Consultation on the Disability Action Plan 2023 to 2024: Analysis and Reporting

---

Prepared for the Cabinet Office's Disability Unit **February 2024**

alma economics

About the authors

alma economics

Alma Economics combines unparalleled analytical expertise
with the ability to communicate complex ideas clearly.

www.almaeconomics.com

About the commissioning organisation

Cabinet Office

This independent analysis was commissioned by the Cabinet Office's Disability Unit (DU). The authors alone are responsible for the views expressed in this article, which do not necessarily represent the views, decisions, or policies of the institutions with which they are affiliated.

www.gov.uk

Table of contents

Executive summary

In December 2022, the Minister for Disabled People announced that a new Disability Action Plan would be put to public consultation in 2023. The consultation was open for 12 weeks between 18 July and 6 October 2023.

The Disability Action Plan would:

- set out immediate actions the government would take to improve disabled people's lives
- lay the foundations for longer-term change

The consultation asked people for feedback on whether the proposed areas of action were helpful things for the government to work on. It also asked how they might best be carried out if they were taken forward.

The consultation was hosted on the UK government's Citizen Space portal and GOV.UK. It was available in alternative formats including British Sign Language (BSL), Easy Read and large print. Responses were also accepted via email and post.

The consultation consisted of:

- 16 demographic questions
- 14 closed survey questions
- 14 open survey questions (for which respondents could give a free-text response)
- 5 semi-open survey questions (for which respondents could give a limited free-text response)

Discussions at consultation events helped to inform the final action plan, but this report analyses responses collected via Citizen Space, email and post.

Respondent characteristics

The consultation received 1,331 responses. Of these:

- 93% (1,244 responses) were submitted on Citizen Space
- 7% (87 responses) were sent by email or post

Responses could be submitted on behalf of individuals or organisations. Out of the 1,331 responses:

- 88% (1,166 responses) were from individuals
- 12% (165 responses) were from organisations.

Respondents had a wide range of conditions or illnesses, with each impairment group accounting for more than 10% of responses.

Consultation responses

Overarching themes

Several themes were frequently repeated across responses to multiple consultation questions. These were:

- the need to amplify the voices and experiences of disabled people
- the need for clear and measurable actions (with clarity on who was accountable for their implementation)

- greater financial support due to the impacts of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis
- sufficient and specific funding for any policies implemented
- better communication about available resources and ensuring information was accessible to disabled people with a wide range of impairment types
- equality of outcomes and opportunity for disabled people

Elected office

74% strongly agreed with the proposal to improve access to elected office for disabled people by:

- reviewing funding support
- creating an online hub

18% somewhat agreed and less than 10% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposal.

The most common theme was the need for accessible workplaces for those in elected office. This included the need for more funding for reasonable adjustments while campaigning and in office. The second most common theme was the need for more disabled people with a range of impairment types in elected office. This would mean those in office could be truly representative of the needs of disabled people.

Accessible playgrounds

78% strongly agreed with the proposal to create a hub of guidance about playground accessibility. 14% somewhat agreed. Less than 10% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposal.

81% strongly agreed that voluntary standards for playground accessibility should be mandatory. 12% somewhat agreed. Less than 8% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposal.

The most common theme was that standards for playground accessibility should be mandatory. Most respondents thought voluntary standards would not lead to meaningful change.

Other themes included:

- the need for playground equipment to be accessible for people with a range of impairment types
- emphasising the benefits of inclusive play
- the need for accessibility in the whole park, including the car park and changing rooms

Emergency planning and resilience work

87% strongly agreed with the proposal to increase disability inclusion in emergency planning and resilience work. 9% somewhat agreed. Less than 5% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposal.

The most common theme was the need to better protect disabled people in emergencies by planning for their specific needs. The second most common theme was the lack of consideration for all impairment types in current emergency planning. This includes people with non-visible disabilities, for example.

Climate adaptations and mitigations

62% strongly agreed that there was a need to work on climate adaptations and mitigations. 18% somewhat agreed and 12% neither agreed nor disagreed. 2% somewhat or strongly disagreed, and 4% were unsure.

The most common theme was the need to improve access to both public transport and electric cars. The second most common theme was the extra cost and difficulty placed on disabled people due to climate adaptations. This was particularly the case for housing and essential equipment.

Disability Enabled Badge

62% strongly agreed that this scheme would give increased confidence to disabled customers when accessing businesses or services, 22% somewhat agreed and 7% neither agreed nor disagreed. Both ‘Somewhat disagree’ and ‘Strongly disagree’ were selected by 4% of all respondents, and 1% were unsure.

The most common theme was general support for the Disability Enabled Badge as most respondents believed that the increased staff awareness would help disabled people and increase their independence. The second most common theme suggested that the scheme should be mandatory, monitored and enforced.

Special Olympics Summer Games

52% strongly agreed that hosting the Special Olympics Summer Games in Great Britain should be explored. 22% somewhat agreed, and 14% neither agreed nor disagreed. 4% somewhat disagreed, 5% strongly disagreed and 3% were unsure.

The most common theme was that hosting the Games would have limited benefits for disabled people.[1] Some respondents thought the benefits would be short term or only benefit some disabled people. Others thought the resources would be better spent elsewhere to support disabled people. The second most common theme was support for hosting as a way to increase awareness and visibility of people with learning disabilities.

Access refusals for guide dogs

90% strongly agreed with the proposal for the government to work more closely with the guide dog sector. The aim of this would be to see what more the government could do to address access refusals of guide dogs. 6% somewhat agreed, and less than 5% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposal.

68% strongly agreed that increasing fines would address the issue of access refusals. 19% somewhat agreed, and 6% neither agreed nor disagreed. 4% somewhat disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed and 2% were unsure.

The most common theme among individuals was the need to enforce fines to ensure consequences and act as a deterrent.[2] The most common theme among organisations was the need to increase awareness and education, not simply fine businesses.

Raising the profile of assistive technology

74% strongly agreed that better advice from public sector staff would lead to improved access to assistive technology. 16% somewhat agreed, and 6% neither agreed nor disagreed. 4% were unsure or disagreed.

The most common theme was that assistive technology was instrumental to disabled people’s

---

[1] Please note that overall, more respondents expressed their agreement with the proposal rather than disagreement, matching the results of the quantitative analysis of the closed question. However, respondents who gave positive feedback offered more detailed reasoning and hence, their responses were split into multiple themes.

[2] Under current policy, only taxi and private vehicle drivers can be fined for access refusals. All other refusals have to be dealt with via a civil case where compensation can be sought. However, many respondents were not aware of this and answered based on the assumption that other businesses (for example, restaurants) could be fined for refusing access to an assistance dog.

independence and wellbeing. Well-trained staff were also seen as vital. The second most common theme was that the government should address digital exclusion first.

Wellbeing and opportunities of disabled children

Between 82% and 90% of respondents strongly agreed with the 4 proposed areas of focus.

The most common alternative area of focus they suggested was better support for disabled children in schools. These respondents said school was particularly difficult for disabled children. They argued this was worse if they were bullied or diagnosed late.

Support for disabled parents

Between 76% and 88% of respondents strongly agreed with each of the 3 proposed areas of focus.

The most common alternative area of focus they suggested was better support in schools for disabled parents. These respondents felt that this would help them support their children's education and school experience. Some respondents said that physical and attitudinal barriers at school had a significant impact. These barriers came from both staff and children.

Disability evidence and data improvement programme

69% strongly agreed with the proposed approach. 21% somewhat agreed, and 6% neither agreed nor disagreed. 1% somewhat disagreed, 1% strongly disagreed, and 2% were unsure.

The most common theme was the need for lived experience to inform an evidence-based approach. Respondents said it was important to expand on an outcome-centred approach.

Disability foresight

66% strongly agreed with the proposal. 23% somewhat agreed, and 5% neither agreed nor disagreed. 3% somewhat disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed and 1% were unsure.

The most common theme was support for research that would look ahead to future challenges. This would support disabled people in a more proactive way. The second most common theme was a preference for research into people's immediate needs rather than their future challenges. This preference was particularly expressed by individual respondents.

General comments on the Disability Action Plan and alternative actions

The final 2 consultation questions asked for respondents' thoughts on the plans and suggested areas of action as a whole. The most common response was general agreement with the plan. But some respondents also said the plan needed proper funding and clear accountability.

Areas that needed more attention according to respondents included:

- accessibility in the workforce, and more generally in the built environment and transport
- financial support
- enhancing disability awareness and support in the workplace
- health and social care
- education

Introduction

On 2 December 2022, the Minister for Disabled People announced that a new Disability Action Plan would be put to public consultation in 2023.

The draft version of the plan, published in July 2023, set out proposals for immediate actions the government would take to:

- improve the lives of disabled people in the UK
- lay the foundations for longer-term change

These included policies from the Cabinet Office Disability Unit (DU) and other government departments. The consultation asked for views on the specific policies that would be led by DU. It also asked for views on the plan as a whole.

The consultation was hosted on the Citizen Space survey portal and GOV.UK. It included:

- 16 demographic questions
- 14 closed survey questions
- 15 open survey questions (where respondents could give a free-text response)
- 4 semi-open survey questions (where respondents could give a limited free-text response)

The consultation was available in alternative formats including BSL, Easy Read and large print. Responses were accepted by email and post, as well as on Citizen Space. The consultation was open for 12 weeks between 18 July and 6 October 2023, and received 1,331 responses in total.

All questions were optional. The average response rate was:

- 91% for closed survey questions
- 31% for open survey questions

The government commissioned independent research consultancy Alma Economics to analyse the consultation responses. This report, written by Alma Economics, provides a summary of the analysis.

Research approach

Respondent characteristics

The consultation received 1,331 responses. Of these:

- 93% (1,244 responses) were submitted on Citizen Space
- 7% (87 responses) were sent by email or post

Out of the responses sent by email and post:

- 32 did not follow the structure of the consultation document
- 9 followed the structure of the consultation document but also added more information outside of the structure

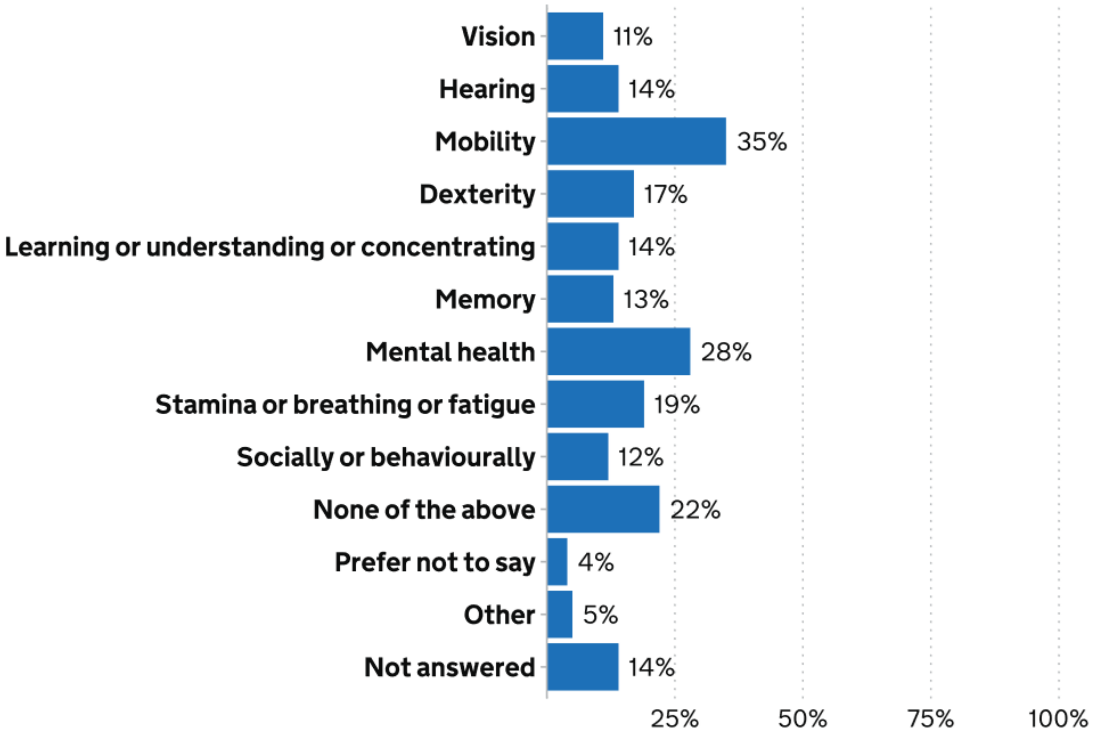
1,166 individuals (88%) and 165 organisations (12%) responded to the consultation.

Table 1. Source of responses received

Respondent type	Citizen Space	Email	Postal	Total
Individual	1,135	28	3	**1,166**
Organisation	109	56	0	**165**
Total respondents	**1,244**	**84**	**3**	**1,331**

Respondents included disabled people with a range of impairments. More than 10% of respondents identified with each impairment type.[3] Out of all impairment types, those with the highest percentage of respondents related to mobility (35%) and mental health (28%).

Figure 1. Impairment types (multi responses)

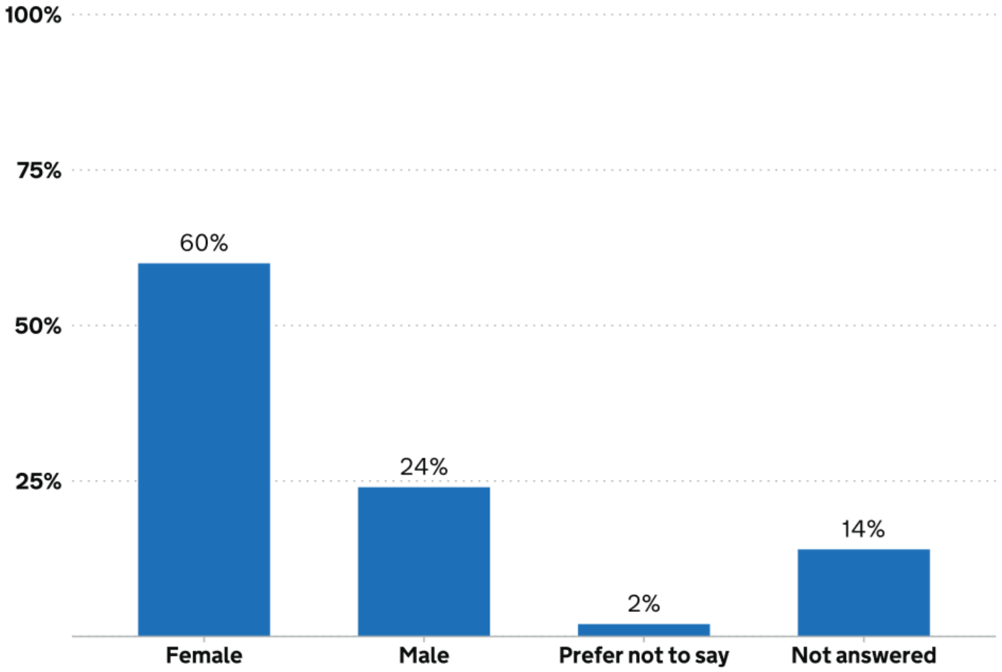


---

[3] Respondents were able to select multiple options for this question, so percentages in the graph of impairment type by share of respondents (displayed above) do not add to 100%.

A majority of respondents (60%) selected female as their sex. 24% selected male and 16% preferred not to answer or did not respond.[4]

Figure 2. Sex



When broken down by country:

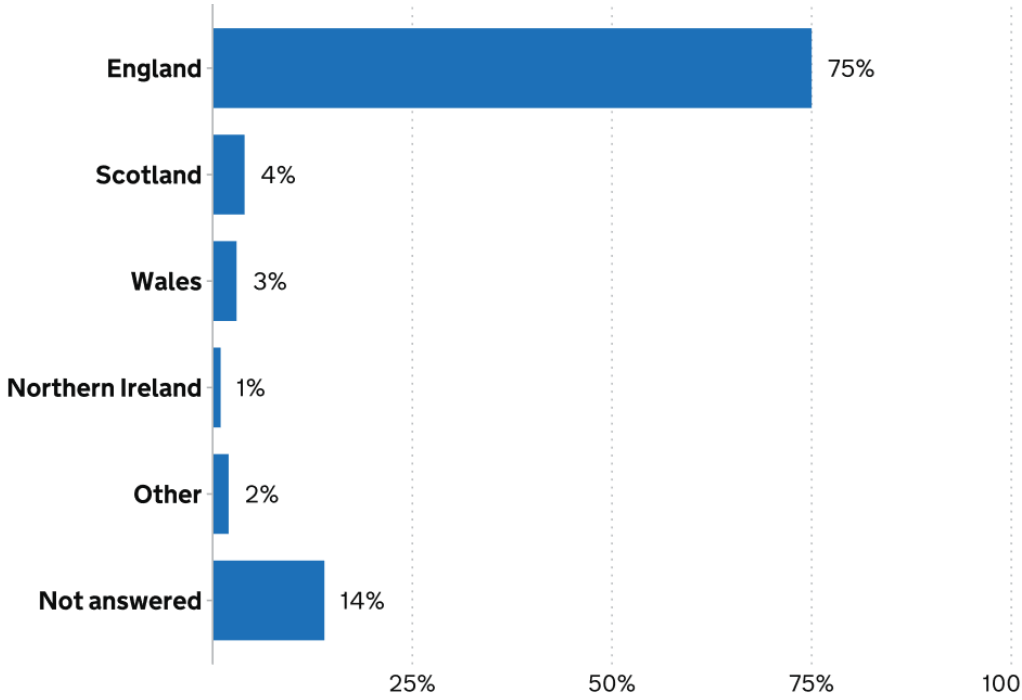
- 1,004 (75%) of respondents lived or worked in England
- 58 (4%) were from Scotland
- 44 (3%) were from Wales
- 10 (1%) were from Northern Ireland

The remaining respondents either did not answer the question (14%) or stated that they were living or working in another country (2%).

---

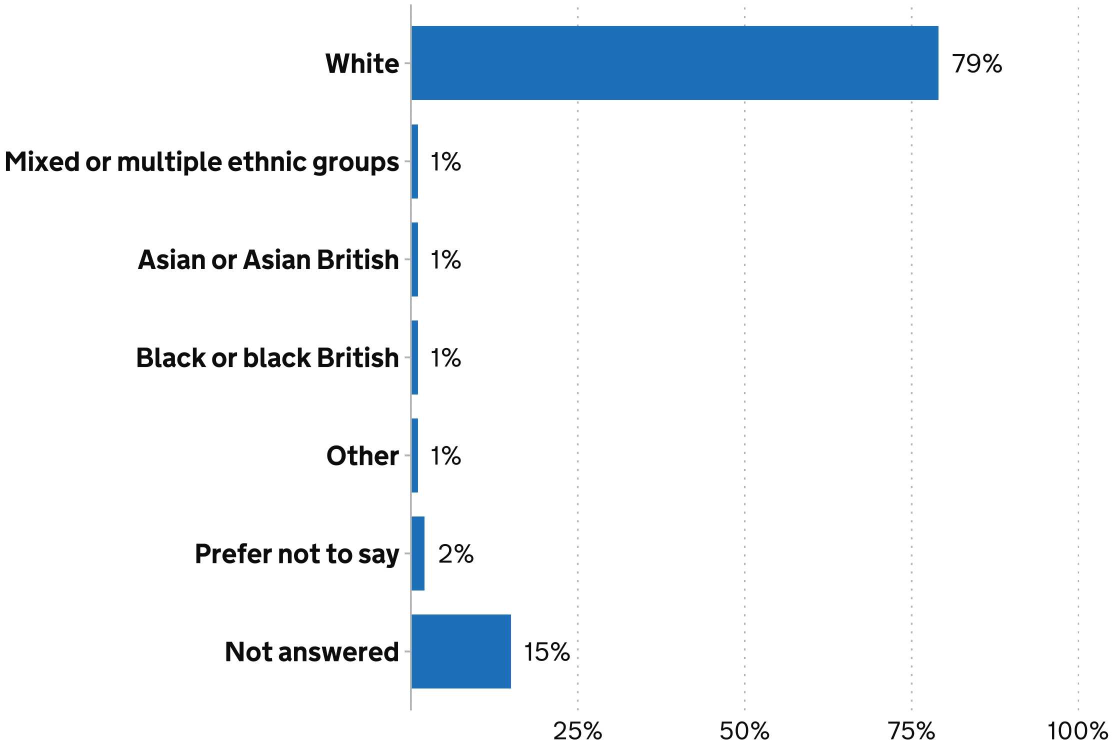
[4] Please note that respondents were also asked whether the gender they identify with is the same as the sex registered at birth and 82% of respondents answered yes, 1% said no and the rest either stated they preferred not to answer the question or did not respond.

