

Disabled Citizens' Inquiry

Giving disabled people a voice in walking and wheeling policy and practice



In partnership with

Transport for All
Access, Rights, Advice

Generously funded by

 **Motability**

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About the Disabled Citizens' Inquiry

The Disabled Citizens' Inquiry was designed to give disabled people, using a pan impairment approach, a voice in making walking and wheeling more inclusive.

The solutions suggested within this report were developed by 43 disabled people through citizens' workshops, before being tested through an independent representative survey of 1,183 disabled people across the UK.

We believe that everyone should have the right to walk or wheel to the end of the street, around our neighbourhoods, and to our desired destinations – with ease, independence and confidence.

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Sustrans

We work for and with communities, helping them come to life by walking, wheeling and cycling to create healthier places and happier lives for everyone. www.sustrans.org.uk

Sustrans is a registered charity, no. 326550 (England and Wales) SC039263 (Scotland)

Transport for All

Transport for All is the only disabled-led group striving to increase access to transport and streetspace across the UK. We are a pan-impairment organisation, guided by the passionate belief that all disabled and older people have the right to travel with freedom and independence. www.transportforall.org.uk

Transport for All is a registered charity, no. 1063733

Motability

This project was funded by Motability, the national disability charity. The charity has oversight of the Motability Scheme, which enables a disabled person to use all or part of their higher rate mobility allowance to pay for the lease of a new car, scooter or powered wheelchair. The charity also provides grants directly to disabled

beneficiaries, other charities and organisations, and is investing steadily in its innovation activities. www.motability.org.uk.

Motability is a Registered Charity, no. 299745 (England and Wales) SC050642 (Scotland)

Language

Disabled people

We have engaged with a range of people who have a mental or physical impairment(s) or long-term health condition(s) during this research.

For brevity, we use the term ‘disabled people’ to include people living with a physical or mental health condition, which has a long-term, substantial effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. By long-term we mean 12 months or more. This is the definition used within the Equality Act 2010; however, it is not necessarily how all disabled people identify.

A [Glossary of impairment types](#) and health conditions can be found in the appendix.

Walking and wheeling

We recognise that some people who use wheeled mobility aids, for example a wheelchair or a mobility scooter, may not identify with the term walking and may prefer to use the term wheeling.

We use the terms walking and wheeling together to ensure we are as inclusive as possible. Wheeling covers modes that use pavement space at a similar speed to walking. It does not include the use of cycles, aside from as a mobility aid through pedestrianised environments when it is not physically possible to walk or push a cycle.



Photo: Jonathan Bewley
Disabled Citizens' Inquiry

Summary

The need to improve walking and wheeling for disabled people

A rights-based approach to transport

All national UK governments have adopted the social model of disability. This follows that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Places including streets and public spaces should therefore be designed to reduce or eliminate barriers faced by disabled people.

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people, including disabled people, from discrimination. It provides a framework of protection against direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in services and public functions, including transport.

There is a legal requirement for public bodies to ensure their services, including provision for walking and wheeling specifically, do not discriminate against disabled people.

However, the reality of our pavements, streets and neighbourhoods is often very different.

The Transport Accessibility Gap

Disabled people take 38% fewer trips across all modes of transport than non-disabled people. This pattern is similar for walking and wheeling. In England, for example, disabled people take 30% fewer walking trips than non-disabled people.

This is known as the 'transport accessibility gap'. One reason for this gap is that our streets are often inaccessible and unsafe for disabled people to navigate. These barriers can prevent disabled people accessing what they need, from essentials like healthcare and food, opportunities in work and education, and social benefits like community and green space. This means reduced independence and a higher risk of isolation for disabled people.

Making walking and wheeling accessible, safe and attractive for disabled people is a critical part of closing the transport accessibility gap. After all, almost every single journey starts and ends with walking or wheeling. Addressing the transport accessibility gap for disabled people in the UK would deliver benefits in the region of £72.4 billion per annum to the UK economy, including for local businesses.

The Disabled Citizens' Inquiry

With generous funding from Motability, Sustrans partnered with Transport for All to provide an opportunity to put the lived experience, views and ideas of disabled people at the fore of policy, investment and practice for walking and wheeling. A pan-impairment approach was used throughout all activities.

To do so we held four two-day citizens' workshops with disabled people across the UK. Disabled people shared their experiences, explored barriers on the street locally, and worked together to suggest and design solutions for change. These solutions were then tested and refined with practitioners from the transport sector and disability organisations across the UK. The workshop facilitators, and many of the practitioners and delivery team members were also disabled people.

Finally, the solutions that disabled people had developed were tested with the wider public through an independent representative survey of disabled people living across the UK.

We hope the recommendations made by disabled people within this report will help decision makers, local and national government transport and planning teams and the wider sector to make places and streets better for people.

Barriers faced by disabled people

Many disabled people face barriers when walking and wheeling

41% of disabled people in the UK told us they often experience problems reaching their destination due to the accessibility

of the environment around them on a typical walking or wheeling journey. This increased to 55% for those with mobility impairments or learning disabilities, 58% of deaf or hard of hearing people and 64% for blind or visually impaired people. The likelihood of experiencing problems reaching destinations because of poor accessibility is significantly greater for disabled women, People of colour and people likely to be on lower incomes or not in employment.

It is not only physical barriers that act as a deterrent from walking and wheeling. A third (33%) of disabled people say that they are afraid of negative comments from other people due to their physical or mental health condition when walking or wheeling. Again, we found the likelihood of being afraid of negative comments is also significantly greater for disabled women, and people likely to be on lower incomes or not in employment.

Not having a suitable mobility aid can also severely reduce or remove the ability to travel safely and independently. Despite many disabled people not requiring a mobility aid, we found 16% of UK disabled people are not able to get access to the right mobility aid to walk or wheel. Disabled People of colour are almost twice as likely (27%) to not be able to get access to the right mobility aid to walk or wheel in comparison to disabled White people (14%).

The cost-of-living crisis is making this situation worse

Disabled people are almost twice as likely to be unemployed as non-disabled people, and three times as likely to be economically inactive. Life costs £583 more on average a month if you are disabled. This means the cost-of-living crisis disproportionately affects disabled people.

We found 59% of disabled people said they have reduced the amount they travel because of the rising costs of living. Furthermore, over half of disabled people (52%) said the rising cost of living is affecting their ability to make essential journeys to places such as shops, healthcare services, education or work.

Disabled women (62%) and disabled people on lower incomes or not in employment (65%) are significantly more likely than disabled men and disabled people from other socio-economic groups to say they have reduced the amount they travel due to the rising costs of living. Once again, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis is exacerbated for already marginalized groups.

Disabled people want the government to do more

72% of UK disabled people say governments across the UK should do more to help people to walk or wheel more. Sustrans' Walking and Cycling Index in 2021 found that 59% of disabled people from 17 UK urban areas wanted more government spending on walking and wheeling.

Solutions developed by disabled people

43 disabled participants across four citizens' workshops developed nine solutions to make walking and wheeling more inclusive and accessible.

These solutions are presented below alongside practical recommendations. They were tested through a UK-wide survey of disabled people to ensure they are representative of disabled people's views. No significant differences were found in the responses of disabled people between the four UK nations.

Solution 1: Ensure disabled people inform walking and wheeling policy and practice

Participants in our citizens' workshops felt strongly that disabled people needed better representation in how decisions, funding and delivery happens. Representation and engagement should be at the core of every solution to ensure disabled people are understood and their needs are met.

Our survey of disabled people across the UK found that more is needed to be able to hold local and national government to account; dedicated disabled people's walking and wheeling panels would encourage 79% of disabled people to walk or wheel more.

Recommendations to enable disabled people to shape policy, investment and delivery

1. All governments and local authorities to have paid expert panels of disabled people
2. Fully engage with disabled people when planning places and designing walking and wheeling schemes
3. Commit to long-term plans to diversify the transport and planning sectors

Solution 2: Create long-term dedicated pavement funding to maintain and improve pavements

It was felt by participants that pavements and walking and wheeling more broadly are often ignored by government in comparison to other transport modes, especially in making pavements accessible and inclusive. Examples discussed in the workshops included the lack of effort to improve walking and wheeling when local authorities introduce low traffic neighbourhoods, road gritting in winter without gritting pavements and pothole funding without addressing cracked and uneven pavement surfaces.

While governments often place walking at top of the transport hierarchy in theory, our participants felt ring-fenced funding for pavements was vital to make this happen in practice. Disabled participants shared that they frequently feel unsafe when navigating inadequately designed and maintained pavements, and that local authorities do not reliably address safety issues when reported.

Our UK survey found creating a national pavement fund to maintain and improve pavements would be useful for 79% of disabled people to walk or wheel more.

Recommendations to maintain and improve pavements

1. Create a long-term dedicated pavement fund to ensure that pavements are better maintained and made accessible
2. Fund footway improvements when implementing low traffic neighbourhoods

3. Strengthen national guidance for inclusive pavement design
4. Improve and fully enforce standards for maintaining accessibility during roadworks

Solution 3: Stop pavement parking and manage pavement clutter

All disabled participants felt there was an urgent need to reduce and manage pavement clutter. Participants were especially vocal about pavement parking especially when it meant having to walk or wheel out into the road to get by, causing significant safety concerns. Clutter is increasing on our streets such as outdoor dining (especially since the pandemic) and electric vehicle chargers on pavements. This needs better management to ensure accessibility. Our participants spoke of the fear and reality of tripping or falling when attempting to navigate obstacles and parked vehicles on pavements and many were reluctant to leave their homes on bin day.

Our survey of disabled people across the UK found that 73% of people would find prohibiting vehicles parking on pavements useful for them to walk or wheel more.

Recommendations to manage pavement clutter to safeguard pavement accessibility

1. Prohibit pavement parking
2. Develop and implement guidance to manage pavement clutter to ensure accessibility

Solution 4: Improve walking and wheeling crossing points across roads and cycle paths

In many areas crossing the road, even in quieter residential areas, can be challenging resulting in disabled people being cut off. Disabled participants told us that crossings needed to be improved and increased, including more dropped kerbs on quieter streets and zebra or signalised crossings in busy areas. Safety concerns when crossing the road are widespread,

with many participants sharing that they often walk or wheel out of their way to find a safe crossing point. Increasing cycle infrastructure is also leading to greater conflict and confusion as scheme designs are often varied.

Our UK survey of disabled people found 80% would find crossing points improved by dropping kerbs, adding tactile paving and more official crossing infrastructure useful for them to walk or wheel more.

Recommendations to improve crossing points

1. Ensure all existing and new crossing points are accessible, inclusive and safe
2. Conduct national trials of zebra markings on side roads that give people walking and wheeling priority over traffic
3. Improve crossing points between walking and wheeling routes and cycle paths

Solution 5: Make wayfinding and journey planning tools work for disabled people

Disabled people require a variety of different forms of wayfinding from visual signage to tactile and audio cues alongside the rise of digital technology. Disabled participants told us that wayfinding varies greatly in practice which can be confusing and challenging to navigate. Many also said that digital journey planning needs to better account for different impairment needs.

Our UK survey found 77% of disabled people would find an app or website where disabled people can share information, experiences and rate routes or destinations useful for them to walk or wheel more.

Recommendations to improve wayfinding and journey planning

1. Develop standardised guidance and practice for accessible wayfinding provision
2. Create fully accessible digital journey planning and wayfinding tools which account for different impairments and health conditions

Solution 6: Ensure disabled people have a choice to live within walking or wheeling distance of services and amenities

The 20-minute neighbourhood concept has recently gained significant support amongst cities wanting to reduce car use and make neighbourhoods more walkable and liveable. Disabled people have been largely left out of this conversation. Disabled participants told us they do not have the same choices. They may walk or wheel more slowly or not be able to walk or wheel as far as non-disabled people. Furthermore, many walking or wheeling routes and destinations are inaccessible making journey times longer. This needs to be better considered by transport and urban planners.

Our UK survey found 88% of disabled people say that a planning system which ensures more essential services are provided within walking or wheeling distance of where people live would be useful for them to walk or wheel more.

Recommendations to improve planning

- 1.** Amend national planning guidance to ensure new developments are built in the right locations and with high enough housing density to support services and amenities within walking and wheeling distance
- 2.** Develop supplementary planning guidance to measure walking and wheeling proximity that fully considers accessibility and inclusion
- 3.** Ensure local plans and decisions facilitate walkable and wheelable neighbourhoods

Solution 7: Improve access to mobility aids

Disabled participants told us that having the right mobility aid is vital to get around independently, especially when walking or wheeling. Many participants had personal stories or friends who didn't understand how to get a mobility aid, had not been eligible to access one that fully met their needs, or had to wait a long time to get the right mobility aid.

Our survey found that 86% of disabled people across the UK would find it useful for them to walk or wheel more if we ensured everyone who requires a mobility aid is given financial support and advice to get access to one that meets their needs.

Recommendations for access to mobility aids

1. Review and address barriers to disabled people accessing mobility aids and other support, ensuring people can access the right mobility aid, when they need it
2. Ensure cycles are legally recognised as mobility aids and roll out schemes to support access to cycles, including non-standard cycles

Solution 8: Improve off-road routes

Many off-road routes such as canal towpaths, routes through green spaces and the National Cycle Network should be fully accessible for disabled people. Disabled people told us the reality was very different. Numerous barriers exist that can stop disabled people from walking or wheeling, reducing access to green space and the countryside.

Our UK survey found removing physical barriers, such as steps and narrow gates from off-road walking and wheeling routes would be useful for 82% of disabled people to walk or wheel more. As custodians of the National Cycle Network, Sustrans' Paths for Everyone strategy is seeking to do just this, removing barriers, improving safety and wayfinding to make the existing network more accessible and inclusive. We need to go further and faster with all off-road routes.

Recommendations for making off-road routes accessible and inclusive

1. Develop guidance and invest in national plans for making off-road routes accessible and inclusive
2. Develop local area-wide plans for making off-road routes accessible and inclusive

Solution 9: Improve the integration of walking and wheeling with public transport

Most disabled people see walking and wheeling as an essential part, before and after, of travelling by bus, train, or other forms of public transport. Disabled participants told us if public transport services were improved and made more accessible this would support more walking and wheeling to, from and at public transport hubs.

The Walking and Cycling Index in 2021 found 70% of disabled people believe the government should invest more in public transport.

Recommendations for improving integration with public transport

- 1.** Improve and adequately resource public transport provision
- 2.** Ensure fully accessible walking and wheeling access to and on public transport, including stations, and interchanges where disabled people need to connect between modes

Next steps

This guidance provides an opportunity for decision makers and the transport and planning sectors to hear the views of disabled people and put disabled people at the centre of policy, investment, and delivery.

We believe walking and wheeling should be the most equitable mode of travel across the UK. Everyone should have the freedom to walk or wheel independently and enjoy being out and about in their neighbourhood, feeling safe and comfortable.

It is imperative that local and national governments, the third sector and businesses work together to make walking and wheeling inclusive and unlock the huge benefits for society, the economy and the environment.

We call for governments across the UK and other organisations working to improve places and transport to increase the rates of walking and wheeling. We must ensure that what is delivered has inclusion and equity at its heart.



Introduction

Disabled people, walking and wheeling



“The world is not designed for people on wheels, if you can get anywhere, it’s a bonus. When a pavement is dodgy, I’m looking down – when it’s flat, I’m looking around.”

Manchester workshop participant

The transport accessibility gap

Disabled people face greater barriers to travel than non-disabled people. This is known as the ‘transport accessibility gap’. As a result, disabled people take 38% fewer trips than non-disabled people across all modes of transport.¹

This pattern is also reflected in walking and wheeling. In 2021, disabled people in England took 30% fewer walking trips than non-disabled people.² A key reason for this gap is our streets are often inaccessible and unsafe for disabled people to navigate.

