



Safety In the Community Survey Report

June 2017

Introduction

North Somerset People First is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) which was established in 1991, with the aim of improving the lives of people with learning disabilities by introducing self advocacy. The charity currently facilitates three "Speaking Up" self advocacy groups, as well as carrying out Person Centred Planning and Advocacy work, supporting victims of Disability Hate Crime and running monthly drop-in advice/advocacy sessions and social activities for people with learning disabilities in North Somerset.

Background

Through the work of our regular "Speaking Up" self advocacy groups and also conversations with other individuals who use our service, we have become aware that many people who have a learning disability and live in North Somerset have safety concerns about accessing the community independently.

People with learning disabilities can be targets for Hate Crime and Mate Crime, and we have worked with a number of people who have either been victims themselves or witnessed others being verbally, physically or financially abused because of their disability.

Home Office statistics for disability hate crime in England and Wales show that there were 3,629 police recorded disability hate crimes during the year 2015-16. However, it is important to recognise that these are just the cases reported to the police and disability hate crimes often go unreported for various reasons.

Research by the Office of Disability Issues in 2011 found that adults with disabilities living in the South West reported (along with those living in the North) the highest number of life areas (eg education, leisure) in which their participation is restricted, and we wondered whether people with learning disabilities in North Somerset are participating as fully as they would like to in social and leisure activities, or whether their participation is restricted by perceived or actual risks when out in the community.

Aims of the Survey

North Somerset People First carried out a survey to investigate how safe people with a learning disability feel when accessing the community in North Somerset.

The aims were to try and find out:

- Whether people with learning disabilities feel safe in the areas they live in,
- How safe people with learning disabilities feel accessing the community in North Somerset during the day and at night,
- What measures would help people to feel more safe when accessing the community,
- How safe people with learning disabilities feel as a pedestrian in North Somerset,
- What particular types of crime people are concerned about becoming a victim of,
- Whether people with learning disabilities are aware of Hate Crime and whether they have been a victim of or a witness to Hate Crime in North Somerset, and
- Whether people with learning disabilities are aware of or have used the Safe Places Scheme.

Method

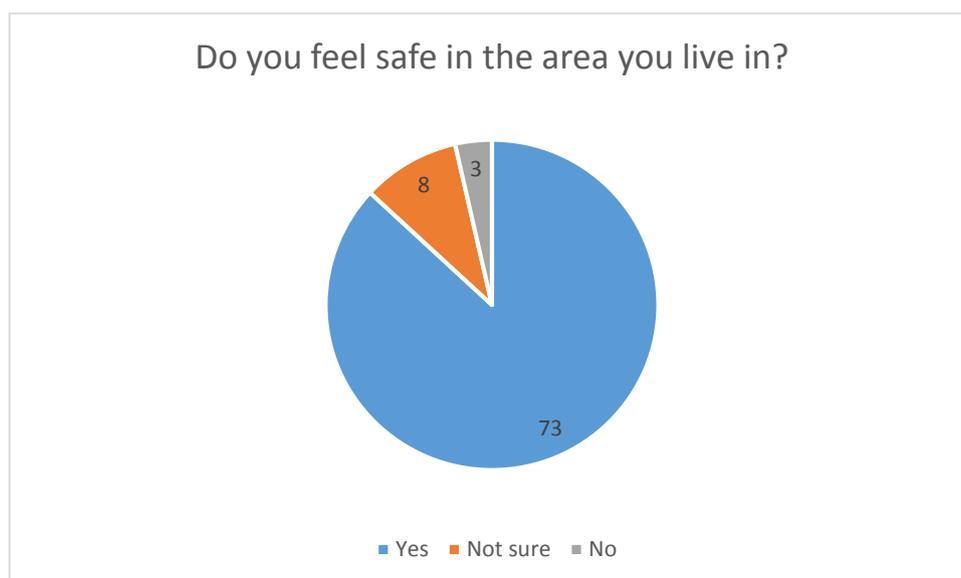
Adults with learning disabilities were asked to complete (with support if required) an easy read survey, which had been designed with help from our members (see appendix 1). The survey consisted of both "tick box" type questions to gather quantitative data and some more open questions to invite people's comments/ideas and gather qualitative data.