Figure 3. **Country of residence**



Regarding ethnicity, the majority of respondents (79%) were white. Mixed/multiple ethnic, Asian/Asian British, black/black British and 'other' were each represented by 1% of respondents. 17% either preferred not to answer or did not respond.[5]

Figure 4. **Ethnicity**



---

[5] The consultation provided answer options on a more granular level. However, due to small sample sizes, they had to be aggregated for a more meaningful analysis.

Methodology

Data processing

At the start of the consultation analysis, all responses were combined into a single dataset. They included:

- responses extracted from Citizen Space
- responses sent by email and post that matched the format of the consultation questionnaire

All responses were treated equally regardless of how they were submitted. During the manual review of responses, the research team screened for:

- responses intended to be offensive, abusive or vulgar
- duplicate responses
- responses arising from campaigns organised by external groups or individuals

No responses were removed as a result of this screening process.

Some responses sent by email or post did not follow the format of the consultation questionnaire. Some did not refer to specific actions. It was not possible to include these in the quantitative analysis. But the themes they raised are reflected in the executive summary, the overarching themes and the relevant proposed policies.

Approach to analysis of closed questions

Descriptive analysis was carried out on the responses to the 14 closed-format questions using Python. For each question, this report shows:

- the overall findings
- a breakdown by respondent type (individual or organisation)

Responses were also analysed by:

- impairment type
- country
- sex
- ethnicity

These insights were not included in the main body of the report. This is because the research team did not find any notable or significant patterns based on these characteristics.

Approach to analysis of open and semi-open questions

The consultation included 15 open and 4 semi-open questions with free-text fields. There was no limit to how much respondents could write, although a 500-word limit was suggested for each answer.

All responses to these 19 questions were read in full by a team of researchers at Alma Economics. The team conducted thematic analysis of each response to:

- capture the main opinions expressed by respondents in overarching themes
- understand the reasoning behind their answers

All the identified themes were added to an Excel-based codebook of themes. Regular project team meetings ensured that themes were defined consistently across researchers. The codebook was then used to identify the most common themes for each question. The most prevalent themes are summarised in this report. Themes are ordered by frequency for each consultation question. The overarching themes are discussed in a separate section of the report.

Limitations

Any information shown in quotes has not been validated or fact-checked. Instead, the quotes represent the subjective views or experiences of respondents alone. They should not be treated as factual information.

Consultation responses from individuals and organisations are not generally representative of:

- the broader population
- any specific demographic group
- geographical areas such as local authorities

Responses from some areas or groups may be disproportionately under- or over-represented.

The research team could not verify whether responses from organisations were submitted officially.

Some responses did not directly address or relate to the questions set out in the consultation. The consultation questions are this report's focus, including the qualitative analysis sections.

This report analyses the responses received to the consultation survey. It does not include insights from the consultation events. These have been analysed and considered separately.

Overarching themes

There were a number of cross-cutting themes that were present in responses to many or all of the consultation questions. These are summarised in this section (rather than repeating them multiple times across the questions).

Policies should be informed by the experiences of disabled people

Respondents said proposals in the Disability Action Plan should amplify the voices and experiences of disabled people and their representatives. Most respondents, particularly organisations, said it was crucial to include disabled people. This was due to their knowledge of the systems currently in place, and their reliance on them.

> *"[…] the ability to work collaboratively requires improved foundations and trust. We continue to hear concerns from disabled people about the lack of meaningful involvement in government decision-making and consultation processes, as well as implementation of policies and programmes, and it is critical this is addressed […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Suggestions for overall policy approach

Respondents often said that actions should be clear and measurable. It should also be clear who was accountable for implementing them. Many respondents also wanted to see a more centralised and simplified approach to support, including centralised standards and guidance. This would:

- make it easier for disabled people to access support
- help to make sure that schemes did not overlap and cause duplication or conflicts

> *"[…] Although the plan identifies areas and barriers that impact on disabled people's lives it needs to have an overarching vision with holistic considerations and measurable actions that can improve things for disabled people now." (Organisational respondent)*

> *"[…] There does however need to be a focus on cross government issues such as the carers allowance earnings limit and the issue of young people without mental capacity trying to access their child trust funds. Too often one department references another as being responsible and yet refuses to work with them to resolve it. Families are then caught in the crossfire.[…]" (Organisational respondent)*

Financial support for disabled people

Many respondents stressed the need for more financial support for disabled people. They also said that:

- the Disability Action Plan did not fully account for the impacts of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis
- disabled people faced disproportionate housing, energy, health and social care, and transport costs

Some respondents asked for a more simplified approach to accessing financial support.

> *"[…] As a whole, the plan does not tackle what disabled people are most concerned about right now and is disconnected from disabled peoples' realities. The pandemic, deconditioning and the ongoing cost of living crisis is not addressed. Disabled people need to see proposals*

> *that will make a difference to their day to day lives focussing on issues with education, healthcare, improving services and employment. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Policies need to be backed up by sufficient funding

Respondents frequently said that policies in the plan needed to have sufficient and specific funding. These respondents believed that most issues facing disabled people were caused by underfunded services. Most respondents supported the proposed policies, but they also questioned whether they would come to fruition and have an impact. This was because there was a lack of information in the plan about funding these policies.

> *"[…] A study and proposals can be put forward for future years but will only be relevant if there is funding to implement the action recommended otherwise, this is a waste of time and resources." (Individual respondent)*

> *"The government proposals seem to be a step in the right direction. However, let's wait and see. Wouldn't be surprised if the recommendations are watered down or the government claims that there are [insufficient] funds to support their proposals. I always think that actions speak louder than words." (Individual respondent)*

Ensure that all disabled people with a range of impairments are included

Many respondents mentioned the need to consider all disabled people when designing policies. For example, they thought that non-visible disabilities such as learning disabilities or mental health issues were not considered enough in policy making.

> *"[…] I am concerned that much of the plans and areas of action focus on physical disability and not on all disability. […]" (Individual respondent)*

> *"Make sure that consideration is given in all areas to people with hidden disabilities. Just because someone isn't in a wheelchair or uses additional aids doesn't mean they don't face challenges. (Individual respondent)"*

Improve communication about available resources

Respondents frequently said disabled people needed more regular communication about the resources available to them. They said that this communication should be accessible to all disabled people. Across all questions, some respondents either:

- said they were not aware of specific resources
- suggested policies that were already in place

> *"There is a need to improve communication of availability of offerings; I was entirely unaware of ECO4 energy efficiency scheme, designed to tackle fuel poverty or the Great British insulation scheme." (Individual respondent)*

Importance of equal outcomes and opportunities

Respondents commonly said they supported the policies in the plan because they reflected the fundamental right of disabled people to have the same outcomes and opportunities as non-disabled people in all areas of society. These respondents said this right should be backed by government support and action.

> *"[…] Disability accessibility is still treated as an add on, or an additional expense, rather than a fundamental human right to ensure all of our population have the opportunity to engage. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Elected office

Question 1: To what extent do you agree with proposals to review funding support and create an online hub to improve access to elected office for disabled people?

Quantitative analysis

There were 1,185 responses to this question. 1,097 (93%) were from individuals, and 88 (7%) from organisations.

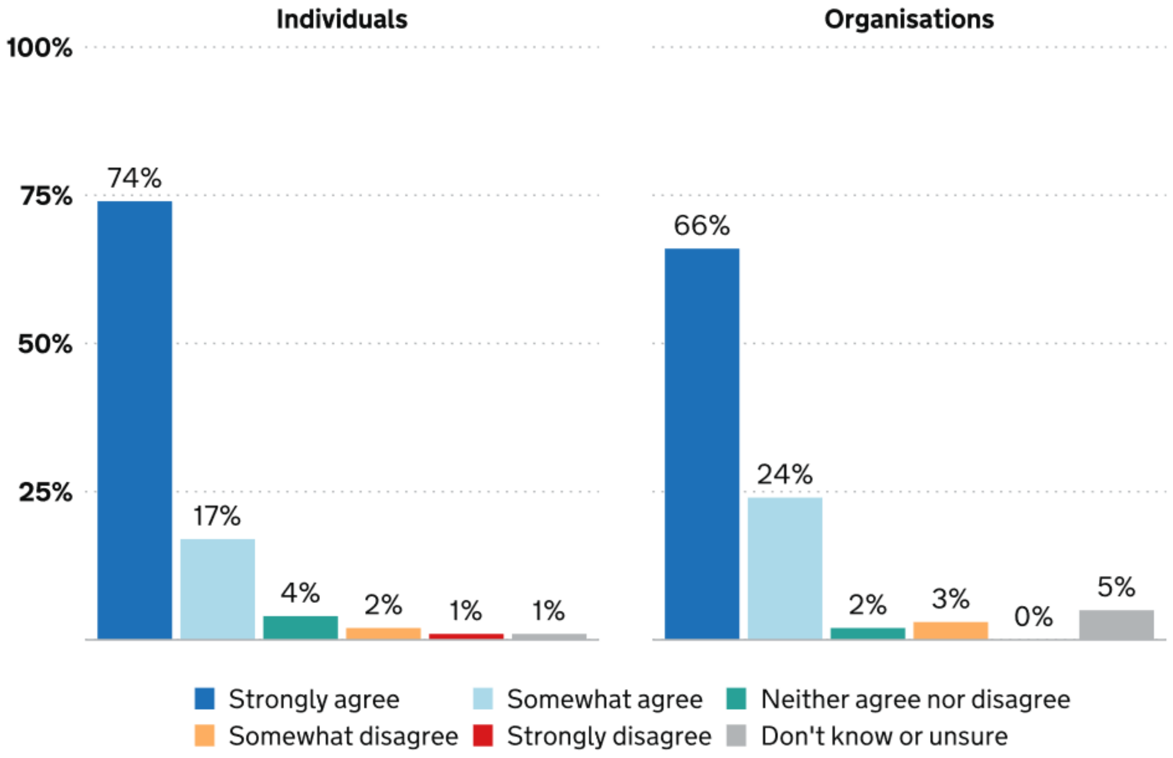
74% of respondents strongly agreed that funding support should be reviewed and an online hub to improve access to elected office for disabled people should be created. 18% somewhat agreed and less than 10% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposal.

Individuals were more likely to strongly agree with the proposals (74%) than organisations (66%). Only 3% of both individuals and organisations disagreed with the proposal.

There were no distinct differences in support for the proposals by country.

When asked if they had conditions or illnesses that affected them, respondents who selected ‘Vision’ were most likely to strongly agree (78%). Respondents who selected ‘Learning or understanding or concentrating’ (69%) and ‘Socially or behaviourally’ (68%) were least likely to strongly agree.

Figure 5. To what extent do you agree with proposals to review funding support and create an online hub to improve access to elected office for disabled people?



Qualitative analysis

If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Accessible workplaces for elected office

The most common theme was the need for accessible workplaces for those in elected office, including increased funding for reasonable adjustments while campaigning and in office. These respondents noted numerous examples of physical barriers which hindered wheelchair users when accessing political spaces, including offices not having accessible entrances or lifts.

Additional barriers highlighted by respondents as restricting disabled individuals from entering elected office and the wider workforce include the lack of assistive technology and British Sign Language (BSL) translation. Therefore, respondents highlighted that reasonable adjustments should cater to the needs of all disabled people, including those with non-visible disabilities.

> *"The House of Commons has many areas that aren't wheelchair accessible, the backbenches and the despatch box aren't wheelchair accessible, and the house of lords has less spaces for wheelchairs than they have peers who currently use wheelchairs." (Individual respondent)*

Diverse representation

The second most common theme was the need for a more diverse representation of disabled people with a range of impairment types in elected office so those in office could be truly representative of disabled people. Other respondents, while still agreeing with the overall sentiment of the proposals, also mentioned the need to represent the interests of disabled people from other under-represented groups.

> *"It is important that disabled people should be part of the political process at all levels and help make decisions which will affect them and their constituents." (Individual respondent)*

> *"[…] I also believe opportunities and processes to run for office should be better publicised to disabled people from a wider variety of socioeconomic and racial backgrounds." (Individual respondent)*

More inclusive society

The third most common theme was the need to take a bigger picture approach, with respondents emphasising that a more enabling society was required for disabled people to enter elected office. These respondents often mentioned the lack of support provided by the current benefits system. They also highlighted that financial systems were not in place to support disabled people in accessing elected office.

> *"The systems are not in place for disabled people to get the experience they need to get into these types of roles. Until the benefits system becomes less oppressive to disabled people, they will not be in a position to rise to public office. The hub also doesn't mitigate physical access to governmental spaces and does nothing to raise awareness of disability and challenge attitudes in the voting public." (Individual respondent)*

> *"[…] the extra costs associated with being disabled are a barrier for women seeking selection and election. Candidates who had been able to access previous versions of the [Access to Elected Office Fund] or other sources of funding spoke about how valuable it had been for*

> *covering costs such as transport or buying assistive tech. Women also spoke about using the fund for personal assistants or support staff. Access to funding enables disabled candidates to contest elections on a level playing field." (Organisational respondent)*

Online hub accessible to disabled people with a range of impairments

The fourth most common theme was the importance of ensuring the hub would support disabled people with a range of impairments. Examples mentioned by respondents included the need for adaptations for visually impaired people, the need for easy-read versions for those with learning disabilities and BSL versions of online content. Additionally, a few respondents highlighted the need for offline resources to support disabled people who lacked access to the Internet or had low levels of digital literacy.

> *"[…] Creating an online hub can address accessibility challenges for disabled candidates and align with the 'digital age' as online platforms provide a versatile avenue to connect with ward or constituency residents. However, it is essential that these hubs are designed to be fully accessible, taking into account the varying levels of digital literacy and assistive technological needs among disabled individuals. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Not substantive enough or not a priority

Finally, a small number of respondents (mostly individuals) expressed reservations or disapproval of the proposal, stating that it did not go far enough or that improving access to elected office was not a priority for disabled people. Some respondents noted that accessing elected office did not reflect more pressing daily issues faced by disabled people in their day-to-day lives, such as financial concerns and issues gaining employment.

> *"[…] If the government is really interested in improving access to elected office for disabled people, a much more proactive approach will be required. This begins at the very basics: supporting disabled people in all areas of life […]." (Individual respondent)*

> *"Money should be used elsewhere in my opinion." (Individual respondent)*

Existing guidance or training

If you know of existing guidance or training for disabled candidates to elected office that you think should be included on the GOV.UK webpage, please share them here.

Respondents made a total of 60 unique suggestions in response to this question. DU will consider and quality assure these as part of ongoing policy development.

Accessible playgrounds

Question 2a: To what extent do you agree with the proposal to create a hub of guidance about playground accessibility?

Quantitative analysis

There were 1,186 responses to this question. 1,101 (93%) were from individuals and 85 (7%) from organisations.

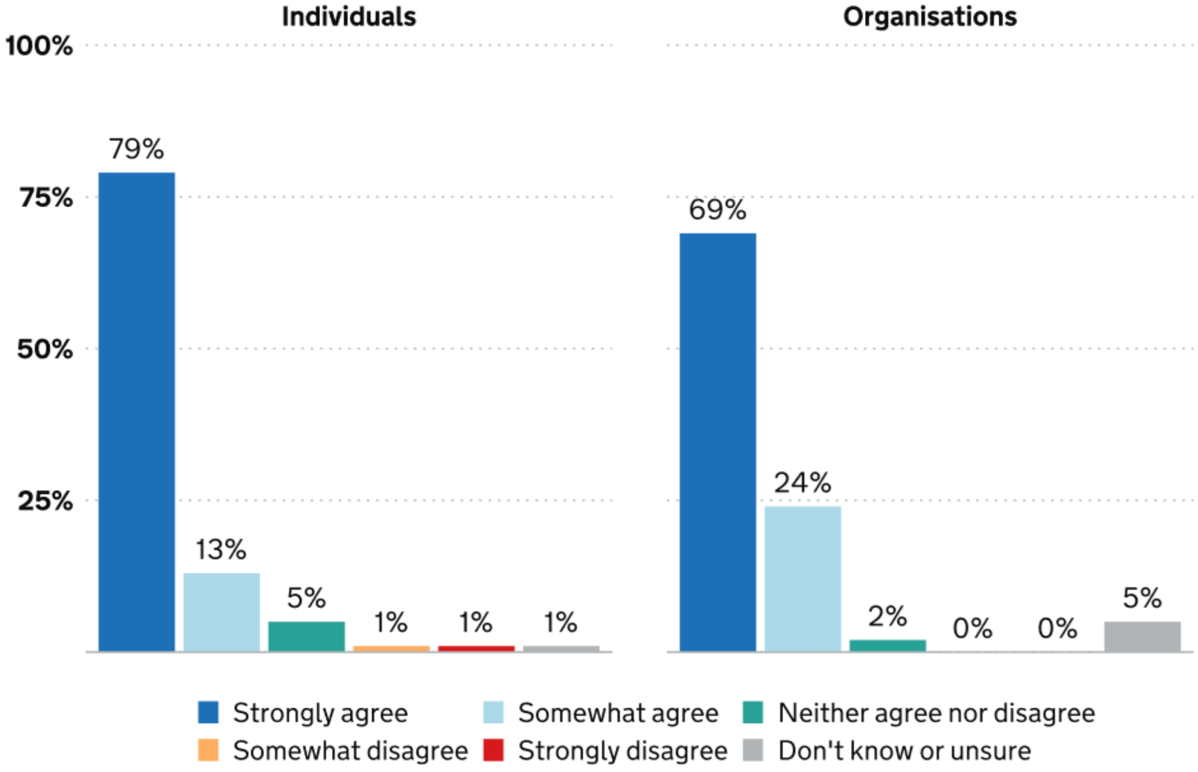
78% of respondents strongly agreed with the proposal to create a hub of guidance about playground accessibility. 14% somewhat agreed and less than 10% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposal.

Individuals were more likely to strongly agree with the proposals (79%) than organisations (69%). Only 2% of individuals and no organisations disagreed with the proposal.

Respondents from Wales were more likely to strongly agree with the proposal (93%) than respondents from other countries.

There were no distinct differences in support for the proposals by impairment type.

Figure 6. To what extent do you agree with the proposal to create a hub of guidance about playground accessibility?



Question 2b: To what extent do you agree that the voluntary standards for playground accessibility should be made mandatory?

Quantitative analysis

There were 1,169 responses to this question. 1,084 (93%) were from individuals and 85 (7%) from organisations.

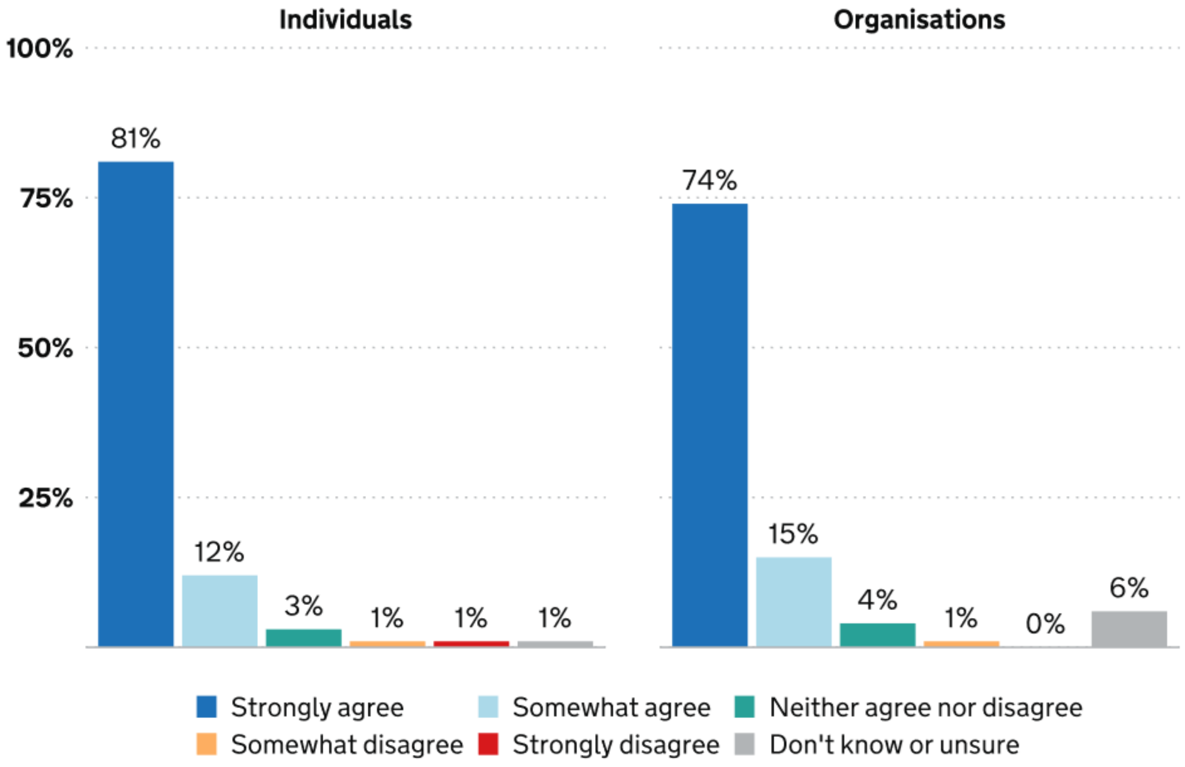
81% of respondents strongly agreed that voluntary standards for playground accessibility should be made mandatory. 12% somewhat agreed and less than 8% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposal.

