



# Discrimination Against Disabled People in York



Independent  
Service User Forum  
(Mental Health)



York University Student Union

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## Why we use the term disabled people

At Healthwatch York, we follow the social model of disability and therefore use the term disabled people as a political one. People may have physical or sensory impairments, mental health conditions, or learning difficulties, but they face barriers in daily life because of the way society has developed. They are, in essence, disabled by society. For example, a wheelchair user may have a physical impairment, but if buildings are developed with ramps and lifts, they are not 'disabled'. Similarly, if we provide sign language interpreters at meetings, Deaf people who use signing are not disabled, but if we do not, they are. In our focus group notes we have used the term school for young disabled people as opposed to “special” school, as many disabled people find the use of the word “special” problematic. It has become a problematic term because some non-disabled people use the term respectfully whereas others use the term as an insult. Therefore, we have opted not to use the word at all.

We are aware that some people are more comfortable talking about “people with disabilities”. It is not up to us to tell disabled people how they should describe themselves, and we aim to reflect their terminology in our one-to-one conversations with them. But, we feel it is important that as an organisation we use the terminology that reflects our belief in empowering people and removing barriers to their inclusion. We have worked closely with a number of disabled people who are passionate campaigners for a greater understanding of the social model. We hope by using their preferred wording, and explaining why we do this, that we can support their work to change society for the better.

## Discrimination against disabled people in York

This report looks at the discrimination disabled people face in York. It sets out how we identified this as a problem and what we have done in response. It makes recommendations to several organisations to tackle inequality and give disabled people a stronger voice in the community. In this report we look at discrimination predominantly in terms of the attitudes disabled people faced both from service providers (GPs, shop assistants etc.) and the general public. We conclude that disabled people face a variety of discrimination from both service providers and the general public.

Nationally about one in five people live with an impairment or long-term health condition.<sup>1</sup> The population of York is 198,051<sup>2</sup>. According to the 2014 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for York<sup>3</sup> “6.6% of the population have a long-term health problem or disability which significantly limits day to day activities, this represents 13,018 people. Additionally, 3.1% of those aged 0-24 have a limitation in day-to-day activities. In 2009, 2,304 people in York were diagnosed as having dementia. By 2015, this number is predicted to increase to 2,708. It is estimated that at any one time there are approximately 170 individuals living with a mental health condition<sup>4</sup> for every 1,000 people aged 16 to 74 years in York. This equates to around 25,000 people experiencing various kinds of mental health conditions ranging from anxiety and depression to severe and enduring conditions including dementia and schizophrenia, (data from 2008). Finally, there are 18,224 self-declared unpaid carers in York, 9.2% of the population”.

Taken together these statistics represent a significant proportion of the local population who are affected by disability or mental health in some way.

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<sup>1</sup> Family Resources Survey 2011/12

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.york.gov.uk/info/200630/census/249/census/2>

<sup>3</sup> Figures available from: <http://www.healthyyork.org/>

<sup>4</sup> We use the term mental health conditions in this report because in our conversations with mental health service users, they told us this is the terminology that they prefer.

## Why Healthwatch York decided to look at this issue

In Healthwatch York's work plan survey in Summer 2013, of the 97 people who responded to the survey 61.9% said living with long-term conditions and mental health conditions were topics that Healthwatch York should look at. There have also been several issues of discrimination against disabled people reported in Healthwatch York's issues log. For example, one man told us about a relative who is a wheelchair user. Theoretically, with support from her carer and her bus pass she should be able to use buses to travel around York. However, a large proportion of her money is being spent on taxis because bus drivers often don't allow her to get on the bus. Online research has also revealed examples of disabled people in York being discriminated against. This included disabled theatre-goers who were forced to pay twice as much for tickets as non-disabled theatre-goers to attend a show at the Barbican in York, simply because they were disabled:

<http://disabilitynewsservice.com/2014/02/theatre-discrimination-victory-will-have-wide-reaching-impact/>

We wanted to find out more about the issues disabled people in York face and to find out what questions we should focus on. In order to do this in March 2014 we met with representatives from several charitable organisations supporting disabled people and their parents/carers in York. These were: CANDI (Children AND Inclusion), The Retreat, The Independent Service User's Forum (ISUF), York Independent Living Network (YILN) and York University Student Union Disabled Students' Network (YUSU DSN). From these conversations and the anecdotes they shared with us during them, we decided to focus on discrimination against disabled people in terms of the attitudes they face.

## What we did to find out more

We produced a survey looking at disabled people's experiences of discrimination in York. The draft of this survey was sent to our contacts at CANDI, The Retreat, ISUF and YILN. From their feedback changes were made to the survey and the final version of the survey can be found in appendix 1. As well as paper copies of the survey there was an online option for people to respond using SurveyMonkey. In total 99 people completed the survey.

We also held focus groups with members of CANDI, ISUF and YUSU DSN. In total we spoke to 23 people through focus groups.

We also supported an event with YILN looking at disability hate crime as well as disabled people's experiences of living in York. The event was attended by 45 people.

We advertised the project through a leaflet (appendix 4) that was distributed around York by Healthwatch York staff and volunteers. We also worked with York Press to publish an article about the project, which can be found here:

[www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/11204851.Disabled\\_people\\_urged\\_to\\_give\\_their\\_experience\\_of\\_discrimination/](http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/11204851.Disabled_people_urged_to_give_their_experience_of_discrimination/)

The meetings were set up as safe places for disabled people to share their experiences. Attendees were told that Healthwatch York would be producing a report following the meeting. We reassured them that no names would be used and people would not be identified in any way.

At the CANDI and YUSU DSN focus groups and YILN event people were asked to talk about where in York they do and do not feel safe and why using maps to help them think of places, (see appendix 2 for the maps). At the CANDI, ISUF and YUSU DSN focus groups two other key questions were asked, these were:

- What are your experiences of being a disabled person or parent/carer in York?

- What do you think can be done to improve life for disabled people in York?

People were encouraged to share both good and bad experiences with us. Attendees could do this by sharing their experiences with the whole group, or in private one to one sessions with Healthwatch York staff after the main meeting had finished.

Healthwatch York staff took notes of all the issues raised during the meetings and during the one to one sessions after the meetings. The notes from all the focus groups can be found in appendix 3.

We sent a draft copy of this report to all of the organisations we worked with on the project for comment. All of the organisations responded and their feedback has been incorporated into the final version of the report.

We also sent the draft copy of the report to: City of York Council, North Yorkshire Police, NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group and York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust for fact checking.

Copies of the final report have been sent to all the organisations above and also: NHS England NorthYorkshire and the Humber local area team, the Local Medical Committee (LMC), Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust asked to clarify some of the points raised by individuals in the focus groups. Firstly, they state that there are translation/interpretation services available at York Hospital, although they acknowledge individuals have faced issues with these. They told us that the Trust has a separate group which has been set up recently to look at access to services which is looking at services for deaf people and other people who have difficulties accessing health services. Secondly, they felt that there are a variety of ways York Hospital will get in touch with individuals depending on the needs of the patient. This is contrary to what individuals at one of the focus groups said.

