

Wheelchair Users Report: Understanding How Accessibility Works for You



Healthwatch Oldham and the Safeguarding Adults Oldham Team have worked in partnership to produce a survey that was designed to be a starting point to highlight and understand people's experiences of accessibility when they have a physical disability.

We hope this will become part of a larger piece of work looking at peoples' experiences of accessibility and help raise awareness with all services and in particular health and social care on the challenges faced by those who require the use of a wheelchair.

Overview



15 people completed the survey



Nearly a third stated they did not receive any financial support from a Continuing Health Care Budget or Personal Budget from Social Care



Two-thirds of people had not had any discussions during their assessments about joining a social group or getting involved in any physical or other social activities



A lack of information available for people to understand what and where they can access support

Practical Care, Activities and Support Groups



Practical care is mainly split 50/50 with support being provided by a paid carer or a family member/friend



Family members are the main source of identifying any available support and activities



A third of people who completed this survey stated that they didn't know enough information on support and activities available to them locally



All the people who stated that they didn't know enough information, were keen to get more information using technology

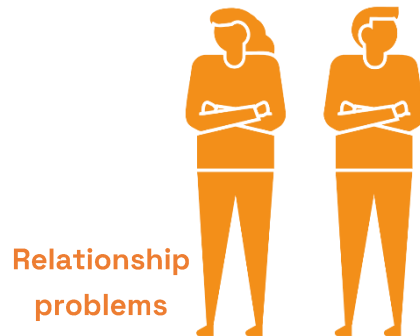


A lack of information available for people to understand what and where they can access appropriate social/leisure/sporting activities

Mood and Stress:



Sources of stress:



Only 3 people stated that they accessed support for their mental health and declared that this was counselling

What improves your mood?