Individuals were more likely to strongly agree (81%) than organisations (74%). Only 2% of individuals and 1% of organisations disagreed with the proposal.

Respondents from Wales (91%) and Northern Ireland (100%) were more likely to strongly agree with the proposal than respondents from other countries.[6] Respondents from Scotland were least likely to strongly agree with the proposal (74%).

There were no distinct differences in support for the proposals by impairment type.

Figure 7. To what extent do you agree that the voluntary standards for playground accessibility should be made mandatory?



---

[6] Only 9 respondents to the consultation stated they lived or worked in Northern Ireland.

Qualitative analysis

If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Mandatory standards and funding

The most common theme was general agreement with mandatory standards for playground accessibility. Respondents supportive of this believed that voluntary standards would not be acted upon adequately and several references were made to the need for legislation to enforce the guidance. Others mentioned specific suggestions for what should be included in the guidelines – these suggestions reflected the need for the guidance to be both educational and serve as a practical resource. Lastly, many respondents noted that mandatory standards could not be enacted without dedicated funding.

> *"It is unfortunate but true that the minute you allow opt out option that becomes the norm. This is too important to allow flexibility, mandating and enforcing rigorously is the only way forward." (Individual respondent)*

> *"[…] voluntary standards cannot be made mandatory without sufficient funding set aside by the central government for local councils. It would be illogical and un-anticipatory for the government to set this in law without providing already cost-cutting local authorities the funding to carry out improvements. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Accessible playground equipment

The second most frequent theme was the need for playground equipment which catered to all disabled people. Respondents listed many examples of specific impairments which some respondents felt were often not accounted for in playground planning, such as multi-sensory equipment for children with learning disabilities, visual communication stations (sign language or finger-spelling) for D/deaf children and musical elements to enhance hand, eye and foot co-ordination. A prominent subtheme within these responses was the need to cater for disabled adults as well as children, with references to adults with learning disabilities benefiting from inclusion.

> *"[…] Much more is needed than just access for children with mobility problems. The organisation which was called H.A.P.A used to have specialist playgrounds with all sorts of wonderful things like tubular bells, giant swings, and much more, so be open minded about what can be done for blind children, those with autism or learning disabilities so that equipment is imaginative and creative for all children." (Individual respondent)*

> *"I think playgrounds should be used by people of all ages (not just children). Disabled adults love playgrounds – it should be about making it more inclusive and accessible to all age groups (including adults)." (Individual respondent)*

All children should be given opportunities to play together

The third most frequent theme was that playgrounds should allow all children to play together. These respondents highlighted that this would not just benefit disabled children but lead to better cohesion in society. A subtheme within these responses was how play, in particular integrated play, could lead to health and wellbeing benefits for disabled children and adults, improving both physical or mental wellbeing and overall quality of life.

> *"Playground accessibility is very important for children to feel a part of society and for disability to be seen and ultimately accepted and understood. Visibility is essential." (Individual respondent)*

> *"[…] It is already established that active lifestyles when young conduce to better long-term health benefits. Inaccessible play and recreation areas reinforce social stigma and isolation, causing distress. Therefore, it is more sustainable and effective in the longer term to ensure that disabled people can access play and recreation facilities, in the public interest, adding to quality of life and wellbeing and reducing the burden of ill health." (Individual respondent)*

Accessibility of the whole playground

The fourth most frequent theme, mostly raised by organisations, was the need to make the whole playground accessible, including adequate changing facilities and parking. These respondents noted the lack of such facilities within parks meant that many disabled people were unable to access various playgrounds. Some respondents also mentioned the need to consider:

- the accessibility of the playground for disabled parents
- that the design of the whole playground should accommodate all disabled people, including wheelchair users

Several examples of accessibility measures included the need for appropriate surfaces (for example, avoiding grass), easy pathways with dropped kerbs and wider width of gates.

> *"[…] It is vital that the guidance does not only focus on the playground itself, but also the other support needed to make the playground truly accessible, such as transport to the playground, changing places toilets, accessible cafes, etc." (Organisational respondent)*

> *"[…] For children with a vision impairment, playgrounds are rarely safe or inclusive. Playgrounds are inaccessible when they don't include different textures and circulatory routes to help children identify where playing equipment are located or lack sensory equipment and good colour contrast of equipment and features. In addition, not having secure fencing of the play area and tactile paving in large play areas to assist with orientation can reduce accessibility. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Search tool

Some respondents, mostly individuals, suggested that the online hub include a search tool to share information on the accessibility of playground facilities in one place.

> *"[…] Ideally it should have a postcode checker, and distance from that postcode of the facilities as Google Maps would do. Each one that you click on, you find what level it is at and what facilities are specifically for disabled people. Otherwise, people have to drive around to find out what is available in their area. Why not have it listed as a feature?" (Individual respondent)*

Proposed actions do not go far enough, are not possible in practice or not a priority

Finally, a few respondents (almost entirely individuals) expressed reservations or disapproved of the proposals for different reasons. Firstly, these respondents thought it was not possible to make all playgrounds fully accessible, as they highlighted the challenges of making guidance mandatory for current playgrounds due to space limitations and previous planning.

> *"Obviously some disabilities will mean that it is impossible for accessibility irrespective of how much money is spent." (Individual respondent)*

Secondly, a few other respondents felt that proposals around playground accessibility should go further – in particular, the online hub should also be made available to the public (with both accessible and offline versions).

> *"Having a centralised place for the guidance would be useful, but requiring accessibility will be more important. It would be best to have that guidance clearly available to the public so that a parent of a disabled parent can check if their local playground meets the requirements and challenge a failure to meet the basic standards." (Individual respondent)*

Third, a small number of respondents said that playground accessibility was not a priority for disabled people, and these responses instead drew attention to other areas of concern, such as healthcare.

Existing guidance

If you know of existing guidance that the DU should consider including on the hub, please share them.

Respondents made a total of 76 unique suggestions in response to this question. DU will consider and quality assure these as part of ongoing policy development.

Emergency planning and resilience work

Question 3: To what extent do you agree with the proposed plan to increase disability inclusion in emergency planning and resilience work?

Quantitative analysis

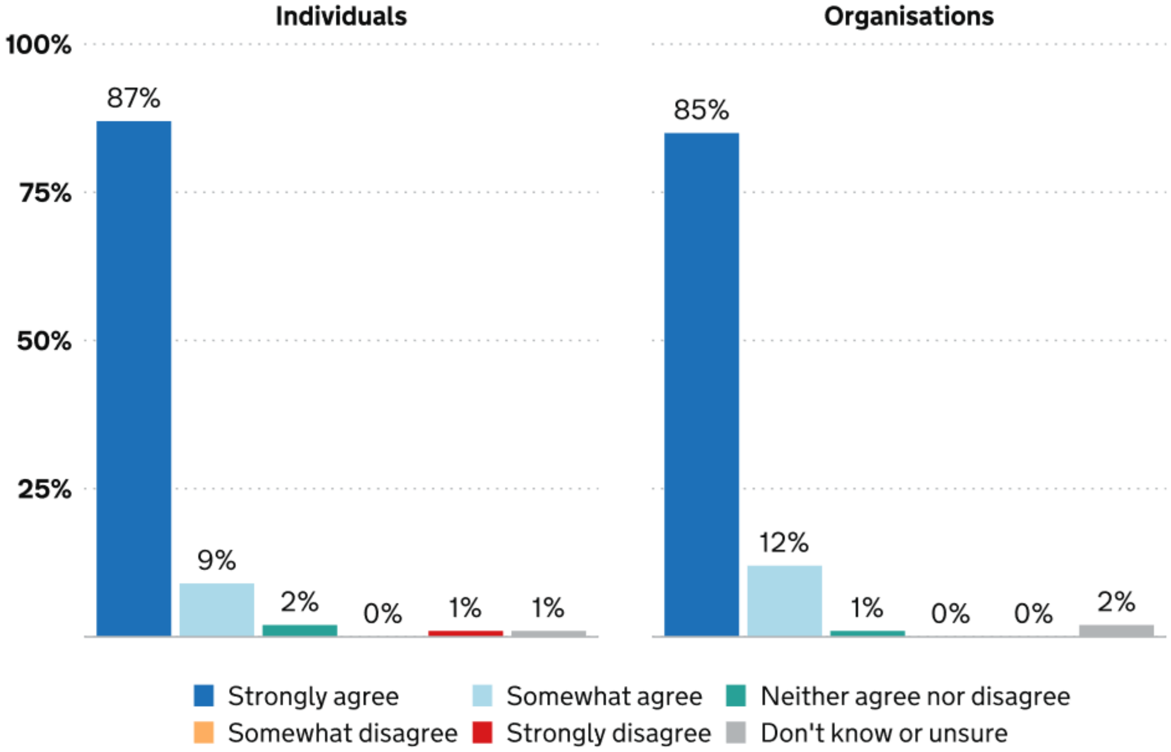
There were 1,191 responses to this question. 1,096 (92%) were from individuals and 95 (8%) from organisations.

87% of respondents strongly agreed with the proposed plan to increase disability inclusion in emergency planning and resilience work, 9% somewhat agreed and less than 5% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposal.

96% of individuals and 97% of organisations agreed (either strongly or somewhat) with the proposed plan.

There were no distinct differences in support for the proposed plan by location or impairment type.

Figure 8. **To what extent do you agree with the proposed plan to increase disability inclusion in emergency planning and resilience work?**



Qualitative analysis

If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Inclusion ensures disabled people can remain safe during emergencies

With the need for policymaking in this space to be informed by the experiences of disabled people, the most common theme was that the needs of disabled people should be fully incorporated into the planning of responses to emergency scenarios to ensure their safety. This was accompanied by views that disabled people often have specific additional needs that could increase their vulnerability during these scenarios. Some respondents believed that the risks to disabled people during emergencies could be mitigated by ensuring planning reflected their specific needs, as well as all relevant information being clearly communicated to disabled people.

> *"[…] Excluding people with disabilities from emergency planning can have dire consequences. In times of crisis, individuals with disabilities may require additional support, accommodations, or specialised equipment. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Existing planning did not consider all disabled people

The second most common theme was that existing planning for emergency scenarios did not fully consider all disabled people. One example mentioned by respondents was the need for emergency announcements to be fully accessible and equitable for all (for example, BSL translation and subtitles). Several respondents noted that the London Fire Brigade's recommendation of mandatory Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) across all relevant settings should be implemented. A few respondents also mentioned the need for up-to-date guidance on disability inclusion for local authority emergency planners and first responders.

> *"[…] Invaluable work undertaken internationally by the World Health Organisation, wider UN agencies, governments and NGOs can inform the UK's inclusive emergency planning and resilience work. This includes the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action which can be adapted for UK use. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Emergency planning should include lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic

The third most common theme, mostly mentioned by organisations, specifically referred to the need to consider disabled people in pandemic responses. Respondents provided examples of disabled people's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent vaccine roll-out, with references to lessons which should be incorporated into future policies.

> *"[…] Lessons must be learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately impacted people with a learning disability (with death rates up to 6 times higher than the general population during the first wave). During the pandemic, the network of support for people with a learning disability was often dealt with as an afterthought by decision-makers and officials. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Suggestions of disabled people’s organisations

If there are particular disabled people’s organisations that you think should be engaged in this area, please share them.

Respondents made a total of 217 unique suggestions in response to this question. DU will consider and quality assure these as part of ongoing policy development.

Climate adaptations and mitigations

Question 4: To what extent do you agree with the need to focus on the emerging area of climate adaptations and mitigations?

Quantitative analysis

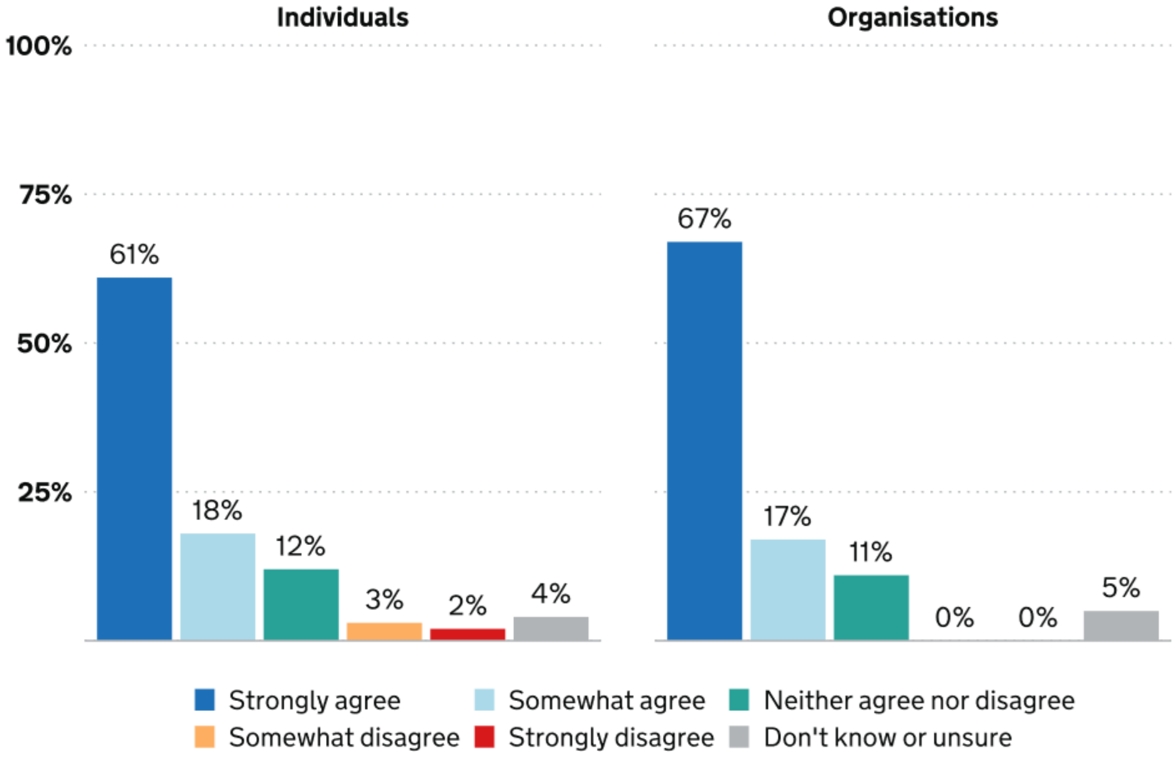
There were 1,169 responses to this question. 1,086 (93%) were from individuals and 83 (7%) from organisations.

62% of respondents strongly agreed that there was a need to focus on the emerging area of climate adaptations and mitigations. 18% somewhat agreed and 12% neither agreed nor disagreed. 2% somewhat disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed and 4% were unsure. Compared to other questions, respondents were less likely to express strong agreement, and more respondents were either unsure or neither agreed nor disagreed.

Individuals were less likely to agree with the need to focus on climate adaptations and mitigations (79%) than organisations (84%).

There were no distinct differences in how respondents answered this question by either location or impairment type.

Figure 9. **To what extent do you agree with the need to focus on the emerging area of climate adaptations and mitigations?**



Qualitative analysis

If there is anything further that you would like the government to do to increase disability inclusion in climate adaptations and mitigations, or you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Transport (public and private)

The most common theme mentioned by respondents was access to transport (both public transport and cars). Respondents touched on a broad range of issues: 2 prominent subthemes were providing exemptions for disabled people within policies which limited the use of a car and improving accessibility of public transport. Many respondents specifically commented on the impact of the introduction of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) on disabled people in London and highlighted that the ULEZ exemption for people on certain disability benefits was too slow and viewed as an afterthought. In addition, several comments were made regarding the lack of space available on buses for wheelchair users. Some respondents also discussed electric vehicles (EVs), including accessibility issues around the use of EVs and hazards to disabled people caused by EVs.

> *"[…] However, public transport appears to be constantly reduced and access being made more difficult, not just for disabled people (keyword: closing ticket offices). We need more public transport (more frequent trains, buses, etc., more stops for buses in order to cope with demand and make public transport an effective and enjoyable experience) and better organised, too. One space for a wheelchair and one for a pushchair in a bus is just not sufficient." (Individual respondent)*

> *"Electric cars aren't, as far as I am aware, having a mandatory requirement to have an audible signal switched on. I have had so many near misses with electric cars, due to sight loss, that it is really frightening." (Individual respondent)*

Consideration of additional costs and challenges for disabled people

The second most common theme, mostly mentioned by organisations, was the additional costs and difficulties placed on disabled people due to climate adaptations. For example, some respondents mentioned the need for further grants for disabled people to make the necessary adaptations to use an electric car. Additionally, a significant subtheme within these responses was the specific challenges faced by disabled people in making these changes, for example, issues faced by visually impaired individuals with recycling bins which need to be mitigated.

> *"[…] An example of this is the lack of electric Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles available through Motability […] A significant reason why they may not be suitable is that they all require a significant advanced payment, the lowest of which is £6,695 for a Peugeot Ehorizon. This is a prohibitive level of cost, especially as disabled people already have higher average living costs and earn less on average due to the disability pay gap." (Organisational respondent)*

Need for more evidence-based and comprehensive policies

The next most frequent theme was that policies should be supported by research to be more comprehensive, as well as looking at the long-term and having funding attached to enact any real change. Respondents felt that a comprehensive approach to addressing climate change was important and that disabled people should be fully considered and protected in any future policy or legislation, for example, by conducting accessibility audits of existing climate adaptation and mitigation plans, policies and infrastructure.

> *"No climate adaption or mitigation should be implemented without research into the effect on disabled people." (Organisational respondent)*

Suggestions on climate adaptations or mitigations

DU has already identified Clean Air Zones (CAZ) and the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) policies as an area for action. Please tell us if there are other climate adaptations or mitigations that require greater disability inclusion?

Respondents made a total of 53 unique suggestions in response to this question. DU will consider and quality assure these as part of ongoing policy development.

Disability Enabled Badge

Question 5: To what extent do you agree that this scheme would give increased confidence to disabled customers when accessing businesses or services?

Quantitative analysis

There were 1,203 responses to this question. 1,104 (92%) were from individuals and 99 (8%) from organisations.

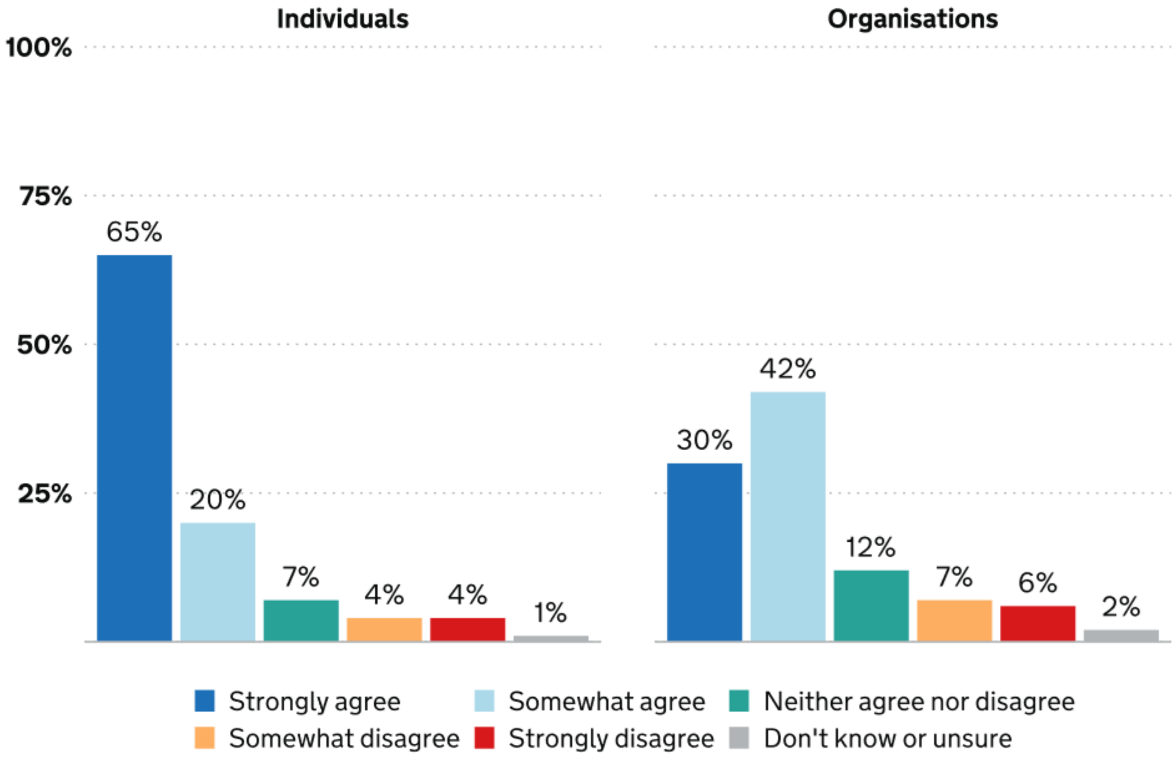
62% of respondents strongly agreed that this scheme would give increased confidence to disabled customers when accessing businesses or services. 22% somewhat agreed and 7% neither agreed nor disagreed. 4% somewhat disagreed, 4% strongly disagreed and 1% were unsure.