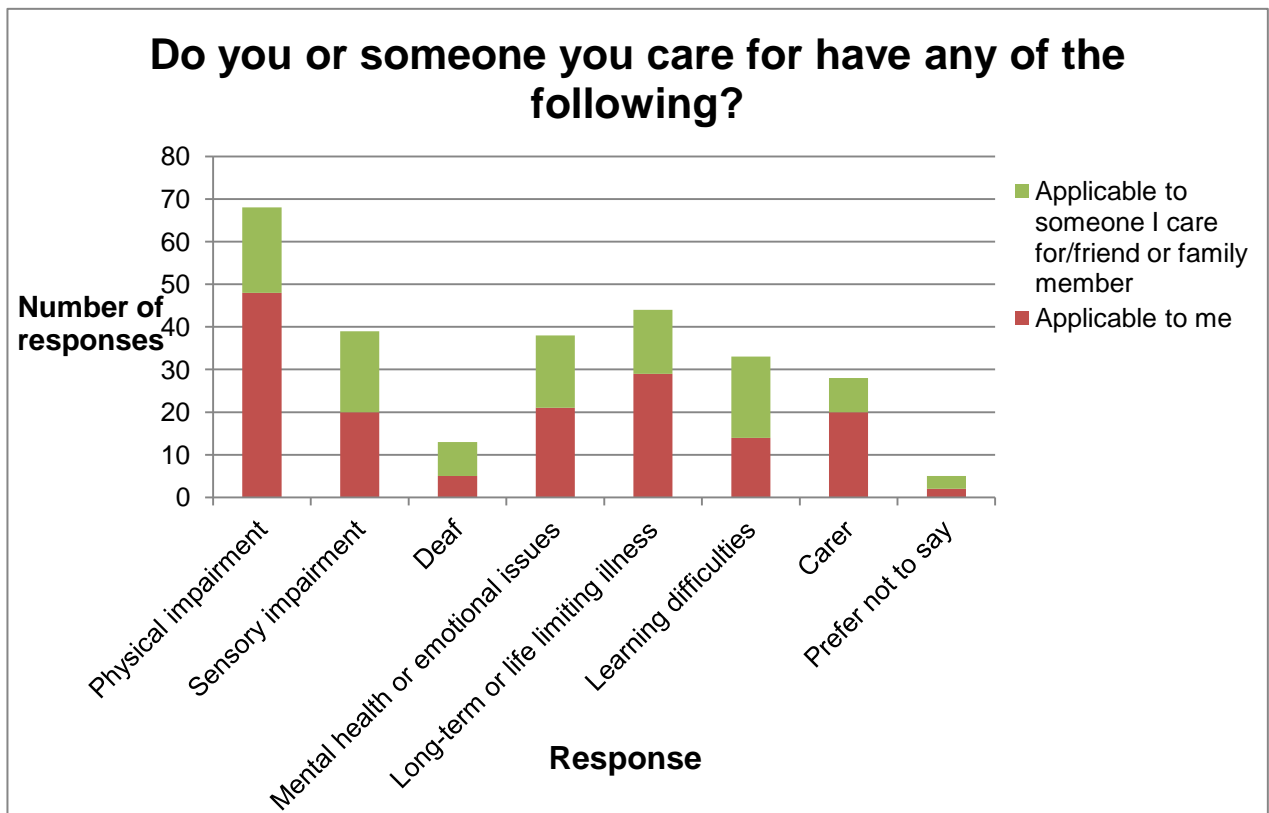
## What we found out

Through holding the focus groups and encouraging people to fill in the survey Healthwatch York has heard from 167 people about the issue of discrimination against disabled people in York. From this we have identified several common themes, which will be discussed in detail later.

### Survey summary

*In total 99 people responded to the survey. This summary shows the overall results for each question in the survey as well as quotes summing up people’s opinions on the different areas the survey focused on.*

**Question 1: Do you or someone you care for have any of the following? Please tick as many as are applicable to you. (98 responses)**

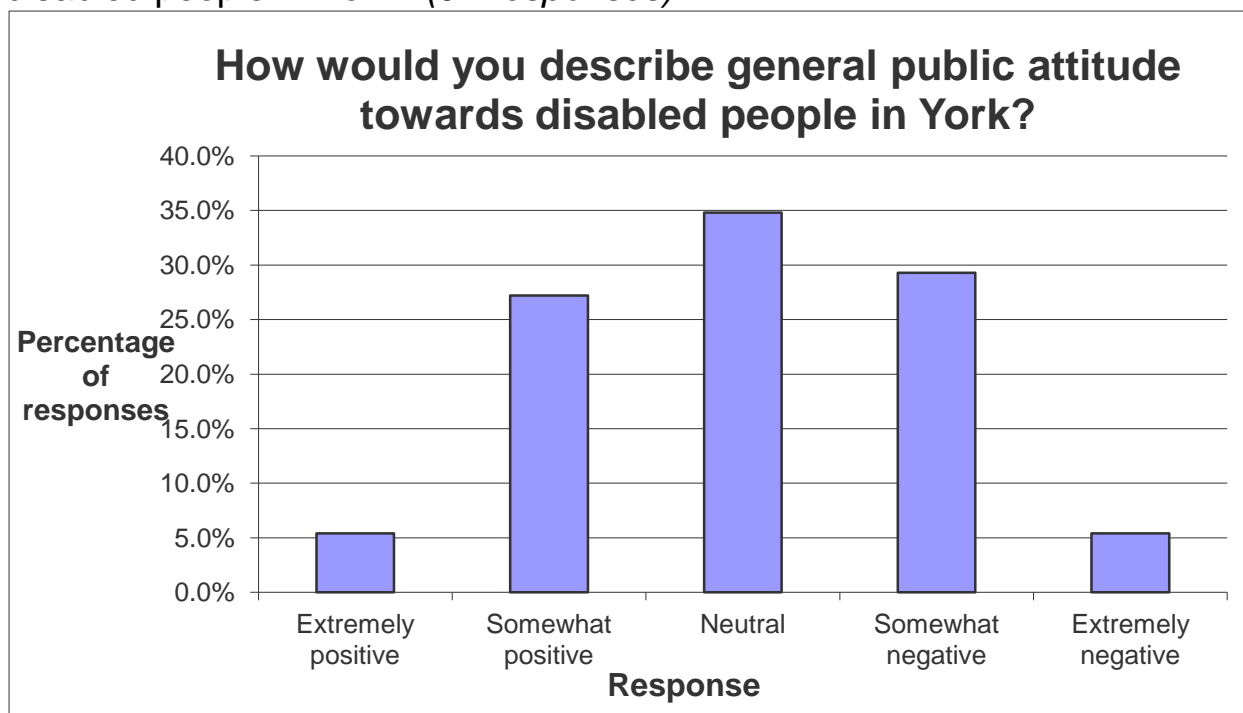




*Question 2: Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person? (96 responses)*

Answer	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	75.0%	72
No	25.0%	24

*Question 3: How would you describe general public attitudes towards disabled people in York? (92 responses)*



*Question 4: Please explain why you have selected your response to question 3. (71 responses)*

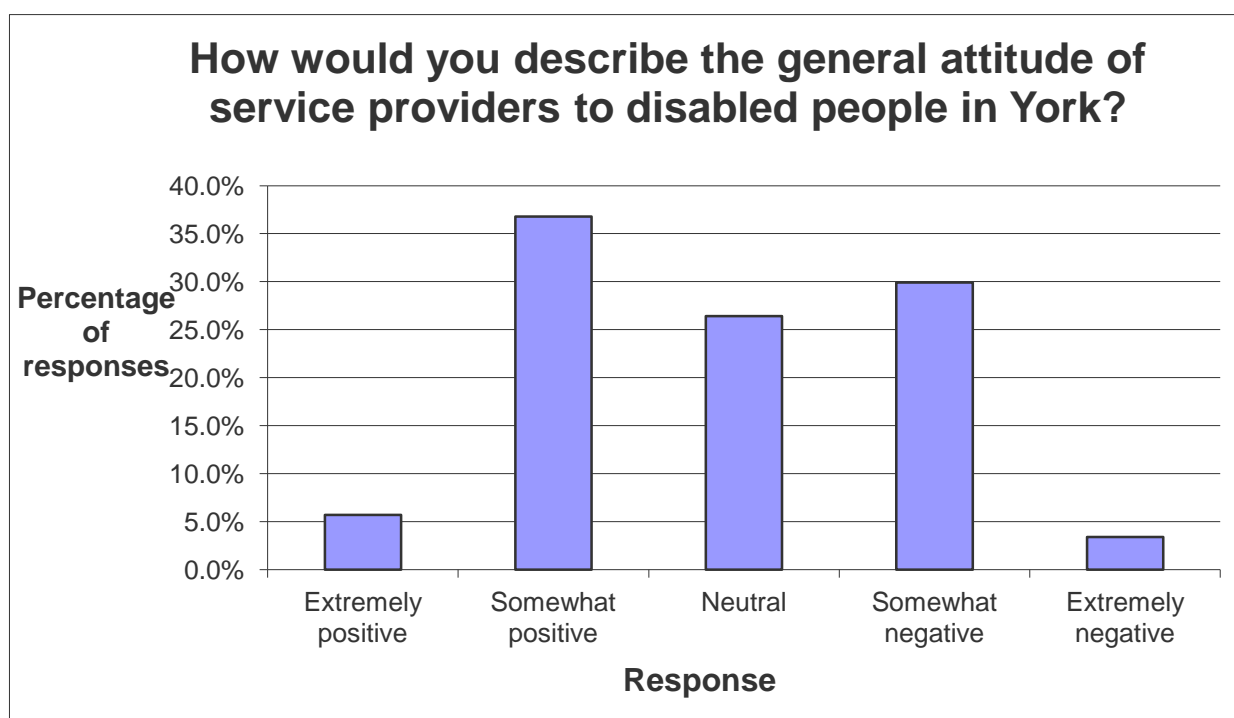
Common responses to this question included:

“Have received comments like, ‘he’s not disabled!’”

“Some people are very positive and helpful, whereas there are a number of people who are overtly negative”.

**Overall, the general consensus was that members of the public can behave negatively towards disabled people, however, several people pointed out this is not the case for everyone.**

*Question 5: How would you describe general service provider attitudes (e.g. bus drivers, shop assistants, GPs etc.) towards disabled people in York? (87 responses)*



*Question 6: Please explain why you have selected your response to question 5. (64 responses)*

Common responses to this question included:

“Rudeness, lack of empathy”, “lack of respect”.

“Many shop assistants look over the top of me and speak to friends and carers instead”.

“Selected somewhat negative...because I have to listen to service providers (whereas I don’t need to listen to what the general public are

saying”.

“Service providers can sometimes struggle to understand things from a disabled person’s point of view. I don’t think that this is necessarily malicious”.

“Some provide an excellent and accessible service. Some do not. It’s always pot luck and this makes life very hard”.

“I have had no real issues with service providers and found a good number bend over backwards to make you equal”.

