

# Adults with physical disability or sensory impairment

## Headlines

Disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society within which they live. It can include physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person being able to carry out normal daily activities.

Locally in 2008:

- 18% of adults needed some form of help with physical functioning, of whom 1 in 5 were aged 18-44 and 2 in 5 aged over 65 years.
- Pain, depression and feeling isolated most of the time affected at least 2 in 5 of people who were dependant.
- Disproportionately more south Asian people were dependent on someone for higher levels of support.
- Low income levels and unsuitable housing are major issues for this group with only 30% in employment compared to 71% of the general population. 41% of people needing support stated their home was inadequate for their needs.

## Why is this group important?

Disability is a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person being able to carry out normal daily activities<sup>1</sup>.

Disability is a term covering impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions<sup>2</sup>. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure, an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action and a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual during daily living. Thus disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society within which they live<sup>2</sup>.

## What significant factors are affecting this group?

Physical disability can be assessed by self perception or independently, for example by a healthcare professional.

Locally in 2008<sup>3</sup>, 18% of adults were dependent on help or support with some form of physical functioning compared to 20% in 2005<sup>4</sup>. Of these:

- 22% were aged 18-44.
- 29% aged 45-64.
- 39% aged over 65.
- 14% were of south Asian origin, i.e. the same proportion as the overall population.

The type of support required was:

- 80% needed help getting around outside the home, of which 9% were of south Asian origin.
- 72% needed help getting around inside their home of which 14% were of south Asian origin.
- 44% were dependent, in other words needed help and support with daily activities such as washing, dressing and feeding, of whom 16% were of south Asian origin.

## Sight impairment

1 in 11 (8.7%) of adult respondents reported sight impairment. Of these:

- 59% were partially sighted, 8.1% were blind or severely impaired. Overall less than 1% of the adult population were blind or severely visually impaired.
- 27% were aged 18-44, 27% aged 45-64 and 35% were aged over 65 years.
- 12% were of south Asian origin.
- 55% of sight impaired people declared they had another disability.
- Nearly 85% of those reporting sight impairment were living in a household with an annual income below £30,000, compared with 61% of those with no sensory impairment.

## Hearing impairment<sup>3</sup>

1 in 7 (14%) of adult respondents reported a hearing impairment. Of these:

- 84% were hard of hearing, 7.3% were profoundly or severely deaf. So, overall 1% of the adult population were profoundly or severely deaf.
- 13% were aged 18-44, 29% aged 45-64 and 49% were aged over 65.
- 61% were men and 34% women.
- Significantly, 55% of hearing impaired people declared they had another disability.
- 84% were living in a household with an annual income below £30,000, compared with 61% of those with no sensory impairment.

Health conditions affecting people with disabilities

- Pain was the most common, affecting more than 3 in 5 (64%) of those needing support.
- Sciatica, lumbago or recurring backache affected half (51%) of dependent people.
- Depression, anxiety and other nervous illnesses affected 2 in 5 people with any level of dependency.

## Isolation

2 in 5 people needing any support with daily living felt isolated all or most of the time.

## Housing

Of people needing any support:

- 58% lived in their own home.
- 34% lived in social rented housing.
- 7.9% in the private rented sector.

Significantly, 41% reported that their accommodation was inadequate for their needs, compared to 26% of the general population.

## Economic wellbeing

30% of adults with a self reported health or disability problem were in employment compared to 71% of the general population. Of those aged under 65 years:

- 56% had a household income of less than £10,000, compared to 23% of the general population.
- 84% had a household income of £20,000 or lower, compared to 48% of the general population.
- 6.9% had a household income exceeding £30,000, compared to 34% of the general population.

## Which specific groups are affected most?

Physical and sensory disabilities can affect anyone from any group but those with underlying health problems, such as obesity and diabetes, can be more prone to physical disablement in later life.

## Where is this causing greatest concern?

Huddersfield South and Dewsbury had the most people in need of some form of support - 1 in 6 (18%) and 1 in 7 (15%) respectively<sup>3</sup>.

## What could commissioners and service planners consider?

A comprehensive needs assessment for adults with physical disabilities and sensory impairment is required to understand how opportunities and life chances can be improved. This should include an analysis of the experiences of those with disabilities and those who support them.

## References

1. London: HMSO. Disability Discrimination Act. (Section1(1)).1995
2. World Health Organisation. Health Topics – Disabilities. 2010. [www.who.int/disabilities/en/](http://www.who.int/disabilities/en/)
3. NHS Kirklees and Kirklees Council. Current Living in Kirklees (CLIK) survey. 2008.
4. NHS Kirklees and Kirklees Council. Current Living in Kirklees (CLIK) survey. 2005.