Individuals were much more likely to strongly agree that the scheme would give increased confidence to disabled customers (65%) than organisations (30%).

Respondents who lived or worked in Scotland were least likely to strongly agree (51% of respondents) and most likely to disagree overall (12%).

When asked if they had conditions or illnesses that affected them, respondents who selected ‘Socially or behaviourally’ were least likely to strongly agree (52% of respondents). Of these respondents, 12% selected ‘Neither agree nor disagree’ and 7% each selected ‘Somewhat disagree’ and ‘Strongly disagree’.

Figure 10. To what extent do you agree that this scheme would give increased confidence to disabled customers when accessing businesses or services?



Qualitative analysis

If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Supporting disabled people

The most common theme was general support for the Disability Enabled Badge as a means of supporting disabled people. These respondents believed the scheme would support disabled customers in feeling valued, safe, and equal through respectful and empathetic treatment by staff as a result of improved disability awareness. Greater awareness among businesses was also considered an important catalyst for long-term, sustainable action by a large minority of respondents.

Within this theme, a number of respondents mentioned that the visibility of a badge ensured disabled customers did not need to repeatedly explain their condition and divulge personal information to staff to have their needs met. While this highlights important information about disabled customers' experiences, it seems to result from a mis-interpretation of the proposal, as the 'badge' is intended for the business and not the disabled customer.

> *"As a disabled person I want to be as independent as possible and would welcome appropriate training and being able to identify that business has made such an effort I would feel more confident in approaching people to ask for assistance and not feel a nuisance just because I have to ask for help." (Individual respondent)*

> *"Having a greater knowledge in disabilities would improve, not only the service the disabled person would receive but also the confidence of staff to deliver a quality service." (Individual respondent)*

Scheme should be mandatory, monitored and enforced

The second most common theme, pushed predominately by individual respondents, suggested that the scheme should be mandatory. Given the significant impact on disabled customers' independence, an accessible and disability-friendly environment should be the expectation rather than voluntary 'best practice'. Moreover, these respondents suggested that the scheme should not be exclusive to frontline staff but involve all business employees in training. To support small businesses with limited resources, respondents suggested dedicating additional funding for the implementation of the scheme.

Many respondents also emphasised the importance of regular monitoring and enforcement of scheme compliance. Where businesses or services were seen to be non-compliant, respondents thought repercussions in the form of fines or removal of the badge should be consistently applied. To complement this, respondents suggested embedding an accessible complaints procedure for customers to report negative experiences easily and quickly.

> *"[…] We'd like to see a more rigorous monitoring system developed for any further badge scheme which also encouraged businesses to improve their accessibility offer rather than settle for just participating in the scheme. Finally, there is no robust form of evaluation built into the Disability Confident Scheme, and the government should ensure that in developing the Disability Enabled Badge that they measure the current experiences disabled people face in accessing services and businesses and regularly report on the progress made. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Scheme would be tokenistic and ineffective

The third most common theme was discussed by respondents who did not support the scheme. This was the scheme's perceived ineffectiveness in addressing the wider systemic inequalities faced by disabled customers. First, some respondents mentioned issues concerning physical inaccessibility, highlighting that staff training would not solve issues with public infrastructure or premises that prevented disabled customers from physically accessing the businesses or services.

Second, some respondents mentioned issues around societal attitudes and stereotypes towards disabled people, the scope of which would not be adequately addressed within the scheme. To evidence these concerns, a small number of respondents pointed to the perceived low success rate of the Disability Confident scheme and other corporate disability awareness training. Some individuals mentioned that due to the scheme's insufficient scope, they would not feel more confident accessing businesses or services.

> *"We already have a lot of 'schemes' to increase access to jobs, the built environment, and other aspects of life, yet people with access needs are still largely excluded and largely left in poverty. If we cannot get the existing efforts to work then what exactly will another 'badge' add to this failure?" (Individual respondent)*

> *"It is possible to be 'aware' or 'enabled' or 'trained' about disability in general, but that doesn't actually help in making things accessible. Just because a company or business has a badge, that wouldn't influence me to use it." (Individual respondent)*

Concerns regarding the design of the scheme

The fourth most common theme (mostly raised by organisations) was specific concerns about the design of the scheme. A broad range of concerns were mentioned, including:

- ensuring the scheme provided comprehensive training covering all impairments (including non-visible disabilities), to avoid surface-level or generalised training
- renaming the scheme to something non-stigmatising
- ensuring the scheme was standardised and quality assured to guarantee consistency across businesses
- provide regular updates to the training content and require businesses to renew their training to remain up-to-date
- promoting the scheme to ensure accurate interpretation and awareness by both staff and customers, safeguarding against unrealistic expectations – an online database displaying participating businesses was suggested to enable journeys to be planned in advance
- providing clear guidance for businesses to avoid confusion between existing training programmes and schemes, such as the Disability Confident Scheme or reasonable adjustment requirements under the Equality Act

Support due to negative personal experiences

The final theme was support for the Disability Enabled Badge due to negative personal experiences accessing businesses and services in the past. These respondents expressed low confidence in businesses (due to these experiences) and frustrations at being ignored by decision-makers on issues concerning accessibility. This theme was mentioned by both disabled people and their families.

Specific examples of negative experiences included:

- ignorance by staff and the general public (including being made to feel inferior, asking inappropriate questions, non-disabled people parking in disabled places without penalties, misconceptions about impairments and conditions, and refusal of assistance dogs)
- physical inaccessibility (including issues with shelf height and checkout width in supermarkets, lack of lifts, and high parking fees)

> *"[…] 3 in 4 disabled people have experienced negative attitudes and behaviour in the past 5 years. And of those, an average of 34% have experienced negative attitudes in a support service environment, and an average of 23% did so when using a transport or service provider. We hope that this scheme will lead to more disabled people being able to access products and services without experiencing negative attitudes. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

> *"I don't go out much because some shops I can't get into in my wheelchair/scooter. Then there isn't much parking, then some shops are aware that someone my age (32) can be disabled and I get judged a lot. So I don't go out." (Individual respondent)*

Special Olympics Summer Games

Question 6: To what extent do you agree with the proposal to explore hosting the Special Olympics Summer Games in Great Britain as a way of meeting this aim?

Quantitative analysis

There were 1,168 responses to this question. 1,088 (93%) were from individuals and 80 (7%) from organisations.

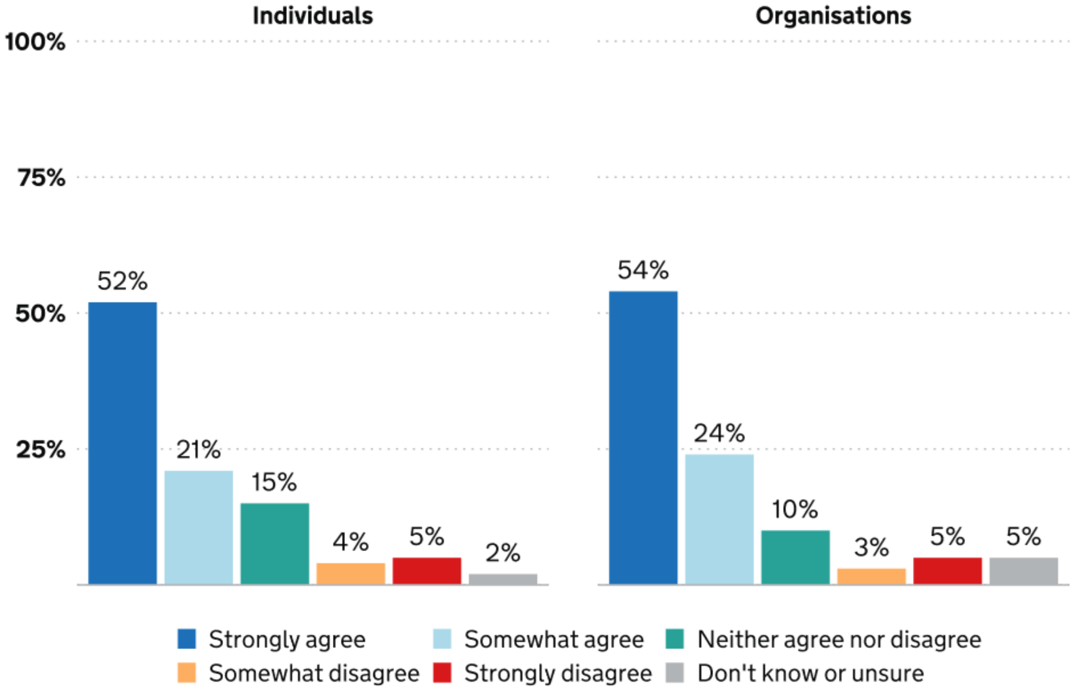
52% of respondents strongly agreed that hosting the Special Olympics Summer Games in Great Britain should be explored as a way of meeting that aim. 22% somewhat agreed and 14% neither agreed nor disagreed. 4% somewhat disagreed, 5% strongly disagreed and 3% were unsure.

52% of individual respondents and 54% of organisational respondents strongly agreed with the proposal, a lower degree of strong support compared to other policy actions discussed in the consultation document. Overall, organisations (78% of respondents) were more likely to agree overall than individual respondents (73%).

Respondents who lived or worked in Scotland were least likely to strongly agree (42% of respondents) compared to respondents in other countries.

When asked if they had conditions or illnesses that affected them, respondents who selected ‘Vision’ were most likely to strongly agree (58%), while respondents who selected ’Stamina or breathing or fatigue’ (46%) were least likely to strongly agree.

Figure 11. To what extent do you agree with the proposal to explore hosting the Special Olympics Summer Games in Great Britain as a way of meeting this aim?



Qualitative analysis

If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Limited benefits for disabled people

The most common theme was concern that hosting the Special Olympics Summer Games would only lead to limited benefits for disabled people.[7] Respondents mentioned several different explanations, including that the benefits would be:

- geographically limited within the regions chosen to host
- time-limited considering the event's short-term nature
- limited to a small subset of disabled people, further alienating those not interested in sports or unable to participate
- limited to sport, rather than providing holistic support and awareness

A wider majority of respondents suggested that the resources used to host the Special Olympics Summer Games would be better spent elsewhere. This included prioritising wider-reaching initiatives to improve access to sports for disabled people, addressing structural barriers to accessing sports (such as venue accessibility or cost of equipment), and embedding sports within schools to benefit all children with learning disabilities. Relatedly, a small number of respondents suggested that hosting the Special Olympics Summer Games risked being tokenistic and 'inspiration porn' considering the systemic inequalities faced by disabled people within the UK.

> *"[…] Even if people were made aware of the event, there's a tendency to view athletes in worldwide competitions as either an exception to the norm, or an example of why others shouldn't need additional support if someone with their same condition can be an athlete, completely missing that learning disabilities especially manifest in different ways and different effects on someone's life. […]" (Individual respondent)*

> *"[…] it is only benefitting a small number of disabled people within a specific impairment group. We need to consider the wider population of disabled people and understand what support needs to be put in place to increase investment to get more disabled people actively engaged in sport and physical activities that is accessible to them." (Individual respondent)*

Raising awareness and increasing visibility

The second most common theme was support for exploring hosting the Special Olympics Summer Games as a means of raising awareness and visibility of learning disabilities. These respondents considered the Special Olympics Summer Games a meaningful opportunity to deal with negative stereotypes, stigmas and prejudice, as well as increase the visibility and understanding of learning disabilities.

> *"[…] The Special Olympics not only empowers athletes with intellectual disabilities but also promotes inclusivity by breaking down stereotypes and stigmas surrounding disability. By hosting such an event, Great Britain can demonstrate its commitment to inclusivity and diversity, fostering a more accepting society. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

---

[7] Please note that overall, more respondents expressed their agreement with the proposal rather than disagreement, matching the results of the quantitative analysis of the closed question. However, respondents who gave positive feedback offered more detailed reasoning and hence, their responses were split into multiple themes.

Equal opportunities

The third most common theme was support for exploring hosting the Special Olympics Summer Games as a means of promoting equal opportunities for people with learning disabilities. These respondents mentioned that equal access to opportunities within sports – for athletes at a professional level, as spectators, and across daily life – was considered a fundamental right which the Special Olympics Summer Games would extend.

> *"[…] People would see that there are opportunities for people with a learning disability to take part in sport, from a local to global level. That sport is a powerful tool to improve the health, wellbeing, and life chances of not only people with a learning disability but also their families, and friends. It would allow more people to know that sport is available to them and through promotion and supporting work it would increase sports participation and awareness, both in the run up to the games and post games. […]" (Organisation respondent)*

Catalyst for long-term change

A final theme was that hosting the Special Olympics Summer Games could serve as a potential catalyst for long-term change. For this theme, organisational respondents were overrepresented. Respondents for this theme discussed many different impacts of similar major sporting events – with reference to the Paralympic Games, the Invictus Games, and the Commonwealth Games.

> *"[…] It will generate socioeconomic benefits, leaving a lasting legacy, engaging communities historically excluded from physical activity and sporting events. It will also foster international collaboration and engaging communities. It will serve as a powerful platform to advocate for and celebrate the abilities of people with learning disabilities. It will reduce obesity and increase physical activity." (Organisational respondent)*

Suggestions for learning disability sport organisations

To help lay the groundwork for a bid, please inform us of any learning disability sports organisations that you think should be engaged, if the Special Olympics Summer Games were hosted in Great Britain?

Respondents made a total of 93 unique suggestions in response to this question. DU will consider and quality assure these as part of ongoing policy development.

Addressing access refusals for guide dogs

Question 7a: To what extent do you agree with the proposed plan to work more closely with the guide dog sector to establish what more the government can do to address access refusals of guide dogs?

Quantitative analysis

There were 1,195 responses to this question. 1,113 (93%) were from individuals and 82 (7%) from organisations.

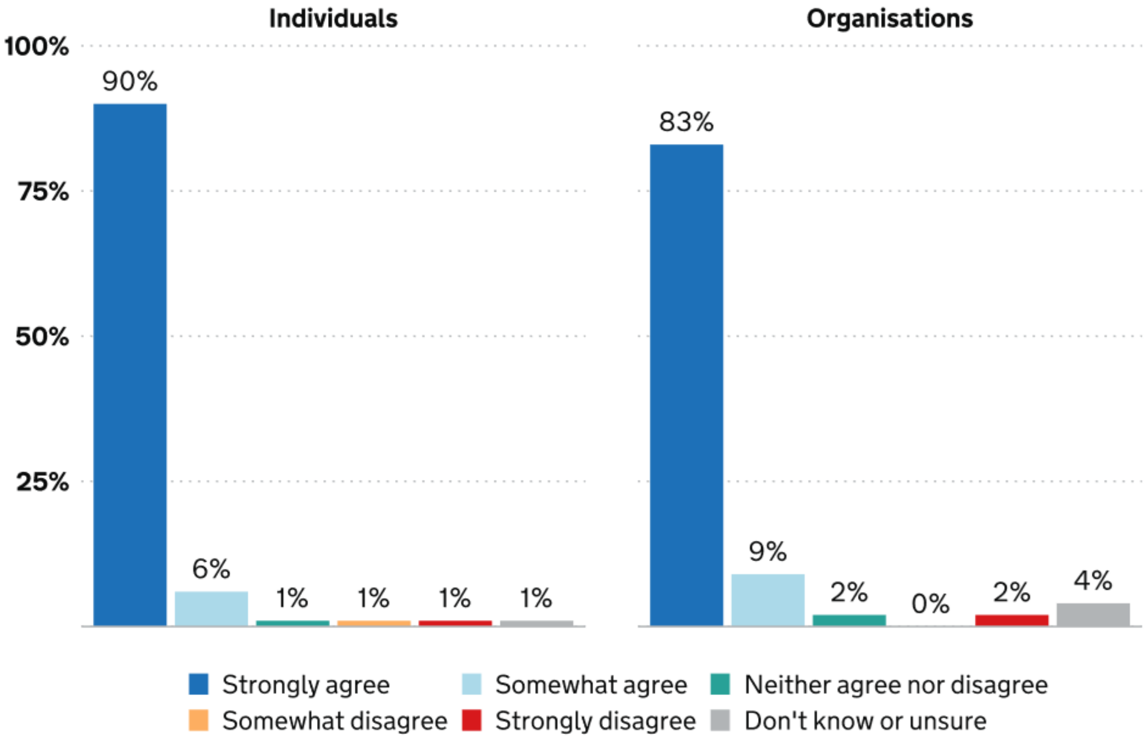
90% of respondents strongly agreed with the proposed plan. 6% somewhat agreed and less than 5% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposal.

Individuals were more likely to strongly agree with the proposed plan (90% of respondents) than organisations (83%). Only 2% of both individual and organisational respondents disagreed with the proposed plan.

There were no distinct differences in how respondents answered this question by location.

When asked if they had conditions or illnesses that affected them, respondents who selected ‘Socially or behaviourally’ (84%) were least likely to strongly agree with the proposed plan. Of these respondents, 10% selected ‘Somewhat agree’ instead.

Figure 12. To what extent do you agree with the proposed plan to work more closely with the guide dog sector to establish what more the government can do to address access refusals of guide dogs?



Question 7b: To what extent do you agree that increasing fines would address the issue of access refusals for guide dogs?

Quantitative analysis

There were 1,162 responses to this question. 1,084 (93%) were from individuals and 78 (7%) from organisations.

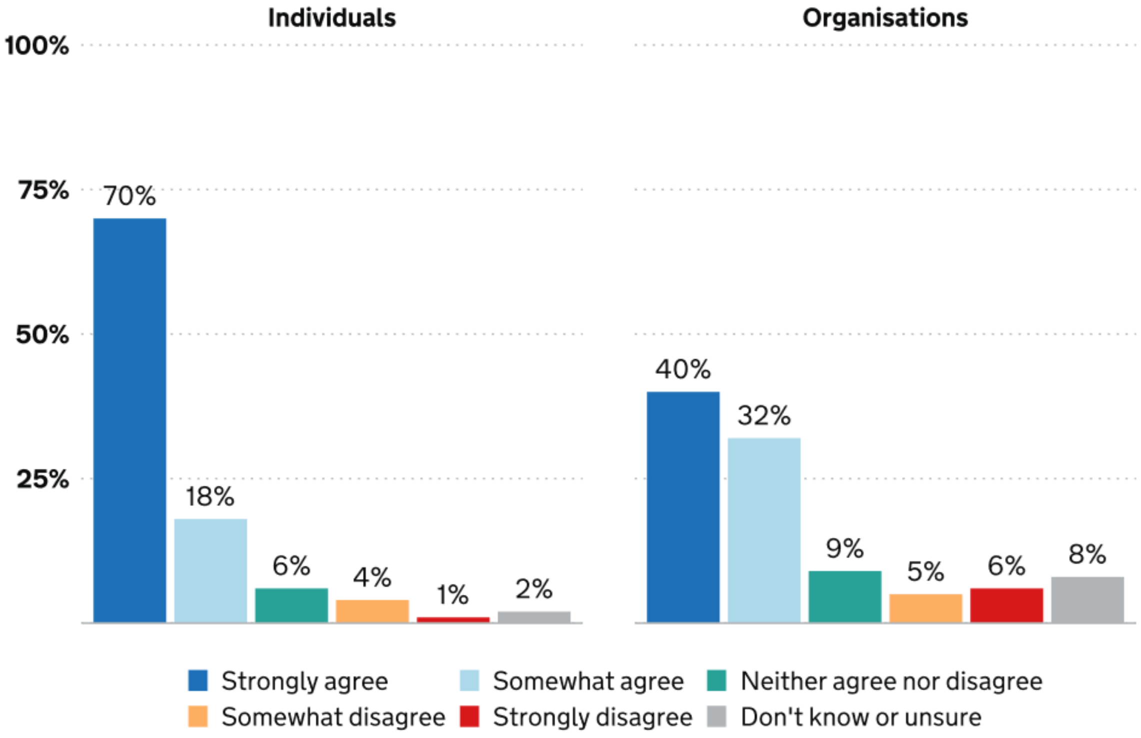
68% of respondents strongly agreed that increasing fines would address the issue of access refusals for guide dogs. 19% somewhat agreed and 6% neither agreed nor disagreed. 4% somewhat disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed and 2% were unsure.

Individuals were much more likely to strongly agree (70% of respondents) than organisations (40% of respondents). Overall, 11% of organisational respondents disagreed, compared to 5% of individual respondents.

