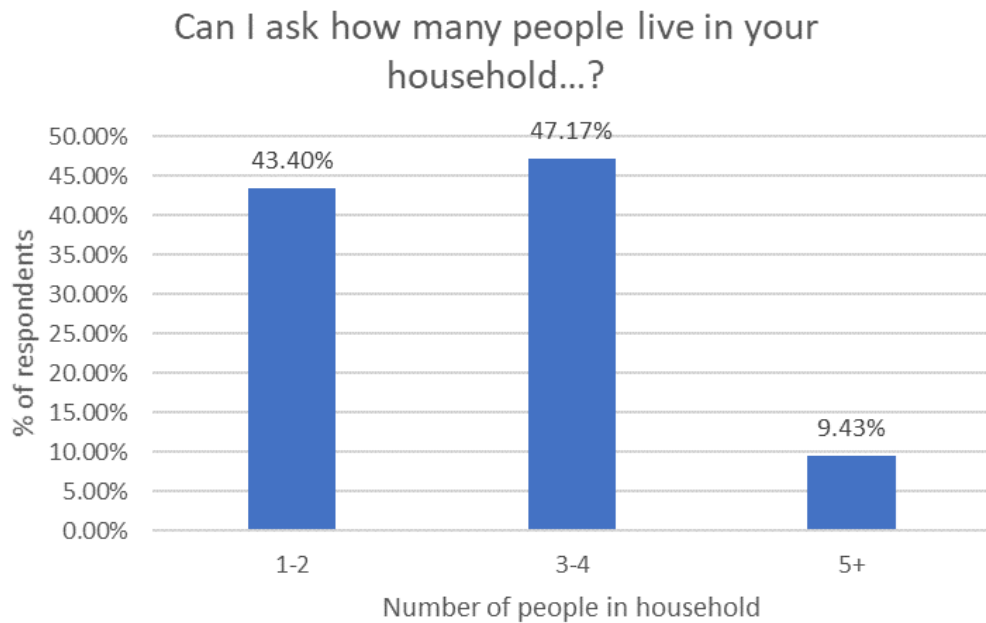
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 4+

And does the business provide the main income from your household?

This question aimed to understand the wider social impacts of the grant, by gathering insights into the role of the businesses in providing household earnings and the number of individuals residing within the household. This provides insights into the reach and social policy implications of the Micro Grants. For 57% of these businesses the business provided the main income for the household. In addition, 56.6% of these businesses had 3+ members within the household. Given the number of individuals stating they were self-employed (see 2.4) many of these individuals may have otherwise been solely reliant on welfare support, for example, through Universal Credit. The welfare impacts are discussed further in the thematic analysis section of this document.

Does the business provides the main
income from your household?

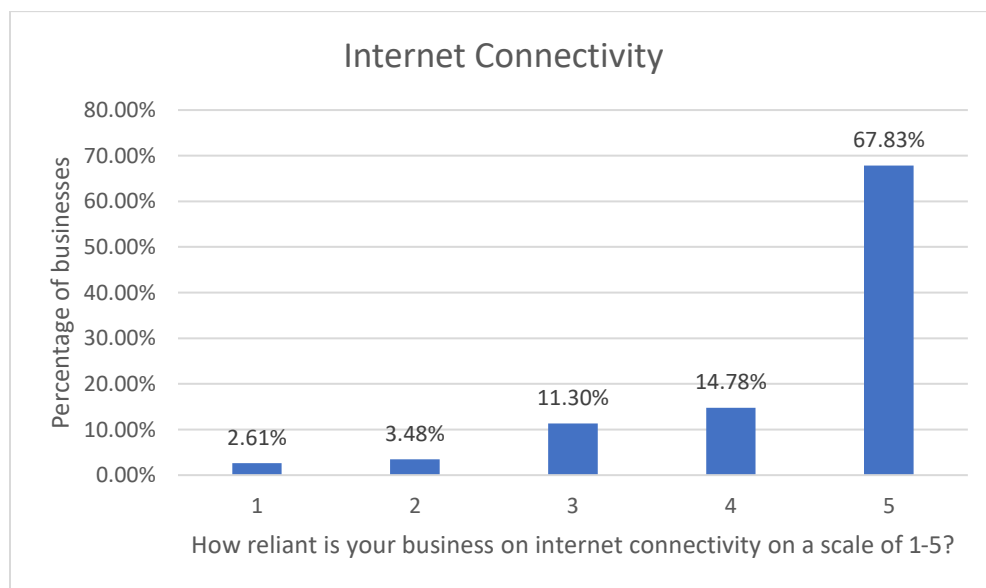




3.15 Question Fifteen – Internet Connectivity

Question Wording: How reliant is your business on internet connectivity, on a scale of 1 – 5 whereby 1 is not at all and 5 is totally reliant?

As well as understand the impact of the micro grants scheme on businesses, we also looked to gather insights that would be useful for City of York Council in terms of shaping future policy requirements.

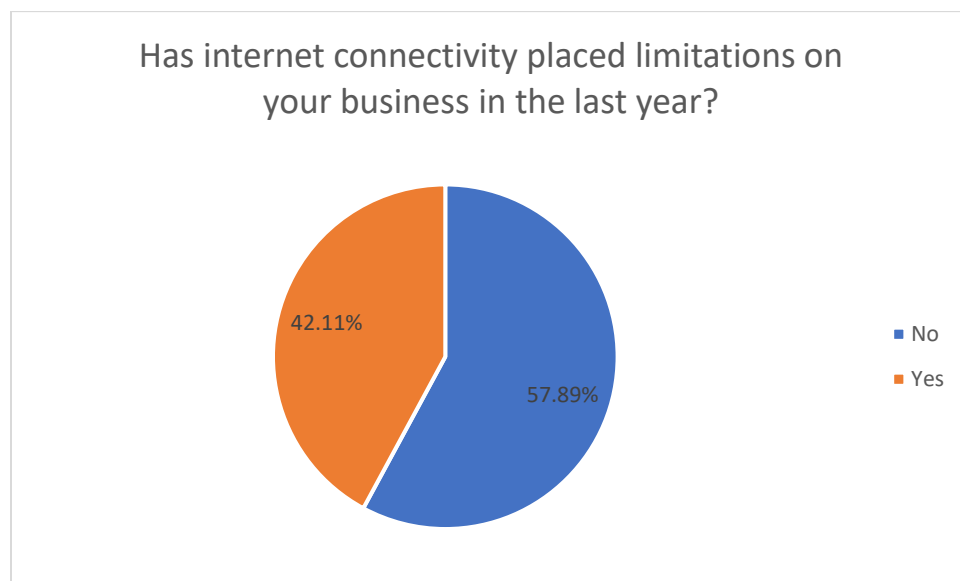


As shown in the graph above, the majority of businesses (67.8%) rated internet connectivity as very important, with a further 14.7% rating it as important. This therefore interlinks with our findings that many businesses were looking at digitalisation and improving their online presence.

