Accessibility and Inclusion Programme for Gloucestershire - Opening Up our Visitor Destinations to All

Findings from Accessibility Audits of twenty visitor destinations from nine railway stations across Gloucestershire

by Inclusion Gloucestershire

May 2023

Accessibility and Inclusion Programme for Gloucestershire - Opening Up our Visitor Destinations to All

Final Report

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1. Executive Summary

Inclusion Gloucestershire were commissioned by GCRP to carry out access audits for twenty destination attractions in Gloucestershire, including their accessibility from nine of the closest railway stations. The objectives were as follows:

- To clarify the level of provision for disabled people at a destination and what that means for the individual and those visiting as a group.
- Ensure that visitors needing accessibility information are able to enjoy their visit more through ensuring correct and supportive access information is available.
- Help local tourist destinations understand how they can improve their communications and marketing to make their sites more inclusive and open to all visitors, including by rail.

Key Points

For many people who face disabling barriers, having access to the right information is critical for planning journeys. We found that the level, quality, and accessibility of information is inconsistent. We also found that information is not broad enough in its consideration of the wide range of people who might want to travel to destinations.

Connections are a huge barrier, with a lack of regular public transport outside large urban areas. Pavements, paths, crossings, and kerbs are often inaccessible, inconsistent in quality and accessibility, and sometimes non-existent.

Accessibility is interpreted in a narrow way – with a focus on physical accessibility. People with learning disabilities, neurodivergence, hidden disabilities, disabled children, and others, as well as non-English speakers are not represented in access information or promotional materials.

Interpretation of the accessibility standards varies across destinations, often with a narrow focus on achieving minimum standards. Improvements are needed in relation to accessible facilities such as toilets particularly. In practice, a destination or stations' accessibility also varies depending on the time, day, or season, because staff or facilities are only available at certain times.

Findings

Information

- Limited information to help people with a range of requirements decide whether the venues are accessible or not, with a narrow focus on meeting basic requirements for physical accessibility.
- Lack of consideration of the needs of people with hidden disabilities, neurodivergence, learning disabilities, sensory impairments, and non-English speakers.
- Lack of, or poor quality, information about public transport connections (both at train stations and at destinations).

- Lack of accessible information or signage at destinations.
- Limited diversity in promotional materials.

Transport

- Lack of, or limited, public transport connections (including accessible taxi services) for non-drivers for locations outside large urban areas.
- Roads and pavements inaccessible for wheelchair users, buggies, and mobility aid users.
- Poor information and signage leading to destinations.
- Train stations themselves have good accessibility features. Help points, Passenger-Assist and QR codes are effective, but non-staffed and small isolated stations can be a challenge for disabled people.

Facilities

- Most destinations are partly or mostly accessible for wheelchair users.
- Mixed interpretation and application of accessibility requirements.
- Poorly equipped accessible toilets, with many not wheelchair accessible.
- Lack of play equipment for disabled children.
- Limited availability of quiet spaces, breast-feeding areas, and prayer rooms.
- Lack of wheelchair/mobility scooter hire.
- Limited bench and rest area availability.
- Limited sign up to Keep Safe scheme, or accreditations relating to disability.

Recommendations

- Improve accessibility of information and communicate information in a range of ways so people can make informed decisions about visiting.
- Broaden the scope of accessibility to include people with learning disabilities, neurodivergent people, people with mental ill-health, with multiple disabilities, hidden disabilities, and non-English speakers.
- Improve accessibility for a wide range of visitors – in particular, essential facilities such as toilets and refreshment services.
- Improve diversity of representation on promotional materials.
- Work with other destinations to share good practice.
- Ask people with lived experience of disability for their advice and consider forming partnerships with local community groups and disability organisations.
- Provide training opportunities for all staff and volunteers to improve accessibility.
- Widen the range of volunteering and employment opportunities to include more people who have lived experience of a disability.
- Destinations, transport providers and local authorities could work in partnership to devise and improve accessible route options and standardised information.
- Transport providers and road infrastructure authorities could work together to improve routes between stations, bus stops and locations.

2. Introduction

Inclusion Gloucestershire produced this report as part of a project commissioned by the Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership (GCRP). This report presents the findings of the twenty audits, along with our recommendations. Each of the individual audits can be found in the Appendices.

2.1 Setting the Scene

2.1.1 Regional demographics

These statements are taken from a report published by the Barnwood Trust in 2020 titled The World Before Covid. http://www.barnwoodtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/The-world-before-Covid-19_Desk-Research_Final.pdf

"There are approximately 9000 working age adults living with a serious physical disability and a further 30000 living with moderate physical disabilities in the county."

"According to the Gloucestershire Population profile for 2016, approximately 1.4% of the population (aged 16+) reported blindness or a partial visual impairment (approximately 8,870 people) and 6.8% reported deafness or hearing loss (approximately 43,082 people)."

"In Gloucestershire, learning disabled people make up around 2.3% of Gloucestershire's adult, and 5.2% of the school-aged population. There are therefore, approximately 11,913 learning disabled adults (2,437 of whom have moderate or severe learning disabilities) and 4,955 school children known to have a learning disability in the county."

"Within Gloucestershire, there are approximately 75,012 adults (aged 16+) with common mental health challenges. Almost two-thirds of these (64%) were recorded as living with depression and in the period 2017-18 alone, 7,610 adults were newly diagnosed. Both of these trends were said to be increasing."

"According to the latest Census data, approximately 8.4% of Gloucestershire's population were from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic Group (BAME) – lower than the national average (14.6%). The largest proportion of people from BAME backgrounds lived in Gloucester City (10.6% of the population) whilst the smallest proportion lived in the Forest of Dean (1.5% of the population)."

2.1.2 Reasonable adjustments? Getting around in Gloucestershire

Before we consider the findings of the audits, we thought it helpful to provide some context. The team of assessors shared their lived experiences of travelling and visiting destinations in Gloucestershire.

We are used to the term “reasonable adjustments” in relation to how organisations are required to make their premises and services accessible. As a team, we discussed how the term “reasonable” can appear that organisations have a range of reasons why not to adjust, such as cost or listed building status.

Through our discussion as a team during this project, it became evident that disabled people make radical adjustments all of the time to deal with the barriers they face. Some of these include:

- Not using trains because of anxiety about unexpected platform changes or delays which can lead to them missing a connection, of not being able to hear announcements about platform changes or delays and of missing stops because of not being able to hear the announcements. Some people had experiences of being met with rude or defensive staff when they asked for help or information.
- Not going out because the pavements are uneven and there are no dropped kerbs, bins obstructing the pavements on bin day.
- Avoiding places where they know they are going to have to ask for access, or for things to be moved.
- Not going to certain places (for example to rural locations, destinations outside the city or town) because of a fear of getting stranded and a lack of transport options.
- Not being able to get a wheelchair accessible taxi when needed, and at short notice.
- Booking a wheelchair accessible taxi, only to find it cannot cater for their wheelchair, or the driver is reluctant to support them getting in or out.
- Being banned by a taxi company because of having had to cancel taxis previously at short notice.
- Not arranging to go somewhere because there is no support on that day to enable them to get ready in time, to drive the car, or accompany them.
- Not going somewhere because there is incomplete or no information about accessibility.
- Not taking a job, missing face to face meetings, or networking opportunities because there is no transport, no flexibility in travel times, or fear of missing connections and being stranded.
- Not socialising in the evening because of a lack of transport.
- For journeys that cannot be taken by bus or train, the cost of taxi travel is prohibitive. One individual recently went to a concert in Birmingham and although the concert ticket cost £45, the taxi fare was over £200. The return taxi fare to a rural location for a day out can cost in the region of £100.
- More subtle messages are conveyed by websites or materials where they are not represented, leading to people being less likely to visit, especially if they know they will have to ask for adjustments to be made.
- Avoiding or being anxious about using accessible facilities because of the risk of being challenged if their disability is not visible.

So, when at some locations we are told that few wheelchair users or disabled people visit, we urge all stakeholders to consider these factors as part of the reason, and to support them in considering what improvements can be made.

2.1.3 Planning is everything.

Although the experience of an individual before they reach a destination is nothing to do with that destination, it has everything to do with whether or not, or how, an individual can get to where they want to go, and what state they will be in when they get there. The idea of just “popping out somewhere” is not a reality for most of the team. For people who have support in the mornings there are a series of steps they need to take, which often includes negotiating arrangements with support providers around staff availability and timings of care provision, and again availability of staff if needed to accompany them on the journey. Duration of a trip can also depend on staff as well as transport availability. Transport considerations such as whether there is public transport and if so, how they will get to the train station, bus stop, or whether taxis are available. Most of us want to go to destinations with family or friends. This necessitates working out whether people can travel together or if they need to arrange separate transport. Thus, increasing the factors that have to be considered. People who have fluctuating health conditions can often experience periods of time where they cannot go out as planned, so making last minute changes can be stressful, especially if everything has been carefully planned in advance. There is the risk that taxi companies can refuse to take someone if they have cancelled trips previously.

The freedom to choose when and how to go out to work or for leisure purposes is curtailed. This is why, the availability of information, good connections and well considered accessibility are vital.

2.1.4 Ideas and assumptions

It is important to be aware of the assumptions that are made, either explicitly or implicitly, about disabled people. Some things that we have heard when doing accessibility audits.

“We don’t get many people with disabilities visiting us.”

“*We’ve never thought about that.”*

“I don’t know if we have that facility, let me ask my boss.”

Some of the things that are not said but are implicit in the way things are set up. For example:

This location is fully accessible. Message: all disabled people have the same experience.

Things cannot be reached independently from a wheelchair, doors cannot be opened, assistance buttons cannot be reached, signage is too high or too complicated. Message: disabled people do not travel without a carer.

When arriving at the train station, there are no clear signs saying it is step free or not, or it is unstaffed. The accessibility maps are complicated for anyone with a learning disability because they use a system of codes for levels of accessibility. Message: disabled people will have planned ahead, fully researched their journey, and made all the right arrangements. They will also have full access to online services. Or they will be accompanied by a carer.

The location is accessible, but there is no accessible transport, or accessible route there. Message: the journey beyond the gates of our location is someone else's business.

Special arrangements have to be made, the access information is somewhere else (not on the main website), you have to ask for assistance or access when you arrive. Message: accessibility is an add-on or a "wish we could have, but…," rather than built in to everything we do.

