Inclusion Gloucestershire Survey

February 2022

Social & Leisure

Chapter 3

INCLUSION GLOUCESTERSHIRE

BIGGER DREAMS ▶ BETTER LIVES ▶ BRIGHTER FUTURES

Contents

Introduction

Inclusion Gloucestershire wanted to understand the areas of everyday life that are causing concern or worry for people in Gloucestershire who face disabling barriers.

In June and July 2021, we invited people who face disabling barriers to give us their opinions and experiences along with any ideas they have for improving things.

We asked people who face disabling barriers, family and friends, and paid staff members who support people facing disabling barriers.

As a user led organisation, we want to make sure that our work is led by those who face disabling barriers, and their families and friends.

We have used the information we have been given to guide our organisational strategy (big plan) for the next 3 years.

For more information on how we found out about what people thoughts, please see our headline report, at:

https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/research-strategy-and-partnerships/
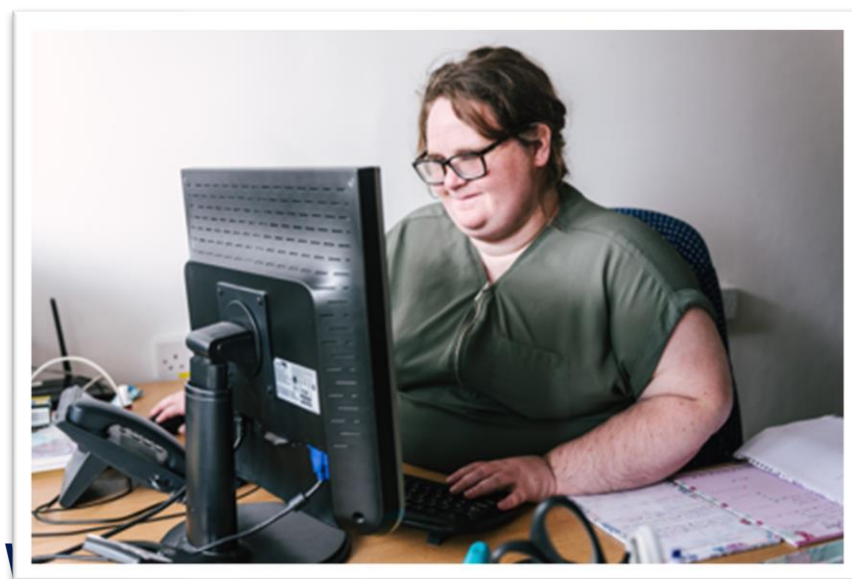
135 People Gave Us Their Views!

There is more information about who gave us their views in the headline report but here is a summary:

- Most people identified themselves as female.

- Most people did not identify as transgender.

- Most people identified themselves as heterosexual.

- The largest group of people who gave us their ideas were aged 55-64. The second largest group were aged 45-54, closely followed by people who were in the 35-44 age group.

- Nearly all people used English as their first language.

- Most people identified themselves as White British.

- The largest group of people who gave us their ideas had lived experience of a mental health condition. The closest group to this were people with learning disabilities, and then people with a physical impairment.
  Several people had more than one "type" of lived experience.

- Most people lived in Gloucester or Cheltenham, but there were still many participants who lived in other areas in or near to Gloucestershire.

- Most people who gave their ideas were not members of Inclusion Gloucestershire at that time.

- Most people had not used Inclusion Gloucestershire's services in the last 6 months.

For more information on how we found out about who responded to our survey, please see our headline report at:

https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/research-strategy-and-partnerships/

What areas of life are worrying people?

We asked people who gave us their ideas and opinions to tell us how worried they are about 22 areas of life.

We asked people to tell us if they were:

- **Very worried,**
- **A little worried,**
- **Not sure,**
- **Not too worried,**
- **No worries or**
- **Whether the area does not apply to them.**

In most of our work we use a strengths-based approach but the reason that this survey used the negative concept of worries and concerns was to reflect that people still face significant disabling barriers in society. We wanted to identify where there are issues and gaps so that something can be done to address them.

