



Men Over 55 Report

What are the barriers?

Last year, Healthwatch Staffordshire initiated a Survey in collaboration with another local service to identify the barriers preventing men over the age of 55 from accessing health, social care, and activities. As part of our research, the goal was to identify any barriers preventing men from attending and to also gain insight into the issues that they may face.

The service aims were to establish free groups & activities where individuals could gather weekly to combat isolation, and loneliness and to build self-esteem. Further, to lend support to help complete forms & to make applications for benefits to enable a better quality of life as people become older.

Methodology

The survey was open to all men living within Staffordshire to make sure we could hear the voices of this seldom-heard group. The initial survey was placed on our Healthwatch Staffordshire website and promoted on social media in February – externally on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and internally on Support Staffordshire’s Basecamp (this is a secure way to share information with Support Staffordshire colleagues on important insights and data, two ways).

Paper copies & QR codes were also used at some localised Engagement events In February and March up and down the County and at internal meetings we held with Stakeholders. It was also shared in e-Bulletins and shared electronically with contacts we held for local Men’s groups.

In the survey, we asked several key questions including:

- How can we make socialising more appealing to you?
- Do you feel a lack of social opportunities impacts your well-being, if so, how does this impact you?
- Do you feel digital technology is of benefit to you? If not, please tell us why.

The outcomes of this survey have been analysed and written in this report.

We did receive a total of 52 surveys back

Summary of Findings

The surveys provided Healthwatch with quantitative feedback. We also received some qualitative feedback from the men we engaged with at local events within the community. The feedback from the events revealed that men still feel the need to be seen as coping and providing for their loved ones. This reflects the traditional notion of masculinity where men feel an obligation to fulfil certain roles. Some men did not even realise that they were acting as carers: *"It's just because, it is what I am meant to do and what I have always done"*.

One of the main findings was the lack of social opportunities having a significant impact on men's mental well-being, as well as their emotional well-being. More than half of the respondents felt that there is a lack of male-oriented activities in the local areas, and the majority stated that digital technology was beneficial to them.

When seeking support, men tended to turn to family members or friends, or professionals for help with health, emotional well-being, finances, or caring for themselves or a loved one.

Most men preferred driving over using public transport giving reasons such as unreliability, lack of availability, accessibility issues, cost, and safety concerns, especially at night.

Improving access to health or social care was seen as essential, with a focus on more access to GP appointments, accessible information, better transport links, more specialised services, increased availability of NHS dentists, better access to hospital services, regular health checks, and befriending services.

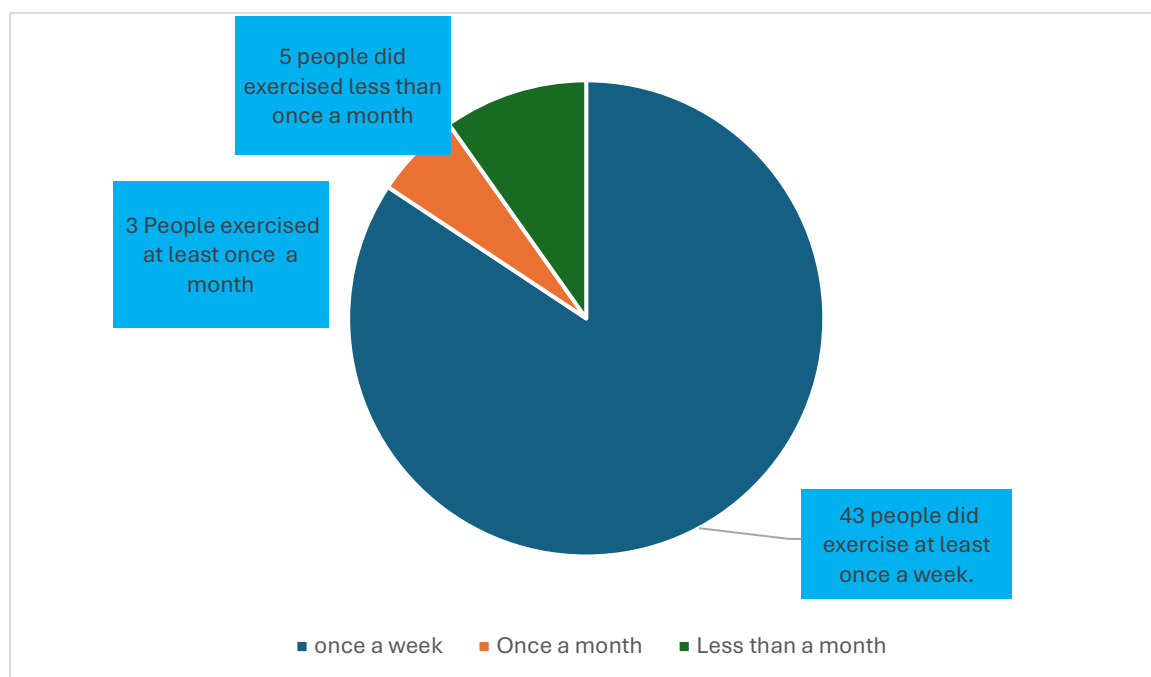
It is notable that the survey was predominantly completed by the White/British population of men. More feedback from diverse cultural backgrounds was needed to create a more comprehensive report.