3.16 Question Sixteen – Internet Connectivity Limitations

Question Wording: *Has the quality of your internet connectivity placed any limitations on you as a business, particularly in the last year?*

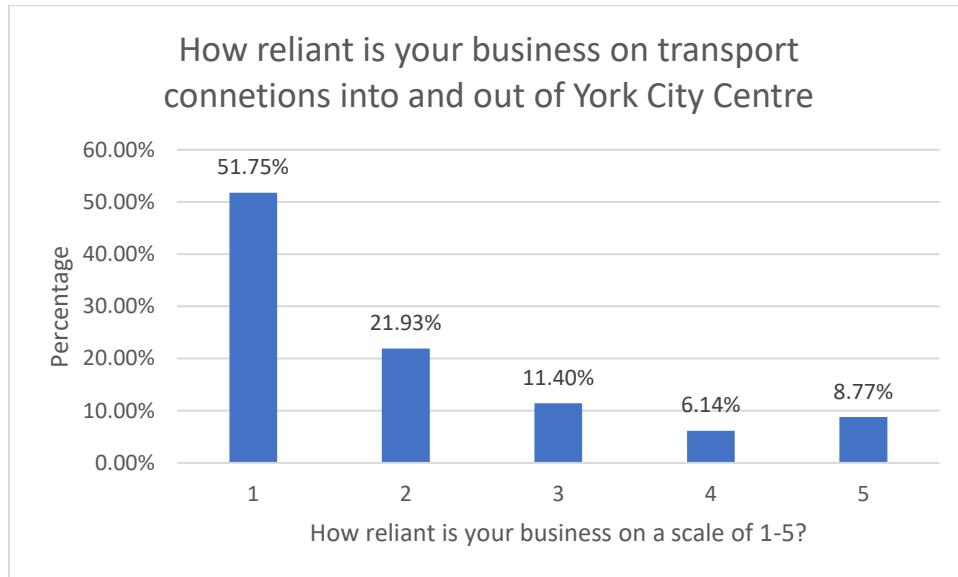
With many businesses transitioning online in the current climate, we looked to understand if any businesses were being held back by their internet connectivity. Interestingly, 42.1% of businesses noted that their internet connectivity had placed limits on their business, therefore we would suggest that these businesses are targeted with any digital support or grants to ensure their businesses can continue to thrive.



3.17 Question Seventeen – Reliance on Transport Connections

Question Wording: *How reliant is your business on transport connections into and out of York city centre, on a scale of 1 – 5 whereby 1 is not at all and 5 is totally reliant?*

For this question we looked to understand how reliant businesses were on transport connections into and out of York city centre, or whether businesses were relying less on public transport following COVID.



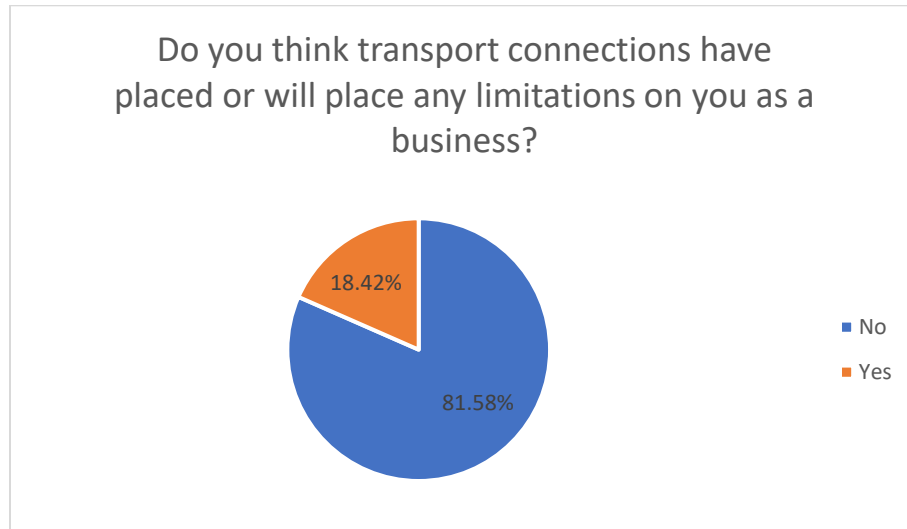
As shown in the table above, despite many businesses being in the personal services and construction industries, the majority of businesses (51.8%) do not rely on transport links into and out of York city centre.

3.18 Question Eighteen – Public Transport Limitations

Question Wording: *Do you think transport connections have placed, or will place, any limitations on you as a business, especially thinking prior to lockdown or looking forward to once things reopen again?*

Following on from the above, we looked to understand whether businesses thought that transport connections will place limitations onto the business. This ranged from factors such as the reliability of public transport, to cycling infrastructure, to parking costs and availability.

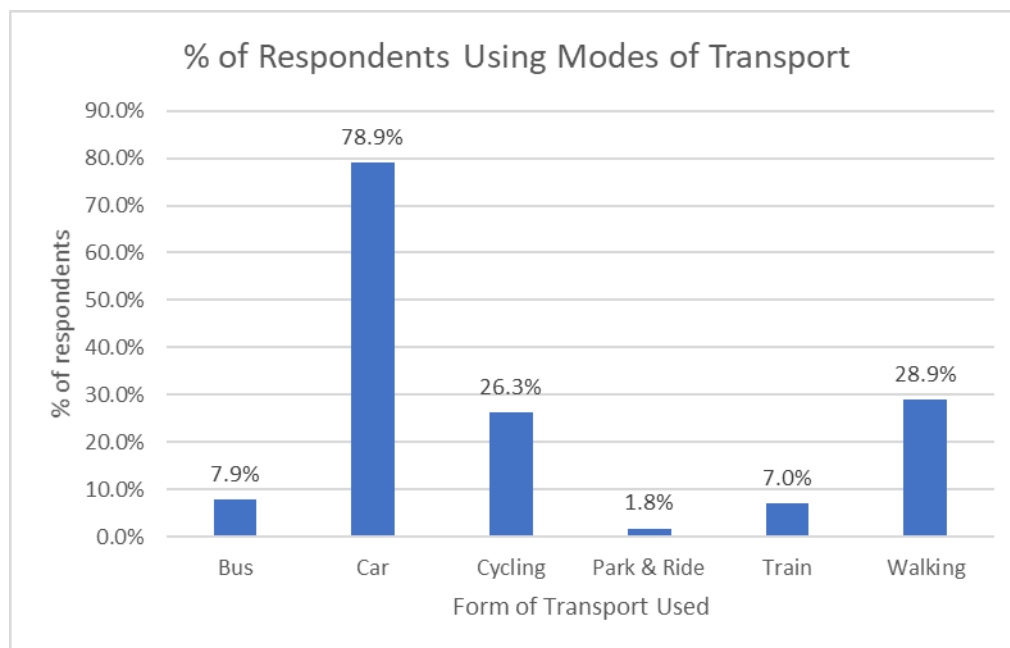
Consistent with the above question, the majority of businesses (81.6%) did not believe that transport connections would place any limitations on the business. This is encouraging to note that many businesses were not facing this as a barrier. However, we would suggest for those that answered ‘yes’ that further research is done to understand what limitations there were, and how City of York Council could help ensure transport is not a limiting factor for business growth.