One area which was causing people some worry was in relation to social and leisure activities and this included contact with family and friends.

**More people were not worried about these areas than were worried.**

This report is going to tell you more about what people have told us.

If you want to know more about the other areas we asked about, we will be writing more reports in the next few weeks and months. You can see our headline report, and our report about health on our website.

https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/research-strategy-and-partnerships/

Summary and key messages about social and leisure

This is a summary of the key information we found out about social and leisure worries:
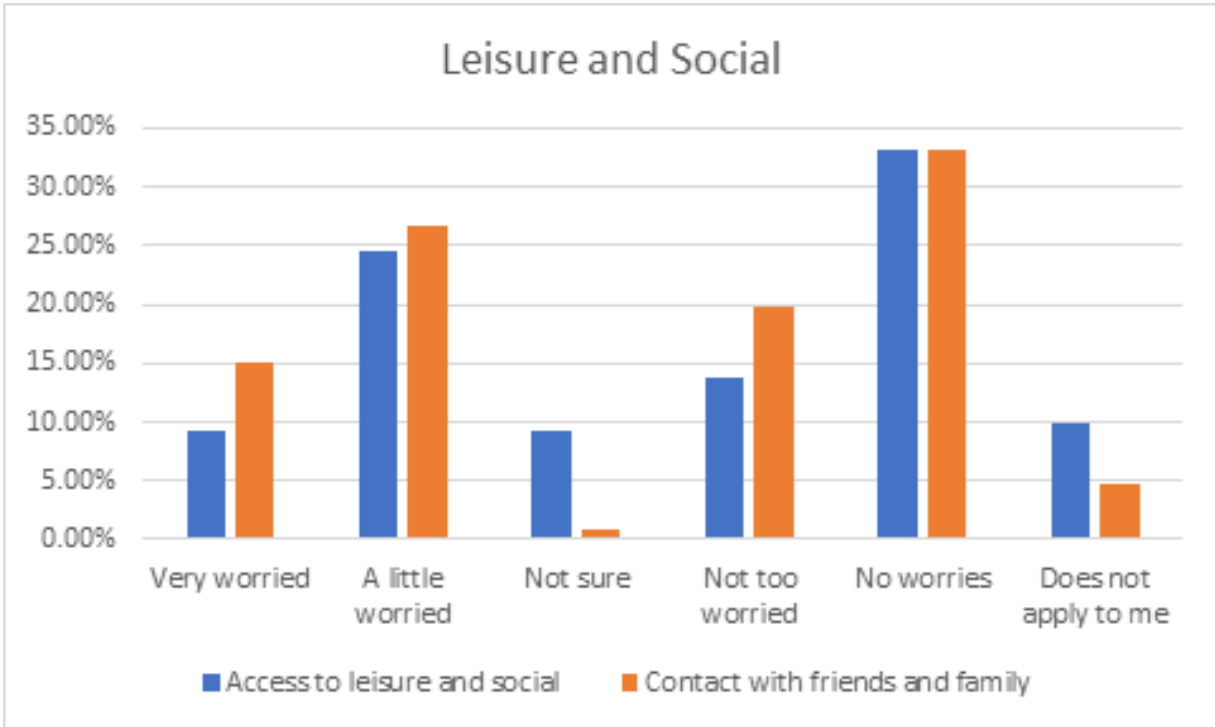
Leisure and Social

- Over half of people were happy with their access to social and leisure, and with the level of contact they had with friends and family
- However, for those who were experiencing difficulties there were a number of barriers that they were facing, as listed below:
- **Access barriers** including:
  - travel and transport;
  - building access;
  - lack of available services in some geographical areas and the need to travel long distances;
  - affordability and unsuitable timings of activities and transport
  - the need to book activities in advance and the computer access and skills needed to do this online
  - lack of available support and costs of support to participate safely
- For some people, there was a **lack of awareness** of the needs of people facing disabling barriers by those who provide social and leisure services and facilities, and this had led to some people not accessing services.
- A number of people shared their **positive experiences,** which were enhanced by family support; good supporters; good providers; and access to computers.
- A small number of people did experience **discrimination, a lack of culturally sensitive services and bullying.**
- For some people, their access to social, leisure, family and friends has been impacted by their **variable individual needs.**
- For many, **Covid 19 and its various restrictions** has had an impact on people's experiences and some residual anxieties and concerns about safety do exist.

