

Results of Disability Survey “Moving Towards an Accessible Dorset”

Introduction

During the summer 2006 Dorset's six District Councils and the County Council carried out a disability survey in order to understand what the main barriers and experiences are for disabled people in Dorset. The reason for this was to contribute to the creation of our Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan.

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a duty on all public authorities to promote disability equality. The overarching goal of this is to achieve the Government's vision of disability equality i.e.

"By 2025, disabled people in Britain should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and will be respected and included as equal members of society."

This report displays the key information gathered from the 160 completed questionnaires returned. The questionnaire was sent out to disability organisations and it could also be accessed via www.dorsetforyou.com. Respondents could answer as an individual or as a representative on behalf of a disability organisation.

Sections

The questionnaire was divided into 12 sections. This report is structured around these topic areas which are:

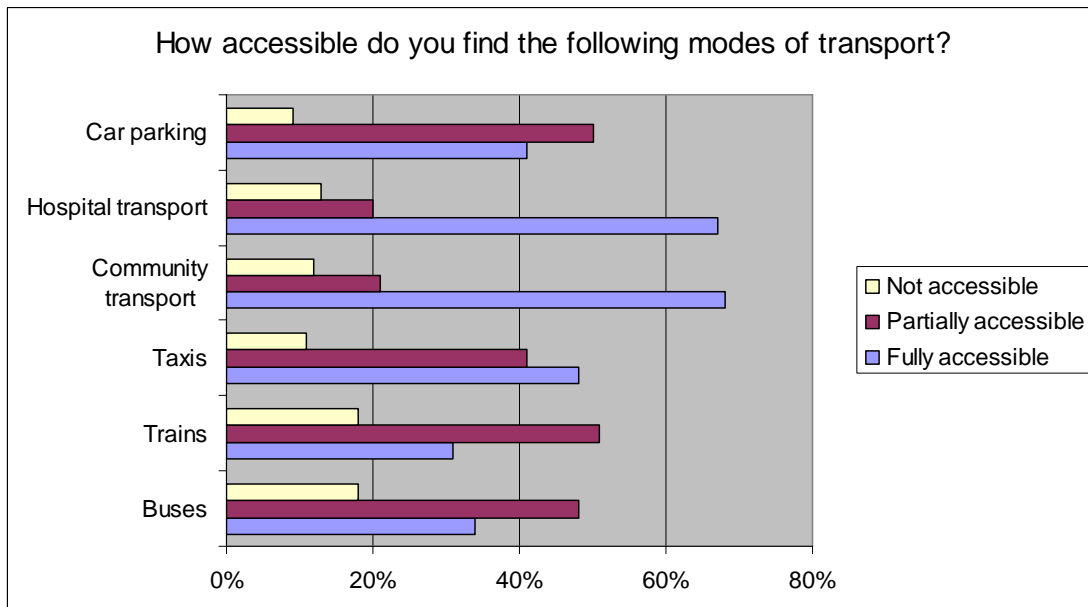
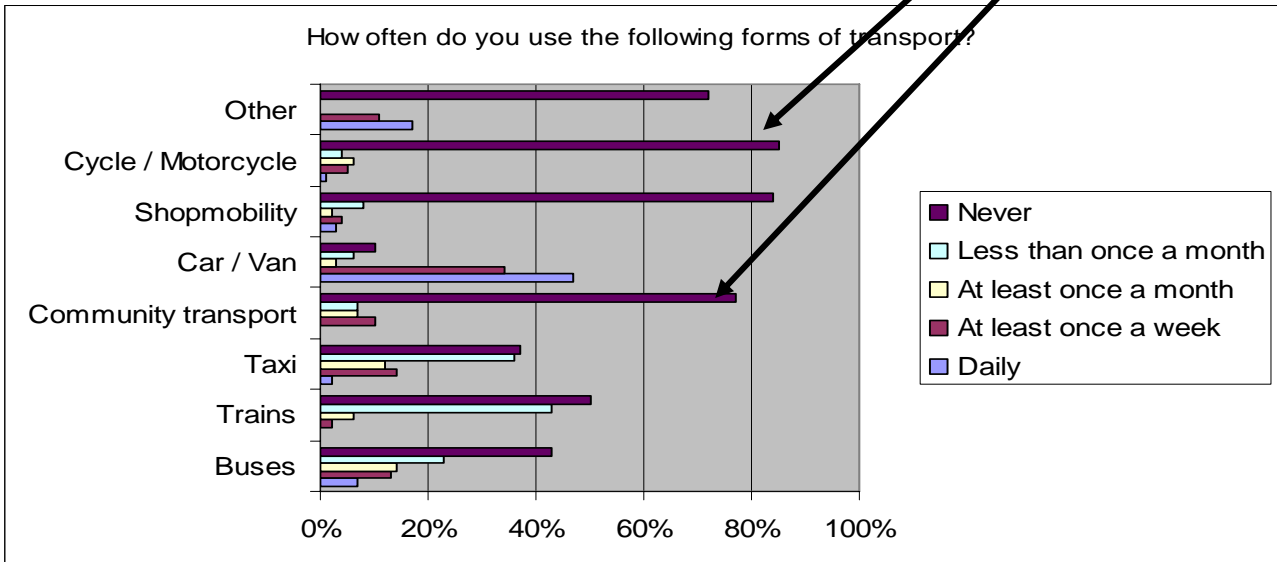
- Transport
- Housing
- Support needs
- The built environment
- Lifestyle
- Employment
- Discrimination
- Involvement in public life
- Moving forwards
- Additional comments
- About yourself
- What happens next

The questionnaire consisted of both open and closed questions so this report includes quantitative (numerical data) and qualitative (open ended, literal) analysis. Text which appears in thought bubbles are direct quotes from people who took part in the survey.

Section 1: Transport

We wanted to find out about accessibility of public transport links in the local area.

The chart below shows how often respondents use different modes of transport. We can see that the car/van was the most popular method of transport with 47% of respondents using this method daily. Cycle/Motorcycle was the least popular with 85% never using this method.

