



State of Gloucestershire

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

Housing



Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

What have we learned?

Barriers to living in suitable and accessible housing are experienced widely by disabled people and people with mental health challenges in Gloucestershire.



2 in 3

people had at least one problem with their housing



1 in 3

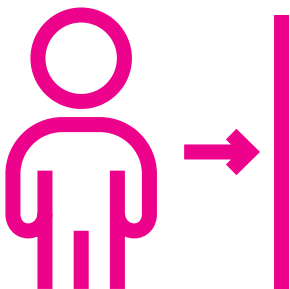
people need extra adaptations to their home



1 in 2

people said their housing had a negative effect on their mental health and wellbeing

Cost was the most frequently reported barrier to solving housing problems and making any adaptations.



One-fifth of people didn't know where to find help or information about housing.

From insights to action...

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

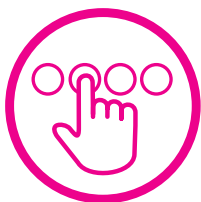
For housing, some suggestions for how you might do this are included below. More detailed recommendations can be found at the end of this booklet.



Engage | Develop or strengthen tenant participation initiatives to co-produce services or support



Inform | Provide information about the accessibility features of properties in different formats, with the option to speak in person



Choice | Gather better data about the access requirements of tenants to offer a range of housing options

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

Our survey findings:

Suitable and accessible housing

In our survey, we asked the respondents:

- If their housing meets their needs
- If they had any housing problems
- If their home needed extra adaptations
- About any barriers to using the internet where they live

We heard that:

- **67%** lived in housing that meets their needs
- **63%** had a housing problem (for example, anti-social behaviour, lack of space to store equipment, needing adaptations, cold or damp)

- Almost two-thirds (**64%**) of those with a housing problem had more than one type of problem
- **29%** needed extra adaptations to help them live more independently

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

- Around half of those with neurological conditions (**51%**), physical disabilities (**46%**), and sensory impairments (**53%** of those with visual impairments and **48%** of those with hearing impairments) needed extra adaptations

- **56%** had at least one barrier to using the internet where they live (such as slow or unreliable internet connections, cost, or lack of devices)



Other findings:

Suitable and accessible housing

The annual English Housing Survey^{1 2} has found that:

- Fewer than 1 in 10 homes (**9%**) in England have four key accessibility features that make them visitable by wheelchair users (such as sufficiently wide doorways and circulation space)
- **53%** of households that require adaptations do not have all the adaptations they need (such as handrails or ramps)

An Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)³ enquiry into the availability of accessible and suitable housing found that:

- **22%** of councils have an Accessible Housing Register
- **62%** of local authorities which managed housing allocations had systems in place allowing them to see the suitability of properties for people with different impairments

- **65%** of local authorities were unable to estimate the proportion of social and/or affordable housing that is accessible

A report by Mencap⁴ highlights that suitable housing should meet both an individual's physical and support needs. Examples of ways to meet an individual's support needs are said to range from having an extra room for a carer to being located near informal support networks.

The latest data gathered by the Office for National Statistics⁵ showed that disabled people aged 16+ (**14.9%**) were over four times more likely than non-disabled people (**3.4%**) to have never used the internet.



In England, fewer than 1 in 10 homes are visitable by a wheelchair user

Our survey findings:

Solving housing problems

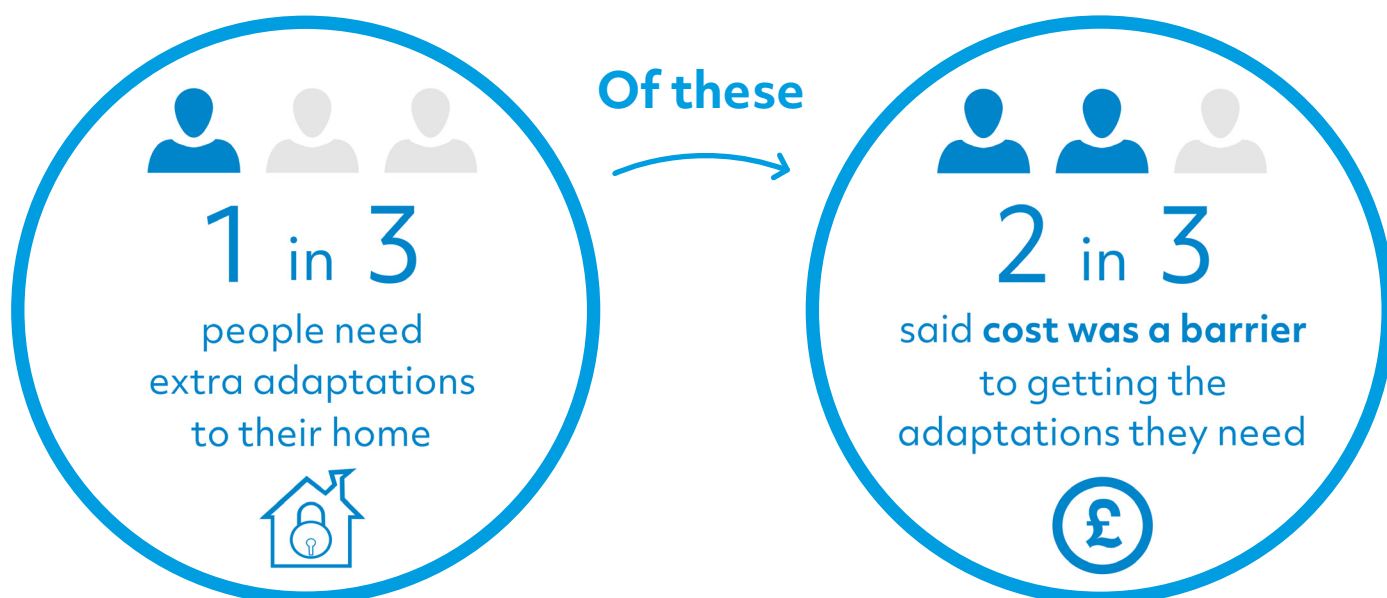
In our survey, we asked the respondents:

- If they know where to find help with their housing
- If they know where to find information about housing
- What makes it hard to solve any housing problems

We heard that:

- Cost was the most frequently reported barrier to solving housing problems, making any adaptations, and improving internet access (for those who couldn't use it as much as they wanted to)

- **65%** of those who reported barriers to making adaptations reported financial challenges (such as adaptations being too expensive and/or being unable to get a grant or funding)
- **54%** knew where to find help with and information about housing
- **One-fifth** didn't know where to find help with or information about housing. This figure was twice as high for those with autism spectrum conditions, with **38%** not knowing where to find help and **41%** not knowing where to find information



Other findings:

Solving housing problems

National research has also highlighted the barriers disabled people and people with mental health challenges experience to solving housing problems.

An EHRC enquiry in 2018 found that, on average, it takes local authorities five months (22 weeks) for adaptations to be approved and installed⁶.

A recent survey by Leonard Cheshire⁷ found that **67%** of local authorities reported home adaptations not being made for disabled people within 12 months. **23%** of local authorities reported disabled people waiting over two years for the completion of works.

The EHRC enquiry⁸ identified barriers to completing household adaptations, including:

- Finding reliable sub-contractors
- A lack of capacity to deal with applications
- A system that is too complicated for applicants
- Persuading landlords to allow adaptations
- A shortage of occupational therapists to assess applications

A survey carried out by Inclusion Gloucestershire⁹ also identified concerns amongst disabled people about housing availability, suitability, security, and costs, including unaffordable repairs and lack of information about how to keep a home in good condition.

Research by Scope¹⁰ has also highlighted the financial challenges experienced by disabled people. On average, disabled people face an estimated average extra cost of **£583 per month** to enjoy the same standard of living as a non-disabled person.