Social and Leisure: more information about what people said is worrying them

We asked people 4 questions about how worried they were about leisure and social activities and contact with families and friends. More than half of people were happy with their experiences in these areas.

The questions we asked were:

1. **How happy are you with your access to leisure and social activities?**

2. **Please tell us about your experiences of accessing leisure and social activities. This might be good or bad experiences**.

3. **How happy are you with your current contact with friends, family and other people who are important to you?**

4. **Please tell us of anything that gets in the way of you having have regular contact with friends, family and other people who are important to you.**

We also asked people what the one thing was that was causing them most concern, how they think things could be improved. If this related to social, leisure or contact with family and friends we have included them in this report along with any other information we were told about concerns in this area.

What did people tell us?

1. **Over half of people were happy with their access to leisure and social activities. (53.4 %). This was 48 people.**
   However, almost a fifth of people (16.6%) were not happy This was 15 people.
   One third of people were in the middle of this 5 point rating, this was 27 people.

42. HOW HAPPY ARE YOU WITH YOUR ACCESS TO LEISURE AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES?
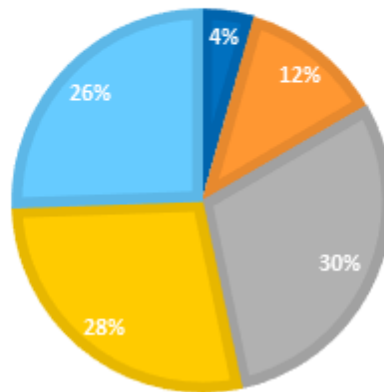
1= Not at all happy …………………… 5 = Very Happy

2. **Over half of people (61%) were happy with the level of contact they had with their family and friends. This was 61 people.**
Only 13 people were not happy, with just over a quarter of people (26%) scoring this question in the middle – this was 26 people.

HOW HAPPY ARE YOU WITH YOUR CURRENT CONTACT WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY AND OTHER PEOPLE WHO ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU?
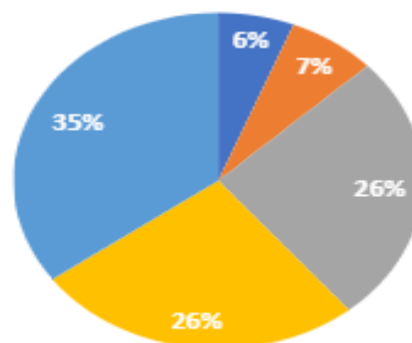
1= Not at all happy …………………… 5 = Very Happy

The details of the reasons why people answered in the way they did is shown in the next section.

Experiences in relation to social and leisure

People told us about their experiences in the areas of social and leisure, and contact with family and friends, and we have been able to use this information to explore which areas are common to several people. We discuss these further below.

Access

A number of key barriers to accessing leisure and social activities and to maintaining contact with family and friends were shared by people and these were:

- **Distance to travel** getting to activities and **lack of activities in certain parts of the county.**
- **Transport and travel** barriers
- Barriers to **access buildings**
- **Lack of available support,** and **costs of support,** to effectively participate in activities
- **Affordability and timings** of activities and transport
- **The need to book in advance, and computer skills** needed to book activities online

Those relating to transport and travel barriers have been experienced by a number of people who completed the survey, but the number of positive experiences were very low.

Other barriers mentioned were experienced by smaller numbers of people.

"I like hydrotherapy as normal pools are too cold, but there are none closer than Swindon."

"There aren't many opportunities in the Forest of Dean."

"Very few options for wheelchair access that don't involve travel in a car."

"I don't really access anything, mostly through choice, but also transport and childcare issues."

"I love sailing but don't have transport to get to South Cerney."

"Not having a blue badge means I have no guarantee of being able to park close enough. I don't leave the house much unless I'm sure I have a very short walk."