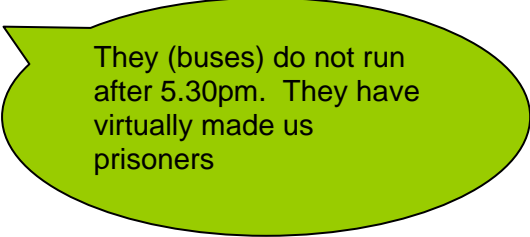


The majority of respondents found the mode of transport they use either fully accessible or partially accessible. The most common modes of transport e.g. buses and trains had the higher percentage of respondents saying that the method was not

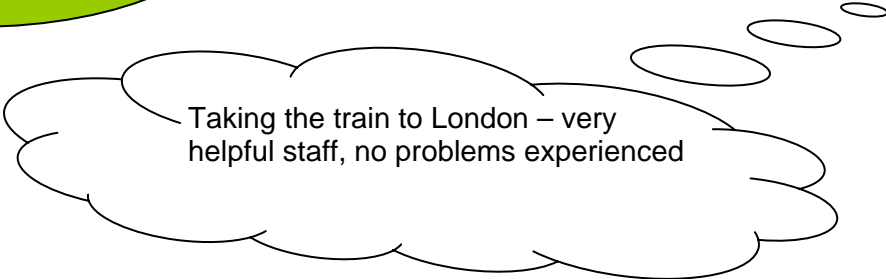
accessible. We can see that most respondents who use Community transport and Hospital transport find these methods fully accessible.

Although the majority of respondents find that the transport they use either fully accessible or partially accessible, we can see from the open ended questions there is still room for improvement. The following points were raised as areas that people wished to be addressed.

- The cost of rail and bus tickets are too high.
- Although there are some wheelchair accessible busses they are too infrequent and unreliable. Many people described that they often had to let two or more buses pass before an accessible bus would come.
- Many also described bus drivers as unhelpful and often rude towards disabled people, for example, by not showing understanding that a disabled person might take longer to get on and off the bus as anyone with a mobility disability would find it very difficult or impossible to move whilst the bus is in motion.
- Blue Badge holders expressed concern over lack of parking facilities close to town centres and felt that the time constrictions were too limiting, e.g. that you are not allowed to use the badge until after 10am.
- More work needs to be done to make bus stops accessible for example by creating seating and timetables that are easy to read and understand.
- People living in smaller villages do not generally use public transport either because of inaccessibility or because there is no public transport.



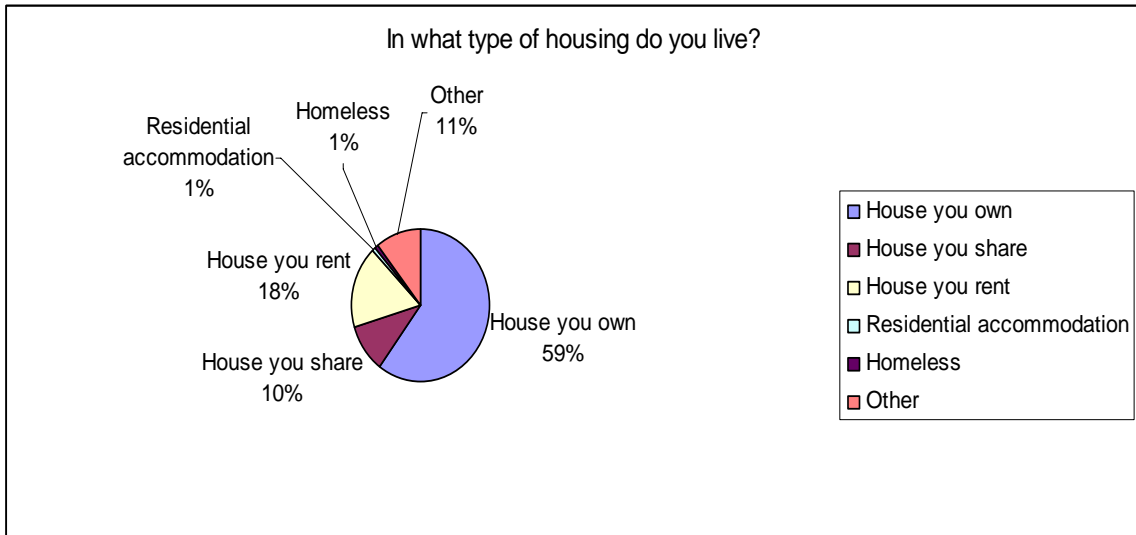
They (buses) do not run after 5.30pm. They have virtually made us prisoners



Taking the train to London – very helpful staff, no problems experienced

Section 2: Housing

This section focused on housing asking people if they felt that the accommodation that they live in is suitable for their needs.



From the pie chart above you can see that the majority of respondents (59%) live in a house or flat that they own.

When asked ' Do you feel that your accommodation meets your needs as a disabled person?' 107 respondents said 'yes' (74%) and 37 respondents said 'no' (26%).



Where accommodation has been adapted it has mainly been alterations to bathrooms, installing ramps, stair lifts and grab rails.

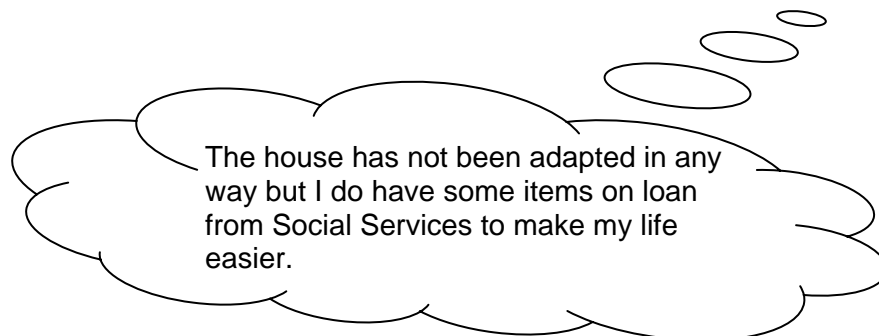
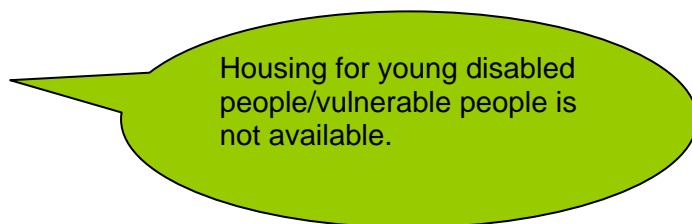
The majority said that their accommodation had not been specially adapted to meet the needs of disabled people. The most common required changes that people wish to have installed in their accommodation are:

- Stair lifts.
- Flashing lights that will alert the individual of door bells and the telephone.
- Installing a downstairs toilet.
- Grab rails.