3.19 Question Nineteen – Preferred Mode of Transport

Question Wording: *Can I confirm what forms of transport you would normally use?*

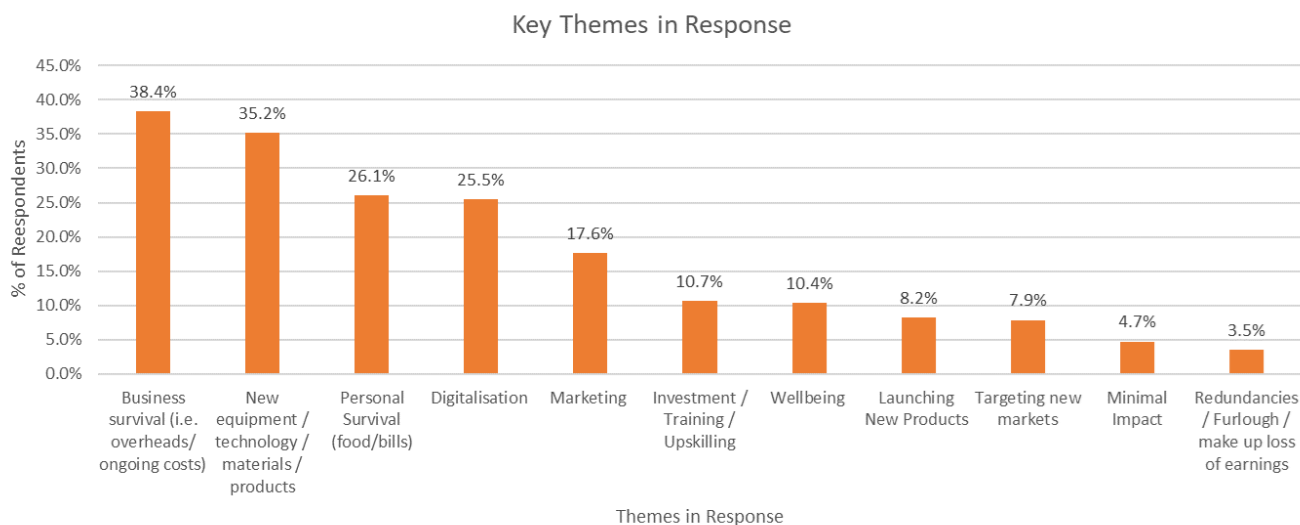
On the theme of public transport, we also looked to understand businesses' preferred mode of transport. We asked businesses to select up to two modes of transport. As shown below, 78.9% of respondents answering this question travel by car, while 28.9% walk and 26.3% cycle. The number of respondents using train, buses or the Park & Ride is relatively low, at 7.0%, 7.9% and 1.8% respectively.



4.0 Discussion and Thematic Analysis

In order to see thematic trends, we grouped the responses based on the themes indicated by the respondent, with a particular focus on their response to questions regarding the grant, although we also took into consideration relevant information across the response as a whole. Each response has been grouped into at least one key theme, but where relevant the response may have been grouped in multiple categories. For example, if a business referenced paying outstanding bills with the grant as well as investing in marketing, this would have been categorised under ‘Business Survival’ and ‘Marketing’.

As discussed in section 3.0, there is a considerable degree of intersection between the different themes. These results demonstrate that the economic impact of the grant is complex and multi-levelled, contributing both to immediate costs and overheads – and thereby business survival – whilst at the same time supporting investment in future business growth, adaptation and innovation. In this section, some of the specific stories are provided to give a flavour of the themes, and also to demonstrate how they inter-relate.



4.1 Survival – Business & Personal

Where the respondent referenced covering immediate costs – such as business rent, bills, on-going costs and overheads or outstanding invoices – these were flagged as relating to on-going business survival. In some instances, the feedback may have been less specific. For example, some individuals stated they spent the money on keeping the business afloat but may not have specified exactly where the money was spent. Where the individual referenced living costs – such as food, household bills and rent or mortgage payments – these were categorised as spending the money on personal survival. Both of these categorisations do encompass a relatively broad range of individual circumstances, as illustrated by some of the example comments below.

Where businesses referenced using the grants for personal and business survival, it is important to recognise that for many of these smaller businesses, business survival and personal survival are entwined. For example, one recipient mentioned that “It kept me alive and kept the business alive”.

Whilst some businesses did not use the grants for personal survival, many used the grants to tide them over until they were able to receive regular income again. Many recognised that despite the grants being relatively small in size compared to other funding streams, they were invaluable in ensuring they could keep their business afloat in the short term by increasing cashflow.

Of the businesses that took part in the survey 133 of the 318 responses (41.8%) included some references to gratitude, sometimes expressing that they felt they had been otherwise overlooked or forgotten by the national support packages in place.

The below comments provide an illustration of the range of different circumstances tagged under business survival, personal survival or both.

It helped pay some bills and living costs at the time as I couldn't get anything from anywhere else. Insurances and licenses, internet and phone bills, IT software, bookkeeping software etc. It made such a huge difference - I would've gone under if it wasn't for the grant. I didn't get anything from the government as I don't have business premises. I couldn't get through to my bank for 35 days either so that was a long time before I got a loan repayment holiday and there was a point where I genuinely thought that was it. Then because I am a private ltd company and I pay myself a directors wage, I couldn't get furlough until Mid-May and now I get about £500 a month from it though as I pay myself only around £9000 a year then take dividends so people like myself have been left in a whole world of trouble. I will add though that City of York Council and the grants I have received from you have been so helpful and I am truly grateful.

Just to help survive, paying for my vehicle, insurance and things like that. It kept me alive and kept the business alive.

I had expenses, rent, some of it just to pay bills and put food on the table, paid accountant and paid my bills [...] it kept me in business.

I used it for living costs as it went really quiet and I needed to pay my bills. It did make a difference as the Builders yards still wanted their money for materials even though we weren't getting any work or any income, so it allowed me to pay some bills and then pay off a few merchants which meant I could continue buying materials there when there was work to do.

For living costs to plug the gap when jobs were postponed. It really made more of a difference to me and my family as it meant we were supported when the work slowed up, especially as my wife wasn't working because she was pregnant so I'm very grateful for your support as I didn't qualify for anything else from the government.

I can't really explain how much of a difference it made. I got an email from the council beginning of last month saying they were going to give me £800 which was amazing, I couldn't believe it. The guys who are sitting in the office and working to support small business they don't get any thanks and I want to say thank you so much to them, they are brilliant. I mean, the mental impact it can have on you being skint can be horrendous, even more so for people who have had a business for years and have all of a sudden lost everything with their businesses, it must be dreadful for them. I know from my perspective though, it really lifted me up mentally to know that we had a bit of help with the car rental costs, the tax, feeding my children which is what every father cares about more than anything. Thank you so much again it was greatly appreciated.