"I have a shared vehicle and have access to the bus as I live on a bus route."

"Transport and Covid 19 (have impacted on my contact with family and friends)."

"Capacity to drive or be driven to see my elderly parents."

"Poor transport opportunities and distance keep me apart from many."

"I can't drive so travel can be difficult."

"Reluctance to go too far away from home."

"Inability to drive anymore or able to walk to a venue."

"Sometimes it is about where they live. Sometimes it's friends letting me down at the last minute."

"Having time to meet up and transport."

"(To access social and leisure) Carefully planned. Rest before and after. Ensure the venue has parking, easy access and toilets."

"My son's needs prevent us from accessing activities as he would need 2-1 support in many situations."

"Accessing leisure like gyms are difficult because of requiring a support worker due to environmental risk."

"Independent access is pretty much finished for me as I need so much support. I find the inflexibility of available support frustrating, particularly weekends and evenings."

"Cost and time."

"Not the most affordable or accessible."

"Due to health I was accessing specific classes for people with health problems, they only run in work time so when I returned to work I could not go anymore. This was a shame as my health improved when I attended them.."

"Too many people on a Saturday."

"My access was getting in the way of having regular contact with friends. However, this is being resolved in the next week as I am having work done."

"My contact with family and friends has been improving recently but I would like more."

"It is frustrating having to book access to leisure facilities in advance, and even then slots may not be available weeks in advance. You need good IT skills to be able to navigate some of the booking apps."

Perhaps the barriers people are experiencing can be appreciated when reading this person's experiences……

"As I mentioned before accessing buildings and venues is very hit and miss, some are easy to get into and others and completely out of the question as they have either no lift or are on the second floor. Cafes and pubs are often closely packed and you have to move tables and chairs to maneuver about, it's embarrassing and humiliating.

Some places are so small I can't even get in them. As a wheelchair user I'm often parked at the front and not given a choice stating fire regulations, whereas that is a horrible place to sit if you have aches and pains, your neck is at an angle, it can also overload sensory reception and turns a night out into a nightmare.

Parking in the evenings is horrendous as everyone uses the disabled bays, I guess we aren't supposed to go out at night?
Taxis that can carry a wheelchair + person are non-existent at night so again we are denied a social life unless we go with another person who can push a wheelchair."

Lack of awareness

A few people were concerned that providers of social and leisure activities are not aware or sensitive to the needs of those facing disabling barriers.
This lack of awareness has contributed to people feeling unable to access leisure and social activities.

"I think a lot of people are unaware of our needs and sometimes they will listen and sometimes not."

"My condition, access to public spaces, general understanding of my needs from people I am meeting."

"There needs to be much more awareness raising around the mental health challenges of isolation and the loss of independence and spontaneity disability inflicts on you."

> "What activities? There is no consideration that my health might prevent me getting involved in what is available."

> "How to access activities in our community, in particular our church (is causing me most concern."

Positive and negative experiences

Many people have shared a range of positive experiences in relation to leisure, social and contact with family and friends.

Lots of things have contributed to people's positive experiences including support from family, good providers of services, access to IT and funding and good support from paid support workers.

However, a few people shared their negative experiences which included discrimination, fear of bullying and for one person, the difficulties they face in finding culturally sensitive leisure activities, particularly in relation to swimming.

> "I was discriminated from a choir at the local community centre."

> "As a Muslim woman, it is very difficult to find a safe space to exercise, I would love to learn swimming, but I feel I can't as lifeguards are male and there is no where I can do this without paying extortionate amounts."

> "I would like to see my sister more, she is working lots."

> "Being afraid of being bullied, especially as I come out of my house because that is where it usually happens."

"I only have contact with immediate family as I have lost all contact with friends."
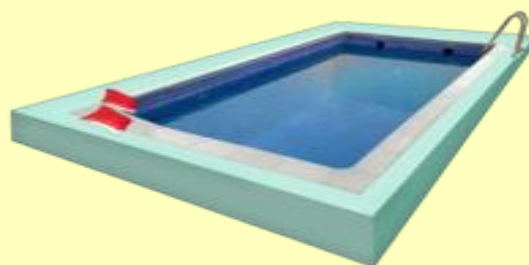
Positive Experiences

"I enjoyed my experience at (named provider offering cycling)."