Worryingly there were a few people who described how they have been waiting a very long time for their local council to assess and address their accessibility needs.

The majority of people's experience of housing for disabled people was positive. However there were some people who expressed concerns over the following.

- That there isn't enough accessible social housing.
- Long waiting lists.
- The lack of supporting people funding means people with learning disabilities often have to continue to live with partners or carers although they wish to move out.
- Because of the location of accessible housing many people are forced to leave their village, this can lead to feelings of isolation and loss of contact with known community.
- Some expressed a concern that the eligibility criteria excludes people under pensionable age.



Section 3: Support Needs

We asked people what kind of support needs they have and if these needs are being met.

Where there are a greater amount of people needing support with a particular issue such as Housework/home help, travel and personal assistance their needs tend to be met in one way. Where there are a less number of people needing support in a particular area such as communication assistance, enabling you to be a carer and support at work the majority of people are saying their needs are not met.

	Needing support	Needs not met
Housework or shopping/home help	107 (67%)	12 (11%)
Personal assistance	93 (58%)	21 (23%)
Communication assistance	37 (23%)	20 (54%)
Support from health professional	57 (36%)	20 (35%)
Advocacy support	48 (30%)	24 (50%)
Travel	81 (51%)	13 (16%)
Enabling you to be a carer	32 (20%)	20 (63%)
Support at work	25 (16%)	18 (72%)

Advocacy support is an area where 30% of respondents say they need help yet 50% of those say their needs are not being met.

Few people said that they receive the support they need from their local council. Most people unfortunately have very negative experiences of obtaining information from public bodies or indeed receiving any help at all. Public bodies are criticised for being too inaccessible and for being too bureaucratic. Lots of people explained that they did not understand what Direct Payments are about or how they can use this to their benefit. Many people described that they are relying on their wife/husband and/or friends to care for them and to provide them with information.

Far too much delay in getting support. They all say they are very busy. Too much talk and not enough action and you get passed from one professional to another with unnecessary delay

Very helpful social workers

Section 4: The built environment i.e. roads, buildings & other structures

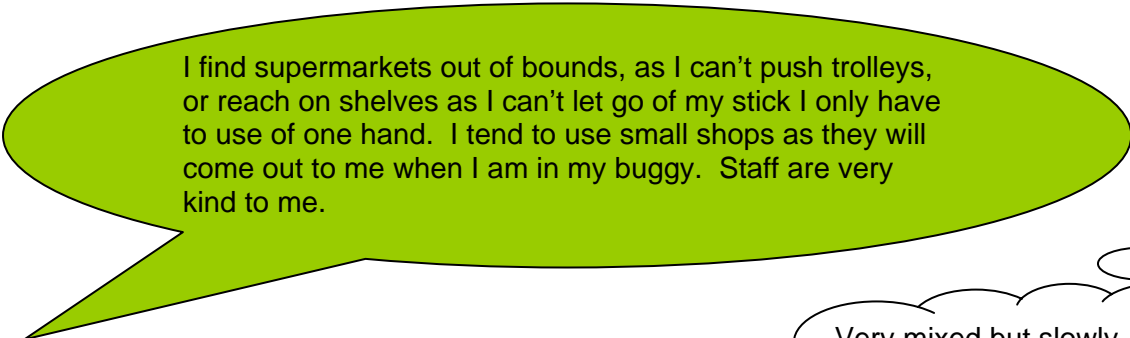
This section focused on physical access to a range of different facilities.

The table below shows the percentage of users who have said that the facility they use is fully accessible. We can see that Health centres, Libraries and GP Surgeries are the facilities that people find most accessible. Sports facilities, cinemas and the street environment received the lowest % for being fully accessible.


	Fully accessible
Health centre	67 (79%)
Library	90 (78%)
GP Surgery	110 (76%)
Council offices	69 (63%)
Shopping centre	76 (59%)
Post office	80 (58%)
Schools/college	33 (57%)
Dentist	73 (56%)
Police station	37 (56%)
Parks/children's playgrounds	32 (53%)
Parking	56 (46%)
Local shops	62 (46%)
Sports and facilities	30 (44%)
Cinema/theatre	39 (43%)
Street environment	40 (31%)

From the comments that people have made in this section it is clear that a lot more work needs to be done in order to make the built environment more accessible for disabled people. The following areas were the ones that people would most like to see improved:

- Would like to see more dropped kerbs in town centres.
- Clearer marking of dropped kerbs and an introduction of parking penalties for people who park in front of dropped kerbs.
- Wish to see local councils putting on more pressure on local shops and business to conform with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- Many people said that pavements are often too narrow and in such poor condition that it is dangerous to travel in a wheelchair or an electrical scooter.
- Pavements can also be inaccessible because of clutter caused by recycling boxes left on the pavements.
- There were a number of people who commented on the fact that many pavements are designed to slope slightly. This causes a problem for wheelchair users as there is a risk of tipping over.



I find supermarkets out of bounds, as I can't push trolleys, or reach on shelves as I can't let go of my stick I only have to use of one hand. I tend to use small shops as they will come out to me when I am in my buggy. Staff are very kind to me.