Our survey findings:

Wellbeing, satisfaction, and choice

In our survey, we asked the respondents:

- What difference (if any) their housing situation makes to their physical and mental health and wellbeing
- How much choice they feel they have about where they live
- How satisfied they are with their housing

- **47%** reported a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing
- **39%** reported a negative impact on their physical health and wellbeing

Just over half of people with neurological conditions reported a negative impact to both their physical (**51%**) and mental health and wellbeing (**59%**).

- **62%** were satisfied with their housing overall
- **36%** felt they had no choice in where they live
- People who felt they had a lot of choice were more likely to tell us they were satisfied with their housing

People with mental health challenges had the lowest levels of housing satisfaction and lower levels of choice. Just over half of those with mental health challenges (**56%**) reported a negative impact of their housing on their mental health and wellbeing.



1 in 2

people said their housing had a negative effect on their mental health and wellbeing



1 in 3

people felt they had no choice over where they lived



Other findings:

Wellbeing, satisfaction, and choice

Research commissioned by Shelter in 2017 highlighted the impact of poor quality and unsuitable housing on individuals' emotional wellbeing and mental health¹¹.

This included:

- **1 in 5** adults in England reported a housing issue having a negative impact on their mental health within the last 5 years
- **3 in 10** of those who spoke about a housing problem or worry during the previous 5 years reported a negative impact on their mental health and no previous mental health problems

A YouGov study, commissioned by the National Housing Federation as the first national lockdown was eased in June 2020, found a quarter of British adults (**25.2%**) to have reported health problems arising from the condition of their home¹².

In a literature review on the relationship between housing and health, the Health Foundation cite a number of studies which have linked the presence of damp in homes to respiratory issues, physical pain and headaches – especially amongst children¹³.

Our survey findings:

Connectedness and life satisfaction

In our survey, we asked the respondents:

- If they find people in their local area welcoming
- If they feel they belong in their local area
- If they have people they can ask for help
- If they have people they can call on for company or to socialise
- How satisfied they are with their lives overall



- **57%** agreed that their local area was welcoming and **45%** agreed that they belonged there
- People with autism spectrum conditions were least likely to agree that people in their local area were welcoming (**43%**) and that they belonged there (**19%**)
- More people had someone they could ask for help (**60%**) than could call on for company or to socialise (**52%**)
- People with autism spectrum conditions were least likely to have someone they could call on for company (**38%**)
- **49%** disagreed that they were satisfied with their lives
- People with mental health challenges (**58%**) and autism spectrum conditions (**57%**) were most likely to disagree that they were satisfied with their lives

Other findings:

Connectedness and life satisfaction

The Office for National Statistics (ONS)¹⁴ measure wellbeing through four measures (happiness, life satisfaction, anxiety, and that things done in life are worthwhile).

In the year ending June 2021, disabled people experienced poorer outcomes on all four measures compared to non-disabled people.

The ONS found disabled people are over four times more likely to report feelings of loneliness “often or always” (**15.1%**) than non-disabled people (**3.6%**). The extent to which disabled people experience loneliness was said to be increasing over time.

Those who were disabled and who reported being limited a lot in their day-to-day activities were more than twice as likely to say that they felt lonely “often or always” (**25.5%**) than those who said they were limited a little (**10.4%**). Those limited a lot were also seven times as likely to say they felt lonely as those who were non-disabled.

Recommendations

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

If you would like to discuss any of the recommendations related to this research, please contact Josh Jones via josh.jones@barnwoodtrust.org or **01242 539935**.

1

Proactively and directly engage with disabled people and people with mental health challenges to understand how to improve access to high quality and suitable housing. Co-production and co-design can also help ensure that information produced about housing is accessible

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

For example:

Housing providers could think about developing or strengthening existing tenant participation initiatives to help ensure that a diversity of voices is included.

This may complement other existing channels to gather feedback, such as tenant surveys, and offer an opportunity to engage with individuals in greater depth.



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

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

For example:

Engaging in co-production and co-design activities can include creating and reviewing the information that is provided about a particular service or source of support. This can help ensure that information that is provided is as relevant, timely, and wide-reaching as possible. This includes making sure people know where to go for housing support, advice, and guidance.