The microgrant did help, it kept me going for one more month but that doesn't help the long term. It is annoying that I can't get any support from York council as I don't do 75% of my trade in York or have business premises in York but as a consultancy working from home, I don't need to pay business rates which is more sensible in the long run and yet I am getting penalised for it. I've written to our local MP and got no joy and I have written to the PM and the Chancellor but also not received a response. The aviation industry is going to be so slow to come back and I am running out of funds so I might have to retire and then live off the state and a pension- that doesn't feel right though when I have worked hard for this business and it is successful, it's just a tough patch. Can the business development team at the council or the grants department do anything to help the directors that have fallen through the nets? I took out a bounce back loan but have to repay it from June, but the issue is will I have a business in June? If not, the loan won't get repaid at all and it is a waste of government money. I can't get business here in the UK- post Brexit the UK aviation industry has separated from the European aviation industry and people don't want to train for UK licences anymore as it doesn't cover them for Europe now. Supporting my business in the short term would mean that when I can start trading again in Spain, it would all be Euro money coming into the UK which we need, but it won't be any more if I can't get help now and that won't help the economy at all. We should be classed as self-employed, and we could get the same SEIS as them. I don't see any logic in it at all if I'm honest, but I know I am not alone in this situation, there are millions of us that have always paid taxes and contributed to the economy that are now getting nothing back from Rishi and the government.

NB – following this call, this business was referred across to City of York Council for further support through the Additional Restrictions Grant

4.2 Investment

Of the businesses we spoke to, 35.2% were tagged as having referenced investment in equipment, technology, products and materials. This theme was also closely correlated with other themes such as launching new products and services or digitalisation where businesses had made investments to support these activities. For example, some businesses were using the grant funding to introduce new products, services, or even launch an entirely new business. Ultimately, this means over a third of businesses used the grant either in part or in full to support them in investing in the medium- or longer-term future of the business, as opposed to using it to cover immediate outgoings alone.

I used it **to buy good recording equipment, so I had a proper home studio** set up in order to be able to do my teaching online and to make good quality recordings. I would've previously gone to a studio, so it meant I wasn't held up or derailed in my timescales and production of work.

We had a packing station for 2 people, and we needed to go up to 4 so **extra racking and warehouse packing stations and equipment**. We also **invested in a new printer** that allowed us **to produce shipping labels quicker** as well. Also had some software developed as well to help us automate a few things **so it was split amongst these things in the main**.

Used the grant **to support the technical development of the app to do digital tours for tourists and locals themselves**. Feel the council could work harder in bringing small businesses together to help them support each other. We want to help local restaurants and cafes. One thing we have latched onto is when people come to York, they go to Starbucks or Caffe Nero instead of the independents. Through the app we want to support the more local businesses and link up with them so the app can show people where they are and maybe they can offer a little discount or something to encourage people to go in there. The small cafes and restaurants are the key area. We have engaged with some of them already and they are totally on board with it if and when we can get it going. In lockdown because the tour side of things is dead, I have also been setting up a separate business of a website for Vegans - the idea behind this being that if you are an annoying vegan like myself, there is always a problem trying to find food. The biggest thing for restaurants is trying to make people aware they do a vegan option. We have said to restaurants we will list all their vegan dishes so people can go on, choose what they want, and it will show them where you can get it. [...] That is in development and hoping to get that off the ground by May/June when things are more open again.

We have done ok. I do intergenerational projects between residents of care homes and young people doing creative projects. We have managed to keep it going through various means and I used the grant to run sessions in other care homes that I haven't already worked with and did it for free for them which was fantastic as it allowed me to build some great new relationships. I am currently running another project that is being funded by the council and we have created resources for care homes based on local life stories and episodes that can be accessed digitally. Also running a project from national lottery funding working with local coordinators to help with people in the community who often fall through the cracks - it is an art project they get stuff delivered to the door and then we collect it again after 2 weeks and share it out to schools and make cards that they can then share with family or friends. I have also made an online gallery as well [...]

Without a doubt the grant was really well spent in my eyes because a lot of the stuff we did was singing- people could look from windows or be in the courtyard at the care home and it really had an amazing reaction from so many people. I am absolutely loving it and I have been speaking to Mind and the social prescribers and I am getting people referred to Community Smiles on an informal basis at the moment but there is talk of making it more official. Mind have put out for partnerships for year 5 of their growth plan and I have got through to the second stage of that. I proposed a project with involved 2 sets of art packs and they came back and asked if I could double it.

4.3 Digitalisation

One theme that came up frequently when speaking to businesses was digitalisation, with 25.5% of businesses tagged as referencing digitalisation of services or adoption of new technology. Given that the pandemic meant that face-to-face contact was limited, many businesses had to adapt and transition to online channels to either reach their market or for service delivery. In some cases, this has enabled the business to continue trading at a time when they would otherwise not have done so, therefore the grant was invaluable in helping businesses continue to trade in difficult times, increasing the resilience of businesses in York.

Given the potential opportunities for digitalisation from micro businesses, we would suggest that this general appetite can be leveraged by City of York Council when developing future programmes and support packages, aimed at helping small businesses get and stay online.

To buy equipment and software to help take my education service online. It helped so much, **I feel like I've gone further and done more in a way I hadn't anticipated.** I've moved into things like music production with the aim of producing learning videos.

I am a musician and a music teacher and so I used it to change all of my face-to-face teaching online. Included a bit of training and some technical stuff as well, upgrade wise. It enabled me to work online [...] I have managed though and **the microgrant made it possible for me to do my online teaching** and working with a lot of children across different programs so thank you for that.

It paid for online packages like Zoom, paid for website hosting, things I wanted to make sure I continued with. These things gave me the facilities I needed to start delivering the workshops. **It allowed me to diversify the business and adapt to be able to keep going through the pandemic.**

It saved me. I only set up my business full time in March 2019. So up until now I haven't had any money apart from Universal Credit. What I have done recently, I had my business valued so I could apply for the business grant and hoping to get some more help soon. **When you gave me the money it was a lifeline because it enabled me to buy samples and products and set up a franking machine so I could send post out to be able to do the live online workshops and therapy sessions.** When I applied for it, I thought no one would give me this. The joy I felt when I found out I could have it was honestly amazing. My business has been shut 8/12 months and the beauty business, even when I opened a bit in summer and December, the business in my room is 40% less than it was before covid and I'm not sure it will ever come back. My therapy room has been shut for so long people have learnt to do things themselves- plus the fact I would get people getting nails done for nights out and holidays and that isn't going to be happening any time soon. Being able to start and develop the online side of things has absolutely changed the business and my life and I am definitely going to continue the online side of things and grow it as much as possible because realistically, the market is national now, so the possibilities are endless.

It helped massively thank you. Very grateful for it. At the time, I had actually been made redundant from another job and only had a part time job on the side, so it was tough at one point, so it really helped me stay afloat with self-employment and **gave me a boost to put more time and energy into getting the online side of things going.**

4.4 Marketing Investment

Similar to digitalisation in some respects, 17.6% of businesses spoken to referenced spending on marketing. One noteworthy theme is the transformational impact of investment in marketing – for example, transitioning to a more digital marketing strategy, overcoming marketing skills gaps and increasing the pace of digital adoption. Some respondents saw marketing spend as a necessity to adjust to new ways of working and an increased reliance on online trade, to ensure they can continue to reach their customers and encourage their customers to continue or resume spending. On the other hand, others viewed this as an opportunity to grow into new markets and attempt new ways of reaching their target audiences. Interestingly, the marketing investment links with business survival in some instances, with many businesses referencing that without the additional funding to focus on their marketing strategy, their business may have closed.