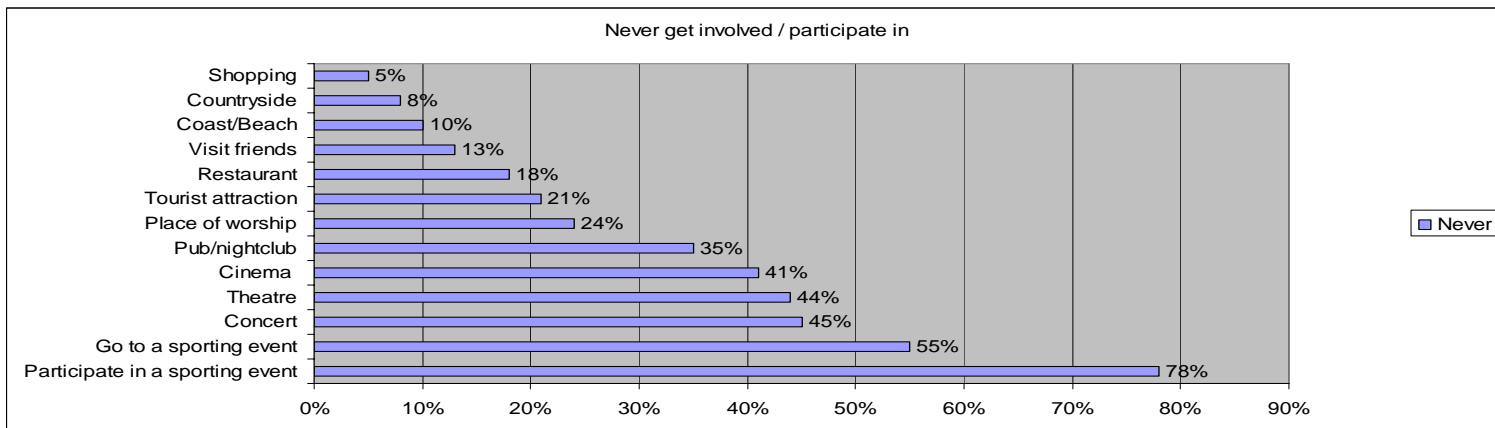


Very mixed but slowly improving

Section 5: Lifestyle

We wanted to know how easy or hard it is for disabled people to use a range of different leisure facilities and shops.

The graph below shows the percentage of respondents that never get involved in certain activities and because they haven't ticked the 'not interested' option we can assume that they would like to get involved. From this chart we can see that participating in a sporting event and going to a sporting event has a higher % than all the other activities.



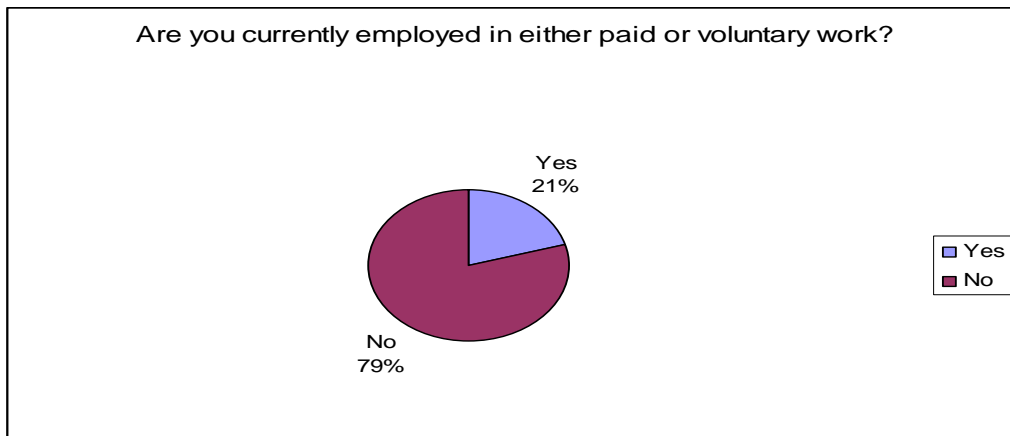
The main issue raised in this section links back to section 1 about transport. Many people commented that although there are different activities that they wish to take part in they are not able to because of the lack of good reliable public transport. Many people also felt that accessible information is a problem as they only find out about activities/facilities via friends rather than through advertising. Finally many people mentioned that the cost is a barrier to using any leisure facilities.

My physical disability prevents me from participating in a sporting event

Fairly good, apart from having to travel long distance for concerts

Section 6: Employment

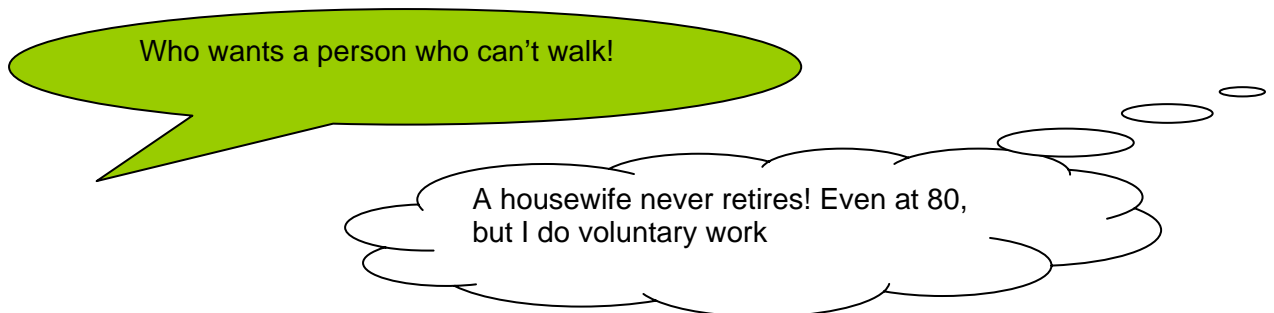
This section focused on whether people are employed and if yes do they feel that they are supported in their workplace. If people did not work we asked them to explain why.



Here you can see that the majority of respondents aren't in paid or voluntary work. 31 respondents (21%) said that they were either currently employed or doing voluntary work. 120 respondents (79%) said 'no'. 46% (73 respondents) of those respondents who have said they don't work are retired. 33% (52 respondents) said that they are unable to work due to their disability.