**Again, there was a feeling that there are issues with the attitudes of some service providers, but this does not apply to them all.**

*Question 7: Do you think attitudes towards disabled people have worsened in the last 3 years? (84 responses)*

Answer	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	35.7%	30
No	27.4%	23
Not sure	40.1%	34

Comments regarding this question included:

“It has always been there”.

“As budgets have been cut within local government attitudes have worsened”.

“I may have been ‘lucky’ not have had any bad attitude”.

“In general, we feel attitudes have got better”.

**Several people also commented that they felt that they had either not lived in York long enough, or had an impairment for long enough to be able to answer this question.**

*Question 8: If you answered yes to question 7, do you think media attention around people claiming benefits and stories of "benefits cheats" have contributed towards this? (51 responses)*

Answer	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, a lot	47.1%	24
Yes, somewhat	25.5%	13
Not sure	23.5%	12
No	7.8%	4

Common responses to this question included:

“Yes definitely. From chatting to other disabled people on the internet a lot of disabled people are frightened either to go out at night or face daily abuse and suspicion. This seems to be due to tabloid scare stories”.

“Stereotyping disabled people does not help”, “everyone is tarred with the same brush”.

“There will always be individuals who ‘work’ the system...unfortunately they do impact on genuine users”.

*Question 9: Have the welfare reforms (e.g. changes to housing benefits and Employment Support Allowance) and/or changes to social care funding affected you? (82 responses)*

Answer	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, financially	7.3%	6
Yes, emotionally	15.9%	13
Both financially and emotionally	26.8%	22
No	52.4%	43

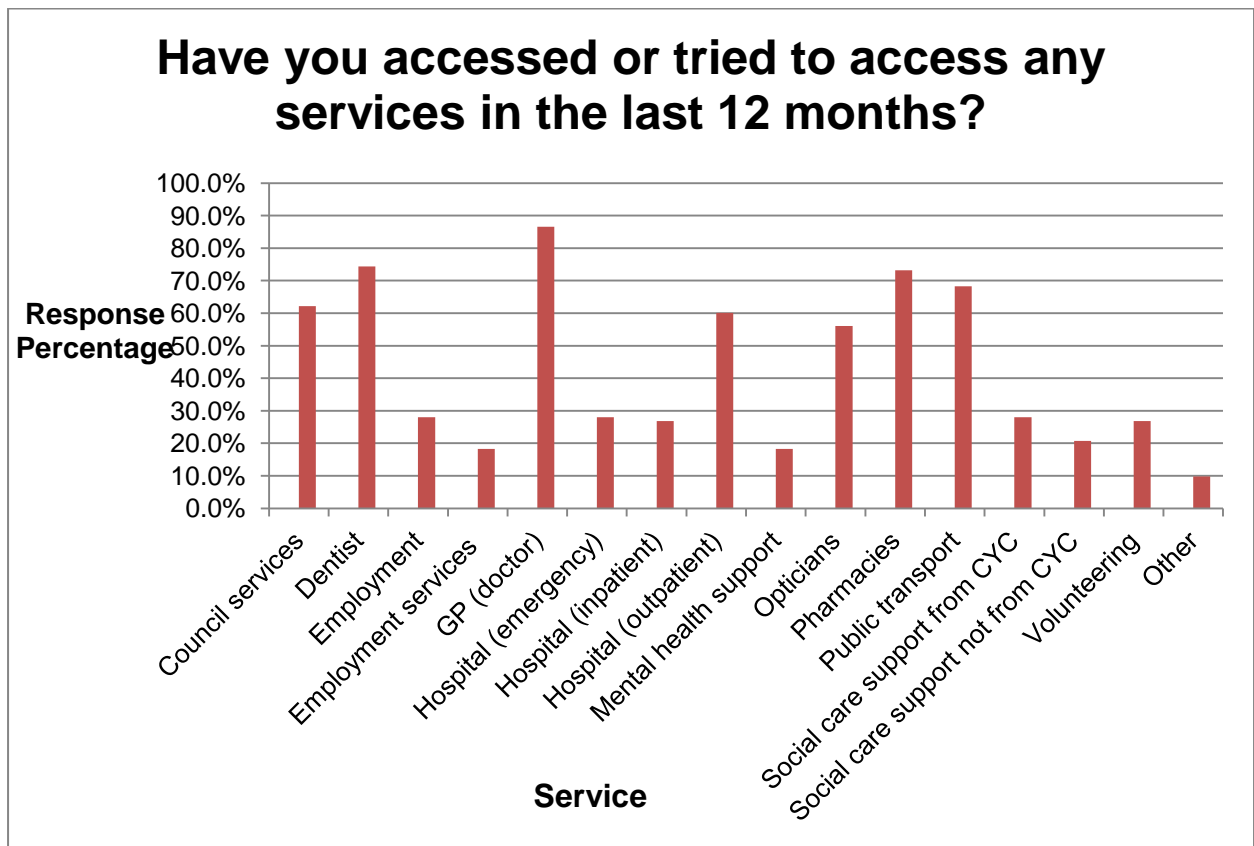
Common responses to this question included:

“I constantly worry that my benefits will be changed or reduced, I’ve been ok so far but each time they need to be renewed I get very stressed about it which impacts on my health”.

“Yes, due to cuts I find myself choosing between bills and needed personal items”.

“Not yet, but they may do in the future”.

*Question 10:* Have you accessed or tried to access any services in the last 12 months? Please select all the relevant services from the list below. (82 responses)



*Question 11: Have you experienced discrimination or negative attitudes when accessing or trying to access services in the last 12 months?*  
 Please select all the relevant services you have experienced issues with from the list below and when you experienced the discrimination or negative attitudes: (66 responses)

Answer	Accessing	Trying to access	Number of individuals providing feedback on service
Council services	13	13	16
Dentist	11	8	13
Employment	12	11	17
Employment services	13	13	17
GP (doctor)	19	10	22
Hospital (emergency)	10	3	12
Hospital (inpatient)	8	5	11
Hospital (outpatient)	10	7	11
Mental health support	4	6	9
Opticians	7	7	8
Pharmacies	9	9	12
Public transport	16	14	20
Social care support from CYC	8	3	9
Social care support not from CYC	3	1	3
Volunteering	6	7	7
No discrimination or negative attitudes experienced	21	16	21
Other			14

**Key figures:**

- **31.8% of respondents to this question experienced no discrimination of any kind.**
- **This means 68.2% of respondents have experienced discrimination when accessing or trying to access at least one service.**

- **The services the most people experienced negative attitudes when accessing or trying to access were the GP (33.3% of respondents) and public transport (30.3% of respondents).**
- **63.6% of respondents have experienced discrimination when accessing at least one service.**
- **42.4% of respondents have experienced discrimination when trying to access at least one service.**

*Question 12: Are there any specific experiences you would like to share with us? (39 responses)*

**There were a number of different experiences shared with us in this question, several related to issues with health services (13 comments) and public transport issues (11 comments).**

*Question 13: How do you think discrimination against disabled people in York could be reduced? (Please give no more than 3 suggestions). (62 responses)*

Common responses to this question included:

“Education about people with disabilities should start in pre-school and continue throughout their education and in all employment sectors”.

“Better training”.

“Awareness. Education.”

“People actually being held to account for their blatant discrimination”.

“Campaign about the positive contribution people living with disabilities make”.

“More awareness around the POSITIVE effect that welfare has in changing disabled peoples’ lives”.

**There were also a number of comments regarding practical ways in which physical access could be improved for disabled people in York.**

## Common themes from the focus groups and YILN event

From the focus groups a number of common themes arose:

- There were comments in all of the sessions regarding the negative comments disabled people have received from members of the public. Individuals also spoke about the impact these negative comments have had on them.
- In 3 of the 4 focus groups issues surrounding public transport, particularly buses were raised.
- It was highlighted that individuals with mental health conditions<sup>5</sup> often experience poorer quality and availability of services than those with other impairments. Furthermore, those with mental health conditions reported experiencing more overt discrimination than those with other impairments.
- It was also highlighted that disabled people do not face problems everywhere they go. For example, in 2 of the 4 focus groups Caffè Nero was singled out as being particularly disabled-friendly.
- In terms of how life in York could be improved for disabled people common suggestions centred on increased education about living with impairment and mental health conditions, awareness-raising of issues disabled people face and better training for staff in all professions, particularly those in public-facing roles.

In general, the topics discussed at the focus groups reflect the main findings from the survey. In the CANDI focus group important issues were raised that seem to only impact upon the parent/carer group. These will be discussed in more detail shortly.

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<sup>5</sup> It should also be noted that not all individuals with mental health conditions were happy with being labelled as “disabled”. However, for the purposes of this report we have included mental health conditions under our definition of disability.



## Issues regarding health services

Where specific providers were mentioned both in the survey and focus groups a large number of negative experiences involved health services. We include GPs, hospital services, mental health services, pharmacies and dentists in this category. In total issues with health services were mentioned 32 times in the survey and 16 times in the focus groups.