This can prevent disabled people accessing what they need, from essentials like healthcare and food, opportunities in work and education, and social benefits like community and green space. In addition, disabled people often face greater risk of safety issues when using inadequate pavements.

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- 1 Motability, 2022. ‘The Transport Accessibility Gap’
www.motability.org.uk/media/iwaidhxxk/motability_transport-accessibility-gap-report_march-2022_final.pdf
 - 2 National Travel Survey, ‘Walking Factsheet, England: 2021’
assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1100998/walking-factsheet-2021.pdf

This goes against the Equality Act 2010³ and Public Sector Equality Duty⁴ which protects disabled people from discrimination. The UK follows the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which includes a commitment to eliminate disability discrimination and enable disabled people to live independently.⁵ We need to take a rights-based approach to transport and ensure that provision for walking and wheeling does not discriminate against disabled people.

The cost-of-living crisis is making the transport accessibility gap worse. Evidence from June 2022 shows that 68% of UK households have seen increases in their transport costs⁶, and this will only get worse as energy, transport and food bills continue to rise. Disabled people are more likely to be unemployed or in lower paid jobs than non-disabled people, leaving them poorer.⁷ While disabled people are less likely to drive, many rely on vehicles as mobility aids. As the cost of living including transport continues to increase disabled people are often more at risk.

Making walking and wheeling accessible, safe and attractive for disabled people is a critical part of closing the transport accessibility gap. After all, every single journey starts and ends with walking or wheeling. Even if a person's main mode of transport for a journey is a bus, they must still get to the bus stop.

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- 3 UK Gov, 2015. Equality Act 2010: guidance.
www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance
 - 4 UK Gov, 2012. Public sector equality duty.
www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-equality-duty
 - 5 Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2020. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-human-rights-work/monitoring-and-promoting-un-treaties/un-convention-rights-persons-disabilities
 - 6 Financial Fairness Trust, 'Under pressure: The financial wellbeing of UK households in June 2022'
www.financialfairness.org.uk/docs?editionId=e2e69bf8-2b51-4ee1-bf44-a53df25cc775
 - 7 TUC, 2022. Jobs and pay monitor - disabled workers.
www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/jobs-and-pay-monitor-disabled-workers

And that first and last part of the journey, along with any other connections throughout the day, should be safe and comfortable.

Aims of national governments for walking and wheeling across the UK

The importance of increasing walking and wheeling is increasingly reflected in the ambitions of national governments across the UK:

- In England, the second *Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy* sets out the aim to increase the percentage of short journeys in towns and cities that are walked or cycled to 50% in 2030 and to 55% in 2035.⁸
- In Scotland, the *National Walking Strategy* aims to make walking or cycling the most popular choice for shorter everyday journeys, as part of Transport Scotland's Long-term Vision for Active Travel in Scotland 2030.⁹
- In Wales, the new *Welsh Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd*, sets out a vision of an accessible, sustainable and efficient transport system.¹⁰ Where Wales needs new transport infrastructure, they will prioritise sustainable transport including interventions that support walking and cycling.
- In Northern Ireland the *Climate Change Act*¹¹ was passed in 2022 which makes it a legal requirement to spend 10% of the transport budget on walking, wheeling and cycling. This should raise ambition to improve infrastructure and enable more people to travel actively.

8 Department for Transport, 2022. The second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-second-cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy/the-second-cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy-cwis2

9 Scottish Government, 2019 The National Walking Strategy, revised.

www.transport.gov.scot/media/47993/national-walking-strategy.pdf

10 Welsh Government, 2021. Llwybr Newydd: the Wales transport strategy 2021.

gov.wales/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021

11 Northern Ireland Assembly, 2022. Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/31/contents/enacted

It is crucial that we increase funding and action on walking and wheeling to meet these ambitions. Alongside increasing the number of trips, we also need to improve the experience of walking and wheeling to ensure it is inclusive.

It's positive to see recent steps towards addressing transport accessibility across the UK. For example, the Inclusive Mobility guidance¹² from the Department for Transport sets out best practice for pedestrian infrastructure in England and the Inclusion Scotland report¹³ addresses transport accessibility issues in light of the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People. We must build on this and work together towards inclusive walking and wheeling for everyone.



“Any amount of space that is taken up by a car parked on a pavement seems to be an issue. For blind and visually impaired people, it’s not just the space being taken up, it’s not knowing it’s going to be there and then coming into an obstruction which is very disorientating and dangerous.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Walking and wheeling challenges for disabled people

Existing barriers to walking and wheeling stop many disabled people from walking and wheeling or make journeys stressful and uncomfortable.

All too often, disabled people face obstacles on our streets and paths. These include but are not limited to: cars parked on pavements, bins and recycling boxes on the footway, poorly maintained pavements, steep or slippery surfaces, a lack of

12 Department for Transport, 2021. Inclusive Mobility. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1044542/inclusive-mobility-a-guide-to-best-practice-on-access-to-pedestrian-and-transport-infrastructure.pdf

13 Inclusion Scotland, 2022. Scottish Civil Society Shadow Report. inclusionScotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2022-CRPD-Shadow-Report.pdf

dropped curbs or controlled crossings, overgrown greenery, unclear signage, and limited places to rest or use a toilet. As well as preventing access, such issues can also pose significant safety concerns. Of course, these barriers can have a negative impact on all members of society, which is why it's so important to recognise that inclusive infrastructure benefits everyone.

These barriers may have a direct impact on how often disabled people walk and wheel in their neighbourhoods. The 2021 Walking and Cycling Index showed that 45% of disabled people walk or wheel at least five days a week, in comparison to 52% of non-disabled people.



“I have an extreme off-road mobility scooter which has allowed me to go out with my dog, not just on the pavement, but through rough terrain, mud and tall grass together. But the problem is the batteries are too expensive now, so I can't use it. It would be nice if there was some sort of scheme from the government that could subsidise these batteries.”

Norwich workshop participant

Impact on disabled people

Barriers to walking and wheeling have a direct impact on disabled people's lives. They can cut off access to essential services, restrict social opportunities, create safety issues and reduce overall quality of life. This can compound poor health outcomes and socioeconomic deprivation, undermining wider policy goals. Life costs £583 more on average a month if you are disabled¹⁴. This means the cost-of-living crisis disproportionately affects disabled people.¹⁵

14 Scope, 2019. Disability Price Tag.
www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/extra-costs/disability-price-tag

15 Leonard Cheshire, 2022. Nowhere Left to Cut.
leonardcheshire.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Leonard-Cheshire-Cost-of-living%20briefing.pdf

The Walking and Cycling Index found in 2021 that many disabled people feel excluded from their local areas. 56% of disabled people said that they feel welcome and comfortable walking, wheeling or spending time on the streets of their neighbourhood. This contrasts with 69% of non-disabled people.

Inaccessible environments can also prevent disabled people from taking up employment, educational and volunteering opportunities. The disability employment gap in the UK was 28.4% in Q2 2021, with signs of an overall but slow improvement since 2013.¹⁶ Disabled people are almost twice as likely to be unemployed as non-disabled people, and three times as likely to be economically inactive.¹⁷ A lack of inclusive travel options is one of the factors that create a disability employment gap. Disabled people may not be able to reach employment or face significant barriers to making journeys that can reduce their confidence.

With disabled people making up 21% of working-age adults¹⁸, millions of people are excluded from using their valuable skills and expertise through employment, resulting in an under-utilised source of value to the economy.

Disabled people also report lower levels of community engagement. Only 35% of disabled respondents feel able to participate in making their neighbourhood a better place, compared to 45% of non-disabled respondents (Walking and Cycling Index 2021). This leaves many disabled people feeling disempowered and unable to improve their local areas. It also reflects that engagement approaches are too often not inclusive or democratic in nature.

16 Department for Work and Pensions, 'The employment of disabled people 2021':
www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-employment-of-disabled-people-2021/the-employment-of-disabled-people-2021

17 Scope, 2022. Disability facts and figures.
www.scope.org.uk/media/disability-facts-figures

18 Family Resources Survey 2020/21.
www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2020-to-2021



Alisha, Greater Manchester



“My autism, ADHD, anxiety and depression, mean I really struggle in busy and dense city spaces. It’s intense for me to be surrounded by lots of people. It feels like they’re all walking directly towards me, and that everything is closing in around me. At the same time, I’m very sensitive to noise and lights.

In Manchester, the backstreets are difficult to navigate because there’s not much signage. There also aren’t always designated crossing spots, so I end up making extended journeys, looking for safe places to cross. The pavements are narrow and bumpy, and this makes me feel like I should get in the road to escape people, whilst at the same time making sure I don’t fall over. It’s a challenge to make myself go out. It has to be something really compelling to make me go through an area which is going to panic me.

There’s certainly a perception that autism is a childhood issue. Adults are often entirely ignored unfortunately, which means we’re not involved in city planning. Attitudes are improving, and I think empathetic people would help me if I was panicking. But I shouldn’t have to be panicking in the first place.”

The benefits for society and the economy of inclusive and accessible walking and wheeling

When walking and wheeling doesn’t work or is challenging for disabled people it reduces opportunities to contribute to society, whether that’s employment, being involved in the community, visiting local high streets or participating in leisure activities.

When disabled people are stopped from reaching their destinations or find walking and wheeling difficult it is likely to reduce their confidence and the number of journeys they take. This can lead to isolation and adverse health and wellbeing impacts.

Representing the views of disabled people is not only the right thing to do but is vital for the economy, environment, public health and society.

The economy

Addressing the transport accessibility gap for disabled people in the UK would deliver benefits in the region of £72.4 billion per annum to the UK economy, including for local businesses.¹⁹

Accessible and clutter-free streets create more attractive spaces. This is positive for residents and visitors alike, helping to boost businesses and local economy. Accessible walking and wheeling also helps people to reduce car use and save money. It is one way to alleviate the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis.

The benefits to local business and tourism of people using off-road routes are significant. Off-road routes also provide benefits within towns and cities for everyday journeys including to work. Local businesses benefitted by an estimated £1.7 billion in 2019 from people walking, wheeling, and cycling on the National Cycle Network for leisure and tourism.²⁰

The environment

There are significant benefits of greater walking and wheeling and reduced car use for the environment, including the UK's net zero targets, improving air quality and reducing noise pollution. Modelling suggests we also need to reduce private vehicle use between 20 and 60% by 2030 if we are to meet governmental climate change targets.²¹ The National Travel Survey found in 2021 that 14% of journeys under a mile were

19 Motability, 2022. Transport Accessibility Gap.
www.motability.org.uk/media/iwaidhvk/motability_transport-accessibility-gap-report_march-2022_final.pdf

20 Sustrans, 2022. Paths for everyone: 3 Years On.
www.sustrans.org.uk/media/9991/sustrans-p4e-three-years-on-eng-digital.pdf

21 Transport for Quality of Life, 2018. More than electric cars.
www.transportforqualityoflife.com/u/files/1%20More%20than%20electric%20cars%20briefing.pdf

by car or van²² demonstrating significant potential for greater walking and wheeling.

Reducing pressure on the NHS

Walking and wheeling can support physical activity and mental wellbeing. Both are proven to reduce the chances of premature death whilst helping people avoid or mitigate long-term health conditions. This can reduce pressure on the NHS and social care, whilst improving people's healthy life years. The Walking and Cycling Index found walking and wheeling prevents 20,377 serious long-term health conditions each year, saving the NHS in Index cities £134.5 million per year.²³

Society

Making neighbourhoods more walkable and wheelable benefits everyone by increasing community engagement to help create more vibrant democratic neighbourhoods and society.

Almost every single journey has a walking or wheeling stage, including most car and public transport trips. Making walking and wheeling accessible, inclusive, and desirable will improve how everyone gets around.

22 DfT, 2022. National Travel Survey 2021 – NTS0308.

www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts03-modal-comparisons

23 Sustrans, 2022. Walking and Cycling Index.

www.sustrans.org.uk/the-walking-and-cycling-index



Elaine, Edinburgh



“I got my Frame Runner, a custom-built tricycle without pedals, seven years ago and it has changed my life.

I was born with cerebral palsy and have issues with my mobility so Frame Running helps to get me out of the house. It strengthens my legs and allows me to meet new people.

As my hands are strapped into the Frame Runner, I need someone to run alongside me and be my brakes. That’s why I reached out to the running club, Edinburgh Frontrunners, and was lucky to meet my friend Al. Al and I go running together every Wednesday evening and we’ve been running together for six years now. All of this has massively improved my mental health and given me more independence.

However, getting around Edinburgh on my Frame Runner can be difficult. There are a lot of improvements that the council can do to make Edinburgh more accessible for everyone.

Having wider pavements; better placed dropped kerbs; reducing the space taken up by street furniture; and making pedestrian crossing points more accessible, would all make a huge difference.”

Aims and approach

Aims

The Disabled Citizens’ Inquiry is founded on user-centred research into the experiences of disabled people in public spaces across the UK, with a focus on walking and wheeling.

This project, in partnership with Transport for All and funded by Motability, aims to:

- Understand the context, barriers and needs of disabled people in relation to walking and wheeling.

- Bring together the lived experience of disabled people and the professional expertise of transport and disability stakeholders to develop solutions for inclusive walking and wheeling.
- Produce practical guidance to help better design walking and wheeling for disabled people.

Approach

Research questions

The following questions guided the research:

1. How do disabled people experience the urban streetscape?
2. What are the key barriers that prevent disabled people from using urban spaces to access key services and opportunities?
3. What, if any, differences are there in the travel experiences of people with different impairments and their perception of barriers?
4. How could solutions be developed to make spaces more accessible and inclusive for disabled people across different impairments and health conditions?

Research activities

We designed the research with quantitative and qualitative approaches to get an in-depth understanding of disabled people's experiences of walking and wheeling.

1. A review of existing evidence and insight, including data from the Sustrans' Walking and Cycling Index.
2. Four disabled citizens' workshops in Manchester, Swansea, Norwich and online using a deliberative approach. Participants were recruited from the local area including more rural locations beyond each city boundary. Deliberative methods involve ordinary members of the public in a

structured process to learn about, discuss, and develop collective solutions to complex social and policy problems.²⁴

3. An independent, representative survey of almost 1,200 disabled people across the UK.
4. A stakeholder workshop with representatives from the transport sector and disability organisations.

A detailed Methodology can be found in the appendix.

²⁴ Degeling, 2019. Deliberative Methods.
methods.sagepub.com/foundations/deliberative-methods



Photo: Jonathan Bewley
Disabled Citizens' Inquiry

Results



Dennis, Greater Manchester



“Although access to buses, trams and trains in Manchester has improved, nobody’s thought about how you get to them from your house.

The pavements where I live are old and have potholes, tree roots, sunken patches, bumps, and dropped curbs which are often in the wrong places. We also need more traffic lights and designated places to cross, like there are on main roads and in the city centre. Travel to the bus stop was impossible in my old manual wheelchair, I used to get a taxi instead. It’s nice to be able to get to public transport now, as my electric-powered wheelchair can just about climb over these rubbish pavements.

Access starts improving along the main road near me, but pavement parking is still a massive issue. In some cases, they take up the majority of the pavement. Some drivers don’t understand they’re not entitled to park there, others don’t care. Having to speak to someone about this is humiliating. It individualises a problem which is not about any one individual.

We need honesty and dialogue to understand that it’s not just about the accessibility of buildings and buses, it’s about how we get to them in the first place.”

Barriers to walking and wheeling

Our research found that for typical walking or wheeling journeys, 41% of disabled people often experience problems reaching their destination due to accessibility, for example pavement clutter or inaccessible crossings.

Many disabled people face discrimination and stigma when navigating public spaces, further reducing their levels of comfort and confidence to walk or wheel. A third (33%) of UK disabled people say that they are afraid of negative comments from other people when walking or wheeling due to their physical or mental health condition.