2.1.5 What is accessibility?

The term accessibility itself became a topic of discussion between us throughout the project. All of the team had their own very individual experience of what was or was not accessible, and we talked about how different everyone's experiences could be. Clearly one wheelchair user does not have the same experience as another wheelchair user and one autistic person will experience different challenges to another. One individual may need to contend with a combination of barriers due to a learning disability, physical disability and/or mental ill health. While this seems obvious, in reality the process of attaining a standard of accessibility could be driven by a standardised interpretation of the word for those without any lived experience to draw on. Constraints over funding could lead to a narrow and minimalist interpretation of accessibility. For organisations, especially those with limited budgets, the idea of making their location fully accessible for everyone could feel like a challenging process.

2.2 About Us

2.2.1 Inclusion Gloucestershire

Inclusion Gloucestershire is an all-age all-disability user-led organisation based in Gloucester. The charity was formed in 2016, bringing together two user led charities. The work activities of the organisation include engagement, training and development, quality checking, research, strategy, and partnerships. The access audit work draws on

many years of experience auditing in a range of different environments. The organisation's vision is to help achieve an inclusive society that values, respects, and includes disabled people every day and in every way.

2.2.2. The Auditors

All members of the team work for Inclusion Gloucestershire on different projects and bring their professional and personal experiences to this project. The team consists of ten individuals, seven women and three men, between the ages of twenty and sixty years of age. The team reflect different living situations – some live alone, some with family and some in supported accommodation. The team is made up of single people, people in relationships and people with young and grown-up children. The team all live in Gloucestershire, in various rural and urban locations. Some people have paid care which ranges from around the clock support, to several hours a week, and some do not.

The seven Expert by Experience Assessors have a range of lived experience including physical disability, learning disability, autism, mental ill health, sensory impairment, and combinations of these. Three people worked as coordinators, supporting with the coordination of the audits.

Out of the seven experts by experience, five people are wheelchair users and two are ambulant. Two wheelchair users have access to and can drive their own vehicles. One person owns a Motability vehicle and needs staff at their accommodation to be available to drive it. One person lives in supported accommodation where there is sometimes a vehicle available, but they can only use it when they have staff available who can drive it, and when it is their allotted time for having one to one support. One person lives alone, has around the clock support, and does not have access to private transport. This person uses buses regularly, taxis and then trains. The two people who are not wheelchair users, use public transport as they do not have their own transport. The three coordinators use their own cars, or public transport.

2.3 What we did, and how we did it.

2.3.1 Framework and Approach

The framework was developed by experts by experience at Inclusion Gloucestershire. It is designed to consider the process from planning a visit, getting to the location, and then getting around the location itself. The framework requires the assessors to consider each trip from a range of perspectives.

We used a secret shopper approach. This meant that none of the destinations were aware of our audits before we visited. This also meant that we looked at the locations from the perspective of any visitor, working with the information we found as any visitor

would on a visit. Where we could not find information about an element, after searching for it on the website, on promotional material or at the location itself, we would select a “No.” Where we could not be sure, we put a “U” for unknown. Where the information was not evident the recommendation would be to display this information clearly. For many of the locations staff were not available or could not answer our questions. Where a location is unstaffed, we would put a “not applicable,” but if we could not get information because staff were not available or unable to provide the information either way, we put “U” for unknown.

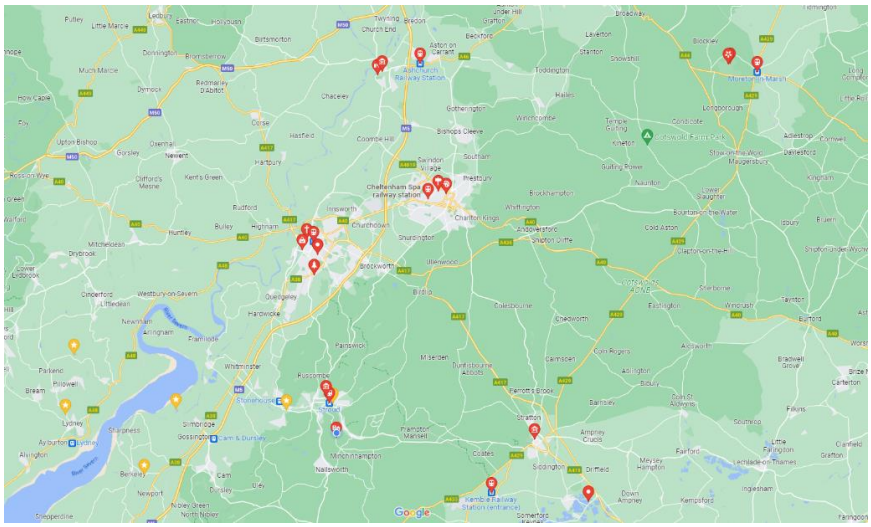
Where we could, we spoke to visitor-facing staff at the destinations, and we explained to them what we were doing. Most of the people we spoke to were interested in what we were doing, and keen to hear the findings.

We researched the websites for the locations we were visiting, and used what information was available to plan the routes. We started the audits from the nearest train station. Where possible, we used public transport, and where this was not possible, we used our own transport and taxis. Two of the coordinators learned to drive one of the Motability cars so taxis did not need to be used. For some of the visits, we needed to carry out separate visits due to lack of availability of transport, or to fit in with the opening and closing times of the locations themselves. We planned around rail and school strikes.

We used photographs and videos to record evidence on the visits. The review and write-ups were shared between the two people doing the audit working to people’s strengths and abilities.

2.3.2 Routes and Destinations

The team audited twenty visitor destinations and nine railway stations across Gloucestershire between the end of December 2022 and mid-March 2023.



The railway stations ranged from a bustling city station to tiny unstaffed rural stations. The visitor destinations included open common areas, canal walks, town museums, places of worship, a shopping area, and attractions popular with families and children. We wheeled and walked and used buses, cars, taxis, and trains.

- Ashchurch Railway Station to Tewkesbury Abbey, and Tewkesbury Museum
- Gloucester Railway Station to Gloucester Quays, Robinswood Hill, Gloucester Cathedral and St James' City Farm.
- Lydney Railway Station to Dean Forest Railway, and Mallards Pike
- Kemble Railway Station to Corinium Museum and South Cerney Outdoor
- Moreton-in-Marsh Railway Station to Cotswold Falconry Centre and Batsford Arboretum
- Stroud Railway Station to Stroud Farmers Market, Rodborough and Minchinhampton Common, and Stroud Museum.
- Cheltenham Spa Railway Station to The Wilson Art Gallery and Honeybourne Line
- Stonehouse Railway Station to Stroudwater Canal
- Cam and Dursley Railway Station to WWT Slimbridge and Cattle Country Farm Park

3. Key Themes

Three key themes arose from the findings.

3.1 Information

The availability and quality of information is key in enabling people to make informed decisions about whether they can get to and from a location and whether they can get around the site when there. One of the findings of the report is that a great deal more could be done to improve the availability and quality of information to enable people to plan their trips. This includes improving the accessibility of websites, the provision of information in alternative formats, giving better accessibility information, and reflecting a more diverse group of people. We found that information at train stations was good in terms of train timetables, but poor in terms of onward travel, and local attractions. The lack of available staff contributed to this. Positioning and format of information could also be improved. Information was not available regarding how to get from one place to another. Many of the organisations had some information about bus or rail connections but these were not detailed, and we did not find information about how accessible these connections were.

3.2 Connections between stations, bus stops and locations.

Connections between stations, bus stops and locations were a major issue for the auditors. Connections were made inaccessible because of the condition or lack of

pavements, dropped kerbs, or safe crossing points etc. Apart from the urban centres of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury, bus times were not frequent. In some of the rural stations, bus routes were infrequent if available at all. Taxi services did not have wheelchair accessible taxis or if they did, they had to be booked well in advance, and these were limited to working outside school run timings. For more information about people's experiences of using buses and taxis, please see the Appendix.

3.3 Accessibility – scope and interpretation

Accessibility in terms of the scope of disabilities included, and the way it was interpreted was inconsistent and patchy. Accessibility was considered from a physical perspective i.e., whether a location was wheelchair accessible or whether there was a wheelchair accessible toilet. Accessibility for people with learning disabilities, hidden disabilities or people who are neurodivergent was not apparent in any of the accessibility information. What was described to be accessible did not always turn out to be accessible and we found there was no standard interpretation in practice.

Accessibility was an add-on consideration for some locations, which appeared to be driven by a tick-box approach. We found one location which excelled in terms of accessibility – both in terms of the information they provided before people visit and the actual visitor experience. This location seemed to have been designed with accessibility in mind.

4. Audit findings and Recommendations

4.1 Planning a Visit

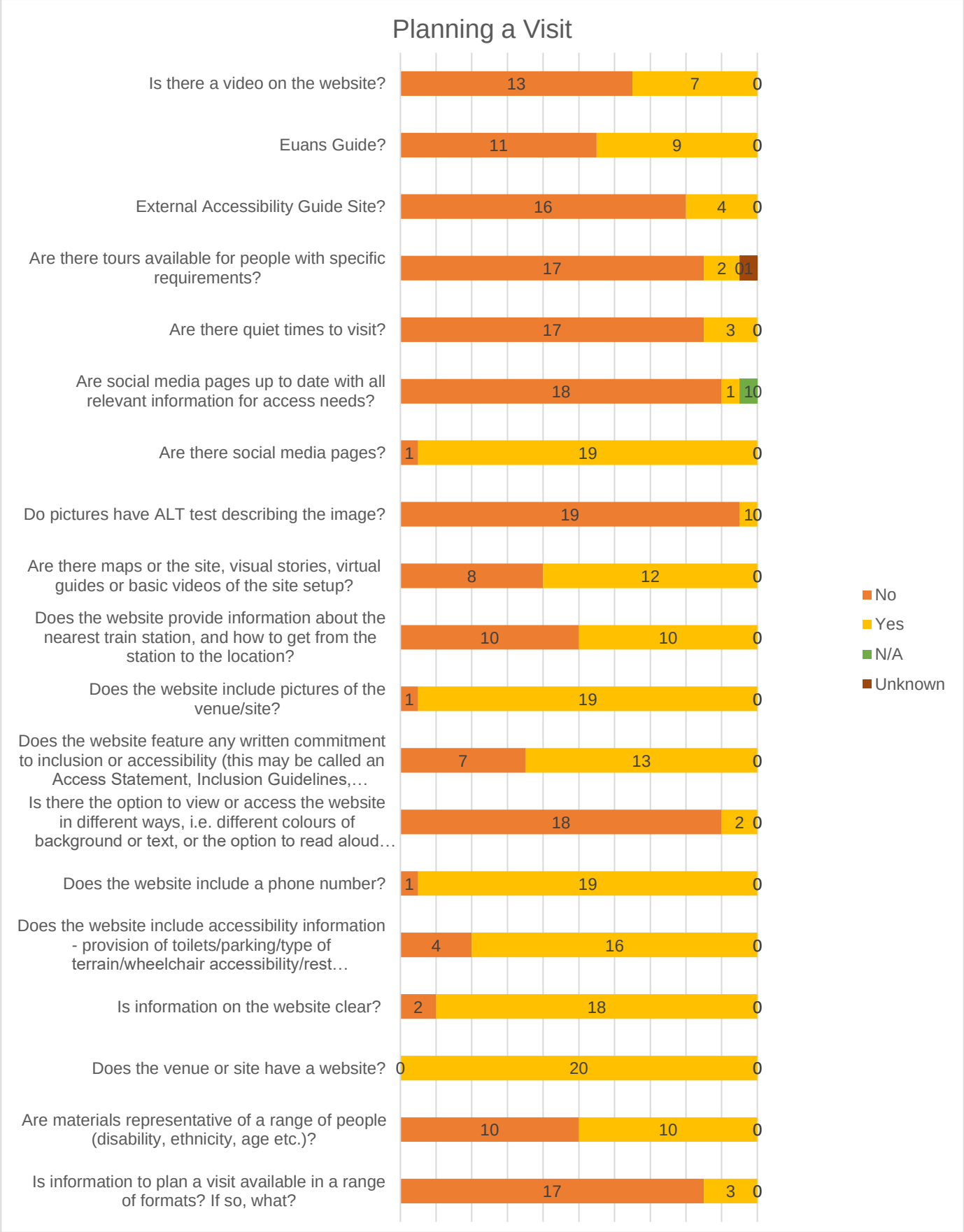
4.1.1 Findings

For most of the locations, we could not find information in alternative formats. Looking at the promotional materials including imagery on websites and leaflets, we looked at who was represented at these locations. Ten of the locations did not have a diverse representation in their promotional materials, featuring only white non-disabled people. The other half had some diverse representation but within this group the range of diversity was limited in terms of type of disability, culture, and ethnicity.

One location had a webpage with accessibility controls such as Recite Me. A handful of others referred to taking accessibility guidance into account when developing their website, in terms of how the screens appeared, the layout, size and spacing of the text and whether or not the pages could be used with assistive technology.

Thirteen of the settings had some form of accessibility statement or commitment on their website. Sixteen of the sites mentioned accessibility. The level of detail provided was patchy and inconsistent. It was hard to find information about accessibility on some websites because it was buried within another section such as the Frequently Asked Questions, or as a link at the bottom of the webpage along with the copyright, in tiny text. Some websites did not have a search field which made it even harder to find.

Accessibility was always described in words and ranged in length from a short paragraph to full pages with good levels of detail and descriptions. The accessibility information itself was not written in an accessible format – so there were no plain English, braille, Easy Read, or audio versions of the accessibility information. Apart from the one website with the Recite Me feature, none of the websites offered information in different languages, or a way for people to access information in different languages.


Planning a Visit
Is there a video on the website?
13
7
0
Euans Guide?
11
9
0
External Accessibility Guide Site?
16
4
0
Are there tours available for people with specific requirements?
17
2
0
1
Are there quiet times to visit?
17
3
0
Are social media pages up to date with all relevant information for access needs?
18
1
1
0
Are there social media pages?
1
19
0
Do pictures have ALT test describing the image?
19
10
Are there maps or the site, visual stories, virtual guides or basic videos of the site setup?
8
12
0
Does the website provide information about the nearest train station, and how to get from the station to the location?
10
10
0
Does the website include pictures of the venue/site?
1
19
0
Does the website feature any written commitment to inclusion or accessibility (this may be called an Access Statement, Inclusion Guidelines,…
7
13
0
Is there the option to view or access the website in different ways, i.e. different colours of background or text, or the option to read aloud…
18
2
0
Does the website include a phone number?
1
19
0
Does the website include accessibility information - provision of toilets/parking/type of terrain/wheelchair accessibility/rest…
4
16
0
Is information on the website clear?
2
18
0
Does the venue or site have a website?
0
20
0
Are materials representative of a range of people (disability, ethnicity, age etc.)?
10
10
0
Is information to plan a visit available in a range of formats? If so, what?
17
3
0
No
Yes
N/A
Unknown

Four locations had a link to their accessibility information on Visit England's website https://www.accessibilityguides.org/. One location had their own accessibility information in addition to the visit England information, but the others had delegated this to the Visit England website. We saw nine of the locations reviewed on Euan's Guide https://www.euansguide.com/ through google searches and two locations had links on their websites to the Euan's Guide.

Twelve of the locations had some form of map or visual guide on their website, but these did not contain information about barriers to access, or specific details about terrain and gradient. Seven locations had used videos which were great to see. While all of the websites use photographs, they were not used to illustrate the routes or facilities in a way which could help people decide how to access the location.

On the location websites, where accessibility was mentioned, they did not include people with a learning disability, neurodivergent people or people with hidden disabilities or mental ill-health. There was a focus on physical accessibility for people in wheelchairs, or with limited mobility, visual impairment, and hearing impairment. Some websites described sights, sounds, and spaces, but we were not able to find any information which reflected that the needs of autistic people or people with a learning disability had been considered.

Only three of the twenty locations referred to quiet or busy times to visit.

4.1.2 Good Practice

WWT Slimbridge have produced a video which takes visitors through the site and shows how accessible it is. St James City Farm have also uploaded a video which shows the locations' physical accessibility. Despite different budgets and levels of film production, both videos do a good job of showing potential visitors some of the key things they need to see before deciding to visit. Stroudwater Canal Walk is featured on a Royal Geographic Society website. https://www.discoveringbritain.org/activities/south-west-england/walks/cotswold-canals.html . An audio guide can be downloaded onto a mobile device and listened to when walking along the route. This was great – audio recordings bring the place to life in a way that text information does not.

4.1.3 Recommendations

- Improve website accessibility.
- Broaden the scope of accessibility to include people with learning disabilities, neurodivergence, hidden disabilities, and mental ill-health.
- Consider highlighting the benefits for different groups of people, not just the barriers.
- Increase the diversity of people represented on websites and in promotional materials.

- Provide information in different formats.
- Use maps with photos to support information.
- Show what the destination looks, sounds, and feels like. Include specific information such as terrain, gradient, steps, fences, gates, livestock, dogs, bicycles, shelter, rest areas, quiet times, busy times, and mobile phone coverage.
- Where there are points of interest such as history, environment, nature, and conservation, create audio clips so people can download and listen to them at the site.
- Offer tours for people with special requirements. Consider developing tours led by people with lived experience.

4.2 Approach and Car Parking

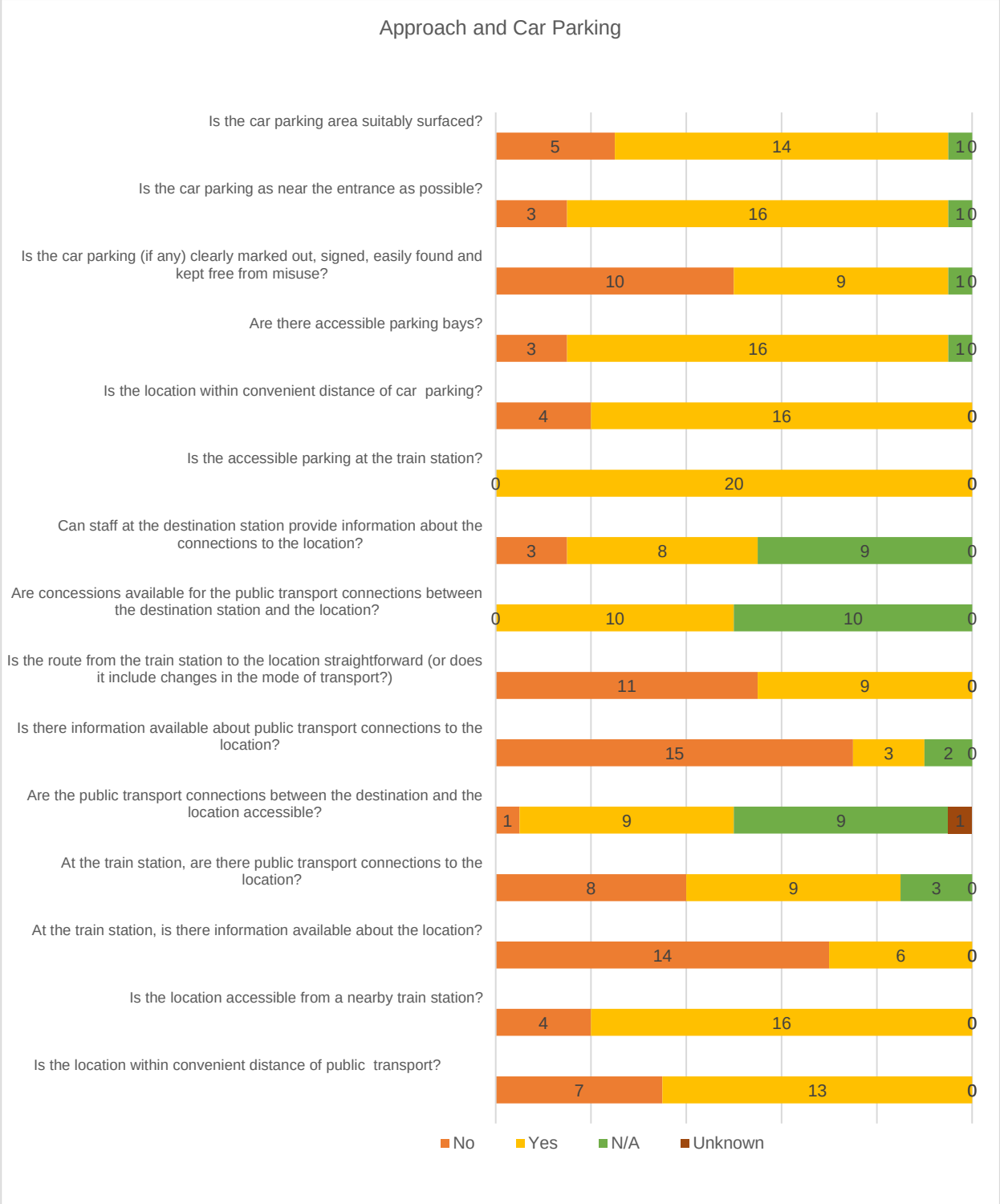
4.2.1 Findings

Two locations were located close to the train station, so we did not look at the public transport connection for these (Stroud Farmers Market and the Honeyborne Line). Instead, we looked at the walking/wheeling route. Sixteen of the locations had a train station nearby. But, for wheelchair users or people with limited mobility, twelve of these locations could not be accessed by bus because either, there was no bus route to the location, or the route between the nearest bus stop and the final destination was via a busy road with no pavement, limited pavements, uneven ground, high or low verges, no dropped kerbs, and or no crossing areas.