The following are examples of the issues with health services that disabled people and their parents/carers reported:

- The first common experience related to the attitudes disabled people have received from individuals working in health services.
  - There were lots of comments from disabled people who felt that they had been patronised by GPs and other medical staff. They also felt that health professionals can hold dismissive attitudes towards disabled people.
  - One individual told us how when visiting a chemists a member of staff wouldn't give them their prescription because they are a mental health service user (the staff member could tell from the medication). The staff member said to the service user "I don't want you coming in here". Negative attitudes like this are extremely concerning particularly in light of the current push to get the general public to use pharmacies more as an alternative to GP and hospital services.
  - There were also comments regarding York Hospital in particular. Service users with mental health conditions said that A + E staff do not have a good understanding or positive attitude towards individuals with mental health conditions. These problems were often experienced by people visiting A + E for self-injury related medical issues.

- There were also comments regarding the general accessibility of health services. These included:
  - Medical administration staff not looking at patient records to see how individuals need to be contacted. One individual told us that they are blind yet York Hospital continually uses letters as opposed to the phone to contact them, even though the individual has raised this issue on several occasions. At a focus group one individual told us the phone is inaccessible for them but because they are not Deaf<sup>6</sup> this information is ignored and health services contact them by phone to arrange appointments.
  - There were also feedback concerning a perceived lack of Deaf awareness and interpreters in health services. Many of these issues are mirrored in Healthwatch York's report on 'Access to health and social care services for Deaf people' which can be accessed here:

[www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Healthwatch-York-report-on-access-to-services-for-deaf-people.pdf](http://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Healthwatch-York-report-on-access-to-services-for-deaf-people.pdf)

- There were also issues raised regarding the suitability of York Hospital Accident and Emergency department (A&E) for disabled people. Some disabled people find it particularly difficult to wait or to be in noisy crowded places and waiting to be seen at A&E can be extremely difficult for them. This issue is examined in more detail later in this report.

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<sup>6</sup> In this report we use Deaf with a capital 'D' to mean people who have British Sign Language (BSL) as their first or preferred language.

## Issues regarding public transport

A number of negative comments were also made regarding public transport. Although this definition includes buses, trains and taxi services, the vast majority of issues raised concerned buses (15 in the survey and 8 in the focus groups).

The following are examples of the issues with bus services that disabled people and their parents/carers reported:

- Individuals with pushchairs are often in the wheelchair spaces on buses. Whilst disabled people recognise that individuals with pushchairs may need to use those spaces on buses, their usage of the space often comes at the expense of disabled people being able to use the bus.
  - There were a number of comments from disabled people saying that there have been occasions where bus drivers have told wheelchair users they cannot get on the bus as there are already pushchairs on the bus.
  - Disabled people feel that this is unfair as theoretically pushchairs should be able to fold down meaning that wheelchair users would then be able to use the space.
  - The issue of whether legally wheelchair or pushchair users should have priority on public transport is currently awaiting a judgement from the Court of Appeal:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/10494819/Court-to-rule-on-wheelchairs-or-pushchairs-to-have-priority-on-public-transport.html>

- Another issue raised was with the attitudes of the bus drivers. The following comment is typical of individuals' experiences of negative attitudes from bus drivers:

“Bus drivers always seem put out if they have to turn the engine off, get out of their seat and lower ramps for me. They never ask people with pushchairs to clear the wheelchair space and I often have to wait for another bus”.

- There were also several comments from individuals who felt that bus drivers often do not give disabled people enough time to seat themselves on the bus, often pulling away from bus stop before they are seated. Some individuals reported that they have fallen over as a result of this.
- Individuals also commented on the issue of non-disabled people sitting in the seats set aside for disabled people. They find this difficult because whilst they need to sit down they do not want to get into a confrontation with the general public about this. Some felt that bus drivers could do more to help disabled people with this issue.

## Issues regarding the public

One issue we focused on in the survey was individual's experiences of the general public's attitudes towards disabled people. The results for that question can be found in the survey summary above. Negative experiences regarding the attitudes of the general public were also raised in all of the focus groups even though participants were not specifically asked about them. Taken together, this suggests the issue of general public attitudes towards disabled people is something that needs addressing.

Most negative experiences related to verbal comments/abuse received by disabled people from the general public. We were also told about other more serious incidents as well including:

- People experiencing individuals banging on their windows and doors at night, making them feel threatened.
- Individual's neighbours regularly being abusive towards them.
- One individual reported an incident where someone attempted to be violent towards their disabled daughter.

These experiences have left some disabled people scared of going out and about. This means that they cannot take part in community activities like their non-disabled peers. This has a negative effect on both disabled people and the communities they live in as they do not feel safe being an active member of them.

At the YILN event looking at disability hate crime a lot of disabled people reported that they do not know how to report hate crimes or where they can go to do this. They also are not aware of the roles of different local authorities have in reporting and tackling disability hate crime and how they can help, or they cannot access the authorities which leaves them powerless to take action. This is clearly an issue that needs to be worked on in order to help disabled people deal with the issues that they face from the general public.

## Other issues

There were also recurring comments regarding bus passes, public-facing jobs, accessible parking and accessible toilets.

- Public-facing jobs. When discussing problems accessing or trying to access services in some cases it was the individual in a public-facing role (e.g. receptionists) as opposed to the service provider themselves that were the cause of the negative experience. Many suggested that a lack of disability and mental health awareness training for individuals in public-facing jobs may be a contributing factor to the negative experiences some disabled people reported to us.
- Bus passes. A few people commented that they have been told that they are ineligible for a bus pass by City of York Council due to being classed as on the lower rate of mobility benefits. One person said they are not allowed to drive or cycle due to their mental health condition, yet they were told they were ineligible for a bus pass. This decision does not appear to be in keeping with the national conditions for the disabled bus pass, as set out here (see section g):

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/181507/eligibility-review.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/181507/eligibility-review.pdf)

- Accessible parking. The issues raised around accessible parking fell into two categories, the lack of accessible parking in York and the problem of individuals who are not Blue Badge holders parking in accessible parking bays.
  - Lack of accessible parking in York. People commented that they feel that disabled people are being increasingly excluded from the city centre. The following comment illustrates disabled people's feelings on the topic:

“I feel that the closing of Davygate during the day with moveable bollards and limiting access until 5pm to the city centre has made life more difficult. Prior to this there was a green city centre badge scheme for cars and it was easy to gain access to the city centre. I thought that there should have been a concession to blue badge holders to cross Lendal Bridge when it was closed”.

- If in future there are any major changes to the access routes to the city centre (for example, if the decision is taken to close Lendal bridge once again) there should be a full Equality Impact Assessment carried out to ensure that disabled people are not affected by these changes. The original Equality Impact Assessment for the Lendal Bridge closure, whilst recognising that disabled people would be affected by the closure argued that:

“Exclusion of blue badge holders and motorcyclists is based on the overall objective which is to significantly reduce traffic in the city centre. In addition exemptions are based on being able to identify a legal definition for a class or use of vehicle which can then be legally signed. Inclusion of these groups would require the aforementioned criteria to be met as well as the registration plates of every vehicle. Blue badges are attributed to individuals not vehicles and therefore it would not be possible to identify the legitimacy of the vehicle.”<sup>7</sup>

- We disagree with this as we feel that traffic to the city centre would still have been significantly reduced even if blue badge holders had been exempted from the ban. Additionally, it would also have been possible to get signage showing that blue badge holders were exempted from the ban.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/10984/lendal\\_bridge\\_closure](http://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/10984/lendal_bridge_closure)

- Non-blue badge holders using accessible parking bays. This presents difficulties for disabled people who are blue badge holders as they cannot then park. Some people commented that they feel there should be harsher penalties for people without blue badges who park in blue badge spaces.
- Accessible toilets. People mentioned that they feel there are not currently enough public accessible toilets in York and as of May 2014 one individual reported that the accessible toilets in York had been out of order for over a month. One resident of York has summed up her feelings on the current situation in this blog post:

<http://yorkpeoplesassembly.wordpress.com/2014/05/27/skip-to-ma-loo-my-darling/#more-615>



## Issues facing parents/carers of disabled children

Some of the issues reported to us were issues that specifically affected parents/carers of disabled children. These included issues with York Hospital A&E, issues relating to school and education and issues with the general public.

- York Hospital A&E. The environment is often very crowded, which is difficult for children with autism or other conditions who find it difficult to wait. However, there is nowhere else for them and their families to wait. Parents/carers reported that this has led to situations where their child has had a “meltdown”, which is a difficult situation for both the parents/carers and for the child themselves.
- School and education issues.
  - There was also a feeling from parents/carers that there need to be better transition plans for disabled children from primary to secondary education. At present, it was felt that the adequacy of transition plans varies across York and this should not be the case.
  - There was also an issue raised around the adequacy of support for disabled children as they get older:

“My daughter is 18 and completing A-levels. We have known she is dyslexic for some time but she was coping well so was not formally diagnosed. However, at AS-level it became clear she had reached the point where personal coping strategies were no longer sufficient, but the school was unable to refer for Ed. Psych. assessment as she is over 16 and would not apply to the exam board for extra time. There appears to be a huge gap in provision at a critical time that could mean pupils being substantially disadvantaged by the system”.