"Good experience at college."

"Nice to have the swimming pool open again."

"(Named leisure provider) seem quite inclusive so I enjoy going there, although it's necessary to book in advance now."

"Pre covid, accessed a gym which was enjoyed."

"It is good if you go to (named leisure provider) and ask the managers for reasonable adjustments."

"I don't have any barriers to access."

"I can go out and be independent."

"I am going to work, and I also see my friends."

"Going to football."

"Zumba, Belling, Music, Park run."

"Member of several local church groups. Always welcome to join in meetings."

"Mum helps me at the moment with going out, without mum, I would need help."

"I like staff to come but getting independent."

"I enjoy going out and all is well."

"Go to church, go to gym, walking, seeing my friend."

"The (named service) is good, but some things not started yet."

"I have 5 hours 1:1 time a week but I use them up and still have the chance to go out."

"I am allowed 1:1 time weekly which I use. My support team help me to access external activities. I enjoy trips out, shopping, walks and going to the cinema. I am able to access these easily."

"I can take myself to the shops and cafe."

"Going well – long walks and exercise."

"I enjoy going to (named provider) – I like the people because you are among people with learning disabilities."

"I only contact friends on the internet so there is no problem."

"My team leader does video calls for me to my sister, I would like for her to come and visit when she is able."

"I do spend time with friends and family."

"Very thankful for learning how to use iPad and mobile phone keeps me in touch with family and friends. Ability to use zoom to join in groups and church services."

"I live with my mum and das and also I am a volunteer at (named place). I have got lots of friends here and I go to church, and I go on holiday with my best friend."

Individual Circumstances

A number of people acknowledged that their individual circumstances have an impact on their social life, leisure and interactions with others.

These circumstances are, for many people, quite variable, but do clearly have an impact on the social isolation that people may experience, and their emotional wellbeing.

"My husband is house bound. I have little energy."

"Mobility problems."

"My son struggles with interactions with other children, so we are unable to socialize with friends who also have families. He can become overwhelmed leading to aggression which is difficult to manage in public or in other people's homes so we are very limited on where we can go."

"I have lost trust in people after a traumatic event and I avoid people now."

"Anxiety. Sometimes when socializing with friends."

"My anxiety."

"By caring for someone, there's no respite support to help. You just have to get on with it."

"I am scared as I am not as mobile as I used to be and I hate loneliness."

"My illness impacts my ability to have regular contact with friends and family."

"Sometimes. I feel like I don't want to be with people, I feel inadequate and I feel like I want to die. I have to try really hard and work really hard to interact with my friends and other people."

"Covid. Depression. Anxiety."

"My health."

"A parent who slags me off to everyone."

Impact of Covid

Covid, and the various restrictions that were in place prior to and during the survey, had a marked impact on people's social and leisure activities, as well as on people's contact with their families and friends, as shown below.

Whilst a number of these may currently be less experienced, it is important to note them in case of further changes to restrictions.

"I'm not sure it is safe and so I am worried to attend."

"Can't access (some activities) at the moment."

"Lockdown has made this very difficult over the last year."

"I found it very difficult to access leisure and social activities after coming out of the last lockdown, but I have been pushing myself to meet with people and to engage in social and leisure activities that cause me anxiety."

"Not great access to leisure because of Covid, has stopped everything."

"Not having access to things because of Covid regulations, like swimming."

"I am not independent and Covid is stressful."

"Getting back to normal, seeing people in larger groups again would be lovely."

"Clubs/groups not reopening until September [2021] or later."

"I worry about people being socially isolated while the Covid is ongoing, not feeling able to venture out and some into contact with others ."

"I'm worried about what happens if I get Covid again or told to self-isolate because I won't be able to see my family."

"Transport and Covid."

"…worried for (family and friends) and me. Covid is rising again and I don't want to spread it."

