



State of Gloucestershire

Opportunities and housing for disabled people and people with mental health challenges

Leisure



Introduction

In 2021, Barnwood's Insights team carried out an Opportunities and Housing Survey. We asked disabled people and people with mental health challenges living in Gloucestershire to tell us about their housing and their experiences of accessing different types of opportunity.

Over 260 people from across the county responded to the survey. Those who took part in the survey told us they had a range of different impairment types. Looking at population data for Gloucestershire suggests that the proportions of respondents with different impairments broadly mirrors the overall county make-up. However, it should be acknowledged that these research findings may not reflect the experiences of all disabled people and people with mental health challenges in the county.

As well as carrying out the survey, we've also looked at the findings of research conducted by a range of other organisations, to contextualise the survey responses.

In this booklet, we share key findings from our survey and our review of research undertaken by others that are related to leisure.

This booklet is one in a series exploring the findings of this research by theme (other booklets look at education/training, employment, volunteering, and housing).

For more information about the methodology of the research please contact **Roz Warden**, Head of Insights, on **01242 539935** or roz.warden@barnwoodtrust.org.

What have we learned?

Disabled people and people with mental health challenges face numerous barriers to accessing leisure opportunities in Gloucestershire.



1 in 3

people can do the leisure activities they want to do



1 in 2

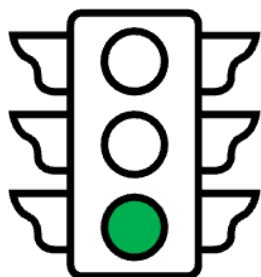
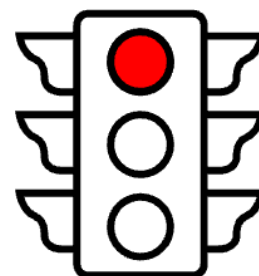
people said that their **health** made it difficult to take part in leisure activities



1 in 2

people said that having more **choice** would make it easier for them to access leisure activities

Around half of people said that their health was currently a barrier to accessing leisure opportunities. The cost of activities and difficulties travelling were also mentioned frequently.



Many people, however, said that if there was more choice, practices were more inclusive, and information about activities was easier to find, then these opportunities would be more accessible. This indicates that if conditions are changed these barriers can begin to be addressed.

From insights to action...

Together, the research findings from the survey and other national data highlight the importance of proactive **engagement** with disabled people to generate solutions, **accessible information** provision, and greater **choice**.

For leisure, some suggestions for how you might do this are included below. More detailed recommendations can be found at the end of this booklet.



Engage | Engage with disabled people to gather feedback about how inclusive venues and activities currently are and any common challenges



Inform | Provide clear and accessible information about activities and venues, including accessibility features and facilities, in a range of formats



Choice | Invest in training for activity providers so activities are more inclusive. Engage with disabled people to understand what this investment should look like

For a conversation about funding or initiatives to support your organisation to take forward actions from this research, please contact Ismail Kholwadia via development@barnwoodtrust.org or **01242 539935**.

Our survey findings:

Access to leisure activities

In our survey, we asked the respondents:

- If being able to do leisure activities matters to them
- If they can do the leisure activities they would like to do

- **74%** told us that leisure activities matter to them
- **46%** cannot do the leisure activities they want to do

There were variations in the responses given by people with different impairment types:

- People with neurological conditions (**24%**), autism spectrum conditions (**25%**), and physical disabilities (**27%**) reported the lowest levels of being able to do the leisure activities they would like to do



Only
1 in 3
people can do the
leisure activities
they want to do

Other findings:

Access to leisure activities

Research highlights that access to leisure activities is a long-standing and widespread issue for disabled people and people with mental health challenges.

- A 2012-2014 survey found that disabled people were over **13** times more likely to report being limited in leisure activities compared to non-disabled people¹
- A 2019 survey of young people with learning disabilities aged 18-35 found that **one-third** spent less than an hour outside their homes on a typical Saturday^{2 3}

Studies evidence challenges in accessing a range of leisure activities, including going to restaurants, shops, sports matches, live music, green spaces, and taking part in physical activity.

- Almost a third of disabled sports fans surveyed reported certain sports or venues they felt unable to attend due to a lack of accessibility⁴
- **29%** of participants in the People and Nature survey living with a long-term illness or condition reported not visiting a natural space in the previous month, compared to **18%** of those without a long-term illness or condition⁵
- Only **4 in 10** disabled people reported feeling they can be as physically active as they want to be, compared to **7 in 10** non-disabled people⁶

People in England who feel they can be as active as they want to be

Disabled people (42%)



Non-disabled people (69%)



Our survey findings:

Barriers to taking part

In our survey, we asked the respondents:

- What, if anything, made it hard for them to do the leisure activities they want to do

We listed barriers that people might experience and asked if they faced these or any other barriers.

The three most frequently reported barriers were:

- My health (e.g. my disability means I need a lot of rest) (**52%**)
- It's too expensive (**38%**)
- It's difficult to travel (**34%**)

Other common barriers included 'I don't feel confident enough' (**33%**) and 'I need other people to help me' (**28%**).

Although health was identified as a barrier to taking part in leisure activities, respondents also reported a range of ways in which opportunities could be more accessible and inclusive.

This reflects the social model of disability which describes how people are not disabled by their impairment or health condition but by barriers in society (for example, inaccessible buildings).

Barriers to leisure

Health

52%



Costs

38%



Travel

34%



Other findings:

Barriers to taking part

National research documents a variety of barriers for disabled people and people with mental health challenges to taking part in leisure activities. This includes physical, financial, and attitudinal barriers, as well as services and activities which are not inclusive.

- **Three-quarters** of participants in a survey about everyday access to restaurants, shops, and attractions reported finding inaccurate, unclear, and misleading information on venue websites⁷
- Top barriers reported by disabled sports fans to attending live sports included physical access at stadiums, anxiety or lack of confidence and costs⁸
- **4 out of 5** Deaf and disabled music fans reported difficulties in booking access for live music events. For example, arranging a step-free seat or a ticket/seat for a Personal Assistant⁹
- Research on disabled people's participation in sport and physical activity found that disabled participants were less likely to say that activity leaders met their needs or considered them in a session¹⁰

Our survey findings:

What would help?

In our survey, we asked the respondents:

- What, if anything, would most help them to take part in leisure activities.

We provided a list of possible enablers and asked them to select the three that they would find most helpful.

- Inclusive practices (e.g. organisations/groups offering accessible activities) (**39%**)
- Being able to easily find information about what leisure activities are available (**37%**)
- Getting help when doing activities (e.g. support from a Personal Assistant) (**30%**)

At least a **fifth** of respondents told us that they would find the following conditions most helpful:

- Lots of choice of leisure activities I can do (**41%**)

Enabling access to leisure

Choice

41%



Inclusive practices

39%



Information

37%



Other findings:

What would help?

The importance of choice, inclusive practices, and information provision is also emphasised in national research about leisure activities.

In a survey about everyday access to restaurants, shops, and visitor attractions, **92%** of respondents said they would look for access information before visiting somewhere¹¹.

National research also includes suggestions and ideas of what inclusive practices and information provision could look like to enable more disabled people and people with mental health challenges to take part in leisure activities.

For example:

For sports venues and stadiums to offer accessible parking, accessible toilets, additional legroom, and easy access seating. As well as to provide up-to-date information, the ability to look around a stadium virtually or on a non-match day before visiting, and the option to bring a Personal Assistant¹².

For example:

For music venues to enable booking both by phone and online and to provide more detailed information, for example about the number of steps in a venue and the distance to accessible toilets¹³.

Recommendations

The recommendations which follow offer an approach that organisations and providers can take to establish what changes may be most impactful for the disabled people and people with mental health challenges they seek to work with. This approach recognises that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to ensuring greater choice and accessibility for disabled people and people with mental health challenges.

If you would like to discuss any of the recommendations related to this research, please contact Ismail Kholwadia on **01242 539935** or development@barnwoodtrust.org.

1

Proactively and directly engage with disabled people and people with mental health challenges to understand how to improve access to leisure activities. Co-production and co-design can also help ensure that information about these opportunities is fully accessible

Engaging with groups of individuals who experience barriers to accessing leisure activities and getting the support they need is vital to understanding how to address these issues. Working directly with people through co-production and co-design has the potential to generate solutions which encompass individuals' expertise about what would help.

For example:

Leisure providers may look to engage with those who currently access their activities to better understand who is already taking part and how inclusive any venues and activities are, as well as to identify any common challenges. Member or participant surveys may be one method to achieve this, for example placing QR codes on noticeboards.

Collaborating with local groups and community organisations may also build understanding in how to develop a wider reaching membership and foster inclusive practices.



Direct engagement can also help ensure information that is produced about leisure activities is accessible. Incorporating lived experience and new perspectives around what makes communication accessible can help ensure that information reaches everyone.