- The general public. Problems parents/carers face from the general public are slightly different from the ones mentioned above. Parents/carers are often worried about how the public will perceive their parenting skills. For example, sometimes a parent may have to physically restrain a child and they are concerned people will see them as a “bad parent”. Parents also talked about wanting to protect their child, with one individual stating that they have not experienced much discrimination because they choose not to take their child anywhere where they feel they might experience problems.

## Conclusion

This work has revealed that there are a number of problems faced by disabled people in York. These include negative and discriminatory attitudes from the general public and service providers as well as physical access issues. We have made a number of recommendations, based on the feedback we have received, which we feel could make a real difference to the lives of disabled people in York.

Our findings are consistent with the national picture of problems that disabled people face. For example, the Office for Disability Issues<sup>8</sup> report that:

- Disabled people are significantly more likely to experience unfair treatment at work than non-disabled people. In 2008, 19 per cent of disabled people experienced unfair treatment at work compared to 13 per cent of non-disabled people.
- Around a third of disabled people experience difficulties related to their impairment in accessing public, commercial and leisure goods and services.
- Disabled people are significantly more likely to be victims of crime than non-disabled people. This gap is largest amongst 16-34 year-olds where 39 per cent of disabled people reported having been a victim of crime compared to 28 per cent of non-disabled people.
  - In North Yorkshire the British Crime Survey results from December 2013<sup>9</sup> showed that Victims of Household crime within North Yorkshire were 10.6% and victims of personal crime were 4.2%. However, as Julia Mulligan, Police and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire said at our event with YILN: “Reported levels of hate crime in York in no way reflect the level of hate crime taking place. We need to increase the level of reporting. I want to know whether hate crime reporting centres are working. Are people aware of them and do people know where they are?”

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<sup>8</sup> <http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/disability-statistics-and-research/disability-facts-and-figures.p>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.crimesurvey.co.uk/previous-research.html>

At present in York disabled people face discriminatory attitudes from a wide range of sources. This is not acceptable. Disabled people deserve to be treated equally. We believe it is in service providers and the general public's interest to change their attitudes towards disabled people. Not only because disabled people deserve a better quality of life, but because disability affects everyone. Only 17% of disabled people are born with their impairment<sup>10</sup>. Many disabled children and adults live with non-disabled parents, siblings, children or partners. This means that the issues that they face are highly likely to one day affect many of the people who read this report.

Our work has also revealed that there are examples of improvements and good practice which are already happening. We hope that by highlighting some of these examples we will encourage good practice to spread.

A number of cafes and restaurants were specifically named because people felt they respond positively to the needs of disabled people: Caffè Nero (specifically named as being deaf aware), Frankie and Benny's (named by parents of disabled children), Greggs (named by disabled students).

There was praise for teachers, teaching assistants, special education needs co-ordinators (SENCO), school transport escorts and drivers.

Positive experiences were reported from taking part in leisure activities including ten pin bowling. Cinemas in York have autism friendly screening. The City of York Council have disability sports officers who make sports such as cycling, swimming and trampolining accessible. Libraries were regarded as places where disabled people feel safe and the staff are helpful.

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.efds.co.uk/resources/facts\\_and\\_statistics](http://www.efds.co.uk/resources/facts_and_statistics)

Cameras in the city centre were regarded as helpful and Clifton Moor Shopping Centre was named as a safe space. There was positive feedback for the queuing system and the staff at West Offices.

Some positive experiences of public transport were reported. Some bus drivers are good at responding to the needs of disabled passengers – especially if they get to know a disabled person on a regular route. There was praise for railway staff and passenger assistance at the station.

## Recommendations

Recommendation	Recommended to
<p>1. Organise a campaign to challenge stereotypes and tackle prejudice, highlighting the barriers disabled people face and what people can do about them. The same should also be done for mental health conditions. This awareness campaign should be developed with disabled people, including people with mental health conditions and organisations helping them and their families.</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing Board, engaging with York Press, Radio York and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Also consider links to the local business community.</p>
<p>2. Children should be educated about disability and mental health conditions from an early age. This should include topics such as respect, the appropriate language to use regarding disability, disabled people and mental health. Children should be encouraged to participate actively in promoting inclusive communities.</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing Board and YorOK Board</p>
<p>3a. Provide disability equality and mental health awareness training, as a minimum for all staff that have contact with the public. Ideally, longer term this training should be mandatory for all staff, and embedded in organisational induction processes, but this may be unrealistic in the short term. The training for disability and mental health conditions should be separate as the issues involved are not the same.</p>	<p>All statutory partners, all service providers including GP surgeries led by City of York Council Workforce Development Unit</p>
<p>3b. The training programme must be co-designed with disabled people and people with mental health conditions and organisations helping them and their families to make sure training is credible and reflects the day to day lived experiences of disabled people and people with mental health conditions. Where possible, delivery should be by disabled people; supported by a trainer only where the disabled</p>	<p>City of York Council working with existing groups such as YILN, York Mind and York People First</p>

person(s) is (are) not an accredited trainer themselves.	
4. There should be more support for people to deal with the welfare reforms and changes to health and social care funding. The City of York Council should work with partners to create a hub for information, advocacy and peer-support, working with disabled people's organisations, carers' organisations and advice organisations. This will also help them to meet the requirements for Information, Advice and Support in the Care Act 2014.	City of York Council (including the Rewiring services team)
5. Consider introducing an "Accessible York" card that individuals could use when going about their daily lives to increase awareness amongst service providers. This should also be available to parents/carers for their child/individual they care for. This card should have wide eligibility criteria to ensure as many disabled people as possible are able to access it.	City of York Council
6. Review the accessibility of the A+E department for individuals who find it difficult to wait and consider introducing a separate space for these individuals to wait to reduce the stress of going to A+E both for the individual and their parents/carers.	York Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
7. Consider the distance from bus stops and accessible parking spaces to public offices, places of work and accommodation. Provide plenty of seating both outside and inside these buildings, and publicly accessible cafes.	City of York Council, Universities, employers
8. Review eligibility criteria for disabled bus passes to ensure it is in-line with legal guidance on disabled bus pass provision.	City of York Council
9. Improve hate crime reporting by working with disabled people to develop effective hate crime reporting systems. Additionally, raise awareness of how and where disabled people can report disability hate crimes.	City of York Council and North Yorkshire Police.

<p>10. Improve accessible parking and access to the city centre, including public transport options. This should be done through working with disabled people to identify the problems and explore possible solutions through public meetings etc. that are accessible to all.</p>	<p>City of York Council, all City of York bus providers</p>
<p>11. When designing surveys and holding public meetings etc. work with disabled people to ensure that they are fully accessible.</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing Board</p>
<p>12. Consider re-introducing the 'hotspots' scheme. This scheme enabled disabled people to report issues such as lack of dropped kerbs, problems with accessible parking etc. Healthwatch York would be happy to have an active role in re-introducing the scheme.</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing Board</p>
<p>13. Make sure that accessibility is always considered when primary care services are commissioned.</p>	<p>NHS England North Yorkshire and Humber area team</p>



## Appendices

- Appendix 1 Healthwatch York survey looking at discrimination against disabled people in York
- Appendix 2 Copies of the maps from the focus groups and YILN event
- Appendix 3 Focus group notes
- Appendix 4 Leaflet advertising the project



Appendix 1: Healthwatch York survey

## Discrimination Against Disabled People In York

In this project we are looking at discrimination in terms of the attitudes disabled people have experienced from individuals and organisations.

At Healthwatch York we fully comply with data protection procedures, this means that your answers to this survey are all anonymous and confidential. No personal data you give us in this survey will be disclosed without your consent.

Please note: questions marked with \* are mandatory.

**\* 1. Do you or someone you care for have any of the following?  
 Please tick as many as are applicable.**

	Applicable to me	Applicable to someone I care for/friend or family member
Physical impairment (e.g. which affects mobility or manual dexterity)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sensory impairment (for example, hearing loss or visual impairment)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deaf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental health or emotional issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Long term or life-limiting illness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning difficulties (for example dyslexia, autistic spectrum condition)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**\* 2. Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?**

Yes

No

**\* 3. How would you describe general public attitude towards disabled people in York?**

Extremely positive

Somewhat positive

Neutral

Somewhat negative

Extremely negative

**4. Please explain why you have selected your response to question 3:**

**\* 5. How would you describe the general attitude of service providers (e.g. GPs, shop assistants, bus drivers etc.) towards disabled people in York?**

Extremely positive

Somewhat positive

Neutral

Somewhat negative

Extremely negative

**6. Please explain why you have selected your response to question 5:**

**\* 7. Do you think public attitudes towards disabled people in York have worsened in the past 3 years?**

- Yes                       No                       Not sure

Comments:

**8. If you answered yes to question 7, do you think the media attention around people claiming benefits and stories of “benefit cheats” have contributed towards this?**

- |               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| Yes, a lot    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Yes, somewhat | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not sure      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No            | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comments:

**\*9. Have the welfare reforms (e.g. changes to housing benefits and Employment Support Allowance) and/or changes to social care funding affected you?**