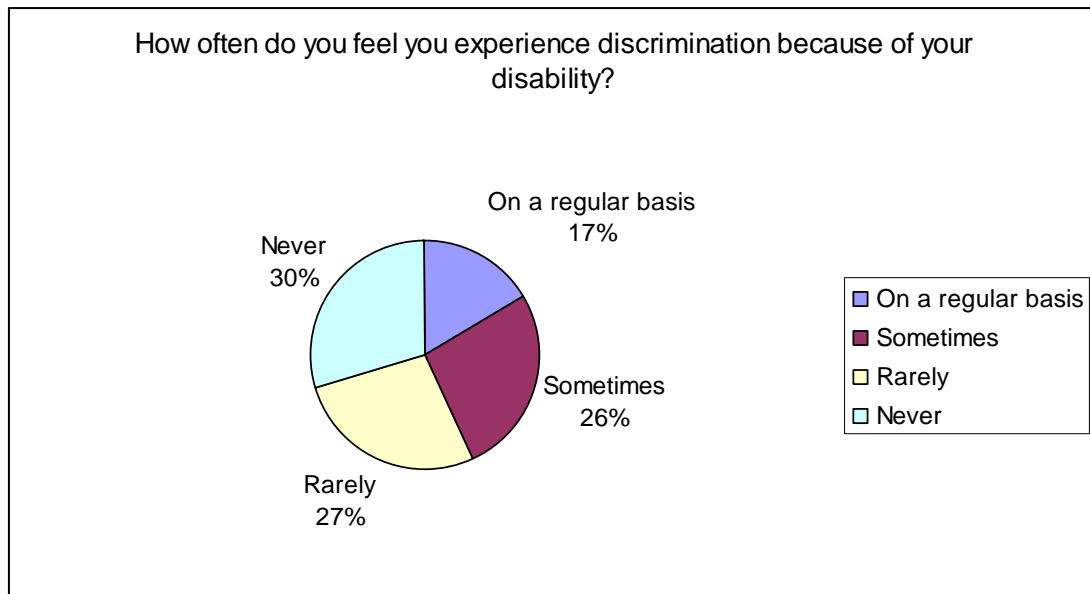
For those respondents that are currently working 86% (25 respondents) said that their employers are aware of their disability. Of those 79% (19 respondents) said that their employer makes reasonable adjustments for them.

The main reason why people do not work is that they are retired. However, there are a number of people who do wish to work but find that they either can't find any employer willing to give them a chance or they are unable to get to the places of work due to poor transport links.

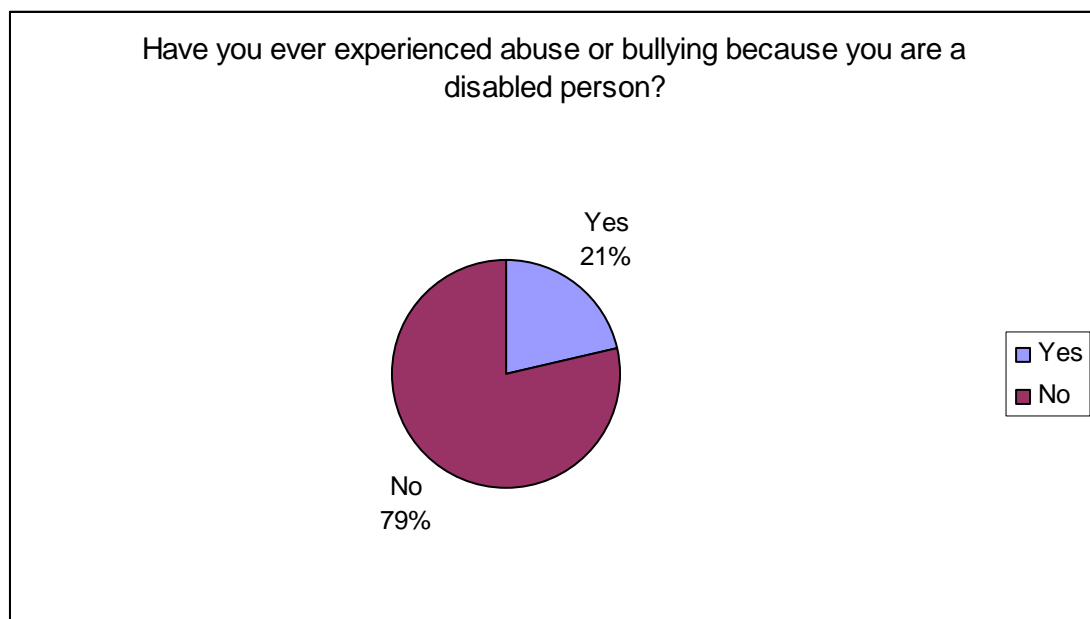


Section 7: Discrimination

We asked people if they have ever been discriminated against because of their disability.



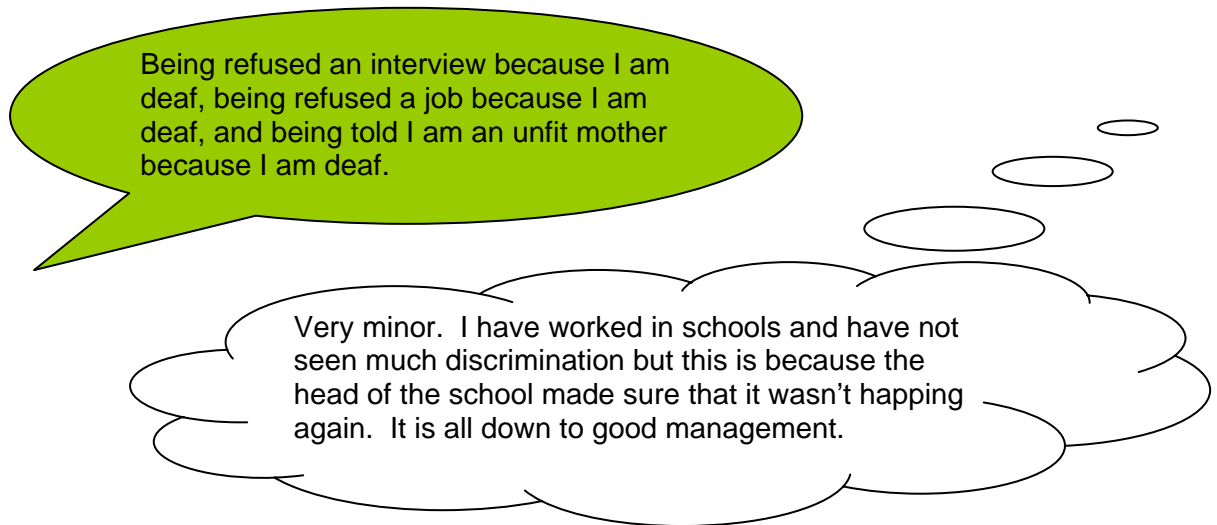
Above you can see that 43% of respondents either on a regular basis or sometimes experience some sort of discrimination because of their disability.



