



<<https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/>>

Birmingham Housing Advice Service consultation

Overview

The City Council is continuing to strive to improve its services for homeless households in Birmingham.

Housing Advice Centres are presently co-located in four Customer Service Centres and we are therefore consulting on changes to this service. The service provided by the Youth Hub (provision for single young people aged 16-25 is not affected by this proposal.)

The Housing Advice Service provides assistance with joining the Council Housing list, discussing housing options, seeking temporary accommodation and assistance with Homelessness or Homelessness Prevention.

Why We Are Consulting

In the current climate the Council is reviewing all services to ensure they best meet the needs of the citizens of Birmingham. Historically, Housing Advice and Homelessness has been delivered alongside the Council's Neighbourhood Advice Service. We recognise that the current approach has not always led to a consistent service for customers and a small number have experienced delays and frustrations with the service they receive.

In seeking to develop an improved service, consideration has also been given to the significant savings required within the Neighbourhood Advice Service for 2015-16.

We are confident that the proposed changes to the service will bring about improvements such as allowing the service to increase the availability of appointments as well as improving the level of service for Households threatened with homelessness.

However, we also acknowledge that such changes can bring with them concerns from citizens and we may not have identified all of the potential impacts upon our customers. We also recognise that customers are well placed to suggest other improvements that we may not have thought of.

Therefore we are undertaking public consultation to get as much feedback on our proposals as we can to inform our decision making as we move forward.

The proposals on which we are seeking your views:

The Housing Advice Service

The Housing Advice service is presently based in 4 Customer Service Centres at Sparkbrook, Newtown, and Erdington & Northfield. It is proposed to reorganise the service to be delivered, from a single location at Newtown Customer Service Centre, Birmingham. This new single Housing Advice Centre will have more advisors on duty and additional available interviews. There is no planned reduction in accessibility to specialist Housing & Homelessness advisors via the telephone and long term we anticipate improved access to housing advice available via phone and web.

This proposal is not based on the Homeless and Pre-Tenancy Service saving money and we are not looking to reduce resources available to the service at this present moment. We believe that one centre will be able to deliver a more consistent service through centralising our staff and expertise. This will take place alongside improvements to our phone service and further enhancement of online services. This approach is inline with that being taken by other similar authorities.

The Newtown location is proposed for its central location and because it sits in an area of the highest demand for Housing Advice Services. It is the most evenly accessible of the four present locations for people across the city to get to and meets the space requirements to accommodate the service. This proposal follows exploration of alternate options; these have been considered however none have been found to be viable. Alternate options which we considered included:

1. Do nothing and stay as we are:

After consideration, it was concluded that if the Neighbourhood Advice staff are to be reduced, it would be necessary to balance this with an enhanced ability on the part of the Housing Advice Service to offer more appointments, ensure that the most consistent service is available and secure the high quality decisions which are needed, particularly in the area of homelessness, all of which objectives are in any event desirable in their own right. This option was therefore not found to be viable.

2. *Move Housing Advice Delivery to a two centre model:*

Upon further exploration it was concluded that this option would still require more Neighbourhood Advice Service staff in support than those actually available or would require additional resources for the Homeless and Pre-Tenancy service. It wouldn't create sufficient increased capacity and would not fully resolve issues around consistency or flexibility of staff cover. This option was not considered viable in view of this.

3. *Relocate the Housing Advice Service to a single site in Birmingham City Centre:*

This was explored however the Council has no suitable building currently available to use and an evaluation of renting a private building recognised that we would incur significant yearly costs as well as one off set up costs which are unlikely to be sustainable and thus this option was not considered viable.

As part of these proposals we are consulting with and seeking the views of citizens of Birmingham and users of our services along with professionals delivering advice in these areas of work.