- |                                  |                          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes, financially                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Yes, emotionally                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Both financially and emotionally | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No                               | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comments:

**\* 10. Have you accessed or tried to access any services in the last 12 months? Please select all the relevant services from the list below:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Council services (e.g. swimming pools, libraries, community centres etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Dentist                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment  | <input type="checkbox"/> Employment services (e.g. Jobcentre plus) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP (doctor)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital (emergency department)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital (inpatient)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital (outpatient)                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health support   | <input type="checkbox"/> Opticians                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacies  | <input type="checkbox"/> Public transport                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social care support from the City of York Council                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social care support from another provider |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering  |  |

**Other:** (please specify)

**\* 11. Have you experienced discrimination or negative attitudes when accessing or trying to access services in the last 12 months? Please select all the relevant services you have experienced issues with from the list below and when you experienced the discrimination or negative attitudes:**

- | Accessing                | Trying to access         |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Council services (e.g. swimming pools, libraries, community centres etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Dentist   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Employment  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Employment services (e.g. jobcentre plus)                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | GP (doctor)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hospital (emergency department)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hospital (inpatient)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hospital (outpatient)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mental health support   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Opticians   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pharmacies  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Public transport  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Social care support from the City of York Council                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Social care support from another provider                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Volunteering  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | No discrimination or negative attitudes experienced                       |

**Other:** (please specify)

**12. Are there any specific experiences you would like to tell us about? (Please include the service and where the stigma you experienced came from):**

**\* 13. How do you think discrimination against disabled people in York could be reduced? (Please give no more than 3 suggestions):**

**14. Would you like to be informed about this survey's results? If you would, please provide us with your e-mail address:**

**15. Would you like to join Healthwatch York's mailing list? If you would, please provide us with your e-mail address or postal address if you would prefer:**

**16. If you would like to be involved in further work on this issue (for example, working with the press please tick this box):**



Thank you for completing our survey - please return it to us by 16/05/2014. We aim to use the responses to help Healthwatch York develop an idea of what life is like for disabled people in York and to make recommendations to services about how to improve the quality of the service they offer to disabled people.

**Surveys can be returned free of charge using our FREEPOST address:**

**Freepost RTEG-BLES-RRYJ  
Healthwatch York  
15 Priory Street  
York YO1 6ET**

**If you prefer, you can complete the survey online by going to our website: [www.healthwatchyork.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk).**

**If you would like a copy of the survey in another format please contact us:**

**E mail: [Healthwatch@yorkcvs.org.uk](mailto:Healthwatch@yorkcvs.org.uk)**

**Phone: 01904 621133**

## About You

We'd just like to ask you some details about yourself. Please note that we will treat all information provided as confidential, and you can leave any questions you do not wish to answer blank.

**\* 26. For monitoring purposes please tell us the first part of your postcode: (e.g. YO24)**

**1. How would you describe your gender?**

**2. How old are you?**

- Under 18
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- Over 65

**3. How would you describe your ethnic origin?**

**4. How would you describe your religion or beliefs?**

**5. How would you describe your sexual orientation?**

Appendix 2: Focus group maps

Maps for Healthwatch York focus groups



home



the area where i live



parks



city centre



pubs/cafes



health services



taxi ranks/bus stops



schools/colleges



library



shops



sports facilities



public transport



post offices



community centres



council offices

other

Map from the YILN event



Appendix 3: Focus group notes

CANDI Focus Groups 10am 28/04/2014 and 18:45pm  
14/05/2014

**Where do you feel safe in York/what are your experiences?**

Home:

- Safe generally – child is happy there
- Child can feel unsafe in the home due to items in the home (e.g. the cooker), when there are new people present and due to sibling rivalry.

The area where I live:

- No comments.

Parks:

- No comments.

City centre:

- Girl with Downs syndrome was queuing for the bus, wanted to be at the front of the queue and an elderly gentleman let her.
- City centre is crowded at times and can be a nightmare. Old streets not great for wheelchair users. Poor paving. Lots of buildings not accessible. Asking for ramp to be put out – feel awkward asking. Often asked “can you not just lift him in?”

Pubs/cafes:

- No comments.

Health services:

- A+E →how it's organised. Environment is very crowded, difficult for children with autism or other problems.
  - Children can get upset and leave. In one case the child didn't go further than the car, but they have run across the road before, so parents feel unsafe.

- Limited options in York outside A+E. Not the most suitable place for people with autism.
- GPs → autism awareness is hit and miss. Some receptionists not very aware. Worried what would happen in a meltdown.
- GP out of hours → Some open Sat morning until 10am. Public transport hit and miss. Takes 20-30 minutes for an ambulance to arrive and they normally say go to A+E.
- 111 → Quite good at giving advice and organising a doctor to call.
- Sometimes parents can directly access children's ward, or direct access to children's ward in Leeds. This has been okay, but for minor injury you have to go to A+E, there is nowhere else to go.
- Could they make more use of Children's Development Centre for children's out of hours service?

Taxi ranks/bus stops:

- No comments.

Schools/colleges:

- Parents/carers of disabled children can feel isolated/alienated in the school playground.
- Parents can feel they are seen as "different", e.g. if they have to physically restrain their child – they feel they are judged by others due to a lack of awareness.
- School settings → Really bad incident in the transition to secondary school. Child had made their choice, didn't want to go to school for young disabled people so mainstream at a school with an enhanced resource provision, but the child didn't like it. Went round another school with enhanced provision but found it too bright. Went to another mainstream school, they said there was good pastoral care there as well as a chapel so calm space and a unit where child could go. So parents decided to send their child there in Feb 2012. When their child visited the school for a transition day he became upset and no-one was able to intervene and keep him safe. He had thrown a tissue at a teacher who remonstrated the child and called a meeting with the Head,



pastoral lead and teacher. Staff told the parents that their child was a “horrible child”. This made the parents feel very angry. So better transition plans are needed for children.

- Ended up having to plead with CYC to find child a space elsewhere resulting in a placement in the satellite unit of a school for disabled young people, but location moved after 1 year across city and new school unable to support him, now in school for young disabled people doing better, but parents wonder what could have happened if things had been better handled from the start.
- Teachers etc. need to understand the child, their triggers and their skills. Secondary school is particularly difficult because there are lots of teachers and lots of classrooms.
- Incident at school → child is on lots of medicines, 1 of them can cause osteo issues. Child said to teacher that they had broken their arm and that their Dad broke it. So teacher reported the incident to front door. Council called and insisted the parents take the child to hospital. There was no break, the child had osteocondritis. Parents are now left with stigma and a record with social services. May say on record, “no action taken” but parents still feel the stigma. Parents can understand why what happened did but are worried about being as open as before, in case they are falsely accused again. Wary child might say something else – often feels has cuts and bruises and wraps sellotape round fingers. Sometimes parents have to restrain him. So need awareness of the issues parents face through all teachers, playgroups etc.
- Replacing statements with “My Support Plans”. Also for people without statements, this is being done in a staged way. SENCOs need to do this with their own heads and teachers – all professionals.
- How good transition from primary to secondary school is varies across York, should not be the case.

Library:

- Libraries are generally good.

Shops:

- When child was very young they had a nasal gastric tube. When the family went into Toys R Us a person came over and said “what’s wrong with him then?” Makes parents feel angry, threatened, feel that person is ignorant. Parents feel that there is chance some people will always be like that.

Sports facilities:

- Hope the new Community Stadium will be accessible for disabled people. Would like them to include a breakout space for people with autism.

Public transport:

- Home/school transport. Streamline have been good but the service is not consistent/flexible enough. It has been better since there has been 1 provider (Streamline) who are willing to change escorts if the child is not happy. But some parents are still not happy with the service, e.g. for childcare arrangements may need child dropping at different places. Can these issues be overcome? Can’t be done on an individual basis. Must be transparent and reasonable.
- Some bus drivers have negative attitudes towards disabled people.
- Buses → as a parent need support to get child on/off safely. Generally, most drivers are okay. Had a poor experience in Durham but not in York. Good access onto bus.
- Issues over stairs on buses – bit unstable, can be difficult. Getting off buses can be difficult – depends on how fast the bus slows.

Post offices:

- No comments.

Community centres:

- No comments.

Council offices:

- West Offices → when you go through the building staff ask you “are you alright using the stairs?” Not all people will feel comfortable saying no.
- Autism strategy needs reviewing, not sure it reflects all parents concerns, e.g. waiting.
- York local authority is pretty good. Local health too. But, the belief in inclusivity not evident even across new borders.
- Culture has changed here.

Other:

- Children sometimes have no sense of danger, therefore parents feel unsafe leaving them alone.
- Cinemas in York are now doing autism friendly screenings, City Screen in particular is very good and they employ disabled people as well 😊 Access to entertainment facilities is important.
- Theatres in town are not very accessible for disabled people. Seating is not ideal and it is not good for wheelchairs.
- Crowded environments, e.g. supermarkets are often difficult for disabled children.
- Media attitudes → It’s okay to mock people who are disabled. Translates into school yard. If parents think it’s okay, children think they can do it too. Comedians stereotyping people, invites people to laugh at disabled people. Mockery reinforces stigma.
- Work environment → it is difficult to look after a disabled child within their rules and structures. Employers can make things awkward, which leads to stress and anxiety. Employers can be initially supportive but lack awareness of circumstances, e.g. good about an operation but not about the follow-up consequences.
  - Problems around the idea of “reasonable adjustment”. Managers often don’t want to do it and try and avoid it.