This left six locations which could be accessed by bus from the train station. These were all urban locations, in Tewkesbury, Gloucester and Cheltenham.

Most of the stations provided little or no information about the locations we visited and no specific information about connections and routes to the locations. Some of the larger stations had leaflet stands, and we found that some of the more well-known destinations had glossy leaflets available, but some of the smaller destinations were not represented. This was reflected in our conversations with station staff. Where there were staff, they were very friendly and helpful, but did not have much information about smaller destinations and the connections to them. Station staff we spoke to were knowledgeable about Passenger Assist, and accessibility considerations for using the trains. For most of the visits, we did not encounter train station staff, either because the stations were unstaffed, or staffed for only part of the day or week. All of the train stations had accessible parking.

Most of the train stations were tidy and well maintained. Where there were ramps and steps they were well marked out and easy to use. The surfaces of the ramps were good, and the gradients were gradual, with good space for turning.



Sixteen of the locations had parking within a good distance of the entrance, and the same percentage had some form of accessible parking and accessible parking was as near the entrance as possible. The parking areas were mostly suitably surfaced. Accessible parking spaces were not always visible or clearly marked out.

4.2.2 Good Practice

Where we met staff at the railway stations, they were all polite, helpful, and knowledgeable about Passenger Assist. Their communication was clear. Using the Help Points, we found information about train arrivals to be clear, audible, and well-paced. One individual with a learning disability rated this highly.

WWT Slimbridge had the largest number of accessible spaces, and these were generous and very clearly marked out. There was no risk of someone accidentally parking in these spaces or encroaching over the lines. All of the railway stations had clearly marked out spaces close to the entrances.

4.2.3 Recommendations

Train Stations

- Improve staff knowledge about local destinations and connections to them.
- Lower noticeboards, and other displays to make them visible for people in a seated position. Place help points and information boards closer to each other.
- Avoid blocking the area in front of information boards.
- Highlight obstructions such as bollards and metal barriers.
- Where there are announcements over speakers, check that these are audible when the train is at the platform and ensure that live displays are accessible for people at a seated level.
- Provide signage that makes it clear where there are no staff at a station, or times when staff are available.
- Consider people who have not accessed (or cannot access) the online information about station accessibility. To make it truly accessible, account for those who would like to be able to turn up without planning extensively, as those who do not face disabling barriers are free to do.
- Provide information about connections to local destinations, including accessible routes. Consider providing audio information about connections to local attractions on the Help Point. Including accessibility of routes.
- Work with local organisations to devise information and maps with key accessible route information from station to door.

Destinations

- Organisations to provide detailed information about accessing the location using public transport – for example, where to get off the bus, how far to walk or wheel and key landmarks And whether the route between the bus stop is wheelchair accessible or not.
- Increase signage to destinations along routes.

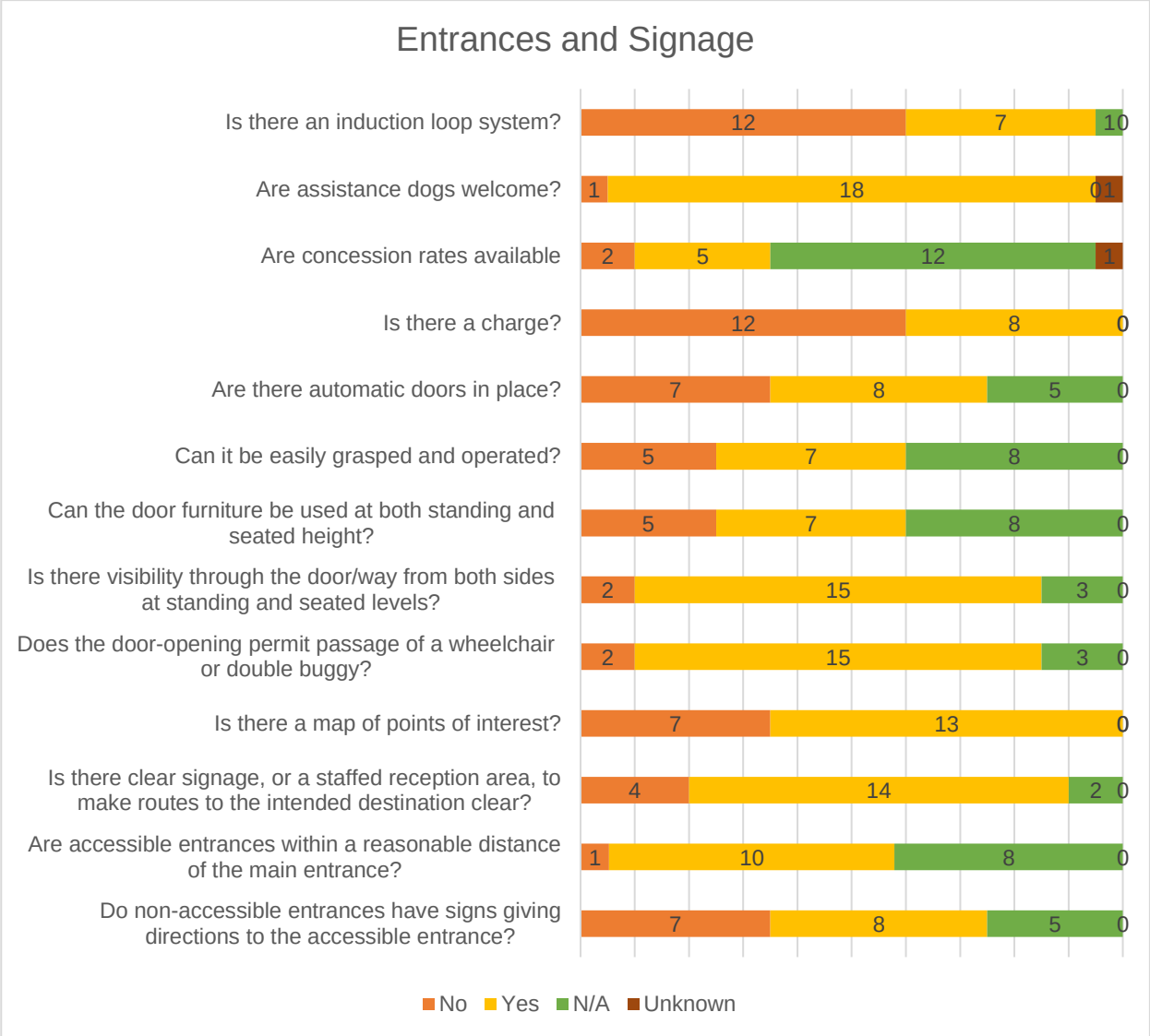
On the roads

- Ensure there is the provision of pavements, improve the quality of pavements, and crossing points.
- Improve signage to enable access between bus stops, train stations and locations.

4.2 Entrances and Signage

4.2.1 Findings

Of the indoor locations, all but one had accessible entrances which were clearly visible. One location required visitors to make a phone call to be allowed access to a back entrance. Where the locations had a physical entrance door, all but one of them was wide enough for a wheelchair or double buggy. Most had good visibility through the entrance, but then there was a more even split when it came to there being accessible door furniture and automatic doors.



Four out of twenty locations did not have a reception area or good signage at the entrance point so that visitors could find their way to the route. Some of these were outdoor locations. Seven out of twenty sites did not display a map and only two out of twenty did not give any information about whether or not they welcomed assistance dogs. Twelve of the twenty locations were free to access. Out of the eight that had a charge three of these did not offer a concessionary rate. It is worth noting however that some locations did not offer a concession to the disabled person, but their carer. And one location required the disabled person to bring evidence of their disability – such as a GP letter. Seven locations had induction loop systems.

4.2.2 Good Practice

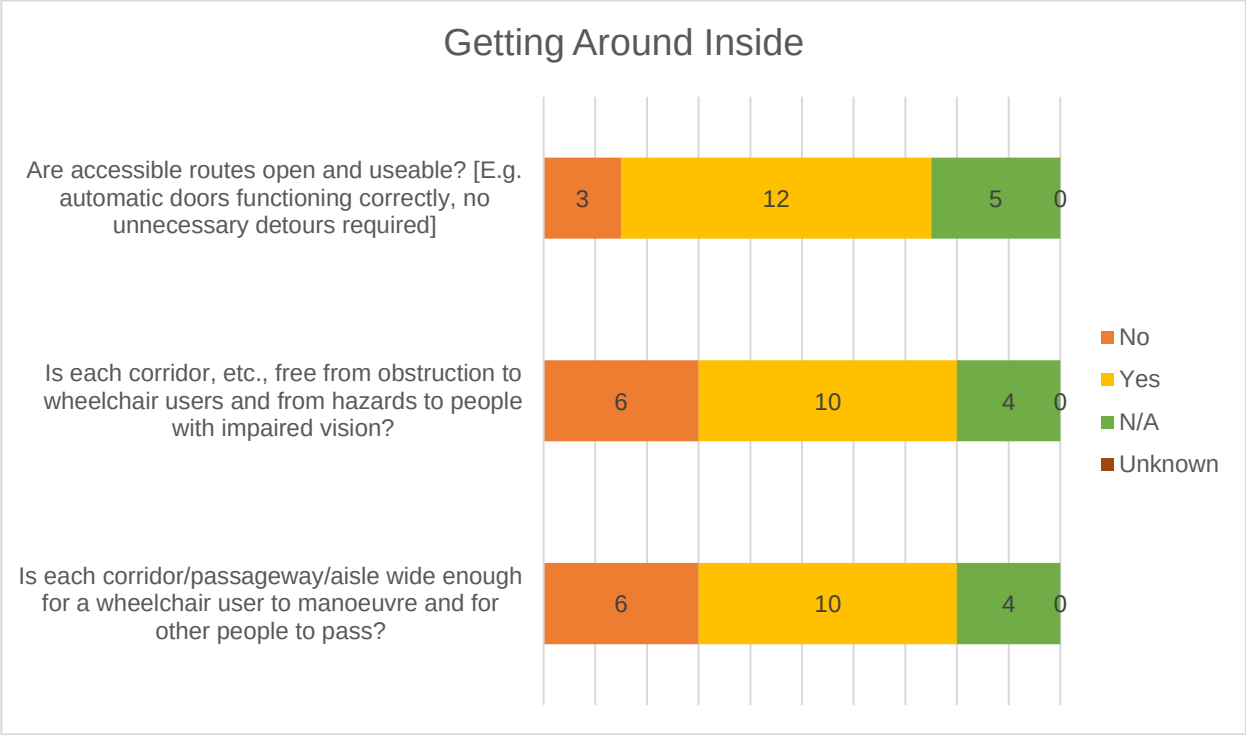
WWT Slimbridge is an example of a location which has built accessibility into the attraction throughout, with most areas including hides, and the tower, accessible for wheelchair users. Robinswood Hill Café also had a very good ramp approach to the building.