In addition to physical and social barriers, the lack of a suitable mobility aid can severely reduce or remove the ability to travel safely and independently. Our research found that 16% of UK disabled people are not able to get access to the right mobility aid to walk or wheel, such as wheelchairs, mobility scooters, crutches or walking sticks, assistance dogs, and carers or personal assistants.

Impairment type

The percentage of disabled people often experiencing problems reaching their destination due to accessibility increases to 64% of blind or visually impaired people, 58% of Deaf or hard of hearing people, followed by 55% of those with mobility impairments and 55% with learning disabilities.

Fears of negative comments from other people when walking or wheeling due to their physical or mental health condition appear to be felt more greatly by those who have less-visible impairments or conditions: people with mental health conditions (47%), people who are neurodivergent (46%) and people with learning disabilities (44%).

Gender

Significantly more disabled women (45%) than disabled men (35%) experience problems reaching their destination due to accessibility. Due to the gendered division of caring responsibilities, women are more likely than men to travel with a pram, children or older people and this may create additional or exacerbate existing accessibility barriers.²⁵

Similarly, significantly more disabled women (37%) than disabled men (28%) are afraid of negative comments from other people due to a physical or mental health condition. Evidence shows disabled women are more likely to experience street harassment, which can compound fear of negative comments.²⁶

Socio-economic groups

50% of disabled people from socio-economic groups D and E (likely to be on low incomes) often experience problems reaching their destination due to accessibility.²⁷ This is significantly higher than other socio-economic groups. Due to limited finances, people from the poorest households are close to seven times more likely to lack access to a car as the richest²⁸ and may be more dependent on walking or wheeling.

25 Women's Budget Group, 2021. Towards Gender-Inclusive and Sustainable Transport Systems. wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Gender-inclusive-transport-systems-V3.pdf

26 Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2009. Disabled people's experiences of targeted violence and hostility. www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research_report_21_disabled_people_s_experiences_of_targeted_violence_and_hostility.pdf

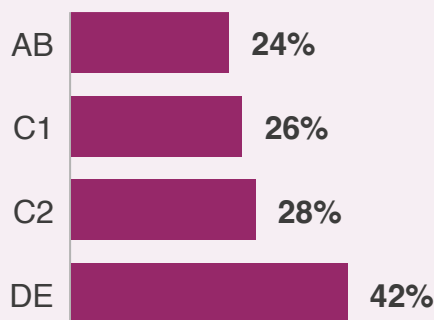
27 Socio-economic group is a classification based on occupation maintained by the Market Research Society. Groups A and B are professional and managerial. Groups D and E are semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment.

28 The health foundation, 2021. Trends in households without access to a car. www.health.org.uk/evidence-hub/transport/transport-trends/trends-in-households-without-access-to-a-car

Similarly, significantly more disabled people from socio-economic groups D and E (42%) are afraid of negative comments from other people due to their physical or mental health condition in comparison to all other socio-economic groups.

Figure 1: The percentage of disabled people from different socio-economic groups who face barriers when walking or wheeling.

When I walk or wheel I am afraid of negative comments from other people due to my physical or mental health condition



Ethnicity

Significantly more disabled People of colour (53%) often experience problems reaching their destination due to accessibility, than disabled White people (40%).

More disabled People of colour (40%) are afraid of negative comments from other people due to their physical or mental health condition than disabled White people (32%). This fear may be compounded by the threat of racialised hate crime faced by People of colour in public places.

27% of disabled People of colour are not able to get access to the right mobility aid to walk or wheel in comparison to only 14% of disabled White people. This is a significant difference.

The impact of the cost-of-living crisis

We found 59% of UK disabled people said they have reduced the amount they travel because of the rising costs of living. Furthermore 52% of disabled people said the rising cost of living is affecting their ability to make essential journeys, to places such as shops, healthcare services, and places of education or work.

Impairment type

Most disabled people across all impairment types said they had reduced the amount they travel because of the rising costs of living. People with learning disabilities appear to be most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. 75% say they have reduced the amount they travel due to the rising cost of living and 69% feel the rising cost of living is affecting their ability to make essential journeys.

Gender

Disabled women are significantly more likely to say they have reduced the amount they travel due to the rising cost of living (62%) in comparison to 55% of disabled men.

54% of disabled women say that the rising cost of living is affecting their ability to make essential journeys in comparison to 49% of disabled men.

Evidence shows that disabled women are significantly less likely to be employed and more likely to be economically inactive than disabled men and non-disabled people.²⁹

29 Eun Jung Kim, Tina Skinner & Susan L. Parish (2020) A study on intersectional discrimination in employment against disabled women in the UK. www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09687599.2019.1702506

Those who are in work are doubly disadvantaged by the gender pay gap and the disability pay gap.^{30,31} This means disabled women are more likely to be in precarious financial situations and negatively impacted by increasing costs.

Figure 2: The percentage of disabled men and women who say the cost-of-living crisis is making mobility and travel more challenging.

The rising cost of living is affecting my ability to make essential journeys



I have reduced the amount I travel due to the rising costs of living



30 ONS, Gender pay gap in the UK: 2022.
www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2022

31 ONS, Disability pay gaps in the UK: 2021.
www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/disabilitypaygapsintheuk/2021

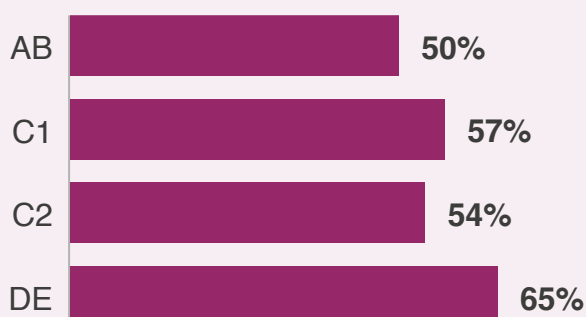
Socio-economic groups

65% of disabled people from socio-economic groups D and E³² (likely to be on low incomes) say they have reduced the amount they travel due to the rising cost of living. This is significantly higher than all other socio-economic groups.

60% of disabled people from socio-economic groups D and E (likely to be on low incomes) say that the rising cost of living is affecting their ability to make essential journeys. This is significantly higher than socio-economic groups A and B, and C1.

Figure 3: The percentage of disabled people from different socio-economic groups who say the cost-of-living crisis is making mobility and travel more challenging.

I have reduced the amount I travel due to the rising costs of living



³² Ipsos, 2009. Social Grade – A classification tool.

www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/publication/6800-03/MediaCT_thoughtpiece_Social_Grade_July09_V3_WEB.pdf

Ethnicity

Disabled People of colour are significantly more likely to say that the rising cost of living is affecting their ability to make essential journeys (62%), in comparison to 51% of disabled White people.

67% of disabled People of colour say they have reduced the amount they travel due to the rising cost of living in comparison to 59% of disabled White people.

Figure 4: The percentage of disabled People of colour and White people who say the cost-of-living crisis is making mobility and travel more challenging.

The rising cost of living is affecting my ability to make essential journeys



I have reduced the amount I travel due to the rising cost of living



Disabled people want the government to do more to help people to walk or wheel

72% of UK disabled people say the government should do more to help people to walk or wheel more often. Similarly, the Walking and Cycling Index in 2021 found that 59% of disabled people wanted more government spending on walking and wheeling.



Rachael, Norwich



“I prefer to walk my local journeys and be self-reliant. Plus, I like to walk with my lovely guide dog Ajay, it’s a nice thing to do.

Cars parked on pavements, overgrown verges, pitted pavements, and lack of dropped curbs, tactile paving and crossings are all big problems. I can think of a particular crossing where the two dropped curbs don’t line up with each other. If you set off from one and walk in a straight line, you end up walking down a main road.

I find shared use spaces difficult, as people coming from behind who are riding cycles and e-scooters, can’t always see the guide dog and pull in too close. This frightens the dog, and if a guide dog loses their confidence, they can’t keep you safe.

A lot of the time it’s assumed that if somewhere is scary or dangerous, you’ll get someone sighted to go with you. I’m a grown adult, not five years old, and I might not have access to a person and frankly why should I? Inclusivity and safety should be baked in from the get-go. How can it be expensive to make things safe for people? I think it’s often more expensive not to.”



Photo: Chris Foster
Disabled Citizens' Inquiry

Solutions

Nine solutions, developed by and tested with disabled people, to make walking and wheeling more inclusive and accessible are presented below. Each solution includes practical recommendations for national governments, local authorities, and other organisations.

Solution 1: Ensure disabled people inform walking and wheeling policy and practice

79% of disabled people would find a panel of disabled people to hold local and national government to account about walking and wheeling useful for them to walk or wheel more

Recommendations

- 1.** All governments and local authorities to have paid expert panels of disabled people to inform walking and wheeling policy decisions, investment priorities and scheme design
- 2.** Fully engage with disabled people when planning places and designing walking and wheeling schemes
- 3.** Commit to long-term plans to diversify the transport and planning sectors.

Current situation and how this impacts disabled people

The transport sector and local and national governments are not representative of disabled people. Disabled people's voices are frequently unheard in consultation and planning processes, resulting in decisions that do not account for disabled people's experiences.

Sustrans' Walking and Cycling Index (2021) found that only 35% of disabled people feel able to participate in making their neighbourhood a better place to live in comparison to 45% of non-disabled people.³³

33 www.sustrans.org.uk/the-walking-and-cycling-index



“We are unable to participate in making our neighbourhoods.”

Norwich workshop participant

Specific barriers

Government (national and local) do not always do enough to take disabled voices into account when planning walking and wheeling. Consultation processes are not always representative and may be inaccessible for some people, for example only available online.

Even when engagement happens, it is often too late in the process to influence plans. Disabled participants told us that even when they were able to highlight issues related to accessibility or safety, this didn't reliably lead to change. This can often result in feelings of frustration and disillusionment, where disabled people feel disempowered to speak out.



Mikla, Norwich



“I joined the Norwich workshop to find out how we can all work together to improve access, not only for disabled people, but for everybody. I learned about how things that impact one person, won’t impact another. Like tactile paving, for some people it’s needed and for others it’s uncomfortable.

I’d like pavements to be improved and for dropped curbs to be clearer. Some are low, but not completely dropped.

Some signage and bus timetables are too high. The bottom of them can be over my head height. If you’re in a chair, there’s no way you can read them.

Moving street furniture out of the way or back a bit, is an inexpensive improvement. Sometimes it’s the simple solutions that make the most difference.

I can’t see depth, so some surfaces and steps are unexpected. I can’t predict or prepare for when the terrain is about to change and have to go really carefully to make sure I don’t go over the edge of things.

I think at least a quarter of people on transport committees should have some sort of disability. And not just a physical or visual disability, but invisible disabilities should be represented too, like learning disabilities.”

What do disabled people want?

Our independent survey of disabled people across the UK found 79% of disabled people would find a paid representative panel of disabled people which meets to review policy and hold local and national governments to account about walking and wheeling useful to walk or wheel more.

Disabled women were significantly more likely to say a disabled people’s panel would be useful to walk or wheel more (83%) than disabled men (74%).



“What’s worked well in the [accessibility] forum is that we have representatives from different pan-disability organisations. At our initial meeting, we spent quite a lot of time understanding the barriers for each group of disabled people represented. Not saying that there still aren’t challenges or conflict, but we got to a level of agreement.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Recommendation 1: All governments and local authorities to have paid expert panels of disabled people to inform walking and wheeling policy decisions, investment priorities and scheme design



“Everyone has a voice, and all voices are equal.”

Manchester workshop participant

Many places already have panels in place. The Scottish Access Panels Network³⁴ are groups of disabled volunteers who work together to improve physical access and wider social inclusion in their local communities alongside local government. The Network is managed by Disability Equality Scotland. Many places, including some national governments, do not have panels that focus on walking and wheeling policy, and many do not pay disabled people for their time.

In Northern Ireland, the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including carers and key transport professionals. Its role is to advise Government on issues that affect mobility. IMTAC has recommended the establishment of forums of Deaf people, disabled people, older people and carers

34 Disability Equality Scotland, 2022. Access Panels. disabilityequality.scot/access-panels

by government departments and local councils to actively assist in the shaping of policies and services.³⁵



“Having lived experience from people who are likely to be affected is invaluable.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Panels should:

- Ensure a pan-impairment approach is taken that reflects all voices, equally.
- Be diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, geographic location, and age.
- Report directly to a decision maker responsible for transport policy, planning and delivery.
- Be a required element of the approvals process for infrastructure design. For example, through a central government requirement or as part of the terms and conditions of grant funding allocated to delivery agencies. Resources should be allocated to enable this to occur locally.
- Have a clear governance structure outlining the role of the panel and how it is used to develop and refine policy.
- Develop connections with government departments to build collaboration, reduce repetition and increase impact.



“Make sure that everybody on the panel is paid and seen as an expert in that area. It shouldn’t be a voluntary process because that changes the power dynamics and whether people are willing to listen or not.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

³⁵ IMTAC, 2022. A new approach to travel, our streets and our places. www.imtac.org.uk/new-approach-travel-our-streets-and-our-places

Recommendation 2: Fully engage with disabled people when planning places and designing walking and wheeling schemes

Engaging with local disabled people is essential to understand both the barriers for disabled people and how to best design the policies and solutions that will make a real difference. A lived experience panel is essential to this process, but we need to go further to ensure we fully represent disabled people.

Local authorities should engage with disabled people from the start of the planning and design process, ensuring representation of different impairments, proactive outreach and consideration of access needs, and that disabled people are paid for their time.

We recommend to:

- Ensure all communication and meetings are inclusive and accessible for everyone and allow disabled people, with different impairment types, to contribute through various approaches.
- Take steps to ensure more inclusive access to both in-person and online public consultations. Collect demographic details from consultees and take steps to address gaps for better representation, including disabled people.
- Build dialogue between local disabled people and planners and engineers to identify accessibility issues and develop wayfinding solutions. Undertaking regular street audits with disabled people to understand barriers and solutions when designing and implementing new schemes is a good place to start.
- Undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for new policies, schemes and programmes to ensure plans do not unlawfully discriminate against any protected characteristic. It should be acknowledged that EqIAs are variable in their effectiveness and all EqIAs should include input from people with relevant lived experience.
- Continue to innovate to find solutions for all users, for example tactile paving that is comfortable for wheelchair

users, and where modes intersect, such as road crossings and floating bus stop designs. It is also crucial to share best practice and implement improvements consistently to establish universal design across the UK.

- Undertake training for all staff involved in the design and delivery of strategy, policy and services relating to travel, streets and places. This training should be founded on Disability Equality principles and be designed and delivered by disabled people.



“Without really in-depth consideration, [Equality Impact Assessments] probably don’t pick up the nuances so if there are conflicts between one group of people with disabilities and another, the process is probably not going to identify that.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Recommendation 3: Commit to long-term plans to diversify the transport and planning sectors.

Across the transport and planning sectors we must do more to diversify, including ensuring increased numbers of disabled people leading the design and development of streets, neighbourhoods and places for walking and wheeling. For example, offer mentoring or apprenticeship programmes to under-represented groups and ensure recruitment and development processes are truly inclusive. In the interim we need to work with and pay Disabled Persons Organisations to support policy making, and practice.

Solution 2: Create long-term dedicated pavement funding to maintain and improve pavements

79% of disabled people would find creating a national pavement fund to maintain and improve pavements useful for them to walk or wheel more.

Recommendations

1. Create a long-term dedicated pavement fund to ensure that pavements are better maintained and made accessible
2. Fund footway improvements when implementing low traffic neighbourhoods
3. Strengthen national guidance for inclusive pavement design
4. Improve and fully enforce standards for maintaining accessibility during roadworks



“For me, it’s the wonky pavements and tree roots that make me anxious. In the winter when it’s snowy or icy, I’m stuck indoors for a week because the pavements aren’t gritted.”