Surveys were completed by members of North Somerset People First's Speaking Up groups, and were emailed out to various service providers (via the providers forum) and all Shared Lives carers in North Somerset. The survey was also accessible via the North Somerset People First website.

We received 84 completed surveys.

Results and Findings

How Safe Do You Feel Where You Live?



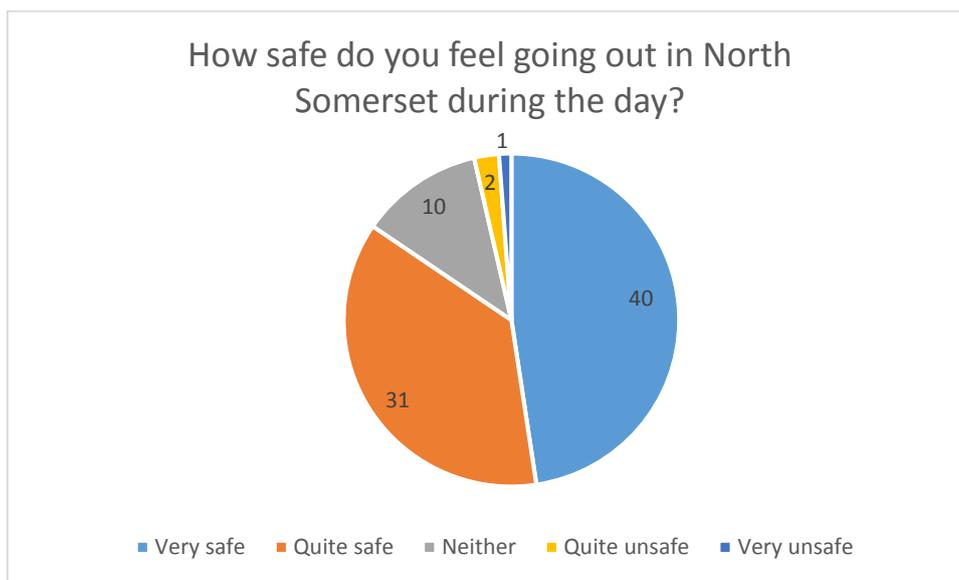
	Yes	Not sure	No
Weston-super-Mare	46	4	3
Worle	9	3	0
Clevedon	8	0	0
Nailsea	5	1	0
Blagdon	1	0	0
Churchill	1	0	0
Congresbury	1	0	0
Locking	1	0	0
Pill	1	0	0

Many respondents who answered that they feel safe in the area they live in told us that they feel safe because of good neighbours, friends or family that live with/near them. A couple of people answered that they have Neighbourhood Watch schemes in their areas, and one person commented that they feel reassured by the fact there is CCTV in their area. Seeing police officers/cars around was something else that people said helped them to feel safe where they live.

People who answered that they felt unsafe, and also some of those who did not, told us about things that cause them concern in the areas they live in.

- 4 people told us that having noisy neighbours worries them,
- 3 people said they are aware of neighbours using drugs and this makes them feel unsafe,
- 2 people said that groups of young people “hanging around” worries them and
- 2 people mentioned car crime in their areas.
- Other comments included: “When street lights are turned off at midnight”, “People asking me for money or cigarettes”, “People setting bins and cars on fire” and “People cold-calling”.

Going out during the Day



Respondents gave many different answers regarding where they felt most safe to go during the day, including:

- Weston College,
- Clevedon Town Centre,
- @Worle Day Service,
- The Sovereign Shopping Centre,
- Churches
- Scotch Horn Leisure Centre.
- One person also mentioned that having street wardens in Weston town centre helped them to feel safe going out during the day.

