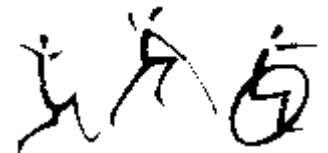
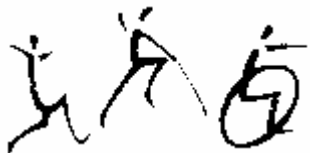




# One Voice

action for disability

## What Disabled People Want and Need 2004



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## Foreword

This report came about as a result of the wishes of One Voice members to see a substantial consultation project undertaken during European Year of Disabled People.

People said that we should ask lots disabled people for their opinions on many different things, and put the information into a report to give to people who make decisions that affect us, so that they are able to make more informed decisions about the services we need and use.

This idea became the One Voice consultancy project “What Disabled People Want and Need”.

Some things have improved a lot for disabled people in the last 10 years – many comments on schools education for example, are very positive. A lot of what people said was shocking, some people felt they didn’t have fundamental rights like the right to stay up late, or go out in the evening, the ability to visit a friend, or do an activity, like their non disabled counterparts.

Not surprisingly, the majority of barriers people felt they faced were around transport and access. Many also felt that they were not being listened to or treated as equal. A lot of the time giving clearer or better information about a services would help.

Obviously this report cannot change things over night, and it does not claim to reflect the views of *all* disabled people, we did however talk to a large number of disabled people from many different backgrounds, most of whom were anxious to be informed of how transport providers, the council, shopkeepers and others, respond to their need and desires documented here.

We do not want this report to lie gathering dust on a shelf, we hope for it to be part of an ongoing process involving everyone with a stake in it’s contents.

Tanya Raabe  
Chair,  
One Voice – action for disability

## Introduction

This report brings together opinions and experiences of many of disabled people. Between October and December 2003, we talked to over 400 disabled people around Wolverhampton, asking for their thoughts on a wide variety of subjects and issues.

We did this by questionnaire, or by using pictures, art, discussion, interview, workshops, - any way that people felt comfortable to contribute.

We talked to people from a wide variety of backgrounds living in Wolverhampton, and with a wide range of disabilities, so that most disabled people's views and life experiences were represented. We also thought it was important to make sure disabled people of all ages had a voice – our youngest contributor was 8, and the eldest (of those willing to give their age), was 89.

We have grouped the comments and views expressed to us into broad subject areas. For each area, we highlight the specific issues as raised by the people, with quotes on the main points raised. Where a comment particularly amplifies an issue, we have put a box around it. For most issues, we have included the top 5 changes people wanted to see. The top 5s were determined by the number of people or groups mentioning them, and are not in order of ranking.

This is not a complete picture, but it is a representative snapshot of opinion at the end of 2003, European Year of disabled people.

We want this report to be a living document referred to by policy and decision makers across Wolverhampton, so that they have a clear idea of our aspirations and needs, and can use these as a starting point for the development of their services.

We hope that this report will be a basis for service providers to hold discussions with us, so that we can work together to improve the lives of Wolverhampton's disabled citizens. The timing is particularly relevant as service-providers will be considering the changes they must make by October 2004, in order to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Not every group we contacted was able to be involved in this project, but we would like to thank the many individuals and groups who took part, including people from the Linthouse, Maltings, Stowheath and Croft Daycentres, Broadway gardens residential area, the Fybromyalgia, Arthritis Care, Sickle Cell and Thalesemia and Stroke groups. The Beacon Centre Youth Group, and young people from Penn Hall, Deansfield and Smestow schools.

Members of DAGLA, the Low Hill, Oxley, and Bushbury disability group, the Disability Network, Workable, and the many users of Shopmobility, who took time to give us their opinions.

And of course the members of One Voice who gave their opinions, filled in questionnaires and took part in workshops.

## Transport

"I use a wheelchair when I am not at home, and I don't have a car. I want to go shopping, or to the pub, or to my friend's flat, like everyone else. Sometimes I have to go to the hospital, or other places. I can't just do this, like anyone else, because I can't get on a bus, and I don't have enough money to catch taxis at £10 to £16 round trip. If I ring Ring and Ride, it's hard to get through to someone, and when I do the buses are full up or I can be taken where I want to go and not brought back, or I have to wait around for 2 hours for a trip home. And I can't just decide I'm going somewhere, like everyone else, I have to know 2 days in advance. Does this make me an equal citizen?"

Transport was seen as the biggest problem for disabled people in Wolverhampton. There were many comments about Ring and Ride and standard public transport, as well as comments by disabled drivers on driving and parking in Wolverhampton. Many of the points raised reinforce the findings arising from the One Voice Transport Week (see Appendix 2).

We have split the comments about transport into 5 types – Ring and Ride (Special Needs Transport), Buses, Disabled drivers, taxis, and metro and trains.

### Ring and ride

Ring and Ride was seen as a service that didn't really meet the needs of disabled people. The main problems identified were:  
it is difficult to get through on the telephone to book a journey  
there are few choices besides shopping trips  
you cannot go where you want when you want  
having to ring 2 days in advance means it is not a viable alternative to public transport.

Here are some of the comments:

"I can't use transport, so I only go from home to the (day)centre. I tried Ring and Ride, I am on a book with them. Every time I 'phoned up we were always told to ring back on a different day. Or else you are told to ring again because they are full. It's no use planning a journey and depending on them. Also you are supposed to ring 2 days and advance, but you don't always know 2 days in advance. It's not a proper service."

Ring and Ride should take you where you want to go. Too many people on ring and ride not just disabled people, so you can only go to majority places like shopping in the day time. Ring and ride still make

enough journeys to boast about, but they're not the journeys we want to go

Ring and ride comes to my home, but it doesn't take me where I want except in town.