Respondents from Northern Ireland (89%) and Wales (79%) were more likely to strongly agree than respondents from other countries.

When asked if they had conditions or illnesses that affected them, respondents who selected ‘Vision’ were most likely to strongly agree (72% of respondents). Respondents who selected ‘Learning or understanding or concentrating’ (61%), ‘Memory’ (61%) and ‘Socially or behaviourally’ (60%) were least likely to strongly agree.

Figure 13. To what extent do you agree that increasing fines would address the issue of access refusals for guide dogs?



Qualitative analysis

If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Need for stronger enforcement

The most common theme, mostly raised by individuals, was that enforcement of fines would ensure there were consequences for refusal of entry.[8] These respondents shared experiences of being discriminated against and the profound impact these experiences had on them. For example, several respondents shared experiences of being stranded after being refused access by a taxi driver.

> *"Those who exclude people with assistance dogs should face the consequences. Financial penalties usually lead to people complying with their responsibilities." (Individual respondent)*

> *"Not only is being refused access distressing but it is also hard for the guide dog owner to challenge taxi drivers and businesses at the time and can often leave them stranded and vulnerable. […]" (Individual respondent)*

Training and education to increase awareness

The second most common theme overall (and most common theme among organisational respondents) was the need for training and education to raise awareness instead of simply fining businesses. Some respondents suggested mandatory disability awareness training for all staff who did not comply with regulations.

> *"[…] More awareness raising on the negative impact on access refusal may also assist in changing business owners' attitudes." (Individual respondent)*

> *"Fines may help, but what you really want is raised awareness and mandatory training around guide dogs in public places and in transport vehicles. […] Stop the discrimination through education first. Fines should be a consequence of people ignoring the training, not a punishment for a lack of training in the first place. […]" (Individual respondent)*

Inclusion of assistance dogs

The third most common theme (mostly raised by organisations) was that the proposed plan should acknowledge all assistance dogs rather than just guide dogs. This included hearing dogs and emotional support dogs.

> *"This should not be limited to registered guide dogs as many disabled people use assistance animals for other purposes. The scope of the activity needs to be broadened so that any disabled person who utilises assistance from a dog for any condition should have a legal right to access. There needs to be a mechanism for registering all assistance animals equally. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Further legislation and publicising compliance

The fourth most common theme was the need for alternatives to the measures outlined above, mainly discussed by individual respondents. The most prominent example was the need for further legislation

---

[8] Under current policy, only taxi and private vehicle drivers can be fined for access refusals. All other refusals have to be dealt with via a civil case where compensation can be sought. However, many respondents were not aware of this and answered based on the assumption that other businesses (for example, restaurants) could be fined for refusing access to an assistance dog.

to ensure all businesses (not just taxis and private hire vehicles) can be fined for access refusals. A subset of these respondents stated that the legislation should be expanded even further so that businesses that fail to comply with access requirements can be temporarily or permanently closed or have further punitive charges brought against them. Another suggestion raised by some participants was the need to publish information about non-compliance in a public forum so guide and assistance dog owners do not inadvertently use these businesses' services and face a refusal. One model suggested by respondents was the food safety rating displayed in shops and restaurants, which could draw attention to premises which failed to accommodate guide dog owners.

> *"Fines are not a deterrent; removal of licence is definite." (Individual respondent)*

> *"It is outrageous that guide and assistance dogs are refused entry. There needs to be a concerted effort to start publicising the fining of places that deny access." (Individual respondent)*

Reporting of non-compliance

The next most common theme (mostly raised by organisations) was the need to improve systems for reporting non-compliance. Respondents highlighted the lack of awareness of reporting mechanisms and the need to make such mechanisms easier to use for reporting non-compliance.

> *"[…] If not already in place, the Disability Unit should also consider establishing robust reporting mechanisms. The Disability Unit can establish a centralised reporting mechanism for individuals who experience refusal of entry with a guide dog. This can include a hotline or an online portal where incidents can be reported, and investigations can be carried out based on the reported incidents. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Dog-related allergies and the need for proposals to be voluntary

A small number of respondents, mostly individuals, criticised the proposed plan for 2 main reasons. First, some respondents highlighted the need to avoid discriminating against those who were allergic to dogs or had dog-related phobias. Second, other respondents thought that any policy governing access to guide dogs should be voluntary. Several respondents noted the challenge of having mandatory policies in place that also took into consideration mitigating circumstances, such as a staff member having a dog allergy.

> *'Have to ensure you balance the rights of guide dog users with the rights of people who suffer allergies to dogs etc.' (Individual respondent)*

Raising the profile of assistive technology

Question 8: To what extent do you agree that access to assistive technology would be improved by better-informed advice from public sector staff?

Quantitative analysis

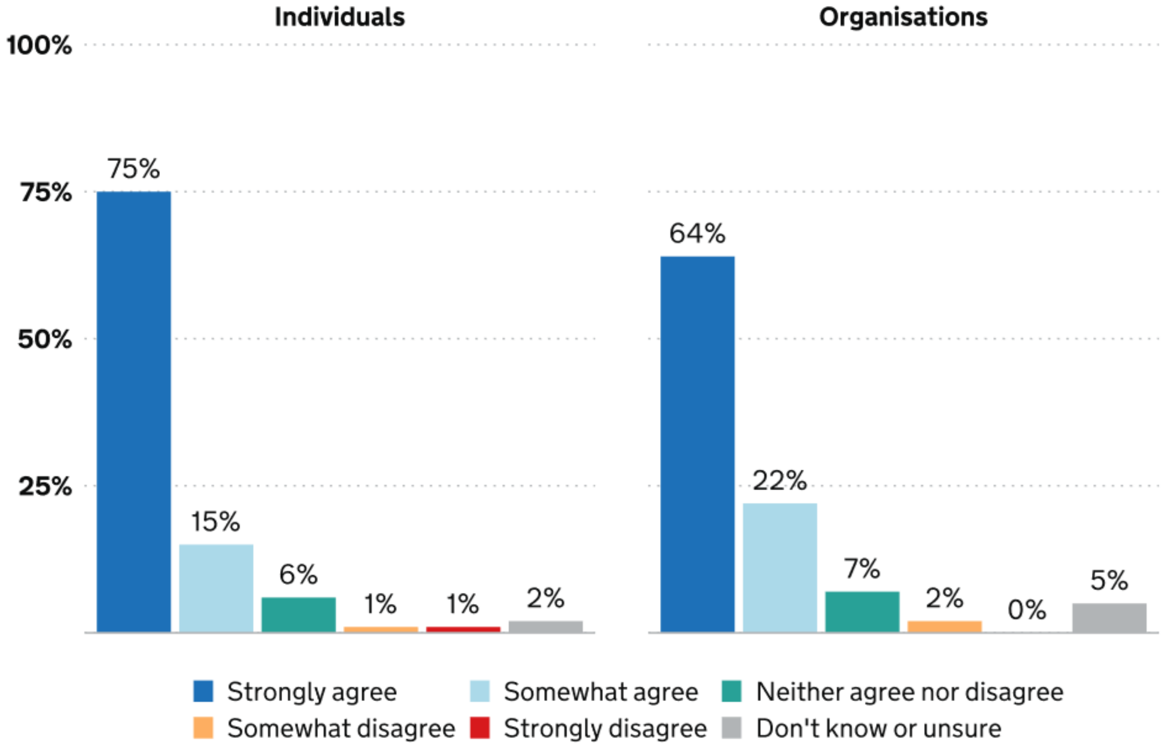
There were 1,204 responses to this question. 1,101 (91%) were from individuals and 103 (9%) from organisations.

74% of respondents strongly agreed that access to assistive technology would be improved by better-informed advice from public sector staff. 16% somewhat agreed and 6% neither agreed nor disagreed. 4% of respondents were unsure or disagreed.

Individuals were more likely to strongly agree (75% of respondents) than organisations (64%). Overall, only 2% of both individuals and organisations disagreed.

There were no distinct differences in how respondents answered the question by location or impairment type.

Figure 14. To what extent do you agree that access to assistive technology would be improved by better-informed advice from public sector staff?



Qualitative analysis

If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Improving awareness of, and access to, assistive technology

The most common theme was general agreement that the proposal would improve awareness of, and access to, assistive technology for disabled people. Better access to assistive technology was considered an important tool for 'levelling the playing field' for disabled people, boosting their confidence and independence, improving their quality of life through improved access to public life, and allowing them to reach their potential. These respondents mostly considered the need for better-informed advice by public sector staff to be important for 2 reasons:

- the fast-moving nature of the assistive technology sector made it challenging for individuals to keep up-to-date with advancements
- individual needs, and by consequence, the support required from assistive technology, evolve over a lifetime, requiring continuous access to information and advice as needs change

Some respondents also described barriers and negative past experiences related to accessing assistive technology, including delays and inadequate equipment provision within workplaces and public spaces.

> *"There is already good advice to be found in the private and voluntary sectors if you know where to look for it, but many newly disabled people do not know. I think the public sector does have a role in helping people to find the information they need." (Individual respondent)*

> *"Assistive Technology (AT) opens numerous doors for individuals with additional needs, granting them access to the world and empowering them to have a voice. […]" (Individual respondent)*

Prioritise and address digital exclusion instead

The second most common theme was that digital exclusion should be prioritised ahead of providing better-informed advice on assistive technology. These respondents identified low digital skills and financial costs as the biggest barriers to accessing assistive technology for disabled people, as opposed to the lack of information on available products.

> *"Assistive technology is extremely enabling for many people with disabilities. However, it must be remembered that not everyone, disabled or not, can use the technology on offer. Any champion should also be looking at non-digital alternatives to ensure no one is further isolated." (Organisational respondent)*

Suggestions regarding the design, delivery, and implementation of the scheme

The third most common theme was suggestions on the design, delivery and implementation of the scheme to maximise its effectiveness. In particular, these included:

- combining activities on assistive technology with enhanced training on disability awareness
- ensuring that the activities were free and mandatory to all public sector staff, without the need for grants or applications to be processed before gaining access
- frequently updating the content of activities to ensure that they captured the most up-to-date information regarding assistive technology (to account for the fast-moving nature of the field)

- providing a dedicated hub for public sector staff to access immediate support and information alongside the activities
- widely advertising the support public sector staff could provide so disabled people knew where and how to access support
- continuously involving disabled people and relevant representatives in the design and implementation of activities, incorporating suggestions and inviting opportunities for feedback to inform improvements

More effective alternate methods for raising awareness of assistive technology

The next most common theme discussed alternative methods for raising the profile and understanding of assistive technology. This theme was mainly raised by organisational respondents. These respondents did not consider training public sector staff to be the most effective or beneficial way to advise disabled people on the assistive technology available and how they could access it. Although most of these respondents were supportive of public sector staff having greater awareness, they did not feel that public sector staff should be the primary source of information for disabled people. Given the complex, broad and fast-moving nature of the assistive technology sector, these respondents thought that public sector staff could not adequately provide the specialist advice needed to appropriately advise on individual needs. Alternative suggestions mentioned by these respondents included:

- supporting a partnership between public service staff and assistive technology professionals to effectively signpost disabled people based on their needs
- running public awareness campaigns to raise awareness more broadly, including signposting where to access specialist support
- developing an online information hub providing up-to-date resources on how and where to access assistive technology and specialist support
- ensuring information related to assistive technology was readily available within all businesses and services (not just public services) to provide disabled people with independent access to information at their point of need

> *“[…] There certainly is a need for a trusted source of advice in this area; as well as a need – in some cases of assistive technology – for better training provision. However, it is not clear that charging public officials with getting to grips with the wide array of assistive technology that exists and is emerging is feasible. It might be better pursuing this goal by some other means, making use of disabled people’s expertise and experiences with assistive technology and/or via something such as Trust Pilot.” (Organisational respondent)*

Assistive technology alone would not provide sufficient support

The final theme was that an increased focus on assistive technology would replace conventional or alternative methods of support. These respondents highlighted that some disabled people were reluctant to use assistive technology because of difficulties engaging with the technology, individual access requirements or personal preferences (rather than lack of knowledge or access to products).

> *"[…] However, I am concerned that assistive technology is not always the appropriate solution, depending on the person’s access requirements and daily living preferences. It is important to remember that there is always a place for conventional physical support in the form of a personal assistant where human help is more appropriate. I worry that with increased dependency on assistive technology and people's dependency on assistive*

> *technology, people's needs will not be properly assessed and it will be assumed that assistive technology provides a catchall solution to every problem, and every challenge that disabled people face. [...]" (Individual respondent)*

Wellbeing and opportunities of disabled children

Question 9: To what extent do you agree with each of the following proposed areas of focus?

Quantitative analysis

Transitions to adulthood

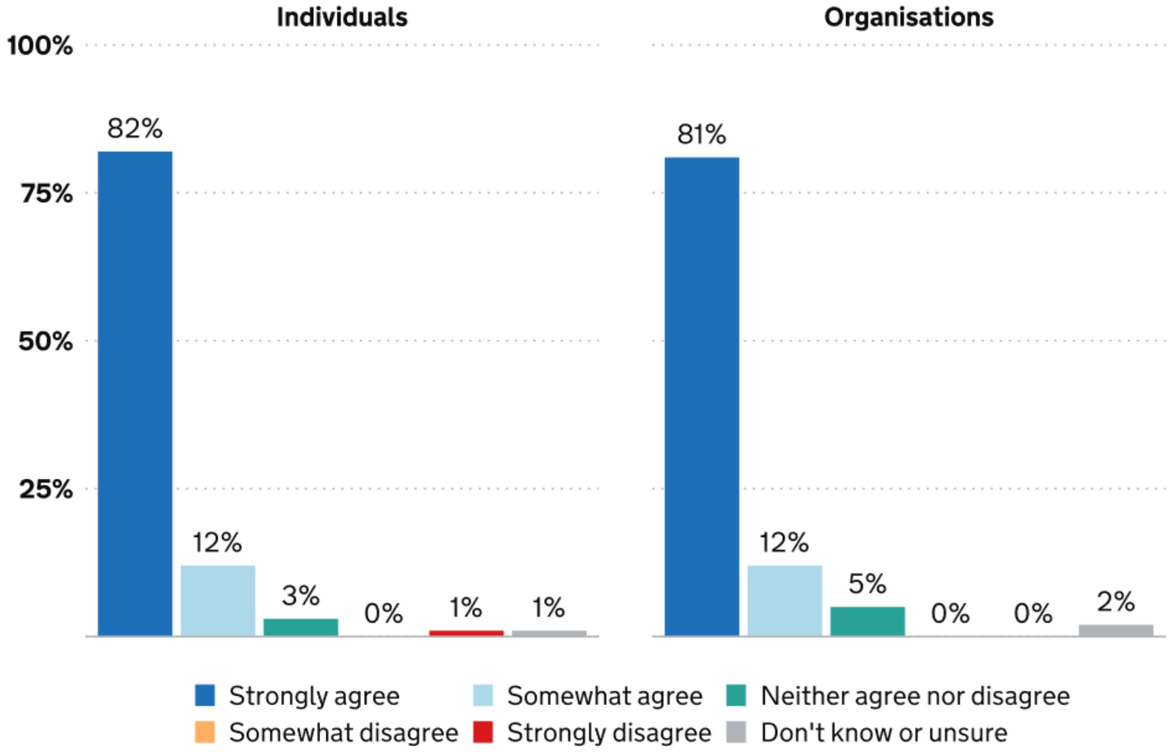
There were 1,192 responses to this question. 1,094 (92%) were from individuals and 98 (8%) from organisations.

82% of respondents strongly agreed with the proposed area of focus. 12% somewhat agreed and less than 6% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with ‘transitions to adulthood’ as a proposed area of focus.

82% of individual respondents and 81% of organisational respondents strongly agreed that ‘transitions to adulthood’ should be a proposed area of focus.

There were no distinct differences in how respondents answered the question by location or impairment type.

Figure 15. To what extent do you agree with each of the following proposed areas of focus: Transitions to adulthood.



Accessibility of public spaces and transport

There were 1,191 responses to this question, 1,093 (92%) from individuals and 98 (8%) from organisations.

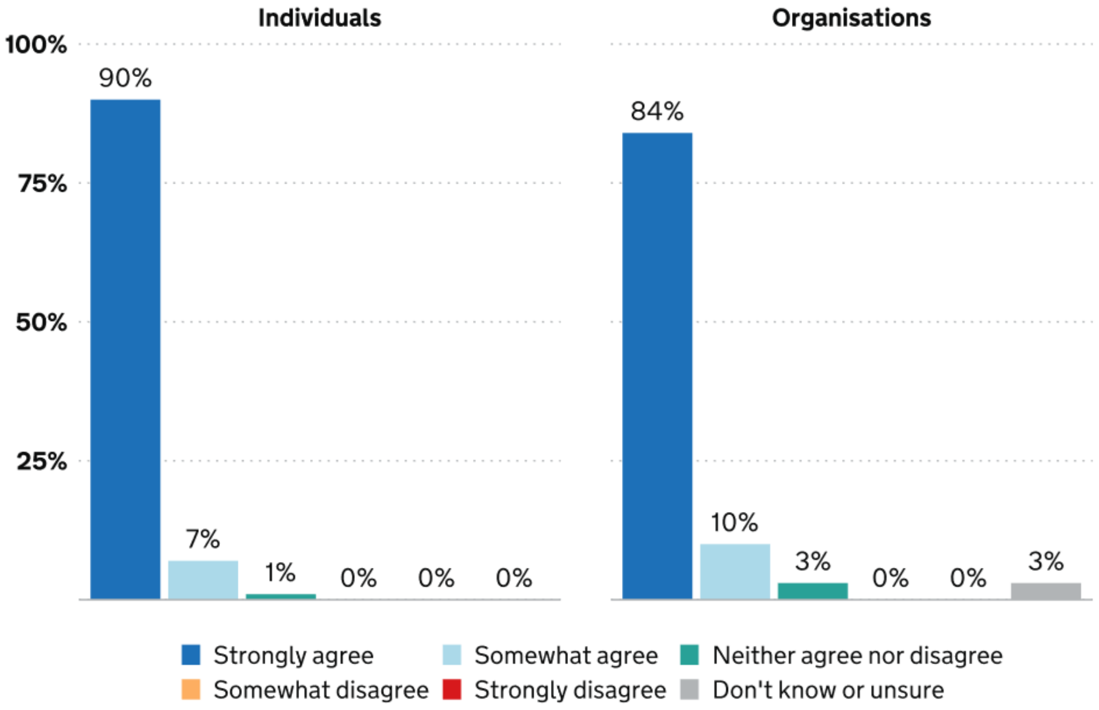
90% strongly agreed with the proposed area of focus, 7% somewhat agreed and less than 4% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposed area of focus.

Support for the proposed plan was very high among both respondent types, with 97% of individuals and 94% of organisations overall agreeing with 'accessibility of public spaces and transport being an area of focus'.

Respondents from Wales or Northern Ireland were most likely to agree with this proposed area of focus (100% of respondents in both countries).

There were no distinct differences in support for the proposed area of focus by impairment type.

Figure 16. To what extent do you agree with each of the following proposed areas of focus: Accessibility of public spaces and transport



Bullying, personal safety and impact on wellbeing

There were 1,189 responses to this question, 1,092 (92%) from individuals and 97 (8%) from organisations.

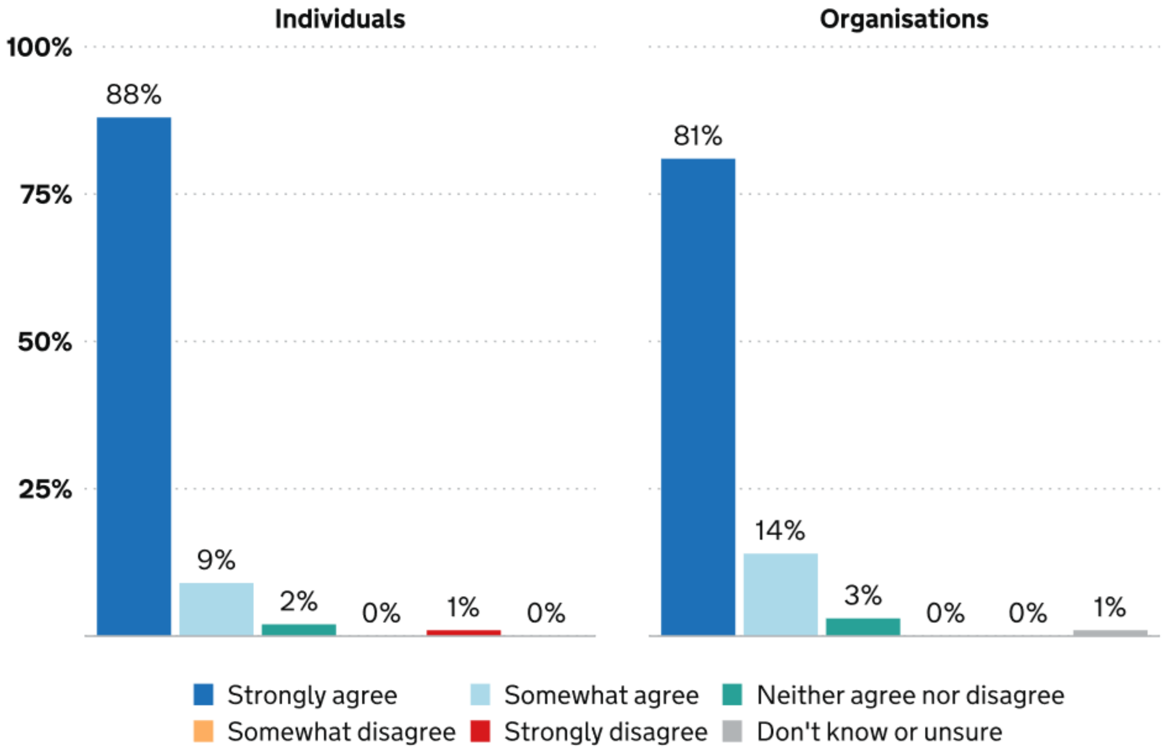
88% strongly agreed with the proposed area of focus, 9% somewhat agreed and less than 5% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposed area of focus.

