

Accessible Information

May 2023



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Background and Scope

In 2016 the [Accessible Information Standard](#) was introduced to give disabled people and people with sensory loss the legal right to receive information from the NHS and local adult social care in a format they choose, so they can understand information and can access communications support if needed. Healthwatch in East Berkshire (Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead, Healthwatch Slough and Healthwatch Bracknell Forest) undertook a piece of work to find out if the standard is being delivered as it should be to those residents in East Berkshire who need accessible information.

This report details the results of this work, providing evidence for continuing investigation around this topic.

Summary

Our work returned very small numbers and therefore it is not possible to gain a true representation of the views of people with additional accessible information needs across the East Berkshire area. However, the results do provide a basis for further work for all 3 of the Healthwatch areas.

Highlights from the results:

- Many people said face-to-face interaction helps to make information accessible/helps with communication (Covid lockdown and many services still not fully back to face-to-face interactions will have a major affect).
- Many people said **no** services asked them what their information needs were. However, most people said if services have not asked them, they also have not asked as patients.
- Most services did not refuse or said they could not provide accessible information, but some did.
- Even if information was provided, many people still said they did not get what they needed.
- The impact of not getting accessible information affects physical and mental well-being as well as prevents people from accessing services and clearly understanding and communicating with them.
- Many people rely on family and friends to communicate with services on their behalf.
- Many people are unsure what they are entitles to in terms of accessible information.
- Many people do not know how to complain if they are not given the accessible information they need.

Methodology

We developed a survey, which we presented and discussed with, individuals found during our engagement work and also in some focus groups of people across the region which identified with the below characteristics.

- People with disabilities.
- People with sight impairment.
- People with hearing impairment.

Our discussions took place in open group sessions or with individuals, based on people's communications needs.

Findings

Number of completed responses received:

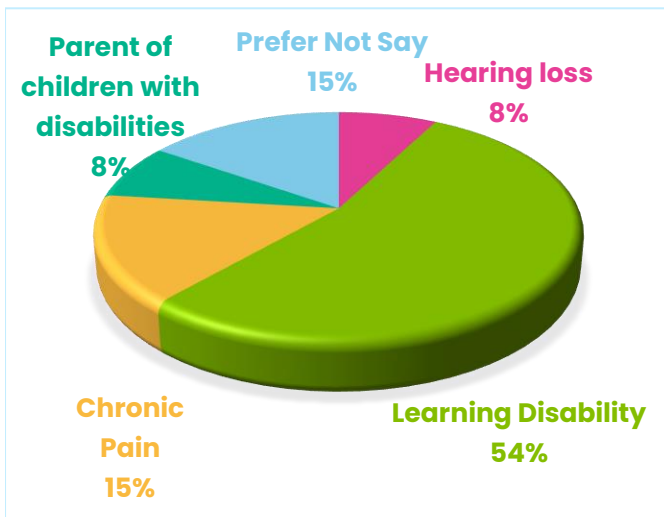
Healthwatch Slough = **8**

Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead = **13**

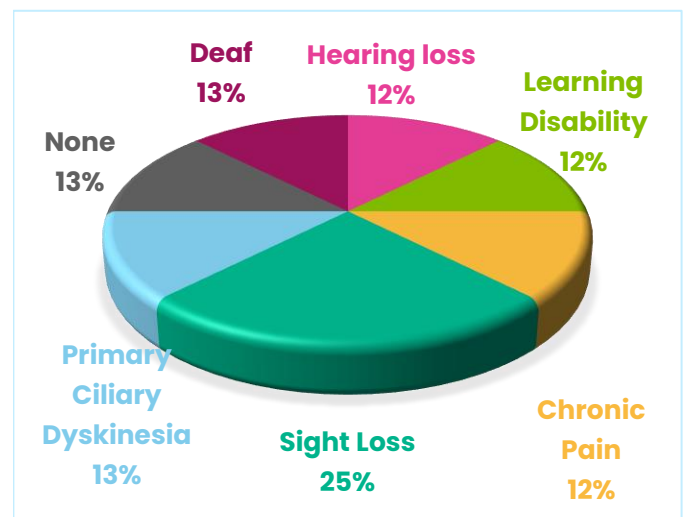
Healthwatch Bracknell Forest = **31**

1) Which of the following applies to you:

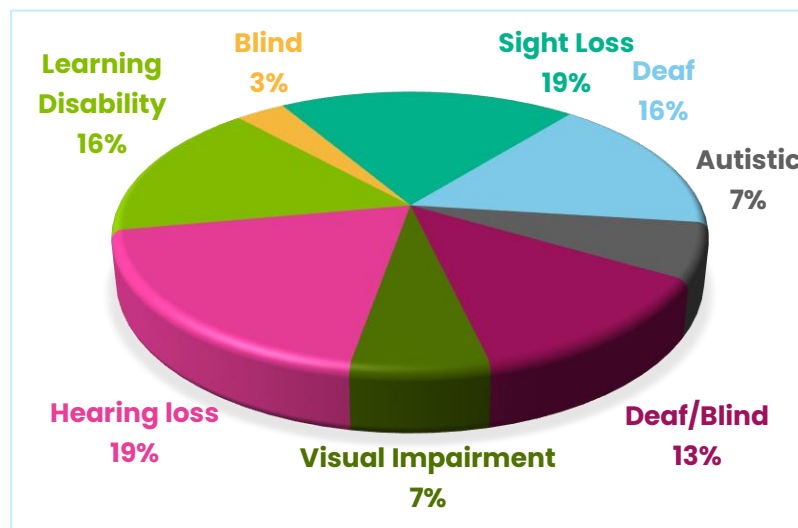
Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead



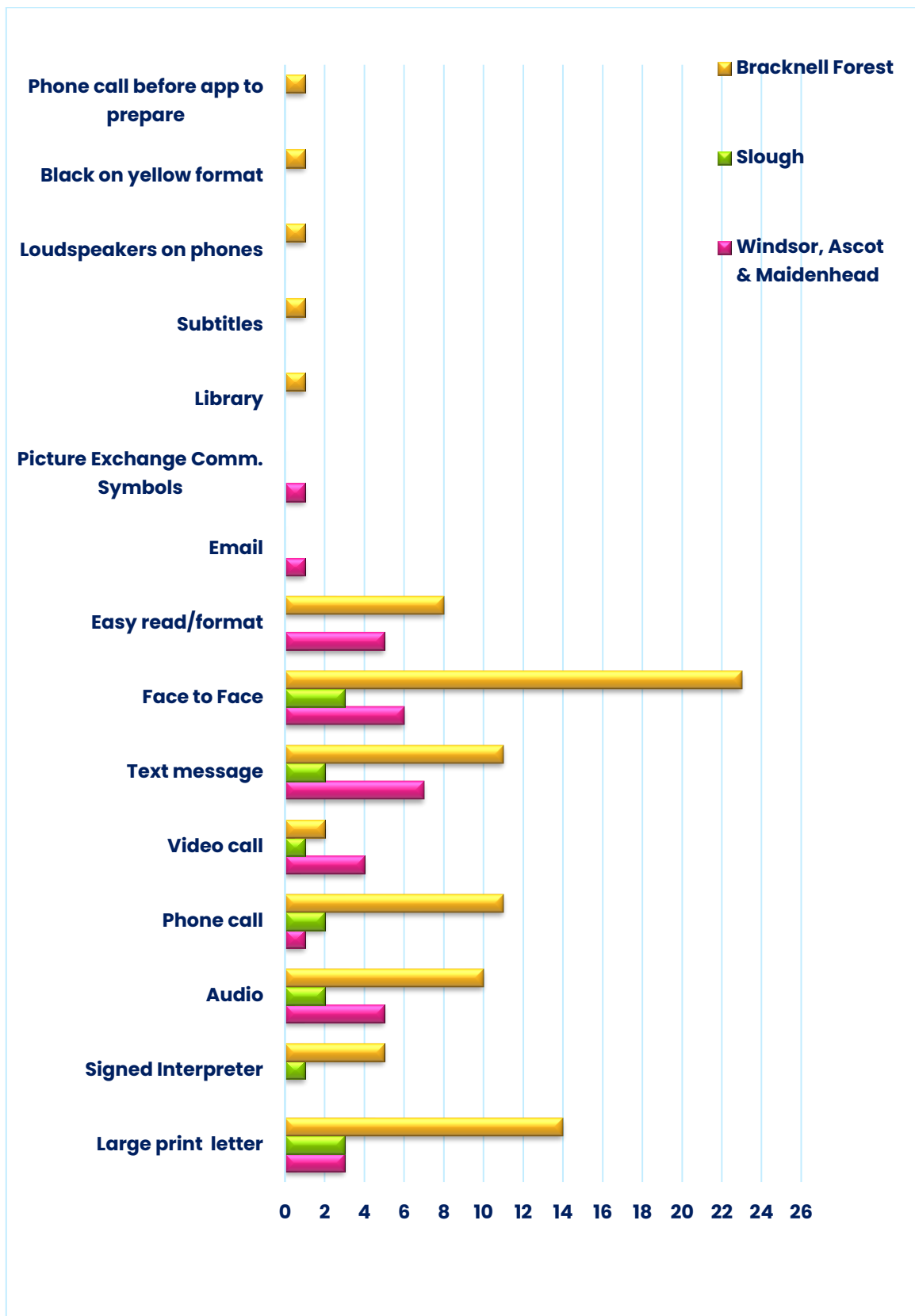
Healthwatch Slough



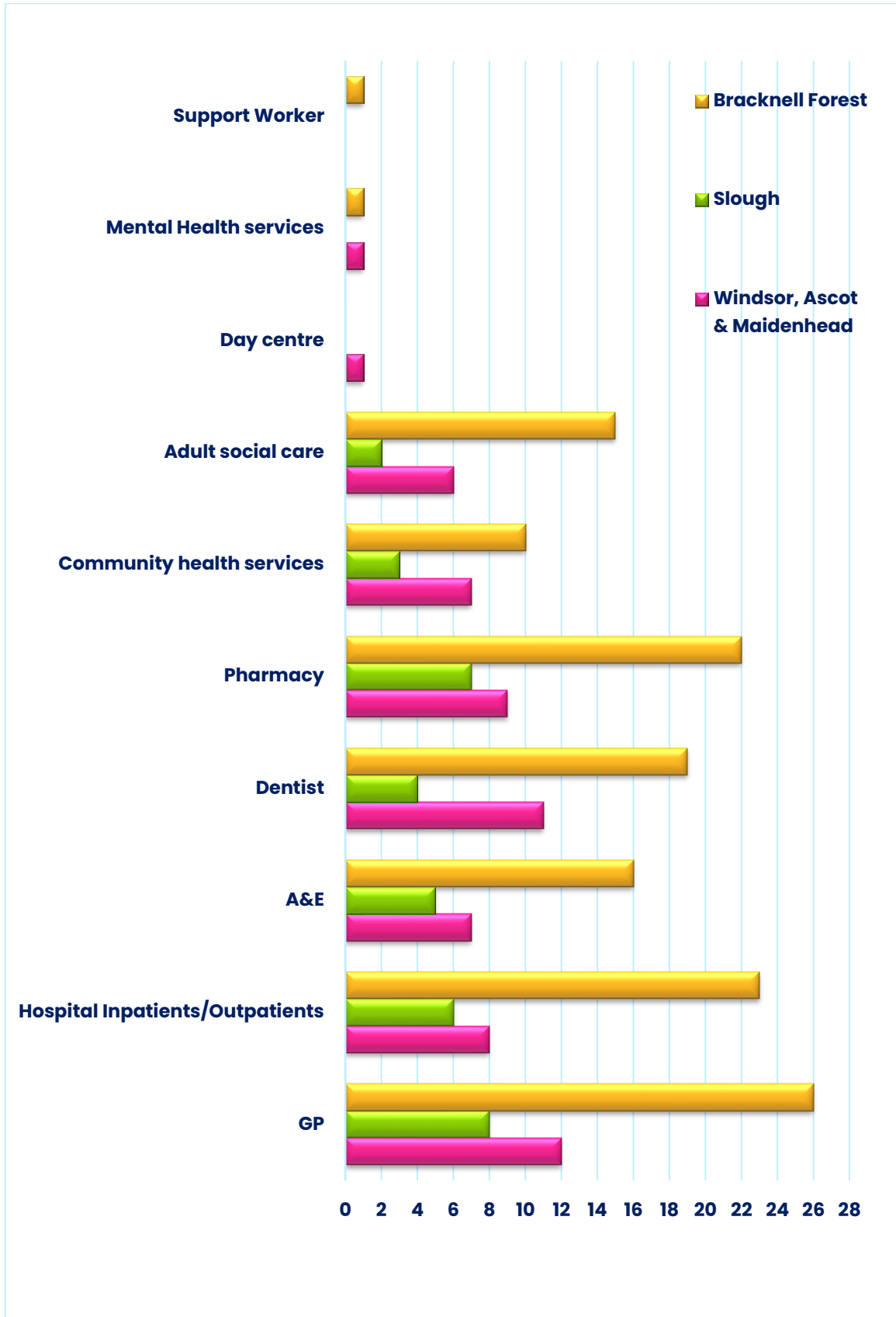
Healthwatch Bracknell Forest