"Lockdown (impacted on my contact with friends and family)."

"Covid restrictions (impacted on my contact with friends and family)."

"(My friends and family) are mortally afraid of being arrested."

"The pandemic and I find online a very poor substitute."

"Pandemic has prevented gatherings."

"Covid and not being able to go out with family as usual. All my child wants is to go out for coffee and look in charity shops."

"Covid restrictions and family members being very busy due to extra workload of the pandemic."

"Socially isolating, family re socially isolating."

> **"Presently at home in part self-isolation due to partner being extremely clinically vulnerable."**

> **"(Named service) has been closed since outbreak of Covid. I have not heard from them about what is happening and whether it is still running. I don't see the people who go there. This is bad. It is inconsiderate not letting people know what is going on."**
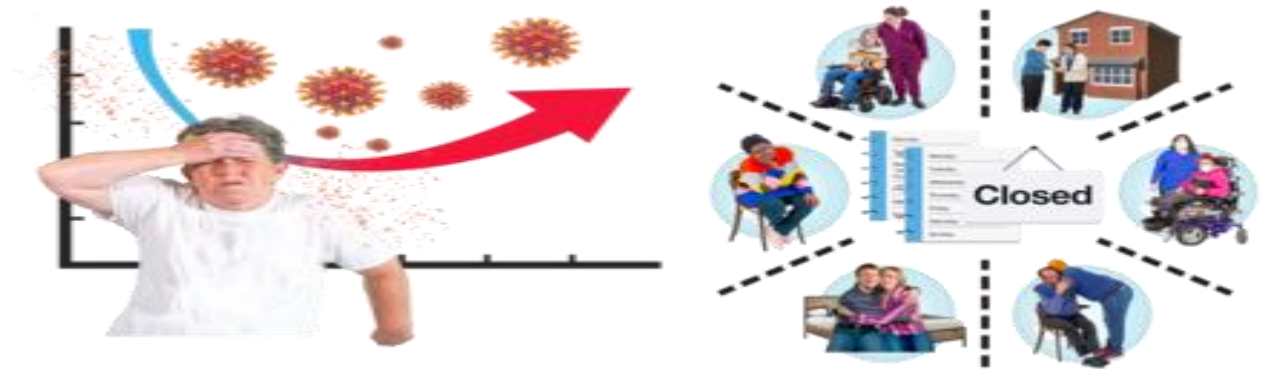
Other Research

Our findings in relation to social and leisure and social isolation are different to other local and national research, which has shown marked increases in social isolation for those who face disabling barriers.

Our research has considered how worried people were and not necessarily whether their social networks and connections with others have reduced.

Wider research does need to be taken into account, particularly in relation to increased social isolation and the impact on confidence and emotional well-being of those facing disabling barriers reported by some people locally and evidenced in wider research.

For more information, please see the following reports:

1) **Barnwood Trust, "Our Changing World: A report into disability and mental health in Gloucestershire during the COVID-19 pandemic" highlighted concerns regarding isolation and connection.**

https://www.barnwoodtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Our-Changing-World-Exec-Summary-v6.pdf

2) **A recent HFT reported highlighted that people with a learning disability were experiencing loneliness before the pandemic and it has been exaggerated since.**

https://www.hft.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/lockdown-on-loneliness/

3) **Healthwatch Gloucestershire, in a recent report (September 2021) highlighted local people's experience of social isolation and loneliness**

https://www.healthwatchgloucestershire.co.uk/news/new-report-highlights-what-can-be-done-to-help-tackle-social-isolation-and-loneliness-in-gloucestershire/

4) **A Mencap report in 2019 showed that bullying of people with a learning disability led to social isolation as people had a fear of leaving their homes**

https://www.mencap.org.uk/press-release/new-research-mencap-shows-bullying-people-learning-disability-leading-social

5) **SENSE reporting high numbers of loneliness for those facing disabling barriers and has a campaign to tackle this**

https://www.sense.org.uk/support-us/campaigns/loneliness/
https://www.sense.org.uk/support-us/campaigns/left-out-of-life-campaign/left-out-of-life-inclusion-in-local-communities-report/

6) **A SCOPE report showing the importance of people feeling connected with families, friends and community, and an additional report focussing on the importance of community connection for disabled young people.**

https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/independent-confident-connected/

https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/research-policy/making-connections-disabled-young-people/

7) **Sport England has shown that disabled people are almost twice as likely to be physically inactive.**

https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/demographic-knowledge/disabled-people#:~:text=Addressing%20inequalities&text=Our%20Active%20Lives%20Adult%20Survey,without%20a%20disability%20(23%25).