Undertaking regular engagement may be built into regular review processes and organisational policies to become standard practice. In carrying out this engagement, it is also important to consider creating an environment where people feel safe to share both the challenges they face and the support or conditions that could best meet their needs.

For example:

Engaging about access to leisure activities can help identify the accessibility information it may be useful to share about activities, facilities, or venues. Engagement activities may offer an insight into the methods that people find accessible to book tickets or activities.

It can also be an opportunity to find out about what would make people feel welcome when taking part in a new activity or visiting an unfamiliar space. This can be important to consider in ensuring any messages used in marketing materials convey that everyone is welcome.

2

Provide clear and accessible information about leisure opportunities in a range of formats and via multiple channels, along with the option for in person contact. Accessible information provision should consider all the useful information that might be provided to enable real choice

Clear and accessible information is essential in ensuring people can take part in opportunities that matter to them. This means providing timely information in a range of formats from Easy Read to audio, large print, and braille across a variety of media, print and digital.

For example:

Leisure providers may want to explore using a wider variety of methods to share information in a range of formats, including both visual and audio.

This may include photographs or pictures of the internal layout of a venue or of equipment and facilities. It may also include how to access the venue, numbers of steps, the distances between seating areas and other facilities, the location of accessible/changing places toilets, and information about access for carers, Personal Assistants, and support animals.



Clear information provision isn't simply about making written communications accessible. Having staff members available to answer questions and plan with someone around individual preferences and access requirements can make a huge difference to a person's experiences and be invaluable.

For example:

Online information and booking systems can be practical for some but aren't always accessible to everyone. Some people may prefer to speak to someone to explain their needs or ask questions before booking or visiting. Pre-release tickets that are only available online, for example, can be exclusive. The option of talking to someone by phone can help overcome these barriers. Engaging with individuals in this way can help create the conditions that make an opportunity accessible for an individual.

3

Take proactive steps to ensure real choice is available and accessible to disabled people and people with mental health challenges about leisure activities. Choice is more than just a greater range of options, it's about making sure that what's currently on offer is accessible to everyone

Proactive steps to increase choice and variety through better engagement might include looking at current practices and support and thinking about and discussing factors where choice could currently be hindered.

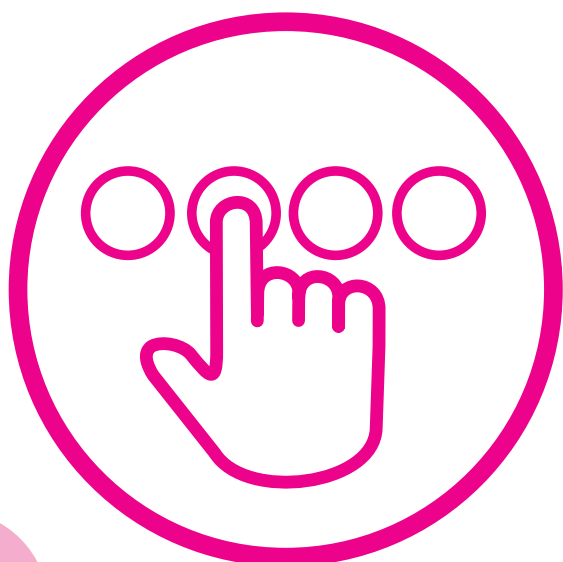
Current, available options might themselves be limiting choice. The conditions and context around an activity, such as the facilities within a premises, and accessibility of transport and parking, are just as important as the variety of activities on offer.