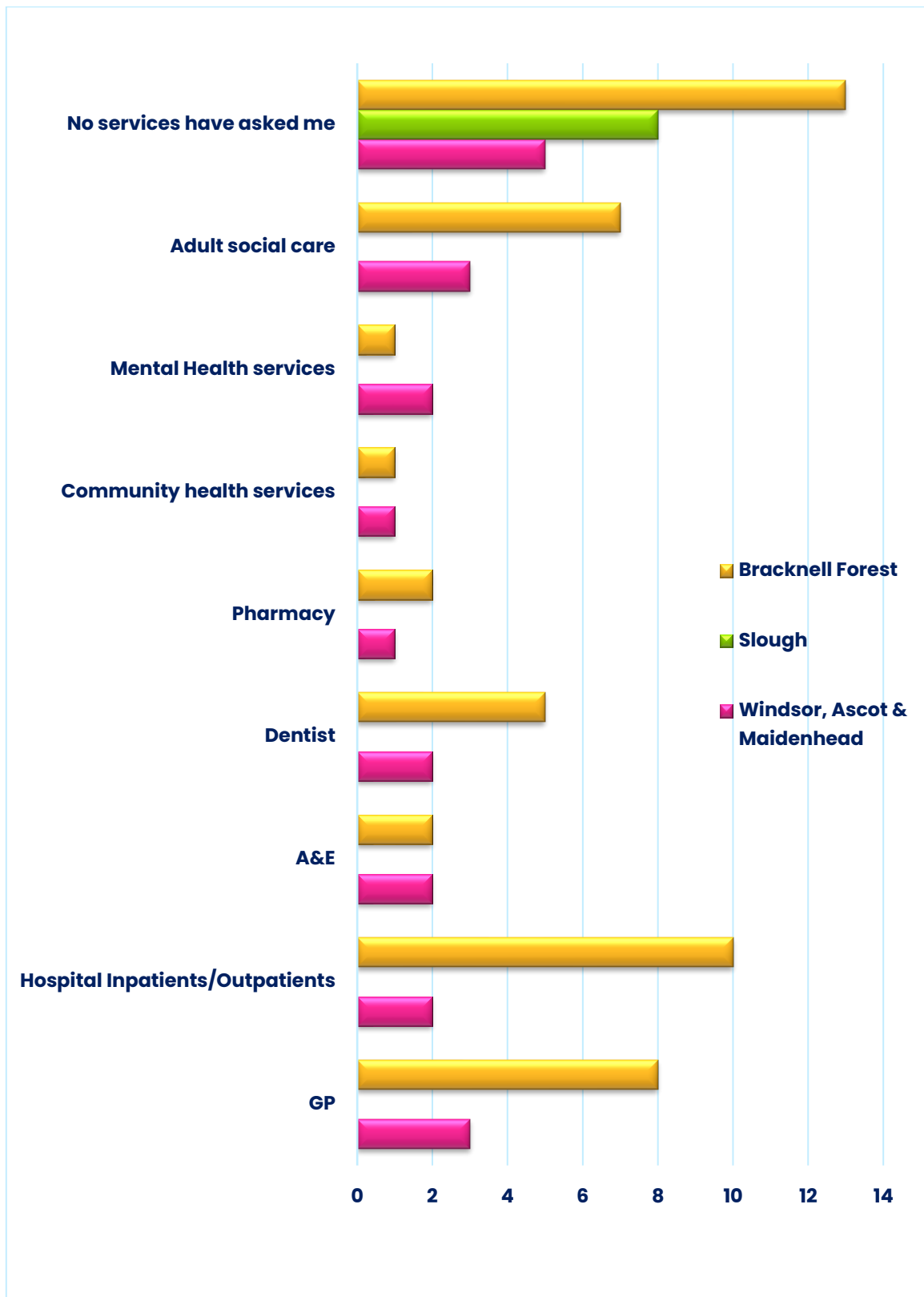
2) Which of the following helps to make information accessible to you and/or helps with communication (choose all that apply).