Can't always remember to ring the 2 days in advance, because of medication.

Ring and ride service needs changing, but they are not open to change. You need to make an appointment 2 days in advance. It does not compare to people who can catch a bus.

Ring and ride should be changed to meet the needs of the people who use the service, not the ones who run it.

Ring and Ride should cater for wheelchair users who can't use other transport. Rather than constant shopping trips

I used to use Ring and Ride to go to church but sometimes they come back while the service is still on – you can't rely on them so I don't go anymore.

I used to use Ring and Ride because I can't travel on my own, but I can never get hold of them.

Ring and Ride would be better if they had a weekly escort service, as I can't find my way around alone.

Shopping trips would be better kept separate from social and other visits as the service is not reliable enough. There should be a standard accessible bus dealing with shopping rides, Ring and Ride could drop people at the shopping bus stop.

You cannot get through on the telephone to book a ride as it is always engaged.

## **Buses**

Many people could not use the bus service, or felt that the bus was not accessible enough. The main problems were seen as:

A route has kneeling buses sometimes and not others, so it could not be relied upon.

Drivers have no disability awareness, and drive off before you sit down, or cannot operate the ramps, or cannot communicate with disabled people.

There are not enough accessible spaces on the bus.

The colour contrasting is poor.

There are no accessible buses on the route.

The stops are not disability friendly because of lack of seating, or information.

Here are some of the comments:

When they're full it's difficult to find my way around the bus. I can't get to the door to get to the stop, can't always see the bell.  
When the bus arrives at the station, they should shout out the number of the bus because other buses use the same stop.  
Also the drivers only stop if you hold your hand out in town, but I can't see the bus coming.

There are no kneeling buses on our route.

We've got kneeling buses, but they drive off before you sat down so its not safe.

No regular kneeling buses.

Bus drivers don't wait for you to sit down.

Bus stops are too far away, if you can't walk far.

I have no confidence in public transport because no-one could see that I would need to sit down before the bus started off. If I fell I could not get up again.

More wheelchair spaces on buses.

Some bus drivers are okay, but most are rude to disabled people.

Someone should tell you if your bus pass is going to run out soon, if you can't see it.

on buses the number and direction is difficult to read – bus is gone by the time you find out

Driver should tell pushchairs to move (from disabled spot) like in America.

a tail lift on buses and coaches

We need accessible buses for wheelchair users on a regular service.

All drivers should be able to use the ramps

Seats at stops

Area buses going straight to newcross (hospital)

More kneeling buses, they never come where I live

More Free Bus stops with accessible buses.

I have difficulty getting off bus – drivers not willing to wait. They don't stop at kerb, but in road. Timetables impossible to read.

Buses don't take the wheelchair as they are always full of pushchairs. People with pushchairs and prams make me get out of the disabled seat so they can put their pushchair there, and the driver does nothing. I'm too unsteady to travel standing.

All buses should be kneeling – this is good for those with sticks as well as pushchairs and wheelchairs.

More park and ride, more accessible buses, more strategically placed park and ride. Why no park and ride at all the main routes into town, there would be less cars then.

### **Metro and Trains**

Only 2 people commented upon Trains, both comments are included:

Trains do not have disabled persons toilet

not enough accessible areas (on trains), and you usually have to get out of your chair, many people cant. Also you have to let train station know in advance.

Most people who had travelled on the Metro liked it. The main problems people had using the Metro were:

Getting to a stop

Finding an accessible seat or space in the carriage

Broken lifts and escalators

Here are some comments:

Transport costs more expensive because of lots of taxis, and you can't walk far, the metro should be free for people like us

I like the metro but you have to go into town first. It's hard to get there. Once you are on its okay, but it's too far to walk.

Women with pushchairs take up the wheelchair space – the conductors should make them move.

I can't get to the Metro to use it.

There's nowhere for anyone with stick, you just have to keep out of the way of the pushchairs, and hope someone will give up their seat.

Not enough wheelchair spaces on the Metro, and they are usually taken up by pushchairs.

I can't get off when the lift's broke.

### **Disabled drivers**

The main difficulties disabled drivers reported in getting around, related to the frequency and abuse of Blue Badge parking.

Here are some of the comments:

People who aren't disabled park in disabled spaces, and traffic wardens don't do anything about it.

Not enough blue badge parking – especially in town. There should be spot fines for people abusing blue badge bays – asda issue a £40 fine – all the supermarkets should do this, plus the traffic wardens.

More blue badge parking. Especially near shopping centres.

Traffic wardens don't look for your badge, they just write a ticket.

Blue badge should be issued to all sickle cell sufferers

### **Taxis**

Most of the people we talked to did not like or could not use private hire cars. The majority of people used Black Cabs, but found problems with pricing, colour contrasting, and taxi drivers not dealing with or handling disabled people properly:

Getting in and out of taxis is difficult because it is high up and I can't see the handrails.

I like taxi because it come on time and drops me where I want to go.

Taxis are a bit awkward to get in and out of, and black cabs are very expensive

Black cabs are accessible but expensive.

Taxi drivers are not trained properly and often mishandle you.

**Top 5** – these are the comments that most people and groups made or subscribed to:

- 1 Ring and ride should be a realistic alternative to public transport, it is not. It should be replaced or changed so that it is a viable

- transport system for disabled people who cannot use the buses to make their journey.
- 2 There should be more kneeling buses, and a kneeling bus route should always have kneeling buses, so that people know they can catch a bus whenever it is timetabled.
  - 3 Bus drivers should wait until you sit down before driving off.
  - 4 Drivers/conductors of transport should have better or more disability awareness training
  - 5 There should be more Blue Badge parking, better policed.