Norwich workshop participant

Current situation and how this impacts disabled people

Disabled people often find pavements much more challenging than non-disabled people because of poor design or poor maintenance. The Walking and Cycling Index found only 56% of disabled people felt welcome and comfortable walking, wheeling or spending time on the streets of their neighbourhood in comparison to 69% of non-disabled people in 2021.³⁶

36 www.sustrans.org.uk/media/10527/sustrans-2021-walking-and-cycling-index-aggregated-report.pdf

Recent research suggests, since 2019, pavements in England have been gradually declining and semi-urban areas have the highest proportion of pavements in poor condition.³⁷

People are prevented from walking and wheeling by damaged, poorly maintained and low-quality pavements. The biggest issues are uneven surfaces, lack of dropped curbs, slippery conditions, inconsistent design and inaccessible diversions around building works. A recent report found disabled people risk being ‘left out’ of post-pandemic urban design.³⁸ Inadequate pavements can lead to serious safety issues, with many disabled people at higher risk of falling or being injured when walking and wheeling. Concerns around safety and accessibility whilst walking and wheeling can also put disabled off from attempting these journeys.

Disabled participants told us that when they proactively engaged with local authorities about safety concerns regarding pavements, little action was taken.

Guidance is obviously important and welcome, however each time new guidance is released disabled people have to relearn how to use the new pavement design. This can be very confusing as typically many pavements will not be updated for many years, resulting in confusing design and inconsistent tactile cues.



“When I come into the city centre as a wheelchair user, I spend my time looking down for obstacles. This means that I’m not looking at the area around me and taking in what I’ve come into the city to see.”

Manchester workshop participant

37 lcrig.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Gaist_Healthy-Pavements_Ed2_June-2021_v5-increased-quality-1.pdf

38 Possible, 2022. Nobody Left Behind. static1.squarespace.com/static/5d30896202a18c0001b49180/t/620bd77ea6a7065a0dec6fe1/1644943920058/Nobody+Left+Behind+Envisioning+inclusive+cities+in+a+low+car+future.pdf

Specific barriers include:

- Inaccessible or exclusive pavement design, including lack of dropped kerbs, restrictive pavement widths and steep camber angles.
- A lack of prioritisation for pavement maintenance and improvement resulting in uneven surfaces including holes, cracks, tree root damage, steep slopes and stepped access.
- Inappropriate material used for pavements that gets hot, waterlogged, slippery or damaged.
- Seasonal barriers, such as ice, leaves and overgrown vegetation.
- Lack of direct accessibility and clear signage during roadworks affecting the pavement, for example diversions that don't provide dropped curbs or level surfaces.



“A couple of weeks ago I went into town. I parked in a disabled space on the side of the road, got out, got my wheelchair out, only to discover that the nearest drop kerb was 100m away. This meant I then had to go up a very busy main road to reach the drop kerb. Being able to access a safe pavement is so important from a vehicle or when you need to cross the road.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

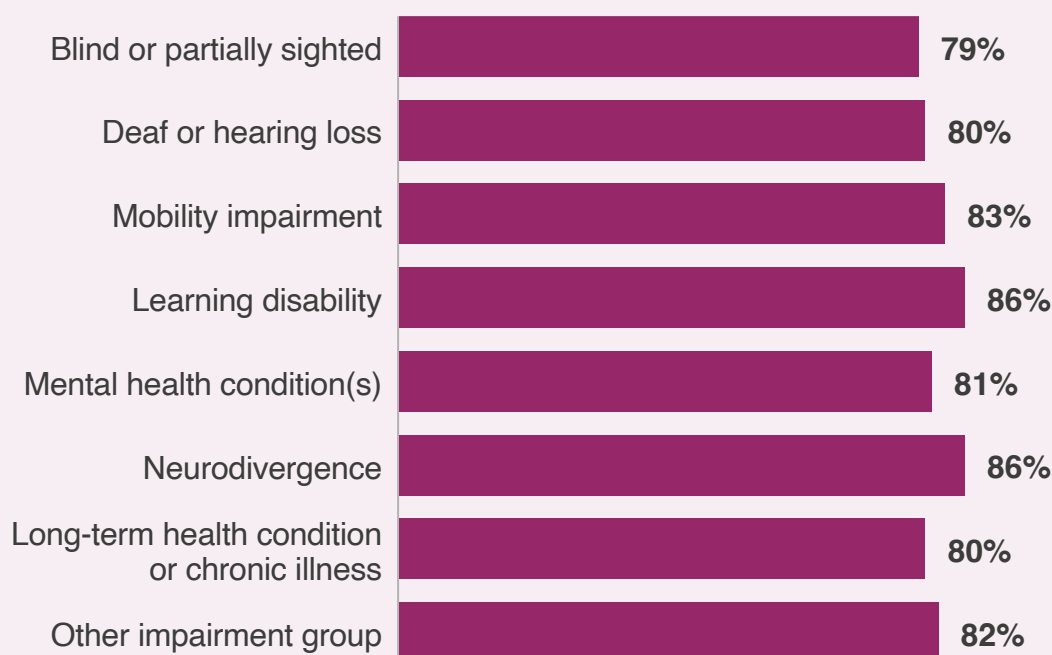
What do disabled people want?

Our independent survey of disabled people across the UK found:

- 79% would find creating a national pavement fund to maintain and improve pavements useful to walk or wheel more.
- 87% would find improved standards of maintenance, including managing vegetation, de-icing, and gritting pavements useful to walk or wheel more.

- 87% would find pavements kept accessible during roadworks useful to walk or wheel more.
- 89% would find pavements that are level and smooth – for example reducing steep slopes and repairing tree root damage – useful to walk or wheel more.
- 78% would find standards to ensure more accessible and inclusive street design useful to walk or wheel more.

Figure 5: The percentage of people with different impairment types and health conditions who would find creating a national pavement fund to maintain and improve pavements useful to walk or wheel more.



“The travel planning hierarchy seems to be inversely related to the maintenance hierarchy. Maintenance money for pavements and off-road routes is often secondary to carriageways.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Recommendation 1: Create a long-term dedicated pavement fund to ensure that pavements are better maintained and made accessible

Governments across the UK should create dedicated pavement funding which is ring-fenced and long-term. Walking is increasingly recognised at the top of the transport hierarchy, and we need to adequately fund improvements to ensure pavements are accessible, inclusive and safe. Recent government research found pavements are in decline and the total cost to bring up and keep footways in England (excluding London) in good condition would be £1.695 billion.³⁹

This means improvements to pavements and crossings should have their own funding mechanism in addition to maintenance funding and large-scale public realm improvements. It is also important to do more to repair and improve pavements. This should be included whenever cycling, public transport or road improvement schemes are delivered.

This would help local authorities make pavements more accessible and inclusive by funding pavement improvements as well as maintenance, including vegetation management and giving greater priority for de-icing. Local authorities should conduct regular pavement audits with disabled people, paying for lived experience, to identify and proactively resolve issues before they get worse. Local authorities need to develop accessible ways for people to report pavement issues, with clear information about the department responsible for addressing them. Local authorities should also consider accessibility requirements when managing vegetation and weeds on pavements.

Where funding is introduced, we recommend not making this fund a competitive bidding process. Local authorities do not have the resource to compete against one another and just want to make change happen on the ground. The model from Active Travel England of understanding ambition and investing in places with the

39 Gaist, 2021. Healthy Pavements. lcrig.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Gaist_Healthy-Pavements_Ed2_June-2021_v5-increased-quality-1.pdf

highest ambition while helping other authorities increase ambition is worth exploring, although care is required to ensure we never leave places behind. There can be a tendency to focus on urban environments for active travel funding. Walking and wheeling is critical for rural communities where basic infrastructure is often lacking, for example pavement provision or accessible crossings.



“It’s very frustrating seeing beautiful smooth roads for cars whilst walking on pavement surfaces that are falling apart. It’s unfair and I don’t think it needs to be that way.”

Norwich workshop participant

Recommendation 2: Fund footway improvements when implementing low traffic neighbourhoods

A low traffic neighbourhood should always start from the footway. It should be designed to ensure walking and wheeling is accessible and inclusive, as opposed to just reducing through traffic.

This means going beyond implementing low-cost measures such as planters and traffic cameras and working to improve the walking and wheeling environment overall. This would enable more journeys to be walked or wheeled and attract greater support from the public.



“I’ve always thought no low traffic neighbourhood should be put in place without a proper budget for improving footways up to the right standard. We shouldn’t be asking people to walk and wheel more and drive less without providing them with better walking and wheeling environments. We cannot just ‘make the road a better place’. Crossing it and cycling on it are important, but we need to start from the footway.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Recommendation 3: Strengthen national guidance for inclusive pavement design

All UK nations should have specific guidance linked to funding for inclusive pavement design. Wales recently updated their active travel guidance which includes principles for walking and wheeling.⁴⁰ In England, for example, this should be equivalent to LTN1/20 which provides guidance to local authorities on delivering high quality, cycle infrastructure for cycling⁴¹ or Cycling by Design in Scotland.⁴² An equivalent for pavement design would ensure guidance equally exists for the walking and wheeling environment, including accessibility, and linked to national funding to ensure standards are improved. Manual for Streets is currently being revised and will be updated soon for England. It will be used by Active Travel England to assess schemes for funding; however, it is not as comprehensive as LTN1/20 as its focus is street design overall as opposed to specifically walking and wheeling.



“LTN1/20 exists for cycling design and local authorities across England do not get funding unless they abide by it. It’s effective and well used. The same guidance and link to funding just doesn’t exist for walking and wheeling.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

40 Welsh Government, 2021. Active Travel Act Guidance. www.gov.wales/active-travel-act-guidance

41 DfT, 2020. Cycle infrastructure design (LTN 1/20). www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120

42 Transport Scotland, 2021. Cycling by Design. www.transport.gov.scot/publication/cycling-by-design

Recommendation 4: Improve and fully enforce standards for maintaining accessibility during roadworks

Update and revisit the ‘red book’ – Safety at street works and road works – a code of practice. This was last revised in 2014 and sets out guidance for operatives to maintain safety during street and road works. It too often not adequately followed, leaving many people unable to safely navigate road works.

Local authorities should ensure through contracts that building contractors maintain accessibility around works and enforce this where necessary. Local authorities also need to ensure accessibility information about footway diversions for roadworks is provided online.



“Road works are my personal hatred. Revisiting the ‘red book’ would be great, the training document, people read it once and never revisit it. That might be a gain. The traffic management facility can raise profile of accessibility. This affects everyone.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Solution 3: Stop pavement parking and manage pavement clutter

73% of disabled people would find prohibiting vehicles parking on pavements useful for them to walk or wheel more

Recommendations

1. Prohibit pavement parking
2. Develop and implement guidance to manage pavement clutter and ensure accessibility

Current situation and how this impacts disabled people

Objects on pavements reduce or prevent independent mobility. The biggest issues are parked cars, parked cycles and e-scooters, advertising boards, outdoor seating, and bins on collection day. The transition to electric vehicles also poses a future problem as the number of charging points often placed on the pavement rapidly increases. These obstructions cause safety concerns including trip hazards and the danger of stepping into the road when the pavement is blocked.

Recent Department for Transport guidance recommends there should be a minimum two metres in pavement width on all residential streets.⁴³ This is the space required for two wheelchairs to pass one another. Main roads should typically offer more space as they are busier.⁴⁴ Sustrans' Walking and Cycling Index (2021) found 35% of C and unclassified roads have a pavement width less than two metres and 51% of A and B roads have a pavement width less than three metres.⁴⁵ This means many roads do not

⁴³ Inclusive Mobility, 2021. Department for Transport. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1044542/inclusive-mobility-a-guide-to-best-practice-on-access-to-pedestrian-and-transport-infrastructure.pdf

⁴⁴ Department for Transport, 2007. Manual for Streets. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1072722/Essex_Manual_for_Streets_Redacted.pdf

⁴⁵ www.sustrans.org.uk/the-walking-and-cycling-index

have adequate pavement space even before the addition of clutter which creates greater barriers for people.

A practical example illustrates the impact narrow pavements may have on pedestrian flow. A scheme in Newland Avenue in Hull created more space for pedestrians. At a pinch point under a narrow railway bridge, the footway was widened from 1.1 metres to 1.6 metres, and the flow of pedestrians increased by around 1,700 per day, an increase of 59%.⁴⁶

In addition to space, clutter can also create barriers for blind and visually impaired people: long cane users often use the building line for orientation and navigation whereas assistance dog users tend to walk in a straight line down the middle of the pavement. Having to avoid obstacles on the pavement interrupts their lines of travel. People with limited spatial awareness or depth perception find low or non-contrasting pavement clutter especially hard to navigate. Some people also find the combination of pavement clutter alongside noisy street environments a sensory overload.

⁴⁶ CIHT, 2010. Manual for Streets 2 – Wider Application of the Principles. tsrgd.co.uk/pdf/mfs/mfs2.pdf



June, County Down



“The minute I go through my front door, my adventure starts. I always hope it will be a good adventure. I don’t have the visual clues I had in the past, so I rely on my sense of orientation, my hearing, and my amazing guide dog, Clyde. Being out and about is a normal part of life for me, but there are challenges.

Clyde makes me quite emotional sometimes when people tell me what he has done to keep me safe. One of my biggest challenges is vehicles parking on the pavement, particularly near junctions. When Clyde takes me out round a parked car, I can’t tell if it’s just one car, or a whole line of them. I don’t know how long I will be on the road for, and traffic can be very busy. I often have to orientate myself back and start all over again, or just return home.

Pavements should be for pedestrians, but traffic flow seems to be the main focus. My solution would be a complete ban on pavement parking. A bad incident can put me off for a while, but for some people, a bad incident can be a really huge thing. We need inclusive design from the outset that allows people to safely navigate their own communities.”

What do disabled people want?



“Our pavements are car parks.”

Manchester workshop participant

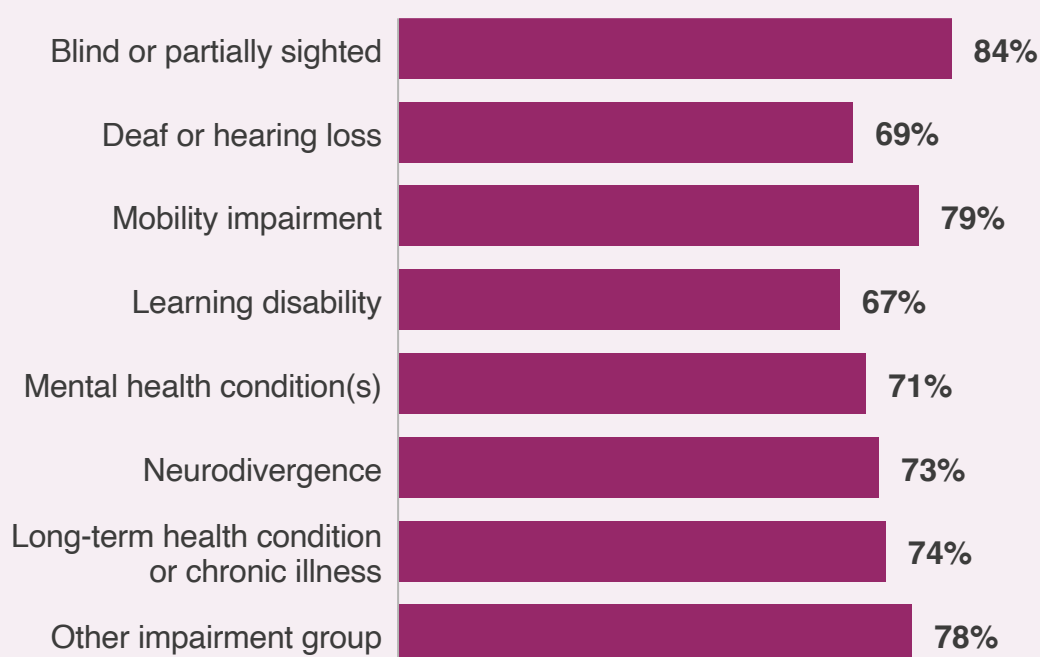
Our independent survey of disabled people across the UK found:

- 73% would find prohibiting vehicles parking on pavements useful to walk or wheel more.
- 70% would find reducing obstructions on pavements, such as stricter controls on how shops, restaurants and cafes use pavement space for outdoor seating and signage useful to walk or wheel more.