Survey Findings/Data:

Q1) Do you feel you have adequate opportunities to socialise and make friends with like-minded people in the area you live?

Out of the 52 Surveys, only 51 responded, 38 men said “yes”, 12 men said “no” and 1 person left no response.

Q2) How often do you engage in social activities?



It is important to mention that some men exercise more than once a week.

Q3) How can we make socialising more appealing to you?

Out of the 41 men that answered this question, one man made multiple suggestions.

1 mentioned [advertising what is available](#).

2 talked about [accessibility and more provisions for people with mobility or disabilities](#),

2 men mentioned having [more clubs/social venues](#).

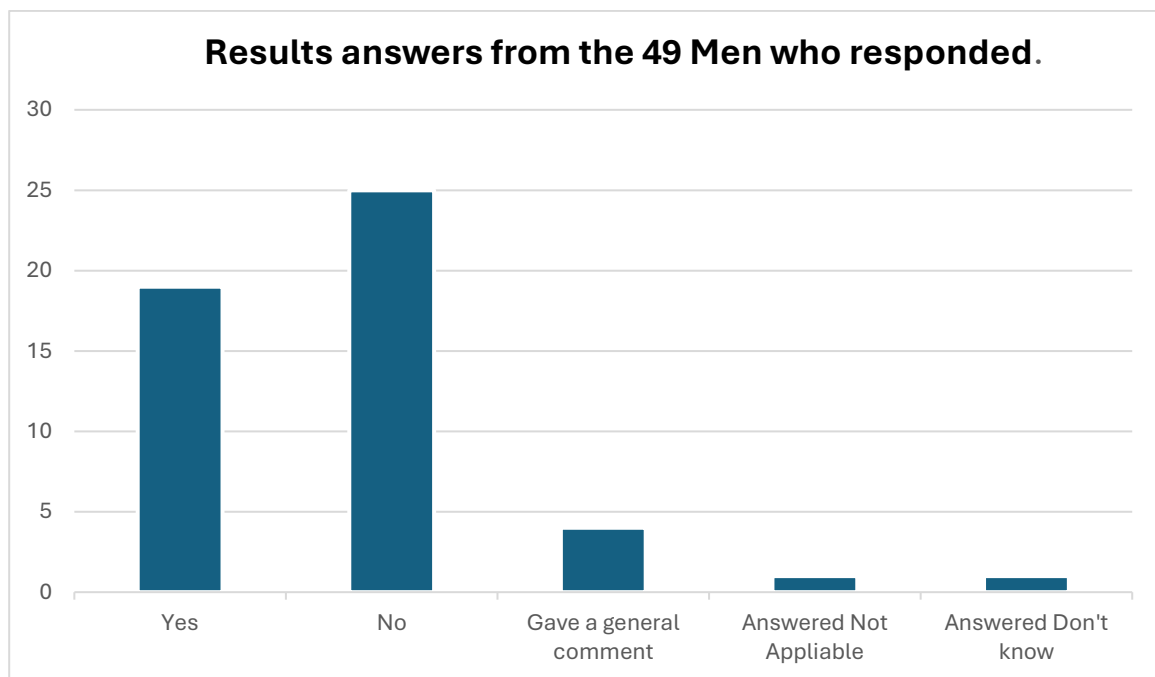
3 stated need [activities/venue's closer to home](#),

7 mentioned public transport links need improving

8 mentioned Men's groups geared up for Men this included ideas like Darts, Dominos, and activities inside.

19 commented they had no idea of how to make socialising more appealing or they were happy with what they do already.

Q4) Do you feel there is a lack of male-orientated activities in your area?



From the 49 responses, general comments included:

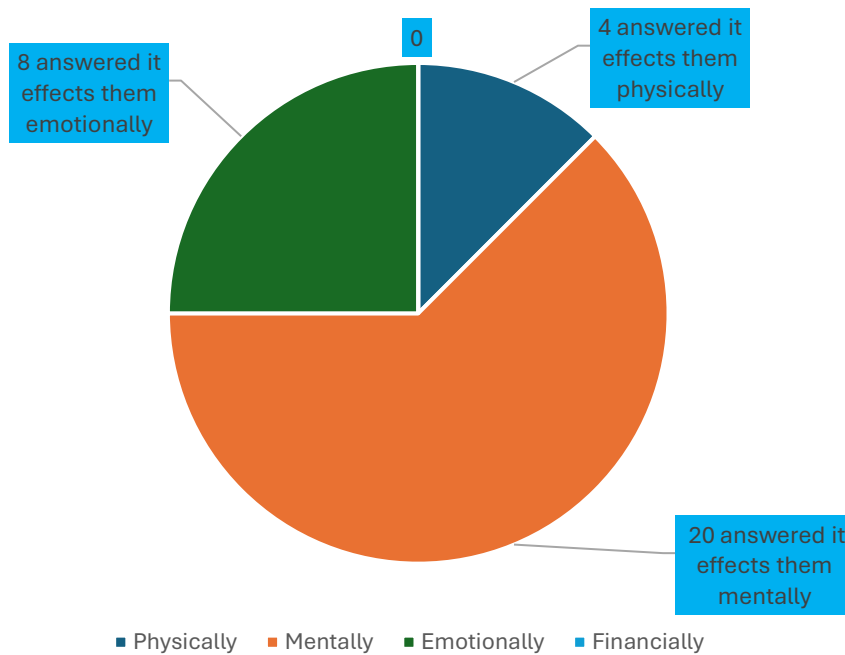
"for people living with disabilities yes", "Depends on what you want to do".