## Where I live and housing

We talked to people who lived in their own homes, rented homes, and group homes about housing and the area in which they lived.

### **My Home**

Most people were fairly happy about their home, the main problems identified were around support, repairs and maintenance.

Here are some of the comments:

new houses are all supposed to be accessible but they are not. Why is this allowed to happen?

I love my home, all seen to by the council, I feel safe, I feel warm.

repairs and maintenance should be done more quickly to avoid the area becoming run down – in my block they come round every 3 years!

Taps should be easier to turn on and off, this suits everybody.

the option of having a bungalow allocated to me rather than a flat which is oppressive would improve my overall wellbeing and reduce hospital episodes – I could sit in the garden.

Housing do not understand people with sickle cell's needs, we require more adequate heating and regular contact to check on our welfare. All the windows should be double glazed, and have affordable heating

New windows in my flat because they are dropping out.

I live in a home now because I couldn't manage, and couldn't get help. Not enough housing for disabled people or people with mental problems, where they have their flat and there is someone to help them if they want. Also there should be a social are where there are things going on if you want – like films, or sewing.

My (residential) home is not very secure, things get pinched. There should be secure lockers you can put things in.

Letters and information from wardens like a fortnightly news sheet would be a good idea.

Can't carry the washing around from my flat (warden controlled housing) to the washing area, and there's no one to help.

### **Local Area**

People had much more to say about how they would like their local area improved, most comments were about getting around: pavements, dropped kerbs, lack of crossings etc

we need more dropped kerbs and paths when getting around on a scooter, it is frightening on the roads. We are not supposed to go on the roads but trying to get to local shops makes this unavoidable. In order for (..) to get to the hairdressers she has to go a considerable distance out of her way around the straight route because of the lack of dropped kerbs.

Area forums good idea but these need to be made accessible to disabled people.

More information about road works and digging - council information on local radio and tv

Improve safety on some road junctions, increase crossing time. More green man crossings.

I wrote to the Council about there being no dropped kerbs on my half mile journey to the shops, and they put them in, so I can get to the shops in my wheelchair. So that is a good thing that happened

There are a lot of potholes and uneven or broken slabs. Also there are trees and bushes in the way that make it difficult to get around and dangerous. The council come down to have a look, so weeks have passed, and it is dangerous because I can't see very well

More views or things to look at like parks and sculptures.

There are not enough toilets in Bilston. There is only 1 toilet and 1 Radar you have to queue and there is nowhere to sit and wait – the toilets were better before.”

Not enough seats.

Somewhere for the kids to play would make it safe for them and us.

More things to do at nighttime.

A decent daycentre around Parkfields, there are no facilities for us, no meeting places.

There are no dropped kerbs between where I live and the shops – how am I supposed to get to the shops?

The traffic lights should be slower. Also need to be able to cross safely where I live, but I can't.

no parking for my car

Hurt my foot in a pothole – I can't see them – should be fixed as soon as they are there.

The police don't do anything about people parking where they shouldn't.

**Top 5:**

- 1 More choice in accessible housing
- 2 Better communication from Housing Department
- 3 More dropped kerbs and crossing points in local areas
- 4 More pelican crossings with longer crossing times
- 5 More local facilities like seats, play areas

## **Equipment, Aids and adaptations**

Everyone who expressed an opinion said that there was not enough information on these services, and that they needed more and clearer information on what is available, how you apply, how the process works, and so on.

Most people who had an opinion found the personal equipment service to be good if slow. There was a much more critical approach to the service governing adaptations to homes. Some people were happy with the service, but the main points raised about the service were:

lack of information about the process.

people felt they were not listened to or were not given a say  
the length of time the process took.

Poor communication

Here are some of the comments made:

Sometimes they just give build stuff for now, it's not long-term even though they know you are going to get worse, so it costs more in the long run to do it twice.  
Also, showers are minimum size, which isn't good.

What they choose for me is not what I want. They won't put a stair lift in, but they want to put in a big lift that takes up half the room.

If you have an income you have to pay for most of it, but this means all your income goes on disability costs, so you can't do things like everyone else, like holidays or going out. Disability is expensive.

Good service

You can't get what you need if you have your own home.

Bathroom is all white – tiles don't go with the rest of it. It looks like a hospital.

Don't know how to go about getting it. Don't know what I'm entitled to.

It's our house but we don't seem to have any say

"When you need something, you have to wait too long for the thing to come. How do you manage while you are waiting?"

**Top 5:**

- 1 More and better information about the services.
- 2 Officers should communicate more clearly during the process
- 3 More choice
- 4 Shorter wait for assessment
- 5 Help with application form

## **Buildings and Access**

Along with transport, access to buildings and the physical environment was identified by disabled people as a major problem. While many people talked

about their own access problems, some made some more general points, here are some comments:

More automatic doors – all entrance doors to shops and other buildings should be automatic.

More space for disabled people to get around. More ramps and lifts

Insulated handrails

Entrances and tannoys difficult there should be entry lights and written instructions

Using different colours for things so I can find my way. Like red floors for the café.

Buildings should have more space to move about and wider doorways

Too many steep slopes – they might as well build a mountain.

scaffolding should be marked more clearly, clear signs on any obstruction

In big areas, walkways should be covered.