- 61% would find installing electric vehicle charging points on the roadside as opposed to on the pavement useful to walk or wheel more.

Disabled women were significantly more likely to find prohibiting pavement parking (77%) and reducing pavement obstructions (72%) useful than disabled men (both 67%). Barriers on the pavement are more likely to have a worse impact on women overall as they make more encumbered journeys (for example travelling with a pram, children or older people) than men due to the gendered division of unpaid labour.⁴⁷

Figure 6: The percentage of people with different impairment types and health conditions who would find prohibiting cars parking on the pavement useful to walk or wheel more.



⁴⁷ Women's Budget Group, 2021. Towards Gender-Inclusive and Sustainable Transport Systems.

wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Gender-inclusive-transport-systems-V3.pdf

Recommendation 1: Prohibit pavement parking

Pass legislation in England to prohibit pavement parking outside of London. The Department for Transport consulted on pavement parking back in 2020. The government has not yet set out any proposals in response to the consultation. Now is the time to move forward with the introduction of legislation to introduce a London-style pavement parking prohibition throughout England, as in Scotland.

The Scottish Government is set to introduce pavement parking bans in 2023 and the Welsh Government needs to act on its commitment in the transport strategy to do the same. A consultation on pavement parking in Northern Ireland by the Department for Infrastructure closed in early 2022.⁴⁸ No decision has yet been made.



“Fundamentally, the thing that is so frustrating about pavement parking is this assumption that it is more acceptable to block the footway than it is to block the road – which clearly shouldn’t be the case. If we can do something to change that status quo in a reasonably blanket way then I think we should.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Local authorities will need to enforce pavement parking rules (including parking on or blocking dropped curbs) and build local behaviour change programmes to embed adherence.

We believe any significant change such as banning pavement parking will also require a public awareness campaign, building on lessons from previous behaviour change initiatives, for example wearing seat belts, to highlight the issue and encourage long-term adherence.

48 DfI, 2022. Inconsiderate Pavement Parking - Options Paper. www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/inconsiderate-pavement-parking-options-paper

Recommendation 2: Roll out guidance to manage pavement clutter to ensure accessibility

National guidance, and in some circumstances, standards need to be implemented to better manage and remove pavement clutter. For example, Scotland is currently reviewing planning responsibilities⁴⁹ for street furniture following guidance from Transport Scotland.⁵⁰

The guidance should cover:

- Standards for the design of electric vehicle charging points that include the location to ensure charging points are placed on the highway as opposed to the pavement. The Guide Dogs organisation recommends a hierarchy of locations for charging infrastructure, where pavements should be the last resort and only if all other options have been exhausted.⁵¹ Where charging points are installed on the pavement, they should be consistently designed with contrasting features (for example tonal contrast and reflectors or lighting) and located by the kerb edge to improve visibility and accessibility. This should never occur on pavements of less than two metres in width.
- Develop suitable parking guidance on the carriageway for public rental schemes for bikes and e-scooters, keeping pavements clear. For example, by converting car parking space into space for parking bikes and e-scooters. National Government should also work with operators to take action against users who ignore official parking spaces for public hire schemes.

49 Scottish Government, 2022. Planning – Permitted development rights review – phase 2: consultation.
www.gov.scot/publications/review-permitted-development-rights-phase-2-consultation/pages/1

50 Transport Scotland, 2021. Inclusive Design in Town Centres and Busy Street Areas.
www.transport.gov.scot/publication/inclusive-design-in-town-centres-and-busy-street-areas

51 Guide Dogs. Policy Position: Electric vehicle charging points.
gd-prod.azureedge.net/-/media/project/guidedogs/guidedogsdotorg/files/about-us/what-we-do/research/guide-dogs-ev-charging-points-position-statement.pdf

- Develop guidance and training for businesses on ensuring restaurants and pubs with outdoor seating, and retailers' advertising do not make pavements inaccessible.
- Develop guidance for better placement of wheeled bins and recycling boxes on collection days and look at ways to support collection crews to take better care of bin placement.

Local authorities will need to abide by guidance from national governments to ensure pavement clutter is effectively managed, possibly by employing access officers. A zero-tolerance approach to pavement clutter in our towns and cities which excludes people from safely accessing a pavement or public space should be taken.



“This is a symptom of a much larger issue which is car use. Pavement parking is really about the lack of space, and so we need to be thinking about reducing car use – especially for those short trips which can be done by walking, wheeling and cycling.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Solution 4: Improve walking and wheeling crossing points across roads and cycle paths

80% of disabled people would find crossing points improved by dropping kerbs, adding tactile paving and more official crossing infrastructure useful for them to walk or wheel more.

Recommendations

- Ensure all existing and new crossing points are accessible, inclusive and safe
- Conduct national trials of zebra markings on side roads that give people walking and wheeling priority over traffic
- Improve crossing points between walking and wheeling routes and cycle paths

Current situation and how this impacts disabled people

Simply crossing the road can be a significant challenge for many disabled people. Whilst formal crossing infrastructure design has improved, many junctions or roads lack crossings, or where they do exist, they prioritise traffic over people. This can cause significant safety issues, with disabled people being placed in danger from vehicles or other road users.

Specific barriers include:

- A lack of dropped kerbs, especially in more residential neighbourhoods on crossing points.
- Not enough crossing points for people walking or wheeling along high streets and busy roads, long crossing point wait times or having unnecessary complications, for example two or three stage crossings. This is often linked to prioritising vehicle flow around places as opposed to people walking and wheeling.
- A lack of accessible light crossing switches can make it more challenging for blind and visually impaired people to cross. Some blind and visually impaired people may walk or wheel further to safely cross a road using a signalised crossing, instead of a Zebra or other informal crossing point. See the appendix for more information about crossing design and accessibility.
- No accessible formal crossing infrastructure exists for crossing most side roads, despite changes to the Highway Code in Britain which gives people walking and wheeling priority over traffic exiting or entering a side road. In Northern Ireland we need to update the Highway Code to reflect the recent changes in Britain giving people walking and wheeling greater priority.
- Many disabled people are unable to cross the road within the allotted timeframe. A study of older people, many of whom had a mobility impairment, suggested only 11% walked at least as fast as the UK transport guidance on crossing

speeds (1.2m/s).⁵² Whilst the guidance was updated in 2019 to allow for slower speeds of 1.0m/s, 1.2m/s still remains the convention.⁵³ The fear of not being quick enough to cross the road is known to restrict people leaving the home or limit their accessibility when out and about.⁵⁴

- The use of black and white in traditional pedestrian crossings offer high contrast which is essential for people with low vision to stay on course when crossing roads. The increased use of colourful crossings to replace traditional black and white road markings with multicoloured patterns and shapes create major issues for disabled people.
- A lack of formal and well understood crossing points existing where pedestrian and cycle paths cross one another, showing clear priority for people walking and wheeling over those cycling, including at floating bus stops.
- Many areas simply do not have enough crossing points. This includes residential areas, where simple dropped kerbs on the corners of roads do not exist, and a lack of crossing points on high streets. This can create severance which cuts people off from where they need to go and creates unnecessary car dependency.

52 Musselwhite, 2014. Environment–person interactions enabling walking in later life. www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03081060.2014.976983

53 DfT, 2019. Traffic Sign Manual. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/851465/dft-traffic-signs-manual-chapter-6.pdf

54 Webb, et al, 2017. Crossing the road in time: Inequalities in older people's walking speeds. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214140517300464



“I have a problem where I live of being unable to cross the road due to the timing of the lights – there’s no real crossing, just an island in the centre. There’s traffic coming from all different directions, and no time to cross because as one lane of traffic stops, another starts, there’s no gap. I contacted the highways agency and didn’t get anything resolved. You need to be able to run to cross, and I can’t run! I contacted the council; they didn’t come up with a solution. I suggested retiming the lights but that costs money.”

Online workshop participant



Mark, Swansea



“People notice my guide dog Bobby much more than they did my cane. They used to trip over it and take it out on me as if it was my fault. Bobby’s very reassuring.

Hopefully I’ll never have to go back to a cane.

Pavement parking is a real problem because I’ve got to go on the road. And Bobby can’t tell me if there’s any cars coming. On a 200 yard walk, this could happen maybe four or five times.

Not all pelican crossings bleep when the light turns green, but the button unit should have a small cone underneath which you can feel spinning when it’s time to cross. Quite a few cones in my area don’t work, so I can’t cross unless somebody else is there at the same time. This can mean I need to get on a bus, just to get off on the other side of the road once it’s on its return journey. This could take half an hour extra.

Low flower beds in Morryston are quite a trip hazard. As are all the tables, chairs and advertising boards outside shops in Swansea city centre. I’d like to see these changed.”

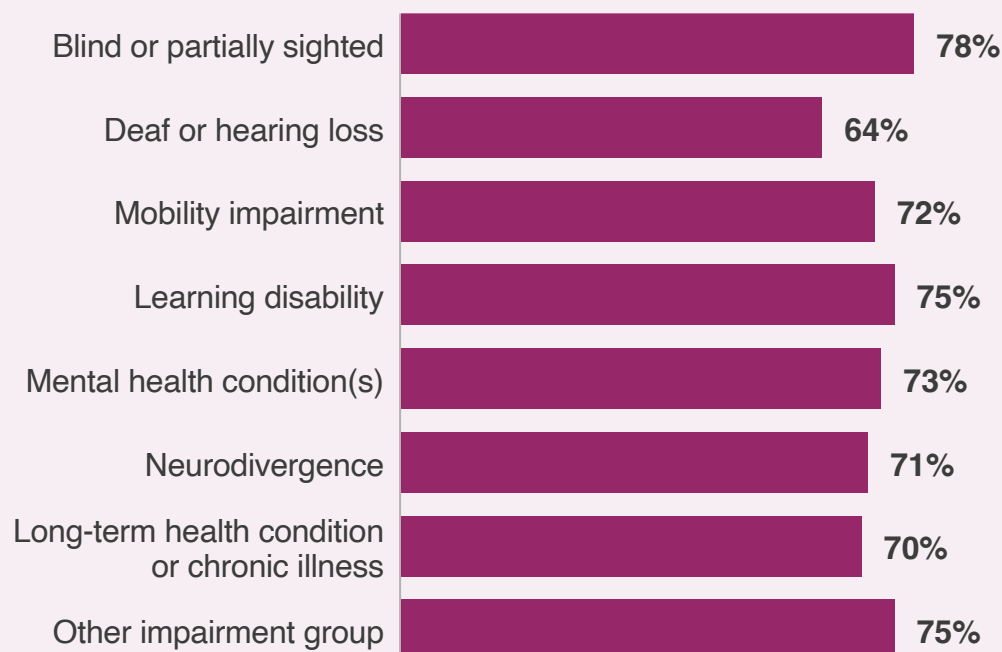
What do disabled people want?

Our independent survey of disabled people across the UK found:

- 80% of UK disabled people would find improved crossing points by dropping kerbs, adding tactile paving and more official crossing infrastructure useful to walk or wheel more.
- 70% of UK disabled people would find zebra crossings on side roads to give pedestrians priority over motor vehicles useful to walk or wheel more.
- 74% of UK disabled people would find longer time for people to cross the road at pelican crossings useful to walk or wheel more.

Overall, disabled women said they would find all above improvements significantly more useful than disabled men. For example, 80% of disabled women said providing a longer time to cross the road at pelican crossings would help them to walk or wheel more, compared with 66% of disabled men.

Figure 7: The percentage of people with different impairment types and health conditions who would find zebra crossings on side roads to give pedestrians priority over motor vehicles useful to walk or wheel more.



Proposed solution

Support people walking and wheeling to cross the road safely by ensuring all existing crossing points are accessible and inclusive, while expanding the number of crossing points, especially on side road crossings, high streets, and in residential areas.

Recommendation 1: Ensure all existing and new crossing points are accessible, inclusive and safe

National governments need to review and update existing guidance for accessible and consistent crossing design, for example minimum crossing times.

Local authorities should audit streets to understand and address accessibility issues in relation to crossing streets. This should include:

- Accessible infrastructure, including dropped kerbs and tactile paving and ensuring that crossings give everyone enough time to safely cross the road.
- Provide regular signalised crossings on desire lines to offer people walking and wheeling a choice of how to cross, especially those who don't have the capability or confidence to use uncontrolled crossings or shared space areas. Major high streets should have at least one controlled crossing as recommended by the Guide Dogs' report on crossings.⁵⁵
- Piloting new technology in crossing points, for example giving extended crossing time activated by radio frequency ID tags.

Finally, we need to increase the number of crossing points available in many areas. This starts with local authorities auditing crossing points to better understand gaps in provision, safety concerns and accessibility issues to inform investment plans to improve walking and wheeling. This can address community severance and boost footfall on high streets.

55 Guide Dogs, 2014. The importance of signalised crossings for people with sight loss – recommendations for best practice
www.guidedogs.org.uk/-/media/project/guidedogs/guidedogsdotorg/files/about-us/what-we-do/research/road-and-street-crossings.pdf

Recommendation 2: Conduct national trials of zebra markings on side roads that give people walking and wheeling priority over traffic

In January 2022 the UK Government updated the Highway Code in England, Scotland and Wales.⁵⁶ This included giving people walking or wheeling priority to cross any side road over vehicles and cycles turning into or out of a side road. Motor vehicles and cycles should now give way to people waiting or already crossing a side road.

It is clearly unsafe for a pedestrian to step out into a road in front of cars entering or exiting a side road. It is likely that in practice the changes to the Highway Code have not resulted in changes to behaviour. One suggested approach is the use of zebra markings across side roads. These are identical to zebra crossings but without flashing lights (known as Belisha Beacons).

The approach is commonly used across Europe. This would act to influence behaviour change by changing the environment. Greater Manchester has piloted the use of zebra markings on side roads and found they lead to drivers giving way 65% more than where there is no marking.⁵⁷

There are issues for blind and visually impaired people through this approach who often will prefer signal-controlled crossings. These would be less practical on many side roads because of lower traffic levels, and very expensive. We need to work with the blind and visually impaired community to better understand if zebra markings on side roads, would be an improvement to the current situation and if there are any negative impacts. It is positive to see from our inquiry survey that 78% of blind and visually impaired people think their introduction would be useful for them to walk or wheel more.

56 UK Government, 2022. The Highway Code. www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/updates

57 Transport for Greater Manchester, 2021. Greater Manchester's side road zebra crossings report. beeactive.tfgm.com/walking/side-road-zebras

Recommendation 3: Improve crossing points between walking and wheeling routes and cycle paths

It's important to design out the friction between people walking and wheeling and those who cycle. We need to ensure solutions do not create more conflict and discomfort, especially where cycleways and walking routes cross.

Crossing points for people walking and wheeling across cycleways also need improving, especially when the crossing point is not in the carriageway. Crossing points should always clearly prioritise people walking and wheeling and inform people cycling to give way, for example with zebra crossings.

One situation where this is increasingly common is the use of floating bus stops or bus stop bypasses, where a cycle track leaves the carriageway to move around a bus stop, greatly reducing the risk of collisions between people cycling and buses.

While this report does not look at floating bus stop design, we are aware of ongoing research from Living Streets in this area which is due for publication in 2023. The project is funded by Transport Scotland and the Department for Transport and is working with disabled people and organisations that represent them to develop guidance. We hope the findings will reduce conflict at floating bus stops and a more universal approach to design is implemented by national governments across the UK.

