

**North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership
Disability Focus Groups**

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report details the main findings to emerge from focus group research carried out by Lowland Market Research on behalf of North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership with regard to people with disabilities accessing, using and interacting with North Ayrshire public services.

Objectives and Methodology

A number of partners in the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership have developed disability equality schemes. To inform and assist with this a series of four focus groups have been developed with residents of North Ayrshire to ascertain their view and opinions of the services provided, the way in which they interact with these services and how this could be developed for the future.

Focus Group Composition

In total four focus groups were developed with people with disabilities from throughout North Ayrshire. The group composition was as follows;

Group 1 – 18-24 years old residents with physical disabilities

Group 2 – 30-55 years old residents with physical disabilities

Group 3 – 60+ years old residents with physical disabilities

Group 4 – People of mixed ages with learning disabilities

The focus groups were developed within the confines of the research budget to reflect a broad cross section of people with different types and degree of disability, as well as age, gender and geographic area.

Summary Points

The Built Environment

The main issues with the built environment that people with disabilities face include the following;

- Uneven pavements, broken paving slabs and potholes.
- The need for more dropped kerbs. People in wheelchairs or who are unsteady on their feet are unable to get on and off the pavements if the kerb is too high.
- Other obstacles in the street such as parked cars, advertising boards and over grown trees

Experience of using/accessing Services

People's experience of accessing and using different services varies considerably. Many services now have ramps and automatic doors which help them to access the service, as well as some with lowered counters. There are still many offices and facilities without these and the coverage must be widened.

Some services do appear to provide a service to people with disabilities, however, it may be less than adequate. For instance the Magnum does have a ramp to access it, the problem is

that the ramp is quite a big hill. Alternatively, people can gain access to the Magnum from the bottom of the building where they have to ring a bell to have the door opened. The problem being that it can be 20 minutes before someone comes to open the door.

Other examples were given where once again the developments and improvements for people with disabilities only go so far but still leaving barriers and obstacles to be overcome before they can use a service properly.

The groups also mentioned that the Council have stopped the garden tidy scheme and many disabled people need this service. In addition to this it was commented that the Council provides people with a permit for the black wheelie bin which means that the refuse collectors will take out and put away the bin. The Council will not however do the same for the brown bin (garden refuse) despite the fact that these people with disabilities cannot move the bin themselves.

Access to Other services

Health Board

In addition to services provided by the Council, comment was made on people's experience regarding contacting and using other services and facilities. It was mentioned that physical access to dentists, doctors surgeries, health centres and chemists was not always good.

A related comment was that the health board have induction loops at their front desks but often there are books in front of them or an ornament and they are not switched on, or people cannot see where they are.

Private sector

In addition to the issues within the public sector members of the groups commented that the private sector should also be looked at. People stated that shop keepers and other staff need more training in dealing with people with disabilities. Places such as post offices, pubs, restaurants and banks are often not that accessible. There needs to be stronger legislation that the Council can use to enforce the private sector to make buildings accessible.

Accessible public transport

Transportation is a major issue for people with disabilities. It was acknowledged that many public transport issues are outwith the direct control of North Ayrshire Council. They can however influence and bring pressure to bear upon the SPTA, Scottish Executive etc. Without suitable access to transport the services provided by the Council and other organisations will be inaccessible.

Issues relating to public transport included;

- Some bus drivers will run past people in wheelchairs at bus stops.
- Many bus drivers do not wait until people have sat down before they drive off from the bus stop.
- Often public transport does not go near the services people want to access- an example given was Saltcoats Health Centre

- Trains were mentioned as being generally more accessible with wider doors. The main issue is that the rail companies need to know a day in advance that people are travelling. This reduces any spontaneous desire to go somewhere.

Car parking

All of the groups said that disabled car parking can be problematic. There are never enough spaces and often it is people without a disabled badge park in the spaces. It should be against the law to park in a disabled space and it should be enforced.

Housing

Most people who require it have suitable adaptations to their houses. These include stair lifts, wide doors, showers etc. The main issue is that it can take quite a time to get these things done.