**Top 5 :**

- 1 Entrances should be wide level and well lit with automatic doors
- 2 Big lifts are the best way to get from floor to floor
- 3 All steps should have white or yellow lines on the edge and rails you can hold onto
- 4 Signs should be bigger and easier to understand
- 5 More space and more seats

## The City Centre

Most people thought that the city centre was slowly improving, but that disabled access needs were not really being taken into account. Many people said that the changes meant it was easier to get in and out of some of the shops, but harder to get around the Mander and Wulfrun centres. The main problems people identified related to moving between floors, space and layout, and seating. Here are some comments:

Getting up and down in the centre is hard. The Wulfrun centre steps are just black and white lines and you can't see where one step ends. They've messed up the Mander centre. You can't see the steps on the escalators, and the curving staircase has wooden rails you can't hold onto. Better if they spent the money on the lifts, they're too small, and always full of pushchairs, so you have to wait for ages, and no seats to wait.

more information about what is on – like a large screen tv telling you about events coming up in the city centre – like Birmingham.

More social facilities in the city centre – not just shops – places you can go and just sit, read the paper, have a coffee, meet people.

More places to sit down.  
Tables or benches in city centre.

Not enough dropped kerbs around centre.

Better signposts – more pictures  
I don't go to the city centre because I get lost and can't understand the signs.

There is not enough room to get to the new disabled toilets so no one uses them.

clearer and larger price signs in shops, especially on special offers, I can't read amounts on packages or ingredients or sell-by dates, this should be more clearly marked, or on the shelf where products are stored.

Disabled persons toilets in all restaurants, pubs (I don't go to a lot of restaurants because of a lack of such facilities)

Better layout of shops – more space to get around.  
Proper access all shops, pubs, restaurants etc

Shops tend to ignore children – don't seem to realise that children can be visually impaired even if they have canes  
Shopkeepers are horrible to me because I speak slow. Want shopkeepers not to be horrid to me.

Shelves with goods on are too high, and things in shops are too close.  
Changing rooms you can get into and use

Goods in shops are too close together – particularly clothes shops.  
More accessible shops and with lower counters, so we can see.

Ramps and more lightweight doors on shop entrances.  
Shopmobility is good, but could do with staying open longer, because you can't always get to town until the afternoon, and then you have to rush.

More disabled persons parking spaces. Better enforcement of disabled persons parking – able bodied persons who use our parking spaces

More parking for people who can't use public transport  
The traffic wardens never seem to ticket people using disabled parking who \re not disabled.

If there were lots more free buses that were level that everyone could use to go all around town then there would be less traffic.

Market is a mess, you can't get around it if you are disabled, and you cant find anything. There are not enough signs around the town or the market for where things are.

Social services or city centre should make a service to help disabled carry their shopping.

## **Sport, social and leisure**

Nearly everyone we talked to believe that their sport and leisure needs were not being met. Most people either could not use a facility because their access needs were not being met, or could not get to the facility because of transport difficulties. There were many comments in this area, here are a few:

It was okay when there was community sports sports in town but now its nothing in town, so you have to get a bus into town and then another to the sport place, and it may only provide 1 of the things you want to do. It's no good if you don't have a car. Community sports used to take you to do swimming and other things.

There is nothing to do in the evenings. I would like a disability club where you could go once a week, to drink a beer, or just meet other disabled people and chat. You could meet other people and decide to go on trips together. There is very little for disabled people.

The Mobile library is really good.

swimming – higher temperatures, more brine baths, personal assistants available if you need it.

If someone could take me to central baths and help me while I was there, then bring me home, I could go swimming.

Heated pools – at least one pool higher temperature – shouldn't have to go out of the borough to use a pool

Changing rooms at Compton and central baths should be improved.

Central Baths – no hoist. When the equipment break down it should be fixed immediately, not left broken. All pools should have hoists and accessible changing rooms.

transport to and from leisure facilities.

At sporting facilities most things are mainstream there is little or no provision for disabled athletes. Facilities at Aldersley are very hard to use in wheelchair.

I would like to see hydrotherapy provided in at least one of Wolverhampton City Leisure Centres.

Access to gym equipment and buildings. – closed sessions just for disabled with assistants who are trained about disabilities.

Personal trainers and coaches who have knowledge of disabilities

Let us know when a facility is accessible – contact disabled groups direct, come and talk to disabled groups about what you've got and how to make it better.

more stuff to do and see in my area – like at community centres.

I would like to do clay, or use the computer, without having to try to get into town.

It would be good if there were more places to do art. Like a drop in art centre, where you could just turn up and paint or do photography or on the computer. Not where you have to go every week for months. Disabled people can't always do that.

More things in parks that people could go to like plays and comedy, so people could get together to watch things.

Would like transport so I can get to Grand theatre.

Would like to see more plays at the Grand with disabled actors.

Deaf children not catered for in social groups – no clubs in Wolverhampton.

Beacon youth club not advertised enough

I Want to go on day trip to seaside-go on beach in wheelchair and eat big chocolate ice cream.

Music and cultural activities at school are excellent as deaf children are included in all activities, but outside school there is nothing.

Amongst the *many* viewpoints expressed, the **top 5** that the majority of people mentioned or subscribed to were:

- 1 Accessible transport to and from a venue
- 2 More information and consultation on accessible facilities
- 3 All swimming pools should have working hoists, and one should be warmer for disabled people.
- 4 Trainers, assistants and other staff should be trained in disability issues and help disabled people
- 5 All local leisure facilities should be accessible.

## Health and medical services

The majority of comments in these areas specifically concerned Newcross Hospital or the contributor's relationship with his/her GP. Here are some of the main comments:

You can never get an appointment at the doctors you have to keep ringing up to see if they've got one, you have to book on Friday for the following week and if you can't get one you've had it.

Better training for doctors' receptionists in dealing with older and disabled people.

Medical staff should listen to expertise of patients

It would be better if you could have x-rays at the GP surgery

More health centres where you can be seen, instead of waiting days for appointment.