Above you can see that 29 respondents (21%) have experienced abuse or bullying because they are a disabled person.

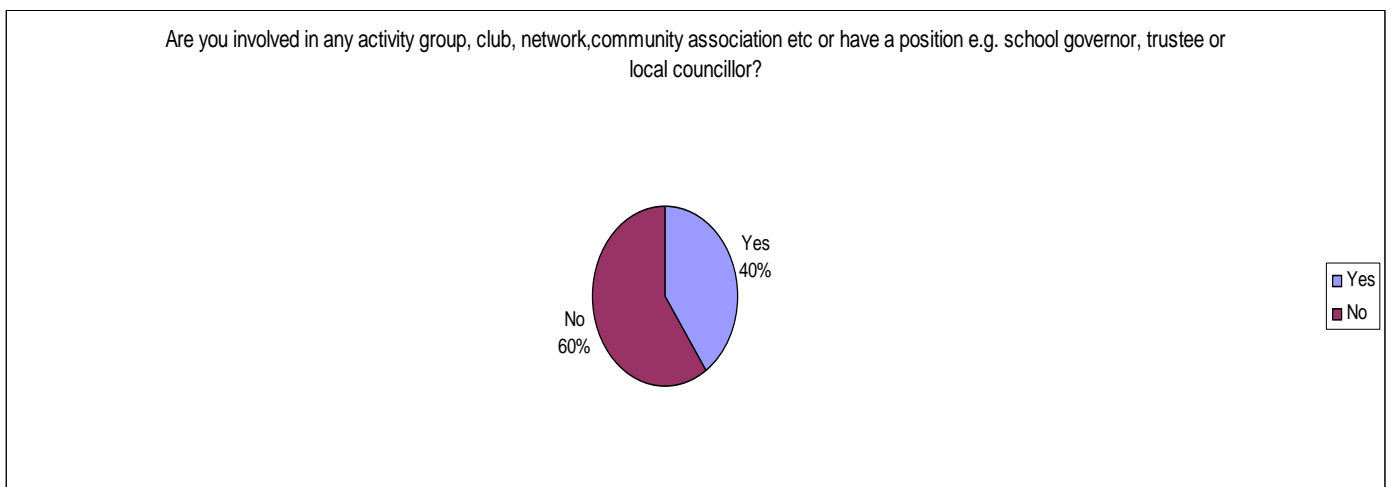
Many people describe how on a regular basis they have been called names by adults but especially by school aged children. People also expressed how the general public perception of disabled people is negative and discriminatory. The discrimination described by most is of a subtle nature and many have explained that they think it is a general lack of understanding of disability that leads to non disabled

people being impatient and rude to disabled people, especially people with non visible disabilities.



Section 8: Involvement in public life

One of the general duties under the Disability Equality Duty is that public bodies must encourage participation of disabled people in public life. In this section we asked people if they are already involved in public life and if not why not.



Here you can see that 57 respondents (40%) are involved in some sort or group (activity group, club, network, community association) or hold some sort of position (school governor, trustee, local councillor).

Of those who are involved in public life there is a great variety in the different types of involvement. Most people volunteer for disability organisations, a few are governors at their local schools or district councillors.

The main reasons given as to why people are not taking part are:

- Knowledge of what exists and the requirements.
- Lack of accessible transport.
- Evening meetings makes it impossible to join in, due to lack of transport and/or because of caring responsibilities.
- Too tired due to ill health.

Section 9: Moving forwards

Here we asked people to tell us what three things they would like to change most in order of disability equality becoming a reality in their local area.

Qualitative results:

Change 1

- Education of children, adults, professionals and the general public about disability which would end prejudice and misunderstanding.
- Accessibility to shops and public buildings.
- Better and more reliable accessible public transport throughout Dorset.
- Lower kerbs and more money spent on making paths and pavements more even.
- More accessible parking in town centres.
- More accessible information about services available.

Change 2

- Better support, for example respite, for people who are fulltime carers for disabled people.
- Create more sheltered housing with better accessibility – too many upstairs with no lifts and no space for mobility scooters.
- Better signage where business or buildings have got accessible facilities.
- Fines for people (who don't have a blue badge) that park in blue badge parking spaces.
- Better access to the sea for disabled people.
- Employment schemes to allow disabled people to try work without affecting their benefits.

Change 3

- Greater provision of accessible toilet facilities which do not require a radar key.
- Free wheelchairs in shopping areas for a small returnable deposit.
- Provide more extended holiday activities at clubs for disabled children.
- More opportunities to be involved in local issues.
- Reintroduce free lip-reading classes.