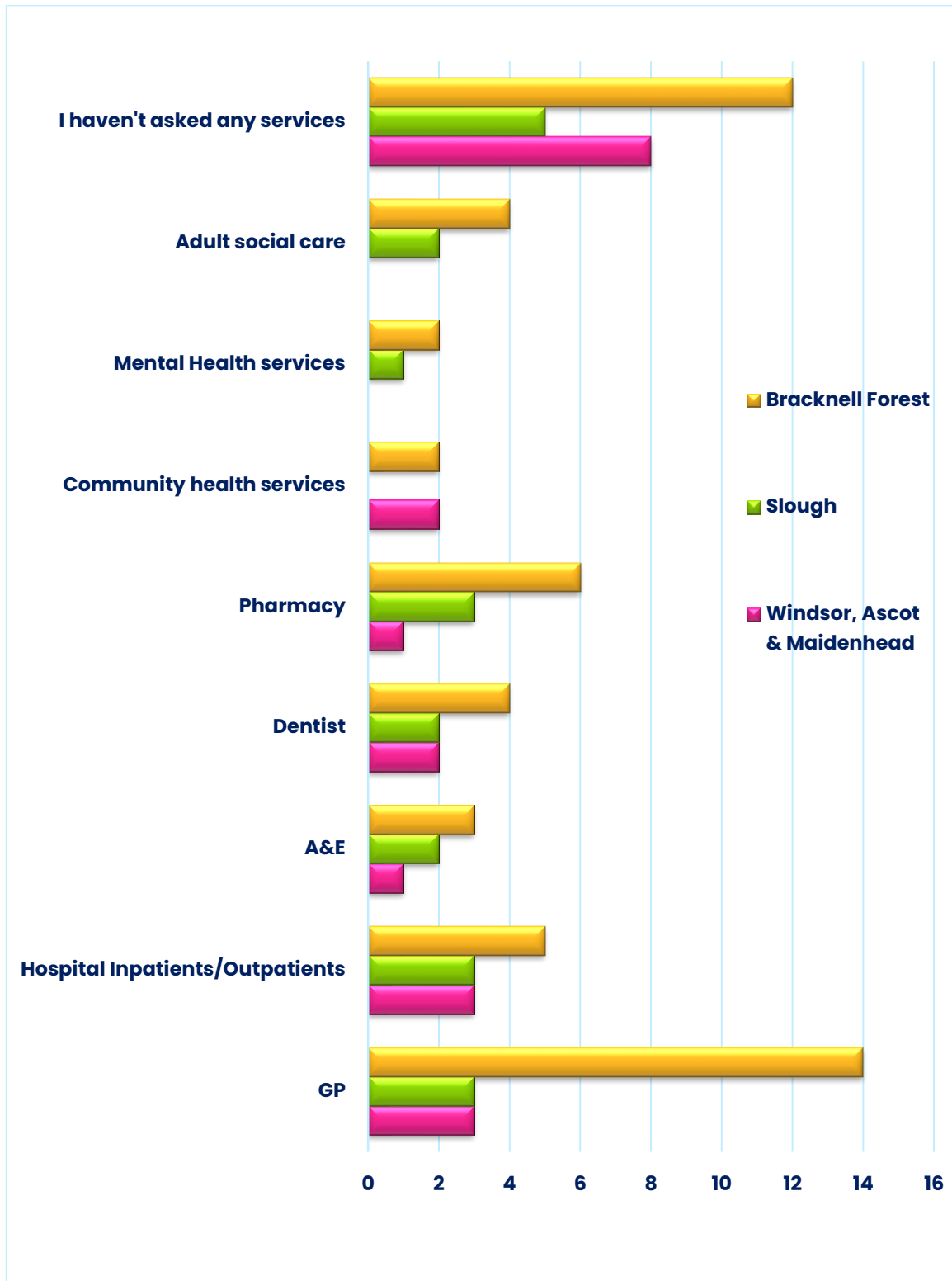
3) Which of these services have you used? (choose all that apply).



4) Have any of these services asked you what your accessible information needs are? (Choose all that apply).

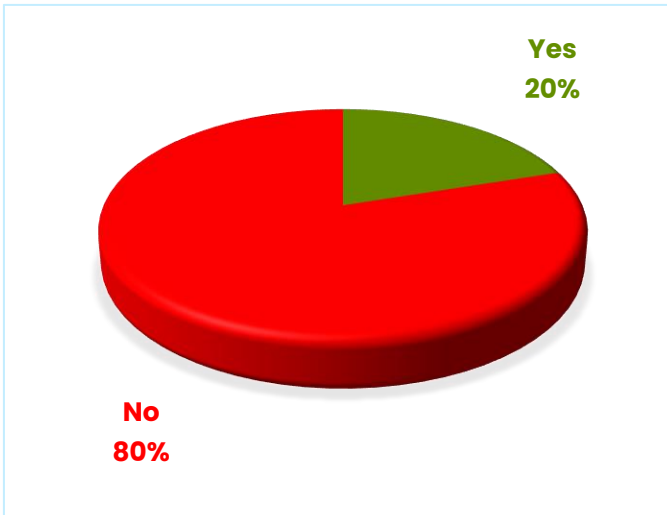


5) If services haven't asked you what you need, have you told any of them what your accessible information/communication needs are? (Choose all that apply).

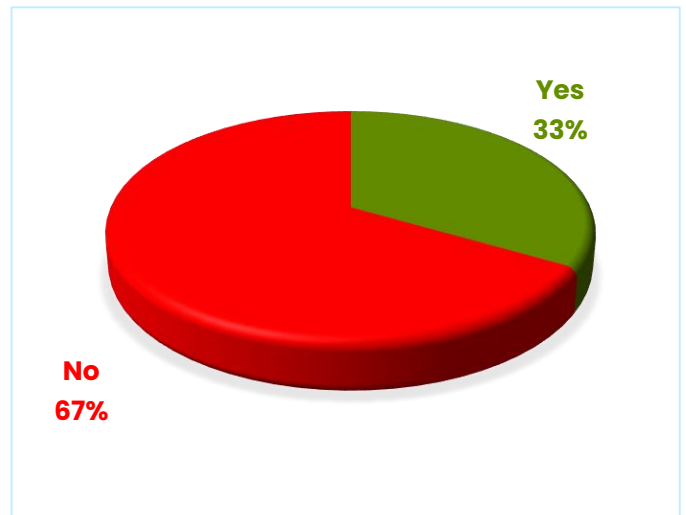


6) If you have asked services for accessible information or communication support, have any services refused or said they can't provide what you have asked for?

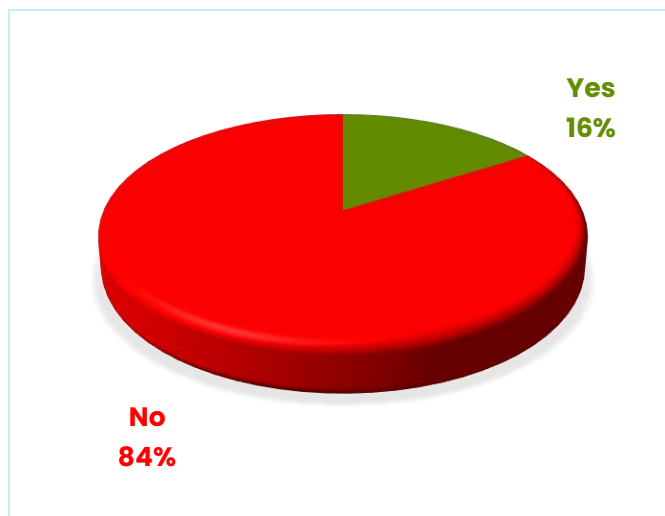
Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead



Healthwatch Slough



Healthwatch Bracknell Forest



Comments received for Question 6:

"There is great resistance to provide signed services interpreters due to associated costs."

75-84 Male with hearing loss (HW Bracknell Forest).

"Not refused as much as don't bother."

55-64 deaf male (HW Bracknell Forest).

"Hospital outpatient regarding masks, very difficult as I lip read."

75-84 female with hearing loss (HW Bracknell Forest).