In addition to this, some businesses have managed to achieve a return on their investment and positive business growth as a result of their marketing investment.

It has been put to good use in the business. I spent some time updating my website and changing that so it has helped relaunch and rebrand the business. I am also getting some paid for support with my social media content planning as that is an area I am very weak in [...] **I certainly wouldn't have been able to afford to do the rebranding, website refreshing and social media side of things without the support and without being able to do that, I think I would've had to close it down.**

I have set up marketing automation so it keeps in touch with the customer on a regular basis- might not be to do with plumbing, it could be to do with planting flowers but just keeps me in their mindset. Automatic emails for boiler service reminders- people love that. I have had to put a lot of effort and time into it- I was a massive technophobe before hand and my social media was all over the place. To keep me current on social media, I now pay a guy to do it- I send him content of photos and videos so people get the impression they know me before I get to the property [...] **all this was down to getting the initial grant from yourselves and I am so grateful because if things keep going like this, I will continue to grow.**

I mainly used it for repositioning my marketing. I set up a new website and paid £500 towards a marketing company to get out and contact people for me about my new offering and help me rebrand. The rest went on social media - Google ads and things like that and LinkedIn. **It made a really big difference to the business as I may have gone in this direction but a lot slower, but we have had to take the plunge with new technologies a bit quicker because of Covid and the grant has allowed me to change my business to benefit from this change in attitude and the need that is now there for more technological ways for companies to reach their audiences.**

That was the only grant we got because it is a new start up business **so we are having a website made and it has given us the means to be able to do that and reach an audience we previously couldn't tap into.** The pandemic has been bad, but a lot of good things can come out of it, like my business- I am able to set a business up and do more advertising and it has pushed me in that direction I probably previously would've avoided and given me the opportunity to do more. My other business - we got the rates grant with; we have put a mezzanine floor in so we can grow our business. In normal times we wouldn't have been able to do it. There are downsides and it has been really tough in so many ways, but you have to think positively.

It made a massive difference. The company I am using for the social media support are sending something out every week, it has been really interesting to see how much traction I am getting there. **I certainly wouldn't have been able to afford to do the rebranding, website refreshing and social media side of things without the support and without being able to do that, I think I would've had to close it down.** I almost feel like I am having to start a business from new again it feels such a strange position to be in, similar to when I first launched. I think I would've had to wrap the business up and look for a job if I hadn't had been able to make those changes. Any sort of support the council are giving out especially with digital marketing and sales generation side of things would be brilliant to have to help me move forwards.

I am one of the tiny businesses that fell through the cracks overnight and I lost all my clients for 6 months. For me personally, it was devastating not being able to access any funding. Fortunately I have survived, the microgrant wasn't a lot but it was a lifesaver in the fact it helped me put into place marketing support to help raise my profile which I couldn't have afforded any other way. I tried for one of the other ones but for whatever reason I didn't get it. It is gut wrenching really as so many people in different sectors have been able to access a lot of things, I haven't had anything but I feel fortunate that I have survived whilst at the same time I feel very disappointed that I missed out through no fault of my own.

4.5 Training & Upskilling

Of those who answered the survey, 10.7% referenced spending on training and upskilling. It was interesting to note that training and upskilling also overlapped with diversification and business growth in some instances. In these instances, it was often the case that whilst the respondent had ideas for self-development and business diversification, they needed to invest in training to achieve this, and the grant support was therefore beneficial in helping businesses upskill, invest in their business and as a consequence offer a wider range of services.

It partly went towards some training I did. I am interested in puppetry - The little Angel Theatre in London who are one of the best in Puppetry were doing training on Zoom **so I was able to pay for that and learn a new skill** which I have been incorporating into my shows and also been teaching children how to make **puppets giving me another source of paid work** which is great.

Doing an online marketing course. I found it on Facebook and the guy that runs it was an electrician. **I invested in that and it has changed my business.**

I also did a course on the software I use as well [...] I had wanted to do the course to get a better understanding of the software I use for a while but finances wouldn't allow it so **that was great for my self-development.**

Without the grant we wouldn't have applied to the British Franchise membership as financially we wouldn't have been able to spare that money under these circumstances. Being a member now means we can add that to our portfolio and in this industry it's a stamp of quality assurance which in the long run when we start to see an economic bounce back, will help us secure some new clients.

Massive. Honestly it was incredibly helpful, it came at a bleak time when everything was drying up. At that time, we weren't eligible for any other funding, our banking facilities got removed overnight, we had a working capital fund and it was knocked out overnight, spent most of our money abroad on a trade mission in Myanmar and when we returned our banking facility got took out and it was a scary time. We took out some loans and loan repayments are starting now - we would like and appreciate more help if its available. In terms of rent we are based in the business centre at Hiscox so we have a free base - 40 small companies - can work remotely for now.

4.6 New products and Services

As well as training and upskilling, 8.2% of businesses referenced using the grant to help the business cover some of the immediate costs involved in developing new products. For example, this could be costs such as plastic bottles, packaging and banners to name a few examples referenced in the calls.

Quite significantly, one of the responses highlighted an interesting parallel between well-being and the economic climate. They explained that the grant enabled the business to reinvent themselves while fitting around their own health and well-being needs.

Pre-pandemic I was doing alterations and repairs. Because of my health and taking anti-depressants before the national lockdown, I stopped taking appointments and it limited what I can do work wise. **So what I have done instead, including using the council grant, I have moved onto online selling and making bespoke bench cushions.** [...] I have done the bespoke cushion and bench cushion side of things before locally but now it is online. Despite last year being horrendous, my business is now growing in a way that it wouldn't had I continued doing the old type of work. It turned into a great opportunity as I had wanted to do it for a while but there needed to be a break in the other work coming in which wouldn't work financially for me, so I was never able to try it. Now I have the machine, I can be far more creative as I wanted to do for ages, but it was just a chunk of money that I didn't have, so getting the grant really allowed me to take the leap into the new area which has been amazing.

For a while I have been trying to launch a business and I didn't have the time or the amount of funds I needed to launch it. **Can't really do hair and makeup right now so launched an organic skincare range. So, the grant went towards the ingredients and the bottles and packaging I needed.** I was getting it from Italy originally however with covid and Brexit issues, I turned it into a positive and I actually managed to find better options from the UK so that reduced both cost and carbon footprint which I was really happy about!

We got new banners, new signs, **we started getting the new chutneys made and we wanted to expand because we believe in this business, so the grant went into that.**

The grant let me launch another side to the business. We are videographers, and **we launched art workshops for kids which is called Art Savvy**, this has been extremely helpful in allowing us to continue as a business and wouldn't have been possible without the grant.