2

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

Clear and accessible information is essential in ensuring people can access housing support and solutions. This means providing timely information in a range of formats from Easy Read to audio, large print, and braille across a variety of media, print and digital.

For example:

Engaging with disabled tenants could help identify what information is needed about the accessibility features of a property, for example on the Homeseekers site or property rental websites.

Information that it may be helpful to provide can include maps, photographs, and measurements of internal and external aspects (such as door widths, numbers of steps, and distance to parking).



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

For example:

Having a helpline, helpdesk, or a drop-in to assist people with any aspect of a housing application or enquiry could make an enormous difference. In a digital world where more information is being moved online, face to face interaction is vital for those excluded by access to technology, confidence, or circumstance. Engaging with individuals in this way can help create the conditions that make a service accessible for everyone.

3

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

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

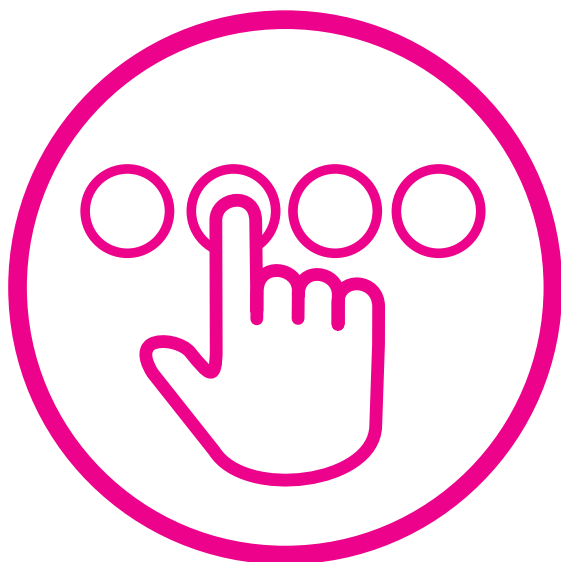
Current, available options might themselves be limiting choice. The conditions and context of surroundings, such as transport provision, local amenities and community safety, are just as important as the variety of properties on offer.

For example:

This may include thinking about the range of housing options and property types that are promoted and clearly available to different people, such as shared ownership, social housing, and private landlords.

For example:

Housing providers may want to explore how gathering better quality data about the access requirements of tenants, the accessibility features of properties, and the surrounding areas could enable greater housing choice.



Sources

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) English Housing Survey 2018: Accessibility of English homes – fact sheet

² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) English Housing Survey: Home adaptations report, 2019-20

³ Equalities and Human Rights Commission (2018) Housing and Disabled People: The role of local authorities

⁴ Mencap (2012) Housing for People with a Learning Disability

⁵ Office for National Statistics (2021) Internet Users Data available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/datasets/internetusers>

⁶ Equalities and Human Rights Commission (2018) see Source 3

⁷ Leonard Cheshire (2020) Disabled people face waits of more than two years for vital home adaptations Press release available at: <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/about-us/our-news/press-releases/disabled-people-face-waits-more-two-years-vital-home-adaptations>

⁸ Equalities and Human Rights Commission (2018) see Source 3

⁹ Inclusion Gloucestershire (2022) Inclusion Gloucestershire Survey: Home and Money

¹⁰ Scope (2019) The Disability Price Tag 2019: Policy report

¹¹ Shelter (2017) The Impact of Housing Problems on Mental Health

¹² The National Housing Federation (2020) Housing Issues During Lockdown: Health, space and overcrowding

¹³ The Health Foundation (2020) Better housing is crucial for our health and the Covid-19 recovery

¹⁴ Office for National Statistics (2022) Outcomes for Disabled People in the UK: 2021

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

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

To get involved in conversations about taking forward the recommendations of this research please contact Josh Jones via josh.jones@barnwoodtrust.org or 01242 539935.

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

01242 539935 | www.barnwoodtrust.org

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