



Northern Devon Healthcare
NHS Trust

Our Future Hospital Accessibility Survey

Summary report—
March 2022





Accessibility Survey

Why - To provide evidence base for our future OFH estates designs

How - The survey was conducted both face to face and online and promoted through our community groups such as Involving People Steering Group and One Northern Devon groups

Who - We spoke with as broad a range of individuals as possible including attendees to Parent and Toddler groups, Age UK, Active Wellness groups around the community as well as on site at the hospital in different service locations including outpatients and fracture clinic

When - The survey ran from Nov 21 – February 22 and a total of 527 responses were achieved





Respondent Profile

- Nearly 3 in 4 respondents were Patients – 74%
- Visitors – 22%
- Carers – 15%
- Volunteers – 8%
- If a respondent chose multiple categories, they were most likely to consider themselves both Patient and Visitor
- We received 1085 open comments – including 357 regarding how we can make the hospital more accessible for our patients and visitors





Accessibility issues of respondents

- Mobility impairment - 38%
- Hearing Impairment - 30%
- Visual impairment - 16%
- Memory difficulties - 16%
- No impairments - 38%

(Access is not a problem solely for those with accessibility impairments)





Common themes

The most common themes reflected difficulty with getting to the hospital, parking and navigating the hospital site.

Not enough appropriate parking (44)

Drop-off area too small / congested (31)

Difficulty navigating / poor signage (27)

Not enough disabled parking (20)

Not enough/poorly monitored volunteer parking (12)

Transport issues (11)

Parking too expensive (10)

Difficulties with hospital layout (9)

Access to refreshments (9)

Sloping / uneven pathways (8)

Inadequate seating (7)

Opening hours for refreshments too short (7)



Parking

Not surprisingly, the most common theme was lack of spaces which caused concern for those visiting the hospital. However other issues raised included:

- **Disabled parking**
 - Lack of provision within a short distance of the hospital entrance
 - Very narrow disabled parking spaces which made it very difficult to access wheelchairs and help immobile people in and out of vehicles
- **Lack of designated parking** for specific hospital departments. In particular:
 - Maternity
 - Physiotherapy
- **Distance of car park to the main entrance.** Particularly problematical for those with mobility issues and those assisting patients/visitors with mobility impairment:

“I suggest you go and give it a try with a standard wheelchair. Try taking someone up to the main car park and see how easy you find it. Imagine you’re old and pushing your spouse.”



Drop-off area/main entrance

Congested, cluttered, creates bottleneck. Other key findings were:

- **Lack of waiting area near drop-off**
 - Particular concern for carers/visitors who felt anxious dropping patients whilst then having to find a parking space
- **Lack of designated parking for volunteer drivers**
 - They felt unable to provide their service adequately
- **Sloping access**
 - Hard to access for those with reduced mobility and wheelchairs users
- **Lack of signage**
 - Highlighted as an issue both entering and exiting the hospital

“There needs to be a waiting area by the drop-off section. Very hard when you are a carer to just drop someone off and then leave them whilst you find a parking space.”



Navigation around NDDH

Lots of positive responses regarding staff and the help desk but main concerns for respondents are:

- **Signage**
 - No accessible signage – pictorial, large type, colour coded etc
 - Not enough signage in between departments
 - Not enough maps
 - No signage at comfortable visual height for wheelchair users
- **Challenging layout of hospital**
 - Endoscopy hard to find
 - Physiotherapy considered too far to access
 - Hard to navigate the hospital via wheelchair or on crutches
- **Not enough seating**
 - No general waiting area
 - No rest areas between departments e.g. accessing Physio

“The hospital entrance is busy, but once you move down the corridors it is confusing and poorly signposted, especially when going into the lower levels.”



What our patients and visitors want...

Better / clearer signage / navigation improvements (38)

Better/more parking (20)

More disabled parking (19)

Alter the layout (18)

Improve drop-off point - increase capacity / availability (17)

Provision of staff or volunteers to help patients get to appointments (14)

Improve wheelchairs provided, for better ease of use (12)

Use colour coding to support ease of navigation (11)

More wheelchairs available for patient use (11)

More seating available (9)

Provide maps or plans of the hospital (8)

Provide directions on appointment letters (7)

Provide support with getting to the hospital e.g. hospital transport (7)

Better communication for those with hearing impairments (7)

Use floor markings to guide to departments (7)

Provide more volunteer parking (6)



Conclusions

How will this information help our design proposals?

- Have a better awareness of hidden disabilities – especially in our signage
- Consider the whole journey for our patients and visitors - from the moment arriving at the hospital to finding specific departments within the hospital site
- Consider the length of time patients and visitors are on site and ensure there are adequate accessible toilets, resting and refreshment areas
- Consider the changes to services in the future – digitally connected care – and how this may change these experiences





Recommendations from the survey

- **Improved signage** – internal and external
- **Availability of car parking spaces** – including more disabled and volunteer driver provision
- **Bigger, better managed drop-off area**, with improved access and signage
- **Better support getting in and around the hospital** – more aids for navigation, more help points
- **Improve general site access** to ease congestion and improve traffic flow – including considering separate entrances/parking for specific departments
- **Improve availability of accessible toilets** and changing facilities– especially for disabled adults
- **Consider TV screens** to display patient appointments to help those with hearing impairments
- **Provide additional seating** areas for rest, waiting and quiet contemplation



In summary...

This is just one patient's experience....

“Arrival at main door - no clear signage, a busy area that's intimidating and overwhelming and smelly from the smokers right outside.

This starts the process of sensory overwhelm. In the waiting areas the lights are bright, the sounds are loud (TV/radio)

Waiting room layout makes it hard not to sit near anyone else. But if you wait in the corridor you worry you'll miss being called so you sit there and try and deal with it.

Being overwhelmed before the appointment starts is a sure fire way to mean no information is retained except the bad news.”

How can we make this experience better?



In summary – What our patients and visitors want...

Seating area by drop-off
Accessible drop-off area
Accessible signage
Signage to stairs and lifts
Improved disabled parking
Clearer signage
Improved transport links
Colour coded areas
Better signage
Better wheelchair access
More seating
More rest areas