4.7 New Markets

Of the businesses we spoke to, 7.9% referenced reaching new markets as a business. What we have found was that there was a significant overlap between those that referenced reaching new markets, digitalisation and marketing, with many using the grant funding to increase their online presence and online marketing strategies. Due to the pandemic, there was a widespread recognition that many businesses needed to increase their online presence to stay afloat, so some businesses were grateful to receive a grant to enable them to improve or create a website with reduced footfall. For example, one business noted that the grant went towards setting up an online store to reach new customers, which would not be possible without the funding. Another interesting example was for a construction company. In this instance, the grant went on materials for converting a work van, but this has since enabled the business to explore a new service offering and reach a new market which they anticipate will be lucrative.

To push advertising through a new website and **reach a wider audience.** I got my initial grant and that was good then I got an email to say I was entitled to a top up which was amazing which shows the council are behind people in the city. [...] That was the only grant we got because it is a new start up business, **so we are having a website made and it has given us the means to be able to do that and reach an audience we previously couldn't tap into.**

It took the pressure off, seeing the bank account dropping and dropping with no incomings, it really mentally made a difference as well as to keeping the business in a state that we can continue staying open and building our client base which seems to be growing all the time which is great.

4.8 Minimal Impact

In some instances, the respondent stated that the grant itself did have minimal impact on their business, due to the size of the grant available in comparison with their business costs. However, only 4.7% of businesses noted the grant funding as having minimal or no impact on their business. In these instances, it was generally where the business had substantial running costs or overheads even when not actively trading. Businesses of 6+ accounted for 26.7% of these respondents compared to 4.0% of all grant recipients, which reflects this being primarily due to the relative size and cost base of the business. Even in these instances, in some cases there was still a sense of gratitude for the support, even if the value wasn't enough to make a significant difference to their business. Only in one case was strongly negative feedback received. In this instance, the respondent felt the council had not gone as far as they could have done to support small businesses through the pandemic.

It didn't make a difference to us surviving and not surviving but added value and made the process of working from home smoother and for that I am very grateful.

The running costs never went - we still had to pay vehicle and van insurance. **I wouldn't say it made much of a difference** but I am still grateful it is just that the business running costs are high so although it helped, **there was still so much to pay for when there was no income.**

It paid off an invoice. **Barely touched the sides for ongoing costs really. The issue is when you have put into the system you should be able to get something out of it.**

It made no difference at all. The £10,000 initial grant was denied to me as I was stuck in a long lease and then I needed rate relief but I was told the rateable value of the building is £19,000 per year when the limit is £15k per year so I couldn't have the grant. It was largely unused with 1 person in it, used to be 20 but I had to let them go. I asked for valuation officer to come out and they refused. I had to get a bounce back loan which I have to pay back. I'm now totally on my own and City of York Council did everything they can to not help me. Went to Ryedale council and they gave me a £3000 grant and they came out to see me. **City of York Council did nothing and that's why I moved out of York. The government have totally failed businesses like mine and I think I am likely to have to go into administration any time now so thanks for nothing City of York Council.**

4.9 Welfare & Wellbeing Impact

As explained earlier in this report, the aim of this research was not solely to look at the economic impact of the grant on local businesses. Whilst important, for some of the smaller businesses, they sit at the intersection of social and economic policy. For example, many of the businesses were self-employed individuals who would otherwise be reliant on Universal Credit, so this grant money was crucial to keep these individuals in work, by ensuring or increasing their chances of business survival. Of the respondents to our survey, 26.1% referenced using the grant money for personal survival, and 56.9% of respondents stated the business provided the main household income. Therefore, whilst this was a business grant, it demonstrates the personal impact of the additional support for small businesses, as many of these individuals would have faced significant hardships if they had not received the grant.

I wasn't entitled to any of the government support because I started trading in 2019 so the grant really did help me. Had a bit of universal credit as well but that isn't a lot at all especially when there are ongoing monthly costs to pay for, so I am really grateful for the help with the microgrant.

Anything is a help so thank you. I didn't qualify for anything, spoke to my MP and the bank and neither could help. My problem was I run a not for profit, and I don't have a tax bill, so I am not eligible for any support. I put on a production and I always paid for it as my husband died, then the ticket sales would've paid the money back. Production was all set for 24th March, and I had spent 10k of my own money with 14k worth of ticket sales that I had to refund and lose all the money I had put into it which had wiped out my bank account. Not for profits, the third sector and charity organisations have been forgotten about by the government and belittled like we are not important to society- if you don't make thousands then you don't deserve help is very much how it feels to me. **We create these shows, and they have a lot of volunteers, it is a community project a lot of the time and gives a lot of people a lot of work and meaning.**

I didn't qualify for universal credit due to my husband having an income. He had got £16k from one job that he had been doing over 3 months but he had labourers to pay for and materials so when it boiled down to it, it wasn't that much to keep for himself as wages. **In the end, I stopped filling in my universal Credit journal as I got so disheartened by it filling in the money section of how much we had and knowing that I wouldn't qualify for anything. [...] It made such a difference getting the help from you, just at the very beginning, the fact of not knowing what you would be getting in the bank and the stress of that mentally, it really helped. It made me so relieved and I actually cried when the email came through.**

Used it to continue to give my young apprentices wages whilst we couldn't work at the start as one of them didn't qualify for furlough and the other was only 17 so hadn't made any tax contributions [...] **it helped make sure I could look out for the lads so for that I'm grateful.**

In addition to this, 10.4% of businesses also noted that due to the grant funding taking off some immediate strain, it made a really positive impact on the recipient's mental health and wellbeing. Whilst the grant had the primary aim of keeping businesses afloat in difficult times, the impact that the grants had on mental health should also be noted. Given many of these businesses were small businesses, their survival was heavily intertwined with the mental health of the business owners. Whilst for some recipients the grants positively impacted their mental health as a result of being able to support the business and their dependants, many other businesses also noted that the grant funding boosted their confidence, reduced stress and allowed them to focus on developing their business without unduly worrying about their finances.

It was a **massive emotional support** to be perfectly honest as I had dropped to my knees at that point and I have put so much effort into this but I had got back to square one again. It was what I needed and it was a validation of me as a **human at that point because there was no furlough or anything to help me so I want to say thank you to the system for that.**

Psychologically it helped you keep going, maintaining some kind of business and it helps you make better business decisions as **if you are struggling for cash, you are going to make bad decisions** and you will be in a negative business mindset.

The mental impact it can have on you being skint can be horrendous, even more so for people who have had a business for years and have all of a sudden lost everything with their businesses, it must be dreadful for them. I know from my perspective though, **it really lifted me up mentally to know that we had a bit of help** with the car rental costs, the tax, feeding my children, which is what every father cares about more than anything.

Even though I have been in business for a long time, my husband has been ill for 5 years and he passed away this year, so things have only been ticking along during that time. When he died, I didn't take a salary, I had been putting all the money into the business so when the government did their self-employed scheme, I didn't qualify as I didn't make a profit and made a loss for 2 of the past 3 years so I wasn't eligible. **Rather than fold the business which I didn't want to do, I wanted something for me to be able to carry on with after he died [...]** I was ploughing every bit of money into the business to get the website going. **You have kept me in business really** - I am lucky I don't have a mortgage but if I did, I think I would've had to fold the business.