4.2.3 Recommendations

- Improvements to door furniture could be made to enable people with limited reach or dexterity to operate them.
- Consider using automatic doors or making doors easier to nudge open in a wheelchair.
- Maps and information could be improved, with details of accessible routes as standard.

4.3 Getting Around Inside

4.3.1 Findings



We visited some fully outdoor locations, some partial outdoor and indoor locations and some fully indoor. Most locations were accessible inside, but there were issues with obstructions being left in passageways, and some areas which were not wide enough for all users. Corridors leading to toilets was a particular issue in some of the destinations. Where accessible facilities are provided, sometimes the route to that facility is not accessible. This felt to the assessors like this had not been thought through by the designer of the facility.

Obstructions can sometimes be caused by signage. Accessibility should be something that is built into all staff training, whether that is the people responsible for maintenance, cleaning, or signposting visitors to a part of the attraction. Thought needs to go into where signs are placed. For example, in one location there was a sign inside the building (by the toilets, but in a place which was not accessible for wheelchair users) directing wheelchair users to ask staff for assistance to the accessible toilet.

4.3.2 Good Practice

We found some good examples of locations where routes had been thought through well in terms of accessibility. Tewkesbury Abbey had lots of space around the seating areas for wheelchair users to sit at the end of the rows and the aisle spaces were wide.

4.3.3 Recommendations

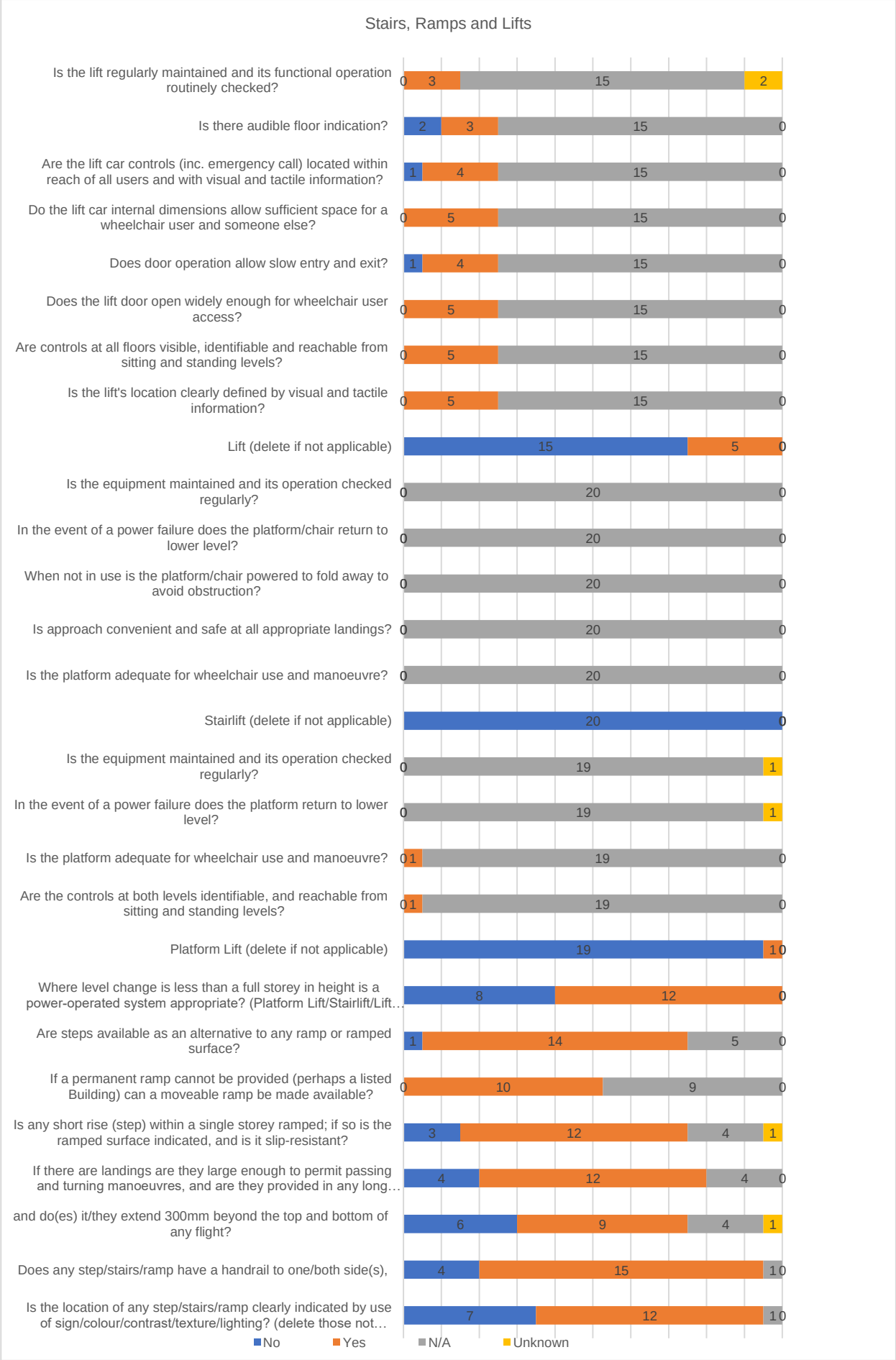
- When installing an accessible facility such as a toilet, organisations need to think through not only the facility itself but the route through the building to get to that facility.
- When communicating about accessible routes, organisations need to think about how accessible the communication itself is.
- Organisations need to be alert to obstructions and take steps to avoid these.

4.4 Stairs, Ramps and Lifts

4.4.1 Findings

Seven out of nineteen locations did not have good enough markings around their steps, stairs, and ramps. Four of these did not have handrails, and six did not have hand rails that extended beyond the 300mm above the top and bottom of the flight.

There were twelve locations where some form of lift could be helpful. Five locations had lifts and they were well maintained and easy to use. We found that audible, visual, and tactile information could be improved in the case of two locations and in one location we found the door to open too quickly for someone to move in and out. One location had platform lifts, and none had stairlifts.


Stairs, Ramps and Lifts
Is the lift regularly maintained and its functional operation routinely checked?
0 3 15 2
Is there audible floor indication?
2 3 15 0
Are the lift car controls (inc. emergency call) located within reach of all users and with visual and tactile information?
1 4 15 0
Do the lift car internal dimensions allow sufficient space for a wheelchair user and someone else?
0 5 15 0
Does door operation allow slow entry and exit?
1 4 15 0
Does the lift door open widely enough for wheelchair user access?
0 5 15 0
Are controls at all floors visible, identifiable and reachable from sitting and standing levels?
0 5 15 0
Is the lift's location clearly defined by visual and tactile information?
0 5 15 0
Lift (delete if not applicable)
15 5 0
Is the equipment maintained and its operation checked regularly?
0 20 0
In the event of a power failure does the platform/chair return to lower level?
0 20 0
When not in use is the platform/chair powered to fold away to avoid obstruction?
0 20 0
Is approach convenient and safe at all appropriate landings?
0 20 0
Is the platform adequate for wheelchair use and manoeuvre?
0 20 0
Stairlift (delete if not applicable)
20 0
Is the equipment maintained and its operation checked regularly?
0 19 1
In the event of a power failure does the platform return to lower level?
0 19 1
Is the platform adequate for wheelchair use and manoeuvre?
0 1 19 0
Are the controls at both levels identifiable, and reachable from sitting and standing levels?
0 1 19 0
Platform Lift (delete if not applicable)
19 1 0
Where level change is less than a full storey in height is a power-operated system appropriate? (Platform Lift/Stairlift/Lift…
8 12 0
Are steps available as an alternative to any ramp or ramped surface?
1 14 5 0
If a permanent ramp cannot be provided (perhaps a listed Building) can a moveable ramp be made available?
0 10 9 0
Is any short rise (step) within a single storey ramped; if so is the ramped surface indicated, and is it slip-resistant?
3 12 4 1
If there are landings are they large enough to permit passing and turning manoeuvres, and are they provided in any long…
4 12 4 0
and do(es) it/they extend 300mm beyond the top and bottom of any flight?
6 9 4 1
Does any step/stairs/ramp have a handrail to one/both side(s),
4 15 1 0
Is the location of any step/stairs/ramp clearly indicated by use of sign/colour/contrast/texture/lighting? (delete those not…
7 12 1 0
No
Yes
N/A
Unknown

4.4.2 Good Practice

Gloucester Cathedral provides two platform lifts so visitors can easily move around the building and volunteers are located in the vicinity of the lifts available to help.

4.4.3 Recommendations

- Improve the condition of markings where there are steps and ramps.
- Consider audio, visual, and tactile signs in lifts.
- Where there are steps, provide handrails which extend 300mm beyond the top and bottom of the steps.

4.5 Toilets

4.5.1 Findings

One of the indoor locations had no toilets for visitors. Three other locations, which were all outdoor walking routes, also did not have toilets. Signage for toilets was often small and subtle. We did not see any signs for people with hidden disabilities.