What are your experiences?

- Members of the public when faced with unconventional behaviour.
- Being ignored by restaurant staff.

- Professionals briefing themselves.
- Positive GP experience.
- Positive hospital experience.
- Inclusive (e.g. SNAPPY) vs. non inclusive clubs.
- Ten pin bowling – positive experiences.
- Disability Sports Officers (swim/cycling/trampolining).

Positive:

- City Screen.
- Some schools – willingness to keep trying.
- CAMHS.
- CDC + Paediatrics.
- Special OCYMD ICC.
- Frankie and Benny's.
- NAS events.
- School transport escort and driver.
- SENCO
- Teachers/TAs.
- Choose 2.
- SNAPPY.

Negative:

- Playground – mainly parents, occasionally children when dropping off/collecting.
  - Parent reaction in assemblies, quietness/mutters.
  - People's reactions in community.
  - Wider family don't understand.
  - Pressure on siblings.
  - School transition.
  - University issues.
  - SENCOs/pastoral care.
- 
- Accessible toilets – concerned how will be perceived taking child, public might not understand child is disabled → issue around

gender, e.g. mother and son, father and daughter, parents have been challenged.

- In some places, people will not give the parent the key for the accessible bathroom; tell them “you’re not disabled”.
- Locks can be inaccessible.
- Counters etc. can be too high.
- Lack of accessibility is understandable in old buildings in York but not in other places.
- Lack of information available about services, e.g. the adjustments they can/might make. E.g. Brownies, Cubs etc. Swimming lessons.
- Choose not to do things because don’t want child to have a negative experience.
- Before parent used to explain now “sick of” having to justify themselves/their child to other people.

### **How could things be improved?**

- Could provide disability equality training to health and reception staff, front door to services. Important they are aware.
- Hearing people’s experiences - case studies – for people living with their impairments.
- Transparency. Improve honesty of communication between service users and professionals. How do we go about this? Partially about managing expectations.
- Awareness of disability within the health service, e.g. receptions. What is being done there around this at the moment? There should be mandatory training.
- Disability awareness for all teachers and playgroup staff. Also, staff need to know about each individual’s needs.
- Celebrate disabled people’s achievements (e.g. like Lives Unlimited have done with their videos). These things are not filtering down. School + work environment. It’s about the positives not the negatives.
- Stigma when you are younger carries over to when you are older. Need to be challenging stigma with young people.

- Different place in A+E to go for minor injuries needed. Specifically for children.
- Lack of transition plans primary → secondary. Could be improved. Varies between areas, need consistency.
- Personal experiences are the best way to raise awareness.
- Need the media to promote disabled people more positively (e.g. Look North and York Press). Media stories say disabled people = benefit cheats.
- Raise awareness. Parents/carers should be involved with City of York Council doing disability equality training to explain how things are and how not to do things.
- Inclusive groups → went to DofE awards and there was an inclusion group with the Salvation Army, really heartwarming celebrating what they'd achieved. Got a DofE award can never take that away. Paralympics and The Last Leg – could see change coming. **But**, not filtering down to everything and everyone else.
  - Involve employers. Need true commitment not just lip service. Hassle to be truly inclusive, but has rewards.
- Reasonable Adjustments. People won't go beyond the minimum. So will avoid doing them if they can. Clarity needed about what is reasonable and minimum things that must be tried before people can say "it's too difficult".
- Need government initiatives. Closure of Remploy gives bad message, implies it is too hard and not cost-effective to employ disabled people.
- Using new media, e.g. Biomation (Council has used them) is good for getting things out.
- Role of strategic board and links with disabled people/carers to understand their issues, they are the routes to influence.
- Idea of autism hub.
- Issues around what people will say to health and social care professionals. Gap between what you think and what you are prepared to say. Role for anonymous feedback/mediated discussions.

- Need transparency around budgets and where money goes.
- Training from parents.
- Need to make all clubs inclusive, some childcare, scouts/cubs and clubs in general are not.
- People should make an effort to reassure, this is part of a good experience.
- Seeing the professional is important.
- Understanding, awareness, willingness.
- Improving access and services to places of interest – not having to climb stairs!
- Raising awareness of disability and mental health needs.
- Changing attitudes and eliminating stereotypes.
- Should be an opportunity for disabled children to have free taster sessions for activities.
- About changing attitudes and education.

### **General Comments:**

- Personal budgets for families can work. But many families would struggle to manage it. Still would be good for parents to understand the notional cost associated with the services their child/family uses, e.g. transport, medication, groups, OT etc.
- Disappointed with David Cameron. Why is he not championing rights for disabled people?
  - Need someone in central government championing disabled people.
  - Need to bring parties together rather than just fighting.

## ISUF Focus Group – 5pm 30/04/14

### Experiences/thoughts about being a person with a mental health condition in York:

- Employers and service providers don't realise that mental health is covered in the anti-discrimination legislation.
- Benefits – to get them as a mental health service user you have to class yourself as disabled, but that is not how all mental health service user see themselves.
- Chemists – Bishopthorpe Road. Wouldn't give a person their prescription because they are a mental health service user (could tell from the medication). Staff member said to the service user "I don't want you coming in here". Has changed person's approach, doesn't go to local chemists anymore, goes to supermarket one instead. Important considering the current push to get people to use chemists more.
- Lack of acceptance behind closed doors. People get treated differently once they "come out" as having a mental health condition.
- Fears of getting back into the job market, explaining gaps in employment. As soon as you mention mental health employers tend not to be interested. See you as being unpredictable. Perception from mental health service users that they will be discriminated against if they say they have a mental health condition. Lack of understanding as mental health is an "invisible disability/condition".
- Staff in the LYPT often have patronising, negative attitudes, one service user felt that staff see the staff-patient relationship with mental health service users as being a parent-child relationship.
- A and E staff at York Hospital do not have a good understanding of mental health issues, particularly for self-injury.
- GPs – some can be discriminatory, they're only interested in if you're taking medication.
- The medical vs. social model doesn't really seem to take mental health into account.



- People are still stuck in the medical model way of thinking. We need more use of the social model in employment.
- Issues around language (both in the press and general public), has been tackled for physical disability but not for mental health conditions, “psycho” etc.
- “People associate mental health problems with hobos”.
- Employment – people have to drop out of their jobs for treatment, you wouldn’t have to do that if it was cancer. Discriminatory and could make the individual’s mental health condition worse.
- Feeling that you are always being treated differently because you have a mental health problem. For example, there is a lack of services for people with mental health conditions compared to physical disabilities etc.
- Difficult to know how to present themselves to society.

What could be done to improve things for people with mental health conditions in York:

- Employers should be reminded of the laws around anti-discrimination and the fact that they apply to people with mental health conditions too.
- It would help people to make talking about mental health problems more commonplace.
- Raising awareness of how common mental health problems are with employers.
- More publicity about the fact that mental health problems can happen to anyone regardless of “class”, for example, in the York Press.
- Making things more mainstream helps break down barriers and stigma.
- Learning to see people as a person. Gives people an understanding as they grow up.
- Would help if more “celebrities” spoke up about their experiences of mental health problems.
- Work to improve things should be done slowly and steadily.

- Time to Change, education, information → start things at a young age. Education should come from both professionals and service users and be done in an interactive way.
- Need more service users with mental health conditions to join together to campaign about the problems they face. This doesn't happen because people are worried about stigma.
- Ex-service users may be the best advocates for people with mental health conditions.
- There should be mental health specific training, it's not the same as disability awareness training.

### YILN Event 9:30am - 12/05/14

#### Rivers

- Don't go near – dangerous.
- Scared of falling in the deep water.

#### Health services

- No interpreters at GP surgery or hospital.
- Pass – identified as deaf to help get information.
- Hospital poor booking interpreter, on and off.
- NHS need wake up to provide interpreter.
- Health staff talking down to you as if you don't understand.
- Access to GP appointments to claim ESA, which leaves people feeling vulnerable and withdrawn.
- GPs/psychiatrists safe. I can talk to them in confidence.

#### City centre

- Problem with my guide dog in town, people play with my guide dog, I say no, people say bad things to me and walk off.
- Don't feel safe talking to strangers.
- Feel unsafe walking around town due to name calling.

### Shopping centres

- People with mental health issues/dementia find shopping difficult – need time to sort money out and deal with the transaction.
- Feel safe at Clifton Moor, see friends.