Give Us Your Views - Take our survey

Housing Advice Consultation <<https://www.research.net/r/beheardhousingadvice>>

Related Documents

- **2013 - 2014 Homeless Applicants by Geography.pdf** <https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/people-1/housingadvice/service/++preview++open/supporting_documents/2013%20%202014%20Homeless%20Applicants%20by%20Geography.pdf> , 1.0 MB (PDF document)

Contact

AdviceServiceConsultation@birmingham.gov.uk

Key Dates

Status: Open

Runs from 30 Nov 2015 to 18 Jan 2016

Other Information

Areas:

All Areas

Audience:

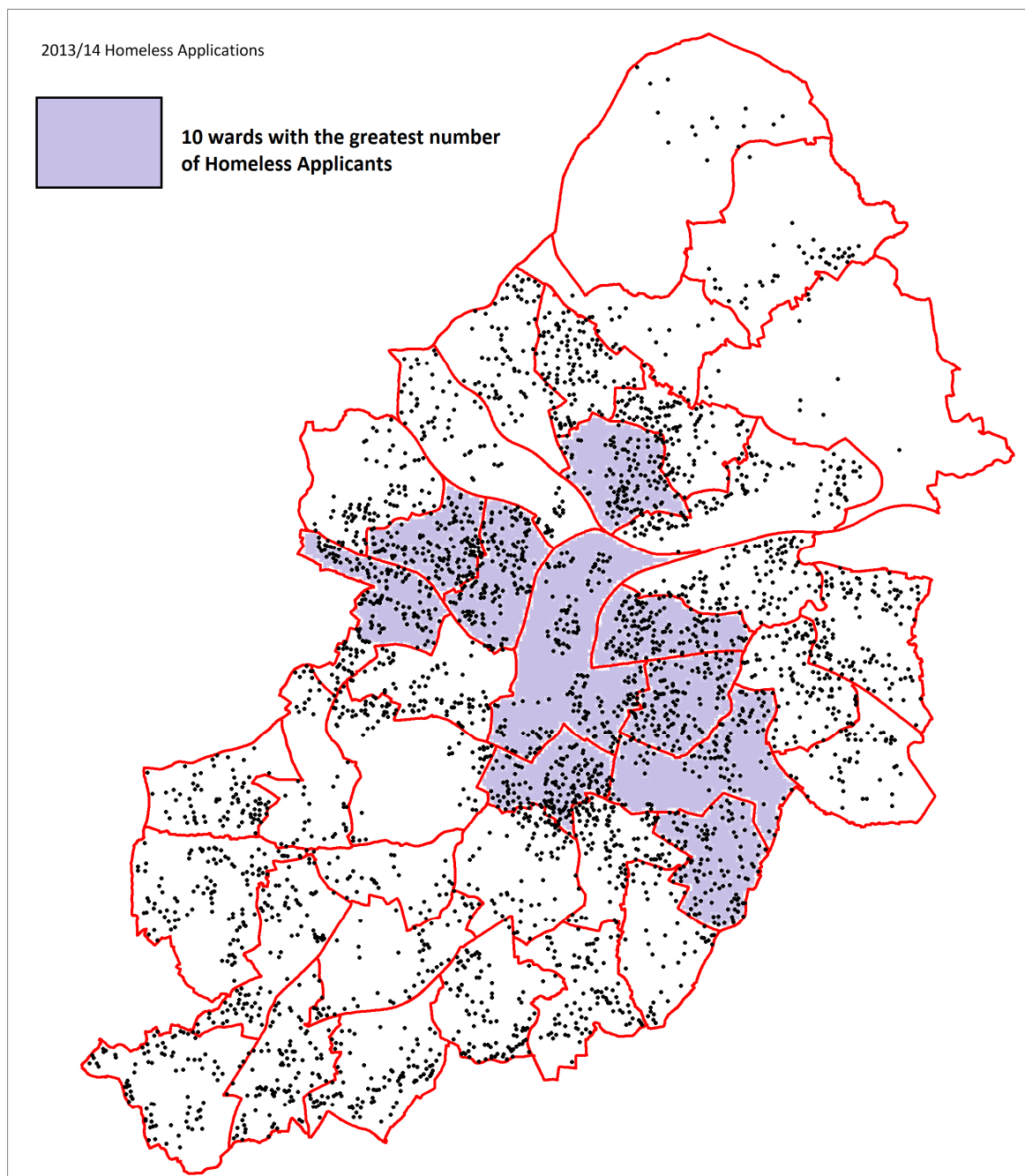
- All residents,
- Asylum Seekers and Refugees,
- Minority Ethnic people,
- Young people,
- Older people,
- Disabled people,
- Council tenants,
- Women,
- Councillors/MPs/MEPs,
- Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender people,
- Older people,
- People with Disabilities,
- People with Learning Disabilities,
- Men,
- Homeless,
- Offenders,
- Local Residents,
- Public Sector Bodies,
- Faith groups,
- Community groups,