8) **Inclusion Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire County Council and University of Gloucester in a recent report (February 2021) highlighted access and transport concerns. "Access for us all: Barriers to Mobility"**

https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/research-strategy-and-partnerships/

9) **The Office of National Statistics latest data shows disproportionate impacts of Covid on disabled people including poorer wellbeing**

https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsondisabledpeopleingreatbritain/march2020todecember2021

Recommendations

- Transport barriers need to be addressed, enabling people greater opportunity to access their communities, and social networks and connections. This includes assessing availability of public transport and addressing the shortage of wheelchair accessible taxis. This will require ongoing commitment from a range of partners, and change needs to be centrally monitored and a clear governance process established.

- Current time restrictions on the use of disability related bus passes need to be varied to enable greater community access.

- Accessibility of buildings continues to be a challenge, and investment is needed in improving audit and reporting mechanisms so that issues are more easily identified – see also our report on Choice and Control https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/research-strategy-and-partnerships/

- Accessibility, in terms of both physical access and processes and practices, need to be at the forefront of service design and planning.

- All organisations should review the accessibility of their websites and processes for individuals to gain information and get involved. Adjustments should be made to make booking processes suitable for all people.

- A local standard for accessibility of information should be co-developed with training available to support this – see also our report on Choice and Control above
- Information and support should be available to those people who are being assessed by social care to identify their eligible need for social interaction, leisure, community connection and physical activity. This would be to ensure that people are supported appropriately to participate.
- Providers of social and leisure services should ensure that their staff teams have greater training and awareness of disability and culturally sensitive support alongside the needs and barriers that people face and the adjustments which can help.

https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/training-and-development/

- Support and encourage more people facing disabling barriers to become more physically active utilising the local Move Connect Inspire programme, offering training, funding, project support and advocacy https://wecanmove.net/campaign/move-connect-inspire

- Further research is needed to understand people's experiences of culturally sensitive services fully, from the perspective of a more diverse group of people – see also our Choice and Control report above
- Further research is needed in relation to how safe people feel when not in their own homes, and what needs to be done to address this – see also our report on Choice and Control.

What Will Inclusion Gloucestershire Do Next

We will share this report with providers of health, social care and sports and leisure services in Gloucestershire, and with other local organisations and groups.

The report will be available on our website, publicised on social media and shared with individuals who were part of the survey and gave us their contact details.

We will ensure that in all forums in which we are involved we share the experiences and recommendations with decision makers. This includes connecting with the following workstreams and groups:

- **Learning Disability Partnership Board**
- **Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment Partnership Board**
- **Autism Partnership Board**
- **Carers Partnership Board**
- **Mental Health and Well Being Partnership Board**

We will continue to actively engage with people who face disabling barriers to seek their views and experiences in relation to leisure and community connections via our Speak UP Groups; MHELO (Mental Health Experience Led Opportunities) Focus Groups; Inclusion Hubs; our user led Quality Checking visits and our regional network of self-advocacy groups.

If you would like any information on any of the above activities, please visit our website or contact us on the email below:

https://www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/our-services/
info@inclusion-glos.org

We will implement the organisational specific recommendations highlighted above and work in partnership with others to achieve the system wide recommendations.

And finally, thank you!

We would like to thank everybody who gave their time to complete our survey and share their experiences with us.

We would also like to thank our small team of volunteers who have given their time and insight to enable us to present peoples experiences in this report.

@inclusionglos

Inclusion Gloucestershire

@inclusionglos

Inclusiongloucestershire

Find out more about us at: www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk