CHANGE IN STORE

THE EXPERIENCE OF
YOUNG DISABLED PEOPLE AS CONSUMERS
IN SCOTLAND

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SCOTTISH CONSUMER COUNCIL  In association with  BT
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The SCC is grateful to Market Research Scotland which distributed questionnaires to a sample of non-disabled young people at no cost.

The SCC would like to acknowledge the help of BT in transcribing the recordings of the focus group discussions.

The research project has benefited greatly from the advice of an advisory group containing representatives of organisations of and for disabled people, and the SCC would like to thank them all for giving their time and expert knowledge to the project. Members of the group are listed in Appendix 2. The conclusions and recommendations made in this report are those of the Scottish Consumer Council, and members of the advisory group should not necessarily be assumed to agree with them.

The project benefited from information sent in by many volunteers who are members of the SCC’s Consumer Network. They reported the problems faced by disabled people in their local high streets, and this information was drawn on in preparing the discussion guide used in the focus groups.
PREFACE

The publication of this report, the result of a collaboration between the Scottish Consumer Council and BT, coincides with the celebration of the 21st birthday of the Scottish Consumer Council. In its 21 years the SCC has vigorously represented the interests of the consumer in Scotland. While it may be tempting on reaching such a landmark to pause and look back over the last 21 years, this report reminds us that there are always new challenges and new problems to be addressed.

The report brings two strands together: for the first time the SCC looks at the experience of disabled people as consumers, while at the same time, the introduction and implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 from the end of 1996 represents a significant legislative development giving disabled people the right to the same goods and services as are available to non-disabled people.

While all disabled people stand to benefit from the Act, it is particularly appropriate for this report to focus on the experience of young people. These young people have all grown up in the so-called ‘consumer society’ with all the expectations which that entails. They represent a new generation on the brink or just over the threshold of adulthood. For them the Disability Discrimination Act will be a useful tool throughout their adult lives.

We hope that this report will raise awareness of the range of barriers currently experienced by young disabled people and the kind of solutions which may be required. Many service providers know that they need guidance about the Act. Many more probably have only a vague idea of what the Act will require. The report makes practical recommendations to service providers about what they must do to remove the barriers which the report discusses.

The report indicates that this is an articulate group of people, eager to lead independent lives and unwilling to accept anything which stands between them and their full participation as active consumers in society. Their views on the restrictions they face and their ideas for the way things could be improved should be invaluable to service providers.

Both BT and the SCC share a desire to promote awareness of the needs of disabled people as consumers and to raise awareness of the Act, and believe that this collaboration has been a fruitful way of pursuing these goals.

Deirdre Hutton
CHAIRMAN
Scottish Consumer Council
BT is pleased to be associated with this important and timely research.

The young disabled consumers surveyed in this report want what we all want—equality of choice, access and service. The reality is that, all too often, they are excluded. There can be no doubt that the Disability Discrimination Act is the first important step towards correcting this. But how much more could be done if service providers recognised that compliance with the Act is best achieved through committing themselves to understanding and meeting disabled people's needs—and whenever possible, exceeding them.

BT's long history of involvement with disabled people has been guided by just such a commitment. This has resulted in us being regarded as a leader in the field—something of which I am immensely proud.

The message of this report is clear. And, if they wish to gain a share of the massive £30 billion spent each year by disabled people and their families, I believe that service providers simply cannot afford to ignore it.

I congratulate the Scottish Consumer Council, not only on this research but also on 21 years of active representation of consumer rights in Scotland. I look forward to continuing our partnership well into the next millennium.

Sir Iain Vallance
CHAIRMAN
BT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is based on discussions with young disabled people between the ages of 15 and 25, covering broadly their experiences as consumers. Separate discussions were held with people with different types of impairment. The areas covered in the research are:

- high street goods and services;
- financial services;
- leisure and recreation;
- communication services.

The report shows that young disabled people lead more restricted lives than their non-disabled counterparts. They tend to go out to the shops or to leisure activities less often, they have less money to spend, and are less likely to have a bank account or access to their own money. They will probably have started buying their own clothes and going out with friends later than non-disabled young people, and a number of them have done few things on their own without assistance from family or friends. Nonetheless, many of the young people who took part in the research were extremely articulate, eager to lead independent lives and unwilling to accept the barriers which exist to their full participation as active consumers in society.

The report uncovers a range of barriers which the young people experienced in their day to day activities as consumers, as well as some examples of good practice. Where such examples existed, the young people were extremely appreciative and likely to continue to patronise that provider. Barriers could be physical, caused by the attitudes of other people, or result from policies or practices, or the lack of them, which made it more difficult for the young people to gain access to the service.

Those with a **physical disability** largely required changes to be made to the physical layout and structure of buildings. They also experienced problems with public transport, and were to a large extent dependent on their families and friends for help.

Those with a **visual impairment** also needed improvements to the physical layout but fewer structural changes and more changes in the way that goods were presented, for example, improved labelling, clearer signs and more audible messages. They wanted more consistency in a variety of situations: in the layout of shops, and in the design of autotellers and public phones.

Those with **hearing difficulties** had virtually no problems with the layout of buildings and most of their difficulties lay in the area of communication. Where information was visible, they had fewer difficulties, but when they needed to speak to staff in shops, banks or leisure settings they found a very low level of awareness of their needs. Background noise was a problem for them in a variety of settings. The telephone, used so much in today's society, highlighted their difficulties and was given much attention. The technology which is available can go far in alleviating these difficulties if more widely used. They were unhappy about the additional costs which they incurred in their phone bills, and also in insurance costs.
People with learning difficulties had perhaps the least well-defined impairment of all those researched and abilities varied enormously even within the small sample of this study. The corresponding difficulty of recognising this particular type of disability makes it more problematic for providers of goods and services to tailor their services for this group. Overall, this group identified fewer barriers but it must be recognised that the nature of their disability made this inevitable. What those with learning difficulties wanted was largely time, patience and a greater level of understanding, something which all the young people identified to a greater or lesser extent.

Certain common themes emerged to which all the groups subscribed. These were a desire for equal treatment with non-disabled people and services which are inclusive; the importance of consultation by providers of goods and services with their disabled customers; clear and accurate information about goods or services available in the formats which they preferred; the need to address the communication needs of people with a hearing impairment or learning difficulty; and a desire for consistency in the design of autotellers and public phones, and in shop layouts.

An underlying and fundamental issue was the need for more and better disability awareness training for the staff of all the different kinds of providers of goods and services discussed in the research. Most of the young people felt that it was important that disabled people themselves do this and many of them expressed a willingness to take time to make themselves available to non-disabled people to raise awareness of their needs.

The older groups in the study were all generally more confident and independent than the younger groups and had more strategies for getting around the difficulties faced as a result of their disabilities. A large number of the young people expressed reluctance about returning goods to a shop or complaining, and this was most often attributed to embarrassment. Experience appeared to be a prominent positive factor in establishing confidence.
PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Reasons for doing the research

Being an active and effective consumer of goods and services is an integral part of participating in the economic and social life of the community. It is a necessary part of leading an independent life, and shopping has become one of the most popular leisure activities in late 20th century Britain.

The ability of disabled people to act as consumers in the same way as non-disabled people is recognised as being an important element in the empowerment of disabled people. The policy goals of organisations of disabled people have been described as including:

"to achieve a degree of personal autonomy comparable to that of their non-disabled peers; and to expand their role as consumers."

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 gives disabled people a right to be treated equally in relation to access to goods, services and other facilities. Under the Act, providers of goods and services will have a duty from December 1996 not to discriminate against disabled people by refusing to serve them, by offering the service on different terms, or by offering a different standard of service. At a later date they will be required to take steps to change practices, policies or procedures which have the effect of making it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of a service, and to remove or alter physical features, or to provide alternative means of avoiding features which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of such a service.

However, although some work has been done on specific aspects of their experience, such as physical access, no research has looked broadly at the experience of disabled people as consumers. For this reason, the SCC decided to explore as widely as possible the experiences of young disabled people in Scotland as consumers. The research focused on high street goods and services, financial services, leisure and recreation, and communication services. The aims were:

- to identify what the young people themselves felt were the main barriers to their functioning as active and equal consumers;
- to explore their ideas about how such barriers could be removed or reduced.

1.2 Background

The last 20 years have seen the emergence of a change in the perception of disability. Formerly perceived as being an individualised medical problem, disability is increasingly accepted to be a result of the barriers which the disabled person experiences in gaining access to goods, services, rights and other entitlements. These barriers may be physical, they may be the result of other
people's attitudes, or they may be caused by social or economic factors. This social model of disability has become increasingly widely accepted, due in no small part to the lobbying of disabled people themselves. Following the social model, disabled people argue that they should not be treated as a separate group within society requiring separate services, but as equal members of society entitled to enjoy the same levels of service as non-disabled people.

The Warnock Report in 1978 recommended that wherever possible children with special needs should be included in mainstream education provision, and that the statutory categories of handicap be replaced by the concept of 'special educational needs'. In social work and health, it has become increasingly unacceptable to institutionalise disabled people in hospitals and other institutions. Care in the community has reinforced this move away from institutional care, with the goal being to integrate disabled people as equal members of their local community.

This move from institutional care settings has been accompanied by the growth of the independent living movement, whose impetus came from disabled people demanding their right to the support and assistance needed to make this transition. The concept of independent living involves disabled people being able to control their own lives and develop to their maximum potential, with whatever assistance they require. It also enshrines a demand that disabled people are entitled to function independently within society. Independent living encompasses a range of needs which must be provided as an integrated whole, from housing, transport and personal assistance to information, counselling and technical assistance.

The demand for equal rights for disabled people and for anti-discriminatory legislation led to a series of private members' bills being presented to parliament during the 1980s, and a gradual growth of support within parliament for such legislation. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the first part of which will come into force on 1 December 1996, is the government's answer to this demand. Although not going as far as disability organisations would have liked, the Act is significant in imposing new duties on providers of goods and services, and in giving disabled people certain rights which can be enforced in the courts. The Act represents the beginning of a new era for disabled people.

1.3 Disabled people as consumers

The nature of many of the barriers which disabled people face, as consumers, may seem self-evident and simply an aspect of the general position of disabled people in our society. Disabled people are less likely to be in paid employment than non-disabled people: a recent review of the winter 1994/5 Labour Force Survey showed that there is an employment rate of 32% amongst disabled people compared with 76% for non-disabled, while 21.6% of disabled people were unemployed compared with 9% of non-disabled people. Disabled people are likely to earn less and to be dependent on support from either services provided by statutory authorities or their family. As consumers, they are likely to have less money to spend, less access to those goods and services which they seek, and often a less active voice in seeking to ensure that the goods and services on offer are those which they really want. A follow-up survey of disabled adults in the Family Expenditure Survey suggests that, at similar income levels, disabled people are more
constrained and experience a lower standard of living than their able-bodied counterparts. Many writers have discussed the creation of a syndrome of dependency which affects disabled people in this country.

**Disabled People in Britain: a world apart,** a major four-part report published by Scope, formerly the Spastics Society, in 1994, looked at the position of disabled people and underlined the restrictions which are placed on the normal day to day activities which non-disabled people take for granted. It found that 50% of respondents did not have as active a social life as they would like, and over three-quarters of respondents often feel excluded from enjoying things other people take for granted.

A recent report by Scope, *In Good Company*, has investigated how far businesses in the UK are making provision for disabled people and what their future plans are for improving services for disabled people. It highlights examples of good practice amongst 16 leading companies and makes recommendations about how businesses can develop strategies for the supply of goods and services to disabled people. The research found that there are examples of leading companies which have recognised the importance of addressing the needs of disabled people, and which have gone a considerable way to ensuring that they will comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. On the other hand, there are many companies which have not even begun to think about this area, and the report uncovered considerable apathy on the part of the small business sector.

1.4 **An untapped market**

There is an increasing realisation of the importance of disabled people as an untapped market. In the UK, it is estimated that one in four households has at least one member with a disability. In Scotland it was estimated that in 1985 there were 611,000 disabled adults and 33,000 disabled children.* The actual number depends on how widely the definition of disability is drawn.

In relation to tourism, a recent report by Touche Ross (now called Deloitte Touche) indicated the size of the potential market represented by disabled people in Europe. It estimated that if disabled people’s needs were catered for, the current market of 5 million disabled tourists would expand to 19 million, and the £6.500 million currently spent by disabled people could increase to £23,400 million.*

In a report on telecommunications for people with disabilities published by the European Commission, it is stated that:

“Programmes which address the needs of people with disabilities can open up new market opportunities and be profit generators rather than economic burdens. Also these more enlightened companies are reaping a marketing benefit ... from being seen to be balancing human need against the commercial imperative.”11

Some of the companies which took part in Scope’s research for *In Good Company* reflect this. A spokesperson for Sainsbury’s is quoted as saying:
"We moved from viewing disabled customers in a solely paternalistic or altruistic way to a realisation that it makes good business sense to cater for people who have disabilities. Disabled people, their families and friends control a significant amount of the country's income. These customers have a choice, you must serve the customer or die." 12

Companies have also found that modifications introduced to meet the needs of disabled people have the added benefit of attracting other consumers who may benefit, for instance, adults with babies and small children, and elderly people, as well as other socially-aware consumers prepared to support a company which demonstrates a concern for the needs of disabled people.

1.5 Young people

While many of the experiences of older disabled people in Scotland will be the same as those of young people, this research has focused on the experience of young people.

The main reason for focusing on younger people is that they have grown up in the changing environment discussed in section 1.2. Their education should have led them to expect to be able to participate in society on equal terms with non-disabled people. They have also grown up in the 'consumer society' and can be expected to have the same expectations as control group.

For young disabled people the transition through adolescence to adulthood is more problematic than it is for non-disabled young people. Research has examined the problems involved in this transition, into the support available, and the extent to which non-disabled young people make this transition successfully. For example, research has looked at the transition from school to employment;15 the general experience of adolescence and disability;14 and the health and social needs of disabled group.15

This research has shown a significant degree of social isolation amongst young disabled people both during their school years and after, as well as a lack of 'education for living' courses in schools and colleges.16 Follow-up research indicated that, compared with the general population, young disabled people were less likely to have worked in paid employment, to have established independent households or to be married and have families of their own.17

One aspect of the transition to the independent status of adulthood is the ability to function as an effective consumer of goods and services. No work has been done explicitly on the barriers faced by young disabled people as consumers. It is particularly interesting to explore the barriers which young disabled people encounter and to look at the experience of young disabled people at this time, with the Disability Discrimination Act coming into force in December 1996. The report shows the very wide range of barriers which exists, and suggests some ways in which service providers can think about minimising them.
The research concentrated on young people between the ages of 15 and 25 and the central part of the research was discussions with young people in focus groups. This work was undertaken by Carole Millar of Carole Millar Research, Edinburgh. In addition to the focus groups, a questionnaire was sent to all the participants, and to a matched sample of non-disabled young people.

Prior to starting the research, an advisory group was established to advise on all aspects of the research. This group contained representatives from organisations of and for disabled people, covering the range of types of impairment considered in the research. Before doing any fieldwork, a topic guide was prepared, giving structure to the discussions in the focus groups, but allowing for other topics to be raised and explored. This topic guide was discussed by the advisory group which suggested areas of discussion and amendments. The advisory group also commented on the questionnaire. Members of the advisory group are listed in Appendix 2.

The study contained four main elements.

1. **Pilot groups**

Five pilot groups were held to ensure that the topic guide was appropriate and covered the areas of greatest concern to the participants. One of the pilots involving people with learning difficulties clearly indicated that not all people with learning difficulties could contribute fully to focus groups, either because their ability to communicate was limited, or because they had insufficient experience as consumers. The questionnaire was also piloted by the members of these groups.

2. **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire had two purposes: to obtain some factual information about the patterns of consumer behaviour of the participants which would be used to draw some comparisons with a matched sample of non-disabled young people; and to prepare the young people for the discussion group itself. The first part of the questionnaire asked for background information about age, income, education or employment status, and type of impairment. It asked about the frequency of the respondent’s consumer activity, and the age at which the respondent first did various things, like going shopping, on their own. The second part asked the respondent to think about the kind of problems which people with different types of impairment might have in a variety of situations, such as going to a football match, or using a public phone. It was sent by post to all those taking part in the focus groups, before they were held. Sixty questionnaires were returned by people who went on to participate in the focus group discussions.

**Control group**

The sixty people who completed a questionnaire were matched by geographical location, age and sex, with 60 non-disabled young people, and 59 of these returned a questionnaire. This group acted as a control group. Market Research Scotland undertook to identify these people and
returned their questionnaires to the SCC. The analysis of the comparisons between the responses of the control group and the disabled respondents is contained in the following chapter.

3. **Focus groups**

The groups were divided up according to age and type of impairment.

**Age**

Two age groupings (15-18 and 19-25), referred to in the report as the younger and older groups, were chosen in order to speak separately to those who were still in school and those who had moved on to either further or higher education, training, or employment. The age of 25 was chosen as the upper limit because that is an age by which most non-disabled people would be expected to have achieved an independent adult lifestyle. It became apparent that many colleges and training organisations, particularly in the field of learning difficulties, considered that 25 was too young an age with that particular group, and as a result some of the groups contained people over the age of 25. In practice there was some overlap between the two age groups.

We were keen to be able to compare the expectations and experiences of the younger and older age groups, and some clear differences did emerge.

A total of 63 young people took part in the focus groups and a further 17 in the pilots. The analysis of the focus groups takes into account the material obtained at the pilot groups. Of the total of 80 young people, 46 were male and 34 were female. The ages of those participating was evenly spread over the ages of 15-25.

**Type of impairment**

Four categories were used: those with a physical disability; those with learning difficulties; those who were blind or with a visual impairment; and those who were deaf or hard of hearing. As far as possible, we wanted to keep the types of impairment distinct so as to be able to identify the particular problems and possible solutions for each type of impairment. In practice, many disabled people have more than one type of impairment, and we had people in some of the groups in this position.

Our intention was to reflect the whole range of impairment. In practice, we had to limit participants to those who could contribute fully to a focus group and those who were able to operate independently to some extent as shoppers and consumers of goods and services. This obviously excluded people with the most severe disabilities, particularly those with a severe learning difficulty, but the groups did include people with quite severe disabilities.

In relation to sensory impairment, our groups were probably over-representative of deaf and blind young people. Although deaf people were statistically over-represented in the research they experience a considerable degree of isolation, and there is very limited awareness of their needs.

Similarly, the number of Braille users in the visually impaired groups was quite high. However, their specialised needs should not be discounted simply because of their small numbers. The
Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) considers that Braille readers are often the most influential and active members of the blind community, and well placed to articulate the needs of visually impaired people.

People with learning difficulties have an intellectual disability either as a result of a medical condition or an accident or injury to the brain, which makes it harder for them to learn to do things like handling money, using public transport or making themselves understood. The severity of this type of disability varies considerably, and the people who took part in the focus groups could be described as having mild or moderate learning difficulties. We made a decision that rather than ask people with learning difficulties to come from a variety of educational, training and other settings to a central point for a focus group, we would visit smaller numbers of participants in the setting with which they were familiar. This meant that we held two discussion groups for each of the age groups.

Ten groups were held, the details of which are given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type of impairment</th>
<th>Age group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glenrothes</td>
<td>physical</td>
<td>15-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>physical</td>
<td>19-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Blind School, Edinburgh</td>
<td>visual</td>
<td>15-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>visual</td>
<td>19-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td>hearing</td>
<td>15-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow Centre for the Deaf</td>
<td>hearing</td>
<td>19-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevenson College, Edinburgh</td>
<td>learning difficulties</td>
<td>15-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsinch School, Edinburgh</td>
<td>learning difficulties</td>
<td>15-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantrey Bridge Rural Skills College, Croy</td>
<td>learning difficulties</td>
<td>19-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverness</td>
<td>learning difficulties</td>
<td>19-25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: where an institution or organisation is listed, all the participants came from there. Where only the place is listed, participants came from a variety of organisations.

**Geographical spread**

It was the original intention to cover, as far as possible, the circumstances of young disabled people throughout Scotland, in both urban and rural settings. It proved difficult to find enough participants in some parts of Scotland. For example, after trying to find a group of young people with a visual impairment in both Tayside and Borders it became apparent that there were not sufficient numbers for a discussion group, and that the most easily identifiable source of youngsters in this category would be the Royal Blind School in Edinburgh. In fact, the young
people we met at the school came from all over Scotland, from Kirkwall to Coatbridge, and in
discussion they often compared their experiences in their home town with those in Edinburgh. The
same considerations applied to the younger group with a hearing impairment, so again we went to
a specialist school, the Aberdeen School for the Deaf, although here we were able to include pupils
from mainstream schools whose impairment was not so profound, as well as from Aberdeen
College.

Most of the groups were held in larger towns and cities, but in all cases there were participants
from smaller towns and villages.

Subject matter

Each discussion covered consumers’ experiences in four main areas:

- high street goods and services;
- financial services;
- leisure and recreation; and
- communication services.

4. Consumer diary

At the conclusion of each focus group, all participants were asked if they would be willing to keep
a diary outlining a few of their experiences as consumers over the following two or three weeks.
A follow-up group discussion took place at the end of that period, and their experiences were
discussed. Not all the participants returned with completed diaries but the exercise was a useful
one, prompting young people to take a more active interest in the attitudes and practices of the
providers of goods and services.
PART TWO  QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS

CHAPTER 3  COMPARISONS BETWEEN DISABLED AND NON-DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE

The questionnaire was completed by 119 young people, 60 of whom were disabled. The small numbers, and the fact that they were not selected so as to be representative, means that the findings cannot claim any statistical validity. However, the answers to the questionnaire do indicate considerable differences between the circumstances and experiences of the two groups, which are referred to as the disabled group and the control group throughout. The disabled group were more likely to be living at home, less likely to be employed, and were leading more restricted lives than the control group.

3.1  Home

The disabled people were more likely than the control group to be living at home with their parents (83.3% compared with 70.7%) and less likely to be living with a spouse or partner (none compared with 20.7%). These figures are more pronounced if the younger age group up to 19 is excluded. In the older age group 69.7% of the disabled group were living at home with their parents and none were living with a partner or spouse. For the control group the equivalent figures were 53.1% and 37.5%.

3.2  Employment

More of the control group were employed, and they tended to have higher incomes. While 69.5% of the control group were in full or part-time employment, only 15% of the disabled groups were. If only those aged 19 or over are taken into account, 72.7% of the control group and 12.1% of the disabled group were in full or part-time employment. The unemployment rate amongst the respondents was 3.4% for the control group and 13.3% for the disabled group. More of the disabled group were in full-time education (56.7% compared with 25.4%) and in the over-19 age group the difference was more pronounced, with 33.3% of the disabled group to 9.1% of the control group.

3.3  Income

These differences are followed through in the weekly income of the two groups. As can be seen from the chart below, 88.9% of the disabled group had a weekly income of £75 or less, compared with 56.6% of the control group. Considerably more of the control group were earning higher amounts of income (£100 or over).
3.4 Financial position

Respondents were asked whether they had a bank account, immediate access to their money, a cheque book and a cash card. Twice as many of the disabled group did not have a bank account (17.2% compared with 8.6%) and more than a quarter did not have immediate access to their money (27.8%) compared with 11.1% of the control group. A majority of both groups did not have a cheque book, although considerably more of the control group did have one (42.6% compared with 25.9%). There was a greater difference with cash cards, with 85.7% of the control group having one compared with 40.7% of the disabled group.

3.5 Frequency of consumer activity

Respondents were asked how recently they had done certain things, either or their own, or accompanied by someone else. These can be grouped broadly into shopping in the high street, leisure activities, and communications. They were asked whether they had done these things in the last month, the last six months, the last year, over a year ago, or never.

Shopping in the high street

Everyone in the control group had been shopping to buy clothes, CDs, shoes, etc, in the previous six months, with 89.8% having been within the last month. In contrast, only 61% of the disabled group had been shopping within the last month, and five respondents said they had never done this.

When did you last go into town to shop?

[Graph showing frequency of shopping by income and disability status]
Similarly, almost half of the disabled group had never gone shopping for a major purchase such as a TV or CD player, compared with 13.6% of the control group. Three times as many of the control group had made such a purchase within the last month (16.9% compared with 5.3%).

Leisure and recreation

A large majority of the control group (81.4%) had been to a pub within the last month, compared with 55.2% of the disabled group, and considerably more of the disabled group (17.2%) had never been to a pub compared with the control group (5.1%). The figures for going to a self-service restaurant show less variation, with the main difference being in the numbers who had never been (11.9% of the disabled group compared with 1.7% of the control group).

More than two-fifths (41.4%) of the disabled group had never been to a sporting event, compared with less than one-fifth (18.6%) of the control group, but otherwise the figures were similar, although a slightly higher percentage of the disabled group had been to a sporting event within the last month (27.6% compared with 23.7%).

When did you last go to a sporting event?

![Bar chart showing percentage of disabled and non-disabled individuals who went to a sporting event in different time periods: last month, 6 months, year, over year, never.]

There is a greater contrast in how recently the respondents had been to a nightclub, with 62.7% of the control group having been within the last month, compared with 12.1% of the disabled group. More than half the disabled group (55.2%) had never been to a nightclub, compared with 10.2% of the control group.

Figures for going to the cinema were broadly similar between the two groups, although again there were more disabled people who had never been (6.9% compared with 1.7%).

The disabled group took part in sport almost as much as their non-disabled counterparts, although again considerably more disabled people had never taken part in sport (13.8% compared with 1.7%).

Communications

Both disabled and non-disabled young people had used a public pay phone within the last year, but 8.8% of the disabled group had never used a public phone and 5.3% had used one over a year ago.
3.6 Age at which respondents became independent consumers

Respondents were asked what age they were when they first did various things on their own: what age they were when they got their own cheque book or cash card; went into town on their own and chose their own clothes and shoes; went to the pub, to a cinema, concert or nightclub with friends. While this is used as an indicator of their achieving independence, it must be borne in mind that it is not essential to the concept of independent living that disabled people should be able to do these things on their own. A certain amount of assistance, as appropriate to each individual, may be a precondition of independence.

Bank account

The figures in the previous section show that while a large majority of the disabled group had a bank account (82.8%), considerably fewer had either a cheque book (25.9%) or cash card (40.7%) associated with that account. The question in this part of the questionnaire asked at what age the respondent got a cheque book or cash card. Half of the disabled group said they had one by the age of 18, compared with 76.2% of the control group. Similarly, the percentages for those who got a card or cheque book at a younger age were at least 50% higher in the control group than in the disabled group.

Going into town on their own

More than twice as many of the control group had been into town on their own at the age of 14 or under (67.8% compared with 31%), and 15.5% of the disabled group said they had never been into town on their own.

Age at which you first went into town?

Choosing own clothes and shoes

Almost three-quarters of the control group had first done this by the age of 14 (74.9%), compared with 24.4% of the disabled group. By the age of 16 all of the control group had done this, compared with 61% of the disabled group, and 13.6% of the disabled group said that they had never done this. Looking at the different types of impairment within the disabled group, those with a hearing impairment were closest to the control group, while the other three groups had a considerable percentage who had never done this on their own.
Leisure and recreation

Almost all (94.9%) of the control group had been to a pub by the age of 18, compared with 67.3% of the disabled group. More than a quarter of the disabled group had never been to a pub (27.6%) and once again those with a hearing impairment were closest to the control group, with 91% going for the first time between the ages of 15 and 18.

A majority of the disabled group had never been to a nightclub (57.1%), compared with only 10.2% of the control group. Of those who had gone, 84.8% of the control group had been by the age of 18, compared with only 26.8% of the disabled group.

More than three-quarters of the control group had been to the cinema for the first time when they were 14 or younger, compared with 35.1% of the disabled group. More than a tenth of the latter group (15.8%) had never been. Of those who had never been, the majority (77.8%) were young people with learning difficulties.

Non-disabled people were more likely to have gone to a concert with friends at a younger age than disabled people, with 71.2% having done this by the age of 16, compared with 27.6% of the disabled people. More than half (53.4%) of the disabled group had never done this, compared with 13.6% of the control group.

3.7 Perceptions of the problems caused by disability

The second part of the questionnaire asked respondents to say what they thought the main problems would be for people with different types of impairment in doing various things: buying clothes in high street shops; going to a football match; using a public telephone; and getting money out of the bank. It is important to emphasise that this part of the questionnaire was primarily designed to prepare the participants for the focus groups and it is not possible to give too great a weight to the findings which can be drawn from the comparison of the degree of awareness of the different groups.

It appears from responses to the questionnaire that the control group had a greater degree of awareness of the problems faced by physically disabled and visually impaired people than of those faced by people with other types of impairment. A significant number in the control group could not see what problems people with learning difficulties or with a hearing impairment would have. This probably indicates a greater degree of public awareness of the problems experienced by physically disabled people and people with visual impairments than of those who are deaf or hard of hearing and those with a learning difficulty.

Another point which emerges from the responses is that people with a particular type of impairment have a considerably more sophisticated understanding of their own needs than do people with another kind of impairment. For example, respondents who were not visually impaired considered that the problems for this group related mainly to not being able to see things: the clothes in the shop, the football match, the autoteller at the bank, or the numbers on the phone. Visually impaired people themselves tended to go beyond these obvious facts, and mention problems like finding their way around a shop or a football ground, or finding a phone box or cash machine and being able to discover what type it is and whether or not it is working.
Similarly, while the other groups tended to emphasise the fact that deaf or hard of hearing people could not hear someone on the phone, the bank staff or the staff in shops, deaf people themselves had more specific things to say, particularly about the use of public pay phones. They mentioned the problems of carrying the necessary technology to use a public phone, the fact that there is no shelf in a public phone on which to put a textphone, and problems with using a charge card caused by not being able to hear verbal instructions.

By way of contrast, respondents with learning difficulties were less aware of some of the problems which could arise as a result of their disability.

3.8 Conclusion

The responses to the questionnaire do indicate clear differences between the experiences of disabled people and their non-disabled counterparts, in terms of both the frequency with which they shop and go out for leisure activities, and the age at which they did these things for the first time.

The responses to the second part of the questionnaire indicate that the barriers confronted by physically and visually impaired people are likely to be more easily recognised by other people than those experienced by people with a hearing impairment or a learning difficulty. To discover the full extent of the problems caused by a particular type of impairment, it is essential to talk to someone with that impairment. This emphasises the importance of consultation with disabled people encompassing people with all kinds of impairment. A ‘token’ disabled person cannot be assumed to appreciate the range of problems experienced by all disabled people.
PART THREE  FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

CHAPTER 4  ACCESS

This chapter outlines the problems associated both with getting in to town centres, and with getting around within shops, banks and leisure facilities. These fundamental issues considerably affect the extent to which young disabled people can gain access to the goods and services provided in all the sectors dealt with in later parts of the report.

Summary

Transport

• All the groups experienced difficulties in using public transport. They would prefer not to have to give advance notice of requiring assistance.

• Physically disabled people would like to see more wheelchair access and better handrails.

• The visually impaired groups found it difficult to identify buses, and to know when they had reached their stop.

• The hearing impaired groups would like transport providers to have pen and paper available, and better means of contacting emergency services on the motorway.

• Disabled parking places should be policed to prevent abuse.

Streets

• Obstacles in the street were a problem for both physically and visually impaired groups.

• Visually impaired people found road crossings inconsistent.

Stairs, escalators and lifts

• Steps and stairs caused problems for both the physically and visually impaired groups.

• Stair edges should be clearly marked and banisters easy to use.

• Stairs should be clearly signposted for those unable to use lifts or escalators.

• Lifts should be level with the floor. Talking lifts were best for visually impaired people, but Braille labelling or raised numbers would help.

• Escalators should be labelled to help prevent visually impaired people going up or down the wrong way, and to help them know when to get off.

4.1 Transport

All the groups had some difficulties with public transport. Those with a physical impairment and no transport of their own had the greatest problems because of their effective exclusion from the public transport network. Many suggestions were made about improvements which would help disabled people make better use of existing transport systems.
Physical impairment

In the physically disabled groups, some of the younger group could get around fairly easily for short distances but experienced more problems if transport was required. Many were dependent on their parents for lifts since there was a lack of adapted transport, for example, there was only one bus in Fife with low-level entry. As a result, this group appeared to be virtually excluded from using public transport.

The older group had similar difficulties and were dependent on transport being arranged which clearly restricted the frequency and range of places that they visit.

"I go out once a week to a club in Perth where I see all my friends. It's a bit of a problem because I can be lifted into a normal car but it's a bit of a pain having to come out of my wheelchair. It would be good if there were taxis that you could just go into in your wheelchair. There is a group called Access Cars but you have to book them a week in advance."

Some of the older group could use buses with assistance from others in getting on and off. These were people who might sometimes use a wheelchair but could get around with the use of sticks.

"Buses in Kinross are hopeless for me because my dad or mum has to be behind me to help me up the big high steps. I find it so difficult and the handle bars, they are always short—they could be a wee bit longer."

They felt that buses should be able to accommodate wheelchairs.

"I think that public transport buses should have facilities for wheelchairs as well with this discrimination thing [Disability Discrimination Act]. Why do they cater for able-bodied people and not for the disabled. That is something I would like to see happening."

Some of the people in the physically disabled pilot group remarked about the abuse of parking places for disabled people.

"Parking is a pain and that is the reason I don't go often. Even if there is disabled parking, nine times out of ten there will be people parked there without the orange badge, so you can't find a space. Sometimes, despite the extra space given for disabled drivers, others can park right up alongside so it is difficult to get in and out."

Visual impairment

The problems experienced by the visually impaired groups with buses were identifying the right bus, changing buses and knowing when they had reached their stop. Several of the younger group spoke of the complications of getting to the popular shopping places such as the Gyle shopping centre and Princes Street. One participant had to use three different buses.
"To get to Edinburgh you have to change buses, which is a nightmare. To go to the Gyle you might have to take three buses."

Some said there were not enough buses, while where a good bus service did exist they had problems using it. It was difficult for them to identify the correct bus and this was made even more difficult since the number of different bus companies has increased since deregulation.

"Public transport is useless to me. There are so many buses around now and you don't know where they are going."

The older group were more confident about shouting out to the driver to ask where the bus was going, but this could cause problems.

"I have asked vans before."

Some got help to identify the bus while others got help from family or friends.

"If I am going anywhere I get my mum to drive me down to the bus stop and then she waits with me until the bus comes and puts me on the bus."

Some also made use of the train, but this too had its difficulties. Like the bus, once they had identified the correct train they needed to know when to get off again. They found both bus drivers and train guards to be unreliable in letting them know. They had a tendency to forget about them.

"The worst thing is when they'll tell you when your stop is and then they never come up. I'm counting my stations anyway so I'm off but you think 'If I was depending on them'."

There were further problems at the railway stations. Getting assistance at the station could be difficult as notice had to be given that help was wanted. Sometimes when they had given notice that they required assistance, the help was inappropriate, for example, being transported through the station on a motorised trailer. Partly because of the embarrassment of this type of help and partly because they felt that it was difficult to be sufficiently organised, they often just turned up at the station and hoped for the best.

"I can't be that organised. I don't like planning things that much in advance anyway. If I wanted to go into Glasgow, I'll go. I tend just to go in and hijack a member of the public."

Others agreed and would also just go and take a chance that they would manage. They did not want to give notice of needing help.

Because of problems with public transport, many relied on the use of taxis and lifts from family and friends. However, taxis were expensive to use and could quickly eat into their limited disposable income, even using a taxicard scheme by which disabled people can travel at a lower rate, subsidised by the local authority.
Hearing impairment

Problems with transport for people with a hearing impairment, who may also have speech difficulties, were their difficulties in getting information, and letting other people know what they wanted.

The younger deaf group still had difficulties in getting around, whereas the older group had much greater confidence and some had their own cars, reducing the need for communication. The younger group had difficulties explaining where they were going and a few of them always travelled by taxi because of problems with the bus. One of those who did use the bus had a card telling the driver where he wanted to go.

The older group had developed more strategies for dealing with different situations but did still face difficulties, as the following comment illustrates.

“If you are going on the train and you are asked where you are going, you can guarantee that there’s not a pen and paper available at the station ... if I have got on a train without a ticket, it can be quite a problem. When I get on the train I sit beside the map so that when they ask me where I am going I can actually point at the map which is much easier than having to explain.”

The difficulty of getting around was also raised by an example where a group of deaf people had ten minutes to make a connection at Birmingham railway station and they did not know what platform to wait on.

“I asked a member of staff by giving him my ticket saying Birmingham, Bridgend. He just told me to stand there and continued to deal with other people and he just left me standing there, so I ignored him and asked another man who told me he had never heard of the place, I would need to go to the Information Centre. Time was running short. Luckily when we were running to the Information Centre we saw a television with the train time and platform for Bridgend. If we hadn’t seen the television we would never have caught the train.”

Even if they had a car, problems could arise. One group member’s car broke down on the motorway. He tried to use the emergency phone but it was not working, so he took the phone off the hook and waited. About one hour later the police arrived and were very helpful and contacted the AA for him.

“If I was a hearing person I would have probably walked on to find a phone that was working and phoned the AA. I lost over an hour ... Maybe you could press a number or buttons, one for police, one for ambulance, one for the AA, etc., and a central computer would know where you are. If they had a code that you could press into their computers that I am deaf. If it was a secret code then it would prevent hoax calls.”

Learning difficulties

Transport did not appear to be a major issue for those with learning difficulties and many were able to take buses. Most were quite well served, but some in Inverness felt there was a lack of buses at
night, which restricted them. This problem was not because of their disability, and non-disabled young people probably experienced similar restrictions.

"I don't go out much because there are no buses at night and it's expensive by taxi."

Another in Inverness said that he had done very little within the last fortnight because of transport difficulties. Others were dependent on their parents for lifts and indeed many would always go shopping with their parents or somebody else.

"It's difficult because if I want to go anywhere, I have to rely on my dad to take me, so it's hard to go anywhere."

4.2 Streets

Getting around the streets could be a problem even before disabled consumers got to banks, shops or leisure places. The main changes required are to remove unnecessary obstacles in the street, to highlight them clearly, and where possible to replace steps with ramps.

Obstacles in the street were a problem for the visually and physically impaired groups. Problems included potholes in the pavement, steep kerbs, scaffolding, and black rubbish bags.

"I hate bin bags, they annoy me. Why do people leave bin bags outside shops? If you're up early in the morning on rubbish days, they leave them in the middle of the pavement. I mean I fell over two last week coming down the main road. I felt like a complete idiot lying in the road."

It was felt that scaffolding could be highlighted by putting fluorescent tape on it, which would not be expensive. The blind person in that group who had a guide dog said that the dog was quite good at weaving in and out of the obstacles.

Visually impaired people could also have difficulties crossing the road and reported that some crossings bleeped but others did not, which could leave them standing at the side of the road being unsure of what kind of crossing they were at. They liked talking crossings but even they required them to press a button which could be difficult to find.

Finding the shop itself could be a problem for visually impaired people and one suggestion was that raised maps should be available for large shopping centres, while another group member suggested that there should be something outside the shops to indicate what kind of shop it is.

4.3 Stairs, escalators and lifts

Here again, the problems are mostly limited to those with a visual or physical impairment.

Stairs

The clear marking of stairs was a particular concern of one young woman in the visually impaired pilot group.
"A white or yellow strip painted across the edge of the step makes all the difference."

It was also sometimes difficult to be directed to the stairs as many people just direct people to the escalators.

"Sometimes it's hard to find the stairs in shops because I can't use the escalator because of the dog and when I ask people to direct me to the stairs they direct me to the escalators. I once asked this lady to direct me to the stairs and twice she sent me to the escalator."

Steps constitute a barrier for the physically disabled group and could be a problem even if the person had someone else with them. One member of the younger group described how he had removed the stabilisers from his wheelchair which allowed him to get up and down steps more easily. This was not an option for many wheelchair users, and also reduced his own safety.

A member of the pilot group had problems with stairs which had the hand rail set at an angle to the steps.

"I find the steps at Waverley Market very difficult because the banisters are not straight down with the steps, they are sort of angled in, so you've got to walk sideways down the steps. The steps are marbled so it's difficult to see where the edge of the step is. I have problems and I can see, so if someone was visually impaired it would be extremely difficult. The marbled effect makes it slippery or at least look slippery and can make you feel quite nervous walking across it."

Stairs often posed a problem for wheelchair users when they wanted to go to the cinema.

**Escalators**

It was difficult, if not impossible for the members of the visually impaired groups to use escalators. This is very dangerous, and impossible with a guide dog.

"When I was in Tenerife, my mum went upstairs to get my grandad and I was left downstairs. I tried to find my way upstairs and ended up going head first down the escalator."

The members of the groups made some suggestions about ways of making escalators safer, for instance the use of Braille signs indicating whether the escalator was going up or down. Another suggestion was to have pressure pads on the approach to the escalator or a bar across which only opens one way.

If they succeeded in getting onto the escalator, they found it difficult to judge when to get off. They would like some cue, for example, a change in the banister, to let them know it was time to step off.
"I don’t like escalators, I just can’t get on them. It’s more fear. Somebody’s got to be there or I just use the stairs. Maybe it’s because they move so fast and it’s difficult to judge."

Lifts

Lifts also pose difficulties for those who are visually impaired. Although some could negotiate the escalators, they thought lifts were a problem, because of inconsistency of style, and not knowing where they were.

“You never know where the buttons are. You don’t know what floor you’re on.”

The variety of styles of button meant that some were afraid to experiment in case they set off an alarm. Although they all applauded talking lifts, they did appreciate that this was an expensive solution and felt that public places could make less costly changes which would help.

“If stores are going to adapt things, like Marks and Spencer going for the talking lift, they could also put a Braille label which marks the floors or even a large print label which would be less expensive.”

The younger group also said it would help if they raised the print on the buttons or put them in Braille. They also wanted a list of what was on each floor so that they would know where they were going. None of these cheaper solutions would tell them which floor they were on and they would still have to ask but it would be a significant improvement on the current situation.

By way of contrast with the visually impaired, the physically disabled groups were in favour of more lifts. One common problem with lifts was that they sometimes had a lip which the wheelchair could catch on.

In shops where there was no customer lift, the staff sometimes expected them to use the goods lift which often involved significant detours, for instance round the back of buildings.

“The goods lift is way round the back—so you’ve got to go outside—if it’s raining it’s awful—right out the Centre and round the back to use the goods lift.”
CHAPTER 5  ATTITUDES AND AWARENESS

This chapter deals with the attitude both of the staff in shops, bank and leisure facilities, and of the general public. Both were important aspects of the experience of going shopping, going out for a meal or any of the other activities covered in the report. The young people in the focus groups were all extremely appreciative of staff or members of the public who went out of their way to be helpful. Attitudes towards disabled people were, to a large extent, determined by the degree of awareness which non-disabled people had of their needs. Many of the young people stressed the importance of disability awareness training both for sales staff and for the general public.

Summary

• Getting the attention of staff was often difficult. The visually impaired group had difficulties in finding staff and would prefer it if customer service desks were more conveniently situated near to the entrance of the store.

• All the other groups reported being frequently ignored by shop staff.

• Staff in some shops could be very helpful.

• All groups had come across some staff who in their view had a poor attitude. Many of the groups reported being treated as if they were incapable of anything or being talked over.

• Some reported members of the public who simply did not notice any disability and as a result would bump into them or allow doors to close on them. They felt that members of the public got in their way and would not move.

• Some felt that older people were particularly intolerant of disabled people.

• People with learning difficulties were the most likely to report bullying.

• All groups, with the exception of those with learning difficulties, wanted a greater level of awareness of the needs of disabled people. They all stressed that this did not need to be lengthy or expensive and much could be done at little cost. Staff should have disability awareness training and publicity should be undertaken to increase awareness amongst the general public.

• Those with learning difficulties did not seem to have the same awareness of their disability as the other groups and indeed rarely referred to it as such.

5.1  Getting the attention of staff

Getting the attention of staff was described as difficult by both of the visually impaired groups, who may have the greatest need for assistance from staff, and also the greatest difficulty in finding them.
"I found a problem last week. I went to a shoe shop and the lighting was really dark so that I couldn’t see the shoes and their sizes ... I couldn’t find anybody. I don’t know where they were ... I think they should do something about it. They should have people on the floor or on the counter. The staff were really poor."

They found that the shortage of assistants was usually more of a problem in smaller shops but could also be a problem in larger stores.

Some members described their strategies for getting the attention of the staff: some would go straight to the counter; others said that they would go to the checkout and ask for help. Those with some sight said they would look out for some kind of uniform and name badge. Others had had difficulties with staff who seemed unaware of their problems.

"Sometimes when you go and ask for assistance they will tell you to go to the customer service desk because they don’t realise that we can’t see. Even if you have your stick they will still try and give you directions."

"In one supermarket, the assistant said ‘Follow me’ and disappeared!"

While getting staff’s attention was not much of a problem for deaf people, the difficulties arose when they needed a different size or needed someone to explain something. Some of the younger group said they were often ignored.

"They prefer to talk to hearing people. Sometimes I ask for something and they are chatting. They just ignore me and walk away."

"I get people’s attention by tapping them on the shoulder, which is a deaf thing. They still ignore me and walk away."

Those with physical disabilities had little to say about actually getting staff’s attention. One did have difficulty keeping their attention.

"I have no problem getting the attention of shop assistants but when I am with the shop assistant other customers will ignore me when I’m talking to the shop assistant and take them away."

One of the members of the pilot group said that sales staff tended to make an assumption that because she was disabled she did not have any money to spend and noticed a difference in attitude and considerably more attention once they found out that she did actually have spending power.

Although some of the participants with learning difficulties said that getting the attention of staff was not a difficulty, many mentioned problems of being ignored by sales staff.

"I went into a bike shop once and I was waiting to get my bike fixed. I stood there for over half an hour until the man came."
They felt that sometimes they were kept waiting too long, and that this was unacceptable.

"I think if someone is waiting a long time you should complain ... but some staff in restaurants are not polite and they just leave you waiting. I think they should give more time to people who are waiting."

5.2 Helpfulness of staff

For many disabled people, local shops can provided a level of helpfulness and service which larger shops could not match. People in different groups made the general comment that they were well known in their local shops and banks where staff knew about their needs and were confident about dealing with them.

Learning difficulties

Members of the groups with learning difficulties had largely seen shop staff as helpful. However, some in the younger groups had comments about their attitude, describing them as 'ignorant' or unhelpful.

"They can just ignore you and walk away."

One had found a staff member less than sympathetic when she did not have enough money to pay and goods had to be returned to the shelves.

"I remember going into a chemist and wanted to buy lots of things which I tried to buy, but when I got to the counter I realised I didn't have quite enough and had to take everything back except one item. Instead of being sympathetic or something, it was as if she was fed up with me and just wanted to push me on. The other staff were nice ... The staff at the counter were ... 'Oh here we go again'."

Her reaction to this attitude was to leave the shop as speedily as possible.

Visually impaired

There were examples of more helpful staff from the visually impaired groups. For example, one of the older visually impaired group had been shopping for a music centre and the shop assistant had asked immediately if he could be of any assistance and proceeded to show her models, explained how they worked, let her feel them and told her prices. This was a very positive shopping experience but other group members agreed that there is a very fine line between being helpful and being a pushy salesman. This tended to depend on how they asked if help was required.

Other stores which were mentioned as being particularly helpful were Argos, where someone will let you see anything and will explain anything to you, despite not having a Braille catalogue, and Boots.

"The people in Boots in Sauchiehall Street are very helpful. They will take your arm or your basket and tell you to tell them what you want and they will go round with"
you. They are also very good at telling you about special offers.”

The helpfulness of shop staff improved if they were regular customers and the staff got to know them. Paradoxically, staff would often offer help to a young visually impaired person when they were with others and therefore did not need help, yet did not offer help when they were alone and did need it.

“I find that when you are with someone, they will come up and ask if they can help you because they don’t feel embarrassed when they see someone with you and they know you’ll say ‘no’ because you do have someone with you but when you’re on your own, you’re on your own basically ... They are frightened, they don’t know what to do. They need to understand that we’re not going to go crazy with them if they make a mistake, for example take our arm the wrong way ... I think they worry that they might do something wrong.”

Others said that sometimes staff did not have very much time for them. They could understand this but still felt that there should be more staff.

“Sometimes they don’t have very much time for us. If it’s a busy shop we can’t really expect them to drop everything for us, but it would be nice to have a bit of courtesy ... Saturday’s usually busy and through the week there is not enough staff to try and find someone.”

Physical disability

Some of the physically disabled groups found it difficult to ask for help.

“I find Edinburgh best because they help you when you need it. I need mum with me to hold onto the chair and pull me out of the chair. I need help to see what sizes things are. I get embarrassed asking for help.”

The older physically disabled group in Perth said that in general they found the staff in Perth good. The group agreed that the existence of Capability Scotland’s centre at Upper Springland in Perth had probably contributed towards this, and staff were more familiar with disabled people as a result.

“They’re not afraid to ask if there’s something they can do to help you.”

There were occasions when staff were not so helpful.

“I went in at what they class as their lunch time and asked for assistance with my shopping and she said I couldn’t get it at that time and would have to come back another time. There were staff walking around. I said ‘I’m just like any other customer and if you can’t find someone, I’ll go elsewhere’. Then she said, ‘My boyfriend’s disabled’ and I asked her if she would treat him like that and she said ‘No’, so I asked her not treat me like it. I did complain to the manager but her attitude has never changed.”
5.3 Attitude of staff

Visual impairment

Visually impaired people shopping on their own are more dependent on staff, and some of the group members said they could not always trust sales staff to tell them the truth and give an honest opinion as their desire to get a sale gets in the way. Others felt staff ignored them and stood chatting whilst leaving them to stand waiting. Some took the view that staff could be patronising.

“They either count out your change very slowly or it’s chucked in your hand.”

Hearing impairment

Occasionally, people with a hearing impairment come across staff members who have a very poor attitude.

“I once went to a catalogue shop and the woman there had a very bad attitude. I wanted more information and we were writing things down but because her attitude was so bad I just walked away. On going out I met the manager, and I mentioned the woman’s attitude, but he didn’t say anything to the staff.”

Another came up against a common problem for people with disabilities: an assumption that someone who cannot do one thing will not be capable of something else.

“I went shopping last year for a video with my boyfriend. I asked the man in the shop for the video and he started to fill out these forms and I asked ‘What’s the form for’ and he said he thought he would fill it out for me and I asked to let me read it first. I think he took it for granted that because I was deaf I couldn’t read either.”

Physical disability

A difficulty commonly encountered by both groups of physically disabled people was staff or other people talking over the top of them as if they were not there. They all disliked this enormously but some were more likely to say something about it than others.

“It’s a major problem. They will talk to the other person. They will talk about you. They will say, ‘Does she want this’, and the other person will say, ‘Well, why don’t you ask her’. Some of them think because you are in a wheelchair you don’t have a brain.”

“One time it happened when I was in a bit of a bad mood. I turned round and snapped at them and said, ‘I’m here’.”

“I get it from everyone but I just say, ‘Ask me’ and that usually shuts them up. I don’t just let it drop because it’s ignorant really. It embarrasses them as much as it embarrasses me.”
"I find sometimes if I am with someone and we go to the till to pay they think its them that's paying and not me."

They found it difficult to understand why people would speak to them if they were out on their own, but would speak over the top of them if they were with others.

"They think that because you are with someone you are not capable, and they have seen you a million times on your own. You think, when I'm on my own your treat me normally, why can't you treat me normally now."

One group member charitably thought it might have been to do with high counters where the staff could not see them very well. A later section discusses the shop environment in greater detail. They also felt that staff did not really have time for them.

"When you do go out they are willing to help but sometimes they are rushing you out the door. You've got to say, 'No, I need time, like any other customer.'"

5.4 Attitude of other members of the public

Visual impairment

Those who were visually impaired all mentioned the difficulty of people bumping into them. This was especially bad on busy days. The younger group seemed to find this particularly difficult.

"When I was in the shopping centre and I didn't have my cane, people just kept bashing about. I was in Princes Street one day and the children would get out of the way but the men and women just barge into you."

They felt that people did not apologise, and that adults were generally embarrassed by their presence. The older visually impaired group also mentioned the problem of people getting in the way. They thought that older people in particular were more of a problem for them than other groups.

"They stop right in front of you and you're trying to get round them and they won't move."

Older people were thought to be less tolerant of disabilities than other groups. The visually impaired group thought that it was because they had less contact.

"I think it's a generation thing. I met somebody on holiday who had been to the school I went to about 30 years ago when it was a blind asylum as it was called then. It was the case where you were just taught to do cobblerly or sewing. If you had any disability at all you had no brain—you had the basket weaving mentality. I think a lot of people of that generation have been brought up with that attitude."
Hearing impairment

Sometimes members of these groups found that other members of the public were more understanding than the staff.

"I may be standing asking a member of staff for something and they can't understand me—then a member of the public who is maybe standing behind me will tell them what I want. They understand me and the member of staff won't."

Others mentioned that people sometimes stare at them, including children who sometimes stare. The older deaf group felt that the adults should adopt a different attitude in dealing with this.

"Sometimes when you are standing in a queue with a lot of children staring at you because they can see the hearing aid, the parents pull them away or whatever. What they should do is explain to the children what it is instead of pulling them away as though there is something really wrong with us."

Both younger and older groups had experienced people making fun of their signing.

"We were trying to get into a taxi and a car with four people asked where the chip shop was and then they started making fun of us because they thought we were thick. When they went off, they were still teasing us."

The younger group mentioned that sometimes people stopped them in the street and asked for directions. As a result of their problems communicating, and presumably the public's lack of awareness of deafness, this kind of situation made them feel very embarrassed.

Physical disability

Like the visually impaired group, the younger physically disabled group found the attitudes of older people particularly difficult.

"Older folk can be really annoying—they usually just 'tut' and then look at you and stare as if to say 'what are you doing here'."

Two young wheelchair users said,

"We went down to the town centre at the weekend and we were taking it nice and easy and this lady kept staring at us everywhere we went and then she came over and spoke to us and asked us to slow down. We were only doing about two miles per hour. Then they deliberately walk in front of you."

They also mentioned that pedestrians would get in their way.

"Staff are okay, but pedestrians just walk in front of you and if you hit the back of them they can either fall and hurt themselves or hurt us."

The older group too found other members of the public difficult.
"Sometimes people will see you coming and they just walk in front of you."

The older physically disabled group also said that people spoke about them behind their backs. What they heard was very similar to the comments heard by the older visually impaired group from elderly people.

"You can hear them behind you talking and saying we shouldn't be out on our own if we're like this ... now I've begun to think, no this is the 1990s not the 1920s."

"They can be quite nasty. If we are next in the queue, some people will actually jump in front of us. Some people say 'sorry—I didn't see you there'—it's disrespectful as well."

Learning difficulty

Those with a learning difficulty often felt that other members of the public either ignored them or pushed them around.

"There were chatty old ladies who were chatting and I would say 'excuse me' but they would still chat away... so I had to walk all the way down the other end [of the shop] and back again."

"Every time I go, someone always jumps in front of me. I went to get some bread for my mum one day and a lady just pushed past me and I said 'excuse me, I was in the queue first' ."

They agreed that this sort of thing seemed to happen to them a lot. The younger group felt that the public were intolerant of slowness.

"I got angry with a customer once because there was an old lady walking quite slowly down the stairs. I didn't mind at all, but this other person was making terrible comments about the lady. But in the end it got too much for me so I turned round and said 'How would you like it if you had arthritis wrong with you and found it difficult walking down stairs and you wouldn't like it of someone called you an old snail'."

Another problem which many of those with learning difficulties have experienced was teasing which in some cases escalated into severe bullying.

"I don't like the people hanging around the shops and bullying people—they choked me once."

"Because I don't speak properly, people usually make fun me and because of my size."

This happened commonly to this person, usually outside shops and when walking. His strategy was to ignore it as best he could but on one occasion at the swimming pool he needed a member
of staff to help him out. Other people who had problems with their balance reported members of the public treating them as if they were drunk or ill.

5.5 Raising awareness

Although the people in the learning difficulty groups clearly experienced difficulties with staff and the general public, they did not attribute this to a lack of awareness of their needs. The other three groups were much more likely to criticise the low levels of awareness of disabled people's needs.

Visual impairment

Both the younger and the older visually impaired groups felt that staff serving the public should have some level of awareness training. Neither group felt this need be lengthy or expensive. They felt that not enough people in Britain had this kind of training.

"I think every shop assistant should have a day or half a day's training course. We need to make ourselves available so that shopkeepers can talk to us about it and maybe get their fear out of the way."

"It doesn't take that long. All it needs is a couple of hours—if and when you encounter a visually impaired person, do the following. If they are going to offer visually impaired people assistance it wouldn't take much to train their staff to do it properly."

Both groups also felt that blind and visually impaired people needed to make themselves available, either to get sighted people used to meeting them, or to consult with them about what changes needed to be made.

"More consultation is needed. If they're going to consult with disabled people let's hope they will act on it as well. I mean you cannot expect everything to be accessible, like you cannot expect a small corner shop to build extensions at the back to get wheelchairs in. Within reason, you want as much access as possible."

They stressed that changes did not have to be large or expensive.

"Companies think that they'll need to make massive changes to their buildings, but this is not true. It's something simple—making contrasting signs a bit better, aisles a bit wider—it's not as if it's going to break the bank."

When special facilities are provided they stressed that they should be providing services which people will actually want to use. The example of the rail stations asking for 24 hours' notice of anyone requiring assistance was cited as an example of a service which on paper might look as though they are doing something, but is so restrictive, because so few plan that far ahead, that few actually use it.
"You tend to think ‘Sod it’, and they end up not being used and they think they don’t need used and there are folk who do need it. Eventually they are going to lose the service because it’s not being used."

The younger group had experience of a lack of awareness by staff in Waterloo railway station. On being informed that a group of ‘disabled’ school children needed assistance, they were met with a fleet of wheelchairs.

The younger visually impaired group had also felt there ought to be more publicity to raise the level of the public’s awareness of visual impairment.

"I think they should start producing big leaflets explaining really deeply about how blind people really need help."

The lack of awareness of staff and the public could have the effect of making them feel very angry. Two of the younger group had had strangers approaching them in the street, one assuming he was homeless and the other offering to buy her sweets. They felt very frustrated but often wanted to deal with the situation without drawing attention to their blindness.

"I hate saying I’m blind."

When asked if they had ever been discriminated against, the older group replied that it was very difficult sometimes for them to judge whether they got as good a service as anyone else since they had never known anything else and, therefore, had no basis for comparison. It may well have been that the expectations of some of the young people we spoke to were lower than those of non-disabled young people.

Their expectations of the changes which will follow as a result of the Disability Discrimination Act were quite low. They felt the wording in the Act was cloudy and it would be difficult to judge how the Act would be interpreted. They felt that while some individual shop managers might be willing to make changes, their head offices might not be so willing to back them on this.

**Hearing impairment**

Both groups felt that staff in shops should notice their deafness. Some members of the younger group said that their hearing aids were quite visible and they expected people to notice. While some were happy to tell people they were deaf, others would feel embarrassed. The older group agreed that sometimes it was difficult explaining that they were deaf. They clearly felt a need for more deaf awareness training as well.

"I remember once going to a shop and explaining that I was deaf so that the person thought they had to come very close to me and shout in my ear and it was really embarrassing."

Again there was agreement that training did not need be lengthy or expensive.
"Deaf awareness training. It is very simple. Just explain how you communicate with a deaf person, talk about the light, where they are situated, not to stand very close, not to stand too far away, clear lip patterns. It doesn't have to be really deep. It could take one day on basic training for deaf awareness."

They also mentioned that some shops have a sticker on their windows with an ear sign but nobody is clear what it means. It had been interpreted by some members as indicating that the staff had deaf awareness training but their experiences suggest that this is not the case. Some think it might indicate there is a loop system but at the moment the sign is confusing.

Others mentioned a card produced by Hearing Concern, formerly the British Association of the Hard of Hearing, to indicate that someone was deaf, but they felt that this would not be well used.

"I think they are producing a card which actually says—'Please speak clearly—I'm a deaf person'. But in saying that a lot of deaf people don't want to walk into a shop and show staff the card. So a lot of them are not going to use it so I don't really think this will be helpful."

Some did feel that they were treated differently from others. One young man had been refused entry on a mechanics course and one of the reasons given was that his hearing was not good enough to hear the engine noise. He accepted this decision without challenge. Another was told at an airport check-in that she had to be with a hearing person for safety. They also seemed to get her disability confused with visual impairment.

"I was going on holiday and my father had told them I was deaf because he wanted to make sure I was safe. When I got to the airport, the lady assumed I was blind. I did say I was deaf but for some reason she thought I was blind."

Someone also reported an odd attitude on the first day of his work experience.

"The lady told everybody not to speak to me."

A few of the older group who had experience of other countries felt that deaf people were served better abroad.

"I feel that in Spain they are much better than in Britain. Abroad they don't see deafness as a problem but they do in Britain. I tried to hire a car in Livingston, so they said I couldn't get a car because the insurance said no."

"If I have a business in America, the legislation would make sure that at least one of my employees would have to be able to sign. Not all, just one."

Both groups thought that staff should learn a small amount of sign language and they thought that finger spelling would be easy to learn. They especially felt that it was important that doctors, lawyers or anyone with whom they might wish to have a confidential discussion with should be
able to communicate with them. One mentioned that in America, by law, all children are taught some signing in schools.

Physical disability

They too felt that the public should be more aware of the needs of people with physical disabilities, although they did agree that there were a lot more places which cater for disabled people now than before. But they also had examples of people whose attitudes were unacceptable.

Another really did not want to draw attention to herself or her disability and felt happier if the public were not aware of it and did not actually notice her in any way standing out from the crowd. This comment draws attention to the difficulty many face in wanting to be treated the same as everyone else, yet at the same time to have people notice and be aware of disabilities. This is not an easy dichotomy to resolve.

The older group of physically disabled people had experienced some discrimination.

"I went to the taxi rank where there were four taxis sitting but they all refused to take me. [The reason was] ... because I couldn’t walk. My uncles offered to help me in but they still refused.”

"Once when I went to the pictures, the actual cinema was upstairs and there were no lifts. They did allow me to go in but my sister had to help me up the stairs but then I had to transfer into a seat and I cannot remember what happened to the wheelchair. They did say they couldn’t do that again.”

Another said he did not feel he should have to phone places in advance at all since non-disabled people do not have to. They also felt that public transport should be available to all and should therefore have facilities for wheelchairs.
Summary

The shopping environment

- The disabled people in this study used a wide variety of shopping venues. Modern shopping centres tended to have easier access for people in wheelchairs and the lack of traffic made them easier for people with visual impairments.

- Visually impaired people would like to see a greater consistency of layout, straight aisles and wider spacing. Improved lighting, good contrasting signs and Braille labels would also help.

- Loud music was a problem for both the visually impaired and the deaf groups.

- Physically disabled people would also like to see wider aisles and also handrails, lower shelves, ramps instead of steps, improved larger changing rooms, more lifts and, where possible, a means of avoiding heavy doors.

The shopping experience

- Many disabled people needed to or preferred to have someone with them when they went shopping. However, many were able to go on their own if they wanted to.

- Communication with staff could be improved if staff paid more attention, spoke clearly, looked at the person they were talking to and always had a pen and paper clearly available for people to write things down.

- High counters were thought to inhibit good communication with people in wheelchairs.

- Those with learning difficulties needed staff to be more patient with them and to give them more time.

- Price lists in shops should be available in Braille and the print on receipts needs to be improved. Shops should ensure that prices on items are clearly marked. Goods should ideally be identified with Braille labels especially in circumstances when they all felt the same.

- Many disabled people undertake research about larger more expensive products before they go shopping to prevent lengthy communication with shop staff. Those with learning difficulties prefer to have someone with them to help them buy more expensive items.

- Both visually and hearing impaired people have difficulties with queues and identifying who is next. Visually impaired people also have difficulties in identifying which queue they should be in or where the end of the queue is.

- Many disabled people exhibited great reluctance to take faulty goods back to a shop. Their greatest fear was embarrassment. The older groups were considerably more confident than the younger groups but it was nevertheless a difficult thing for them to do.

- Shops should make returning goods and making complaints as easy as possible to encourage people to feel positively about returning goods.

- Flashing lights should be installed as well as audible alarms for emergency situations.
6.1 Shopping venues

Visual impairment

Most visually impaired people in the groups used the high street shops in city centres and also the out of town shopping centres like the Gyle in Edinburgh and Clydebank or East Kilbride, near Glasgow. The new, modern shopping centres were seen as good, being large and having lots of space. The younger group found city centre shopping more of a problem because of the number of crossings and because it was busier.

"I would never go to Princes Street unless there was someone with me because it's just too dangerous."

Most visually impaired people would prefer to go shopping when it was quieter, although they are not prevented from going because of the crowds.

Hearing impairment

These groups also shopped at a range of shopping centres. Their preferences rarely had anything to do with their disability but instead reflected reasons like good parking, being indoors and offering a wide range of shops.

Physical disability

The younger group, who lived in various parts of Fife, would go to Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes, Dunfermline or the Gyle in Edinburgh. Kirkcaldy was seen as suitable for wheelchairs but Dunfermline was a bit hilly. The older group would shop in Perth or in their home towns, mostly small towns in Perthshire or Angus. The out of town shopping centre was the preference of those who had wheelchairs because of lifts and the fact that it is generally easier to get around.

Learning difficulty

Members of the four groups of people with learning difficulties between them visited a wide range of shops. They ranged from one who lived in North Berwick and who rarely visited the shops in the city to those who regularly used city centre shops and others who prefer the out of town centres like the Gyle in Edinburgh. The participants living in and around Inverness tended to go into Inverness to shop.

6.2 The shopping environment

Visual impairment

One of the greatest problems for visually impaired people was the lack of consistency in the shop layout. They had no sooner become used to the way something is laid out when the shops change it all around. Marks and Spencer were thought to be particularly bad for constantly changing displays, while shops like Debenhams and Frasers were thought to be better.

The cash desks or counters could also be more accessible. They were often sited at the back of a shop and could be hard to find. One person said that it helped if there was a noisy till. Even if
they have found the till they could not always tell if it was attended. The location of the customer service desk was also mentioned as sometimes being difficult to find.

"Why not always have the customer service desk on the ground floor."

In keeping with their desire for consistency, they preferred straight aisles and wide spacing, with no unexpected steps.

"A lot of shops don’t have straight aisles, they just have these things in the middle of the carpet areas and sometimes they can be quite awkward because they have things sticking out the side."

The background noise in a shop could make a difference to their spatial sense, and loud music from multi-directional speakers could be disorientating.

"If there’s a stereo system with speakers all round you can lose your sense of direction."

Another just did not like loud music because she could not hear what her friend was saying.

"I went into a record shop with a friend and she was reading out what was on the album to me but because the music was being played so loudly I couldn’t hear what she was saying—it can be very distracting."

The lighting was another factor. It varied between shops, with Marks and Spencer and John Menzies being seen to have good lighting whilst Debenhams in Glasgow was thought of as being dark. Smaller shops were also more likely to be dark. The lighting at the entrance to a shop was also important since it took time for their sight to adjust.

Some participants found doors very heavy and would like to have seen more automatic doors. The visually impaired group did not, however, like revolving doors, which could be a nuisance especially if they had a dog with them.

The visually impaired groups also discussed signs in shops. They liked good contrast between the lettering and the background colour of both the sign and the colour of the walls in the shop. But improved signs were only useful to those who had some sight. One member of the older visually impaired group had come across Braille signs at his bowling club, and would welcome more Braille signs, but felt it was important that they were put up in a consistent fashion.

"If they’ve put them up in the same place then it’ll be good but if they stick them round randomly then that could be a problem."

The younger group had also experienced Braille notices at the Science Museum in Paris and had thought that very good.
Hearing impairment

As with the visually impaired group, loud music in shops could be a problem.

“When there is music going on sometimes hearing aids make it louder so it's difficult to hear people talking against that noise.”

The older group mentioned a difficulty with general background noise.

“If you are going for something to eat and there are people moving things around like tables, chairs, etc., I cannot even enjoy the food I’m having because of the actual noise which is really bad.”

Physical disability

The physically disabled groups had a lot to say about the shopping environment. Generally they felt that they needed more space. This was especially true in smaller shops, like newsagents.

“We need more room in the smaller shops like sports shops because we are afraid we might knock something over. In some electrical shops they have the security beams at the door which doesn’t give us a lot of room to get in.”

Suggestions for improving the layout of shops included:

• wider aisles;
• hand rails;
• lower shelves;
• ramps for wheelchairs;
• wider doorways.

Some examples of good practice included a music shop with lower shelves which were easily accessible, and the Metro Centre in Newcastle.

“The Metro Centre in Newcastle is brilliant for disabled people. It goes up to three floors and they all have lifts going up and down to them. There are ramps and there are no steps into any of the shops.”

Heavy doors were also a problem, and some of the younger group mentioned that although some people held doors open for them, there were some who just let them go. Quite often people do not look behind them.

The groups also mentioned difficulties in trying clothes on. Changing rooms were rarely large enough, and rarely had somewhere they could sit down.

“We went to Edinburgh and there were no big changing rooms. I once burst the lock in a changing room. I found it difficult to tell them.”
Some took a chance with clothes, buying them without trying them on and taking them back if they did not fit.

There were mixed feelings about open-plan changing rooms. Some did not like them, but now at least one person preferred them to the difficulties of coping in a small space.

"The ones that have open-plan are not maybe the best and at first I wasn't too keen but now I just go in and get changed. They are better because there is a bit more air even to breathe because they can be a bit hot. The ones that are cubicles are never big enough."

High counters were mentioned, firstly in relation to communication with staff, and secondly in relation to reaching things. Access to other things high up, including door handles, was also mentioned as a problem.

Others mentioned having to make significant detours to avoid stairs and occasionally when there was no lift, having to use the goods lift. This made them feel annoyed and they thought it was "pretty sad."

**Learning difficulty**

There were no aspects of the layout and general shopping environment which people with learning difficulties commented on. They often preferred quieter times to busy periods.

One mentioned difficulties in adjusting to different levels of lighting in shops and restaurants which was occasionally a problem, depending on the levels of lighting involved and the contrast with the lighting outside.

**6.3 Accompaniment**

**Visual impairment**

Nearly all of the visually impaired people we spoke to would take someone shopping with them. The younger group would nearly always go with someone, whereas the older group could go shopping on their own if they were shopping for something specific such as a box of chocolates, although this varied according to how much sight they had. The older visually impaired group would also take someone with them to help when buying clothes or when looking for something which is more difficult to find. They all said it was difficult to get hold of shop assistants to help them.

The younger visually impaired group said that their parents would try and influence what they wanted to buy. The older visually impaired group advocated not taking parents shopping, especially for clothes, for that very reason, and would take friends with them whose judgement or taste was similar to their own, a sentiment no doubt shared by non-disabled young people.

"You're better to go with your pals because if you go with your mum she's bound to choose all the old-fashioned stuff."

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Hearing impairment

This group did sometimes take others with them shopping but again the reasons were not always to do with their difficulties in hearing. They went with others because of the company or to get a second opinion if they were buying something for a special occasion. One person did notice a difference in her experience of shopping depending on whether she was alone or with her mother. This related very much to the attitude of the staff.

“When you ask for help I think they can be less than helpful. Sometimes they feel as if it’s too much or sometimes they don’t give you help, they just give you sympathy and it’s not sympathy you want. Or they serve you quickly and say there you are, that’s it, bye. There’s no patience there. Sometimes I go shopping with my mother and I am quite calm, the service is excellent, but if I go myself, it is very quick as though, there’s your things—get out of the shop.”

Physical disability

The younger group could go by themselves if they made plans to go by bus or get a lift from their parents. The older group, most of whom had more severe impairments than the younger group, had greater mobility problems, but some did go shopping on their own. Shopping was seen more as a necessity by some of the older group and not something you would do for fun.

“I like to go on my own because it makes me feel a little bit more independent knowing I can go on my own.”

Another said she would often go with someone else, but again not because of her disability but rather from a preference for company. One said she would take someone with her if she needed to buy clothes as she wore a spinal jacket and it would be embarrassing if a stranger came in while she was trying something on. Another always went with her parents because she could not negotiate pavements where she lived.

Learning difficulty

Many of those in the groups of people with learning disabilities were still accompanied by their parents or others, although a few claimed to like shopping alone. Some had concerns about going out alone for reasons of personal security.

“There are strange people wandering about nowadays ... so you’re best to go with a friend or family.”

“Yes [I prefer to go with somebody] ... because I don’t like walking about Princes Street very much, I feel dizzy.”

Even within the older groups, many were still accompanied. Some had never been on their own and others were still quite unsure about it. Some of the older group did need help from others and openly acknowledged this. One would not go shopping without his key worker, the social worker responsible for his care, there to help him. Those who went with others
generally felt that their purchase decisions were influenced by that person and especially by their parents.

"The good thing is it can give you ideas. The bad thing is, you may have your heart set on something and they will say ‘That’s not a good buy—try this one instead’.

Those who were more confident did go on their own and often found it easier that way. Those who had been shopping alone had quite different reactions to their first experiences of it.

"No problem, I wasn’t nervous."

"At first it is nerve wracking—after a while you get used to it."

Some of the older groups who had others looking after their money felt that this too influenced their purchasing decisions.

6.4 Communicating with staff

The older physically disabled group felt that communication with the shop staff in town was improving and they were not so afraid to offer assistance, although one thought that the high counters inhibited good communication and made her feel intimidated. Communicating with staff was a problem mainly for those with a hearing impairment, and for those with learning difficulties.

Hearing impairment

For those with a hearing impairment, the helpfulness of the staff was, to a great extent, determined by the ease with which they could communicate with them. Both groups had quite a lot to say about the difficulties of communicating with shop staff. The younger deaf group felt that the staff could pay more attention.

"They could maybe learn some signing. I don’t use signing much. I lip read and some of the hearing people in shops mumble and it’s difficult to understand them. Sometimes they forget to keep their faces turned so we can lip read. Sometimes they walk away when they are talking."

Few of the younger deaf group wrote things down but one sometimes used mime and if absolutely stuck would write things down. By contrast, the older group would write things down if there was a problem and most shops had a pen and paper, but many felt that they did not need to ask for help—they just looked around for what they wanted.

"Shops are really visual, so what we want we can actually see and it shows the price as well so you don’t really need the communication just to go in and get something."

Sometimes there were difficulties trying to explain that they wanted a piece of paper.
"... but sometimes when I ask for a paper and pen, they just look at me because they don't understand what I'm saying. Then I explain that I am deaf, then they will look, then I have to write it down and pass it over to them. Sometimes their face is just blank as if they don't know what you are talking about because they don't realise we are deaf. We constantly have to ask them, showing pen and paper, and we have to mime which means everyone looks at us and it can be embarrassing."

One of the members of the pilot group suggested that it was perhaps their own responsibility to carry pen and paper with them.

Some examples of the difficulties in communication were about ordering food and drink. One member of the younger deaf group said it was particularly hard for deaf people to say "vodka", while another described his experience in a restaurant.

"I asked for a Danish pastry. I just asked for one. They gave me two and they couldn't understand that I only wanted one. They eventually apologised and put one back... They should listen more carefully. The staff should pay more attention. They were both rushed."

Another adopted another means of getting more information when she was going to choose something in the shop.

"I go to reception and say 'excuse me, come with me' and I will actually take them to the item to ask for information and then I will take them back and ask for a pen and paper. They get quite annoyed."

The deaf groups did mention a few examples of places where they thought they adopted good practices for serving deaf people. The younger group mentioned Intersport.

"They let us write things down and they pay attention to us."

The older group offered two examples.

"I remember one shop I went into that had something that said 'for deaf people' and you could actually go in there and sit and write. I think all shops should have the same access for deaf people."

"I was really surprised when I went into Marks and Spencer in Edinburgh. Some of the staff actually have a badge that says 'I am deaf, please lip read' so any deaf person going into the shop knows who to approach because that person will understand deaf problems. There are actually three deaf people working in Marks and Spencer. They really welcome the deaf because they have given their staff training in deaf sign language so Marks and Spencer really have an awareness of the deaf."

It was agreed that Marks and Spencer was very good. They have textphones and will give job experience to deaf people.
Learning difficulty

Some said that they had problems getting staff to understand what it was they wanted and this often made them feel frustrated.

"Because people don't understand me and I get worked up."

They were asked what staff could do that would make it easier for them to communicate.

"Eye to eye contact."

"I would like people to pay attention, but they just look away."

Another of the older group described a difficult experience trying to communicate at the hairdressers. He has some, but not severe, speech difficulties. His confidence about the expedition to the hairdressers was low, and he was feeling anxious as he was going somewhere he had never been to before.

"I didn't know how to explain because nobody knows what I mean when I explain myself."

He felt he needed time to explain and people would only give him one chance to explain himself and this, for him, was insufficient. He felt that he needed time both to think of what he was about to say and to physically say it.

"Sometimes I say something that is wrong and then just as I finish they start speaking and I think of it and then I say 'Hold on a minute' and they say 'No that's it now'.""n

At the hairdresser he would have liked pictures showing him different styles of haircuts and the length of different razor settings. He found communication at the hairdressers very difficult and diagrams would have helped him a lot.

All four groups had some members who had difficulties remembering things and this too got in the way of clear communication.

"I got to the shop and there was a card sale and I was at the point of saying 'have you got a ...' When it came to 'got' I couldn't think of anything so she had to suggest ideas. I couldn't think of anything. But as soon as I got out of the shop, of course I remembered everything and dashed back in again. Yes, I knew what I wanted."

"The worst thing they do is just stand there. I don't worry about it. Occasionally, they just look at you as if you are completely stupid. I suppose you do look stupid."

"Sometimes when I go into a shop I don't know what to buy."
6.5 Finding out what things cost

Finding out what things cost was a difficulty for those with a visual impairment, either because they were Braille readers, or because the print on labels was too small and difficult to find.

"You don't need to have all the price tags in Braille but they could have price lists in Braille."

They also felt that they had no way of checking receipts because they could not read them. They nevertheless keep all their receipts and some were very organised, having different pockets in their wallet for receipts. The standard of print on receipts was also called into question.

"I think there should be some sort of standard on the print of receipts. Some you can read with a magnifier and others look as though they're just a blank piece of paper."

The hearing impaired groups relied on being able to read the information they needed, and when this was missing they would ask, and that was sometimes a problem. They felt that all items should have price tags on them and price lists at tills or the entrances to public places would be a help.

6.6 Identifying goods

The visually impaired groups had problems identifying goods, especially when they were all similar shapes.

"I'm thinking of moving out in a year's time and I know when I go shopping and take it home I'm not going to be able to tell the difference between a tin of beans and a tin of spaghetti. I think with the technology now they could quite easily Braille everything."

"I wish they had Braille on shampoo and deodorant. There are ten yards of identical things and some of them are sealed."

They also added that pill organisers are now available in Braille proving that it was possible. They wondered if it was possible to have something at the checkout to label things, for instance, a scanner which could print a small Braille label.

Another suggestion for making it possible to identify products more easily was to attach different shapes to garments so that one could feel the shape and identify the colour of the garment.

The younger group preferred to be able to touch goods and often found sales staff reluctant to let them. The older group were quite different, and did not especially like to touch the goods.
One person took the empty packet with her back to the shop to identify what she wanted, and often this group had to be more prepared before they left home, knowing exactly what they wanted. However, it was particularly difficult where there are lots of brands as, for example, with toiletries.

6.7 Researching products

Responses to the questionnaire suggested that almost half of the disabled group had never gone shopping for a major purchase such as a television or CD player. People from the visually and hearing groups said they would often do some research in advance of going shopping.

"You do have to have information in advance because if you don't know what you want, you could be in trouble."

Some of the older visually impaired group mentioned catalogues which were available on tape from stores such as Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury and Boots. These catalogues on tape were thought to be very useful, and were a way of informing customers about special offers.

The people in the hearing impaired groups would also often research things before they went shopping, rather than relying on getting information or advice in a shop.

"Sometimes when you go into a shop it's very difficult to access the information because even although they sell the stuff, some of them don't have information on it. Usually I get the information from newspapers and magazines before I actually decide to buy something. That's the way I find information."

"Sometimes we would go in and ask for a book on the actual item and then we can read. Everything has a package or some information and we usually ask for that first and then decide."

Some of this group, for whom British Sign Language (BSL) was their first language, would also experience some difficulty in reading technical jargon in English.

Physical disability

Physically disabled people did not mention many problems in this area, but they did occasionally have the need to obtain specially adapted goods. They were mostly reliant on the social work department for providing such items or advising them about what to buy and how to obtain them. They felt that more specialised products were now available in the high street for special needs.

Learning difficulty

All of the groups with learning difficulties were also asked how they got information if they were making a bigger purchase like a TV or a stereo. Some felt that they would need to have someone with them. They had concerns about making a foolish purchase or of being
conned by someone, and one person had experience of being conned into buying a faulty bike at a market.

"You might feel a bit of a fool taking it home and showing your friends and then you don't know how it works."

"You could buy a TV and then find out when you'd got it home that it was actually stolen."

"You might be conned into buying faulty goods."

Some were dependent on their parents and when many of this group were relating the actual experiences of past purchases, many did have family or friends helping them.

"I would leave it [getting information] to mum and dad—we wouldn't do something like that on our own."

"My parents would help me but I'd pick it myself."

By contrast, others were remarkably trusting of shop staff.

"I would just ask which gave me more quality for money and they will tell you."

Many in the learning difficulty groups could not read product instructions for themselves or understand them.

"I don't bother with instructions."

"I always ask someone to help me read them."

Some said they were difficult to understand because they had big words and had no pictures to follow. Clearly it is very important for manufacturers to provide instructions which are clear and easy to understand with pictorial representations where appropriate. There are potential dangers of someone operating an appliance without knowing how it works.

6.8 Queues

Queuing posed problems for the two sensory impaired groups, both in shops and in other places like banks. Visually impaired people had difficulty knowing where the queue was, where the end of the queue was, and they were often not sure when it is their turn.

"I usually listen to other people buying things and then when they walk to pay for it I just follow them."

Some were not frightened to use their cane to get priority in a queue, or to draw attention to the fact that they needed some help.
“I usually just go straight up to the counter. If you’ve got your cane it’s okay.”

When asked what could be done to make it easier for them they said:

“The woman on the counter could just shout ‘Next’.”

“It would be useful if there was a bar and you knew once you were past the bar you were at the front of the queue.”

People with hearing impairments also had difficulties with queues, although these difficulties were only mentioned by the older deaf group. They had difficulties knowing when they are next unless they are really concentrating on the situation.

“When you go to the till and there’s quite a queue and someone shouts to come over to the next till. Of course we cannot hear and then someone taps you on the shoulder and says ‘Over there’—that can be quite embarrassing.”

“The banks are the same, the teller calls ‘Who’s next’ and we don’t hear them, so we just stand in the queue. Now a lot of banks have a television for advertising, so we stand in the queue watching the television, not realising that it’s actually you next so someone has to tap you on the shoulder.”

A solution for them to these problems would be to have a flashing light to indicate that the next teller was free or some sort of numbering system. Better staff and public awareness of deafness would also help.

6.9 Taking things back

This was something which was considered difficult by all the participants and a large majority had never taken anything back, considering it too embarrassing.

Visual impairment

Some of the younger visually impaired group would take things back and said it was easy and staff were helpful, but there remained a great reluctance on the part of others and especially if the fault was theirs and not the shops.

“I would be embarrassed.”

“If you know you bought the wrong product and it’s nothing to do with the shop, you wonder if they’ll give you a new thing.”

They felt shops could help by offering demonstrations and Braille labelling on goods.

The older group was more confident than the younger group and had more positive experiences of returning goods.
"I do it myself. All I need is for someone to take me to the desk. After that I do the talking. The person with me is only there to guide me. I think the motto is—always buy from a shop that you know you can take it back. Never buy from small shops that don't. Don't buy anything from a market. They can you there too."

In both visually impaired groups, there were some extremely articulate young people who were very clear about their rights in this situation and unafraid to pursue them vigorously.

Hearing impairment

There was a general reluctance to take goods back, usually because they found it embarrassing to have to explain. The older group were more confident although there was still a reluctance on the part of some. One got his sister to write a letter and he took that and did not get embarrassed. The younger group often asked their parents to help out. Another did not like complaining while others were watching him as it took so long to complain. He would, therefore, prefer to go when it was quiet.

Physical disability

Like the other groups there was a reluctance to take goods back to a shop if they were faulty. Some said they would get their mothers to do it for them. The main reason, once again, for their reluctance was embarrassment.

Learning difficulty

Some had complained about faulty goods and poor service but many found it highly embarrassing and many were reluctant to complain.

"I went and ordered a tape and it was the wrong one ... I took it back to the shop ... I got a refund on it ... but I had to fill out a form ... it was dead embarrassing."

"I've done it [made a complaint]. I was in the picture house with my friend and bought tickets. When we handed them to the man, he said the person with me was too young, so I went back and complained. I got my money back."

He did not find making this complaint an easy thing to do and he found it embarrassing. His reluctance to complain was such that he would have just left without getting his money back if it had not been for his friend urging him on.

Others found it easier to have someone with them if they were making a complaint.

"Because if you went on your own, you might not know what to do and the person with you can help you."

"You might not be strong enough and know what to say and it's helpful to have a second opinion."
Some of the older groups would take things back but there was still a reluctance, a feeling of embarrassment and a preference to get someone else to do it for them.

6.10 Public announcements

Public announcements at railway stations and airports, and also in emergency situations were discussed at some of the groups. It was felt that shops and public places should give some thought to public announcements and emergency situations. Flashing lights should be installed in addition to audible alarms. Public announcements at stations and airports should be made both audibly and on screens.

The two sensory impaired groups had different needs: those with a visual impairment depending on spoken announcements, while the deaf and hard of hearing groups needed to be able to see information on a screen. Non-disabled people use both spoken and written information to supplement each other, whereas these groups were totally dependent on one medium. It is, therefore, vital that all the information needed is available in that medium.

The younger visually impaired group mentioned difficulties with public announcements. They said that Glasgow Airport did not make announcements over the loud speakers any more so they had to look at television screens for the details. If a visually impaired person were alone at the airport, they felt there was a strong possibility that flights would be missed.

Hearing impairment

These groups said that they would not understand the announcements at the railway station if there were any sudden changes. One of the older group commented that he could not hear the car radio and, therefore, would not know about any potential problems on the road. They had problems at the airport too. One had experience of nearly missing a flight.

“I was with my girlfriend when we were coming back to Scotland from Spain. I had to wait an hour before someone told us which gate. We were looking at something, not realising that there had been an announcement. Luckily we looked at the screen and it was the last call. We had to rush and we did make it but we could have missed the plane.”

He felt this kind of situation could be avoided if there were many more TV screens around with departure information. He thought that Glasgow Airport was very good because they had screens everywhere, including in the duty-free shops.

Another in the pilot group added that in the USA it was actually written on the ticket whether the passenger was deaf, blind or disabled, and this helped avoid a situation described by someone in the pilot group, of watching everyone leave the plane, and no one informing her that there had been a security alert.

In the case of fires or other emergencies, the deaf group said they would just see people rushing around and they would follow. One suggestion was to put information on screens as well. A
flashing light was the most common alternative and they felt that would not cost much. Both
groups mentioned concerns about being in toilets as they would not know what was happening, nor
would they be aware of others rushing around.

"I remember one day when I was at work, I was making a telephone call during my
tea break and I was typing away when I thought something was going on, so I
continued making my call and when I eventually turned round, there was a fireman
standing there. He asked me why I was still in the building. Nobody had tapped me
to let me know the fire alarm had gone off. So when I actually went outside
everybody realised that nobody had bothered to tell me, until the fireman arrived,
that the alarm had gone off. A supervisor asked me if I was OK, but I was just really
angry. We did have a pager but it wasn’t working."

Someone else had a pager which was tested every week at the same time as the fire alarm. It
started to vibrate as soon as the alarm went off and he had to carry it at work at all times because
of insurance requirements. While pagers are clearly the solution for the workplace, they cannot
work in public places. Flashing lights would appear to be the solution, preferably with many lights
in all locations in the building including the toilets. The younger group mentioned that even
flashing lights would not always be seen, and they might be more effective in a strong colour, such
as orange.

Although not mentioned in the groups, people with a hearing impairment may have difficulties if
a lift breaks down and the only means of communication is a telephone.

Physical disability

Those in the younger group of physically disabled people seemed to be well drilled on what to do
in an emergency. If they were in a wheelchair in a place with lifts or stairs and could not get down,
they would go to the closest member of staff and let them know they were there. If they were in
school or college, they would go to the nearest stairwell so that the fire brigade could get to them.
If they could get out, they would go out with everybody else but some preferred to wait until near
the end so that they were not pushed or rushed.
CHAPTER 7  FINANCIAL SERVICES

Summary

- Glass screens were generally disliked and made communication more difficult. High counters also inhibited communication for those in wheelchairs.
- Forms were perceived to be difficult by some and the learning difficulty and visually impaired groups would like help filling in forms.
- Cash machines were difficult for all groups with the exception of the deaf groups.

- Problems with cash machines included:
  - not knowing which buttons to press
  - not knowing which way up the card went in
  - not being able to tell if the machine who empty
  - not being able to read the screen
  - not being given enough time
  - concerns about their personal security
  - not being able to reach it from a wheelchair
  - making mistakes using it

- Both the visually impaired and learning difficulty groups reported having very variable signatures which did not always match the one on the back of their card. Visually impaired people also had difficulties knowing where to sign and often required assistance with this.
- Banks were better than building societies at providing special facilities for visually impaired people and could provide bank statements in Braille and templates to aid cheque writing.
- The deaf groups had the greatest difficulties in contacting the bank by telephone and often found them inflexible, insisting that telephone calls come from the account holder and not through some intermediary, including the Typtalk facility. Textphone facilities, where available, were not always operational.
- Many of the participants preferred to use cash rather than any other means of paying for goods or services. Writing cheques was difficult, especially for those who were visually impaired or had learning difficulties.
- Counters are often too high for physically disabled people to sign debit or credit card machines.
- Few had bought any other financial products, but some did report difficulties in obtaining car insurance, often being asked for a letter from their doctor and sometimes being asked to pay higher premiums.

7.1 The use of banks

Discussions about banks and financial services for those in the visually impaired groups often centred around cash machines and the bank environment, although the older visually impaired group did discuss what special facilities were available to them.
Banking was not such a problem for deaf people and cash cards presented no difficulties, although few of the younger groups actually had one. They did, however, have comments about information from banks, the bank environment and telephone banking.

The use of bank accounts varied amongst the physically disabled groups: some had bank accounts and others did not.

The older groups were more likely to be financially independent than the younger groups although those with learning difficulties were the least likely to have achieved financial independence, even amongst the older groups. However, quite a few did have bank accounts, often opened on their behalf by their families.

"I leave it and let my mum deal with it."

Few, therefore, had any experience of opening a bank account. One recalled that he had to put £10 in and fill in a form. It was quite easy and he did not speak to the manager and his sister completed the form for him.

Some of the older groups said that they did not have any problems with budgeting but one of the participants said that he often ran out of money the day before his giro arrived.

7.2 The bank environment

The physically disabled groups often found it difficult to get into banks. There were often steps and heavy doors to be negotiated. Automatic doors, where they existed, were appreciated.

"If I want to get money out using a cheque book I have to go up two steps and hold the door open when I'm half way in ... and people are not helpful at all."

All the groups found that the glass screens interfered with their communications with bank staff. The older visually impaired group found it difficult to hear what staff were saying and would have preferred to be able to speak to someone directly. The hearing impaired groups also found the glass to be a barrier.

"We sometimes have problems in the bank when they cannot actually see what we are saying and we are trying to show them something. Because of the glass screen and the reflection they have to move about to see what we are saying whereas a hearing person would just sit there and listen to them."

One of the older people with learning difficulties who had problems with his speech had similar concerns.

"I think they might not be able to hear me—it would block my voice from going through."
For physically impaired people the height of the counter often made communication difficult.

"I can speak through the flap where you put your money in—but people smaller or a wee bit taller have to stretch or bend to hear or listen."

The younger hearing impaired group had some experience of banks with induction loops, but several of them found them very unsatisfactory.

"Everywhere I've been the loop systems have never worked."

Both the visually and hearing impaired groups had experienced problems with queues. The visually impaired groups mentioned the difficulties of knowing which queue to join, while the hearing impaired group described not hearing the attendant calling for the next person.

Some of the people in the physically impaired group did describe the helpful staff in their banks, and said that where a person was known to the bank staff there were few problems.

7.3 Cash machines

Visual impairment

Both visually impaired groups found cash machines very difficult.

"Cash machines are a total nightmare."

"We don't know which buttons are which ... and if we put the card in the wrong way, we cannot get it back out ... I have difficulty reading what the actual screen is saying and it doesn't give you a lot of time to read, so by the time you've finished reading it, you've not got time to do anything else. There are none that talk at all."

They were aware that the layout varied between machines. There was also a problem with the different styles of button on the cash machines and the electronic ones with no raised surface were very difficult.

"The ones with the ordinary keypad. I know the number because they are the same on the phone. Whereas the ones that have nothing on are just a nightmare."

The older group added to the list of problems by saying there was no way of telling whether the machine was empty or not, sometimes resulting in them standing by the machine being quite unsure why no money was coming out. They were also conscious of the time they were taking and therefore causing a queue to form behind them. If machines were to have a speaker then everyone in the queue would know how much was being taken out. One solution might be to have an earphone socket which visually impaired people could use.

Another concern was security.
"I'm always wary getting money out of them because you never know who's watching you."

However, they felt that they could not win because the alternative to using the cash machine was to go into the bank and write a cheque and that too presented difficulties.

"You can either use the hole in the wall, which I'm not happy using, or go into the bank where you have to sign your name and I don't like signing my name. There's no happy medium at all."

**Physical disability**

The location of cash machines caused considerable discussion amongst the physically disabled groups. Many were simply not accessible to someone in a wheelchair.

"If you need to use the cash machine, the only way to do it is if you come out of your chair and hop up the stairs. It can be a bit of a struggle. It helps that you can use your card in other banks."

"You need space to push your chair into it to get close enough."

"To get money out using my cash card, I have to get out of my chair, hold on to the wall at the bank, and stand on my tip toes to get the card in."

Those who could not get themselves out of their wheelchairs in this way would not be able to use the machines at all. As well as the height of the machines, one person felt that for someone who did not have good function in their hands, the buttons were not big enough.

**Learning difficulty**

The groups with learning difficulties had quite a few comments about cash cards and their experiences of using them.

"It's awkward the first time."

"You sometimes push the wrong buttons."

The possibility of pushing the wrong buttons worried them since they thought they could overdraw their accounts and someone in one of the older groups had done exactly that.

"I once had a problem when I went to get some money. I only wanted £20 and ended up pressing £200. The whole lot came out, so I went straight to the bank and asked them to put it back into my account."

Other problems were forgetting the PIN and the machine swallowing the cash card.

There were also concerns, as there were amongst the groups who were visually impaired, about personal security.
"Sometimes it's an easy place to get mugged. Someone might grab the money."

7.4 Signatures

Some people in the visually impaired groups had signatures which varied enormously and they also found it difficult to know where they should sign.

"When they hand you the slip to sign and you don't know where to sign, a lot of people are not very helpful with that. I can sign my name but others cannot so they should really have something over it to show where to sign."

Some of the older group used signature guides (templates) which were provided by their banks, but it was not always simple to explain to shop assistants how they worked.

"If you use a card in the shop, the slip quite often is on the machine and I have one of these guides and I'll ask the girl to line up my signature and they don't understand what I mean so I have to explain that they have to put the guide where they want me to sign."

The poor and variable signature had caused one shop assistant to query whether or not it was acceptable to the bank.

Some members of the two older groups of those with learning disabilities also claimed to have signatures which varied greatly.

7.5 Information from banks

Visual impairment

The younger visually impaired group were not aware that bank statements were available in Braille. Some of the older group did receive Braille bank statements. However, despite the fact they got their bank statements in Braille, the banks continued to send out PINs in normal text.

"What I don't understand is when they send you the PIN number for your cash card, they can send out a statement in Braille, but the PIN number which is only supposed to be known by you they will not send out in Braille, so you have to get someone to read it out to you"

Banks were nevertheless thought to be better at providing special facilities for visually impaired people than building societies.

Hearing impairment

One mentioned that opening his account had been made easier because by chance he had a Youth Training Scheme (YTS) interpreter that day and he helped. Someone else said that he would not like to take an interpreter to the bank as it was confidential. Another said that he did not understand the bank’s terminology, and that procedures were not always clearly explained.
Learning difficulty

One of the younger groups had had a visit from a representative of the Bank of Scotland to their school. He explained to them how to use cash machines and also explained a budget account through which bills could be paid. This kind of visit was seen as helpful.

One of the older groups said banks could help by offering to fill in forms. He indicated he would be happy to ask for this kind of help. Most of the group found bank statements easy to understand but one did not understand what the term 'credit' meant.

The need for clear information is essential for those with learning difficulties. The following example concerns the Post Office.

"I have asked for help with postal orders. Once I sent a £4 postal order for a catalogue and it never came back. Three weeks ago I got the landlord to phone the place and they said I hadn't put the wee line on the postal order [crossed it]."

7.6 Telephone banking

None of the younger visually impaired group had used this type of service but one of the older group had and found it useful for paying a bill or checking a balance. No one in the younger physically disabled group had made use of telephone banking and it wasn't discussed in the older group. None of those in the learning difficulty groups had made use of telephone banking.

Telephone banking is not used by deaf people because of their difficulties using the telephone. One did however mention home banking which allowed access to the bank through a keyboard.

"I thought it was a great idea because it was good for the deaf ... but they don't give out information on it, so most deaf don't know about it."

Although they did not use telephone banking there were occasions when they would like to have been able to phone the bank, and others where the bank expected them to contact the bank by phone. One situation might be if they had lost a bank or credit card.

"The only problem would be if I lost my card. How do I phone them to tell them?"

"Phoning is a real problem. If I am on holiday and forgotten my Minicom and lose my card—then it is impossible for me to telephone ... but if I have my Minicom I can get through on Typetalk."

"In France I was looking for a bank. Someone showed me where it was and I went to see. But I put down my bag somewhere. When I arrived at the bank I realised that I had left my card in my bag. Now if I was a hearing person I could have phoned someone and said I'd left my bag there. I was trying to take money out to buy
something and I was explaining that I was deaf but there was a communication breakdown right away so I gave up.”

Another had a problem with his bank which had refused a Switch card because there had been insufficient turnover in his account. He did not know what ‘turnover’ meant and the bank did not explain, despite requests. In exasperation he asked his mother to phone and close the account but they said he had to write. They then asked him to phone to confirm he wanted to close the account and still would not accept a call from anyone else. He had to take time off work to go to the bank to close the account. He was never sure if the problems were a result of his deafness.

A member of the pilot group mentioned that her bank would not accept calls through Typetalk and did not seem to understand the nature of the service.

“Sometimes when I phone the bank I try to use Typetalk. The banks don’t seem to realise that this is a confidential service. It is important to us because Typetalk is how we communicate with the hearing.”

Another difficulty experienced by one person with a bank was that although a textphone facility existed, when she called she got an answering machine which asked her to leave a number which she was unable to do.

7.7 Paying for things

All the groups expressed a preference for using cash to pay for things.

Visual impairment

Since cheques were so difficult to write and paying by credit cards felt risky, as they did not know what they were signing, most visually impaired people had a preference for paying for things with cash. However even the use of cash could be difficult since it was difficult to tell the notes apart.

“I always tend to have coins in my purse because I find it difficult to tell the difference between a £1 note and a £10 note. The £1 and the new £5 note are identical—they only have about 1 cm of a difference. If you’ve got a reference it’s fine but you could easily be ripped off.”

The older group also expressed a preference for coins.

“There are two different sizes of £10 note. One is the size of a £5 note and the other is the size of a £20 note. The £1 is the same size as the £5. You can usually tell by the colour but not always. I have to check twice. I don’t like the £1 note and would much rather have coins.”

It helped if staff gave them their change in coins rather than in notes and if they separated it out for them rather than just putting it in their hand all together. The younger group who had recently been in France thought that French currency was easier because the coins had ridges on them.
While discussing paying for things, the younger group raised the issue of paying bills. These are always sent in written form so that they need help to read them. They felt that they should not have to ask someone else to read their bills to them and would like companies to send out accounts in Braille or in large print. Some members of the older group spoke of the usefulness of scanners for giving some privacy for things like bills and letters.

**Physical disability**

They all tended to use cash as they felt it was easier. One person who did pay by Switch found the counter was often too high.

> "When you go through the check-out aisle, we pay by Switch a lot of the time, so we've got to lean over the check-out on to the conveyor belt because the plastic thing to lean on is too high up. It isn't very convenient."

She added that the Switch machines where you have to sign on the actual machines were also difficult as she had to get out of her wheelchair to sign.

**Learning difficulty**

The learning difficulty group's preference for paying with cash was largely borne of a reluctance to write cheques and sign their names.

> "I would rather pay with money. Paying by cheque takes too long."

> "It takes too long. I watch other people do it and there is always a queue forms. I would definitely feel worse."

They got very concerned when they were out in shops that they would have enough money.

> "I get nervous when I do that [pay for things with cash] in case I don't have enough money."

> "If I don't have enough then I start to panic."

One of the participants of the older learning difficulty group said that he would be unable to tell if he was charged the wrong amount.

**7.8 Other financial products**

Some of the older deaf group had experience of getting insurance for cars or holidays. A common problem was a requirement to get a letter from the doctor in order to take out car insurance. They did not see why they had to do this.

> "The DVLA allow me to drive and I have passed my test and hold a full licence. The point is, I will hold my licence for another 23 years or whatever it is and they insisted that I have a doctor's letter to take out insurance."
Differing insurance premiums because of their disability was also mentioned, with one person reporting having the excess on his insurance policy increased by £50.

"The first time I got insurance they didn't realise I was deaf so there wasn't a problem. I was looking around for insurance prices and my father asked me if I had told them I was deaf and I said no. When I did tell them I was deaf there was £200 difference in the original estimate they had given me. I was angry because of that."

Others mentioned problems claiming on personal or holiday insurance because of their difficulties in making phone calls.

Few of the participants in the physically disabled groups had arranged insurance policies, although some had got insurance for their wheelchairs. This did not seem to be a problem, but many of the younger groups got their families to arrange it for them.

One of the older group had come across an instance of discrimination while trying to get car insurance.

"I haven't had problems but one insurance company told me that disabled drivers were classed as a liability. Why, I really don't know, so I went looking elsewhere but I haven't really had any problems getting insurance."
CHAPTER 8 LEISURE AND RECREATION

The group members between them had a wide range of leisure activities that they took part in. Restrictions were often seen to be more a function of time and money than of their disability. Many of the comments recorded earlier in this report about the layout of buildings and the attitude of staff also apply to leisure and recreation and, therefore, are not repeated in this section.

Summary

• The visually impaired group felt that lighting and layout could be improved. In addition, they mentioned difficulties with very large open spaces and would like some cues to tell them here they were.

• The hearing impaired group would like to have seen more information signs and price lists and a reduction in background noise. The learning difficulties group would also like to have heard a reduction in background noise.

• The physically disabled group thought that facilities were improving for disabled people in leisure centres. They would like to have seen more toilets for disabled people.

• The visually impaired group have had to contend with others perceiving them to be drunk or on drugs. The deaf group mentioned being teased and made fun of because of their speech difficulties and their signing.

• One of the physically disabled group felt other people were reluctant to approach him in pubs or other places because of a fear or a lack of familiarity of being with disabled people.

• There tended to be a preference for going to places they knew well. They said they would all try new places but those with learning difficulties were slightly more reluctant than other groups to try them out. Many disabled people tried to get information about places before they went. They resented the fact that they had to do this when non-disabled people did not have to. Even once they had phoned to get information they could not be certain that it is was accurate.

• Menus in restaurants could be a problem for those with a visual or hearing impairment. It helped if the menu was clearly presented and had everything on offer on it. Braille menus were enthusiastically received.

• Visually impaired people would like audio descriptions to be available in cinemas although some said it was difficult to listen to both the description and the soundtrack at the same time. Physically disabled people in Fife found it difficult to get into cinemas locally and they often preferred to travel to Edinburgh if they wanted to see a film. The deaf groups would like to see more films available to them with subtitles at the cinema and on video and TV. The theatre was very difficult for them as interpreters at the theatre did not work well.

• There was a resentment of restrictions being placed on their activities just because they were disabled.
8.1 The leisure environment

Visual impairment

The younger group mostly spoke about outdoor activities. Football was thought to have a good atmosphere and a running commentary of the match was relayed by local radio through a personal stereo. Others mentioned fun parks. These were disliked because they were too noisy and busy, and it was difficult to know when to get on or off the rides.

"The rides are scary too because you don’t know what they are doing and you don’t know where they are."

The older group spoke more of pubs and restaurants. Dull lighting in pubs made it difficult to find the bar and the toilets. One person would like to have seen the layout of restaurants improved.

"Sometimes there’s not a lot they can do about it because they are always trying to get as many people in as possible and it’s always the same when you are in pubs as well."

They also mentioned difficulties with very large open spaces. This discussion was prompted by an experience at a leisure centre.

"Maybe the layout could have been better because as you got in the door, there was a great big space. You knew you were going in but didn’t know how far to go."

They also got this feeling in places like Central Station in Glasgow. Different floor surfaces might have been helpful in these situations.

The problem with the open space also occurred at ten pin bowling.

"It’s the open space again—it’s quite disorientating. I feel quite uncomfortable in the ten pin bowling in Paisley, you feel quite vulnerable. I think all the lanes are close to one another so you don’t know if somebody is taking a shot in your lane or in the lane next to you."

Hearing impairment

Once again, the hearing impaired group had little to say about the actual physical environment. The younger group would like to have seen more information signs in public places and more price lists displayed so that they did not have to ask. Background noise, as in shops, could be a problem, making verbal communication more difficult.

The younger group mentioned the difficulties at swimming pools when they could not hear announcements, for instance asking certain people to leave the pool.
Physical disability

The main concern of the physically disabled groups was the layout of the places they went to in their leisure time. They found modern places better equipped than older places. Because of their interests, many of their comments centred around sports facilities. Much of what they had to say was quite positive and would suggest that building design is changing for the better. The younger group mentioned a new sports centre which was fully equipped for disabled people.

"The desks are low for wheelchair users and there are bells in the toilets in case they fall."

Swimming pools too were improving. At the Glenrothes Centre there were large changing rooms and showers for disabled people and they now had facilities to help people get into the pool.

"In the pool, [x] wouldn’t normally be able to go swimming without having to have a couple of people to him, but now they have a chair that he can sit in and they manoeuvre it into the pool."

A problem which they still commonly faced when they went out to leisure centres, pubs or other public places was the lack of toilets for disabled people, or accessible toilets being used as store rooms. Some had to rely on friends helping them to go to the toilet. Sometimes there were no toilets for disabled people and the toilets available were really small.

For those with speech difficulties, as for those with a hearing impairment, loud music made it especially difficult to hear or be heard.

Finally, the layout in pubs and restaurants was criticised.

"Sometimes when you go to pubs or parties, the tables are either too high or too low and the chairs are fixed to the floor."

Learning difficulty

There were few comments about the physical environment at places they went to in their spare time, but one commented that the strobe lights at the night club resulted in headaches and so these kind of places had to be avoided.

8.2 The attitude of staff

Visual impairment

The younger group found that the attitude of staff in leisure places was quite variable. They thought it would be a good idea if they were booking a table to mention they were visually impaired and to find out if it was possible to get someone to read the menu to them. In some places the staff could be really helpful.
"I went to a cafe on Thursday night. One of the other girls phoned up and booked it. When we got there, they were really good to us. They showed us to our table and about ten minutes later came back and read the menu to us and we got our order there and then."

The younger group had also had experience of people giving them special attention when visiting the Palace of Versailles on a recent trip to France.

"That was good. It was crowded with people banging into you all the time but we got into the rooms and got to touch the beds and that—they wouldn’t let anybody else do that."

**Hearing impairment**

The deaf groups had experiences with leisure staff which were similar to those with shop staff, with all the problems stemming from difficulties in communication. They did have particular difficulties at the McDonalds Drive-Thru when they could not give their order into the speaker. They felt it would have been better if it had been a real person at the place they had to speak into.

Although there have been reports in the media about young deaf people being barred from entering night clubs and discos, the groups we spoke to had no personal experience of this kind of discrimination.

**Physical disability**

Both physically disabled groups commented on the helpfulness of the staff they encountered when they were out, with the bar staff bringing drinks over and, in one restaurant, a member of staff cutting up the steak for one person in the group.

Another member did however prefer to have someone she knew with her if she was likely to have trouble with her meal.

"I can feed myself at mealtimes but when I’m out I always take someone with me to assist me with the meal—so it’s awkward if I cannot get someone to come with me."

**Learning difficulty**

Most people found staff very helpful. Some of the younger groups had had problems being refused service as some staff believed them to be under age if they looked young for their age. The same group said that staff should be more aware and should look out for people coming in to see if anyone was having problems so that they could help them.

### 8.3 The attitude of the public

The older visually impaired group mentioned the attitude of other members of the public when they were in pubs and clubs.
"The only thing about going to night clubs is that everyone thinks you’re on drugs. I had an argument with a customer in a pub in Queen Street. We were coming down a flight of stairs and one of the girls was taking my hand to guide me and this person said ‘We’re well oiled tonight’.

They felt they had to learn to be thick skinned, but also felt that other people should not be allowed to be abusive. How they reacted on the day often depended on their mood.

One of the members of the older physically disabled group felt that other members of the public were reluctant to approach him in places like pubs, and puts this down to unfamiliarity of being with disabled people.

“If you’ve not worked with disabled people, it can be a bit nerve wracking but after that it’s fine. This is like ... we are trying to educate the public and this is how to treat disabled people ... I tend to look on it as their loss. We’re just the same as them so why shouldn’t we be treated the same?”

8.4 New places or old

In general, the members of the groups enjoyed trying new places. The visually impaired groups said that they liked going to new places but they also saw advantages in going to a familiar one.

“I like to try out new places but if you really want to have a good time, then it’s best to go somewhere you know.”

One of the members of the older visually impaired group said she would always phone a restaurant first to check whether she could take her dog because she had experienced places that refused to allow the dog in.

“I have had a few experiences where I’ve wanted to try somewhere and they wouldn’t let the dog in.”

Being a regular customer also had advantages. One of the members of the older visually impaired group said that the bar staff at his local pub always gave him his change back separately so that he knew what money he had.

Those with learning difficulties often preferred to go to places they knew well for their spare time activities, and often received a better level of service.

“Yes [they were helpful] because they know us well.“

Their reasons for not going to new places included:

“Not knowing what it’s like.”

“Not knowing what bus to get.”
"If it's far away—you won't know how much time you'll have."

8.5 **Getting information in advance of going out**

If they were going somewhere new, they would often try and get some information in advance of going. Those who had wheelchairs were concerned to know whether there were stairs or not. Those with guide dogs often phoned a new place they might want to go to since not all venues would allow the dog in.

The older deaf group felt that any information they received in advance of going out might be unreliable and they often learnt of good places by word of mouth. They also advocated finding things out for themselves.

"The only way to get information is to go ourselves. If you ask for information, sometimes they can add bits on or they don't give the correct information ... or maybe they will say they don't have a lot to offer, so the best thing is to go yourself and find out for yourself."

One person spoke about a teletext service like that provided in France (Minitel) and how useful a similar service from BT would be.

"That's what happens in France. All the restaurants, shops, etc—it's like the Internet—for getting information and for phoning—it's excellent."

Some of the physically disabled participants felt they should not have to phone places to check on their suitability before going anywhere since non-disabled people did not have to. When they did phone, the information they received was usually inaccurate.

"Sometimes you get there to find there are no disabled toilets."

8.6 **Menus**

A problem for many in the visually impaired groups was reading menus and having to ask for help. Menus written in fancy italic writing or written up on backboards could be hard to read. Occasionally staff were quite unhelpful and refused to read it out to them. Someone in the older group remarked that when someone was reading you a menu, they never read you the prices unless you asked. One felt that because of difficulties with menus he had an unconscious tendency to stick to the same things.

The older group mentioned that some places have started using Braille menus, for example, Pizza Hut.

"Pizza Hut use Braille menus—they're great."

The younger group recalled recent experiences in Paris.
"The food was out of this world ... there were about 30 things on the menu that we had to remember and by the time you got to the end of the menu, you cannot remember what was at the start."

Menus were not a problem for deaf people, because in most circumstances they could just point but if the writing was too small, this could be difficult. One mentioned having problems when waiting staff asked what he would like with his main dish. Another commented on the difficulties of ordering in fast-food restaurants and having to point at an overhead menu.

8.7 Cinemas

Visually impaired people felt that cinemas were a problem because of the difficulty of getting an audio description, and the difficulty of listening to that as well as the soundtrack. The older groups said they would like audio descriptions to be available. An audio description is delivered via a small set of headphones and it describes what is happening. They did however say that musicals were great and theatre could be enjoyable especially when they went with someone who could describe what was happening during the quiet periods.

Some members of the older deaf group did go to the cinema but were annoyed they had to pay the full price when there were no sub-titles. Occasionally, there are films with sub-titles but one person felt they needed considerably more publicity to attract people to them.

"We went to see a film which was advertised as having sub-titles. I was really shocked because there were only eight deaf people. There was not enough publicity to let everyone know so the cinema people thought, ‘Well we’ve had a sub-titled film and not a lot of people came’, so they won’t do it again."

Another girl from the pilot deaf group would go to see foreign films because they were sub-titled. They would like to see more films at the cinema and on videos as well. They also felt all TV programmes should be sub-titled.

This group also faced difficulties in going to the theatre.

"I would like to go to the theatre more but I have to take an interpreter because I wouldn’t understand it ... but paying for an interpreter is too much hassle so we don’t bother going. The other thing is, if you do go to the theatre and there is an interpreter there, because of where the deaf are sitting—it’s too far away and if there’s music the interpreter can get confused about what is actually going on. It’s very difficult for an interpreter at the theatre."

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8.8 Restrictions

Occasionally the visually impaired group had come across some rule which applied to disabled people without any kind of thought about the nature of the disability, for instance restrictions on the use of flumes in swimming pools.

"I was told I couldn't because I was blind and they didn't like disabled people using it and I thought what benefit will my eyes be going down it."

Similarly, those in wheelchairs resented being excluded from places on the grounds that they constituted a fire risk.
Summary

- Phones were used by all age groups but deaf people had the greatest difficulty with phones and needed to use textphones or special services like Typetalk to communicate.

- Typetalk was criticised because of the need to communicate through Typetalk operators in Liverpool which added to the communication difficulties.

- Many of those with learning difficulties did not like using the phone and felt a bit afraid of it. They also disliked answering machines.

- Payphones presented some difficulties for all four groups.

- For visually impaired consumers, payphones lacked consistency and were difficult to find.

- The deaf consumers found it was often difficult to use payphones with textphones, and would like to have seen them fitted with a socket to connect the textphone. They would also like to have seen a shelf fitted so that they did not need to balance their textphone and type at the same time.

- For the physically disabled groups, payphones were difficult to use, often being too high up, and it was often impossible to get a wheelchair into the phone box.

- Those with learning difficulties found them difficult to use and would have liked clearer instructions preferably in pictorial format.

- There were advantages and disadvantages in using phone cards but the biggest difficulty was experienced by visually impaired people who could not always tell which way up to insert the card or whether the phone was one which took cards.

- The deaf groups felt since their calls were significantly longer than a hearing person’s they should qualify for a discount on their telephone bills.

- None regularly used a mobile phone but several thought they would be useful, especially to let others know where they were or to arrange help to get home. The deaf group thought they would be useful if they could connect with textphones.

- Most of the disabled people in the study were familiar with computers. Printers outputting in Braille, scanners, speech synthesisers and software to enlarge print on the screen were all making a great difference for visually impaired people. Unfortunately, all this technology comes with a high price tag and is therefore not available to all.

- The deaf group gave a lukewarm reception to the idea of videophones as they were aware of their current slowness. They did however think that pagers, fax and e-mail were all very helpful.

Communication is a fundamental human activity, but some disabled people may have limited means of communicating. Technological developments can help disabled people in a variety of
ways. This chapter focuses on the use of the telephone and the variety of problems associated with it. The technology is already available to alleviate many of these problems, but few were being used.

9.1 Phones

The visually impaired groups were happy using domestic phones but payphones attracted some criticism (see section 9.2).

Hearing impairment

One of the biggest problems which deaf and hard of hearing people had was communicating by phone. This was particularly difficult for those who did not have good speech and sometimes could not make themselves understood. As a result, many of the younger group avoided phones.

"I'm useless with phones."

They needed either to use a textphone, which allows them to type their messages in, or a service like Typetalk. This allows them to type in the message and an operator, based in Liverpool, relays the information to the hearing person and vice versa. Textphones come in various forms, usually with a keyboard which can be linked to a normal phone. They are frequently referred to by a product name, for example, Minicom, Qwerty phone, or Compact and the term 'minicom' is increasingly used by service providers to indicate that they have the facility to receive calls from a textphone user.

There were some criticisms of the Typetalk facility. One of the younger group said the operator annoyed her because she could not understand her friend's name (Ruthelle) and this made her feel quite angry. The older group used Typetalk quite a lot to phone places like restaurants. They found it very good but the English or Liverpool accents did present difficulties.

"Typetalk is very good but it's an English voice. Sometimes when I phone my mother she does not understand the English voice. So my sister phoned to explain. Why does it have to be done through Liverpool? Why could they not have one in Scotland?"

One of the older group also had a problem with Typetalk.

"I had to phone a shop using Typetalk but the shop wouldn't accept the call because it was a Liverpool accent—that's access to information for me but the shop actually objected to me using Typetalk and that was a problem."

Another issue which arose with Typetalk was confidentiality. Although Typetalk operators are bound by very strict rules of confidentiality and cannot pass on the details of any call to a third party, this may not be fully appreciated, either by the deaf person, or by the person receiving the call.
"If it's something very confidential, someone else hears it. If I want my mum to be the first to know something, it's impossible. Someone from Typetalk hears it first."

Another difficulty with Typetalk was that it took too long.

What happened when the phone rang at home was also discussed. Most had a flashing light but this was thought to have its restrictions as you would only see it if you were looking at it. If you were sleeping or in another room you would miss it. One person thought that the older-style phone ring was better.

"The old-fashioned phone was better—it had a louder ring. The tone of the new phone is very low."

Some of the younger group were reluctant to pick the phone up, while some said that it would be helpful to know whether the person on the phone was a hearing person or not.

"I never pick the phone up."

"When my mum and dad go out I pick it up because I will know it's my aunty but I cannot take messages."

"I leave it because I don’t understand what people say."

**Physical disability**

All of the physically disabled group used the telephone with no difficulties with the exception of those who had speech difficulties, who tended to avoid it. One of the older group communicated using a computerised voice synthesiser and he said that people did not understand this over a phone.

**Learning difficulty**

Most people in all of the groups with learning difficulties used telephones, although some say they were quite anxious about it, and especially about talking to people over the phone who were not well known to them.

"I am quite scared of the telephone. If someone phones me and asks me to phone them back, I don't like to phone in case it's not my friend that answers."

"I'm scared of it ... I'm not sure why ... when I phone my friends that's OK."

Those with speech difficulties found using the phone difficult and often avoided using it much.

"Some people put the phone down."
Answering machines were discussed by a few of the groups with learning difficulties and were generally disliked.

"I don't like answering machines. If I phone someone and get an answering machine I just hang up because I don't like speaking into them."

"The first time I phoned the cinema there was an answering machine telling me what was on. I hate answering machines—I got confused ... It's 'cos I don't like talking into a machine."

One mentioned the difficulties in keeping her thoughts together and how she had been taught to write things down if she was making phone calls.

"In my old school, I had a teacher who always taught me that if when I say something on the phone, especially if it's a long, long message, it might be easier to write it down, maybe not word for word, just the basics. Notes."

9.2 Payphones

Visual impairment

The visually impaired groups would like to have seen more consistency in the layout of public phones, and because of the difficulties, some avoid them.

"I tend to avoid using public phones because they are not all the same and I would need help to find it so I would either ask somebody to help me use the phone or if I could use their phone."

Someone else found the new type of payphones with the visual display difficult to use.

"All the other buttons are in different places on public phones and payphones, like the follow-on button."

Someone else mentioned a raised dot which is on the number 5 on some phones.

"Some payphones have a thing on the number 5 which acts as a marker but some payphones don't have that so for the visually impaired people who don't know how to use the phone could have a bit of a struggle and end up ringing the wrong number."

Hearing impairment

Payphones presented even more difficulties for people with a hearing impairment. There are hardly any public textphones in Scotland, and there are problems of compatibility between textphones and payphones.

"The new handsets on payphones don't sit correctly on the Compact and you also pick up all the noise from the background so it's difficult to use a payphone at all because it doesn't sit on correctly."

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“Sometimes phones are not compatible. I wish they could design a standard thing which everyone could use that each shop, restaurant, etc, could have.”

“All public phones should have a keycard for the deaf. A socket to plug in your Compact with no background noise. Portable phones could have a socket to plug into Compact. Mobiles would be great if you could connect to Minicom.”

There were also difficulties in physically handling the textphone and the payphone.

“Most payphones don’t have a shelf to put your Compact on, so you are trying to dial, hold it and type at the same time.”

Another described a situation where using the phone had become essential.

“My girlfriend broke down at Central Station and they have a textphone there but it was broken and she didn’t have any money. So she had to ask a hearing person to contact her sister and for her sister to contact me. I feel it is really disappointing that a hearing person can just pick up a phone and speak quite quickly and put the phone down, whereas we have to type and have it connected to our Compact. Two minutes for a hearing person but fifteen minutes for a deaf person.”

One person in the younger group found that the inductive couplers in telephones did not help much.

**Physical disability**

Access to payphones was difficult—they were usually too high to be reached from a wheelchair and you could rarely get a wheelchair into a telephone box.

“They are too high and you cannot reach to put your money in.”

They also found doors on telephone boxes very heavy, with a very hard spring on them. The newer style of phone box does not always have a door, but were still not always wide enough.

**Learning difficulty**

The attitude towards payphones in this group was mixed. Some found them straightforward but others had difficulties. One did not like them because of the background noise and needed to find a payphone in a quiet location. Another found them difficult because of the need to have the correct change. Quite a few mentioned difficulties following the instructions, either because of the way they were presented or the size of the instructions.

“No I don’t read instructions on the phone, I look at the pictures.”
"You go in and put your money in and even if you don't get a reply, you don't get your money back."

"Sometimes I put too much money in."

One of the members of one of the older groups had never tried to use a payphone but would like to be able to if someone would help him.

"Most telephone boxes have diagrams but they've got small writing and so if you cannot see too well, it's a total nightmare. I think the writing should be bigger."

9.3 Phone cards

Phone cards were a problem for people with a visual impairment. Few had tried to use them. They felt that they would not know how much money was left or they might not know how much money they had spent. One girl needed to use a phone card on holiday in France and said that every time a unit was used up it beeped. There was a microchip on the card which let her know which way up to use the card. However, she did have difficulties initially in even finding out if the phone operated by money or with a card and had tried to put money in the card slot. She had needed assistance to identify it as a card phone.

The groups with learning difficulties expressed no strong opinions about phone cards. Some disliked them because they needed to have a card with them, while another thought they were better because they could talk for longer. One had trouble using it and understanding how it worked.

"I went to use my phone card once and the card machine said 'no credit', so I put it in again."

The hearing impaired groups had problems with charge cards which use a spoken message.

9.4 Extra costs

The length of time it took people with a hearing impairment to make their calls led them to discuss the additional costs they incurred. Not only did they have to buy additional equipment, which was in any case unreliable, but their actual calls cost more.

"Why should we pay for the phone. We constantly pay and it's not our fault we're deaf."

"We should get a discount."
9.5 Mobile phones

The visually impaired group thought mobile phones would be useful if they had one of their own and used it all the time, but they find them difficult to use and to know what buttons to press. They thought it would be good for security if they were out and had to phone someone for assistance or a lift home.

The hearing impaired participants thought that mobile phones would be really useful if they could connect with textphones, but mobile phones are all different sizes.

The use of mobile phones was raised at some of the groups with people who had learning difficulties. They could see that it would be handy especially if they needed to get home. However, they also believed they were very expensive to run and therefore out of their reach.

"No [I haven’t used a mobile phone] ... but I would like to ... you can use it to tell people where you are."

9.6 Computers and new technology

Visual impairment

The groups, most of whom were familiar with computers, briefly discussed how other forms of technology could help them to communicate. Computers can now output in a variety of formats including Braille, large print and speech, which is a great advantage. Someone thought that as computers got more and more advanced, by the year 2000 everyone in school would be sitting with a voice-activated computer. Scanners were also very useful for converting written text into speech form. They will not, however, read handwriting.

"Scanners give you independence. I like to read magazines and books with it. The computer voice annoys me."

However, some, especially the younger group, thought that the cost of this new technology was beyond their reach.

Hearing impairment

The subject of videophones was discussed very briefly. The younger group quite liked the idea.

"If you could see a person signing it would be good—it would be better if we could sign over the phone."

"I think it would be good if it was the size of that (16" screen) television."

The older group seemed more knowledgeable about the current state of technology and said that at present the picture is very slow and people look as though they are moving in slow motion.
One member of the older group mentioned the helpfulness of staff in a Vodafone shop when he had been enquiring about a vibrating pager which gives a message, for example, to cancel a meeting or call someone back.

"In my work they don't have a telexphone so it's sometimes easier for people to leave messages on my pager. You can leave quite a lot of messages of a couple of lines. Sometimes in work, people send faxes and then leave a message on my pager to let me know they are sending one. I think the pagers are really good."

Another person commented that the staff in the BT shop had not been aware of how helpful a pager would be for deaf people.

"I saw it in TALK magazine and I showed them so they phoned London headquarters. I think all staff should have the same information. They gave me the pager to try for a week and if I liked it I could keep it, if not, I could have it changed."

A few members of both the younger and the older groups had made use of the Internet and had liked it or found it useful.

"I have e-mail. It's really, really useful. Communication is great with e-mail. One interesting thing is that it doesn't tell me when there is a message for me. That's the only bad thing."

"A lot of firms use it. When I contact other organisations they don't know I'm deaf. As far as they're concerned I'm the same as any employee."

Some of the younger group liked the idea of shopping by computer as there would be no communication difficulties, but others would still prefer to shop in the traditional way.

**Physical disability**

All of the people in the physically disabled groups used a computer. The younger group found them easy and they were occasionally used by those who had problems writing and found it either easier or quicker to do on computer. Some of the older group found it quite difficult to use computers because of difficulties with manual dexterity. Another just felt he was very slow.

"The speed puts you off. You start off fast, then you get tired after five minutes and give up."

One person commented that touch screens would make it a lot easier for him.

**Learning difficulty**

Many had used computers. However, a few found that using computers exacerbated a medical condition or made them feel ill.
“I used to have one at home but it’s broken and my dad says I cannot use it because of my epilepsy.”

“It makes you feel dizzy and your head hurts.”

“The colours give you a sore head.”

Some found typing easier than writing.

“It would be good for writing letters.”

Another made use of the different font sizes to make something easier to read while she was working on it.

“What I do is, I cheat. I put on the big sizes and then when I want to print it out, I put it down to the smaller sizes.”

Some who were not yet using computers hoped to in the future. There did not seem to be any reluctance to embrace computer technology. Some thought that communication on the Internet would be as bad as having to fill out forms, while others thought that communicating over the Internet might be easier.

“If you’re shy talking over the phone, that’s much easier to do.”

Their opinions on the possibility of shopping in some other way were quite varied. Some thought it would have advantages while others preferred to continue shopping in the traditional way.

“It would certainly be easier just using the mouse and then after you’ve finished your order, an hour later your shopping arrives.”

“You wouldn’t have to leave your house.”

“It would make people lazy.”

One had seen TV shopping but thought it looked boring and felt that TV shopping could never offer the range that real shops do.
CHAPTER 10       LIFE SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING

At the end of each focus group discussion, the question of the development of confidence in consumer settings was raised. The members of the groups were asked whether their schools or colleges had any consumer education classes, or had organised practical training, for instance about how to open a bank account.

Summary

- Most group members had increased their confidence through their own experience and through time.

- The older participants were consistently more confident than the younger ones in all the groups. Levels of confidence were also affected by personality and varied enormously within each focus group. There were some very confident and articulate young people even at the youngest ages we spoke to.

- There was no question that those with greater levels of confidence led more independent lives and the development of the skills needed to lead independent lives was increasingly important.

Visual impairment

Levels of confidence and the extent to which they were self-conscious were largely determined by personality, and for some there was considerable concern about what others thought of them. The older group was notably more confident than the younger group and the younger group expected that their own levels of confidence would grow with age and experience.

"The more experience you have with people in both respects—those who help you, people who help you too much, people who don’t help you and people who are really nice to you—you’ve got to accept that there are some things you cannot do because you cannot go around saying I’m going to do this or that. Some things you will need help with—that’s just reality—that’s the way things are."

Some people were very concerned about what others thought if they were going around holding each others’ arms.

"Just say you are walking around holding on to somebody’s arm, you wonder what people are thinking and whether they know you are blind or not. If we had leaflets, people would be more aware ... Edinburgh and Glasgow are different. In Edinburgh, lots of people hold arms. In Glasgow people don’t. That’s worse for guys, they must get some weird looks."

Another was very self-conscious and could tell when people were looking at her.

"Since I was young I have been able to tell when people are watching me. There’s
this feeling that goes through you because I would see someone behind me and sure enough they would be staring at me and people were always making fun of me and being really, really cruel.”

She very much wanted the public to become more understanding, but her confidence as a result of these feelings was quite low as were her aspirations for the future.

One person in the older group, by contrast, claimed to have always been very outgoing preferring to do things for himself. He did not like to ask for help but if he had to he would.

Mobility training was briefly discussed. This enabled the young people to become familiar with their local area or a part of the town centre and was an integral part of their school curriculum.

**Hearing impairment**

One of the younger group was a bit frightened of going to new places because of concerns about people looking at her. The older group, like the visually impaired group, was markedly more confident than the younger group. The older group spoke of the training they had received when they were younger which had gradually built up their confidence.

“I just constantly kept going shopping and that gradually built my confidence.”

“When I was about twelve, I lived in America, we used to go with the school staff to look at the shops and then at the end of two years when everyone was fourteen, then they would allow us to go shopping with our friends and that’s how we built our confidence.”

Others within the group felt they were still building up their levels of confidence.

“Sometimes when I go shopping and want something in a different size, I will ask the staff and then they bring all these different things and I say ‘I never asked’ and I get frustrated and just say ‘Look, forget it’, because I am not really confident yet. I would say my confidence is still pretty low.”

Some of the younger group said that the bank had come to the school to give them a talk and afterwards they went to a bank, but they had no strong views on whether such visits were useful or not.

**Physical disability**

The younger group did not make many comments about their levels of confidence but were generally positive and confident about their lives. Those who were wheelchair users had taken part in an award scheme which involved increasing their proficiency in using and maintaining their chair; changing a set of wheels on their wheelchairs; getting themselves out of the chair; taking the wheels off and putting them back on again; and getting back into the chair. They found this very helpful.
The older group, who had more severe disabilities than the younger group, remembered that it had taken a lot of confidence to go shopping on their own for the first time. One remembered her parents being somewhat anxious about it as well.

"Parents as well were under a lot of pressure because they worried about us maybe going into the main street and having to cross a road."

Like the other groups, their confidence had grown with time and experience and with the positive support and encouragement of school, family and friends.

"Well for me it was just time, but sometimes it's still not right—it just depends on the situation."

"I am a bit more confident but it wasn’t just through time, but through friends and family encouraging me to go and do it."

Some of the older group said that the way they were feeling on a particular day affected how confident they felt, and one person claimed not to go out much at all and put this down to lack of confidence.

"I get embarrassed in front of anyone. Going to get a haircut or food shopping for my mum."

One of the members of the older group who was a resident at a Capability Scotland residence spoke positively about the experience of living in a supported unit which encouraged people to acquire skills for independent living.

**Learning difficulty**

Many of those with learning difficulties exhibited low levels of confidence, were easily embarrassed and reluctant to do new things, particularly in front of other people. Whether they spoke up for themselves in situations where others were taking advantage or pushing them around often depended on how confident they were feeling on that particular day.

A number of them mentioned worries like not having enough money to pay for things, about having to fill a form in or write a cheque in front of other people and when a queue is forming, or even just asking for things.

One young man felt that seeing his key worker and others cope in shops made him believe that one day he would be able to do these things without having all the emotions he currently experiences.

Many of those with learning difficulties had had quite a lot of training in life skills and some had also had visits from organisations like banks and housing departments. Some thought these visits were good but others thought they made little difference as they learnt all these things from their family anyway.
11.1 Conclusions

The findings of this research show that, at present, young disabled people lead more restricted lives than their non-disabled counterparts. They are more likely to be living at home with their parents, less likely to be employed, and tend to have a lower income. They go out to the shops or to leisure activities less often, and are less likely to have a bank account or access to their own money. They probably started buying their own clothes and going out with friends at an older age than non-disabled young people, and a number of them have done few things on their own without assistance from family or friends. Nonetheless, many of the young people who took part in the research were extremely articulate, eager to lead independent lives and unwilling to accept the barriers which existed to their full participation as active consumers in society.

There were clear differences between the experiences of the groups with different types of impairment, both in the extent to which their consumer behaviour differed from that of non-disabled young people, and also in the nature of the barriers they faced. For example, the results of the questionnaire suggest that young people with a hearing impairment are not as circumscribed as some of the people in the other groups, but nonetheless the barriers which they face in communication are considerable.

The report uncovers a range of barriers which the young people experienced in their day to day activities as consumers, as well as some examples of good practice. Where such examples existed, the young people were extremely appreciative and likely to continue to patronise that provider. Barriers could be physical, caused by the attitudes of other people, or result from policies or practices, or the lack of them, which made it more difficult for the young people to gain access to the service.

Those with a physical disability largely required changes to be made to the physical layout and structure of buildings. They also experienced problems with public transport, and were to a large extent dependent on their families and friends for help.

Those with a visual impairment also needed improvements to the physical layout but fewer structural changes and more changes in the way that goods were presented, for example, improved labelling, clearer signs and more audible messages. They wanted more consistency in a variety of situations: in the layout of shops, and in the design of autotellers and public phones.

Those with hearing difficulties had virtually no problems with the layout of buildings and most of their difficulties lay in the area of communication. Where information was visible, they had fewer difficulties, but when they needed to speak to staff in shops, banks or leisure settings they found a very low level of awareness of their needs. Background noise was a problem for them in a variety of settings. The telephone, used so much in today’s society, highlighted their difficulties and was given much attention. The technology which is available can go far in alleviating these difficulties if more widely used. They were unhappy about the additional costs which they
incurred on their phone bills, and also, more generally, in higher insurance costs.

People with learning difficulties had perhaps the least well-defined impairment of all those researched and abilities varied enormously even within the small sample of this study. The corresponding difficulty in recognising this particular type of disability makes it more problematic for providers of goods and services to tailor their services for this group. Overall, this group identified fewer barriers but it must be recognised that the nature of their disability made this inevitable. What those with learning difficulties wanted was largely time, patience and a greater level of understanding, something which all the young people identified to a greater or lesser extent.

It may well be that some of the experiences described are shared with other young people, for instance the difficulty of attracting the attention of shop staff, or of older people being impatient with, or rude, to younger people. However, it is clear from the research that a very wide range of barriers exist to young disabled people which do not in any way limit the activities of non-disabled young people.

Physical barriers

The nature of this type of barrier is the most easily recognisable by the general public, but the report does highlight how varied these barriers are, affecting transport and streets as well as access to and within shops, restaurants, banks and leisure facilities of all kinds. The report shows that young disabled people prefer to shop in large modern shopping centres which are more likely to have better physical access and facilities such as accessible toilets and lifts. The physical problems are greater in older shops in local high streets, or in banks, building societies and places like pubs and restaurants in high street locations. These physical problems are to a considerable extent compensated for by the fact that staff in local shops, who know the young people well, are likely to be helpful.

The clear preference expressed for modern shopping centres would appear to put disabled people in rural areas at a disadvantage. Their ability to travel to such places will be circumscribed by the cost or availability of transport. However, the awareness of the needs of disabled people living in rural areas may be higher within their own communities than in urban areas.

Some of the physical improvements which could be made are very inexpensive, while others are more costly, for example, automatic doors or talking lifts. If a bank is being refitted, it should not cost any more to ensure that at least one of the counters is at a lower level, and it need not cost any more for a restaurant to have movable rather than fixed seating. Some improvements which may be perceived as involving a major investment, such as requiring buses to be capable of carrying wheelchairs would not necessarily increase costs significantly if low-level buses became the norm.

There are, inevitably, conflicts between the needs of different groups. While people in wheelchairs would like public phones to be lower, this may be quite inconvenient for other people. While ramps may be an essential way of improving physical access for people in wheelchairs, they may constitute a hazard for visually impaired people. The information needs of people with different
kinds of sensory impairment are likely to be quite different. This emphasises a point which emerges clearly from the research: to address the needs of disabled people it is essential to consult with a wide range of people with all types of impairment.

Policy and practice

Apart from physical access, the experience of young disabled people is to a very large extent determined by the policy of the provider of goods or services. Providers who have given thought to the needs of their disabled customers may have developed a policy about how they will meet the needs of this group of consumers. Companies which have developed such a policy are, at present, in a minority. Examples of companies which have done so are given in the Scope report In Good Company, and include Marks and Spencer, Boots the Chemists and Sainsbury's. Marks and Spencer's policy covers aspects of physical access, such as installing automatic doors and wider till points, as well as working practices such as taking shopping out to the customer's car, providing a textphone at their head office and providing laptop boards for cheque signing.

A policy for disabled consumers may encompass proposals about physical access, the provision of aids and other facilities, simple practical steps that can be taken to improve accessibility, such as painting a contrasting strip on the edge of steps, as well as the important issue of disability awareness training. Our research has shown areas in which organisations are making an effort to provide accessible services, as well as examples in which the absence of a policy, or the existence of bad practices, have made it more difficult for young disabled people to operate as consumers.

In many of the areas discussed, examples of good and bad practice went hand in hand. Banks were able to send statements in Braille, but sent a confidential PIN in print. Some banks had very poor physical access, but this was often combined with very helpful staff, particularly if it was the young person's own branch. A textphone number might be provided by an organisation, but there was no one trained to use it. Disabled parking spaces may be available, but if these are not policed they are of no benefit. Many shops and leisure facilities may simply be unaware that loud music and poor lighting constitute major difficulties for both hearing and visually impaired groups.

The research demonstrates that there is a pressing need for all providers of goods and services, whatever their size, to address explicitly the needs of disabled consumers and to develop a policy to meet these needs. What is required may not be expensive, but until a conscious decision is taken to think about these issues, many barriers will persist.

Attitudes and awareness

The young people in the focus groups described problems in finding staff, being ignored by staff and gave examples of being treated as if they were incapable of doing anything. On the other hand, many positive experiences were also reported and, when staff had been helpful, the young people were extremely appreciative.

All the groups, with the exception of the learning difficulty groups, were clear that there needed to be very much more awareness of the needs of disabled people, whether that was how to communicate with a person with a hearing impairment, how to guide a visually impaired person round a shop, or how to speak to someone in a wheelchair. Although the learning difficulty groups
did not explicitly raise staff attitudes as being a problem, they did indicate that staff often did not have enough patience with them or allow them enough time to express themselves or pay for things. The attitude of the general public, particularly older people, was also criticised.

Disability awareness training is simply one aspect of ensuring that the service provided meets the needs of the consumer. Only when staff at all levels within an organisation are aware of a disabled customer's needs, and confident in communicating with that person or providing the appropriate assistance, will disabled people begin to feel that they are being treated equally, and not as second-class citizens. Many of the problems experienced can only be improved by greater awareness. The visually impaired groups described the problems they had with queues: finding the right one, finding the end of it, and knowing when it was their turn. There are no technological solutions to these kinds of problems, and only better awareness on the part of members of the public and staff will help.

Where there was a high degree of awareness, a person's experience was dramatically improved. Where efforts had been made to give better service, this was much appreciated, and remembered. The example of the young visually impaired group being allowed to touch the furniture and fittings in the Palace of Versailles demonstrates this.

11.2 Common themes

Certain themes emerge in the report which apply to the different service areas, and are relevant to people in all four categories of disability. Many of these themes apply equally to non-disabled people: many improvements introduced to remove some of the barriers faced by disabled people would be welcomed by non-disabled consumers.

(a) The desire for equal treatment

None of the groups want to be treated differently from the population as a whole. They want to be able to operate in the same way. They do not want to have to give notice of their special needs, to have to identify themselves as being 'different', to always have to phone in advance to make sure they can be accommodated. They want to go on the same kind of holidays and travel in the same sort of transport. They want a society which is inclusive and does not separate or 'ghettoise' them.

There is an understandable resentment of any extra cost imposed by service providers, because of their impairment. For physically disabled and visually impaired people this might result from the difficulties of using the public transport system and their reliance on taxis. For deaf people it relates largely to the extra cost of phone calls. For all groups, there was likely to be a surcharge on any insurance policy.

(b) Consultation

The need for better and regular consultation is one of the key issues to emerge from the research. The young people involved in the groups want service providers to ask them about their needs. The services provided to disabled people can only improve as a result of dialogue between providers and disabled consumers.
(c) **Consistency**

Those with a visual or learning difficulty do not like shops which are constantly changing their layout, whether in the supermarket or in large department stores. This also applies to the design of public phones, cash machines, and toilets in trains, and again was most emphasised by the visually impaired and learning difficulty groups.

(d) **Education, training and life skills**

The confidence with which a disabled person is able to participate as a consumer is perhaps a key indicator for this study. The older groups were all generally more confident and independent than the younger groups. Whether cause or effect, they had more strategies for getting around the difficulties faced as a result of their disabilities. Experience therefore appears to be an important factor in establishing confidence and this tends to suggest that education and training may have a role to play.

The research shows that the attitudes of non-disabled people affect the confidence levels of disabled people. Until public attitudes towards disabled people change, education, life-skills training and practical experience of shopping and financial services would help to increase the confidence of all the groups, a large number of whom were still reluctant to take things back to a shop.

(e) **Information**

All the groups would benefit from readily available, accurate information in plain language: either about services available, for example, from banks, about facilities in restaurants, or about special showings of films with subtitles. Information must be available in formats which are appropriate to the target audience. This may be in the form of an audiotape, or in Braille, or in clear symbols. Information about how to use a phone box could usefully be presented with the use of clear pictorial symbols. The use of pictures in information about how to use electrical products appears to be increasing, as it is a way of conveying information to an international market place without the need for translations.

Information needs to be presented more clearly within shops, banks and leisure facilities. Signs must be easy to see, and labels and receipts should be in larger and clearer print. Information about an emergency situation must reach all consumers, and flashing lights should be used in addition to sirens.

Timetables can be particularly important sources of information and it is vital that these are available in a range of formats to meet the needs of young disabled people.

In addition, the visually impaired groups had particular problems with obtaining information from labels, and would also welcome some way of identifying what kind of shop they were going into.
Communication

This was an area of major concern for those with a hearing impairment. Where information was visible, they had few difficulties. The telephone was a major problem, and was given much attention by the groups researched. The fact that not many hearing people can use BSL, and the shortage of sign-language interpreters is a problem for this group. They would like more people to be encouraged to learn at least a minimum amount of sign language.

Deaf and hard of hearing people have a wide range of needs in communicating. Apart from sign-language users, there are significant numbers who depend on lip reading, and others for whom the most important improvements will come from enhanced volume, or through induction loops.

Communication was also sometimes a problem for the groups with learning difficulties. These groups frequently mentioned the need for staff and members of the public to have more time, patience and understanding in their dealings with them.

This research was restricted to four areas: high street goods and services, financial services, leisure and recreation and communication services. Many of the findings of the research are probably equally applicable to other areas such as the professional services provided by lawyers or doctors, but these areas were not specifically covered, and no conclusions can be drawn about these services.

11.3 Recommendations

In the light of these conclusions, the SCC makes the following recommendations.

A TO SERVICE PROVIDERS IN ALL FOUR SECTORS DEALT WITH IN THE REPORT

The coming into force of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 at the end of 1996 gives some urgency to the need for service providers to consider how the Act will affect them. An essential pre-condition for improving the service provided to disabled people is that providers of goods and services should have a policy in relation to their disabled customers.

1. Providers of goods and services should address as a matter of urgency their policy towards disabled consumers. Those who do not have such a policy should develop one. This policy should be evolved and agreed at the highest level and be actively supported and promoted by senior management. Senior management should be required to ensure that the policy is observed and promoted at all levels within the organisation.

2. In drawing up a policy, or in reviewing an existing one, providers of goods and services should consider and be aware of the whole range of barriers caused by disability identified by the young people in this research. These are listed in Appendix 3.
3. In assessing or drawing up a policy, and in reviewing the accessibility of their premises, providers of goods and services should involve disabled people with all types of impairment. This should be done through consulting existing organisations of and for disabled people, or through local access panels where these exist.

4. The policy should address the desirability of providing services to disabled people on the same terms as to other customers.

5. The policy should be continually monitored to ensure that its goals are being met. This should involve consultation with disabled consumers, as well as with organisations of and for disabled people.

The SCC is particularly concerned that some of the participants in the focus groups have apparently experienced discrimination in relation to the cost of financial services such as insurance. While the cost of insurance is in part determined by medical factors, there does seem to be evidence of premiums being increased on arbitrary grounds, and this appears to be an area which should be investigated in greater detail.

6. Providers of financial services should examine their policy on disabled people to ensure that no unjustified additional costs are being imposed on them.

The members of the focus groups all emphasised the importance of disability awareness training.

7. All service providers should ensure that, as part of their disability policy, disability awareness training is given to all staff who are in direct contact with members of the public. Disabled people should provide this training.

One of the main themes emerging from the research is the desire for equal treatment and inclusive services. There are situations, however, in which it is still necessary to provide separate facilities. For instance some disabled people need assistance, which may be provided by a member of the opposite sex. Unless or until unisex toilets become more generally accepted, there will be a need for an accessible toilet which can be used by both sexes.

Providers of goods or services building new premises or undertaking major refurbishment can often achieve high levels of accessibility at little, if any, additional cost.

8. Service providers should have a goal of providing inclusive services which are accessible to all. Wherever possible, facilities for disabled people should not be separate.

9. Service providers should ensure that any services available for disabled people are well publicised both through mainstream information and advertising, and through organisations in direct contact with those who might benefit from those services.
10. Service providers should ensure that any facilities available, such as accessible toilets or induction loops, are indicated clearly and unambiguously within the premises. They should ensure that these facilities are accessible and in good working order, and that where necessary, trained staff are available, for instance to answer textphones.

11. Companies offering a telephone service, or a telephone helpline for particular circumstances, should ensure that this is accessible to all, through the use of textphones, and staff trained in the use of the equipment.

The lack of consistency in design of autotellers and payphones, as well as things like vending machines, represents a real problem for some disabled people. It would be a significant step forward if service providers in these and similar areas could collaborate to agree on standard formats and layouts.

12. Service providers providing equipment for general use should consider ways in which they could collaborate to promote a greater degree of consistency in design.

B TO LOCAL CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Research by Scope has shown the particular dearth of thinking about disability in the small business sector. The small business sector in Scotland has indicated its need for guidance and assistance in understanding the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Guidance will be provided by the codes of practice which cover the various parts of the Act, and some advice and assistance will be available from an independent service to be provided by the government, which is at present the subject of a tendering process. However, it would also be beneficial, at local level, to create advisory panels of disabled people to advise a wide range of local service providers. Disabled people could advise about their needs and existing barriers, while local businesses should publicise and promote examples of good practice and any special services available, for instance store catalogues available on tape, or telephone shopping with a home delivery service.

13. Local chambers of commerce should take the lead in establishing advisory panels or forums of disabled people, representing all ages and all types of impairment, at local level, possibly with funding from local as well as national businesses, to encourage a two-way flow of information about access to goods and services.

C TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities which have responsibilities for public roads, pavements and road crossings, should ensure that as much as possible is done to enable disabled people to use them, for example, by providing ramped access to kerbs, encouraging unobstructed use of pavements and clear marking of obstacles such as scaffolding. Planning departments should ensure that the design of road crossings is consistent, and that these can be used by visually impaired people. There is evidence of widespread abuse of disabled parking spaces, which could be better enforced by traffic wardens.
14. Local authorities should ensure that the needs of disabled people are taken into account in the design and maintenance of roads and pavements.

15. Planning authorities should ensure that the design of road crossings is consistent.

16. Traffic wardens should police the use of disabled parking spaces.

D To education and training bodies

The organisations visited by the researchers demonstrated high standards of education, dedication and care. The young people who took part in the groups all had considerable resources of support available to them, and many were being challenged and encouraged to live full independent lives to the maximum of their potential.

However, their experiences suggest that the confidence levels of young disabled people are fairly low, due in part to the attitudes both of staff in shops and other places and members of the public with whom they come into contact. It does appear that young disabled people would benefit from more consumer education and with some direct practical experience of various consumer settings and circumstances.

17. Consumer education, with a practical bias, should be included in the education of young disabled people, involving direct experience of shopping and financial services.

E TO ORGANISATIONS OF AND FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

The research shows that the experience of young disabled people as consumers is affected by the attitudes and awareness of members of the general public. It seems to be important, as disabled people are increasingly living within their local communities, that public awareness of their needs should be raised. No one body has any obligation to do this, but a combination of measures could do much to raise awareness. The involvement of disabled people in disability awareness training will be an aspect of this. The increasing inclusion of disabled people in mainstream education will undoubtedly be a significant factor in increasing public awareness, and the research did seem to suggest that older people are often less tolerant of disabled people in the high street. However, it is still the case that a significant proportion of disabled young people, often those with the more severe impairments, will continue to attend special schools.

18. Organisations of and for disabled people should make themselves available whenever possible to raise the profile of disability and to raise awareness in their own local communities. They should encourage their local business community, through the local chamber of commerce, to support the creation of the local panels described in recommendation 13.
19. The government should initiate a public awareness campaign in tandem with the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act, aimed at raising the awareness of the general public of the abilities and needs of disabled people.
REFERENCES


A Clark and M Hirst, see reference 5.

15. A P Thomas, M C O Bax and D P L Smyth, “The Health and Social Needs of Physically Handicapped Young Adults: are they being met by the statutory services?”, *Developmental Medicine and Neurology*, vol, 27 no 4, August 1985.

17. A Clark and M Hirst, see reference 5.


APPENDIX 1

ORGANISATIONS WHICH HELPED WITH THE RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOCUS GROUPS

Aberdeen College
Aberdeen School for the Deaf
Ashcraig School, Glasgow
Blindcraft, Glasgow
Cantrey Bridge Rural Skills College, Croy, Inverness-shire
Centre for Independent Living, Glasgow
Edinburgh and East of Scotland Society for the Deaf
Fife Institute for Physical and Recreational Education, Glenrothes
Glasgow and West of Scotland Society for the Deaf
Glenrothes College
Glenrothes High School
Hinshaw Street Resource Centre, Glasgow
Inverness College
James Watt College, Greenock
Jewel and Esk Valley College, Dalkeith
Kingsinch School, Edinburgh
Motherwell College
Perth College
Phab Scotland
Playback Service for the Blind, Glasgow
Psychological and Hearing Impaired Services, Aberdeen Council Education Department
Rehab Scotland
Resource Centre for the Blind, Glasgow
Royal Blind School Edinburgh
RNIB Student Advisor
Social Work Department, Glasgow City Council
Social Work Department, Paisley (Art to Touch project)
Stevenson College, Edinburgh
The Ability Centre, Galashiels
The Shirlie Project, Inverness
Upper Springland, Perth (Capability Scotland)
APPENDIX 2

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY GROUP

Bill Campbell, Vice chair, Strathclyde Forum on Disability

Dougie Herd, Disability services, research and training consultant

Barbara Howie, Communications Officer, Lothian Coalition of Disabled People

Linda Kerr, Information Officer, ENABLE

Lilian Lawson, Services Director, RNID Scotland

Brian Perrett, Operations Manager, Age and Disability Unit, BT Corporate Relations

Joyce Wilson, Deputy Director, Sense Scotland
## APPENDIX 3

### BARRIERS TO YOUNG DISABLED CONSUMERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Visual Impairment</th>
<th>Hearing Impairment</th>
<th>Physical disability</th>
<th>Learning difficulties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buses</strong></td>
<td>Not being able to identify bus</td>
<td>Not being able to communicate destination</td>
<td>No wheelchair</td>
<td>Understanding timetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not being able to identify place to get off</td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty in getting on/off</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Train stations</strong></td>
<td>Having to give notice of needing assistance</td>
<td>Unable to hear announcements</td>
<td>Having to give notice of needing assistance</td>
<td>Understanding timetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doors closing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Access to station</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ferries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Require person to be accompanied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergencies on motorways</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communication with car park staff</td>
<td>Abuse of disabled parking spaces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crossing roads</strong></td>
<td>Road crossings are inconsistent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kerbs</td>
<td>Can be difficult in heavy traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Crowds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Getting along the pavement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kerbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obstacles in the street</td>
<td></td>
<td>Crowds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crowds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stairs</strong></td>
<td>Problems identifying edge of stairs</td>
<td>Communication problem if lift breaks down</td>
<td>Lip between lift and floor must be able to catch wheelchair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding stairs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lifts</strong></td>
<td>Not being able to identify buttons or location</td>
<td></td>
<td>May not be able to use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Escalators</strong></td>
<td>No means of identifying up and down</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No means of identifying when to get off</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cannot take dog</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accompaniment</strong></td>
<td>Needed to guide, help identify goods, and choose</td>
<td>Occasionally needed to help communicate</td>
<td>Often needed to help negotiate kerbs, etc.</td>
<td>Occasionally needed to assist generally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attention of staff</strong></td>
<td>Finding staff</td>
<td>Problems with subsequent communication</td>
<td>Keeping attention is difficult—staff sometimes ignore them</td>
<td>Staff ignore them a lot—keep them waiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Locating customer service desks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Helpfulness of staff</strong></td>
<td>Staff usually helpful but less helpful when alone</td>
<td>Staff sometimes unhelpful</td>
<td>Ignore them</td>
<td>Ignore them A lack of understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicating with staff</strong></td>
<td><strong>Visual Impairment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hearing Impairment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Physical disability</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning difficulties</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of staff (shops)</td>
<td>Being talked over</td>
<td>Very difficult—should pay more attention, speak clearly, look at person, have pen and paper to hand</td>
<td>High counters inhibit communication</td>
<td>Need more time and patience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Treated as if daft</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of members of the public (shops)</td>
<td>Bump into them</td>
<td>Assume if can’t hear then can’t read</td>
<td>Being talked over</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allow doors to close on them</td>
<td>Children staring</td>
<td>Need more time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Get in the way</td>
<td>Imitating their voices</td>
<td>Allow doors to close on them</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shops</td>
<td>Would like to see: consistency of layout straight aisles</td>
<td>Would like to see: wider aisles handrails</td>
<td>Older people worse</td>
<td>Being ignored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wider aisles</td>
<td>lower shelves</td>
<td>People get in the way</td>
<td>Pushed around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improved lighting</td>
<td>ramps instead of steps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>good contrasting signs</td>
<td>improved larger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>braille labels</td>
<td>changing rooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>less loud music</td>
<td>no heavy doors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public announcements</td>
<td>More audible announcements</td>
<td>Introduce flashing lights for emergencies</td>
<td>Need clear instructions for evacuating buildings in event of emergencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding out what things cost</td>
<td>Price lists should be available in Braille</td>
<td>Ensure prices on items are clearly marked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Print on receipts should be improved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifying goods</td>
<td>Goods should be identified with Braille labels</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need clear signs with contrasting colours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Researching products</td>
<td>Need to get information in advance of shopping</td>
<td>Need to get information in advance of going out in written format Information not in plain English</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concerns about purchase—need assistance Don’t understand instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queues</td>
<td>Problems finding the queue</td>
<td>Identifying who is next in the queue</td>
<td>Manoeuvring chair in queue</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying who is next in the queue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer rights</td>
<td>Reluctance to take goods back</td>
<td>As visual impairment</td>
<td>As visual impairment impairment</td>
<td>As visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash machines</td>
<td>Identifying the buttons to press</td>
<td>Too high</td>
<td>Too high</td>
<td>Make mistakes Need clear instructions Concerns about security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How to insert the card</td>
<td>Cannot get close enough in a wheelchair</td>
<td></td>
<td>Need more time</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowing if the machine is empty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough time</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerns about security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visual Impairment</td>
<td>Hearing impairment</td>
<td>Physical disability</td>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signatures</td>
<td>Vary</td>
<td>Need better facilities, eg., teaphones</td>
<td>Glass screens and high counters inhibit communication</td>
<td>Vary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from banks</td>
<td>Need Braille statements and templates for cheques</td>
<td>Need better facilities for phone contact Should all accept Typetalk</td>
<td>Counters too high to write cheques, pay by debit or credit cards</td>
<td>Would like help with forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote banking</td>
<td>Glass screens make it difficult to hear May need help with forms and placing signatures</td>
<td>Glass screens inhibit communication</td>
<td>Glass screens and high counters inhibit communication</td>
<td>Preference for cash because of difficulties writing cheques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank environment</td>
<td>Preference for cash because of difficulties writing cheques Problems identifying coins and notes</td>
<td>Asked for doctors letter to get car insurance Premiums higher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying for things</td>
<td>Difficulties with large open spaces Poor lighting Poor layout in restaurants</td>
<td>Not enough written signs and price lists Difficult to hear announcements</td>
<td>Not enough accessible toilets High tables Fixed seating</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other financial products</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leisure environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitude of staff (leisure)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitude of the public (leisure)</td>
<td>Perceived to be drunk or on drugs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cinemas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting information in advance of going out</td>
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<tr>
<td>Menus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phones</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Visual Impairment</td>
<td>Hearing Impairment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Payphones</strong></td>
<td>No consistency of layout</td>
<td>Poor compatibility of texphones and payphones&lt;br&gt;Need shelf for texphone</td>
<td>Cannot reach from wheelchair&lt;br&gt;Access</td>
<td>Difficult to understand instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phone cards</strong></td>
<td>Identifying how to insert card&lt;br&gt;Identifying that it takes a card</td>
<td>Hearing spoken instructions with charge card</td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to understand instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extra costs</strong></td>
<td>Transport Insurance&lt;br&gt;Insurance</td>
<td>Phone bills Insurance</td>
<td>Transport Insurance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>