Solution 5: Make wayfinding and journey planning tools work for disabled people

77% of disabled people would find an app or website where disabled people can share information, experiences and rate routes or destinations useful for them to walk or wheel more

Recommendations

- Develop standardised guidance and practice for accessible wayfinding provision
- Create fully accessible digital journey planning and wayfinding tools which account for different impairments and health conditions

Current situation and how this impacts disabled people

On street signage, wayfinding cues, maps, audio guides and route planning apps can be inconsistent, unclear and do not always address the needs of disabled people. This leaves many people unable to plan journeys or independently navigate streets, public spaces and routes.

Specific barriers include:

- Information about journeys is often not available in multiple formats
- Difficulty locating accessible routes, for example step-free or reduced gradient routes are often hidden or unavailable.
- Signage is often inconsistent, poorly designed, positioned or missing, or sometimes illegible. This can reduce confidence and increase safety concerns, especially where walking and wheeling paths intersect with other users or modes.
- Tactile cues, especially for pavements can be missing, or inconsistently implemented and tactile and Braille signage are typically unavailable.

- Auditory cues can be unavailable or broken, for example temporary traffic lights without audio alerts.
- Digital wayfinding tools too often lack accessibility features or include barriers along routes. Furthermore, many disabled people need to understand what facilities that will help them to reach their destination are in place along a route, for example rest areas and public toilets or how accessible the route is for wheelchairs, crowdedness levels or staff availability. Most digital wayfinding tools also work better for streets than off-road environments. This reduces the ability of disabled people to walk and wheel in nature for recreation and wellbeing.



“Having these things around might also prompt non-disabled people to ask about access needs – they might ask ‘why are these things there?’ and that gives us an opportunity to spread awareness.”

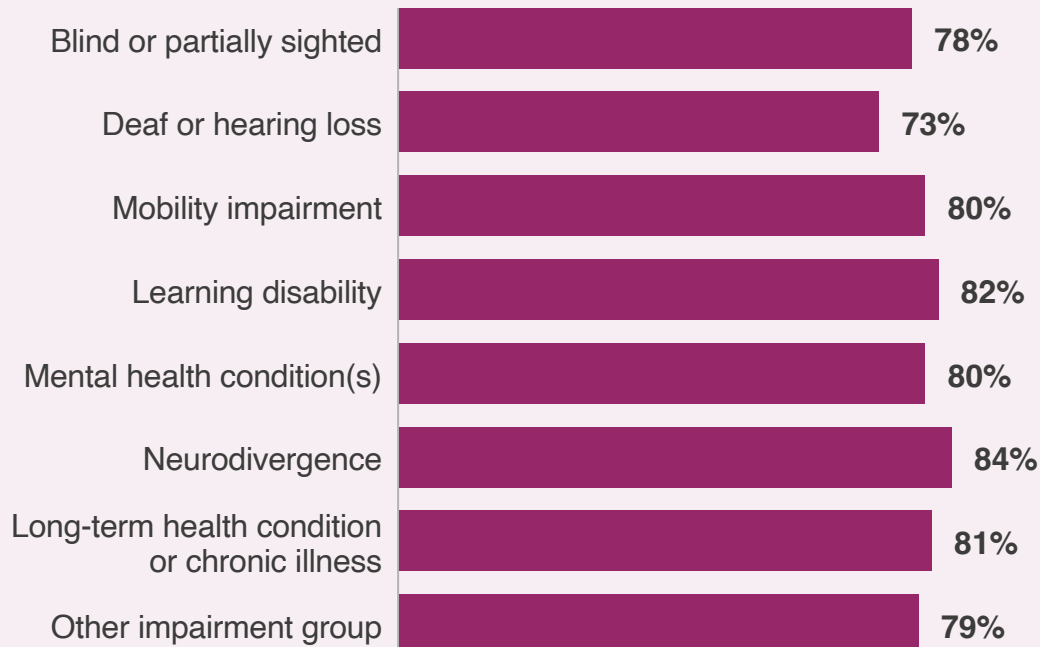
Norwich workshop participant

What do disabled people want?

Our independent survey of disabled people across the UK found:

- 77% would find an app or website where disabled people can share information, experiences and rate routes or destinations useful to walk or wheel more.
- 79% would find making streets easier to navigate, for example better street signage, tactile paving and audio cues useful to walk or wheel more.

Figure 8: The percentage of people with different impairment types and health conditions who would find an app or website where disabled people can share information, experiences and rate routes or destinations useful to walk or wheel more.



Recommendation 1: Develop standardised guidance and practice for accessible wayfinding provision

We need to develop standardised guidance for all accessible wayfinding provision, including visual, auditory and tactile cues. For example, there are legal regulations to prescribe the design and conditions of use of traffic signs on or near roads in England, Scotland, and Wales.⁵⁸ There is no set regulation or even national guidance for signage for walking and wheeling, aside from where this directly interacts with the carriageway, for example at road crossings. This leads to hundreds of different local approaches being found, even within the same authorities, as well as inaccessible signage.

58 Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016: an overview, 2016. www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-regulations-and-general-directions-2016-an-overview

Training should be offered for officers, engineers and planners to implement more standardized and accessible approaches to wayfinding. Training should also include auditing of streets and routes to ensure officers are equipped to monitor and understand where improvements need to be made.

All local authorities need to:

- Ensure accessible wayfinding is built into new schemes and improvements during highways maintenance.
- Proactively consider wayfinding as part of any footway maintenance and improvement schemes to ensure they are accessible.
- Improve signage to key facilities, including accessible toilets and rest areas.
- Provide better signage, including tactile paving, indicating start of cycle paths and shared spaces to improve safety of different users.
- Better maintain existing signage to ensure it is legible.



“I was recently in Southeast London doing an audit of a high street. You can see they have done rebrands over the years because they have different signage and it’s all in different fonts and different looks. Some of the fonts are quite stylized and hard to read, some of the signage uses icons but no text at all, so I was thinking ‘what are you trying to tell me?’. Some stuff is all in capitals which can be very difficult for dyslexic people to read.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Recommendation 2: Create fully accessible digital journey planning and wayfinding tools which account for different impairments and health conditions

To give disabled people the confidence that they will be able to independently complete a journey, digital tools must be fully accessible and free to use to allow users to plan routes that account for their impairment or health condition.

Providers like Google Maps and City Mapper have made improvements to their apps and websites to make them more accessible, yet they do not meet the needs of all disabled people. Google Maps can give audio cues but does not cater for barriers to accessibility by showing where dropped kerbs or physical barriers exist. Finally, we shouldn't forget off-road routes, many of which are not adequately mapped by service providers.

New tools would not only provide directions but would detail physical barriers, highlight any width restrictions, and allow people to get a good sense of the terrain and topography along the route they are exploring. The tool could also provide audio cues to assist people with visual impairments as well as indicating where facilities are, such as public toilets, benches, and water fountains.

This will require public and private partnerships develop digital mapping, journey planning and wayfinding tools, online and app based, to provide end-to-end journey planning that enables disabled people to get the right accessibility and safety information to make informed choices when using off-road routes.

Digital journey planning and wayfinding should be fully integrated with on street or off-road signage, tactile and auditory guidance. For example, tools should also be used to help prioritise removing barriers. We should also look towards new digital innovation, such as audio cues built into crossings and activated by radio frequency ID tag or Euan's Guide which allows disabled people to rate and give feedback on destinations across the UK based on accessibility.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Euan's Guide, 2022. www.euansguide.com



“We have tried to develop our own digital tools over the years to try to develop better wayfinding for active travel. The feedback we have largely had from users is any capacity of any app that is made by a local authority isn’t going to be as good as something like Google who has lots of money and ability to do it really well.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Solution 6: Ensure disabled people have a choice to live within walking or wheeling distance of services and amenities

88% of disabled people say that a planning system which ensures more services people need are provided within walking or wheeling distance of where people live would be useful for them to walk or wheel more

Recommendations

- 1.** Amend national planning guidance to ensure new developments are built in the right locations and with high enough housing density to support services and amenities within walking and wheeling distance
- 2.** Develop supplementary planning guidance to measure walking proximity that fully considers accessibility
- 3.** Ensure local plans and decisions facilitate walkable and wheelable neighbourhoods



“We don’t always need to design a one-size fits all. And so not stigmatising disabled people for whom this doesn’t work. We, as disabled people, may take longer to get to places, and 20 minutes for person x may not be the same as 20 minutes for person y.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Current situation and how this impacts disabled people

Essential services and amenities, including shops, schools, GPs, bus stops and green spaces, are often too far from where disabled people live, to walk or wheel. Sustrans' Walking and Cycling Index found only 59% of non-disabled people can easily get to many places they need to visit, without having to drive. This falls even further for disabled people where only 47% of disabled people can easily get to many places they need to visit, without having to drive.⁶⁰



“The walk to my local GP is 45 minutes for the fit and healthy. In places, there are no pavements and quite long distances between crossings. Many pavements have uneven paving stones, and I would not say they’ve been designed with disability in mind.”

Norwich workshop participant

Specific barriers

National planning guidance does not always ensure new developments facilitate walking and wheeling. For example, in England, the National Planning Policy Framework does not prioritise walking and there is no national guidance for local planning authorities to measure reasonable walking or wheeling distance to ensure amenities are within walking and wheeling distance of new developments. Recent research by Sustrans found local planning authorities do not always take walkability into account or measure it in a consistent way when deciding where to site new developments.⁶¹

60 www.sustrans.org.uk/the-walking-and-cycling-index

61 Sustrans, 2022. Walkable Neighbourhoods. www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/research/all-themes/all/walkable-neighbourhoods-building-in-the-right-places-to-reduce-car-dependency

It is often cheaper and easier to develop greenfield sites away from existing cities and towns.⁶² These sites are often further away from amenities and built at lower densities which makes it more challenging for services to be financially sustainable. This typically increases car dependency and reduces walking and wheeling.



“Often, we don’t have the same choice as to where to go. So, you can get to the pub in 20 minutes, but that particular pub doesn’t have an accessible loo or a step-free entrance. That choice of being in a 20-minute neighbourhood isn’t a choice for everyone. Disabled people may also need to go to more specialised services, such as healthcare, which are in regions rather than in local areas. So how do we make sure that 20-minute neighbourhood is connected to a sustainable transport network and interchange?”

Stakeholder workshop participant

What do disabled people want?

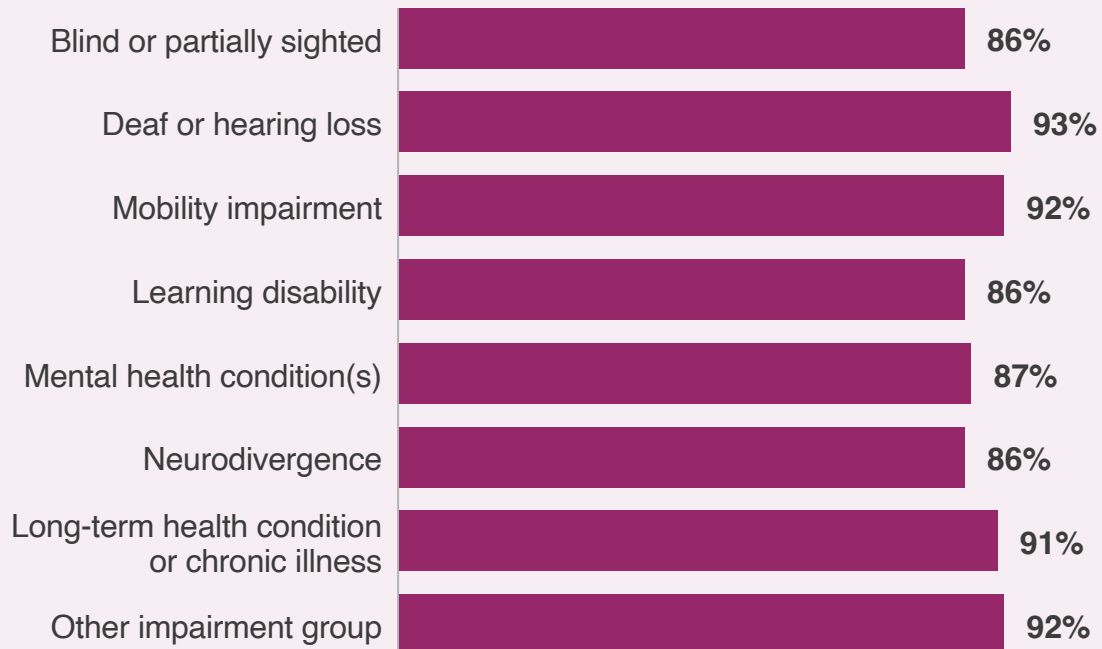
Our independent survey of disabled people across the UK found 88% of UK disabled people would find having more services people need (such as shops, green space, schools or GPs) within walking or wheeling distance of where people live useful to walk or wheel more.

Disabled women were significantly more likely to say (89%) ensuring more services are provided within walking or wheeling distance of where people live is useful to walk or wheel more than disabled men (85%). This aligns with typical journey patterns of men and women where women often still take on more caring responsibilities and take more shorter multi-modal journeys whereas men make longer commuter trips.⁶³

62 Property Investors, 2022. What Exactly are Greenfield Sites? A Guide for Property Investors www.propertyinvestmentsuk.co.uk/greenfield-site

63 Sustrans, 2022. Walking for Everyone. www.sustrans.org.uk/media/11493/sustrans-arup-walking-for-everyone-inclusive-walking-report.pdf

Figure 9: The percentage of people with different impairment types and health conditions who would find ensuring that more services people need are provided within walking or wheeling distance of where people live useful to walk or wheel more.



“10 minutes (each way) is not inclusive for everyone.”

Online workshop participant

Recommendation 1: Amend national planning guidance to ensure new developments are built in the right locations and with high enough housing density to support services and amenities within walking and wheeling distance

This means national planning policy would better ensure amenities and services are close to where people live and support local living and facilitate thriving local economies.

Scotland is further ahead than any other UK nation in doing this and recognising the principles of the 20-minute neighbourhood in planning policy. The Scottish National Planning Framework 4

(NPF 4) was consulted on earlier this year and will run until 2045.⁶⁴ It recognises the need to support development proposals that “provide direct, easy, segregated and safe links to local facilities via walking, wheeling and cycling networks before occupation.”

This should include:

- Better integration of planning and transport to ensure housing development aligns with a sustainable and resilient transport system based around walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport.
- Developing mechanisms for deciding not to build on a site because it is likely to result in car dependency or isolation.
- Developing guidance for rural planning authorities, where challenges to facilitate walkable neighbourhoods are greater.
- Stipulating all new developments need to include travel plans that favour walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport over car use.



“In the context of site selection, should certain sites just not be on the table? Should there be some sort of mechanism for deciding that a site is just not sustainable in the long run and won’t enable walking and wheeling, and even if it is cheap and easy to develop upon, we should actually be looking elsewhere.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

64 Scottish Government, 2022. National Planning Framework 4: revised draft. www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4-revised-draft/pages/3

Recommendation 2: Develop supplementary planning guidance to measure walking proximity that fully considers accessibility

Ensure national planning guidance sets universal standards for measuring walking proximity, and that this definition fully considers accessibility. The principles of the 20-minute neighbourhood⁶⁵ or 15-minute city (where amenities and services are within a 10 minute or 15 minute trip) are a good starting point, but more needs to be done to understand and ensure they work for disabled people. This should include ensuring amenities are within a walkable distance and duration (time) for disabled people. It should also be recognised that disabled people must often walk or wheel further to reach their destination because of direct routes being inaccessible.