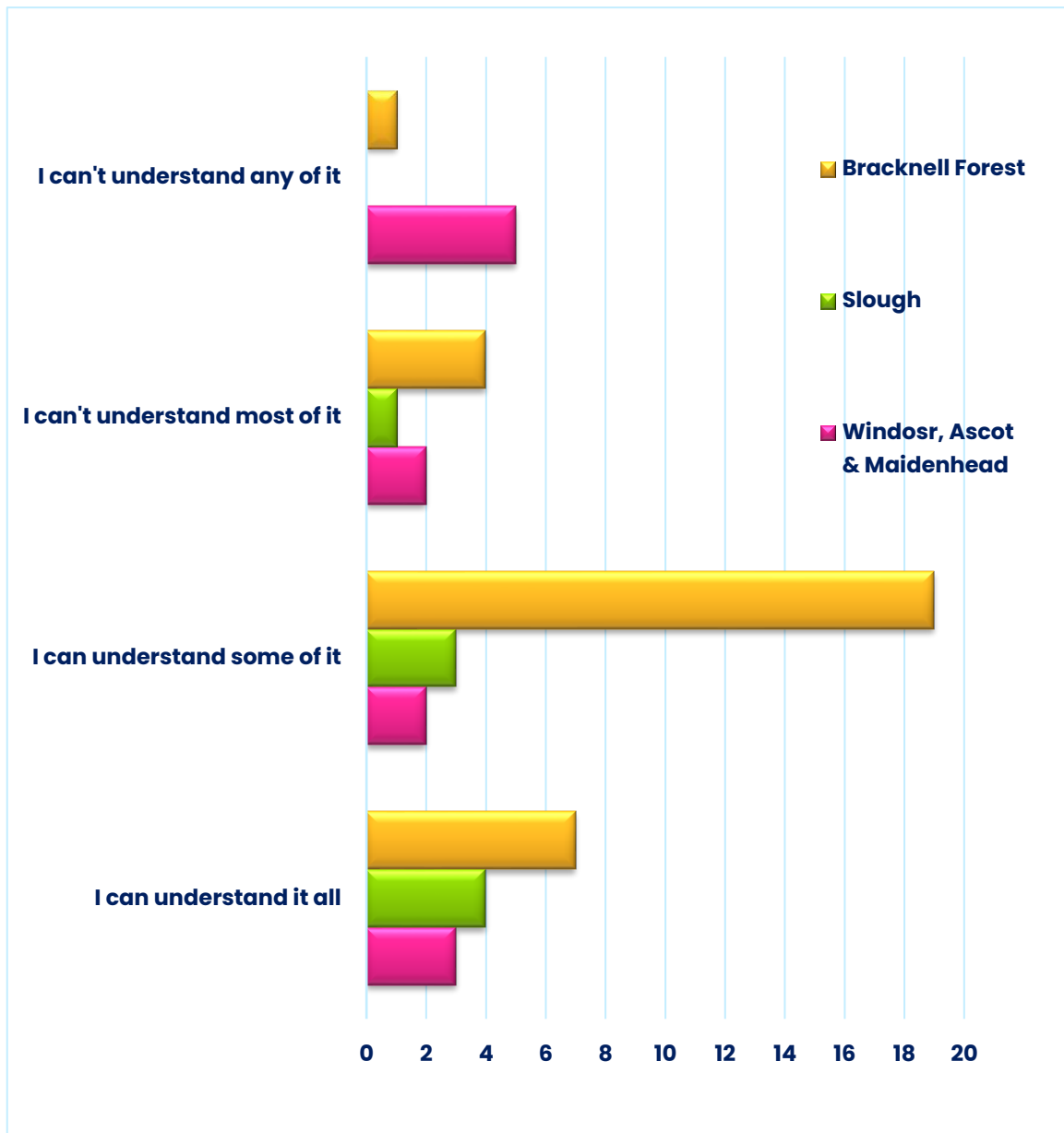
"Adult Social Services would not help me."

Over 80 deaf/blind female (HW Bracknell Forest).

"Pharmacy, they could not enlarge print and made it very hard to read medication, so my daughter has to do this for me."

Over 80 female with sight loss (HW Bracknell Forest).

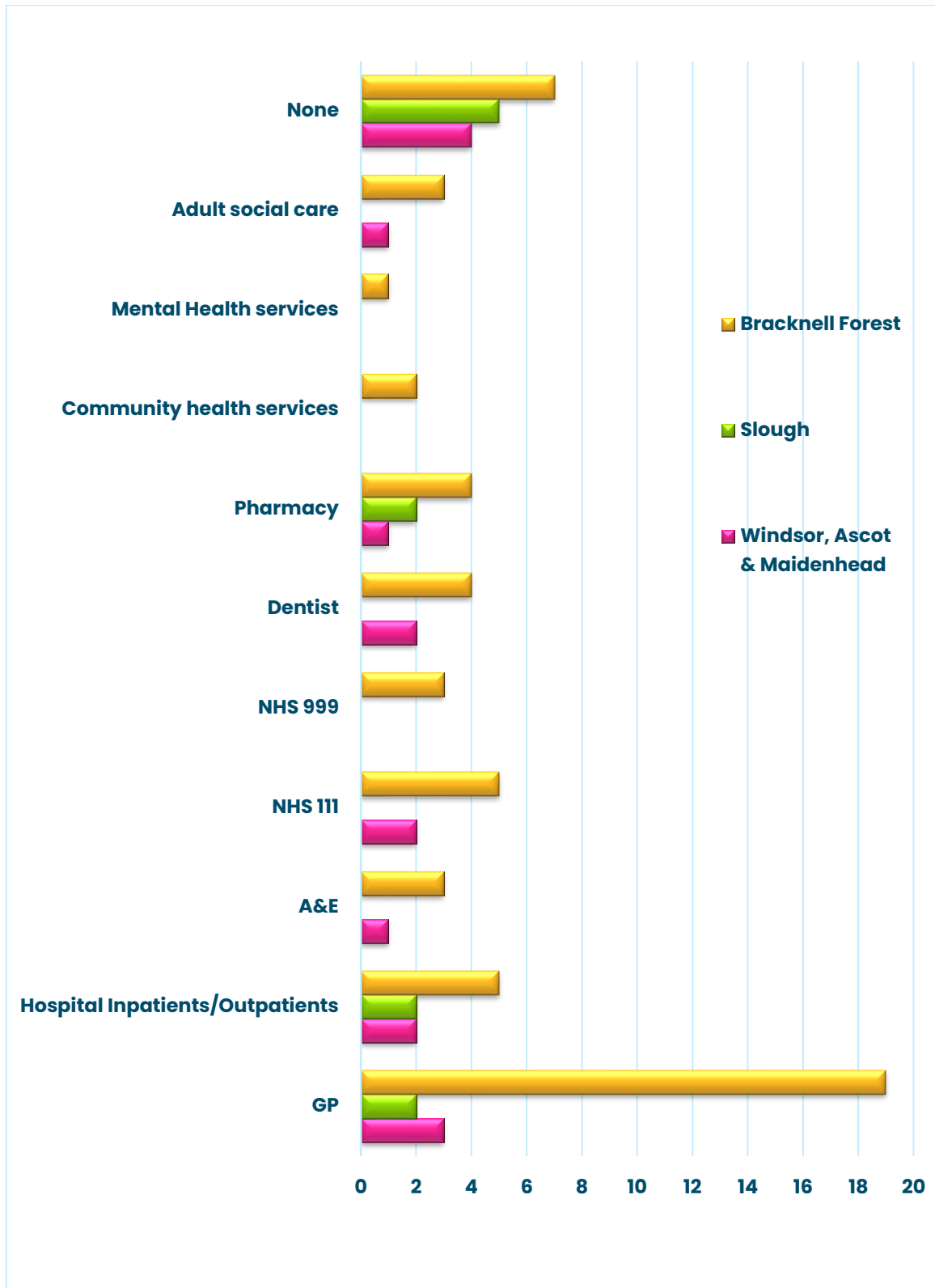
7) How would you describe your ability to understand information given to you by NHS services or local social care if it isn't given to you in an accessible format.