Sixteen locations described having accessible toilets. We found that the interpretation of accessibility varied. Five out of the sixteen toilets (thirty-one percent) did not have enough space for the person in a wheelchair to manoeuvre into or within the toilet, so they were not wheelchair accessible for our auditors.

(Twenty-five percent) - four out of sixteen accessible toilets did not have emergency cords. Of the twelve that did have an emergency cord six (fifty percent) were not reachable from floor level. Fourteen locations had no information displayed as to who would respond should the cord be pulled. Some of the locations were unstaffed or far away from staff locations.

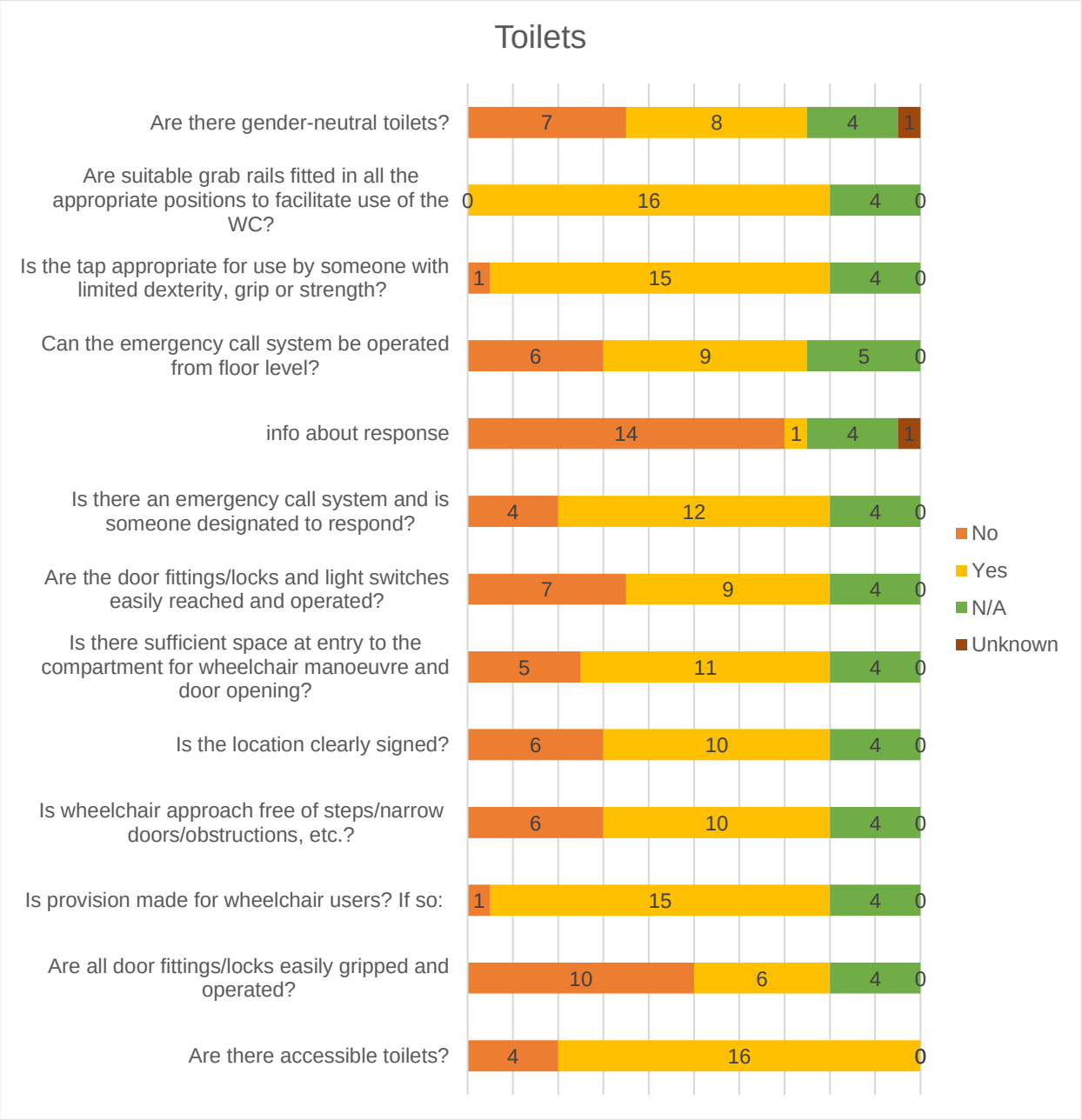
Many of the toilets had items blocking the spaces on either side of the toilet. Often these were the sanitary waste and nappy bins. The majority of the toilets we saw also provided baby changing facilities. Apart from one toilet, all had flip up tables.

The majority of door fittings were not appropriate as they were small twist locks. We looked at the positioning of the soap dispensers, the hand dryers, toilet paper, and whether or not there were hooks and shelves and how they were positioned (in particular from the perspective of people with stoma equipment). Most of the toilets did not have any form of shelf. Some toilets did not provide mirrors, or mirrors were not at a height suitable for both seated and standing positions. Hooks tended to be accessible from an average adult standing position.

Sinks were often away from the hand-dryers, meaning people would have to operate their chair with wet hands. In the case of seven toilets, there were issues with door fittings and light switches.

We also looked at the toilets and changing places facilities in Gloucester Kings Walk as part of assessing the route to the Cathedral.

Seven out of fifteen locations did not provide gender neutral toilets.



4.5.2 Good Practice

Kings Walk Shopping Centre and WWT Slimbridge have changing places facilities which were spacious, well equipped, and warm. We also noted that the accessible toilet at Parkend Station on the Dean Forest Railway route had a good space with shelves and hooks for people who might have catheter or stoma equipment.

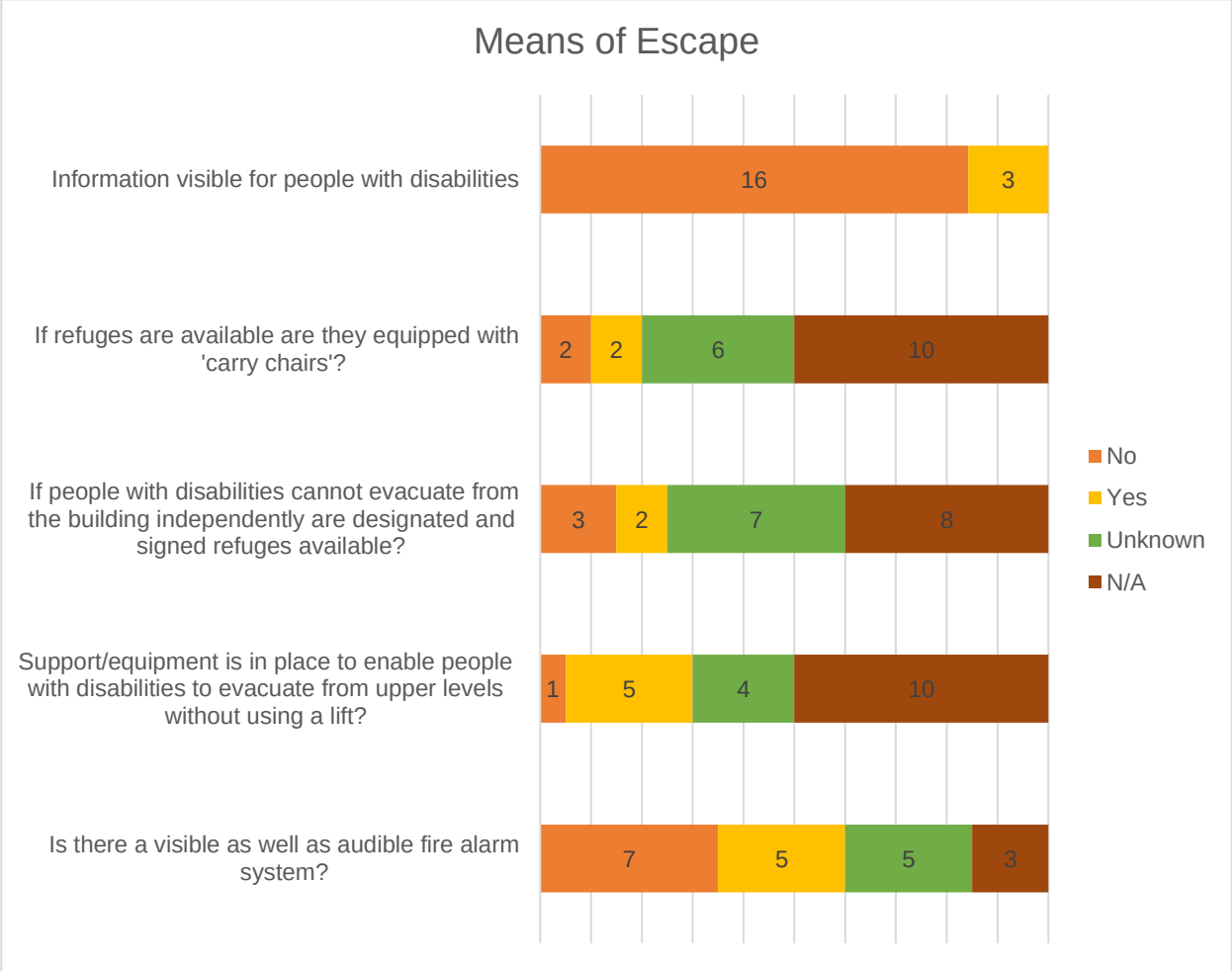
4.5.3 Recommendations

- Provide information on website about toilets. It is important to include photos and dimensions.
- Maintain free space on either side of the toilets and avoid storing items in the toilet cubicle/space.
- Improve door furniture; consider accessibility of different handles and locking mechanisms.
- Organisations should look to increase the space in accessible toilets if they want them to be wheelchair accessible.
- Looking carefully at the position of toilet rolls, hooks, shelves, soap dispensers, hand dryers, etc so they can be reached from a seated position.
- Follow correct guidance around emergency cords.
- Provide information about who is designated to respond if the emergency cord or assistance button is pressed.
- Install a shelf and hooks – for people to use when changing personal care items or managing catheter or stoma equipment.

4.6 Means of Escape

4.6.1 Findings

We found that we could not see much signage or information about means of escape at the locations we visited. We observed fire exit signage and fire extinguishers, however, in most of the locations we could not see information about refuges or support for disabled people to evacuate in emergency situations. Five locations had visible fire alarms.