Furthermore, many services and amenities are not fully accessible, and disabled people may not have the same choices in where to go. Finally, disabled people may also be likely to require access to specialised services, hence the importance of aligning walking and wheeling with public transport for longer journeys.



“Transport is a means to an end, it’s not the end. So, if the destination is not there, or not accessible then why are we bothering? What is the role of people working on transport on these areas? However, we know if we don’t get it right – better public transport, more accessible destinations – clearly people are going to walk and wheel less.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

⁶⁵ TCPA, 2021. The 20-minute neighbourhood.
tcpa.org.uk/collection/the-20-minute-neighbourhood

Recommendation 3: Ensure local plans and decisions facilitate walkable and wheelable neighbourhoods

Local planning authorities need to embed walkable neighbourhoods across local plans, site selection, and planning guidance. This should include:

- Developing local plans and site selection based on walkability and the reduction of car dependency and make sure disability and inclusion is embedded.
- Embedding walkable and wheelable principles into supplementary planning documents and guidance.
- Engaging local disabled residents and Disabled People's Organisations on local neighbourhood planning issues through accessible consultation processes.
- Better integration of walking and wheeling with public transport to join up journeys to other neighbourhoods and exploring how we can help to make sure destinations and amenities are inclusive and accessible.



“How do we embed walkability in local plans? And through their development, consultation with local communities ensures disability and inclusion are embedded. Local plans are such an important way to ensure new developments are part of walkable neighbourhoods.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Solution 7: Improve access to mobility aids

86% of disabled people would find it useful for them to walk or wheel more if we ensured everyone who requires a mobility aid is given financial support and advice to get access to one that meets their needs

Recommendations:

1. Review and address barriers to disabled people accessing mobility aids and other support, ensuring people can access the right mobility aid, when they need it
2. Ensure cycles are legally recognised as mobility aids and roll out schemes to support access to cycles, including non-standard cycles



“Without Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments there are a lot of services and support you can’t access. Lengthy waiting lists – two to four years, perhaps with an appeal process. What happens to people whilst waiting? It’s a systemic issue with disability support.”

Swansea workshop participant

Current situation and how this impacts disabled people

Accessing a suitable mobility aid can be very challenging for many disabled people and is a key reason why disabled people take fewer trips than non-disabled people.

Less than half (44%) of disabled people in our survey said that they are able to access the right mobility aid and over a quarter (26%) said the question didn’t apply to them.

Not all disabled people need a mobility aid and yet 16% of disabled residents surveyed do not have access to the right mobility aid to walk or wheel (such as wheelchairs, mobility scooters, crutches or walking sticks, assistance dogs or carers).

The need to access to a mobility aid is more likely for people with visual impairments, people who are deaf or hard of hearing and those with mobility impairments as well as people with a long-term health condition or chronic illness, such as chronic fatigue.

Mobility aids can be very expensive. Some grants are available to help disabled people purchase mobility aids, but there are issues with eligibility, the financial support available, support to make applications and getting a mobility aid that meets individual requirements. It is often difficult to access suitable carers or personal assistants and there are long waiting lists for many mobility aids, including assistance dogs.

The lack of a joined-up system can also pose problems, for example where separate services exist for wheelchair services, occupational therapists and social services.

A recent report by Motability and the Wheelchair Alliance found clear concerns among stakeholders over service quality, equity and user fairness and examples where users are left without adequate equipment.⁶⁶



“A lot of disabled people have no idea what is available to them. Once they’ve been diagnosed, quite often they are left to get on with it. It’s only those who have the confidence or energy to fight their own battles that get the help they need – and even then, they often don’t.”

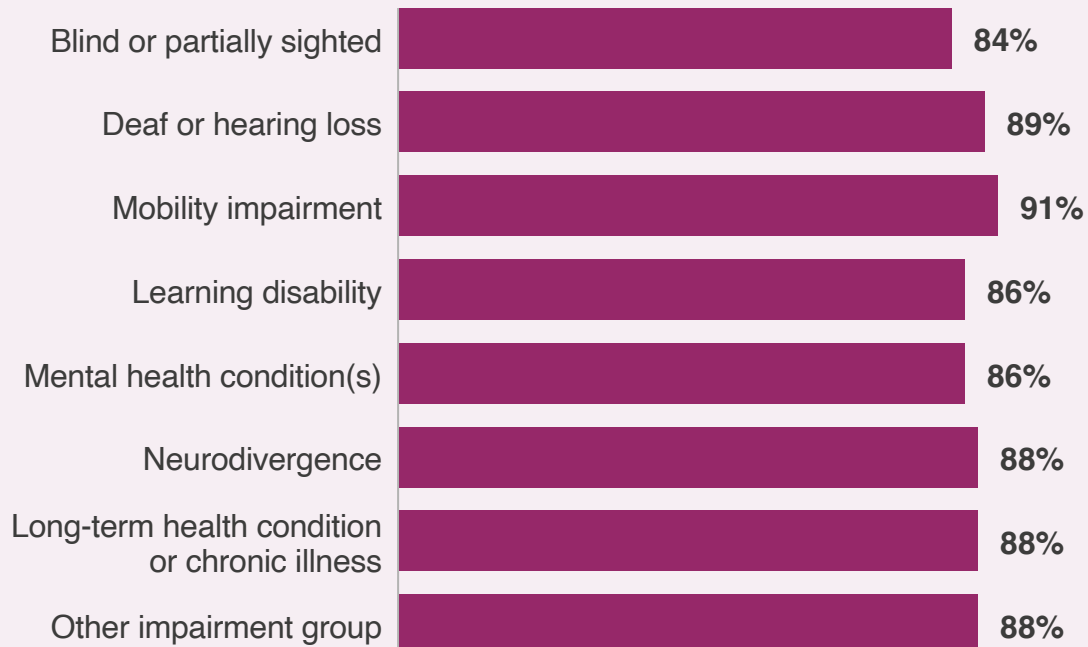
Stakeholder workshop participant

What do disabled people want?

86% of disabled people surveyed think ensuring everyone that requires a mobility aid is given financial support and advice to access one is useful to walk or wheel more.

⁶⁶ www.motability.org.uk/media/zsjnh4un/wheelchair-economic-study-final.pdf

Figure 10: The percentage of people with different impairment types and health conditions who would find ensuring everyone that requires a mobility aid is given financial support and advice to get access to one that meets their needs useful to walk or wheel more.



Disabled People of colour are significantly less likely to have a suitable mobility aid, with 27% saying they are not able to get access to the right mobility aid to walk or wheel. This is compared to 14% of disabled White people. A recent TUC report on race and the labour market found racial inequalities still exist when it comes to access to employment.⁶⁷ Racial disparities in access to a suitable mobility aid may act to compound this.



“I only know about good mobility solutions because I know other disabled people and we exchange information”

Stakeholder workshop participant

⁶⁷ TUC, 2022. Still rigged: racism in the UK labour market.

www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/still-rigged-racism-uk-labour-market

Recommendation 1: Review and address barriers to disabled people accessing mobility aids and other support, ensuring people can access the right mobility aid, when they need it

The Scottish Government in 2021, issued new Guidance on the provision of wheelchairs for short-term loan. This was developed in response to research which highlighted inconsistency and gaps in provision.⁶⁸

All national governments across the UK should review mobility aid provision and take steps to ensure people can get the support or equipment they need at the time they need it. The review should be led by medical, social care and transport professionals alongside disabled people to ensure it is user centred.

It should cover all mobility modes, including modes not currently recognised as mobility aids, such as cycles. More community centres should be set up across the UK where people can try out different mobility aids. Cycling hubs, including those specifically focusing on inclusion, could be used to offer these services. Advice around understanding different options and thinking through the practicalities of a new mobility aid, for example storage and charging considerations, should be offered.



“At the moment, the assessments are made by medical professionals – it’s not based on the experience of disabled people. This leads to medical ableism and gate keeping – the result is that other than cars, it’s very limited what people are given. It limits people’s lives – our ability to live independently to access education and health and work and fun.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

68 Scottish Government, 2021. Wheelchair provision - short-term loans: guidance www.gov.scot/publications/draft-guidance-provision-equipment-adaptations-executive-summary/pages/11

The review should aim to identify how to:

- Increase eligibility for support and ensure there is clear guidance on eligibility.
- Expand mobility aid criteria, for example inclusion of cycles, standing frames, and non-standard shoes.
- Provide more funding for all impairment-related costs, including maintenance.
- Provide greater support to groups least likely to currently have access to the right mobility aid, including disabled People of colour.
- Increase awareness of what is available.

When people find out equipment doesn't meet their needs there is a danger it can get discarded. These aids need to be recycled and put back into the system – perhaps as tools taken to roadshows for people to try out.



“It needs to be radical – we mustn't let it be a dedicated support staff in local authorities with a little extra cash to do a project on the side, who don't necessarily have the right level of knowledge. We need a well-rounded and well-resourced service nationally with disabled people's involvement.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Local authorities should develop local area-wide plans for improving access to suitable mobility aids including:

- Providing dedicated local authority support to help people find and apply for grants.
- Increasing public awareness of what support is available, for example through community centres and pop-up shops.
- Employing disabled people in roles involved in the decision-making processes and give disabled people who are seeking mobility aids more influence in local decision making.



“Assessments by occupational therapists and wheelchair assessors often forget that you are the expert in your situation. I was told I needed crutches, but I needed a power chair in order to get out and use the bus [due to steep slopes].”

Swansea workshop participant

Recommendation 2: Ensure cycles are legally recognised as mobility aids and roll out schemes to support access to cycles, including non-standard cycles

Many disabled people use a cycle as a mobility aid in pedestrian environments, including pavements and within buildings. As cycles are not legally recognised as mobility aids, little financial support exists to access them. Many disabled people could benefit from a cycle to help them increase their independence and ability to travel.

The UK Government should review legislation to recognise cycles as mobility aids and support should be provided for their use alongside other mobility aids.

At the same time many disabled people who use their cycle as a mobility aid are asked to dismount on pavements and push their cycle, even when it might be physically impossible for them to do so.⁶⁹ We need to educate people and address cultural and physical barriers to using cycles responsibly as mobility aids in pedestrian environments.

69 Wheels for Wellbeing, 2018. Assessing the needs of disabled cyclists – annual survey 2018.

wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Survey-report-FINAL.pdf

Solution 8: Improve off-road routes

82% of disabled people would find removing physical barriers, such as steps and narrow gates from off-road walking and wheeling routes, useful for them to walk or wheel more

Recommendations:

1. Develop guidance and invest in national plans for making off-road routes accessible and inclusive
2. Develop local area-wide plans for making off-road routes accessible and inclusive

Current situation and how this impacts disabled people

“We need regular inspection and maintenance of these paths, rather than just waiting until they’re completely destroyed and then spending a fortune repairing them. We also need to make sure the paths are prepared for winter.”

Norwich workshop participant

Numerous barriers prevent disabled people from using off-road routes, including the National Cycle Network and routes through parks, along canals and in rural locations.

Barriers include:

- Physical barriers, such as gates, bollards and chicanes, steps
- Camber or steep slopes, which are not marked – for example it would be helpful for many wheelchair and mobility scooter users to introduce gradient markings on slopes which are typically road signs for traffic but absent in a pedestrian context.
- Surface issues can result in muddy or rough paths, made worse by adverse weather. This can mean off-road routes become unsafe or unusable for extended periods of time.

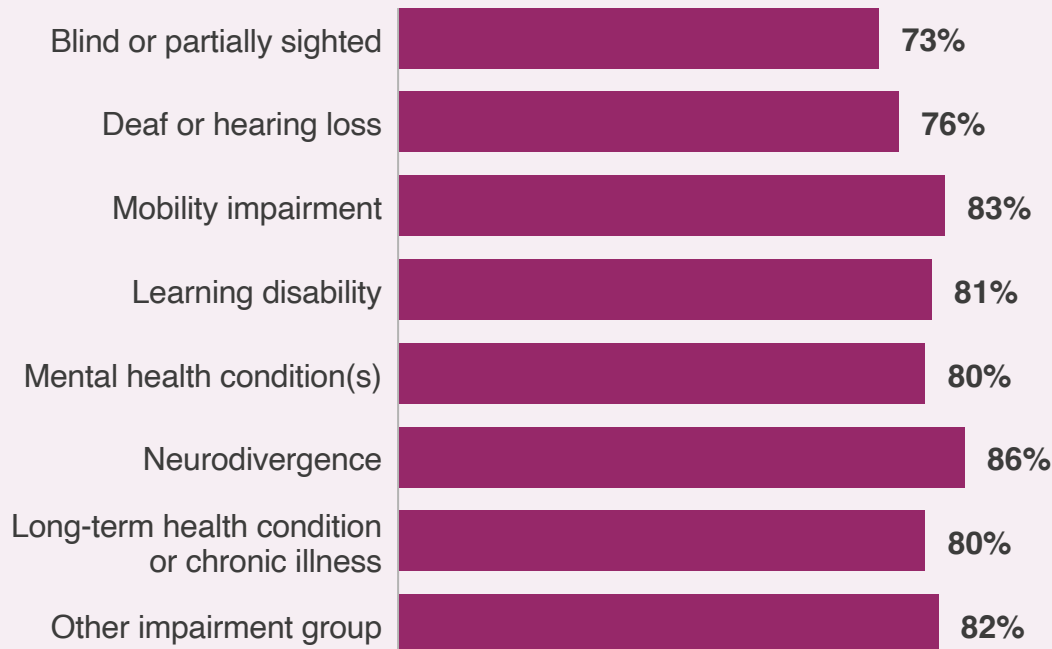
- Off-road routes are often shared spaces and people cycling can sometimes intimidate other users or make them feel unsafe.
- Off-road routes can be perceived for fitness and exercise, putting others off using them.
- Wayfinding for off-road routes is often inaccessible for different access needs, making navigation difficult. This is in addition to a lack of information about inclusive routes.
- Many off-road routes are difficult to reach and not adequately connected to public transport.
- Tensions between heritage or conservation considerations and making environments accessible, especially on canal routes.

What do disabled people want?

Our independent survey of disabled people across the UK found:

- 83% would find accessible surfaces on off-road walking and wheeling routes in urban areas useful to walk or wheel more. Accessible surfaces are made from material which is smooth, dry and continuous.
- 82% would find removing physical barriers, such as steps and narrow gates from off-road walking and wheeling routes, to allow all users with mobility aids access useful to walk or wheel more.
- 80% would find online information about the accessibility of off-road walking routes for different users as well as at entrances and exits to help people plan their journey useful to walk or wheel more.

Figure 11: The percentage of people with different impairment types and health conditions who would find online information about the accessibility of off-road walking routes for different users as well as at entrances and exits to help people plan their journey useful to walk or wheel more.



Recommendation 1: Develop guidance and invest in national plans for making off-road routes accessible and inclusive

To support disabled people to use off-road routes by making paths accessible and inclusive we need national guidance for off-road or traffic-free walking, wheeling and cycling routes (to ensure they are smooth, dry and continuous) and ensure funding for local authorities is tied to this guidance to ensure adherence and consistency. In England LTN1/20 includes guidance for traffic free routes, but this focuses on cycling as opposed to walking and wheeling and could include more detail on designing for accessibility.

As custodians of the National Cycle Network, Sustrans has developed traffic-free routes and greenways design guidance.⁷⁰ It covers a wide range of different areas and accessibility and inclusion is considered across each area.

Governments also need to commit to multi-year funding to deliver national plans to improve walking and wheeling off-road routes so that they are accessible to everyone. Sustrans' Paths for Everyone strategy⁷¹ is seeking to do just this, removing barriers, improving safety and wayfinding to make the existing network more accessible and inclusive. We need to go further and faster with all off-road routes.



“We need a consistent approach to destinations and features along the way”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Recommendation 2: Develop local area-wide plans for making off-road routes accessible and inclusive

Local authorities should develop their own plans for improving off-road routes to make them inclusive and accessible. Plans at a minimum should strive to:

- Maintain and improve the quality of regional off-road routes by removing physical barriers, especially where the local authority is the landowner.