Support for the proposed plan was very high among both respondent types, with 97% of individuals and 95% of organisations overall agreeing with 'bullying, personal safety and impact on wellbeing' being an area of focus.

Respondents from Wales were most likely to agree with this proposed area of focus (100% of respondents).

There were no distinct differences in support for the proposed area of focus by impairment type.

Figure 17. To what extent do you agree with each of the following proposed areas of focus: Bullying, personal safety and impact on wellbeing



Early identification of need and support for families

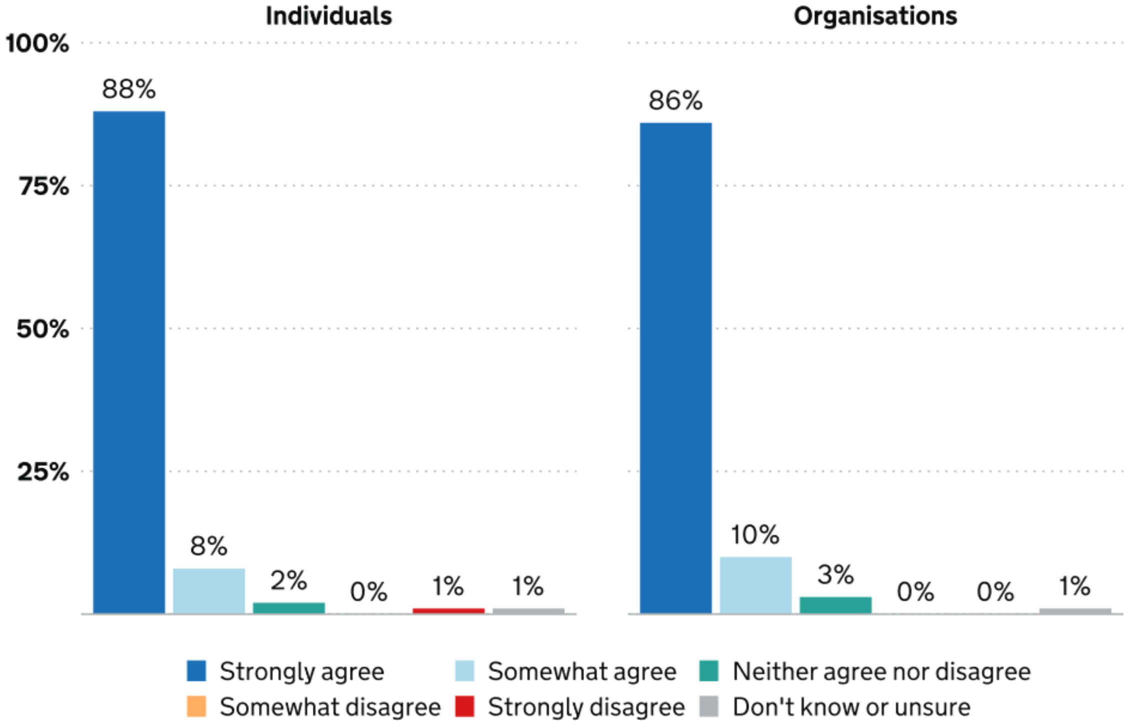
There were 1,193 responses to this question, 1,095 (92%) from individuals and 98 (8%) from organisations.

88% strongly agreed with the proposed area of focus, 8% somewhat agreed and less than 5% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposed area of focus.

Support for the proposed plan was very high among both respondent types, with both 96% of individuals and 96% of organisations overall agreeing with ‘early identification of need and support for families’ being an area of focus.

There were no distinct differences in support for the proposed area of focus by location or impairment type.

Figure 18. To what extent do you agree with each of the following proposed areas of focus: Early identification of need and support for families



Qualitative analysis

If there are other issues that you think this taskforce should consider, or you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Section 1: Proposed areas of focus

This section summarises the responses that related to each of the proposed themes.

Transitions to adulthood

'Transitions to adulthood' was the proposed area of focus that was mentioned the most by respondents. They specifically called for increased support and a national strategic framework around transitions to adult support services, higher education, and in particular in employment. Some respondents also suggested expanded support around other important periods of transition, including from nursery to primary school, secondary school to college, and college to university or employment.

> *"[…] The lack of a co-ordinated approach to transition has a negative impact on young people and their families. There is currently no national strategic framework that gives families clear indication of how the process will work and what their role is in the process. It is not just the transition to adult services that is important but transition post 18 for young people leaving college. There needs to be a clear framework that is adhered to nationally. The framework should hold all parties accountable for their part in the process and make up part of a local authority's auditable KPIs. Professionals currently do not seem to see transition as a way of moving the funding responsibilities from one department to another rather than as part of the journey in a young person's life. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Early identification of need and support for families

The second most common area discussed was the proposed area of ‘early identification of need and support for families’. These respondents thought that early identification was essential to prevent loneliness, social isolation, or mental health issues as children grew older. A few respondents also highlighted the need to address inequalities common within diagnosis, such as underdiagnosis of autism and ADHD in girls. Concerning support for families, a few respondents expressed support for a family-centred approach, which ensured support was provided in partnership with families. Common suggestions mentioned by respondents were increasing access to respite care and signposting opportunities to meet other families with disabled children.

> *“[…] One of the primary reasons early interventions are vital is because they can significantly improve a child's developmental outcomes. For children with disabilities, delays in speech, motor skills, or social interaction can have a lasting impact on their overall quality of life. Early interventions provide children with the tools they need to overcome these challenges, enabling them to reach their full potential. Research consistently shows that children who receive early interventions are more likely to achieve developmental milestones and gain independence as they grow. Moreover, early interventions don't just benefit the child; they also offer crucial support to families. Raising a child with a disability can be emotionally, physically, and financially demanding. Early intervention programs provide parents with valuable resources, guidance, and a network of support. […]” (Individual respondent)*

Accessibility of public spaces and transport

The third most common area discussed was the proposed focus on ‘accessibility of public spaces and transport’. Respondents describe access to both public spaces and transport as essential for children’s development, safety, and integration into society. Accessibility of public spaces and transport was understood as crucial to supporting children’s independence, autonomy, and confidence, as well as protecting their right to equal participation in society. Examples of challenges in accessing transport that were shared included: needing to book support for journeys in advance, lack of audio-visual equipment on trains and buses, attitudes of the public and transport staff, and unexpected changes (such as delays, diversion, or cancellations).

> *“[…] Accessible public spaces and transportation are essential for deaf children's holistic development and integration into society. These spaces serve as gateways to education, social interactions, cultural experiences, and essential services. [..]” (Organisational respondent)*

> *“[…] Currently, in many areas of England, disabled bus passes can only be used between 9:30am and 11pm on weekdays, unnecessarily imposing a barrier on young wheelchair users accessing work and education settings during the morning commute. Train travel also continues to pose difficulties, with inaccessible stations, inconsistent customer support and, more recently, the threat of closing ticket offices and even more unmanned stations. Public transport in its current state requires careful forward planning before embarking on a journey. Upgrading the accessibility of networks will help to ensure journeys run smoothly and offer young people greater spontaneity and freedom. […]” (Organisational respondent)*

Bullying, personal safety and impact on wellbeing

The proposed area of focus ‘bullying, personal safety and impact on wellbeing’ was mentioned the least by respondents. Of those responding to this proposed area, many discussed bullying within schools as a particular area of focus, with one commonly proposed solution being enhanced disability awareness lessons for both children and staff to improve understanding and reduce stigmatisation. To prevent the development of long-term mental health conditions due to bullying, some respondents suggested increasing funding for CAMHS and addressing the long wait time to access diagnosis and support. Another set of respondents supported the implementation of stronger penalties for disability hate crimes, in addition to a focus on cyberbullying and safety online.

> *“[…] The young disabled people we have spoken to as part of this work have told us that experiencing these behaviours often begins in schools, making it all the more important to improve understanding and awareness from a young age so as to foster attitudes that celebrate difference rather than ridicule it. As part of this work, we would like to see the national curriculum directly address ableism, similar to Hackney Education’s successful Diverse Curriculum23 model. This should be just one part of a wider hate crime strategy, which despite being promised in 2021 has now been dropped and merged with the wider action plan to tackle all crime. […]” (Organisational respondent)*

Section 2: Alternative areas of focus

Some respondents proposed alternative areas of focus. These are summarised below.

Increased support in schools

The most common alternative area of focus discussed by respondents was increased support in schools. Specific suggestions included:

- improved mental health support within schools
- expanding support available for disabled children during school holidays
- improving guidance on free school meals to capture all disabled children
- increasing opportunities to engage with sports and physical activities as a means of closing the ‘activity gap’
- improving support within early years and higher education
- improving staff training to identify and support with early diagnosis

> *“I believe ensuring quality early childhood education should also be a priority area of focus. Efforts to do so might include developing training for early childhood educators on working with children with all types of disabilities and increasing funding for assistive technology usage in schools.” (Individual respondent)*

Enhanced awareness education

The second most common alternative area of focus, mostly raised by individual respondents, was enhancing disability awareness education to improve understanding of all disabled people. Some of these respondents supported the enforcement of mandatory disability training for all public and private sector staff, particularly staff within schools and essential services (such as health or social care).

> *“We would strongly advise a robust audit of awareness, expertise, skillsets and deployment currently available in the workforce of those who work across all sectors with children and young people with disabilities, followed by an action plan for how the gap in skills sets and*

> *trained professionals can be addressed. Developing condition specific experts in the fields of education, healthcare and social services is vital. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Access to financial advice and support

The third most common alternative area of focus was improved access to financial advice and support for families with disabled children.[9] These respondents discussed the higher financial cost incurred by having disabled family members, as well as the increased burden of care on families. Specific examples of improved support included: (i) streamlining the process to access financial support to minimise stress, such as automating payments; (ii) bringing PIP in line with inflation or rising and falling in line with fluctuating health conditions; (iii) increasing earning limits for carers to access financial support, and (iv) subsidising costs of legal services, transport, or other essential services.

- streamlining the process to access financial support to minimise stress, such as automating payments
- bringing PIP in line with inflation or rising and falling in line with fluctuating health conditions
- increasing earning limits for carers to access financial support
- subsidising costs of legal services, transport, or other essential services

> *"[…] We would encourage the taskforce to also look into the crucial issue of financial security and implications of the cost-of-living crisis on childhood. In Scope's 'Our Lives, Our Journey' longitudinal study following disabled young people and families with a disabled child, one of the main themes coming out of this research was the worry of financial stability and extra costs. All disabled young people in Scope's study discussed a wide range of extra costs as a direct result of their condition, most young people told us they had money worries about their family's ability to support them. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Improved access to support services

The next most common alternative area of support was improved access to support services. These respondents mentioned healthcare, mental health services, social services, and social care as priorities. Specific areas of improvement included streamlining communication between support services to reduce the burden on families when accessing multiple services, as well as ensuring all available support was clearly and accessibly signposted.

> *"Access to support and therapies that don't require the parent to 'fight' the system to gain and keep. Too many parents of disabled children are worn down by doing this, impacting their ability to work." (Individual respondent)*

> *"Good, regular access to appropriate therapeutic support – physio, nursing, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy etc." (Individual respondent)*

Increased access to activities

The final alternative area of support was increased access to activities, mainly discussed by organisational respondents. These respondents frequently emphasised the need to improve opportunities for physical activity and sports for disabled children, with frequent reference to how the participation gap between disabled and non-disabled children widened as children grew older.

---

[9] While this theme is connected to the two overarching themes 'Financial support' and 'Streamlined policy approach', respondents discussed insights that were specific to the focus of question 9 (wellbeing and opportunities for disabled children).

Additional activities suggested by respondents included after-school and extra-curricular programmes, social opportunities within the local community (such as youth groups), and volunteering schemes.

> *"[…] The recently published government sport strategy 'Get Active' lists the multitude of benefits of sport and physical activity. Disabled children also share in these benefits, but we know that disabled children are less active than their peers and experience more barriers. This is true in school, where we see an increasing activity gap between disabled and non-disabled children as they get older (Activity Alliance My Futures Report 2020), but also in wider society, where there are many reports of parents struggling to find ways for their disabled children to get involved in activity outside of school. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

> *"[…] Please fund extracurricular provision for disabled children? Non-disabled children have access to affordable wraparound and holiday activities where they can play, socialise and continue learning. Disabled children have critically low access to such activities. […]" (Individual respondent)*

Support for disabled parents

Question 10: To what extent do you agree with each of the following proposed areas of focus?

Quantitative analysis

Access to parenting support in health and care services

There were 1,168 responses to this question. 1,091 (93%) were from individuals and 77 (7%) from organisations.

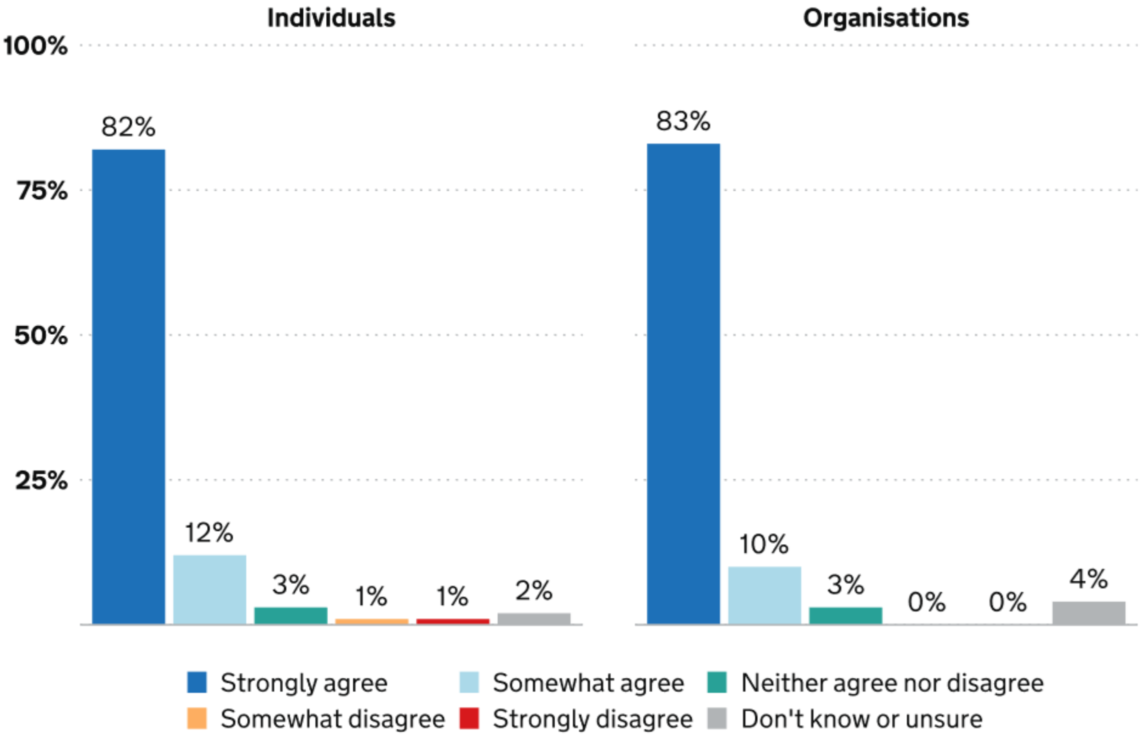
82% of respondents strongly agreed with the proposed area of focus. 12% somewhat agreed and less than 8% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposed area of focus.

Support for the proposed plan was very high among both respondent types, with 94% of individuals and 93% of organisations overall agreeing with 'access to parenting support in health and care services' being an area of focus.

Respondents from Wales (88%) were more likely to strongly agree with the proposed area of focus than respondents from other countries. Respondents from Scotland were least likely to strongly agree (71% of respondents).

There were no distinct differences in support for the proposed area of focus by impairment type.

Figure 19. To what extent do you agree with each of the following proposed areas of focus: Access to parenting support in health and care services



Family courts and child protection

There were 1,156 responses to this question, 1,081 (94%) from individuals and 75 (6%) from organisations.

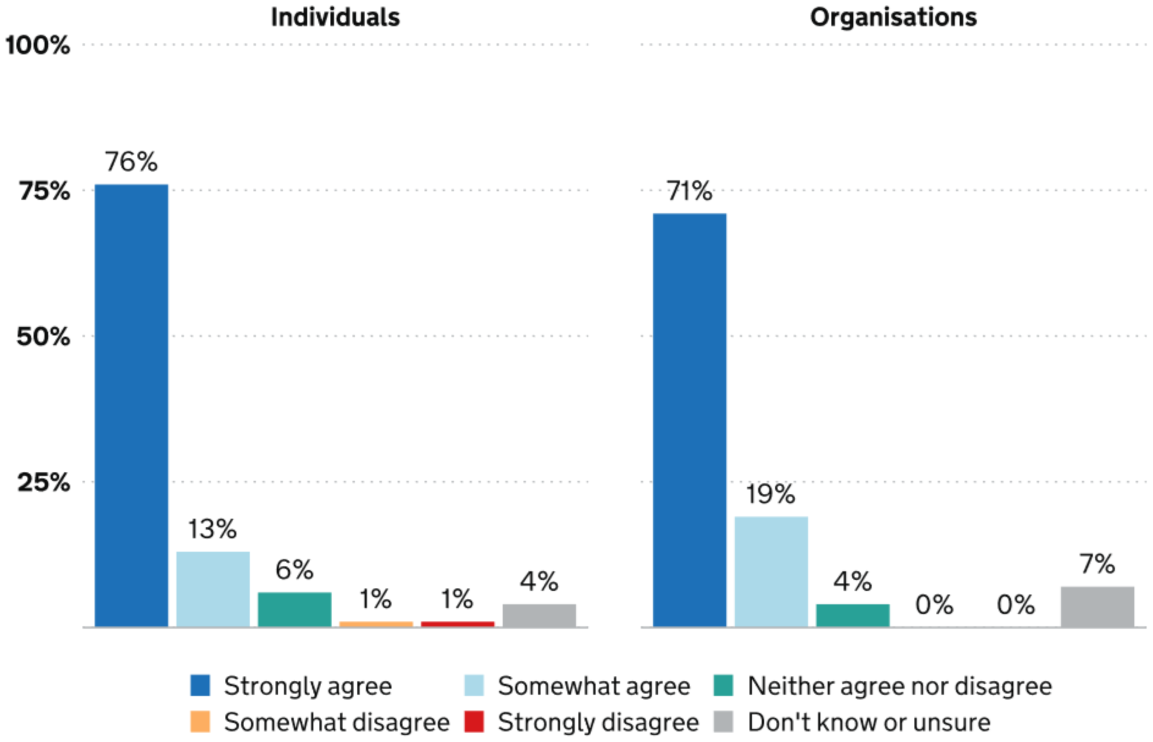
76% strongly agreed with the proposed area of focus, 13% somewhat agreed and 6% neither agreed nor disagreed. ‘Somewhat disagree’ and ‘Strongly disagree’ were each selected by 1% of respondents, while 4% were unsure.

While support for this area of focus was still high among both respondent types, with 76% of individuals and 71% of organisations strongly agreeing, it was lower than for the other 2 areas.

Respondents from Wales (90%) were more likely to strongly agree with the proposed area of focus than respondents from other countries. Respondents from Scotland were least likely to strongly agree (64% of respondents). 16% of respondents from Scotland answered ‘Somewhat agree’ and 13% answered ‘Don’t know or unsure’.

When asked if they had conditions or illnesses that affected them, respondents who selected ‘vision’ were most likely to strongly agree with the proposed area of focus (82%).

Figure 20. To what extent do you agree with each of the following proposed areas of focus: Family courts and child protection



Domestic abuse support

There were 1,155 responses to this question, 1,079 (93%) from individuals and 76 (7%) from organisations.