I don't think I would've coped without it. I have an ok home computer but this one is a super fast laptop and I teach on Zoom so need to share screens and things like that. **I know it sounds melodramatic but having something that worked has helped my mental health through the entire pandemic** as I would've been really frustrated not being able to work at all or not having the right technology to run my lessons and it is easy to get into a negative attitude when things are tough.

I think this is just the start for us, we were mentioned in the Guardian and also to do with a book that was re-released as there was a new production made of it at the theatre. I have also found the confidence to place a half page ad, every 3 months in a magazine called Mslexia which is based out of Newcastle, they are four women writers promoting women writers and that is where this mid - level author that we are now working with saw us! **Everything is interlinked but I must truly extend my thanks to you as in 15 years of trading, we have never had any help at all and the microgrant was the first thing we have ever received, and it absolutely made our day and our year** as it has set the ball rolling and we are moving forwards now in a way that I didn't think we could.

4.10 Thematic Analysis Conclusions

4.10.1 Economic Impact Conclusions

This research aimed to better understand the economic impact of the Micro Grant scheme on the recipient businesses, both in terms of avoiding immediate term downside economic risks – such as business closure or insolvency – and in terms of driving longer term economic growth by supporting business growth, investment and innovation.

In terms of avoiding some of the immediate risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, this research demonstrates that a significant minority of the grant recipients were at risk of permanent business closure at some point over the past year, with over a quarter of respondents (26.4%) stating this was the case. In addition, out of the respondents, only six businesses had ceased to trade permanently, equivalent to 1.9% of respondents. Extrapolating these figures across the 1,114 grant recipient would equate to 21 business overall ceasing to trade, compared to 294 'at risk' businesses avoiding this outcome. In addition, 66.7% of those 'at risk' businesses which avoided permanent business closure referenced putting some or all of the grant towards business survival – for example, covering some of their on-going overheads and bills. From an economic perspective therefore, the grant has played a significant role in avoiding some of the financial fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, the responses show that a significant proportion of the grant funding contributed not only to immediate survival, but to investment in the business, and thereby in the medium to longer growth prospects. This took many forms, from investment in technology, materials or resources, digitalisation, new product and service launches, and investment in training and marketing. For example, 25.5% of grant recipients referenced the grant contributing to digitalisation as a business – extrapolating this across the 1,114 grant recipients suggests 284 businesses were supported in digitalising all or part of their services with assistance from the grant. Similarly, extrapolating the 35.2% who invested in new technology, equipment or materials, suggests 392 recipients in total put some or all of the grant funding towards supporting this kind of investment, and extrapolating the 17.6%

which invested in marketing suggests a total of 196 businesses did so. (However, it should be noted that because these flags are not mutually exclusive some businesses could be counted more than once if they were tagged within both themes).

As discussed, it is worth noting that survival and investment for future growth should not be considered mutually exclusive and some respondents were tagged under both themes. This has implications for how best to monitor future grant schemes given the grant may have indirectly contributed to business investment by reducing some of the immediate pressures of paying on-going costs and overheads. It also demonstrates that even businesses that may have considered themselves 'at risk' at the start of the pandemic have been able to invest in growth and future development.

These findings support the conclusion that the Council's Micro Grant has played a significant role in avoiding some of the economic damage witnessed both locally and nationally as a result of the pandemic, as well as supporting businesses in investing in their on-going growth and development.

However, the research also highlights that for many businesses the challenges of the pandemic are still live, and this has implications for how City of York Council continues to support and nurture the business ecosystem. For example, 27.0% of the respondents stated they had had zero customers in the month prior to completing the survey, suggesting a significant level of dormancy and suppressed economic activity. In addition, from the qualitative feedback provided by businesses, it is possible that some businesses that have invested in growth and digitalisation will need further assistance to embed change in their business and leverage this investment to drive future growth.

4.10.2 Welfare Impact Conclusions

As discussed previously, the majority of grant recipients were either self-employed or sole traders. In essence, this meant that for many of the recipients the distinction between their business and personal finances is more blurred. This is evidenced by the proportion of respondents who also referenced part or all of the grant payment contributing towards their personal expenditure – for example, food, bills or housing – with over a quarter of respondents (26.1%) flagged as referencing personal survival in their response. This includes some specific cases where individuals have also discussed this in the context of their Universal Credit entitlement, particularly where they were ineligible for support.

Given that 57% of the businesses provide the main household income and that 56% of the respondents reside in a household with three or more members, this also demonstrates the reach of the grant support from a welfare perspective.

A qualitative finding from the research was that the business and personal outcomes were often closely interlinked. This is potentially indicative of the profile of businesses receiving the grant, and reinforces the view that grants targeted at these types of businesses have social policy benefits beyond the immediate economic impact. One respondent summed this up by stating: "It kept me alive and kept the business alive."

4.10.3 Wellbeing Impact Conclusions

As identified in section 4.9, there were additional well-being impacts from the Micro Grant programme. 10.4% of survey respondents referenced well-being, and in particular, the well-being impact of receiving the grant. This is also reflected in the support priorities flagged by respondents, with mental health and well-being support achieving an average rating of 2.9, the third highest rating. Additionally, the emotional response evoked by the grant demonstrates the positive well-being impact, with 41.8% of respondents expressing some sense of gratitude towards the Council in their response.

The importance of this well-being impact should not be overlooked and should be considered a further benefit of this type of grant scheme, particularly where recipients are small and micro businesses. The well-being benefit of the grant scheme may also contribute to the overall economic impact, by supporting and nurturing a resilient business community. For example, as one of the respondents stated (see comment on page 48):

*Psychologically it helped you keep going, maintaining some kind of business and it helps you make better business decisions as **if you are struggling for cash, you are going to make bad decisions** and you will be in a negative business mindset.*

5.0 Conclusion

The Micro Grant scheme had a significant economic impact in terms of both the immediate survival of businesses and ongoing growth and innovation and goes beyond that of traditional business support. For many businesses, the grant acted as a vital ‘lifeline’, with many businesses at risk of permanently ceasing to trade managing to avoid this outcome. By easing some of the financial pressure on businesses such as the immediate overhead costs, this enabled them to ultimately focus on making the right business decisions for survival and then growth. What was also encouraging from this research was that despite the difficult economic climate a significant number of businesses were able to invest in their future as a business – whether in the form of technology, equipment, marketing or training.

Not only this, but of the businesses that did choose to reinvest in the business, many looked to increase their digital adoption and reach new markets. For example, a number of businesses chose to put the money towards a new website in order to attract and reach new customers. Some went even further and set up online shops in order to increase their revenue, so in these instances the grants had a positive effect on both the economy but also the confidence of many business owners.

As a result of the pandemic, many business owners reported an impact on their mental health. This was mostly due to the fact they were the sole earner with dependents and their business having taken a hit causing stress and anxiety, or the business owner’s confidence had been knocked due to a significant loss of revenue. In both of these instances, we found that the grants had a positive effect on the mental health and wellbeing of businesses. In many cases, knowing that the immediate costs were taken care of was a benefit in itself.