Doctors should be more willing to make home visits.

There should be counselling services in local areas – at doctor's premises.

Takes too long for an operation, then they cancel. I've been waiting 3 years and the longer I wait the worse the pain gets

When you have an appointment you have to be on time, but then you have to wait hours to be seen.

The new area they built at Newcross is supposed to be better for disabled, but the desk where you hand in x-rays is too high, and I couldn't get into the waiting room they sent me to, so I had to sit in the corridor partially blocking the door. Me and my helper couldn't fit in the changing room, so they had to move things out. When I went to have the x-ray, they couldn't get the scanning table low enough for me to get on, and when I went to the toilet it was really small and awkward, and I was jammed in.

It's hard to find your way about Newcross and its no good being dropped off (as) you need somebody with you.

Parking at Newcross is terrible – I can't park and I can't get around. After 9.15 all the parking spots are taken and no one checks them to see who's using them. They don't have blue badges.

Waiting for long time in hospital in uncomfortable place, and not knowing what's going on and nothing to do and the chairs are not comfortable.

Finding my way around Newcross makes me ill.

The signs inside the hospital are hard to see and confusing.

PALS – make them more accessible

Easier access to information on what's available

Doctors and consultants need to explain better about their health care.

Newcross is very difficult for disabled people to get around

The **top 5** comments were:

- 1 Disabled parking at Newcross should be improved
- 2 GPs should make home visits to disabled people who cannot come to the surgery
- 3 Staff should have better disability awareness
- 4 Staff should communicate better with disabled people
- 5 Disabled access should be greatly improved around Newcross

## Personal assistance and care services

Few people were happy with the care and support services they received. Many people felt that the care services negotiated with social services should be more closely related to how they wanted to run their lives. Here are some comments:

I need help with tidying up my flat, and with decorating, and gardening, and getting rid of rubbish, but there is no one to help unless I am over 65. I need someone to get the rubbish out of the shed or tidy the garden, I can't do it myself.

I wish I could have the help I need to live my life, rather than the help social services say I need.

I used to have a home help until the service was abolished. I used to pay social services £48 per month. I know I could employ someone myself but it was good to know that the service was vetted by Social Services.

Daycentres and drop-in should be more interesting with more to do. People just sit around drinking tea and making baskets.

They should have services for all people. Blind people get on the bus and go to their places with their people, so they don't know what mental or wheelchair people are like. It is wrong to just send people with other people the same. They should give young people the chance to get together whatever their disability.

We should not have to pay for this

Help with care service without paying so much

How come we have to pay towards our care, but we can't choose what we want – I want someone to clean my house, because I can't.

Quicker response to care needs especially those who have just left hospital

Need help cleaning as I can't do it.

I don't have home help as I can't afford it with my electric bill. On a good day (my wife) and I can get me in and out of the chair, but most days we need help"

I Would like to go out at night when it gets dark. Sometimes I would like to stay up after 9.00 but that's when my carer comes to put me to bed. And they make it awkward to ask for a later time.

I'm always waiting for keyworker.  
Would like to have keyworker to come earlier so I could go to town.

There should be a Night centre, as well as day centres. So there are places to go when you can't sleep because you are worried.

The **top 5** was:

- 1 more say in the services received
- 2 help with cleaning
- 3 more control over times support is received
- 4 more activities at daycentres
- 5 more care support for social activities

## money and benefits

Most contributors found the benefits system difficult to follow and hostile. Beyond wishing they had more money, the following is a representative set of comments:

easier forms and help with forms – the process should be transparent, instead of secretive.

Benefits people act like you are trying to steal from them.

More information about where to go for help.

More permitted work earnings, so that you can work a few more hours, and not work if you feel ill.

I don't understand benefits. I don't know what benefits I am on, and what I should be on and the dole office never tell you.

I don't know when my money has gone into the bank. It is supposed to go in monthly, but I don't know if it has. What if it doesn't go in, and I don't know until I need to use it. Then I have to go to the benefit office and try and get the money and it is very stressful, and the people are rude and don't help you, like you are lying.

It would be nice if disabled people got the extra money for Xmas, like old people. Because it costs a lot of money. Also, I feel the cold because of my legs, but I don't get extra money for heating.

Not enough money for transport.

Care money makes no sense. No one will employ me because I'm too ill half the time, and need to be looked after. But some of the time I am okay, so I can't get care money even if I need it.

Give DLA to people who need it

Less hassle to get benefits you are entitled to

More money for yourself so you can make choices about your life – being disabled is expensive.

The **top 5** comments were:

- 1 To know what you are entitled to
- 2 Forms easier to understand
- 3 Heating allowance if you need it because of disability
- 4 Widen eligibility to DLA based on disability need
- 5 Staff less hostile

## Work and employment

Some of the people we spoke to were still at school or retired, but where they expressed an opinion, it was included. Here are some of the things people said:

Employers have a very negative attitude towards employment of disabled

Volunteer bureau should have a much better understanding of disabilities. Also you can't get in their building so they don't want us.

Help with confidence building for newly disabled.

There is no encouragement to work, and we can't get jobs that give us the kind of money we need to support our disability.

I would like to be able to do something a few hours a week, without losing my benefit. Sometimes I am too worried to do anything, so I would like to be able to do something only when I felt able.

Employers should be more flexible.

Some places won't employ disabled people.

Lots of disabled people leave school and are put onto one course after another but with no job at the end of it.

We have lots of skills and no employment – how are you supposed to get experience if no one will employ you.

Like to have vacancy lists from disabled friendly employers. Job centre could send these out.

I worked all my life, and look what I'm down to.