Section 10: Additional comments

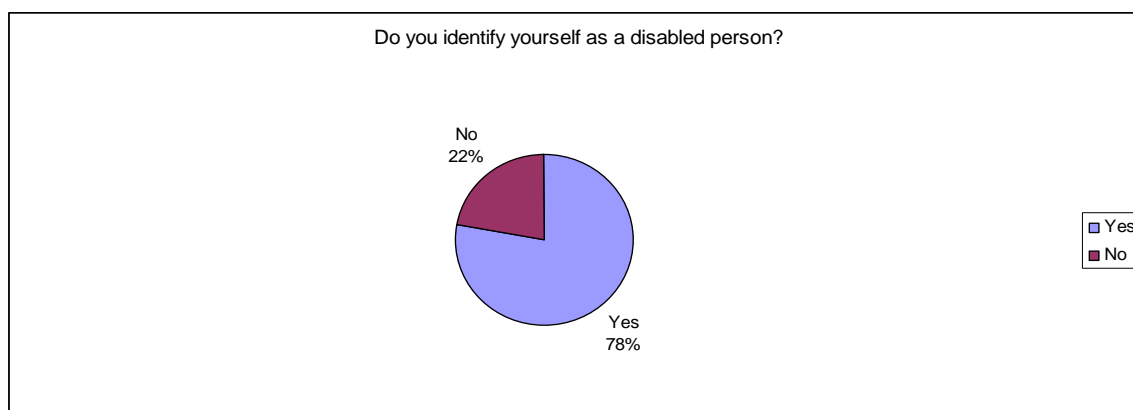
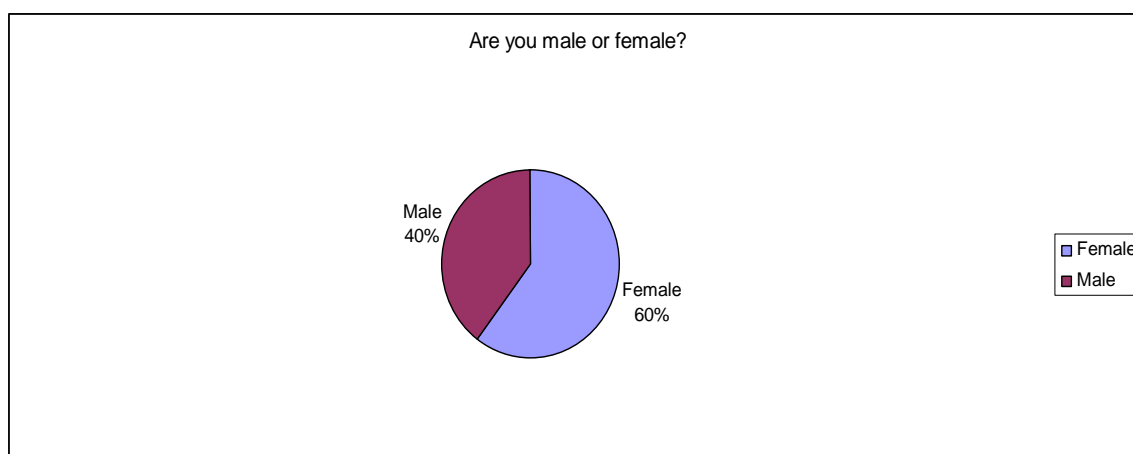
This section gave people the option of telling us about anything that they felt that hadn't been covered in the rest of the survey.

Most of the comments that people made in this section is actually covered in section 9, however, there are two comments that stand out;

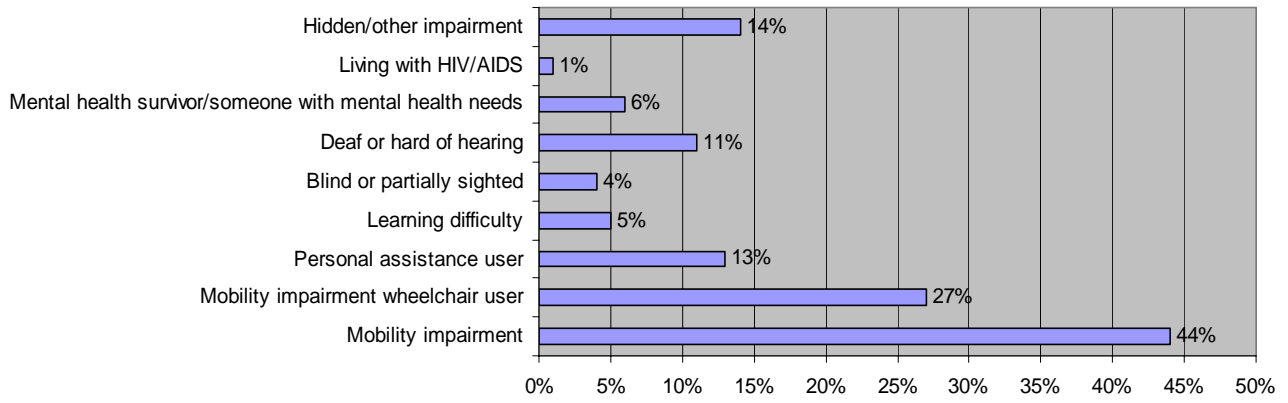
- More support needs to be offered to carers of disabled people. Carers describe that they felt that professionals often forget to ask how the carer is coping and if they need any help/support/respite.
- Would like to see different public bodies working more closely together, for example by communicating with disabled people about support services available to them.

Section 11: About yourself

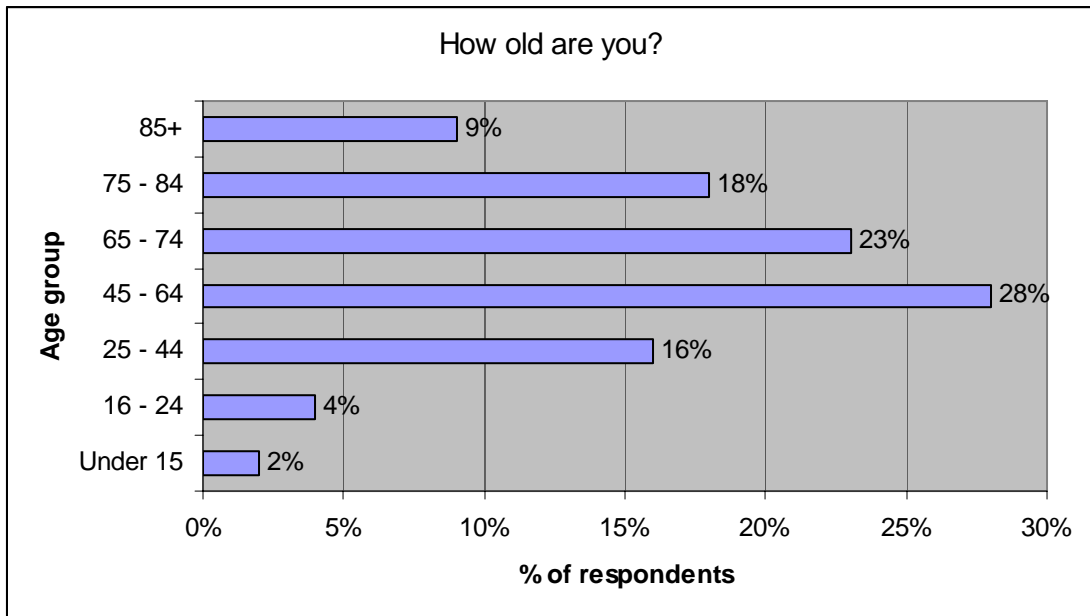
The questions in this section were all designed so that we could build up a picture of who have responded to our survey.