8) If services asked you what your accessible information needs are, or, if you told services what your needs were, did you get what you needed? (Choose all that apply).



9) Which of these services have you struggled to access or engage with because they don't provide you with your accessible information and/or communication needs? (Choose all that apply).



Comments received for Question 9:

"I understand all the above because I get another person to read them to me. It should not be this way."

45-54 Female with sight loss (HW Slough).

"Doctors all seems to be online."

75-84 female with hearing loss (HW Bracknell Forest).

"All face-to-face communication is difficult. TV without STs is hopeless, as are most telephone conversations."

Over 80 male with hearing loss (HW Bracknell Forest).

"Unable to make appointment on phone as no G.P."

75-84 female with hearing loss (HW Bracknell Forest).

"Can never get through or have a face-to-face appointment."

55-64 male with sight loss (HW Bracknell Forest).

"My family and care worker helps me if I cannot help myself".

Comment received from 2 people with Learning Disabilities, one male and one female, both 25-34 (HW Bracknell Forest).

10) What was the impact on you when services didn't provide you with your accessible information and/or communication needs? (Choose all that apply).

Response	No. of Responses		
	Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead	Slough	Bracknell Forest
Didn't affect me at all	3	3	5
I had to get a family member or friend to speak to the service provider	6	2	12
It affected my mental health	2	1	6
It affected my physical wellbeing	0	1	11
I couldn't understand important information I received about my health	1	1	4
I missed health or social care appointments	1	0	2
I couldn't contact the service that I needed	1	3	14
I couldn't clearly understand or clearly communicate with health or social care staff	5	1	7
I couldn't understand important information about my medication	1	1	1
I took the wrong dose of my medication	0	0	2

Comments Received for Question 10:

“I ended up having a severe infection which had a knock-on effect and caused other health problems. My mother had to constantly call and try to get the medical support I needed.”

18-24 female with hearing loss (Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead).

“The main problem I have regardless of making various services aware is getting through to them on telephone. Like many of us it's not possible to get urgent help.”

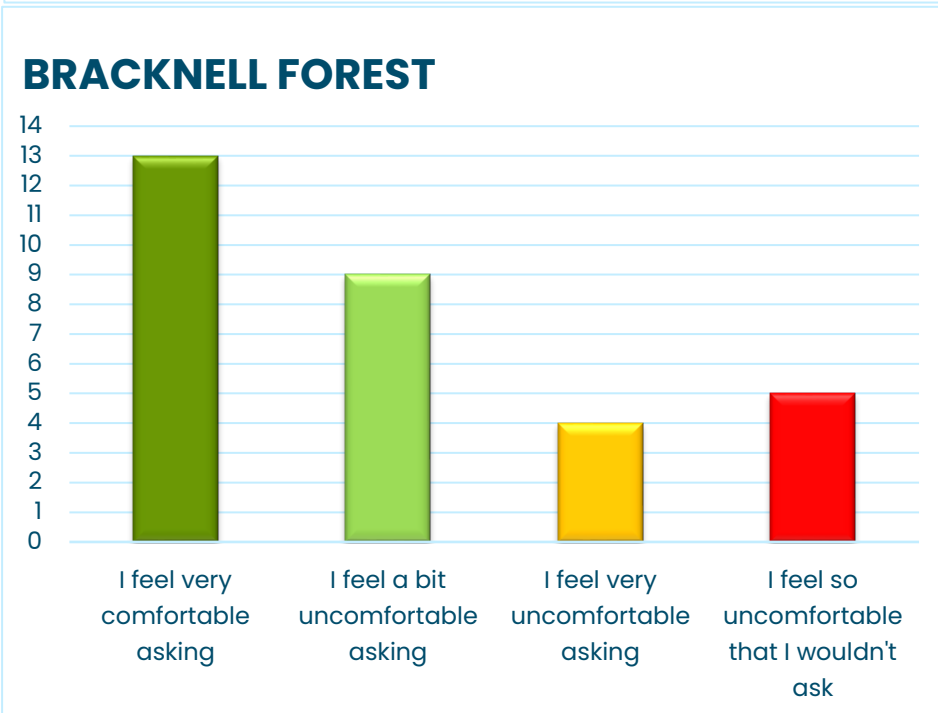
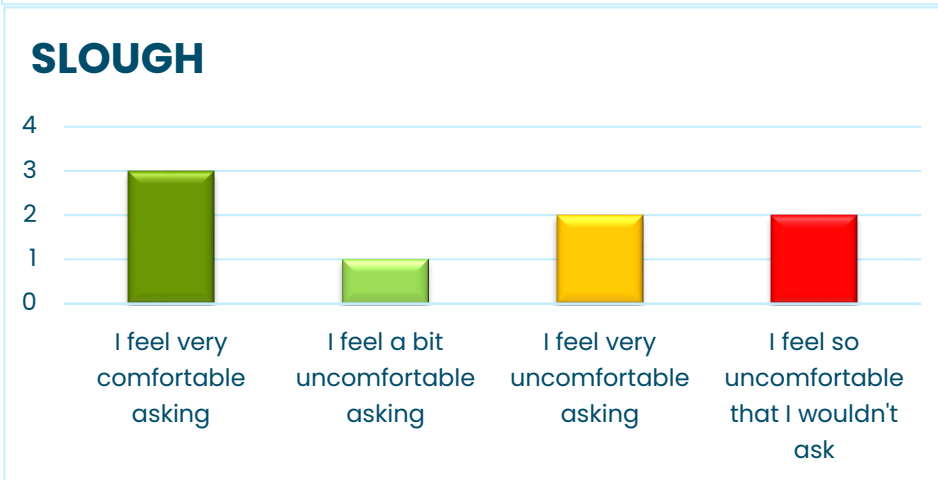
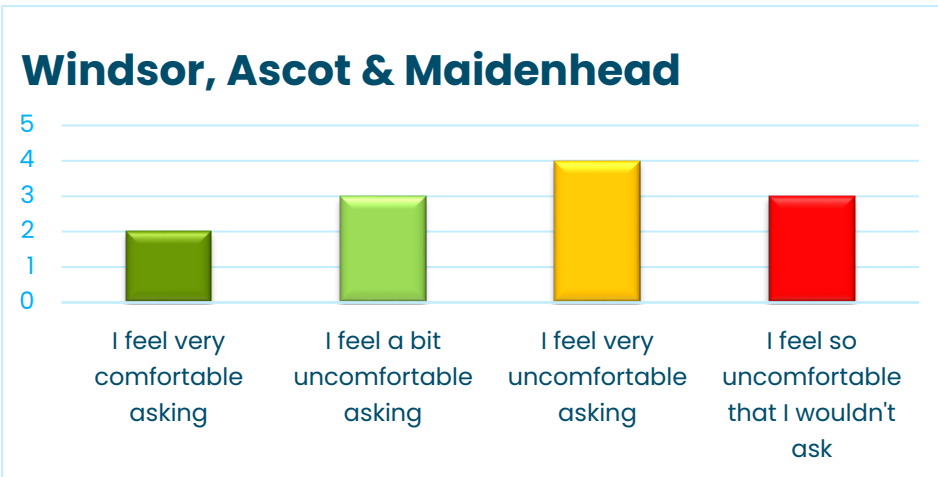
65-74 female with chronic fatigues (Healthwatch Slough).