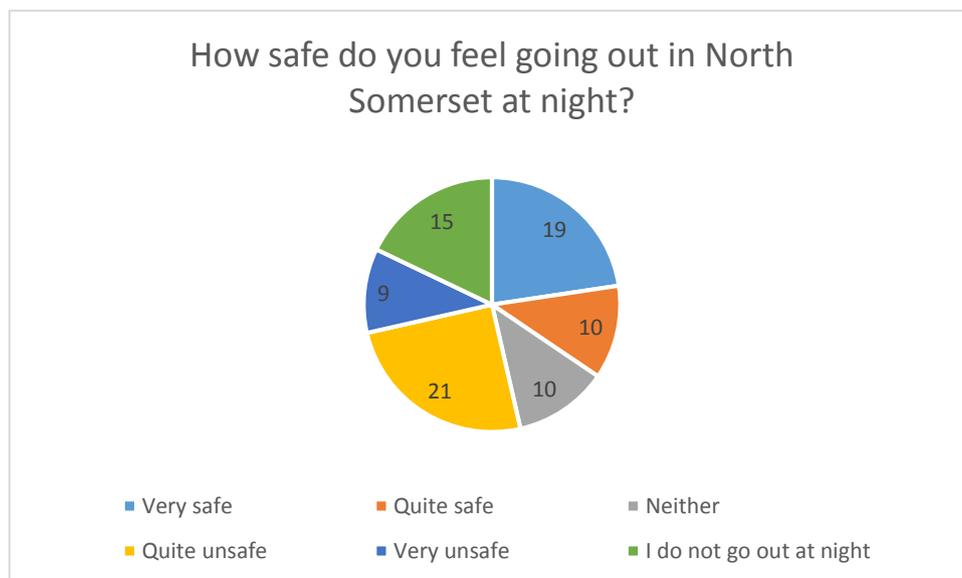
When asked “Where do you feel least safe?” the 2 most frequent answers were:

- Weston town centre (9 respondents), and
- Grove Park (4 respondents).

The reasons people gave for feeling unsafe in those areas were: people asking for money and people using drugs/being drunk.

3 additional respondents commented that they did not feel safe in parks, and one person said they felt unsafe when people did not control their dogs. 3 people told us that they felt unsafe because of traffic in Weston, and another person commented that they felt there were not enough police “on the beat” and this led to them feeling unsafe.

Going out at Night



The option “I do not go out at night” did not appear on our survey, but as we found that 15 people responded to this question by writing this rather than choosing one of the options available, we have included this answer on our results graph.

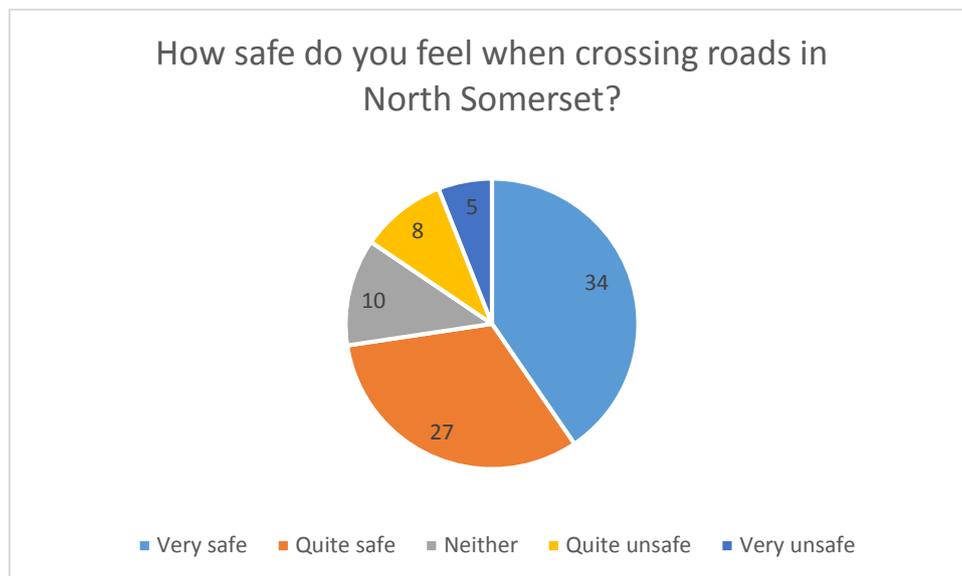
People told us that they feel safest when attending organised events and social clubs with other people that they know, when going to local pubs/restaurants that they know well, the theatre, and when they can see a street warden or police officer around.