When I grow up I want to be an artist working with paint or clay – I don't need to see for this.

I went for a job and the jobcentre said it was accessible, but it was up 2 steps, so I couldn't get to the interview, they wanted to carry me in.

More jobs where you can work when you are well, more reduced hours and jobshare

More information on disability aids to improve working conditions, more information to employers about employing disabled people

Make benefits laws clearer, so it's easier to leave incapacity, try a job, and go back to incapacity when necessary

We make chairs and stools at the daycentre but don't get paid – this would be a good job.

You can't work all the time because of disability. Employers don't like that, they should be more flexible if the job allows it.

The **top 5** points were:

- 1 Benefits system should be more flexible
- 2 Employers should have more flexible hours where possible
- 3 Employers should be told of benefits of employing disabled
- 4 More chances for work experience for disabled people
- 5 More information about accessible jobs

## **Training, education**

We talked to school children, people at college, in university, people using adult education or daycentre services, and people who were not involved in education or training.

There was a big distinction between what people said about school and college or training. Comments about school were largely very positive, and there were lots of ideas about how colleges or courses could be improved. Here are some of the comments:

CCTV at school doesn't work very good – one at home is better. I've got all the equipment I need.

Text books at school are the right size

I can join in all activities at school.

Appreciate extra help at exams for visually impaired

At school I'm sometimes made to feel odd one out if in a group discussion or activity

At school a lady teaches me touch typing for high school – I'll have a laptop there. I am trying to get a bigger screen for my computer; I have most help (with equipment) at school.

I can't catch the ball so people pass it to my teacher who gives it to me. Don't like football at school because they play with a hard ball and sometimes I get hit

More courses near where you live, or transport to and from.

If they give you or lend you a computer you can do the course form home.

My illness is up and down, I can't always stick to something. I'd like to be able to pick up and put down a course when I wanted to.

I would like someone with me when I attend.

It would be good if there was a computer at home for housebound people. If the colleges provided this with broadband then a person could do a course from home in their own time when they felt like it, and they could talk to other people on the course in chatrooms, and you could look things up.

Perhaps when the Disability Discrimination Act comes into force in 2004 we will get more action. I hope the willingness is there.

Open learning - more of this kind of thing where you learn what you want instead of what the college wants. Also when there are more things out of town like colleges,. They should provide transport.

Colleges should tell you about their disability services when you start and give you a booklet or tape.

More computer training that isn't just word processing. Disabled people might be able to do jobs making websites or designing posters if they had the training.

Colleges and courses should be made more accessible, so anyone can do a course.

Transport is an issue – I can't easily get to and from the colleges.

More disability educated lecturers

I can't get to the Art Classes

I would like to do knitting and crafts, but I wouldn't like to go to college because I don't know the way. College is too big.

It would be good if there were more things to learn at the daycentre.

Would like to learn more things at college 'cos I enjoy going to college where I do dressmaking.

When you get on a course in college they don't give you the proper support like readers, carers, and someone to talk to if you've got problems, that's there to help you, not just make sure the college gets its money.

The **top 5** issues were:

- 1 Accessible transport to and from college
- 2 More courses at accessible places in the local area
- 3 Improve disability access to colleges
- 4 More help and support for disabled students
- 5 More flexibility in the provision of education and training.

## Getting action

People were asked about what they did or would like to do when things went wrong and they wanted change. Here are some of the comments:

There should be a one-stop-shop.

A lot of council and health policies don't make sense: who decided if you've had a stroke you can't have a stairlift. Who decided a person can have an electric wheelchair but it is not allowed outside. This doesn't help people in their real lives.

When something goes wrong I have to write a letter to the Council. Then you wait for the reply. Most of the time the reply makes no sense, so then you ring them up, and they put you through to someone who transfers you to someone else. Sometimes you are cut off, sometimes you are put on hold, and sometimes you can speak to someone who knows what you are on about. Usually they just say “this is our policy”, they don’t explain things.

talk, shout – keep on shouting

need to improve partnership working with all agencies

They don’t want to know. I phoned council about new windows because mine is rotten. No one gets back to you. I’ve been waiting to here since July (3 months)

Manufacturers need to improve their packaging so the are easier to open.

No one explains. When you ring up the council they don’t speak to you like a person about whether they can help you, like the bins. Some of them are okay. Mostly they just say we are dealing with it and put the phone down. Then you have to ring them another day – same thing.

We don’t know how to get action – telling people doesn’t change anything, no one listens what’s the point

It’s hard as I don’t know what to do. I need someone to help.

My window is rotten, there is mould and the Council just say they have a window programme and they’ll get to me when it’s my area. What am I supposed to ‘til then?

## **Being listened to and consulted**

Most of the people we talked to had been asked their opinion on a service they received, over the last few years. Many people said that the Council was much more interested in asking their views in recent times, but also, much less willing to act upon them. Here are some of the comments made, some are general, some are about specific agencies:

If I am being listened to, I like some sign they are acting upon my interest, else what is the point.

Giving more time and patience to people. Especially if they find it hard to speak or to be understood.

They don't tell us what they did with our ideas

People don't listen, and they are rude because you are ill.

People at the council and the electricity are not very friendly and it worries me.

Council listens but don't act.

I feel we are often consulted, but not listened to. The outcomes of consultations very rarely reflect the opinions put forward by the general public or even the groups to which I belong.

Disabled people are not listened to enough. Council and Health Authority asks but doesn't listen. Don't act on what we want and won't fully involve us in decision making about public services.

No one listens to you when you are disabled. If they ask what you think

Nobody listens when you are disabled – they think we are brain-dead

Should be willing to make personal visits. People only want to know what I think if I can come to them.