4.6.2 Recommendations

- There should be information about what type of alerts there are in the case of an emergency, and whether there are audio and visual alarms.
- There should be information displayed about what happens in an emergency, in terms of support, refuge areas, etc.

4.7 Outdoor Areas

4.7.1 Findings

Most of the routes had clear paths which, during the daytime, were accessible and sufficiently lit. We did not visit during the evening or at night.

Eight out of nineteen locations had some degree of gradient on the outdoor routes. Eleven out of sixteen had ramps in place where this was appropriate. All locations had benches, but we noted that benches were often positioned away from paths, and not designed with firm, solid ground around them so that people in wheelchairs could get to the bench and sit alongside people on the bench, or side transfer on to the bench. Overall, we felt there were not enough benches and rest points.

Four of the locations had inaccessible terrain for manual wheelchairs, and two had terrain which was unsuitable for powered chairs. However, we do need to caveat this because there are many different wheelchair types, with different tyres and attachments, and many different abilities so we took a fairly general assessment in this regard. For example, for people who do adventure trails using an off-road, lightweight chair, some of the terrain we have assessed as inaccessible could be accessible. In this respect, information again is important, because people know their own abilities, and their own equipment.

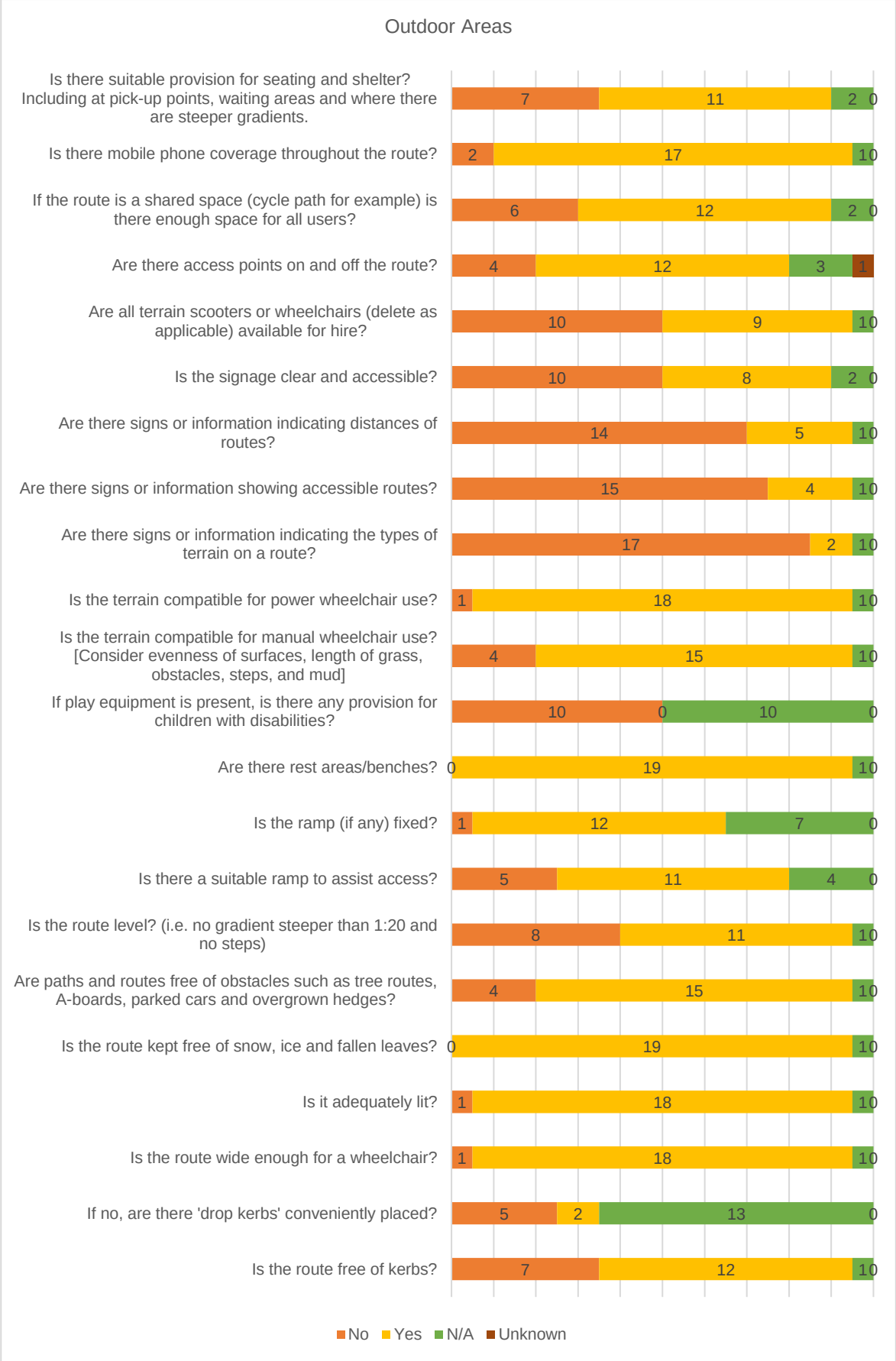
We visited ten locations where we observed children's play equipment. None of these locations had play equipment accessible for disabled children or disabled parents. Often the surfaces of the play areas use bark, which is inaccessible for wheelchair users. A lot of the play equipment is designed for climbing. The other ten locations did not have children's play equipment.

Half of the locations did not offer wheelchairs or trampers. Where they did, it was not always possible to just turn up and use the wheelchair or tramper. One location stood out as on its website they described having a "fleet" of equipment which suggested that one could just turn up and ask and one would be available. In some locations you would have to book ahead, and in one location, trampers were only available on weekdays and booking ahead was essential, and visitors had to register on a mobility scheme which had a cost attached. Some locations offered free use, while in others there was a cost for hire. We did not notice many charging points for battery powered chairs.

Seventeen locations had no information about terrain, gradients, distances or non-accessible or accessible routes. In ten of the locations' signage was neither clear nor accessible. Seven of the locations did not have suitable provisions for seating or shelter, and four did not have access points on and off routes. Most of the routes had mobile phone coverage throughout.

4.7.2 Good Practice

The all-terrain scooters at Batsford Arboretum were a very good option for people with limited mobility. These should be highlighted as an example of good practice and their availability promoted to other similar sites to increase the number of opportunities they provide. At WWT Slimbridge, the accessibility video referred to a fleet of wheelchairs, and tramper availability, which gave an immediate impression that needing a wheelchair or tramper was not a problem and that it was a built-in consideration as part of the visitor experience. At Mallards Pike, we observed plenty of rest benches, and most had clear space around them for people in wheelchairs to sit alongside. There were also excellent signs indicating the accessible route.


Outdoor Areas
Is there suitable provision for seating and shelter? Including at pick-up points, waiting areas and where there are steeper gradients.
7 11 2 0
Is there mobile phone coverage throughout the route?
2 17 10
If the route is a shared space (cycle path for example) is there enough space for all users?
6 12 2 0
Are there access points on and off the route?
4 12 3 1
Are all terrain scooters or wheelchairs (delete as applicable) available for hire?
10 9 10
Is the signage clear and accessible?
10 8 2 0
Are there signs or information indicating distances of routes?
14 5 10
Are there signs or information showing accessible routes?
15 4 10
Are there signs or information indicating the types of terrain on a route?
17 2 10
Is the terrain compatible for power wheelchair use?
1 18 10
Is the terrain compatible for manual wheelchair use? [Consider evenness of surfaces, length of grass, obstacles, steps, and mud]
4 15 10
If play equipment is present, is there any provision for children with disabilities?
10 0 10 0
Are there rest areas/benches?
0 19 10
Is the ramp (if any) fixed?
1 12 7 0
Is there a suitable ramp to assist access?
5 11 4 0
Is the route level? (i.e. no gradient steeper than 1:20 and no steps)
8 11 10
Are paths and routes free of obstacles such as tree routes, A-boards, parked cars and overgrown hedges?
4 15 10
Is the route kept free of snow, ice and fallen leaves?
0 19 10
Is it adequately lit?
1 18 10
Is the route wide enough for a wheelchair?
1 18 10
If no, are there 'drop kerbs' conveniently placed?
5 2 13 0
Is the route free of kerbs?
7 12 10
No
Yes
N/A
Unknown

4.7.3 Recommendations

- Consideration should be given to promoting and increasing access to and use of all-terrain scooters, trampers, and wheelchairs.
- Improve the number of rest areas and benches on outdoor route, making sure there is access to them for wheelchairs, and space alongside.
- Improve the level of information available on outdoor routes, for example using technology to provide audio information for points of interest.
- Improve the level of and accessibility of information on routes.
- Improve the provision of play equipment for children with disabilities, and where there are play areas, look at accessibility for parents who use wheelchairs.

4.8 Safe, inclusive spaces

4.8.1 Findings

Fifteen locations had not signed up to a scheme such as Keep Safe. http://www.keepsafeglos.org/ We noted that some locations had safeguarding policies displayed (the cathedral and abbey). We found that where we encountered staff, most were friendly and helpful. Eight of the locations did not appear to provide training for staff around disability or access needs, and staff were often not confident when we asked about training or accessibility.

We did not see many signs or posters relating to hidden disabilities. We also did not see many posters providing information for people experiencing victimisation. Thirteen locations did not display any breastfeeding friendly signs and eleven out of fifteen locations where it would be applicable did not appear to have a specific space for breastfeeding.

Four locations did not invite feedback, and where feedback was sought, mostly it did not mention feedback about accessibility. Not counting the Abbey and the Cathedral, none of the locations had a prayer space evident.

Around one third of the locations did not provide induction loops, BSL translation, or communications in alternative formats. We did not see mention of translations into other languages.

Where there were accessible toilets, fifteen locations had accessible toilets which were accessible to non-visitors.

Where food was available, most had some options for different dietary requirements, although we noted that often signs directed visitors to ask staff rather than displaying

information. Cafés tended to display information in handwritten format, and the menus were placed high up above the counters.

Out of the twenty locations, we found three had some form of accreditation. For all of the others, there were no signs on the website or at the location indicating they were part of a scheme or had sought accreditations.

All twenty locations had a website, or a webpage as part of another website. All twenty locations had a social media presence, but we could not find information about accessibility on most of the social media pages.

4.8.2 Good Practice

The welcome staff at WWT Slimbridge were excellent. They had a good knowledge of the site and which areas were accessible and specific places where the auditor might find a challenge for their wheelchair. They were standing in front of a large map, which had illustrations, symbols and they used this to explain the facilities.