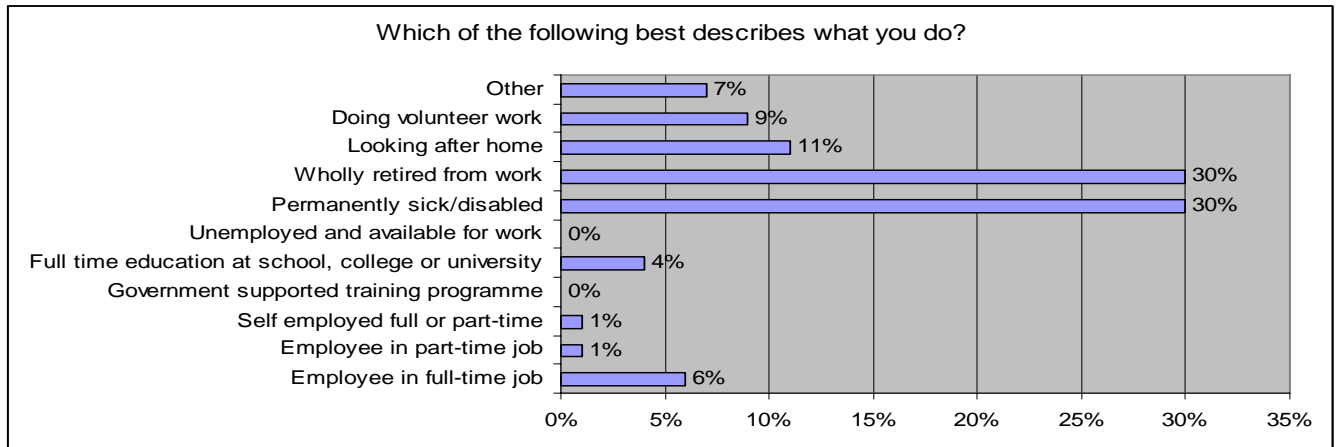
Which of the following impairment groups do you identify with?



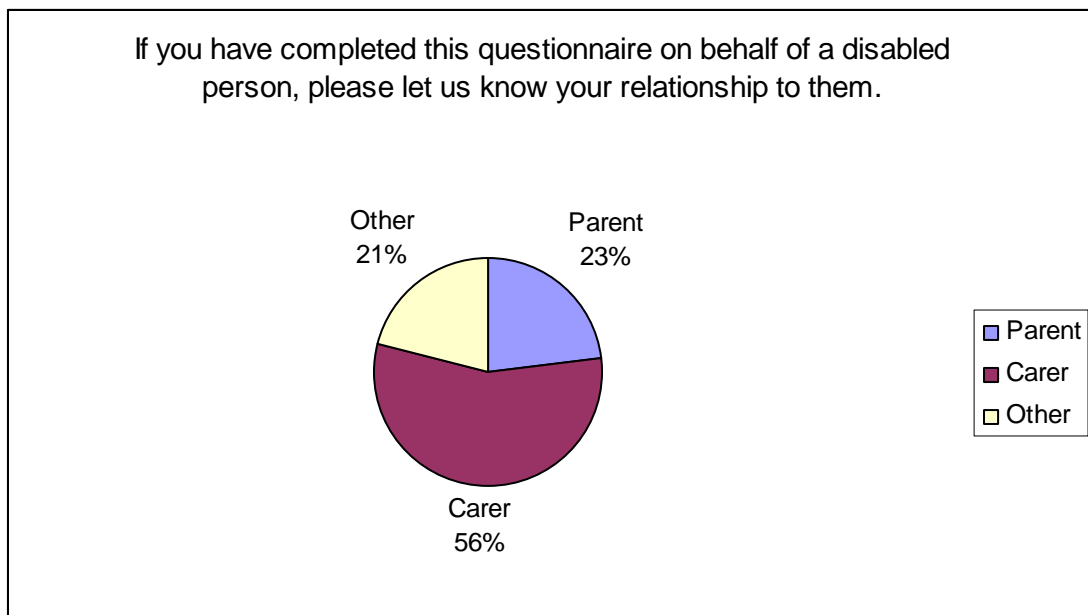
How old are you?



Respondents were asked which of the following best describes how they spend their time. They were asked just to select one option, the one that was more applicable or which occupies the largest proportion of their time.



48 respondents said that they completed the questionnaire on behalf of someone else.



Section 12: What happens next?

In this section we asked respondents if they would like to receive a copy of the results, take part in a focus group and / or receive a copy of their council's Disability Equality Scheme.

61 of the 160 people that took part in the survey wished to receive a copy of the results of this survey.

29 of the 160 people that took part in this survey wish to become part of a focus group that meets regularly. This is very pleasing and we welcome this opportunity to work closely with disabled people. In the focus group we wish to explore the issues raised in this survey in more depth and have open and honest debate about disability equality issues that we can jointly work on. We would also like to use the focus group as a forum to critically discuss local councils' approach to disability equality and to more closely look at our disability equality schemes.

70 of the 160 people who took part in the disability survey said that they would like to receive a copy of their local council's disability equality schemes.

The six District Councils and the County Council have written their disability equality schemes. In the scheme the councils set out how they are going to meet their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and how they plan to take forward issues from this survey. The councils have also got together to create some web pages on Dorset For You where people can find out more about what their local council is doing in terms of equality and diversity.

The six District Councils and the County Council will continue to work closely together in moving towards an accessible Dorset. Where practicable we will work together to tackle issues faced by disabled people. We will meet on a regular basis to ensure that we are continuing to take steps to make Dorset a better place to live for disabled people. Please contact your local council if you have specific questions about what is happening about disability in your area.

Finally we would like to thank all that have taken time to complete the survey.