Whilst some businesses noted that, due to having little to no income and high overheads, the grant was not enough to keep them out of danger, overall, the feedback on the grant and the grant application process has been highly positive, the grants being successful in helping businesses avoid some of the risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The data gathered provides an invaluable evidence base in shaping the support available around the needs and priorities of the business community. In addition to the information gathered on the impact of the grant, we also gathered insights into the types of support businesses would find most valuable. This can also inform the development of further support which mirrors the requirements of local businesses, ensuring this is designed around their needs and targeted towards the local community.

6.0 Appendix – Survey Questions

Hi, it's XXX from City of York Council.

Hope you're well - it was just a really quick one.

I don't know if you remember but back in **(refer back to date)** you received a Covid-19 micro grant from us at the Council and we're simply looking to understand from you, in what has been a very different year with things like COVID and now the EU Exit, **what sort of funding, support and free advice would benefit businesses like yourself moving forwards – as well as get a feel for how the grant has helped to support you and your business and what we could perhaps do better** should more funding / grants become available?

We're really keen to do our bit for the York business community and so I just had a few quick questions to get some feedback if I could run through those quickly with you now?

IF NEEDED – all answers are anonymised – we're keen to speak to businesses that we have supported to gather their feedback and understand what is important to different types of businesses.

Beginning of question set – asked in very much a conversational manner:

Q1

Firstly, we're looking at what type of support is of most value to businesses across things such as skills, business resilience, climate change, networking, grants, exporting etc and so how valuable would you say the following things would be to you as a business, to help improve competitiveness on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is not very valuable and 5 is very valuable?

- Sales / Marketing (including social media)
- Starting, growing and managing a business, including business planning
- Digital and IT
- Exporting/Expanding into new overseas markets
- Innovation & adapting your business.
- Resource efficiency / carbon reduction support (reducing your environmental impact, for example, reducing your energy consumption)
- Training and skills support and apprenticeships
- Mental health and wellbeing (for you and your employees)
- Access to finance

Q2 – Have you adapted or diversified your business during the pandemic? And if so how? So for example, started deliveries, going online etc – anything which involves changing the way you work or what you offer your customers.

YES / NO

Free text box to understand how and / or why?

Response flags for the interviewer (multi-select):

New Markets / New Products or Services / Digitised Existing Services / Reduced Service Offering / Changed Business Model

Q3 – If No: And is that because you haven't need to do so, or because you have faced barriers or challenges to doing so?

Haven't needed to / Faced barriers or challenges

Free text box to understand how and / or why?

Q4 – Can I just ask, did you have to furlough any staff over the past year?

Yes / No / Will be doing.

Free text box to note any additional feedback.

Q5 – In relation to your customer base, which of the following best describes your position now compared to February 2020?

Increased / Decreased / Remained the Same / Unsure

Free text box to note any additional feedback.

Q5b – Roughly speaking, can you provide an estimate of the number of customers you've had in the past month?

Free text box

Q6 – In relation to the COVID-19 micro-grant you received specifically – how easy did you find the process of applying for and accessing the grant on a scale of 1 – 5 whereby 1 is very difficult and 5 is very straightforward and simple.

Grade accordingly on scale of 1 – 5

AND include a free text box to capture why?

Q7 – What would you suggest in terms of any changes to the process if you were to apply again? *(free to prompt here to help open the contact up for example could communication have been better, support with the application forms themselves, was the timing clear in relation to when you would received the actual grant etc?)*

Free text box

Q8 – How exactly did you use the grant? *(free to prompt here for example, new kit, pay wages, stay afloat, pay bills etc)*

IF NEEDED: Just to reassure you this is anonymised and is just to help us evaluate the grant programme, so it doesn't matter if it didn't go towards what you initially intended when you applied.

Free text box

Q9 – What differences has the grant made to you and your business? *(free to prompt here and explain both in personal and professional terms)*

Free text box

Q10 – Did any of these outcomes happen over the last year?

Yes / No

- Ceasing to trade (temporarily)
- Ceasing to trade (permanently)
- Letting go of premises you rent or own
- Letting go of employees.
- Losing customers

For those that didn't happen in the past year:

- Were any of these a risk at any point in the past year?
- Finally, are any of these still a potential risk to your business?

Free text box *(If No to all of the above – probe for any positive news stories in terms of business growth survival, innovation etc. If any of these were a risk but were avoided – how have they managed to avoid these negative outcomes to date and what contributed to this)*

Q11 - Are you aware of or do you engage with any of the following? *Classify each according to 'aware of' and 'engage with' so that we can understand awareness, but also whether any of these businesses are members already or not of some of the wider support groups / networks available in the region.*

- York Chamber of Commerce *(aware of – YES / NO, engage with – YES / NO)*
- Local Growth Hub (Leeds City Region and/or York & North Yorkshire)
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Institute of Directors
- Trade Associations
- City of York Council
- Universities

- Make it York
- Other business networks – *please specify*

IF YES TO ENGAGE WITH FSB – “Have you found the FSB membership useful?”

Free text box

Would you be interested in more information on membership of the FSB or local Chamber of Commerce going forwards?

Yes / No

Q12 – Just to help us understand more about your business and the type of customers you work with, can you just let me know:

- Are your customers mostly businesses, mostly consumers or a mix of the two?
- Are your customers mostly York based, mostly outside of York or a mix of the two?
- Are your customers mostly UK based, mostly international or a mix of the two?

Q13 - Are you open to us contacting you in the future in relation to any advances and funded programmes should they become available? We can't guarantee anything at the current time but we can keep you in the loop in future. What would be the best email address for you?

Q14 – Finally, can I ask how many people live in your household...? *If asked – explain this is just for the purpose of understanding the role small businesses like yours play in the local York economy.*

- 1-2
- 3-4
- 4+

Q15 – Thanks so much for all this information, it's been really valuable in building up a picture of the impact of COVID and how your business has got through the past year. Would you like to remain anonymous or are you happy for your business to be used as a case study in future?

Anonymous / Case Study

Finally, I did have a couple of other questions that would be really helpful to help the Council more generally with planning services such as transport and internet connectivity, if you can spare a couple more minutes?

If no – thank them for the feedback so far.

Q16 – How reliant is your business on internet connectivity, on a scale of 1 – 5 whereby 1 is not at all and 5 is totally reliant?

1 – 5

Q17 – Has the quality of your internet connectivity placed any limitations on you as a business, particularly in the last year?

Yes / No

Text box for further comments

Q18 – How reliant is your business on transport connections into and out of York city centre, on a scale of 1 – 5 whereby 1 is not at all and 5 is totally reliant?

1 – 5

Q19 – Do you think transport connections have placed, or will place, any limitations on you as a business, especially thinking prior to lockdown or looking forward to once things reopen again? *E.g. reliability of public transport, infrastructure for cycling, walking or driving, costs involved in parking, car parking availability etc*

Yes / No

Text box for further comments

Q20 – Can I confirm what forms of transport you would normally use?

Walking / Cycling / Bus / Park & Ride / Train / Car