Similar to the results for the previous question the most frequent responses regarding where people feel least safe were:

- Weston town centre/High Street (6 respondents) and
- Grove Park area (6 respondents).

The reasons people gave for feeling unsafe in those areas were: people being drunk and/or fighting, people on drugs and people asking for money. 3 people told us that they do not feel safe to go out at night because there are not enough buses, and 3 people said that they do not feel safe walking home at night because of dark alleyways or underpasses where they feel vulnerable.

How Safe Do You Feel as a Pedestrian?



The majority of people that completed the survey told us that they generally feel either quite or very safe as a pedestrian in North Somerset. However, several people told us that they have concerns crossing certain roads, in particular:

- Locking Road in Weston, where 4 respondents said that they feel people exceeding the speed limit is a risk,
- Outside the Weston College Knightstone Campus, where 7 respondents told us they feel unsafe as there is no pedestrian crossing.

Other comments made regarding being a pedestrian included:

“ There should be more crossings and speed bumps on the Bournville as people drive too fast”

“ I feel unsafe on Hutton Hill because there is no pavement”

“ Not all traffic lights have a bleeping sound”(to aid the visually impaired)

“Because of cars being parked along the road it can be difficult to see when it is safe to cross” (on Clevedon Rd, Weston-super-Mare)

“Could do with a handrail on Moor Lane bridge as this would help me to walk over it”

“I feel most unsafe on Elton Rd and crossing from Victoria Rd to Strode Rd”(in Clevedon)

“Drivers need to have more patience and speed limits lowered. When using a pelican crossing I need to be given more time to cross”

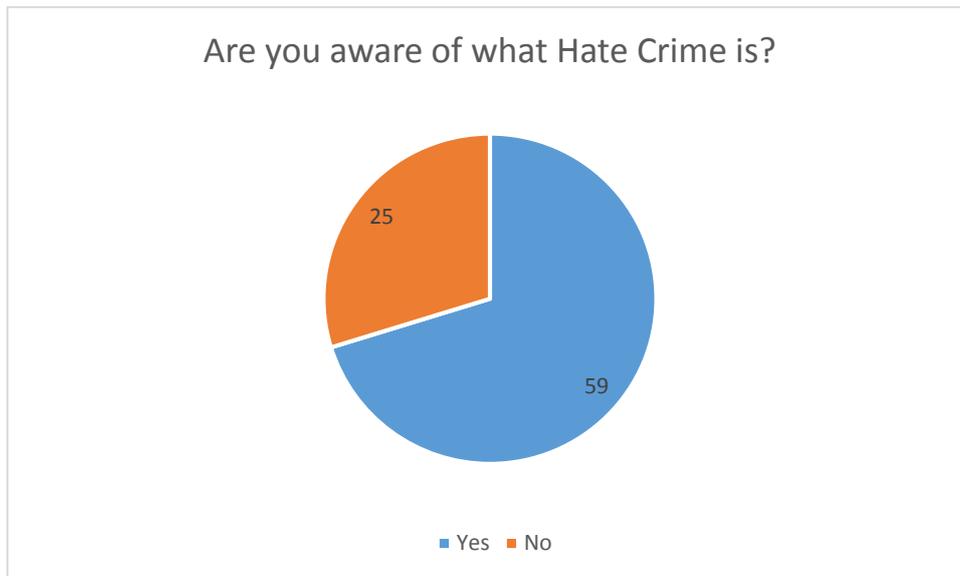
“Queens Rd in Nailsea is a very busy road and really needs more crossings”

How worried are you about becoming a victim of the following types of crime?