### Public transport

- Bus driver training, need pen and paper.
- Cancellation of a service – no-one tells you it's cancelled.
- Announcements need to be accessible – so know what's going on.
- Lack of following procedures, e.g. safety of seats and clamping wheelchairs.
- UNSAFE 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK. There's ramps + space, but it's harassment from passengers. Bus drivers don't want to get involved.
- Assistance getting on and off buses and trains, get put on last.
- On trains not all trains carry ramps. Not all ramps suitable, verbal abuse from passengers, so feel unsafe.
- Felt safe when there were conductors. Feels unsafe having to face passengers when you already feel an inconvenience.
- Experience of disabled area on bus being occupied by pushchairs and drivers sometimes not being prepared to take any action, so disabled person cannot get on bus. Do bus companies try hard enough?
- Some taxis won't pick up disabled people.
- Elderly woman with a stick getting on the bus. Driver was behind schedule. Set off before she could sit down. She said "that's it, I'm not using the bus again".
- Bus leaving before had a chance to sit down but drivers are checked for leaving late so it has time constraints.
- Bus – intimidation, school times.
- Train – no seats, no people to help who are easily identifiable.
- Feel unsafe on public transport/trains.
- Scary taxi drivers who do not understand disabilities.

### Pubs/cafes/restaurants

- Ordering – difficult communication and you can see waiters/bar staff getting impatient.
- Pub, deaf people asked to leave – the bouncer punched one of them.
- Caffe Nero are deaf aware – feel safe.
- Owners of cafe asking you to leave (they need educating).
- Issue about refused entry – Chinese restaurant because of ‘dog’ (owner is blind).
- ‘Blind’ being refused because of ‘dog for blind’.
- I go out in groups to Yates.

### Your neighbourhood

- Housing, tenant intercom – needs to be visual, e.g. camera.
- Unsafe when parking. Verbal abuse. Not giving enough room for wheelchair users even with stickers in back window.
- Banging on windows and doors at night makes you feel threatened.
- MATE CRIME.
- People isolated in own home because other places feel dangerous.
- Feel safe at home because people have someone to call if they need help.
- Lots of discrimination by people (neighbours).
- Friend attacked daughter (tried to slap).
- A nasty letter reported to police, police do not do much.
- Neighbours and friends to talk to 😊

### Parks/sports fields

- Signing in the park – teased.
- No more interacting with strangers in the park/on sports fields.

### Community facilities

- Acomb – social club for deaf people.
- Not able to join local group because deaf.
- Don't have the same opportunities as others due to lack of staff, or trips or activities.
- Safe at community centre.
- Community Buildings – feel safe as people I know.

### Other comments

- 101 not aware of the deaf community.
- There is some disability awareness.
- Cameras help in the city centre.
- Where's the information to report crime?
- Cold calling zones.
- Events, e.g. at museum – no BSL interpreters.
- Lack of RESPECT + AWARENESS + COMMUNICATION.
- Vibrating fire alarms should be available.
- Schools – no awareness, bullying and anti-social behaviour.
- Publicise around incidents, not crime.
- Don't know how to report hate crime.
- Hate crime reporting, health and social care directory?
- People not sure about their 'Rights' (Law).
- If you do not know your Rights, where do you turn to?
- Police do not give feedback, they cannot sign. They need to?
- If the police were disabled would they understand more?
- Education re: disabilities. Need more awareness.

## YUSU focus group 6:30pm 01/05/14

### Where do you feel safe in York

#### Home:

- Feel safe

#### The area where I live:

- Feel safe

#### Parks:

- Parks are not accessible for disabled children.

#### City centre:

- Lots of negative comments in the city centre. People treat disability as public property.

#### Pubs/cafes:

- One individual has never taken their cane out with them when on a night out as the reaction of bouncer's can be patronising as they assume you need help because you are drunk not because you might have other needs. People feel they will be judged for being "different".
- Caffe Nero and Gregg's are good 😊

#### Health services:

- NHS mental health provision is not wheelchair accessible.
- York Hospital will only phone people, information about communication needs is not passed on to receptionists.
- Desk heights are often too high (in GPs and hospital) so people cannot see mobility aids/wheelchair users.
- Receptionists do not know how to handle anything out of the ordinary.

Taxi ranks/bus stops:

- Feel safe in a taxi rank, but don't feel safe alone in a taxi as worried they might not go to the right place/take a circuitous route and because the individual is visually impaired they cannot be aware of this.

Schools/colleges:

- Children get bullied for being disabled.
- "Are you less blind today?" Comments if people do not always use aids etc.
- Other students whisper "does he need that?" "does he even go here?"
- Feeling that disabled people have to "act more disabled than I am" because of people staring.

Library:

- York library is good 😊 Staff are helpful.

Shops:

- When paying with cash more likely to feel patronised.

Sports facilities:

- Feel will be judged due to dyspraxia.

Public transport:

- Bus drivers rock.
- Never been questioned over bus pass, always help with getting off at right stop.
- Use of disabled seats on bus by non-disabled people, difficult.
- Railway staff also rock.
- Passenger assistance is great 😊
- Taxis need other ways of booking than the phone.
- Concerns over not being taken to right place/being overcharged (taxi).
- People always stick to things once they go well.

Post offices

- Anxious (not necessarily unsafe).

Community centres:

- No comments.

Council offices:

- Cafe should be accessible to the public.
- Like the queuing system and the people there are very good.
- More than 200m away from any bust stops.
- Anxious (not necessarily unsafe).
- West Offices is not where Google says it is.

Other:

- Accessible toilets in York have been out of order for over a month.
- CYC reablement service – staff members told the individual they didn't need the help they were receiving.
- People don't always offer to help, worry about offending but don't need to be.
- Supervisors, receptionists etc. often give advice they are not qualified to.
- Feel patronised/treated younger than you are by members of the public.
- Change in how the public view disabled people from being resilient/inspiring → undeserving over the last 3-4 years.
- Awareness differs between lecturers of dyspraxia. Some excellent, others not.
- Feel better when can be alone and not having to interact with people.
- Crowded/noises areas and new places can make people feel unsafe.

**What are your experiences?**



- Street harassment, regular experience “every day”.
  - Especially in town after dark.
  - On own street after dark.
  - From students.
  - On buses, particularly from older people.
  - 44 bus drivers are good once you get to know them.
- Student accommodation at the University of York is all more than 200m away from any bus stops and there are facilities issues at the University of York.
- Buildings are not built with access in mind, both at the University and in town in general.
- Touchscreens, for example, at the Council offices, GP surgeries and University of York library are not accessible.
- Lack of understanding that phones are not always accessible.
- Concern that disabled people might not always notice someone discriminating against them as they just expect that things will be harder for them.
- People do not always use microphones even when they are available – people need them!

### **How could things be improved?**

- Should be more willingness to use e-mail, e.g. CYC adult social care system.
- More training for people who do public-facing jobs.
  - Done through service user development, with professional delivery. Or co-delivery if appropriate.
- More regular consultation of problems, because things constantly change.
- More disabled people getting jobs, “you can’t be what you can’t see” → will improve awareness and physical accessibility.
- “Disabled friendly” stickers/places with disability symbols. Places should be more honest about their accessibility.
- People should be more understanding, don’t jump to negative assumptions.
  - More education needed.

- More understanding of multiple disabilities and the links between them for both members of the public and professionals.
- Subtitling needs to be used more/better.
- When accessing health services individuals often have notes including information about how they would like to be contacted – these are often ignored. They need to be taken notice of.
- There should be consequences of not doing things properly.
  - E.g. bus drivers moving off before everyone is seated.

**General Comments:**

- City centre → need clarification on pedestrianisation, times and where. Difficult for people with visual impairments.

## Appendix 4: Leaflet advertising the project



### Healthwatch York wants to know:

- **Have you experienced** negative attitudes from people because you are a disabled person?
- **Where in society** have these negative attitudes come from?
- **What can be done** to make life better for disabled people in York?

Turn over to find out how to get involved!

### How you can get involved:



By filling in the survey here:  
[www.surveymonkey.com/s/RCXS9XB](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RCXS9XB) (or contact us to receive a paper copy).



Come to a focus group to talk about your experiences.



Get in touch directly with us to share your views.

### How to get in touch:

#### Write to us:

Freepost RTEG-BLES-RRYJ  
Healthwatch York  
Priory Street Centre  
York YO1 6ET

**Telephone:** 01904 621133

**Email:** [emma.hersey@yorkcvs.org.uk](mailto:emma.hersey@yorkcvs.org.uk)

## Contact us:

Post: Freepost RTEG-BLES-RRYJ  
Healthwatch York  
15 Priors Street  
York YO1 6ET

Phone: 01904 621133

Mobile: 07779 597361 – use this if you would like to leave us a text or voicemail message

E mail: [healthwatch@yorkcvs.org.uk](mailto:healthwatch@yorkcvs.org.uk)

Twitter: @healthwatchyork

Facebook: Like us on Facebook

Web: [www.healthwatchyork.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk)

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## York CVS

Healthwatch York is a project at York CVS. York CVS works with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in York. York CVS aims to help these groups do their best for their communities, and people who take part in their activities or use their services.

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## This report

This report is available to download from the Healthwatch York website:  
[www.healthwatchyork.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk)

Paper copies are available from the Healthwatch York office

If you would like this report in any other format, please contact the Healthwatch York office