There is a view that there doesn't seem to be enough suitably converted houses for people with disabilities who also have a family and children. One person stated that she felt there was an attitude that being disabled she shouldn't have children. Many of the adapted houses only have one bedroom.

Treatment by Council Staff

Treatment by Council and other public sector staff can be mixed. Many people have very positive experiences stating that they were treated well, other less so. In general people stated they have seen an improvement in the ways staff treat them. They are more understanding with regard to people with disabilities and the way in which they speak to them and what they say to them has become more appropriate.

There are still issues that people with disabilities have to face. People who are wheel chair users tend to find that they are not spoken to it is the person who is pushing them (able bodied person). Wheelchair users in general feel that the issue is that if you are in a wheel chair, people think you are daft.

For blind people they feel they are invisible when they have a carer/friend with them. The carer/friend is always spoken to. Most disabled people stated that they have to push for them to do things. Then they become the pushy, trouble making disabled person. "You have to always put your point across and remind staff that you can do things".

People in general felt that they are treated well by staff. They do not feel they are treated more poorly. In their view it is probably not the case that staff are being awkward or deliberately obstructive. More often than not it is the lack of training and experience of the needs of people with disabilities.

Communication and consultation

All of the groups said that they do not think that communication to people with disabilities is very good at all. There is a lack of information regarding the help and support that people with disabilities can get. Members of the groups said that information in Braille and large print seems to be available if people want it. However it does not seem to be freely and obviously available. The view of the groups was that information like this should be on all leaflet stands and at a suitable height for people with disabilities.

Most of the people in the groups thought that disabled people are rarely consulted with regard to service developments for them. All of the groups believed that it would be beneficial to take disabled people along to comment on proposed changes or developments.

The groups were of the view that society's views regarding people with disabilities must be altered. The Council needs to promote disability awareness to the wider community. Disabled people stated that "We need to tell members of the public more about issues people face who have learning or physical disabilities.

Employment and training opportunities

There are a variety of different employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities. For the group of people with learning disabilities they had work placements undertaking printing at Ashgrove publishing, another worked in a British Heart Foundation shop in Irvine and another worked as a gardening labourer in Ayrshire Central Hospital.

Members of the other groups had gone to college such as the new college in Kilwinning, James Watt College (annex) in Stevenston and at Auchenhavie School.

People were of the view that the Council, health board and other public sector organisations should be leading by example with regard to employing people with disabilities. This would show that people with disabilities can do different jobs and it would break down the barriers to employment for this group of people.

Future development

The groups were of the opinion that the following issues should be addressed

- 1 Physical access to buildings.
- 2 Accessible public Transport.
- 3 Roads and pavements in a good state of repair and uncluttered.
- 4 More disabled parking facilities and enforcement against inappropriate use of these spaces.
- 5 Accessible information on what services are available.
- 6 More consultation and engagement with disabled people.
- 7 Suitable and adequate housing for people with disabilities.
- 8 Changing public attitudes to people with a disability.
- 9 Employment opportunities, the public bodies should be taking the lead.
- 10 Encouraging the private sector to make their premises more accessible such as shops, restaurants, hotels, pubs etc.

1.0 Introduction

This report details the main findings to emerge from focus group research carried out by Lowland Market Research on behalf of North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership with regard to people with disabilities accessing, using and interacting with North Ayrshire public services.

1.1 Objectives and Methodology

A number of partners in the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership have developed disability equality schemes. To inform and assist with this a series of four focus groups have been developed with residents of North Ayrshire to ascertain their view and opinions of the services provided, the way in which they interact with these services and how this could be developed for the future.

Focus Group Composition

In total four focus groups were developed with people with disabilities from throughout North Ayrshire. The group composition was as follows;

Group 1 – 18-24 years old residents with physical disabilities

Group 2 – 30-55 years old residents with physical disabilities

Group 3 – 60+ years old residents with physical disabilities

Group 4 – People of mixed ages with learning disabilities

The focus groups were developed within the confines of the research budget to reflect a broad cross section of people with different types and degree of disability. In addition to this age, gender and geographic areas was considered. Participants in the focus groups came from the following areas within North Ayrshire.

- Kilwinning
- Saltcoats
- Stevenston
- Ardrossan
- Irvine
- Largs
- Beith
- West Kilbride

1.2 Report Structure

The following sections of the report are structured around the topic guide used and outlines in both narrative and bullet points the types of responses and comments received during the focus groups. The bullet points give rich examples of specific perspectives with regard to the subject matter highlighting clearly and contextualising the more general narrative.

Qualitative research by its nature produces a large amount of information; the report has therefore been segmented into discreet sections to aid understanding. **Readers should be careful, however, not to view each section in isolation but maintain an awareness that many of the issues are inter-linked and should be assessed and actioned in a joined up manner.**

2.0 Research Outputs

2.1 The Built Environment

There are a variety of issues relating to the built environment that cause difficulties for people with disabilities. The first of these is with regard to the height of the kerb that people have to get up and onto a pavement. For people in wheelchairs or who are unsteady on their feet there is a requirement for dropped kerbs. They are unable to get on and off the pavements if the kerb is too high.

Comment was made that the Council started lowering kerbs about 4 years ago and a lot of them have been lowered making life easier for people. Focus group participants stated that more and more pavements now seem to be getting lowered. However, as with many things there are still not enough dropped kerbs. They stated that they have to double back on themselves to get on an off the pavements in the different towns and villages.

A related issue to this is that even where there are dropped kerbs, there can often be cars parked in front of them. This means that the dropped kerb is now no longer useable for the people who require it. Members of the groups stated that the Council needs to prevent cars from parking there.

There is a perception that it is the main towns in North Ayrshire that get the improvements carried out first. Some people felt that places like Beith and West Kilbride are the back of beyond and they are the last to get anything such as drop kerbs.

Another positive development that was mentioned was the fact that at some bus stops there are raised pavements. This helps people who are unsteady on their feet or who cannot step high to access the buses more easily. However, once again it was mentioned that in many cases there are parked cars at the bus stops preventing the bus from accessing the high pavement. This is another instance of an improvement being carried out but due to other issues the benefit for disabled people is not being felt.

Wheelchair users said that the high pavements at bus stops are no help because they are not able to travel on buses.

Other issues to do with the built environment consisted of uneven pavements, broken paving slabs and potholes. A significant number of people mentioned other types of obstacles that they face on the pavements. These included;

Wheelie bins and advertising boards on the street – it can cause problems for people trying to get round them because the pavement is not big enough and they have to go onto the road to get round an obstacle which can be dangerous.

There are also issues with over grown bushes at the side of pavements which reduce the size of the pavements for people to move along.

Cars parked up on the pavement were mentioned which again reduces the size of the pavement for people to move along. The groups felt that cars should be kept on the road not up on the pavements. This is a particular issue for people in wheelchairs who require a broader pavement.

2.2 Experience of using/accessing Services

People's experience of accessing and using different services varies considerably. It was commented that many different services now have ramps and automatic doors which help them to access the service. It was stated for instance that there is a ramp up to the Largs Council office on (Greenock road) and also automatic doors. Also libraries such as in Largs, Ardrossan and Stevenston, all have ramps and the Beith library is on the flat with a lift inside. All of the groups stated that accessing services has become easier over the years.

However there are still issues, for instance it was felt that there are still not enough lowered counters which reduces the opportunity for eye to eye contact. The groups would like more of these. This is not to say that many offices do not have lowered counters, it was stated that Stevenston rent office and the Saltcoats office have a lowered counter as do many libraries.

The Magnum was commented on several times. The groups stated that it does have a ramp to access it, the problem with the Magnum is that it is not just a small ramp, "you have to go up quite a big hill". Members of the groups stated that there is access at the bottom of the Magnum. However, "you have to stand and press the bell to get in and you can be there 20 minutes before someone comes".

Another person stated that "you have to phone them in advance to open the back door". They stated that it creates such a hassle that they end up not bothering. This results in disabled people not using the facility.

Other examples were given where once again the developments and improvements for people with disabilities only go so far but still leaving barriers and obstacles to be overcome before they can use a service properly.

For instance it was mentioned that at Auchendarvie sports centre there are ramps and stairs and tactile surfacing and is quite accessible. However, some people said that they don't go to Auchendarvie because the big pool just has a ladder down to it and it is no good if people cannot hold on properly. There needs to be a way to get in and out the pool without using the ladders. A member of another group stated that he used the pool as they have a chair that lowers him into the water. Some of the more able members of the groups do not want this and would like something to be developed that allowed them to get into the pool with a bit more dignity.

Participants in the groups who were blind stated that again at Auchendarvie they would require part of the pool to be laned off for swimming but often they will not put in a lane line during the day.

Garnock pool has automatic doors, however inside the building there are no automatic doors "they say it is to do with fire regulations but there could be a push button door opening and it shuts behind them".

Once again on the outside of the building for a wheel chair user to get to the side of the pool they have to put a piece of board down to get them down the steps. The staff need to take people down and back up. There are also no disability showers at the pool. A related issue to accessibility is a lack of disabled parking spaces. It was commented that there are only 2

spaces at the Garnock pool. It is well used by people with disabilities but only 2 parking spaces.

Another comment that was made was regarding Bridgegate House where people stated that the lifts sometimes break down and there are only lifts or stairs to access the upper floors. It has welfare rights and social work in it so it is used by people with disabilities quite a lot.

The group of people with learning disabilities had started to use the library in Irvine. They accessed audio books and large print books and some had used the IT suite. Many of them said that they found using the library “scary when you go in at first”. They probably wouldn’t have gone in to use the library without a support worker.

They stated that when the library was in Cunninghame house it was too small and not easy to move about it. It is now much more accessible, it is wheelchair accessible – all on the flat no stairs and in general a lot nicer.

A few of the group feel happy about using the library on their own, other still need the assistance of a support worker. They would also need more one to one support to use the computers.

All of the group said that the staff are very helpful in the library. “They are supportive and will take their time with you”.

Other Services/Issues

The groups mentioned a variety of other service issues which they felt should be addressed. Comment was made that the Council have stopped the garden tidy scheme and many disabled people need this. “You cannot always get someone else to do it and if you do they can charge what they like to cut the grass and tidy the gardens”. Someone said that they had heard that someone had paid £40 for someone to cut their grass. There is an issue that people can be evicted for not doing their gardens.

Another issue that was highlighted by several people was that the Council provides people with a permit for the black wheelie bin which means that the refuse collectors will take out and put away the bin. The Council will not however do the same for the brown bin (garden refuse) despite the fact that these people with disabilities cannot move the bin themselves.

It was commented that the Council states that the person doing the garden should put the bin out, however this could mean that the brown wheelie bin sits out in the street for up to 2 weeks creating a hazard on the pavement for people with disabilities. People have to rely on neighbours to do this and many are not able to do it. The Council policy goes only so far to assist these people but not far enough.

Several people in the groups state that they access a North Ayrshire Council service most days through carers and other staff that assist them. In general they are very pleased with the level of service. The types of assistance they receive include people coming into do the housework and taking them out shopping and paying bills and going to the doctor.

One person said that she was not happy with the service she receives from the home care staff. She stated that they are in 10 minutes and do nothing. She doesn't get the same person each time and she doesn't get a sheet to sign or anything to indicate what has been done for her.

2.3 Access to Other services

Health Board

In addition to services provided by the Council, comment was made on peoples experience regarding contacting and using other services and facilities. It was mentioned that physical access to dentists and doctors surgeries and health centres was not always good. There are also transportation issues which are discussed in the section 2.4

A member of the group brought up the issue of access to chemists. She indicated that the health centre/GP surgery was accessible, however the chemists have steps so that people in wheelchairs cannot get in. Elderly and disabled people have to ask people to go in with their prescription.

It was mentioned that many chemists will offer a prescription pick up and delivery service that would assist people. However, chemists do offer other services not just the fulfilment of prescriptions and by limiting access to the premises it limits disabled people access to the wide variety of services that a chemist can provide.

A related comment was that the health board have induction loops at their front desks but often there are books in front of them or an ornament and they are not switched on, or people cannot see where they are.

Private sector

In addition to the issues within the public sector members of the groups commented that the private sector should also be looked at. People stated that shop keepers and other staff need more training in dealing with people with disabilities. Staff can seem unwilling to help people with disabilities.

Places such as post offices, pubs, restaurants and banks are often not that accessible. Many have steps up to them and heavy or narrow doors.

The Council should be addressing accessibility issues with the private sector – make them compliant. There needs to be stronger legislation that the Council can use to enforce the private sector to make buildings accessible

This is also an issue with shops who put their bins on the pavements to be collected by the Council. The bins are an obstacle to people with mobility problems

2.4 Accessible public transport

Transportation is a major issue for people with disabilities. Some that have an impact upon being able to access public transport have already been discussed in relation to the built environment such as dropped kerbs and raised kerbs at bus stops.

It was acknowledged that many public transport issues are outwith the direct control of North Ayrshire Council. They can however influence and bring pressure to bear upon the SPTA, Scottish Executive etc. Without suitable access to transport the services provided by the Council and other organisations will be inaccessible. Transportation is therefore central to many of the disability equality issues.

A variety of different issues relating to bus travel were discussed. These included the fact that some bus drivers will run past people in wheelchairs at bus stops. Also some drivers don't want to get out their bus and help people with a ramp to get on the bus. They don't want to know and they don't have the time to assist. Some of the drivers are not nice to passengers at all. They don't talk to people in a nice way.

Another issue on the buses is that often it is people with prams that will take up a space and the wheelchair user can't get on the bus.

In addition to this many bus drivers do not wait until people have sat down before they drive off from the bus stop. For people that have a disability affecting their mobility this can be dangerous. "You might get the nice driver who waits now and again but very few of them do this".

Many people will end up using taxis to go places such as health centres and sports and leisure facilities. Examples of using public transport to get to places included the Magnum. It was mentioned that the Magnum seems difficult to get to as it is a bit out the way. The groups said that there is probably a bus that goes down but wouldn't be a low floor bus and most people would need to get at least 2 buses down to it. This puts people off using the facility.

Another example given was Saltcoats library which is up away over the hill and there is no bus that goes past. The health centre in Saltcoats was also mentioned. It used to have a bus that went past but 6 months after the centre was built the bus routes were changed resulting in people having to walk quite far to get to the health centre.

A related transport issue was raised when one person had to go into Quarriers at Bridge of Weir for a six week assessment. He stated that his mother had problems using public transport to come and visit him because it is so isolated. .

All of the groups said that trains are good, they are generally more accessible with wider doors. The main issues is that you need to let them know a day in advance that you are travelling. This reduces any spontaneous desire to go somewhere.

Elderly disabled people stated that they are less able to use the free bus travel that they are entitled to. They lose out in this respect. Accessible buses are only really available that will take them to Kilmarnock or Irvine. They believe that if people cannot access free bus travel

there should be free rail travel instead. Rail transport is generally more accessible for people with wheelchairs.

Most people in the groups thought that dial a bus is poor. Once someone has booked it you tend not to be able to go anywhere else. Other issues are that if you are an electric wheel chair or electric scooter user you cannot use dial a bus. They state that they are not insured for these. You never see a dial a bus with more than a few people on it. Often there is only 1 person on it.

Car parking

All of the groups said that disabled car parking can be problematic. There are never enough spaces and often it is people without a disabled badge park in the spaces. It should be against the law to park in a disabled space and it should be enforced.

One person said that you can provide the best health services they like but as an independent wheelchair user and driver if they cant park the car to start with then the health services are of no use to them.