“As is the usual circumstance deaf people give up and don't bother.”
55-64 deaf male (Healthwatch Bracknell Forest).

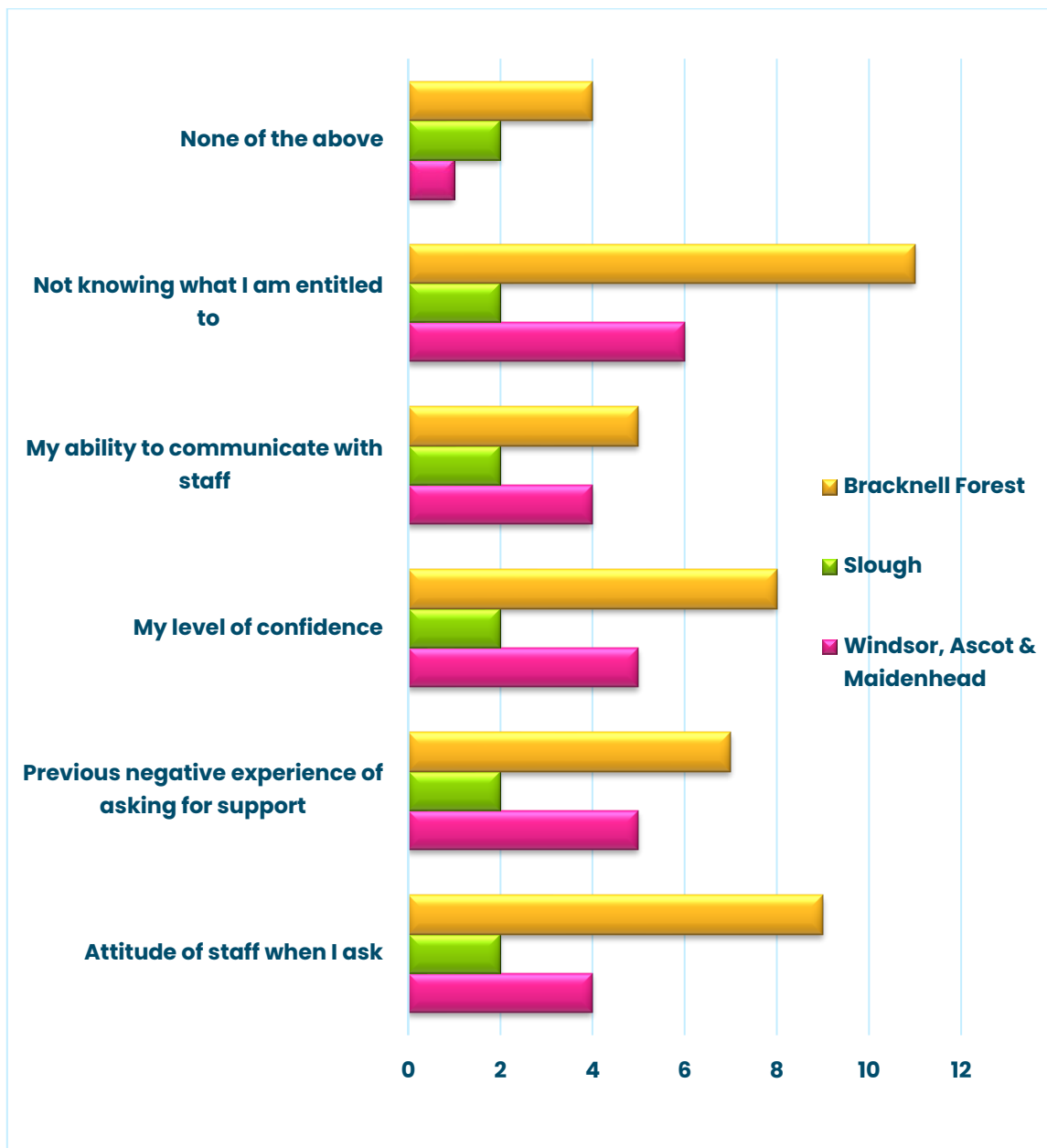
“Had a big heart attack at no aftercare offered afterwards at Royal Berkshire
Hospital.”
85+ female with sight loss (Healthwatch Bracknell Forest).