	Very worried	Quite worried	Not very worried	Not at all worried	Not sure/Don't know
Robbery	19	21	18	16	10
Physical Assault	18	18	19	20	9
Verbal Assault	21	21	17	13	12
Sexual Assault	17	8	21	22	16

As the table above shows the responses to this question were fairly evenly spread. However, the crime that the most people were “very worried” about and the least number of people were “not at all worried” about was verbal assault.

Hate Crime



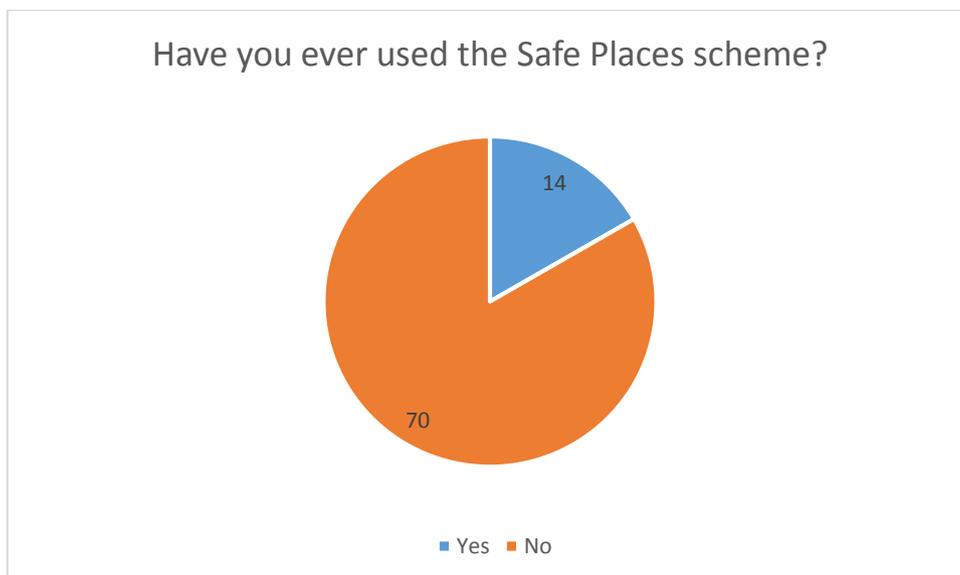
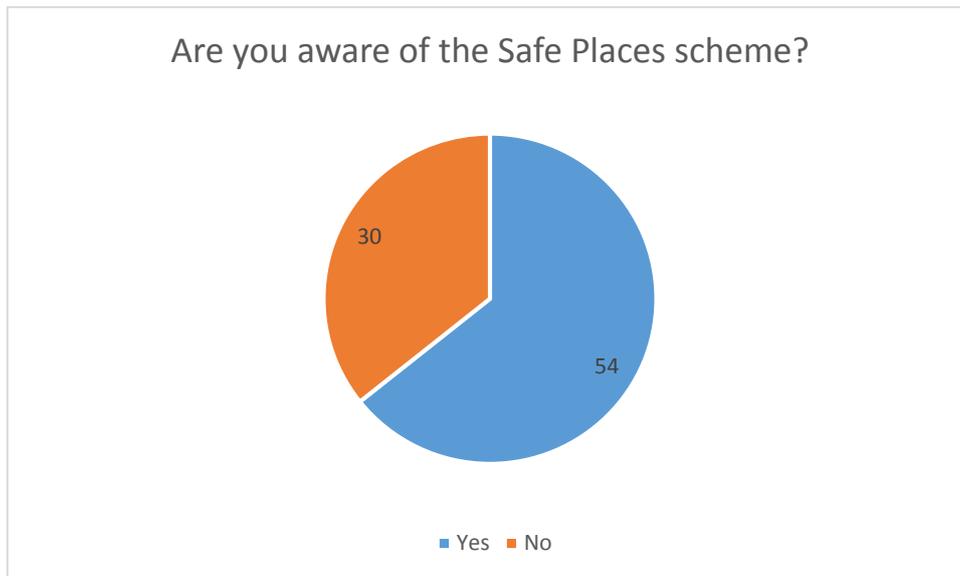
Of the 18 people who had been a victim of or witness to a hate crime 5 said they had reported the crime to the police and 13 said they had not. Reasons the 13 people gave for not having contacted the police were as follows:

I dealt with it myself	2
I didn't think the police would be interested	0
I was too scared/worried	6
I reported it to someone else	7
Other	3

(Respondents were able to tick more than one answer)

The reasons people gave after ticking the "other" option were that they saw that someone else was already dealing with the situation (2 people) and one person responded "I just didn't want to get involved".

Safe Places



Of the 14 respondents who answered that they had used the Safe Place scheme, all 14 said they had found it helpful. Safe Places that people had accessed included: McDonalds in Weston town centre, Subway, Poundland, Weston Police Station and Cancer Research shop in Clevedon.

Reasons that people gave for finding the service helpful included:

“They helped me to feel safe”

“They told the person that was being horrible to leave me alone”

“They told me where to catch the bus from when I was a bit lost”

“I knew I wouldn’t get attacked there”

“They helped me to make a phone call, calmed me down and made me a cup of tea”

“The staff were friendly”

What do you think would help you to feel safer going out during the day or at night?

Many of the individuals who completed our survey had comments and suggestions to make regarding this, and the main themes of these comments were that people would feel safer if they:

- Could see more police/PCSOs on the beat,
- Received more education on how to stay safe,
- Knew more about the Safe Place scheme and where to find safe places,
- Had opportunities to make more friends to go out with,
- Had a personal alarm to carry

People also told us that they would feel safer accessing the community if there was more regular public transport during the evening/night

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our results and findings show that most people with learning disabilities who completed the survey feel safe where they live in North Somerset, but many feel somewhat unsafe when accessing the community, with the main reason being the behaviour of others in certain areas eg drinking/drug taking and begging.

One of the most frequent comments that people made when answering the survey question “How safe do you feel going out in North Somerset at night?” was that they do not go out at night at all. Based on discussions with our members it would appear that there are many reasons for this, as well as concerns for personal safety.

Individuals have told us that they do not have support staff in the evenings to enable them to access social activities, or if they live in residential settings the handover from day to night staff occurs at 8pm which makes it difficult for them to attend any evening activities that go on beyond that time.

For those individuals who are not in receipt of any services from the local authority this can also be an issue, and several people told us that they feel that having more friends or a “buddy” to go out with would help them to access the community more often.

In other areas of the country buddy schemes have been set up eg "Gig Buddies" in East Sussex, matching a volunteer with a person with learning disabilities who has similar interests, to enable them to access more evening/weekend social and leisure activities, and this is something many of our respondents could benefit from if a similar scheme was available in North Somerset.

One of the main things that people told us when we asked them what would help them to feel safer when going out in the community during the day or at night was that they wanted to learn more about how to stay safe.

This also came up when individuals were answering the survey questions on Hate Crime and Safe Places. Many of the individuals who answered "no" to the awareness questions went on to tell us that they would like to learn more about these topics.

With these issues in mind NSPF have decided to hold an event later this year with the theme of "Safety in the Community" where we hope that representatives of the police, other emergency services, the local authority, street wardens and local voluntary organisations will work with us to provide workshops and talks on different aspects of community safety.