4.8.3 Recommendations

- Consider accessibility from a broader range of perspectives including hidden disabilities.
- Provide staff and volunteers with training about disability including learning disabilities, hidden disabilities, autism awareness, mental ill health, and the social model of disability.
- Show visitors and potential visitors that accessibility is considered from a broad range of perspectives.
- Use technology to enable people to access information in different formats.
- Improve the accessibility of information displayed – on websites, promotional materials, in cafes, around exhibits and points of interest.
- Use videos, photos, virtual tours as a way of showing people key information about the location.
- Use social media pages to share accessibility information.
- Invite feedback about accessibility, not just visitor experiences.
- Improve the provision of quiet spaces.
- Display information such as café menus and exhibits at suitable heights for people in wheelchairs.
- Look at ways of helping people to feel safe, engaging with Keep Safe schemes, providing contact details of where to get help, displaying posters for people experiencing abuse, harassment, or discrimination.
- Provide staff with Easy Read Training if they are involved with producing information.
- Using panels of people with lived experience to proof-read or review materials.

- Consider accreditations and schemes as ways of improving your accessibility, such as https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/disability-matters/ https://www.inclusivityworks.org/

5. Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

This report found that all the destinations we visited were aware of the need for accessibility and had made some steps to provide an accessible visitor experience. Some had done more than others. It is clear that there are constraints for many organisations in terms of funding and practicalities.

All the destinations had websites or online information available, so it was easy to find out about the destinations. But when it came to information about accessibility, we found that there were improvements to be made to how information about accessibility is communicated. Website accessibility could be improved, and accessibility information included in social media pages to reflect the fact that many people access information through social media.

All the destinations we visited, apart from one, were broadly physically accessible. All of our auditors were able to carry out an assessment of accessibility.

When it came to the experience at the location, accessibility was patchy in terms of scope and interpretation. Most of the destinations had not factored in the needs of people with learning disabilities, neurodivergence and hidden disabilities. Information was not available in different formats. There was no provision for people to visit at specific times, or tours for people with specific requirements. Where accessible facilities were provided, they were inconsistent – with different levels of equipment and different sizes. Information to help people feel safe or access help was limited. Signage and information at locations was not always clear and accessible.

Although we can make recommendations on how visitor facing staff can respond to the needs of people visiting, the key is for decision makers within organisations to take a lead on accessibility from a higher level. Accessibility as a consideration needs to be built into not only the physical facility but in how websites are designed, how information is communicated and how staff are trained.

The overall recommendations for the destination attractions can be summarised as follows:

- Improve the accessibility of information.
- Broaden the scope of accessibility so consideration includes people with learning disabilities, neurodivergent people, people with mental ill-health, with multiple disabilities and other hidden disabilities.
- Improve the accessibility of locations.

In addition, we would like to recommend the following.

- Work with other organisations to share good practice.
- Communicate information about your destination in a range of ways so people can make informed decisions about visiting.
- Ask people with lived experience of disability for their advice.
- Form partnerships with local community groups and disability organisations.

- Widen the range of volunteering and employment opportunities to include more people who have lived experience of a disability.
- Work with local transport providers when looking at transport options.
- Make use of the wide range of information available when looking at accessibility.
- Invite feedback around accessibility.
- Make use of training opportunities for staff and volunteers to improve accessibility.

For transport providers, our main recommendation is around the provision of information at railway stations about onward travel and the lack of connections between destinations, bus stops and railway stations.

We concluded that getting around the county is challenging for most of the team, because of the lack of regular bus routes, prohibitive costs of taxis, and critically, the lack of accessible and safe pathways, and road crossings for people on wheels. For this, we understand there are a wider number of potential stakeholders. Not just the transport providers but the organisations who have responsibility for the road infrastructure.

Our recommendations:

- Transport providers and road infrastructure authorities to work together to improve routes between stations, bus stops and locations.
- Transport providers and authorities to work in partnership with local destinations to devise accessible route options.
- All stakeholders to work together to provide clear information in the form of maps which include accessible routes, locations of accessible facilities etc.

6. Appendix

6.1 Twenty Access Audits – see separate documents.

6.2 Experiences of transport

For many people who use wheelchairs, taxis are the only realistic public transport option if they are to access twelve out of the twenty locations we audited. So, it is worth noting some of the issues raised by the team around using taxis. Booking taxis is an incredibly challenging process in Gloucestershire. “Wheelchair accessible” can often mean a taxi which can take a fold up chair in the boot. Different vehicles will take different sized wheelchairs. Wheelchair accessible taxis tend to be booked up for regular school runs, which means that often a provider is limited to after 9.30 and before 2.30. If the person needs to be picked up in Gloucester, but the taxi is based in Cheltenham, the taxi adds a fee on top of the journey fare. Because the process is so challenging and taxis need to be booked weeks in advance often, if the situation changes, and the person can no longer travel on that day, and has to cancel they risk being banned by the taxi company. For many individuals, there can be fluctuations in their conditions which mean that they may not be able to travel when they had planned to.

For someone who needs support to get up and ready for the day, they need to know that the support they need is going to be available at the time they need it. Often people do not have control over this, and so any plans they make would have to factor in the care staff’s availability and timetable. If someone needs to be ready earlier, they need to decide this with staff. Already, planning needs to start with the very basics that non-disabled people take for granted. Things can go wrong with this – staff might be sick, they have been delayed because someone else needs support, or traffic problems.

People mentioned being anxious about travelling by train (and therefore trying to avoid using trains) because of previous experiences, which include.

- Missing connections because of a last-minute platform change, they were unable to get over to the other platform in time, or not hearing the announcement about a platform change due to a hearing impairment.
- Unaware of the stop approaching, missing the place to get off and ending up far away from their intended destination.
- Being on a train when it is crowded, being overwhelmed, and not having anywhere quiet to go, or anyone from which to get help.

Another example was of an individual’s requirements not being communicated between stations and the Passenger Assist not working as it should.

Experts by experience gave the following feedback on using buses in Gloucestershire:

Two people spoke about being apprehensive about using certain buses, or buses at all because of sensory issues, or issues with schoolchildren harassing them.

“I use the 10, 8, 2 & 2A Services on a regular basis. I find the space to reverse into very tight for a medium-sized electric wheelchair, I cannot see how someone in a large electric wheelchair would manage it without doing damage to their chair or to the bus.

Reversing into the accessible space requires the space opposite, which is usually used for pushchairs to be empty as well. I find some bus drivers reluctant to ask people, especially people with pushchairs to move so the wheelchair user can turn in the space. They seem to think as long as the accessible space is clear you should be able to get into it, but this is not the case. Often, I have to speak to the other passengers myself, explain the situation, and ask them to move into the alleyway or off the bus temporarily.

Some of the older buses have more space. However, the newer buses are quite tight. I regularly catch myself and the wheelchair on the bar as I reverse, leading to bruising on my arms and dents or chips in the wheelchair.

Some bus drivers will try and persuade you to catch the next bus because they do not have the space to fit you on (because they are carrying pushchairs or people mobility aids). On several occasions I have been told the next bus is only two minutes away, so I have waited, only to have to wait 10 or more minutes - often in the cold, wind & rain.

When getting on to buses, I regularly scrape the drivers cabin with my foot rests as the turn onto the bus is very tight for someone with a medium sized electric wheelchair. The foot rests on my wheelchair are completely bent out of shape as they are often bashed into the drivers cabin as I get onto the bus or on the steps as I try and get off of the bus. There is no point getting them fixed as I use buses at least three times a week so they will be bent again in a very short time.

I sometimes find drivers do not lower the bus enough when the ramp is out, meaning that the ramp is very steep. This is a real issue if it has been raining as the ramp is very slippery dangerous.

At times when the drivers put the ramp out, the ground beneath it is uneven, so the ramp is not completely in contact with the ground at the front. Rather than folding the ramp away and moving the bus forwards or backwards slightly., they will just try to hold the ramp with their foot until you to get off. It is very hard to say ‘no’ as it leads to confrontation, which I cannot deal with, especially when there is a bus full of passengers waiting to move. This is a particular issue on the number 2 & 2A Route as the stop I get off at is on the grass verge that is not flat.”

“I find the app that tells you when the buses are coming is quite unreliable; often it will tell you the bus is going to be 12 minutes late, you factor this into when you leave the house and planning a journey only to find the bus drive past as you are trying to cross

the road and it's actually only 5 minutes late. It is extremely frustrating as you believe the information you are given on the app, only to find you miss the bus and I have to wait in the rain for the next on. The only other option is to go for the original time, but then sometimes the number 10 is up to 20 minutes late and you do not want to wait at an uncovered bus stop for that length of time, especially if it is raining."

"Buses are unreliable if I want to get to work. I would have to leave 60-90minutes before I needed to be wherever I was going as buses just do not turn up (especially the number 10). I regularly find one or two buses do not turn up, which means you are standing at the bus stop for 40 or more minutes, waiting for the bus only to find three at once. If you manage to get the first bus when you have factored such a long amount of time in for the journey, you are then very early at the other end. Depending on the location, you may not be able to go in that early, so you are then left with finding somewhere to wait for that amount of time. Sometimes you are able to go to a coffee shop, but then that means you have to spend money you do not necessarily want to spend and sometimes there is nowhere locally to go so waiting outside which is unpleasant, especially in the rain."

"If the bus is delayed or cancelled without warning, you are often late for work or social commitments which leaves you are looking unprofessional with work or unreliable with friends and that has an impact on you in the future."

"Although you get used to travelling backwards and you learn landmarks for your regular stops, it is difficult when you are completing a new journey as you are not able to see the landmarks that you have been told to look out for, and that everyone else can see. Sometimes the windows are dirty which means we cannot see out. I am reliant on my support workers to tell me where I need to get off as I do not know. I have multiple new staff who have only been in the country a few months and are therefore not familiar with the area which means they are not able to tell me where to get off, on these occasions I am reliant on other passengers to tell me as I have found in the past asking the bus driver to tell me when to get off does not work as they forget. Due to financial reasons, I do not have 4G/roaming data on my phone so I cannot use my phone to track where I am on the journey."

"Some buses have a digital display, which tells you which stop is next however, this is only visible to forward facing passengers, displays also have an audio function so they say each stop aloud. This is not helpful to me as due to my hearing impairment so I cannot hear it."