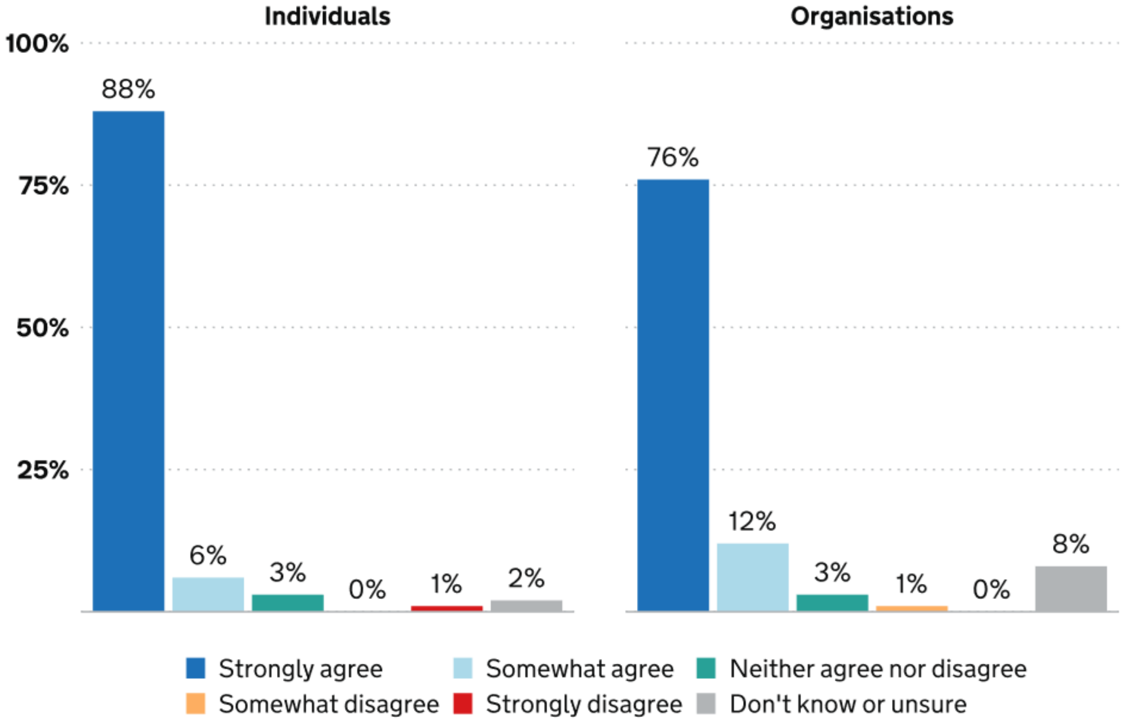
88% strongly agreed with the proposed area of focus, 7% somewhat agreed and less than 7% were neutral, unsure, or disagreed with the proposed area of focus.

While individuals had a higher proportion of respondents that agreed strongly (88% vs 76%), support was high among both groups, with only 1% of both individuals and organisational respondents disagreeing with the proposed area of focus.

Respondents from Wales (95%) were more likely to strongly agree with the proposed area of focus than respondents from other countries. Respondents from Scotland were least likely to strongly agree (78% of respondents).

There were no distinct differences in support for the proposed area of focus by impairment type.

Figure 21. To what extent do you agree with each of the following proposed areas of focus: Domestic abuse support



Qualitative analysis[10]

If there are other issues that you think this taskforce should consider, or you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Section 1: Proposed areas of focus

This section summarises the responses that related to each of the proposed themes.

Access to parenting support in health and care services

Of the 3 proposed areas of focus, ‘access to parenting support in health and care services’ was the most discussed. Within this area, parenting support was considered essential, particularly for single parents or parents without additional support from wider support networks (such as family or friends). These respondents frequently mentioned provision of respite care and carer’s breaks and inclusion of prenatal and postnatal care alongside parenting support. In addition, some respondents felt it was important that all available parenting support should be sufficiently and accessibly signposted. Within

---

[10] Respondents were sometimes unclear whether the policy related to disabled parents with non-disabled children or non-disabled parents with disabled children. As a result, the responses, at times, apply only to one interpretation of the question.

this theme, expanding parenting support beyond health and care services was identified as an important subtheme. These respondents were supportive of holistic support measures which enabled disabled parents to live and parent as they preferred.

> *"With regard to parenting support, this needs to be managed very carefully so that there is not a blanket assumption that parents with disabilities will require state intervention any more than those without disabilities. The focus needs to be holistic in supporting parents to live the way in which they want to and is most appropriate for their families. […]" (Individual respondent)*

Family courts and child protection

An equal proportion of respondents mentioned the proposed areas of 'family courts and child protection' and 'domestic abuse support' in their responses. Concerning 'family courts and child protection', these respondents discussed challenges in accessing family courts. These included structural barriers, such as lack of parking, insufficient transport links, and inaccessible spaces for mobility equipment, as well as financial, communication, and information barriers. A small number of respondents also supported addressing misconceptions and lack of awareness of disabled people, which negatively affected disabled parents through wrongful or misguided court decisions.

> *"[…] Families should have access to clear and accessible information regarding family courts and decision making processes. They should also be given a longer time period to understand what is required and to get their support in place. There should be a specialised and a wider decision making group when it comes to review court cases for disabled parents. These decision making groups need to ensure there is relevant specialist understanding within the group. It seems that disabled people have to go above and beyond to prove they are competent to look after their child. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Domestic abuse support

When discussing domestic abuse support as a proposed area of focus, most respondents supported enforcing training on domestic abuse awareness for all staff within essential services commonly used by disabled parents, such as social workers, occupational therapists, mental health workers, GPs, and specialist nurses.

A small number of respondents also supported educating disabled parents on the signs of domestic abuse to ensure they were themselves able to identify abusive situations. A few respondents discussed the importance of sufficient funding for domestic abuse refuges, charities, and other support services and that these services were signposted and accessible to all disabled parents (across different physical and communication accessibility needs).

> *"[…] We strongly support the Taskforce focus on domestic abuse support and urge the Taskforce to advocate for the need for mandatory, trauma-informed training to statutory services on domestic abuse, adequate ring-fenced funding for specialist 'by and for' domestic abuse organisations and providing additional funding to improve access to domestic abuse refuges, specialist support workers for disabled survivors and training, as part of its work. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Section 2: Additional areas of focus

Some respondents proposed additional areas of focus, which are discussed below.

Increased support in schools

The most common alternative area of focus discussed by respondents was increased support in schools. This theme was similarly raised as the most popular additional area of focus in Question 9, ‘Wellbeing and Opportunities of Disabled Children’. These respondents considered a focus on schools to be important for parents’ ability to support their children’s education, and many respondents mentioned the significant impact of physical and attitudinal barriers at school from staff and children.

> *“We know often disabled parents find barriers at school, either through physical access issues, but also in communication. We know that Deaf people struggle to get some schools to provide BSL interpreters for parent evenings, meetings, and school events. […]” (Organisational respondent)*

Increased financial support

The next most common alternative area of focus, mostly raised by organisations, was increasing financial support for disabled parents.[11] Respondents described access to sufficient financial support as a significant enabler for disabled parents, as they were less likely than non-disabled parents to be in long-term or stable employment.

> *“The above responses miss one very important area which parents of disabled children all have to face: financial services, access to benefits, access to grants, access to appropriate forms of delegated authority. This is an exceptionally complex area and more needs to be done to support parents with access to consistent information. This should be done in collaboration with financial service sector.” (Organisational respondent)*

Enhanced awareness education

The third most common alternative suggestion was increasing disability awareness education across essential services. Most respondents were supportive of mandatory training for all support staff – including the police, healthcare, mental health, social care, financial services, and family courts – to improve disability awareness. Some respondents expressed support for the social model of disability and emphasised acceptance of individual parenting approaches, recognising disabled parents as the experts of their own family needs.

> *“Whilst we agree with the statements above we also believe the task force needs to work with health care services to build a better understanding around non visible disabilities in particular as mentioned in previous responses. There are still many prejudices and stigmas around non visible disabilities which can make disabled people fear any interactions with health care and social services. […]” (Organisational respondent)*

Providing accessible information

The fourth most common alternative area of focus proposed was providing accessible information, in particular, available parenting support. In addition, some respondents called for monitoring and enforcing accessibility standards across these essential services.

---

[11] While this theme is connected to the overarching theme ‘Financial support’, respondents discussed insights that were specific to the focus of question 10 (support for disabled parents).

> *"Schools, healthcare providers, daycare settings, community venues, cultural and commercial venues and domestic abuse refuges are too often inaccessible. Information provided about opportunities for children, including for disabled children, is too often provided in inaccessible formats. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Enhanced support within the workplace

The fifth most common alternative suggestion was enhancing support within the workplace. Respondents discussed the impact disabilities could have on employment, referencing that disabled people faced higher rates of unstable employment or periods of unemployment due to an inability to work or inaccessible workplaces.

> *"Many disabled parents face financial exclusion because of the challenges they face finding employment. We believe it is important for the DU to work with colleagues in parliament to ensure there is the right focus on employment support for disabled parents and learning from best practice in specialist programmes in this area of employability. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Improved access to public infrastructure

The final alternative area of focus proposed was improving access to public infrastructure for disabled parents and their families. Respondents highlighted the following areas of focus:

- social housing
- public transport
- access to community events
- access to play and recreational services, such as play groups, creche, library activities, or soft play
- access to leisure services
- access to nature and green space

> *"[...] The Equality and Human Rights Commission found there to be a chronic shortage of accessible homes with only 7% of homes in England offering minimal accessibility features. Disabled people are more likely to live in social housing due to is affordability and security and are largely unable to access housing that meets their needs. Unsuitable and inaccessible housing can have major impacts on disabled people and their families, such as social isolation, mobility problems, a lack of independence, poorer mental health, an increased reliance on carers and family members, accidents and avoidable hospital admissions. Parents need to be confident and independent at home to provide the care they want to their children. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Disability evidence and data improvement programme

Question 11: To what extent do you agree with this proposed approach to evidence and evaluation?

Quantitative analysis

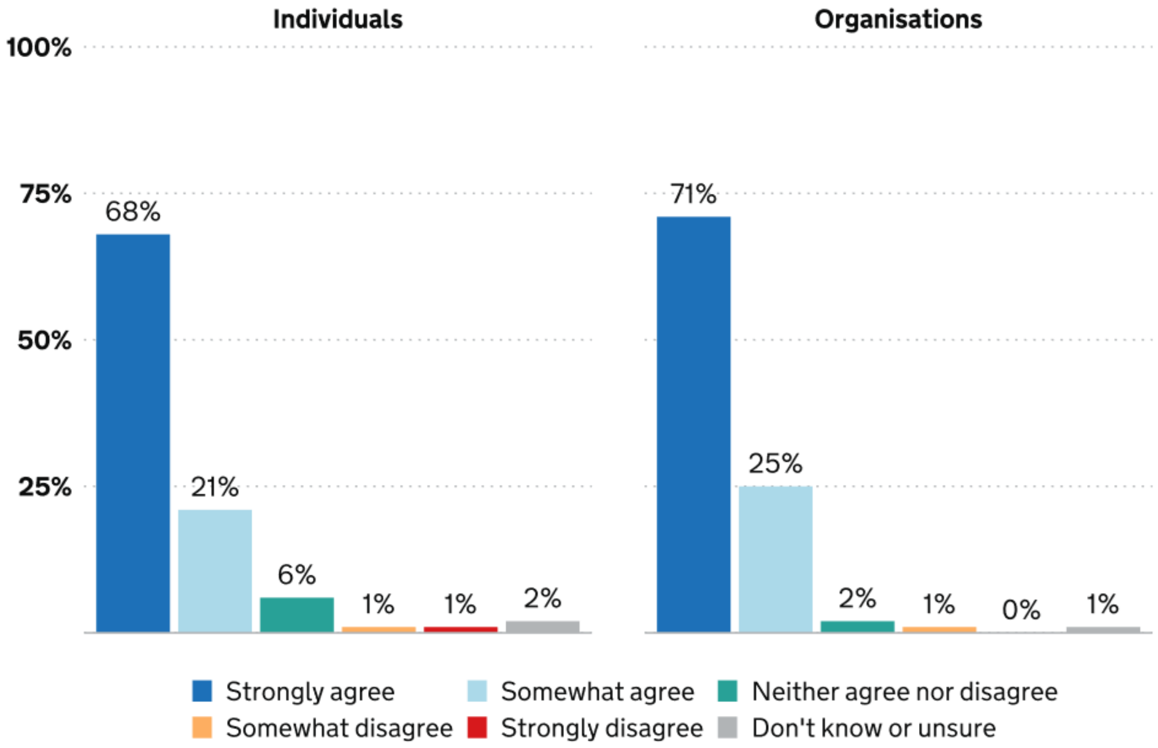
There were 1,190 responses to this question. 1,082 (91%) were from individuals and 108 (9%) from organisations.

69% of respondents strongly agreed with the proposed approach. 21% somewhat agreed and 6% neither agreed nor disagreed. 1% somewhat disagreed, 1% strongly disagreed, and 2% were unsure.

Overall support was high among both individuals and organisations, with 89% of individuals and 96% of organisations agreeing with the proposed approach. However, respondents were more likely to answer ‘somewhat agree’ instead of ‘strongly agree’ compared to other consultation questions.

There were no distinct differences in support for the proposed approach by location or impairment type.

Figure 22. To what extent do you agree with this proposed approach to evidence and evaluation?



Qualitative analysis

If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Importance of lived experience

The most common theme mentioned by respondents was general agreement with the proposal to centre the evidence base on the lived experiences of disabled individuals, and to legitimise it as a form of evidence.[12] Respondents highlighted the need for the experiences of disabled people to inform an evidence-based approach. For these respondents, this research could complement an outcome-centred strategy by helping evaluate if outcomes-based goals translated into direct impact on people's lives (through quality of life and day-to-day experiences). In addition, these respondents believed that data and evidence should reflect the many variations in the experiences of disabled people based on factors such as impairment type, complexity of needs and socio-economic circumstances.

> *"Gathering evidence and evaluating data about the experiences of people with disabilities will empower them by giving them a platform to share their stories and perspectives. […] This is helpful for improving service delivery by understanding their preferences and unique challenges and provides a great opportunity to understand the drivers of health inequalities affecting people with disabilities and the wider determinants of their wellbeing. This understanding also leads to better outcomes and improved service delivery for people with disabilities. This information can also help in identifying gaps and barriers that people with disability experience. It can shed light on discriminatory practices, inaccessible environments and systematic barriers that prevent people with disability from fully participating in society. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Some respondents noted that capturing additional data on the experiences of disabled people should not come at the expense of addressing data collection gaps that had previously been identified. One suggestion mentioned by respondents was to co-produce research with disabled individuals.

> *"Research undertaken by and with disabled people must be prioritised, especially with learning disabled researchers. There is some excellent work being done at the University of Leeds education department on how research can be made accessible to learning disabled people and how they can be included as researchers. Unfortunately, rules around benefits prevent disabled researchers from being able to be paid for this work, which is a huge barrier and needs to be addressed." (Individual respondent)*

Another set of respondents (both individuals and organisations) mentioned specific experiences of disabled people that they felt should be better captured in research.[13] Examples included discrimination that disabled people faced in recruitment, workplaces, and wider society, as well as concerns with financial support packages and healthcare. Regarding employment, some respondents mentioned examples of challenges disabled individuals faced in obtaining a job, getting promoted and making progress in their role (due to a lack of reasonable adjustments or considerations). To address this, a few organisations called for developing additional metrics that could better capture work and education outcomes aligning with the needs and expectations of disabled people. Another organisation suggested regular surveys that asked disabled people about barriers and experiences in

---

[12] Although this theme is outlined in the 'Overarching themes' section, it is referenced here in more detail due to its specific relevance to this question.

[13] Note that some of these responses did not specifically address question 11 (disability evidence and data improvement programme) but did reflect the current experiences of disabled people in the UK.

their day-to-day lives.

> *“[…] Outcome measurements also need improvement. They do not always reflect the needs of disabled people, in the areas of work and education in particular. For instance, metrics should be developed to measure the types and levels of work or education that are actually desired by disabled people, and they should demonstrate the specific needs, expectations and standards set by disabled people about their own lives. […]” (Organisational respondent)*

> *“[…] there should be a clear commitment to undertake regular disability surveys (ideally annually or at least bi-annually), to understand the barriers disabled people face and their differing outcomes across society. […]” (Organisational response)*

> *“Much of the current data of outcomes on disability focuses on key metrics like employment. However it doesn't consider how disabled people are employed. For instance, […] Disabled people might struggle to log the same overtime as colleagues and as such be passed on for promotion due to this. Potentially they don't have the capacity outside of work hours to study for exams the same way others do and thus this limits their promotions and progression at work. These considerations aren't captured at present. […]” (Individual respondent)*

Improving existing research and data

The second most common theme was the need to use existing research and datasets as a foundation for future data collection and research. Respondents highlighted existing areas of research and statistics that could be expanded upon, such as the Purple Pound. However, respondents also noted that many datasets should be collected more regularly so they could be used fully. Finally, respondents emphasised the need for accurate categorisation and adequate sample sizes in data collection to ensure that research reflected the broad range of experiences of disabled people. One example raised by an organisational respondent was the Labour Force Survey, which only collected data on employment rate by ‘main disability’, potentially excluding many blind and partially sighted people who had multiple disabilities or health conditions from employment figures.

> *“[…] There are however major issues with mental health data more broadly which need to be prioritised. On this basis, we ‘somewhat agree' with the proposed approach of capturing ‘real life’ experiences of people with a mental health disability or long-term mental health condition, as this should not come at the expense of improving data in areas where issues have already been identified. […]” (Organisational respondent)*

> *"[…] “The overall lack of systematic disaggregation of data does need to be addressed and to do this as efficiently as possible it should be informed by considering where the key evidence gaps presently exist. This can also be done alongside a look at the cost effectiveness of enhancing the current utility of existing data through more routine data linkage, against considering where individual collections may want to capture additional data such as social and economic indicators as standard.” […]” (Organisational respondent)*

One important subtheme, mostly raised by organisations, was the need to improve and broaden methods for existing data collection and analysis. For example, respondents mentioned the importance of considering multiple protected characteristics. Another suggestion was to improve data linkages across services to better capture the full range of an individual’s experiences.

> *“[…] Arthritis and MSK conditions impact individuals throughout their life, spanning many*

> *different areas, it is therefore crucial data improvement programmes reflect this. To fully understand experiences and outcomes, there needs to be a person-centred approach with harmonised and linked data across services. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Respondents also highlighted the importance of going beyond traditional metrics to explore well-being and quality of life, which were seen as critical indicators for measuring the success of policies and services. Finally, some respondents called for a social model of disability (instead of a medical model) to be used across all areas of research and data analysis.

> *"[…] data currently indicates that employment outcomes such as earning gaps are poorest for people with autism, but there is no further evidence to indicate why and from what basis interventions and improvements could be made for people with these specific conditions. This is an area where improved understanding of the experiences of disabled people could add crucial missing context. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

> *"[…] The quality of data within the UK research sector on disabled people is poor. Framed with a medical model approach, many of the data sources have poor categorisation of disability – even the national census frames disability under 'limited a lot' or 'limited a little'. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Disability foresight

Question 12: To what extent do you agree that DU should focus some of its evidence and insight work on anticipating future challenges for disabled people, rather than focusing solely on further exploring known needs?

Quantitative analysis

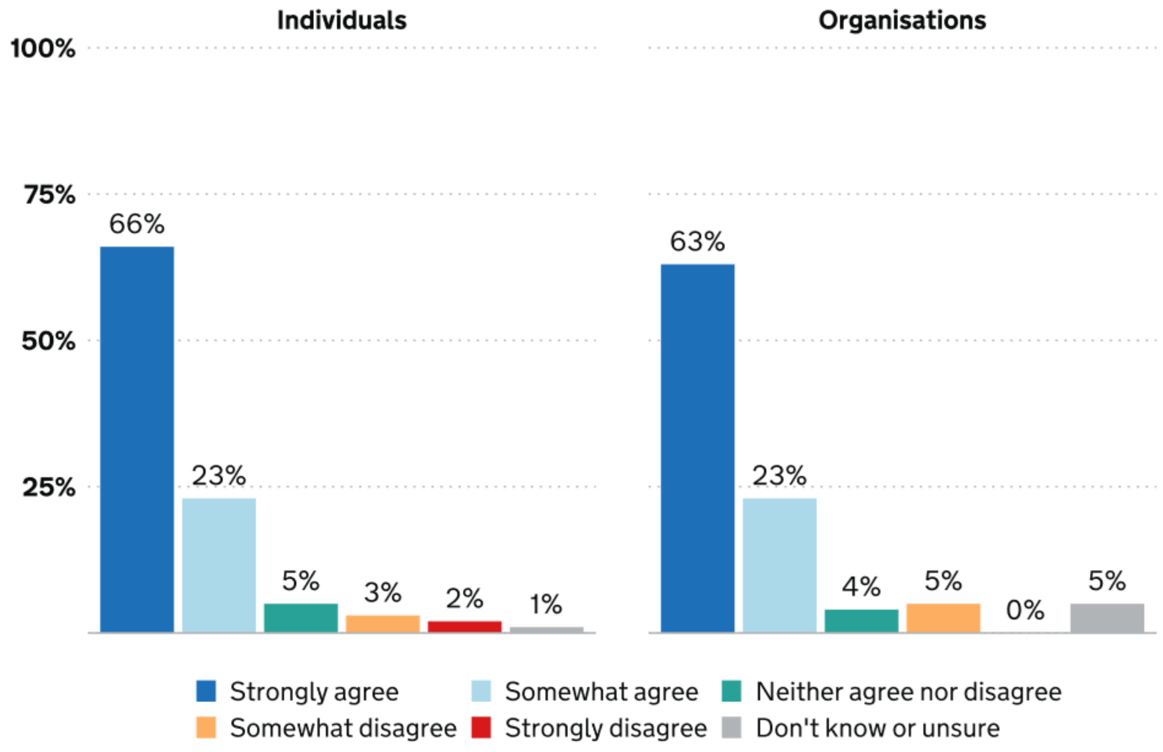
There were 1,192 responses to this question. 1,088 (91%) were from individuals and 104 (9%) from organisations.