2.5 Housing Issue

Most people who require it have suitable adaptations to their houses. These include stair lifts, wide doors, showers etc. The main issue is that it can take quite a time to get these things done. It is all about priorities. Many of the people in the groups have undertaken these adaptations themselves including things like a wet floor shower and a low kitchen.

One person said they applied for hand rails in January and only got them installed in October. Another person said it took them 2 years to get another banister. "You do have a long wait for anything- they think they hang about till you don't need it (die)".

One person cannot get out their house on their own – they have steps up to their house and no ramp.

There is a view that there doesn't seem to be enough suitably converted houses for people with disabilities who also have a family and children. One person stated that she felt there was an attitude that being disabled she shouldn't have children. Many of the adapted houses only have one bedroom. They do not recognise that disabled people have a family, children or possibly a carer that may stay over.

There is a view that if the Council had converted a house for a disabled person and that person dies or moves on, the house should remain as an accessible adapted house. It should then be offered to a disabled person first rather than people on the mainstream housing list.

People on the housing waiting list are asked to indicate the areas to which they would consider moving. In some instances a suitable house may come up in an area they had not considered but they are not offered it. It may be useful to highlight these houses to people on the off chance that they may move to a particular area because a house was available.

2.6 Treatment by Council Staff

Treatment by Council and other public sector staff can be mixed. Many people have very positive experiences stating that they were treated well, other less so. In general people stated they have seen an improvement in the ways staff treat them. They are more understanding with regard to people with disabilities and the way in which they speak to them and what they say to them has become more appropriate.

Comment was made that “they are civil and very nice to your face – the issue is that nothing gets done”.

There are still issues that people with disabilities have to face. People who are wheel chair users tend to find that they are not spoken to it is the person who is pushing them (able bodied person). For people in self propelled wheel chairs they tend not to have this problem. Wheelchair users in general feel that the issue is that if you are in a wheel chair, people think you are daft. They see the wheelchair not the person

People with mobility problems who may move more slowly thought that staff can sometimes treat them as if they are a bit slow in the head. People commented that if you walk with a stick you need to balance the stick and then lean against the counter to sign something. This can mean that people are a bit slower and staff can take the attitude that because of this people are not too bright.

For blind people they feel they are invisible when they have a carer/friend with them. The carer/friend is always spoken to. For instance the carer is asked if they will sign for things rather than the blind person signing. The blind person then has to state that they can do it themselves. They feel they have to force the issue sometimes making them look like the pushy disabled person

Most people in the group stated that they have to push for them to do things. Then they become the pushy, trouble making disabled person. “You have to always put your point across and remind staff that you can do things”.

In many cases it doesn't look as if staff have been trained to be aware of the issues facing disabled people.

In general most people feel that the staff in the different services are very nice and very helpful. One person from the learning disability group said that she felt that they talk down to you at the housing office.

Members of the group in general felt that they are treated well by staff. They do not feel they are treated more poorly. In their view it is probably not the case that staff are being awkward or deliberately obstructive. More often than not it is the lack of training and experience of the needs of people with disabilities.

There is a need for senior officials, directors and councillors and not only front line staff to attend disability awareness training. The senior people are at the end of the day those that can make important decisions. It could be useful if disability/equality awareness training was compulsory for all staff.

It would also be useful if the staff that people come into contact with were able to understand the wide variety of issues that are faced by disabled people and to put disabled people into contact with other departments who may be able to provide other assistance.

Comment on other services was limited however, one person with learning disabilities stated that she has been broken into several times. She reported this to the Police but was of the opinion that she was made to feel that it was her fault.

Most people in the groups do not believe that the Council deliberately discriminates against people with disabilities, however, they feel that the Council does not make life easy for them. They think much of it is to do with ignorance

2.7 Communication and consultation

All of the groups said that they do not think that communication to people with disabilities is very good at all. There is a lack of information regarding the help and support that people with disabilities can get. It can be very much about word of mouth. People who are not involved in groups seem to get very little information.