70 Sustrans, 2022. Sustrans traffic-free routes and greenways design guide contents.

www.sustrans.org.uk/for-professionals/infrastructure/sustrans-traffic-free-routes-and-greenways-design-guide/sustrans-traffic-free-routes-and-greenways-design-guide-contents

71 Sustrans, 2022. Paths for Everyone – 3 years on.

www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/news/2022/february/paths-for-everyone-three-years-on

- Support national mapping of off-road routes, by providing information about local barriers, accessibility features and on-route amenities.
- Arrange regular audits with planners, decision makers and local disabled people to understand and address barriers and safety issues.
- Provide places to rest with shade cover and rain protection along routes, including accessible toilets.
- Provide wayfinding in accessible formats on routes, for example visual, audible, tactile, and advance online information about routes and destinations.
- Ensure clearly separated walking and cycle paths where space allows, especially in areas of higher footfall to better manage the interaction between different users.
- Link public transport to off-road routes, enabling people to access destinations without expending lots of energy.



“It’s important not only to have the end-to-end wayfinding for a route but information about rest stops and amenities on route, regardless of whether that route is for recreation or being used for work: an accessible route is an accessible route. That information should be made available before you use an off-road route.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Solution 9: Improve the integration of walking and wheeling with public transport

70% of disabled people think the government should invest more in public transport⁷²

Recommendations

1. Improve and adequately resource public transport provision
2. Ensure fully accessible walking and wheeling access to and on public transport including stations and interchanges where disabled people need to connect between modes



“As a disabled person, you have to work on the assumption that things won’t work for you”

Online workshop participant

Current situation and how this impacts disabled people

Good and accessible public transport services are important as many walking and wheeling trips are part of longer public transport journeys. Disabled people are often more reliant on public transport, 40% of disabled people use public transport at least once a week in comparison to 31% of non-disabled people.⁷³

This is partly because car ownership is lower amongst disabled people. The Walking and Cycling Index found 35% of disabled people in comparison to 21% of non-disabled people did not have access to a car in 2021.

⁷² Sustrans, 2022. Walking and Cycling Index.
www.sustrans.org.uk/the-walking-and-cycling-index

⁷³ Sustrans, 2022. Walking and Cycling Index.
www.sustrans.org.uk/the-walking-and-cycling-index

Specific barriers can include:

- Accessing public transport hubs: Many stations are located near large, car dominated roads and public transport stops can be too far away or difficult to reach. Many do not have access in all directions which can cut off communities, like Bristol Temple Meads train station which has no direct access from the south or east.
- Accessibility of public transport hubs: Stations and hubs often do not have step-free access or staff support. Many stations in areas with loud noise and high pollution, making them unsuitable.
- Accessibility of public transport: Services may have a lack of space to park or store mobility aids and often wayfinding is unclear. In addition, bus and train carriages often do not have enough space which causes conflict between people with cycles, people with young children in prams and disabled people. Finally, ticket office closures and the reduction of station staff has a discriminatory impact on disabled people.⁷⁴
- Public transport service levels: If services are irregular, crowded, or expensive people will instead decide to drive or not make certain journeys. The loss of regulatory controls over bus operators in many areas has resulted in uneven provision with the continuation of services along profitable routes, leaving less commercial areas are under-served or isolated. There is also the issue of higher fares from having to use multiple providers to complete a journey, and barriers around transport concessions.
- The cost of door-to-door transport, such as taxis to and from public transport hubs.

74 Association of British Commuters, 2022. Six train operators “in breach of legal requirements” due to discriminatory staffing policies. abcommuters.com/2022/11/22/six-train-operators-in-breach-of-legal-requirements-due-to-discriminatory-staffing-policies



Rowan, Swansea



“I plan all my journeys and reccy them. If plans change, I’ll experience a sensory overload and feel very upset. Smells, sounds, lights and lots of people overwhelm me. Because I’m not physically disabled, I hear a lot of ‘no’ to what I need. And I struggle with people thinking I’m controlling. I can’t help it. It’s awful to live like this.

Buses can be rude, loud and nasty environments. Speaking with the driver in front of everyone is overwhelming. I used to have a pass which I could just flash without speaking, but it’s been taken away. Apparently, I’m not disabled enough. I’ve stopped getting the bus. I wish more time was taken to consider people’s needs, otherwise people become agoraphobic and reclusive. That’s kind of what’s happened to me.

On trains I’ve only had positive experiences. Once, a conductor let me sit in first class when it was crowded and I was panicking. I wish everyone was like this, it would make my life so much easier.

Not all disabilities are visible. Public transport workers need autism training. Because if someone can’t look them in the eye, is anxious, or can’t answer questions, they need to know how to communicate in response.”

What do disabled people want?

The Walking and Cycling Index in 2021 found 70% of disabled people think the government should invest more in public transport. Furthermore 59% of disabled people wanted more investment in walking and wheeling.

The integration of these modes is very important for disabled people as a large proportion of journeys include both walking or wheeling and public transport stages.



“You’ve got to take a whole approach. It’s one thing to set a flat fare [for buses] but if you can’t physically get to the bus stop because you’ve got a mobility impairment then service levels and everything else don’t matter. Your public transport journey starts the minute you [...] leave your house.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Recommendation 1: Improve and adequately resource public transport provision

Without good quality, affordable public transport people will not use services and instead where possible switch to car use. National governments need to lead the way in supporting better public transport across the UK. This includes giving local authorities more powers to regulate private bus companies and routes to ensure bus services meet service levels and provide better geographical coverage.

Public transport should be affordable and include either free or heavily discounted travel for disabled people. If not free, discounted flat fares should be set for bus and train use. Governments should also ensure adequate funding for public transport and set much improved service levels, especially through contracts with private operators.

Recommendation 2: Ensure fully accessible walking and wheeling access to and on public transport including stations and interchanges where disabled people need to connect between modes

We need to fully integrate walking and wheeling with public transport to allow seamless joined up multi-modal journeys.

This starts by improving walking and wheeling access to public transport hubs and stops through basic level services. This should include accessible crossings, better surfacing, sufficient lighting, removal of pavement clutter and entrances on all sides.

Tools that help local authorities identify walking and wheeling catchment areas of key public transport stops should be introduced to help identify areas of high priority and target funding and resources.



“Defining catchments of our public transport nodes and [...] ensuring that there isn’t a sideroad crossing within a 15-minute walk of a major transport node that doesn’t have a dropped kerb and tactile paving, for example.”

Stakeholder workshop participant

Furthermore, we need to ensure public transport hubs and services are fully accessible by:

- Providing accessible information at bus stops, including visual, tactile and audio cues.
- Improving stations and interchanges: level access, lighting, information, shelter, wayfinding, accessible toilets at stations, clear exit signs.
- Funding training provided by disabled experts for public transport staff on different impairments and inclusive ways to increase access to public transport based on the social model of disability and include less-visible disabilities.
- Funding local community transport initiatives to give disabled people who rely on door-to-door transport more affordable options.
- Improving information available about existing public transport, especially in rural areas.



“[Public transport integration] is the one thing that all of the other solutions tie into – pavement parking, wayfinding, information provision – it’s not an easy fix.”

Stakeholder workshop participant



Photo: Brian Sweeney
Disabled Citizens' Inquiry

Acknowledgements

Thanks to everyone who participated in this research, especially the 43 workshop participants who have contributed to this report with their own experiences, views and stories and the 1,183 disabled people surveyed as part of the Ipsos survey for this research alongside the Walking and Cycling Index in 2021.

Thanks to all participants from professional organisations representing the transport sector and disability organisations. This includes representatives from: Active Travel England, Active Norfolk, City of Edinburgh Council, Department for Transport, Disabled Ramblers, Equal Lives, Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) - Northern Ireland, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Mobility and Access Committee Scotland, Transport East, Transport for Greater Manchester, Transport for Wales, University of Westminster (Active Travel Academy), Wheels for Wellbeing.



Appendix

Methodology

Review of existing evidence and insight

We reviewed the findings from the Walking for Everyone report which included a literature review and stakeholder interviews with disability organisations.

Drawing on the wealth of data within the Walking and Cycling Index 2021, we analysed available walking and wheeling data to better understand the experiences of disabled people in relation to participation levels, perceptions and barriers, as well as potential benefits and solutions.

The Walking and Cycling Index (formerly known as Bike Life) is the largest assessment of walking, wheeling and cycling in the UK. The 2021 Index included over 6,000 responses from disabled people across 17 UK cities, city regions and one London Borough.

Citizens' workshops

Sustrans and Transport for All held three workshops in Manchester, Swansea and Norwich. These locations were selected to represent urban and suburban areas across the UK and participants were invited from the cities and the wider regions around each one. We also held an online workshop for people from these locations who were unable or preferred not to attend in person.

The workshops with disabled citizens aimed to understand:

- How disabled people experience the urban streetscape and the key barriers that prevent them from using urban space, including how this differs for people with different impairments and health conditions.
- How barriers could be removed, or solutions developed to make spaces more accessible and inclusive for disabled people across different impairments and health conditions.

- How local transport authorities can implement and prioritise walking and wheeling for disabled people in several key priority areas.

Structure

Workshop participants took part in a series of indoor and on-street activities designed to increase their knowledge and understanding of the barriers and potential solutions from different perspectives.

Each workshop took place across two days and contained five parts. Day 1 focused on understanding how to improve walking and wheeling for everyone, and included:

- A pre-workshop task for participants to consider their journey to the workshop, covering what worked well and what was more challenging - including any walking or wheeling parts.
- An initial 'focus group' style session to understand the preliminary views of participants. Using a pan-impairment approach, common themes and shared barriers were explored.
- Sessions to develop the understanding of participants in relation to the barriers and solutions to improving walking and wheeling. This included knowledge-sharing presentations and a walking and wheeling tour of the local area to explore existing tensions in how space is designed and used, as well as potential approaches to improving streets and neighbourhoods. At the end of Day 1, workshop participants voted for their preferred solutions and the six highest-voted options were selected as the priority topics for Day 2.

Day 2 focused on developing ideas and potential solutions to inclusive walking and wheeling, and included:

- A session with invited 'expert witnesses' from different perspectives to share their current work and take questions from the group, for example local government leaders, transport professionals, disability organisations and academics.

- Sessions for participants and expert witnesses to work together to explore and develop solutions related to the six priority topics voted on the previous day. This brought together lived and professional experience to identify practical ways to make walking and wheeling more inclusive.

The online workshop also took place over two days but with a shorter duration. This allowed people who were unable to join the in-person workshops or preferred an online setting to participate. Except for the walking and wheeling tour, the online participants engaged in the same activities as the onsite participants.

Recruitment and facilitation

43 disabled people attended the workshops in total.

Transport for All led the recruitment of workshop participants. They shared the workshop invites with their membership network and on social media. They also reached out to local disability organisations and groups in the three locations.

10 to 13 participants were invited to each workshop using a selection guide. Participants:

- Had one or more impairments or long-term health condition.
- Lived either in the city itself or bordering urban and rural settlements. All participants travelled within or visited the city on a regular basis. There was no requirement for participants to regularly walk or wheel.
- May use mobility aids to help them walk or wheel
- May have access to a car
- Broadly matched the areas' demographics – for example geographical spread, gender, age, ethnicity and socio-economic group.

Transport for All selected participants from different backgrounds, such as different impairment categories, use of mobility aids, ages, genders, ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds to make sure there was good representation within in each group.

All participants were paid to attend the workshops. In addition, accessibility was carefully considered to ensure that the onsite and online workshops were as inclusive as possible. We liaised with individuals on their access requirements and covered support costs, travel expenses and personal assistant payment where applicable.

The majority of staff organising, facilitating and supporting the workshops were disabled people. This helped us create an environment where participants felt comfortable to talk openly about the barriers they face. A further outcome of this approach was to provide paid employment to more disabled people and involve more disabled people in designing and delivering the project.

Quantitative survey

Sustrans commissioned Ipsos to undertake a telephone survey of 1,100 disabled people across the UK from October to November 2022. The survey was used to explore the experiences and test proposed solutions with a wider representative sample of the disabled community. Proposed solutions were based upon the evidence base, and the ideas posed during the citizens' workshops.

We surveyed 1,183 people with a weighted base of 1,340 people. We found many disabled people have more than one health condition or impairment as shown in [Table 1](#), demonstrating the importance of taking a pan-impairment approach.

Table 1: UK Survey respondents by impairment or health condition

Impairment or health condition	Number surveyed	Percentage surveyed
Blind or visually impaired	94	8%
Deaf or hard of hearing	108	9%
Mobility impaired	670	57%
Learning disability	175	15%
Mental health condition(s)	579	49%
Neurodivergent	170	14%
Long-term health condition(s) or chronic illness, for example, people with diabetes, high blood pressure, long-term pain, energy impairment such as chronic fatigue	632	53%
Other impairments, for example, people with stamina or breathing difficulty, difficulty speaking or making yourself understood, dexterity difficulties	235	20%

Stakeholder workshop

Sustrans, supported by Transport for All, hosted a stakeholder workshop with transport professionals and disability organisation representatives, including disabled people. We worked together to review and develop the top solutions, as voted by participants across the four citizens' workshops.

The workshop aimed to:

- Refine solutions suggested by the public to ensure they fit within the existing context of walking and wheeling policy, investment and delivery
- Employ a pan-impairment approach so that solutions continue to represent disabled people's needs

This created a collaborative opportunity to share our findings, build in the views of others and work across organisations representing different impairments and health conditions.

Glossary of impairment types

Table 2: Glossary of Impairment Types

Impairment type	Described as	Definition
Blind or visually impaired	People who are blind or visually impaired	People with complete or partial visual impairments
Deaf or hard of hearing	People who are deaf or hard of hearing	People with hearing impairments, including hard of hearing
Mobility impaired	People with mobility impairments	People with impairments affecting their mobility
Learning disability	People with learning disabilities	People with problems learning, concentrating, or remembering
Mental health condition(s)	People with mental health conditions	People with depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, phobias
Neurodivergent	People who are neurodivergent	People whose brain or mind has culturally been considered 'atypical' by society such as those with conditions such as dyspraxia, autism and ADHD
Long-term health condition(s) or chronic illness	People with long-term health conditions or chronic illness	People with diabetes, high blood pressure, long-term pain, energy impairment such as chronic fatigue
Other impairment	People with other impairments	People whose impairment category is not listed within the examples above

Crossing design and inclusion for blind or partially sighted people

Table 3: Crossing design and inclusion (adapted from RNIB)⁷⁵

Crossing type	Features and benefits and drawbacks for disabled people
Signal controlled pedestrian crossings	Signal controlled pedestrian crossings, like pelican crossings, are the most accessible crossing design. Lights ensure traffic stops, and beeping sounds and rotating cones provide sight, audio and tactile cues as to when it is safe to cross. Signalised crossings however are the most expensive to introduce and may be ignored by people walking and wheeling on quieter streets.
Zebra crossings	Zebra crossings are less safe when people walking and wheeling need to use sight and sound to judge when it is safe to cross, and to communicate with vehicle drivers about right of way. They are much harder for many blind or partially sighted people to use, although are still better than no crossing provision at all.
Continuous pavements across roads (continuous footways)	Crossings which create level surfaces from pavements across roads are also not accessible for some groups, especially people who are blind and visually impaired. Typically found on side-road crossings these road junctions become “invisible” for people who can’t see the active space for vehicles. It can be very frightening to be passed by a car or bike when you believed you were still on the pavement.

⁷⁵ RNIB, 2022. Seeing streets differently. media.rnib.org.uk/documents/Seeing_Streets_Differently_report_RNIB_2021.pdf



Photo: Brian Morrison
Disabled Citizens' Inquiry