“I doubled up my blood pressure pills as was not sure about the amounts. My
care worker helped me to resolve this.”
55-64 male with learning disability (Healthwatch Bracknell Forest).

11) How do you feel about asking health or care services to provide you with your accessible information and/or communication needs?



12) Which of the following affect your ability to ask health or social care services to provide you with your accessible information and/or communication needs?



Comments Received for Question 12:

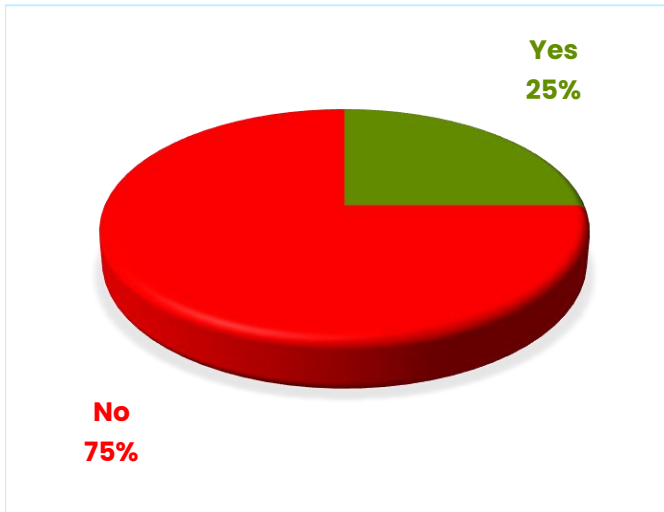
“No one ever listens so why bother, or they listen and do nothing.”
75-84 female with sight loss (Healthwatch Bracknell Forest)

“I like to be independent and feel I can cope mainly. Family are busy so prefer not to ask.”

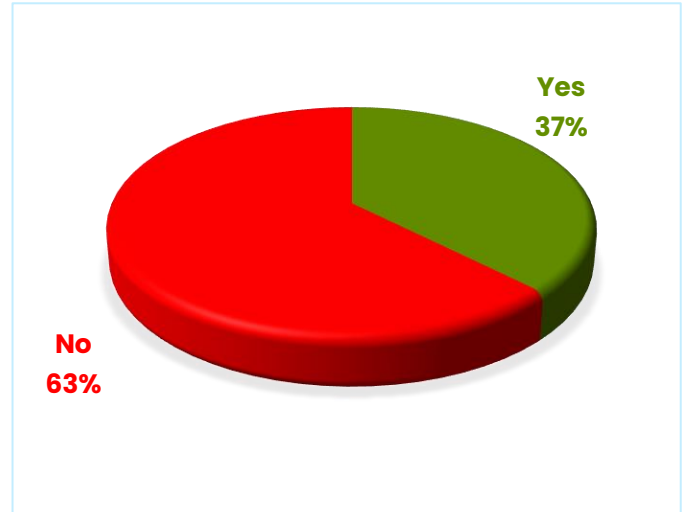
Over 80 female with sight loss (Healthwatch Bracknell Forest).

13) Do you know how to complain if you are not given your accessible information and/or communication needs?

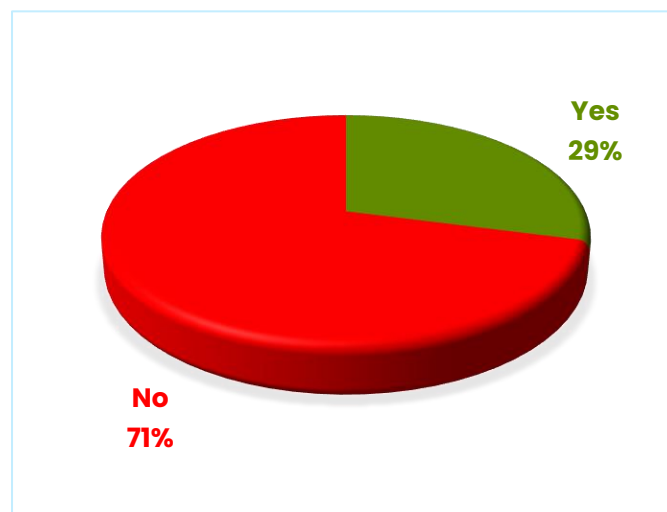
Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead



Healthwatch Slough



Healthwatch Bracknell Forest



Demographics:

Age	Number of Responses			TOTAL
	Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead	Slough	Bracknell Forest	
18-24	3	1	2	6
25-34	1	1	2	4
35-44	3	1	1	5
45-54	4	2	1	7
55-64	1	1	6	8
65-74	0	2	2	4
75-80	0	0	8	8
Over 80	0	0	9	9
Prefer not to say	1	0	0	1

Gender	Number of Responses			TOTAL
	Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead	Slough	Bracknell Forest	
Female	8	7	16	29
Male	3	1	14	14
Prefer not to say	2	0	1	2

Ethnicity	Number of Responses			TOTAL
	Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead	Slough	Bracknell Forest	
White British	7	2	26	35
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	2	2	0	4
White Other	1	2	1	4
Asian/Asian British: Indian	0	1	2	3
White Irish	0	1	1	2
Black/Black British: Caribbean	1	0	0	1
Any Other Mixed/Multiple Ethnic	1	0	1	2
Prefer not to say	1	0	0	1

Conclusions/Recommendations

- Many people said face-to-face interaction helps to make information accessible and aids communication. Face-to-face services pre COVID, need to become fully operational again now post COVID. If this is not possible, the reasons need to be communicated.
- Many people with learning disabilities like to be contacted before health service and other appointments, as a reminder but this also allows the person time to prepare and feel confident in attending appointments. Further to this, services/hospitals/clinics etc that allow people to visit the premises prior to an appointment can be hugely supportive.
- We recommend that service providers ask their service users/patients “what formats” they require, to ensure people have the information they need in an accessible way.
- We recommend that service providers communicate what formats are currently available to people.
- A clear accessible complaints procedure needs to be communicated to all.
- Healthwatch is exploring additional work relating to the Accessible Information standard and its implementation.



healthwatch

Healthwatch East Berkshire (HW Slough, HW Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead and HW Bracknell Forest)

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