Members of the groups said that information in Braille and large print seems to be available if people want it. However it does not seem to be freely and obviously available. The view of the group was that information like this should be on all leaflet stands and at a suitable height for people with disabilities.

They don't think that services such as social work, care services and the NHS communicate with each other. People stated they have to explain the situation each time rather than getting services from different departments or organisations in a joined up way.

Most of the people in the groups thought that disabled people are rarely consulted with regard to service developments for them. All of the groups believed that it would be beneficial to take disabled people along to comment on proposed changes or developments. They don't think that disabled people are involved because some of the changes to services don't look as if they have been thought through properly. They think there should be more focus groups like this. Particularly for people who are not part of groups or organisations and who do not ordinarily get a chance to put forward their opinions..

The group were of the view that society's views regarding people with disabilities must be altered. We need to understand what each other's needs are. The Council needs to promote disability awareness to the wider community. It can be that members of the public look down on people with disabilities as if they are stupid.

There is a lack of understanding regarding disabilities. Disabled people stated that "We need to tell members of the public more about issues people face who have learning or physical disabilities.

They don't really feel they get bullied or harassed in the street by members of the public. However, they can feel a bit intimidated by groups of young people hanging about the streets or on public transport. People with disabilities do not feel they are picked on – it is more about ignorance and fear of disability.

The groups stated that “They would love for people to experience their disability and see what it is like for 24 hours”. Members of the focus groups believe that there should be more information and advertising campaigns.

2.8 Employment and training opportunities

There are a variety of different employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities. For the group of people with learning disabilities they had work placements undertaking printing at Ashgrove publishing, another worked in a British Heart Foundation shop in Irvine and another worked as a gardening labourer in Ayrshire Central Hospital.

Members of the other groups had gone to college such as the new college in Kilwinning, James Watt College (annex) in Stevenston and at Auchenhavie School.

As with all services the groups mentioned that there can be problems with getting transport to colleges if they have to rely on using public transport. To get around this many people stated that it would be good to have courses in local facilities such as in local libraries and community centres.

They think they do get enough opportunities to do courses at college for instance.

One of the issues with college is that at the end of it, many people with physical or learning disabilities are not going to get a job. It would be nice if they had a job or support to get a job at the end of their course.

People were of the view that the Council, health board and other public sector organisations should be leading by example with regard to employing people with disabilities. This would show that people with disabilities can do different jobs and it would break down the barriers to employment for this group of people.

2.10 Future development

- 11 Physical access to buildings without having to ask someone else to help you.
- 12 Accessible public Transport for people with disabilities.
- 13 Roads and pavements in a good state of repair to enable people using wheelchairs or other aids to assist in walking to travel safely.
- 14 Remove overhanging bushes and trees and street clutter.
- 15 More disabled parking facilities and enforcement against inappropriate use of these spaces.
- 16 Buses that have drop floors being able to travel through residential streets free from obstructions like parked cars.
- 17 Accessible information on what services are available. The information needs to be in plain English and different formats such as on the internet, Braille, large format print, tape etc.
- 18 Creating a variety of means by which services can be accessed for different people and in different situations.
- 19 More consultation and engagement with disabled people. Get them in there from the start.
- 20 Joined up services where services work together for example social work, working with housing, working with leisure etc.
- 21 Suitable and adequate housing for people with disabilities. Accessible housing of different sizes to accommodate disabled people with families as well as disabled people in smaller households.
- 22 Changing public attitudes to people with disability both with members of the public and within different organisations.
- 23 Employment opportunities, the public bodies should be taking the lead.
- 24 Encouraging the private sector to make their premises more accessible such as shops, restaurants, hotels, pubs etc.
- 25 Development of a self advocacy group to assist people with learning disabilities. It would help to get the views of disabled people across to services and encourage people to take notice.
- 26 More opportunities for people with learning disabilities to meet up with people and socialise.
- 27 Reinstate the garden tidy scheme for people with disabilities.