Consultation needs to be more than just listening, it means involving the patient or service user in decision making about services they receive, it means a commitment to put the service user at the centre improving and developing it for future users.

**Top 5 comments:**

- 1 Feedback after the consultation process is over
- 2 The consultation process should be easier to understand
- 3 Agencies should consult in a way that suits those being consulted
- 4 Agencies should demonstrate what actions they have taken as a result of consultation
- 5 Service users should be involved in the development of services

**The Law, Government policy, Council policy**

A lot of people made general comments about the way their country or area was run, we have grouped them together here:

Councils are going in the right direction. Don't employ enough disabled though.

DDA haven't noticed any changes due to this

Government should spend money on UK citizens not off fighting wars for someone else and then they can't give us enough money to live on.

There should be more referendums, not just on the euro, the government doesn't care about people.

Shouldn't need charity, should be done by the Government or council, we pay enough in taxes and rates.

Council and government, lack of long term planning. Keep changing their minds, like transport – lot of money wasted.

I can't get in to the voting place, so they don't care what I think.

Government should be funding help for disabled people and not depending on people giving

Need to explain their policies better so we can understand

Well done EEC for making people commit to disability – we have rights too

## **Charities**

Most of the people we talked to did not have an opinion about charities. For those that did, most saw them as organisations to give to, rather than get from. Most people felt that Guide Dogs and Compton Hospice were good charities, but that the rest were out of touch with disabled people's lives – here are a few comments:

Charities have their own agenda – not what disabled people want.

The big ones are just businesses really.

Charities should do what the disabled people want, and communicate with us, not decide for us.

Charities are not interested in the individual and his needs, they just want our money. They are not accessible.

Quite a few charities are good for older people, but not younger people with disabilities.

Once you give money to charity they think you are a bottomless pit. It's all about what you can do for them, not what they can do for you. They don't do hardly anything. Charities collect but ordinary disabled people don't benefit. Only Compton Hospice gives to people.

There are a lot of charities supported well by Wolverhampton City Council but many of them are for the regeneration of specific areas of the community rather than the City as a whole.

If someone collects for the MS society, I don't know what they do with it. They've never done anything for me. They should be asking us what they can do for us, else they are not the MS Society, they are the society making money from MS

## **Information and communication**

Lack of information, or poor communication was a theme running throughout. People often commented that they didn't know what was going on, or things weren't explained properly.

Often it was felt that a service could be substantially improved if the provider took care to provide more information, and in a way that was easy to understand. Here are some of the points made:

I wish they would talk to me directly

Council emailing list - they could send out emails about what they are doing.

too much waffle

There should be a named person to handle any problems you have or help you need.

Letters from the health authority worry you because they are not friendly and do not tell you what's wrong but make you think something is - they are very cold. It would be better if they said 'come to the clinic on such a day so we can run tests, or so you can speak to the consultant about your condition', or something like that.

When you ring someone for help, you – should include a named person, and if you say "who am I speaking to, they say "who are you" or "why do you want to know". Sometimes at the hospital they just put

you through while you are still talking, and you don't always know who they've put you through to

more leaflets and posters through my door about services and events.

The council website makes no sense

More information in Punjabi large print.

More information on sides of buses or bus shelters about things going on. There is no information on where to go for fun and whether I can get in with my wheelchair.

More leaflets to shop mobility and to my home, so I know what is going on.

Information on the ring and ride bus is good. The council don't tell you what's going on.

More posters and leaflets in places disabled people go.

More one-to-one with service changes, there should be a person you can contact to talk you through it.

When things change people don't explain it properly

the council always sends me letters in that tiny print, so I have to find someone else to read it for me, even if it is confidential

If a person is blind or dyslexic its no use corresponding by letter, make social services more user friendly in their communication

I wish they talked or wrote in simple language – I don't know what they're on about half the time

If abbreviations are to be used, state the full meaning first.

The Council and hospital never send me taped information, but I can't read.

Why don't councils send videos to daycentres about what they are trying to do

Videos for deaf with sign language and subtitles.

I have to pay for an interpreter to see the doctor or at interviews – this isn't fair.

The **top 5** issues were:

- 1 Send information to places disabled people use.
- 2 Provide information in a variety of formats and languages
- 3 Use plain language
- 4 Explain the issues more clearly
- 5 Make sure a person can understand the information you are giving

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 - List of Top 5s

#### Transport top 5

- 1 Ring and ride should be a realistic alternative to public transport, it is not. It should be replaced or changed so that it is a viable transport system for disabled people who cannot use the buses to make their journey.
- 2 There should be more kneeling buses, and a kneeling bus route should always have kneeling buses, so that people know they can catch a bus whenever it is timetabled.
- 3 Bus drivers should wait until you sit down before driving off.
- 4 Drivers/conductors of transport should have better or more disability awareness training
- 5 There should be more Blue Badge parking, better policed.

#### Where I live/Housing top 5

- 1 More choice in accessible housing
- 2 Better communication from Housing Department
- 3 More dropped kerbs and crossing points in local areas
- 4 More pelican crossings with longer crossing times
- 5 More local facilities like seats, play areas

#### Equipment aids and adaptations

- 1 More and better information about the services.
- 2 Officers should communicate more clearly during the process
- 3 More choice
- 4 Shorter wait for assessment
- 5 Help with application form

#### Buildings and Access

- 1 Entrances should be wide level and well lit with automatic doors
- 2 Big lifts are the best way to get from floor to floor
- 3 All steps should have white or yellow lines on the edge and rails you can hold onto
- 4 Signs should be bigger and easier to understand
- 5 More space and more seats

#### City Centre

- 1 Better vertical circulation
- 2 More seating
- 3 Better layout at entrances and inside shops
- 4 More circulation space in shops
- 5 Better communication with shop staff

### **Sport, social and leisure**

- 1 Accessible transport to and from a venue
- 2 More information and consultation on accessible facilities
- 3 All swimming pools should have working hoists, and one should be warmer for disabled people.
- 4 Trainers, assistants and other staff should be trained in disability issues and help disabled people
- 5 All local leisure facilities should be accessible.