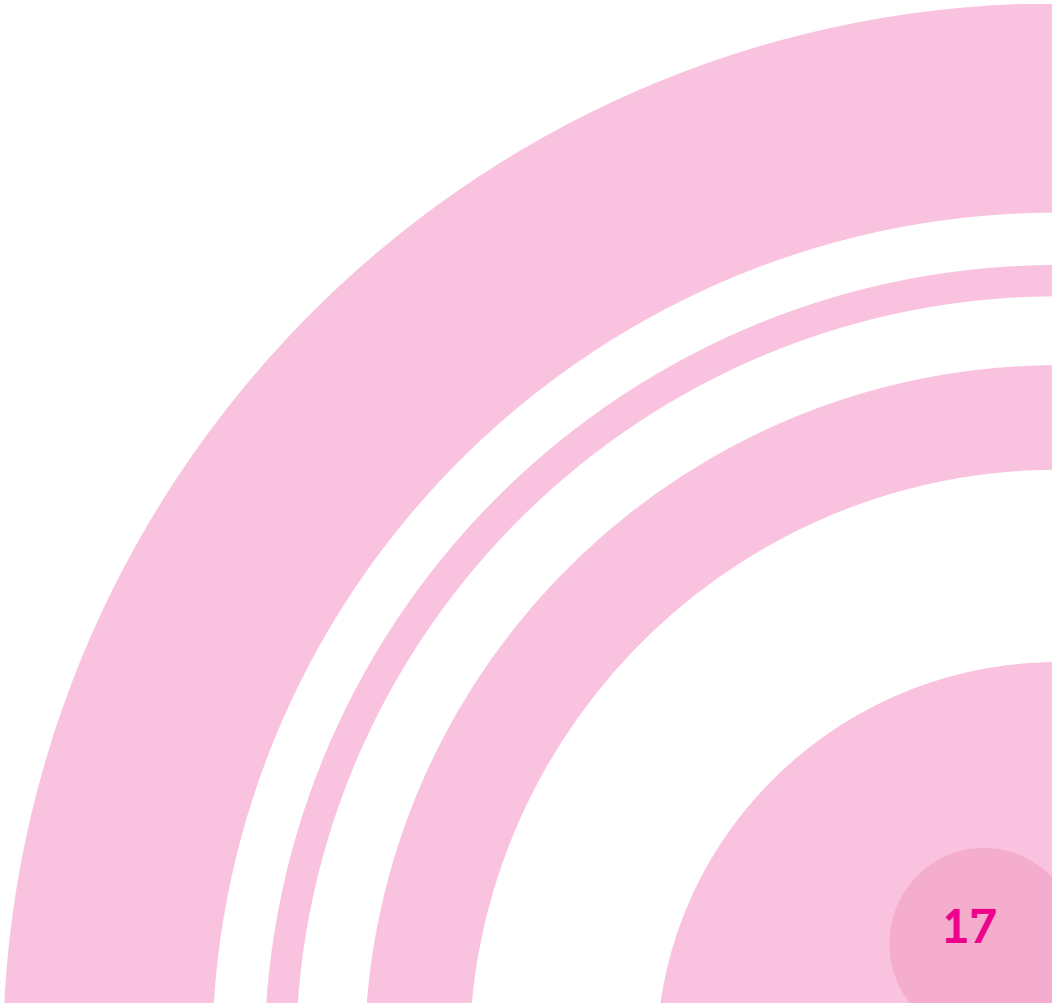
For example:

Leisure providers may build on the information gathered through engagement activities to review their inclusive practices and increase the choice available to disabled people. This may include investing in staff training about disability awareness, accessibility, and inclusion.

For example:

For leisure providers who are actively expanding their offer to disabled people, think about the whole experience. Consider how easy it is to reach a venue, the cost to travel there and to attend, and the customer experience when people arrive. There may be options for subsidised travel or membership options.







Sources

¹ Equalities and Human Rights Commission (2017) Being Disabled in Britain: A Journey Less Equal

² Mencap (2019) New Research from Mencap shows bullying of people with a learning disability leading to social isolation Press release available at: <https://www.mencap.org.uk/press-release/new-research-mencap-shows-bullying-people-learning-disability-leading-social>

³ Mencap (n.d.) Friendship – Research and Statistics Data available at: <https://www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/research-and-statistics/friendships-research-and-statistics>

⁴ Level Playing Field (2021) Annual Fan Survey 2021

⁵ Natural England (2021) The People and Nature Survey for England: Adult Data Y1Q1 (April – June 2020)

⁶ Activity Alliance (2022) Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2021-22

⁷ Euan's Guide (2022) Access Survey 2021

⁸ Level Playing Field (2021) see Source 4

⁹ Attitude is Everything (2018) State of Access Report 2018: Ticketing without barriers

¹⁰ Activity Alliance (2022) Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2021-22

¹¹ Euan's Guide (2022) see Source 7

¹² Level Playing Field (2021) see Source 4

¹³ Attitude is Everything (2018) see Source 9

Barnwood Trust would like to thank everyone who took part in this research and partner organisations who supported in developing and distributing the survey.

For more information about this research, including copies in accessible formats please contact Roz Warden on 01242 539935 or roz.warden@barnwoodtrust.org.

To get involved in conversations about taking forward the recommendations of this research please contact Ismail Kholwadia via development@barnwoodtrust.org or 01242 539935.

Barnwood Trust
Overton House, Overton Road, Cheltenham,
Gloucestershire, GL50 3BN

01242 539935 | www.barnwoodtrust.org

Registered charity number 1162855