"For younger age group between 35 to 60 years, there is a lack of male activities & would like to see more gardening based activities".

Q5) Do you feel a lack of social opportunities impacts your well-being, if so, how does this impact you?

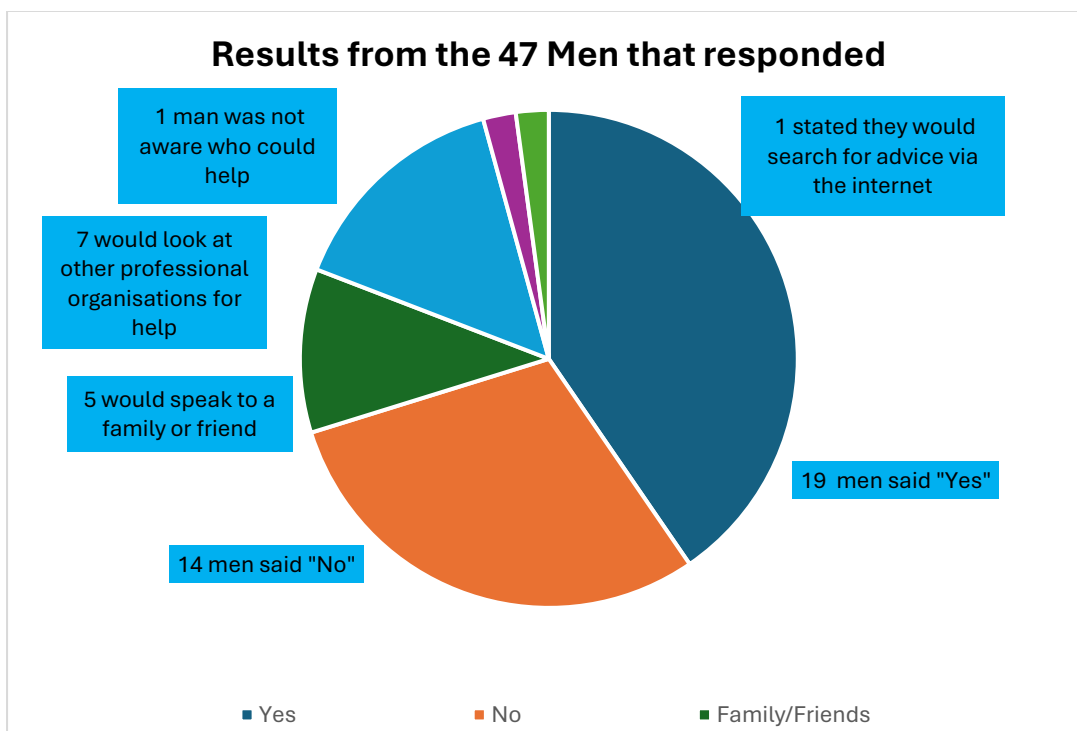
In the results below you will see the impact this has on men's wellbeing however it is important to note that no one commented it impacted them financially.

Results from the 32 Men who answered the questions



Q6) If you had a health, emotional or financial concern, would you know which organisations may be able to help you?

Results from the 47 Men that responded



Based on the survey results, it seems that some of the men who participated would have difficulty finding the information they need.

As a result, we have included some links below to local services that can provide support and guidance.

Online Searchable Directory for Staffordshire Services

<https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/> : is a directory to find support in the local community.

<https://staffordshire.simplyconnect.uk/> : link to the Directory to help with Healthy living, social groups and Activities, Advice, support and Self-help.

Staffordshire Together for Carers

<https://www.n-compass.org.uk/our-services/carers/staffordshire-together-for-carers-service> : Provide information, advice and a wide range of specialist support services designed to help adult and young carers continue in their caring role.

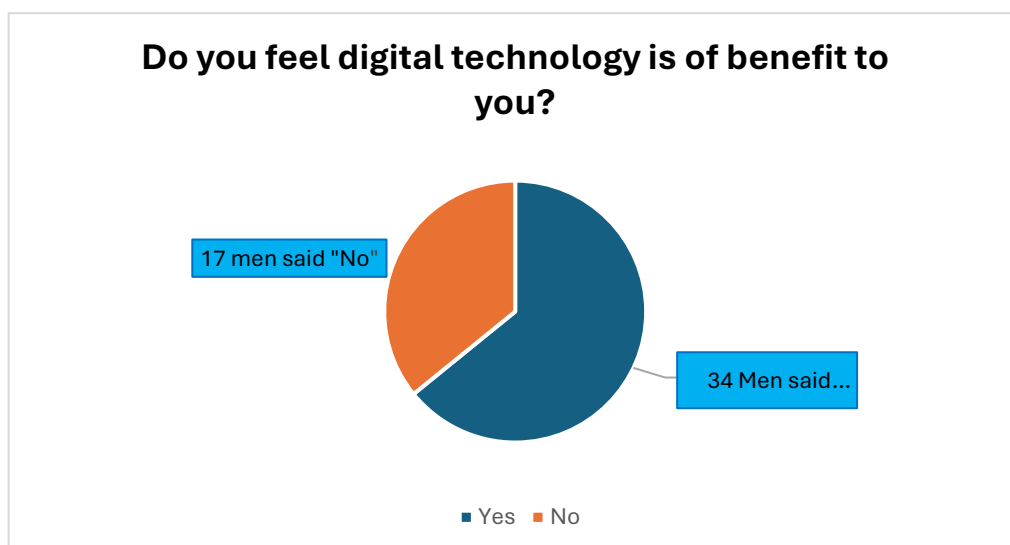
Citizen's Advice – 0300 330 1313

Age UK Staffordshire: Offers help at home, Day opportunities, Information and Advice 01785-788477.

Healthwatch Staffordshire Services Directory:

<https://healthwatchstaffordshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Healthwatch-Staffordshire-Services-Directory.pdf>

Q7) Do you feel digital technology is of benefit to you? If not, please tell us why?



51 men responded to the question, out of these 36 left additional comments, here are the themes

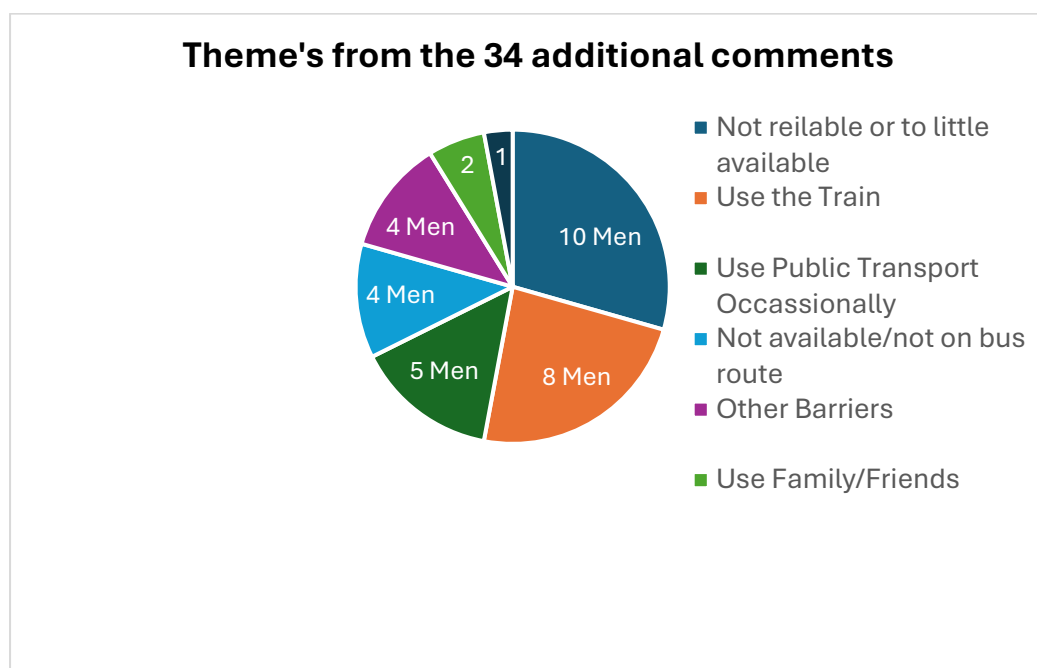
- 19 people felt that they were comfortable using IT to some degree.
- 13 individuals felt for various reason they did not like using IT
- 3 people still prefer face-to-face.
- 1 person felt the question in the survey was not specific enough regarding IT & didn't really know in what context we were referring to.
- Some quotes given were
 - "IT is difficult to use with my Health condition",
 - "I use it but not for accessing social activities",
 - "I use the internet for most things, so this is a benefit",
 - "I am Computer Savvy".

Q8) Do you have access to your own transport?

50 Men that answered this question. 44 stated they "did have access to own transport" and 6 said "No they did not have access".

Q9) Do you use public Transport? If not, please let us know why?

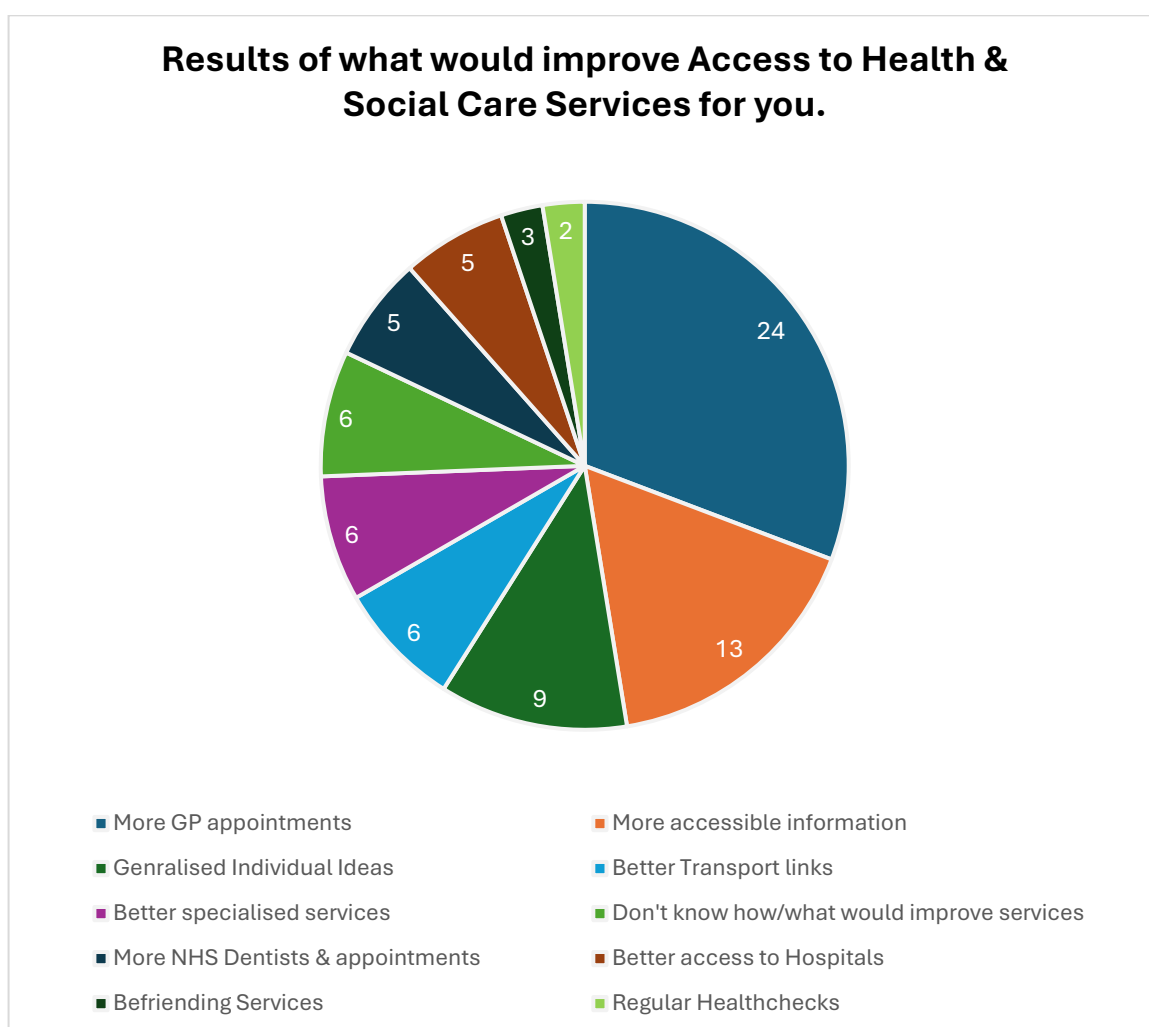
28 Men said "Yes" 24 Men said "No". 34 Men chose to leave additional comments these are some of the themes that came out.



Comments around barriers included [disability](#), [accessibility](#), [prices](#), [feeling safe at night](#) and one [compliment](#) to say “Thanks for the Bus pass”

Q10) What 3 things would improve access to Health & Social Care services for you?

In this question, we received 39 responses from men, with 25 of them providing a second response and 15 providing a third response to improve services. To analyse this data, all the responses were compiled, resulting in a total of 79 responses.



The top 3 improvements mentioned were:

1. More access to GP appointments, including reduced waiting times and better access to booking appointments.
2. Access to information, such as increased accessibility, a centralised website featuring all relevant organisations, information presented in plain English, and a focus on addressing the needs of men & putting announcements/information on village notice boards.
3. Came in with joint suggestions on: Better transport links and improved specialist support services for conditions like Parkinson's, and dementia.

Some general comments included: the need for relief support, a dedicated health centre, affordable or free services, and consideration for health advocates.

Q11) Do you have caring responsibilities?

Out of the 52 Men that responded 44 said " No" and 8 said "Yes"

Do you get any Support with this?

31 answered the question out of the 52 and 24 men said "No" and 7 stated "Yes"

20 people made the additional comments.

1 person stated that their "Health is ok",

1 man stated, "found services to help were quite poor",

3 said "support was not required",

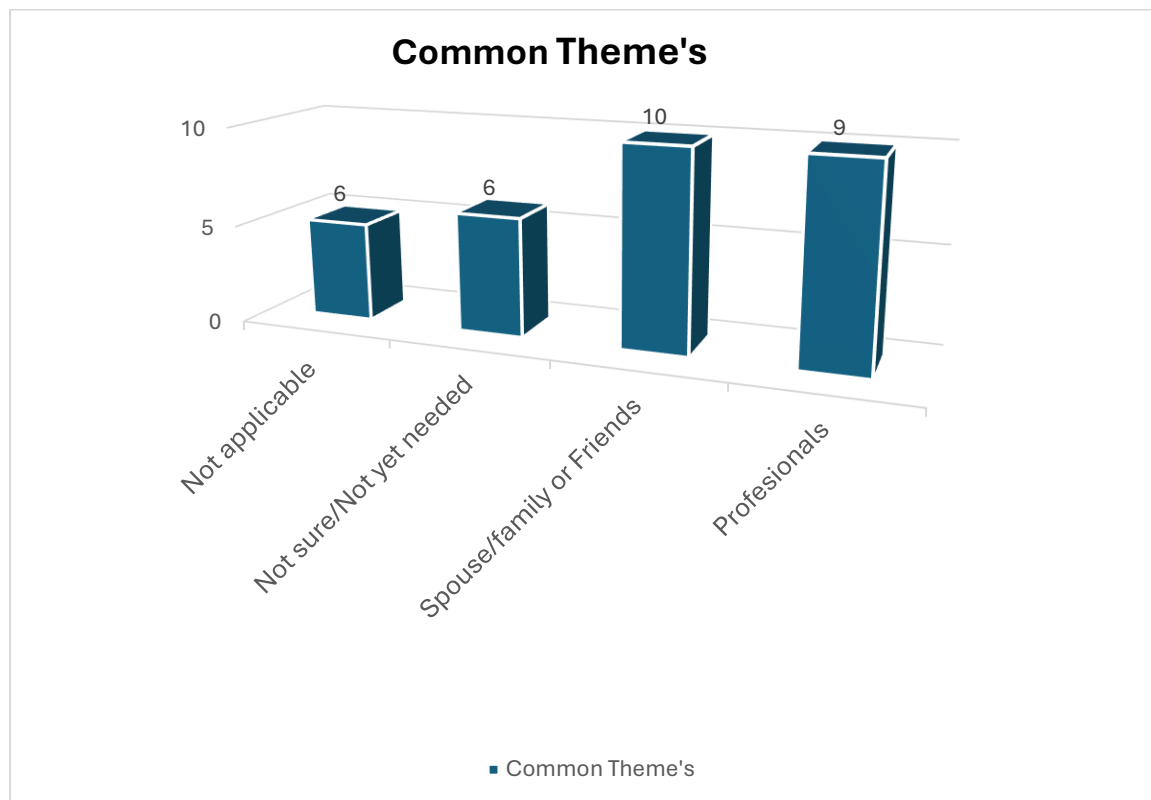
7 relied on partner/family/friends

10 stated the question was not applicable to them.

Other feedback included "No help available as I had to pay and find it myself" and "Parent I live with are in their mid-eighties and I can see a slow decline in them both"

Q12) If you needed caring support for yourself or a loved one, do you know who to turn to?

21 men answered "Yes" & 26 men answered "No" 27 men left additional comments & these are some of the themes.



It is important to note that some of the Men left more than one answer (*hence figures in graph not adding up*). Professionals mentioned that men would seek help from included: [GP's](#), [Social Services](#), [Citizen's Advice Bureau](#), [Parkinson Nurses](#) or the [Dementia Café](#).

Many thanks to all the lovely gentlemen that helped us by providing feedback for this report.

Conclusions

- Analysing the data, shows that most men would prefer services tailored to their interests and activities, which should be promoted not only online but also in local areas or community centres.
- Some Men would prefer activities that are single-sexed as it enables them to talk more freely and openly, however, some men do like options and like the company of women.
- Facilities that are comfortable to attend and accessible if you have disabilities or long-term health conditions.
- Public transport networks also need improving to allow access to these venues. If they could no longer drive, there is a risk of isolation/loneliness as the majority in our survey still drive.
- Access to better health services/facilities.
- Accessible information in plain English and on one site or location so people know where to find it.
- To better recognise when “they have caring responsibilities” and know where to go to get support for this and know what is available to them. Services that encounter men need to “Make Every Contact Count” – Everyone Health offer free training in this: <https://staffordshire.everyonehealth.co.uk/mecc/>

Recommendations for providers/commissioners of activities:

Points for providing activities for men:

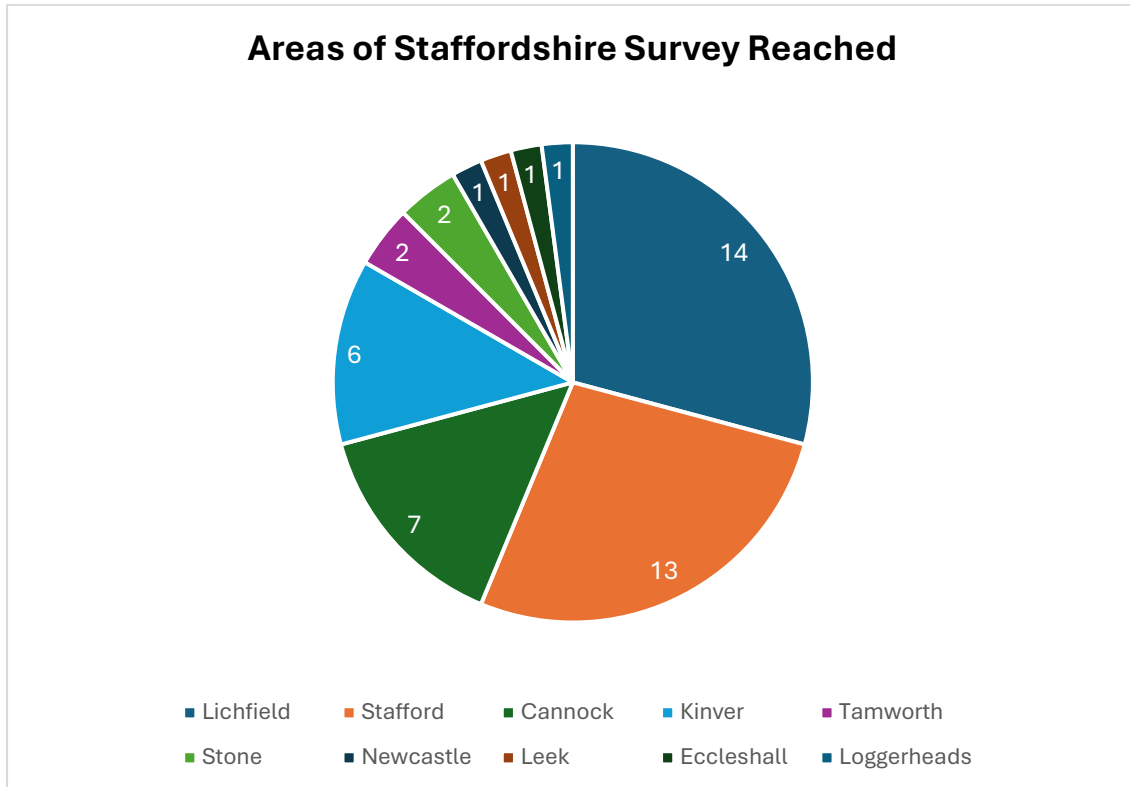
1. Provide activities that are easily accessible with good transport links.
2. Make the activities free or inexpensive.
3. Consider the mobility and comfort of individuals with disabilities or long-term health conditions.
4. Offer peer support groups or a free call centre geared specifically for men.

5. Target men to remind them about what caring responsibilities look like in reality and ensure they are aware of the support services available to help with benefits/help.
6. Ideally, groups for men should be led by men to make them more appealing.
7. Consider the impact of lived experience or childhood trauma on men's engagement in activities, could this be the barrier? Especially if they have been alone for a long time.
8. Consider establishing a buddy partnership scheme to help build self-esteem.
9. When setting up groups, consider locations where men like to gather, such as pubs, gardening spaces, or workshops. Tailor activities to match local skills and industries in the area, past and present.
10. Create inclusive activities such as cooking clubs, breakfast events, or dining activities to bring men together.
11. Challenge negative views to encourage men from ethnic groups to participate and address any homophobic or racist comments.

Appendix 1 Demographics

Q13) Please tell us your postcode.

We had 48 responses to this question.



Q14) Please tell us your age.

50 Men chose to answer this question.

8 were from the age range of 55–64 years, 33 were from the age range of 65 to 79, 8 were 80+ years and 1 man preferred not to say.

Q15) Please tell us your gender.

Not surprisingly all 50 people described their gender as Male.

Q16) Please select your ethnicity.

51 men chose to answer this question. 50 described themselves as White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh. 1 described themselves as Irish.

Q17) Do you have a disability?

51 men answered 20 saying "Yes" 30 saying "No" & 1 man described it as unknown.

Q18) Do you have a long-term health condition?

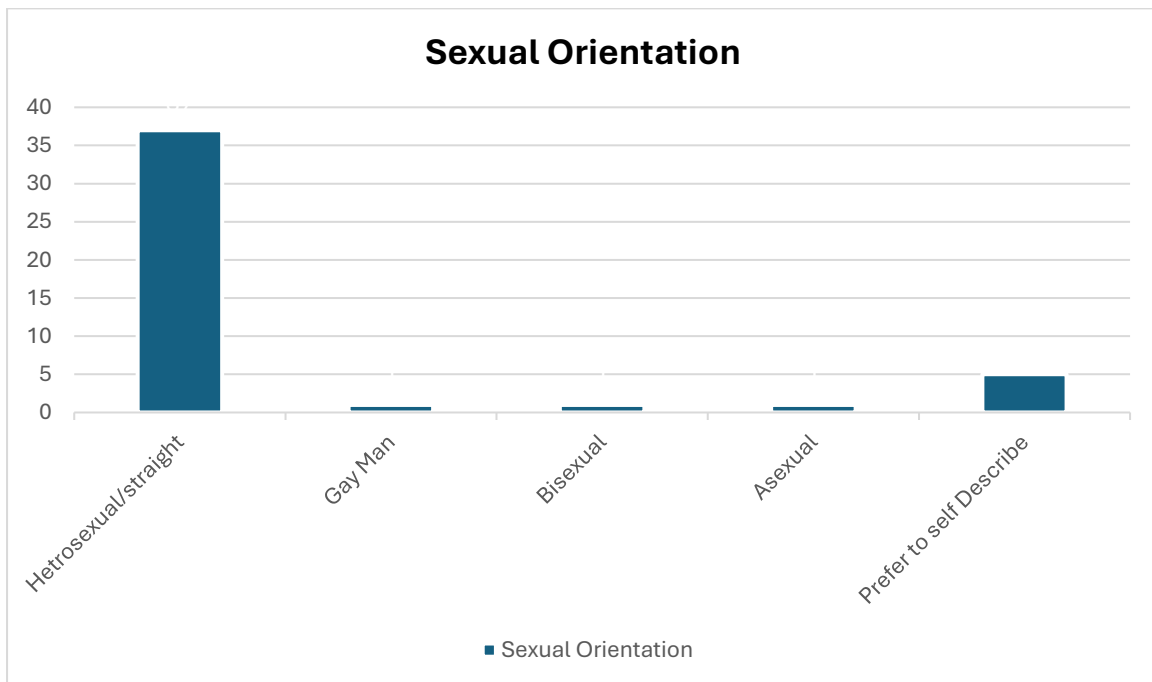
51 men answered 32 saying "Yes" 17 saying "No" and 1 men described as unknown.

Q19) Is your gender identity the same as our sex recorded at birth?

47 Men answered the question and stated "Yes". 5 further males preferred to skip this question.

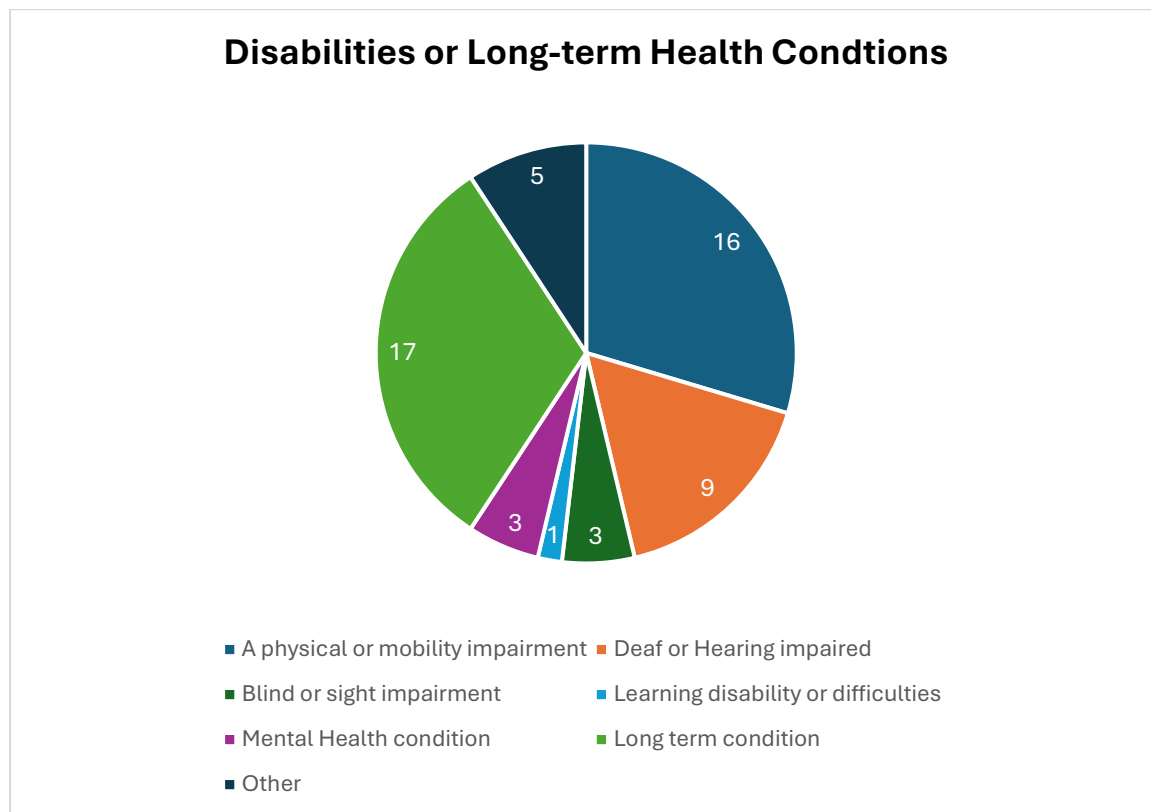
Q20) Please tell us which sexual orientation you identify with.

45 men answered the question and 7 skipped the question.



Q21) Which of the following disabilities or long-term health conditions do you have?

36 Men chose to answer this question and 16 left no answer.



The men that opted for “Other” specified the following:

inability to read or write; Epilepsy; Heart Arrhythmia; being a full-time carer and not applying to them.

We would like to thank Pexels and Tima Miroshnichenko for the photograph used on the cover image for this report.