### **Health and Medical services**

- 1 Disabled parking at Newcross should be improved
- 2 GPs should make home visits to disabled people who cannot come to the surgery
- 3 Staff should have better disability awareness
- 4 Staff should communicate better with disabled people
- 5 Disabled access should be greatly improved around Newcross

### **Personal assistance and care services**

- 1 more say in the services received
- 2 help with cleaning
- 3 more control over times support is received
- 4 more activities at daycentres
- 5 more care support for social activities

### **Money and Benefits**

- 1 Information on what you are entitled to
- 2 Forms easier to understand
- 3 Heating allowance if you need it because of disability
- 4 Widen eligibility to DLA based on disability need
- 5 Staff less hostile

### **Work and employment**

- 1 Benefits system should be more flexible
- 2 Employers should have more flexible hours where possible
- 3 Employers should be told of benefits of employing disabled
- 4 More chances for work experience for disabled people
- 5 More information about accessible jobs

### **Education and Training**

- 1 Accessible transport to and from college
- 2 More courses at accessible places in the local area
- 3 Improve disability access to colleges
- 4 More help and support for disabled students
- 5 More flexibility in the provision of education and training

**Being listened to and consulted**

- 1 Feedback after the consultation process is over
- 2 The consultation process should be easier to understand
- 3 Agencies should consult in a way that suits those being consulted
- 4 Agencies should demonstrate what actions they have taken as a result of consultation
- 5 Service users should be involved in the development of services

**Information and Communication**

- 1 Send information to places disabled people use.
- 2 Provide information in a variety of formats and languages
- 3 Use plain language
- 4 Explain the issues more clearly
- 5 Make sure a person can understand the information you are giving

## **Appendix 2 - Extract from One Voice Transport Week Report**

Here are notes from the 3 escorted journeys disabled people made in One Voice transport week July 2003.

### **Journey 1**

#### **Wolverhampton Centre – Bilston Centre - Wolverhampton Centre**

The disabled person making the journey was Alison, who was using a wheelchair. She was accompanied on the day, by Cllr Christine Irvine, and some friends.

She began from the Metro station in Wolverhampton. Upon arrival, it was revealed that the lifts at the Bilston were broken. This meant Alison would be unable to get off the Metro platform and into Bilston.

When the Metro carriage arrived, she was able to find a place to comfortably sit in her wheelchair. She asked the conductor what to do about the lifts, and he told her to get off at an earlier stop and talk to a member of staff using the Passenger Assistance intercom.

At the Crescent, Bilston, Alison used the intercom. There was some delay while staff found out what they were supposed to say, Alison was reluctantly offered an accessible taxi into Bilston town.

The taxi was the smoothest part of the journey, everyone fitted into the taxi, the driver from Rainbow Cabs knew how to assist a wheelchair user.

The group went immediately to the bus station and looked for an accessible bus back to Wolverhampton. There were none. No one knew when the next one was – a regular passenger said there was often one at midday, in 10 minutes, so we waited. The bus wasn't accessible. One of Alison's party found a member of staff and asked him when the next accessible bus would be along, he had no idea, but rang the bus garage and found out it was at 2.10. If we had waited, it would have put our journey time at around 3 ½ hours. We instead opted to take the staff member's advice, and go down to the main road to catch the 79 bus which comes every 10 minutes.

Leaving the bus station for the 79 bus stop, there were 2 pavements without dropped kerbs, which were difficult to negotiate, and meant travelling on the road for some of the time.

When the 79 arrived, the bus driver did not know about using the ramp, and had to be talked through it. Alison was able to find a space to park herself and wheelchair. On the rest of the journey, the driver did not wait for people to sit down at the stops before he drove off. Several times there were older people or people with sticks stumbling towards a seat.

### **Journey 2**

#### **Around Wolverhampton by standard bus**

The journey was made by Mary a blind woman, and her dog Wilson. They were accompanied by Cllr Elias Mattu.

Mary was able to get on and off the bus okay with assistance from her dog, but finding a seat was difficult, as the dogs don't recognise the pull-down seats at the beginning of the bus.

None of the drivers waited for Mary to find a seat or sit down before driving off, making it very difficult for a blind or visually impaired person to use the buses safely.

### **Journey 3 Tettenhall**

The journey was attempted by Barry and Lin – one a wheelchair user, one with mobility difficulties. They were accompanied by Cllr Joan Stephenson. The aim of the journey was to travel from their home in Tettenhall to town and back again. But they never made it further than the Wergs road.

They waited at the bus stop for the 501, and stopped many buses, but none of them were kneeling/accessible buses. After a while a driver was able to tell them that there are accessible buses on the route, but only in the evening. Cllr Stephenson suggested that Ring and Ride was contacted to see if they could help. Ring and Ride informed that you have to wait 2 days for your journey. The Councillor questioned whether there was a Ring and Ride bus going into town that a person could get on – there wasn't.

Next a taxi firm was contacted. Barry was only able to use Black Cabs, and the price they quote for the journey 1 way is £6 or more.

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If you want us to talk to you about anything in this report, contact us.

You can get this report on cd-rom, floppy disk or webpage file. You can also get a copy on audio tape, in large print, or on yellow paper.

Contact the office and tell us how you want it.

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