Spending time with family and friends



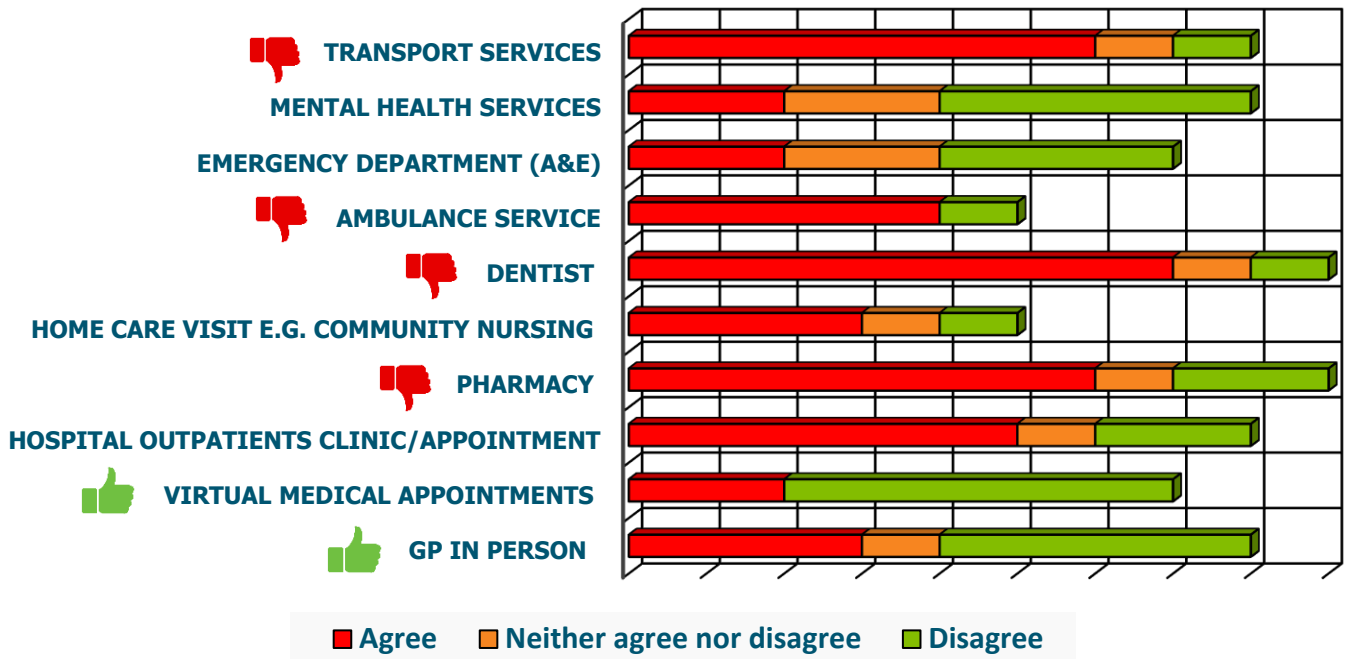
Reading a book



Use of social media

Barriers

"I've experienced wheelchair access problems with the following services..."



From the data above, Transport, Ambulance, Dentist and Pharmacy services have all been ranked poorly in terms of accessibility with those that completed this survey.



Less than a third were members of a social or community group

People did highlight their physical disability as a barrier but when we asked what they felt was the main issue preventing them from being more active, the results showed:



People are not sure what is available



Footpath accessibility



Have low mood/anxiety/depression



Access to restrooms



Feeling self-conscious



Venue and activity access



Lack of transport

Not one person selected the option to state they do not like sports/physical activities. If we had better public access and awareness for wheelchair users which enabled people to participate more freely, then the physical disability would not be classed as a reason for not being more active.

What you said:

"I set up my own Facebook support for friendship called Me and ME but rarely post as too exhausted. I'm involved in the local Delph community for work reasons but cannot access services due to accessibility.

If I gave up part-time work I would be able to have a few hours of social time but work takes all my energy and I only work a few hours for my sanity in a fully adapted placement."

"Not wanting to restrict other people to very limited options of where I can go and what I can do."

(SPEAKING ABOUT WHAT PREVENTS THEM FROM JOINING A SOCIAL GROUP OR SOCIALISING WITH FRIENDS)

About You



Over half of those who took part were in paid employment or had a volunteer role



Over half of those employed stated their employment had been affected by COVID-19



Most areas of Oldham were represented by the people who completed the survey with Alexandra and Chadderton being the most common

African, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and White British represented with nearly half being from BAME Communities



18-64 age groups were all represented with 55-64 being most common



The survey was completed by people who identified as straight, gay and bisexual

We would recommend:

There has been a constant theme of concerns or limitations which also impact inclusivity and how this can negatively affect mental health and wellbeing. We acknowledge that change takes time and can be costly. However, some areas can be better managed through looking at layout, design, clearer information, and thorough consultation.

Below there are 5 areas which have been raised by people who took part in this survey. We would recommend that each of these areas is explored in more detail and that a focussed project be undertaken working with residents of Oldham who are wheelchair users.

- 1** Better access to information on what activities, sessions, groups are available and are wheelchair accessible. If this information was available in a central digital location and provided examples of what people could expect in pictorial and video format, then this would be more helpful and reassuring that the activity is right for the individual.
- 2** Improved access to wheelchair transport services. This includes public transport and specific transport services for wheelchairs users. If people had more confidence in using public transport and wheelchair specific transport it would enable them to get to more places. Further work needs to be done to understand individuals' experiences of transport services and what can be done to ensure the service is fit for purpose and would improve their use of transport services.
- 3** Easy access to restrooms/toilets. This is something that most people take for granted but if you are a wheelchair user and there are no appropriate facilities then it makes attending a place, activity, group, event very difficult. It's worth considering making this information clearer and incorporated into the central shop area.
- 4** Better wheelchair access to venues and/or facilities. There are many venues in Oldham that are wheelchair accessible, however, there are many Oldham buildings that are limited or have reasonable access to the building but once inside may be limited. We need to consider if there are ways to improve the layout and function of a facility to enable inclusivity.
- 5** Public footpaths accessibility. People who use wheelchairs stated having difficulty negotiating footpaths for a range of reasons including how cars park on the pavement, uneven surfaces, paths narrowing, winter conditions and untreated pavements. All of these can result in people having to either manoeuvre into a road or turn back. We need to better understand peoples' experiences and prioritise improving footpaths that are most difficult/hazardous for wheelchair users.