66% of respondents strongly agreed with the proposal. 23% somewhat agreed and 5% neither agreed nor disagreed. 3% somewhat disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed and 1% were unsure.

Overall support was high among both individuals and organisations, with 89% of individuals and 86% of organisations agreeing with the proposed approach. However, respondents were more likely to answer ‘somewhat agree’ instead of ‘strongly agree’ compared to other consultation questions.

There were no distinct differences in agreement by respondent location or impairment type.

Figure 23. To what extent do you agree that DU should focus some of its evidence and insight work on anticipating future challenges for disabled people, rather than focusing solely on further exploring known needs?



Qualitative analysis

If you would like to explain your answer, please do so here.

Anticipating future challenges to proactively support disabled people

The most common theme was support for research on anticipating future challenges, to proactively support disabled people. Some respondents described the 'reactive' nature of existing actions caused by insufficient foresight regarding emerging or evolving issues, contributing to repeated cycles of inequality and disadvantage.

> *"[…] Proactive and forward-looking research is essential to ensure that policies and services are prepared to address emerging issues and evolving priorities for disabled individuals. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Need for immediate support over anticipating future challenges

The second most common theme was a preference for research to look at immediate needs (instead of anticipating future challenges). This theme was mostly mentioned by individuals. Respondents described existing issues which needed urgent attention, including accessibility issues within housing, public transport, public spaces, and commercial premises, as well as fragmented care provision (such as carer shortages or low access to appointments). Some respondents also commented on how the question was phrased. For these respondents, 'exploring' known needs was not necessary. These needs had already been identified, so the focus should instead be placed on addressing them

> *"There is still a lot of action that needs to be done regarding known needs for disabled people. Let's focus on what we know we already need rather than risk putting in limited resources into projects which might be very useful but also at the same time might not be needed at all." (Individual respondent)*

> *"[…] Given the current lack of accessibility and lack of basic provision for Disabled people, it seems implausible to consider that future challenges can be anticipated and mitigated before current, well-known and even legally supported needs are met." (Organisational respondent)*

Equal focus on present and future challenges

The third most common theme was that DU should work equally on exploring known needs and anticipating future challenges. This theme was mainly raised by organisational respondents. These respondents understood the 2 approaches as linked and inseparable: according to these respondents, both a strategy for the future and a strategy for addressing known challenges in the present were needed to achieve sustainable, long-term change for disabled people. A small number of respondents highlighted that looking more at future challenges should not divert vital resources away from urgent issues currently faced by disabled people.

> *"Data continues to show that the needs of disabled people are not met across a range of areas, and work to explore both current/known needs as well as future needs is required. Focusing on future needs must not detract time and effort from addressing current and urgent issues for disabled people. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Lifelong needs should be anticipated

The fourth most common theme agreed that DU should focus some of its work on anticipating challenges, within the context of an ageing population. This theme was mainly raised by organisational respondents. These respondents believed that forward thinking was needed to provide appropriate support for the lifelong needs of disabled people. In addition, a small number of respondents highlighted that the increased pace of population ageing could affect disability support through:

- more people becoming disabled as they age
- impairments changing and worsening over time

These respondents stated that any focus on anticipating future challenges should take these known trends into consideration.

> *"As the prevalence of disability increases with age, and people are now living longer than ever before, government must anticipate the needs of an ever-growing and demographically changing group of disabled people and plan for their future. This must be undertaken as part of a balanced short, medium, and long-term approach to meeting the needs of disabled people and ensuring that they can participate fully in all aspects of daily life. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Focusing on the present supports the future

The fifth most common theme, mainly pushed by individual respondents, disagreed with an increased focus on future challenges, supporting instead a focus on known needs as an alternative means of improving the future. Rather than directly dedicating resources to anticipating future challenges, these respondents suggested that increasing investment in solving immediate issues could build strong foundations to prevent or reduce future challenges from arising. They argued that many future challenges – or 'ticking time bombs' – were already known and preventable but had worsened over time due to a lack of timely action. One example given was promoting healthy lifestyles, such as through diet and exercise, to reduce the deterioration of conditions over time.

> *"[…] I think that if you can help people now that it will help in the long run. My husband's condition was vastly improved by exercise and a healthy diet. We were lucky as we got excellent tailored advice from his specialists. It means that when he gets ill it isn't as bad and he doesn't need as much support from me. I think health promotion is a key area and one that would help prevent a lot of future issues." (Individual respondent)*

> *"[…] You might find that building solid foundations at the present time cuts out the need for pie in the sky projections that never develop. […]" (Individual respondent)*

Future is too unpredictable to anticipate

The final theme, mostly raised by individuals, was that future challenges were too unpredictable to anticipate. These respondents suggested that attempting to anticipate emerging, evolving, or unknown challenges was a waste of resources, which could be better spent on the many existing and urgent needs in the present. In response, respondents suggested:

- addressing known needs, as this was based on the most reliable data
- anticipating challenges within 5 to 10 year timeframes, as those would be the most likely to be accurately predicted
- increasing capacity for flexibility and preparedness, rather than looking at specific hypothetical challenges

> *"Anticipating challenges that may arise in the future is important, but the reality is that nobody can predict the future, and therefore the predetermined themes that are examined could be based in a false or presumed reality. […]" (Individual respondent)*

General comments on the Disability Action Plan and alternative actions

Please note that respondents have treated the following 2 questions very similarly which has led to some repetition of themes across the 2 questions.

Question 13: What do you think of the plans and suggested areas of action described in this consultation as a whole? Are these the right things for the government to be focusing on over the next year?

Qualitative analysis

The most common themes for this question were all overarching themes' and included the need:

- for a simplified policy approach
- for policies to be backed up by sufficient funding
- for more financial support for disabled people
- to include disabled people with a wide range of impairments
- for experience to be at the centre of the proposals and their implementation

These themes are discussed in the overarching themes section.

Reasonable adjustments and the workplace

A common theme specific to this question was barriers faced by disabled people entering the workforce and maintaining employment, most notably due to a lack of reasonable adjustments. These respondents mentioned the need for more pathways to employment for disabled individuals and support in retaining employment. Suggestions for implementation included following the actions set out in the Disability Employment Charter and the use of the supported employment model, which focused on internships, inclusive apprenticeships, and supported employment straight into work. Overall, due to the broad range of reasonable adjustments required, some respondents believed that more awareness and training should be provided to businesses so disabled people could be better supported in their roles.

> *"[…] The DAP [Disability Action Plan] also fails to address barriers to disabled people getting into, and staying in, work. Disabled people are nearly twice as likely to leave their jobs as non-disabled people. […] We would have welcomed the DAP [Disability Action Plan] look into these key areas to improve retention and career progression for disabled people as this closely aligns to the government's goal to tackle the Disability Employment Gap (DEG). […]" (Organisational respondent)*

> *"A key area not covered by the consultation is the economic wellbeing of disabled people, including gaps in income and labour market outcomes. Although the recent Health and Disability White Paper unveiled several new employment-related policies, we believe the government could go much further in addressing the demand-side barriers disabled people*

> *encounter within the workplace, and that doing so will significantly improve the lives of disabled people, not least given that the 30 percentage point disability employment gap has not reduced in the past four years, and the disability pay gap has increased since 2013 from 11.5 per cent to 13.8 per cent." (Organisational respondent)*

Awareness and cultural change

Another theme referenced was the need for a change in mindset and culture towards disability within society. These respondents believed it was important to raise awareness around the barriers experienced by disabled people and to prioritise a more inclusive society for all. In addition, a few respondents felt that a holistic approach alongside consideration of other protected characteristics would best support understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by disabled individuals and lead to cultural change. A small number of respondents also emphasised the need to promote and implement a social model of disability in all proposals.

> *"[...] Something needs to tackle the way we view and talk about the disabled culturally. If any of this is going to get anywhere education isn't enough, the rhetoric around how we talk about the disabled needs to change." (Individual respondent)*

Inaccessible environments

Finally, respondents raised issues with inaccessible environments, both in physical spaces and online. Organisational respondents were overrepresented for this theme. The most discussed subtheme was the various barriers that disabled people experienced with transport, such as the potential closure of train ticket offices (which made it more difficult for disabled individuals to travel). Various improvements were suggested, including increasing staffing levels at bus and train stations and ensuring there was adequate space for wheelchair and mobility scooter users on public transport. In addition, some respondents mentioned that websites should be adapted for all impairment types (such as suitability for screen-readers) to ensure equal access and accessibility in online spaces.

> *"Disabled people are disproportionately excluded from mobility and travel, making 38% fewer journeys than non-disabled people […] Common problems include concurrent installation of' 'historic' or 'aesthetic' inaccessible surfaces and barriers; EV charging points installed restricting pavement width, rarely being installed in disabled parking bays and being unusable by people with lower strength or restricted reach; new rail stations being built without level boarding at the same time as station staffing is being reduced (Elizabeth Line); measures such as modal filters and cycle lanes being installed in ways that block drop kerbs and bus stop access and reduce numbers of disabled parking spaces; buses and trains designed to only carry one mobility aid user at a time; and new and refurbished walking, wheeling and cycling routes which run in secluded locations that many cannot safely use, especially after dark. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

> *"[…] However one big gap exists around ensuring that digital services are accessible, whether they be public or private sector organisations. Really important to expand and extend PSBAR accessibility regulations governing public sector digital presence to now include private sector too such as banks, retailers, etc. […] (Individual respondent)*

Question 14: What alternative actions might the government consider that would make a positive difference to the lives of disabled people?

Qualitative analysis

Improving accessibility across public infrastructure and services

The most common theme was a general need to improve accessibility for disabled people across public infrastructure and services. These respondents believed that universal accessibility was a fundamental feature of an equitable and inclusive society. To enable this, some respondents suggested enforceable accessibility standards, including adherence to the Equality Act 2010, which should be regularly monitored and regulated to ensure compliance.

Areas identified as needing more attention, in order of frequency, included

- public infrastructure, including leisure and recreational facilities, public toilets, pavements, and social housing
- transport
- essential services, including schools, healthcare and mental health facilities
- local businesses
- information and electronic accessibility

> *"[…] What is noticeably absent from the consultation is an awareness of general accessibility requirements and the need for all service providers to adopt the minimum accepted standard of reasonable adjustments, which would enable their services to be accessible and fit for purpose. An area of focus for the government could be to consider actions it could take to hold service providers accountable for meeting those minimum standards. What meaningful action could the government take to leverage Public Sector Equality Duties and compliance with the law in anticipation of those duties being breached? […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Financial support

The second most common theme was access to financial support.[14] Respondents mentioned the need for accessible financial information, education, and advisory services, as well as addressing the root causes of financial inequality and higher rates of poverty among disabled households. Concerning benefits and financial support, suggestions put forward by respondents included:

- amending income-based benefits to be assessed on individual, not joint, income
- increasing the amount of disability benefits available to account for the increased cost of living due to home or car adaptations, increased healthcare costs, or higher energy costs
- addressing the 'activity trap', which discourages disabled people from increasing their activity levels through fear that their benefits would be reduced as a result
- providing concessions for transport, assistive technology, and activities
- expanding the 'Disabled Facilities Grants' to cover all home improvements.

> *"The simplest and most effective means to support people with MND [Motor Neurone Disease] is through targeted financial support, especially during the cost of living crisis. A*

---

[14] Even though financial support is an overarching theme', it has been included as part of the qualitative analysis for question 14 due to the level of detail that respondents provided in their answers.

> *total of £1,850 in direct financial support has been made available for disabled people and those on low incomes during 2022, 2023 and 2024. This covers only 13% of the average yearly cost of living with and managing MND, estimated at £14,500. This inadequacy is markedly more when normal essential costs are considered, such as food, energy and rent. This lack of financial support has been shown to put people with MND in a situation whereby they are having to choose between essential living expenses and their own health and wellbeing. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Enhance disability awareness

The third most common theme was enhanced disability awareness education for both essential services staff and the wider public. This theme was mainly discussed by individual respondents. Many respondents supported mandatory training for organisation and services staff at all levels rather than restricting training to frontline staff. Some respondents also suggested public awareness campaigns and integrating awareness education within schools to target bullying. Finally, a few respondents specifically highlighted the need for improved awareness of non-visible disabilities and informal carers.

> *"I personally think we need to invest in public campaigns, educating people about disability inclusion, to change attitudes overall. As things will not change while people think disability inclusion is a niche issue that is nothing to do with them, or that disabled individuals have to deal with, rather than it being a wider social issue for us all to combat – like racism or gender discrimination. […]" (Individual respondent)*

> *"[…] One of the key barriers that autistic people face in society is a lack of understanding. This can have a negative impact in all parts of their life, as they will often be interacting with people who do not understand their needs. This can be challenging in education, employment, accessing healthcare, using the public transport system and many other places. This is why we believe that the government must invest in a national awareness campaign to build the understanding of employers and the general society. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Target health and social care

The fourth most frequent theme was health and social care. Respondents discussed adult health and social care provision, including transitions to adulthood, lifelong support, and palliative care. Some respondents highlighted that services should avoid age discrimination and instead ensure that all adults have access to the same opportunities as children. In addition, some respondents said other areas of focus should include:

- child health and social care services (including support for early diagnosis)
- improved mental health support (for both adults and children)
- access to appropriate (and subsidised) mobility support

> *"[…] Improve health service with more diagnostic support and ongoing support once diagnosed." (Individual respondent)*

> *"There is very little about the NHS in the government plans. And yet, the NHS underpins the life of the majority of disabled people. Some illness is avoidable, treatable or curable with the right medical support, particularly when that is delivered early on – and yet we do not receive it, or do not receive it in a timely fashion. […] The NHS needs urgent funding to be able to improve medical care that will directly improve the lives and experiences of disabled people.*

> *[…]" (Individual respondent)*

Support in the workplace

The fifth most common theme (mostly raised by organisations) was improved support in the workplace. Respondents expressed concern that the inability to confidently access or retain employment would negatively affect disabled people's mental health and deny them independence. Practical suggestions within the workplace included:

- reforming the Access to Work scheme by removing the support cap, addressing delays in provision (with respondents mentioning delays of up to 6 months), providing assistance to work in multiple locations, and streamlining Access to Work, Access to Work Plus, and the Mental Health Support Service
- enhancing guidance for employers and HR departments on how to use the Access to Work and Disability Confident schemes, providing reasonable adjustments, disability awareness, and the importance of workplace diversity
- improving co-ordination between local stakeholders, such as Jobcentre Plus, Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, training providers, and CIPD local branch networks
- implementing proposals outlined in the 'Disability Employment Charter', such as mandatory monitoring and reporting on the disability pay and employment gaps (recruitment, retention, and progression rates).

In addition to these suggestions, some respondents highlighted the need for earlier support before disabled people entered the labour market. This included the provision of adequate career guidance and sufficient employment pathways for young people embedded within secondary education.

> *"[…] As the population ages, works longer, and disease treatments continue to improve, it is highly likely that more people will be working with a terminal illness. However, despite strong evidence that being employed can improve wellbeing, and having good wellbeing can make it easier to work, employees who become terminally ill, and those who care for them, often find themselves forced to leave employment. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

> *"[…] Gaining and maintaining meaningful work should be a priority. The number of people with disabilities in full-time work is incredibly low and hasn't changed in the last 20 years, and may have got worse. There needs to be a programme of raising awareness with employers of the skills that disabled people have and the support that they can access – Access to Work and also assistive technology. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

> *"Accessible, effective, career guidance and support delivered by professionally qualified Career Development Professionals. Being able to plan your own life choices and self direct support are fundamental to improving the outcomes for disabled people. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Provision of informal support

The sixth most common theme was the provision of informal support. For this theme, organisational respondents were overrepresented. Respondents called for support beyond health and social care services, including:

- funding local community initiatives and support groups to promote integration within the local community

- improving access to recreational activities, particularly sports and physical exercise
- increasing opportunities for social activities for disabled people and their families, including widely signposting support groups available
- increasing available helplines to access informal advice and support at the point of need
- improving access to assistive technology to help make disabled people more independent
- providing enhanced relationship support for disabled couples
- widening access to legal support, including advocacy services, external independent regulators, and subsidised access to lawyers
- providing supported access to civic engagement opportunities, including voting processes

> *"[…] Invest in community-based initiatives that promote inclusion and accessibility at the grassroots level. These initiatives can address local needs and priorities, considering the unique characteristics and challenges of different communities. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

> *"[…] We also believe there are further opportunities for the government to address the impact of loneliness on disabled people alongside the role sport and physical activity can play in improving this. However, research from Activity Alliance shows that almost half of disabled people fear losing their benefits if they are seen to be physically active. In its proposed changes to the disability benefits system and with any work that looks at tackling loneliness and inactivity amongst disabled people, the government must provide safeguards to reassure disabled people that being active will not threaten their benefits. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

Support in education

The next most common theme was the provision of support within the education system. Respondents mainly commented on support within schools to improve the experiences of disabled children and disabled parents, though a small number of respondents also referred to mature learning opportunities. Some respondents discussed the lifelong effects of negative schooling experiences in childhood, including feeling misunderstood by both teachers and peers. Schools were described as the best opportunity to reach disabled children and ensure they were given the best possible start. Some respondents also called for the integration of disabled children in mainstream schools as a means of facilitating social integration and inclusion. Additional suggestions for support in schools included:

- providing subsidised school transport for children with EHCPs until age 18
- ensuring equal access to sports and physical activity
- supporting both disabled pupils and staff members
- expanding and subsidising the provision of holiday schools, schemes, and activities for disabled pupils
- amending PGCE and teacher training to allow for all trainee teachers to teach in SEN schools to address the declining number of specialist teachers
- increasing state school funding to allow for smaller class sizes, better staff-to-student ratios, and improved digital accessibility skills
- improving guidance for schools and parents on how to support disabled children

> *"[…] We recommend action is taken to ensure schools understand and implement legal obligations to provide reasonable adjustments and to progressively realise disabled children's rights to inclusive education. […] We urge that these measures are brought forward as a priority. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

> *"[…] Better support in education and identifying SEN needs and putting in place support plans. Help to educate parents who don't know any better so they can be the best advocate for their children and not cause them to be left behind due to their parents not understanding their complex needs or the support that is out there." (Individual respondent)*

Support for the care workforce

The final theme was support for both the formal and informal care workforce. For formal care, some respondents believed it was important to increase compensation to improve retention and increase capacity to support disabled people sufficiently. However, most respondents for this theme discussed the impact of care responsibilities for young, informal, and unpaid carers. Suggestions put forward by respondents included:

- improving support for informal carers to retain employment while caring, including making the 'Carers Passport' mandatory for all employers
- increasing access to respite care
- improving access to support in public venues, such as museums or leisure facilities
- working with informal carers on the design and implementation of actions related to the Disability Action Plan

> *"[…] While the action plan acknowledges the importance of supporting carers, there does appear to be a gap in the plan regarding the impact of disability on people without disability who may live with or care for someone with a disability. It is crucial to recognise that disability not only affects the people directly experiencing it but also has indirect effects on their caregivers and loved ones. By addressing the needs and challenges faced by this group, we can have a positive impact on the overall wellbeing of both people with disability and those who support them. It would be beneficial for the action plan to consider including specific actions and interventions that address the needs and concerns of people without disabilities who have caregiving responsibilities for people with disabilities. […]" (Organisational respondent)*

+44 20 8133 3192 43 Tanner Street, SE1 3PL, London, UK
+30 21 2104 7902 Ifigenias 9, 14231, Athens, GR

Copyright © 2024 All rights reserved

Company Number 09391354, VAT Number GB208923405, Registered in England and Wales

LinkedIn company/alma-economics

almaeconomics

alma economics