- Voluntary Organisations,
- Staff,
- Service user groups,
- Newly arrived groups

Interests:

- Citizens Satisfaction,
- Health & Wellbeing,
- Equality & Human rights,
- Housing,
- Homelessness

2013/2014 Homeless Applicants by ward



Ward Name	Homeless Applications
NECHELLS	255
SPARKBROOK	224
SOHO	220
LOZELLS AND EAST HANDS	215
ASTON	212
WASHWOOD HEATH	183
STOCKLAND GREEN	182
BORDESLEY GREEN	161
ACOCKS GREEN	158
SOUTH YARDLEY	148

2013/14 Homeless Applications

- A** Newtown HAC
- B** Sparkbrook HAC
- C** Northfield HAC
- D** Erdington HAC

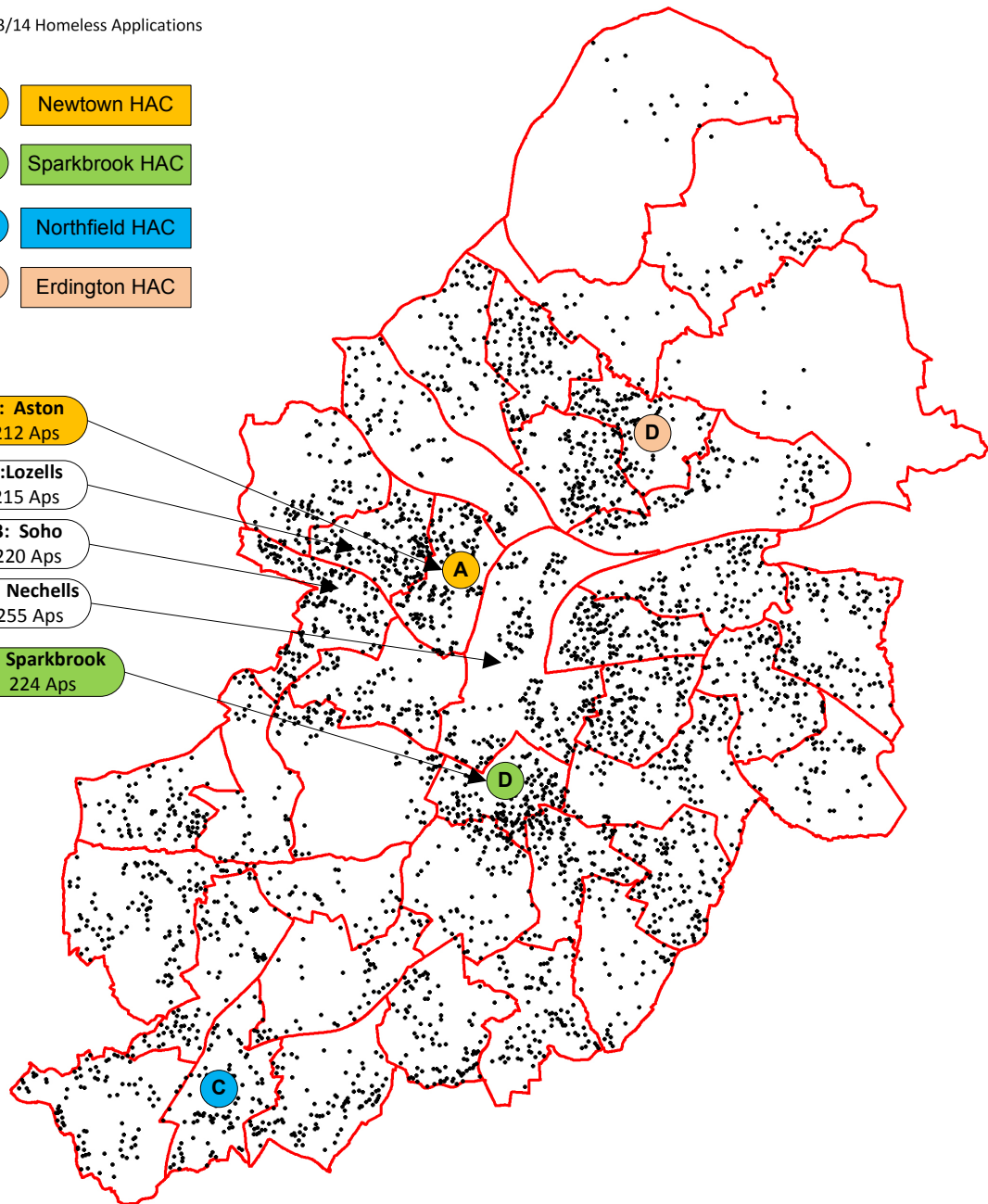
5: Aston
212 Aps

4: Lozells
215 Aps

3: Soho
220 Aps

1: Nechells
255 Aps

2: Sparkbrook
224 Aps



Ward Name	Homeless Applications
NECHELLS	255
SPARKBROOK	224
SOHO	220
LOZELLS AND EAST HANDSWORTH	215
ASTON	212
WASHWOOD HEATH	183
STOCKLAND GREEN	182
BORDESLEY GREEN	161
ACOCKS GREEN	158
SOUTH YARDLEY	148
BARTLEY GREEN	146
SPRINGFIELD	144
HODGE HILL	142
TYBURN	142
SHARD END	138
KINGSTANDING	137
NORTHFIELD	131
KINGS NORTON	130
BILLESLEY	126
BRANDWOOD	126
ERDINGTON	126
STECHFORD AND YARDLEY NORTH	114
WEOLEY	113
HANDSWORTH WOOD	109
MOSELEY AND KINGS HEATH	109
EDGBASTON	104
LADYWOOD	103
LONGBRIDGE	103
PERRY BARR	103
QUINTON	93
OSCOTT	83
BOURNVILLE	75
SHELDON	55
HALL GREEN	53
HARBORNE	53
SELY OAK	45
SUTTON TRINITY	43
SUTTON VESEY	22
SUTTON FOUR OAKS	15
SUTTON NEW HALL	15

Data Protection & Privacy

Birmingham City Council has a privacy statement. We will process any personal data given in relation to this consultation for the purposes of:

- Evaluating the answers to the questionnaire
- Reviewing responses to the proposals contained within

In addition, we will hold and process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and our full privacy notice which is available from www.birmingham.gov.uk/privacy

This questionnaire is anonymous and does not ask for your name, full address or any contact details. Your postcode (and contact details in the case of professionals delivering advice) is the only personal data requested throughout the completion of this questionnaire (although the provision of this is not compulsory).

This data is requested only to analyse geographical spread of our customer base and respondents (and for any identified follow up work for professionals delivering advice).

Responses to these questions will not be included in public feedback on this consultation.

However, as part of other public consultation and the feedback we provide on this matter, responses you provide to other questions may be made public. Therefore please take care not to enter any personal details, information or opinions that you are not happy to be made available in the public domain. We would ask that you take particular care when entering free text in your responses as, depending on the complexity and number of respondents, we are unlikely to be able to remove any personal data contained in these responses, prior to providing public feedback.

If you have any questions, please contact the nominated email address contained within the Be Heard consultation page at www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/people-1/housingadvice-service

Response type

*1. Are you responding as:

- ☐ A user of Housing Advice Centres within the last 12 months?
- ☐ An organisation or professional delivering advice?
- ☐ A Birmingham resident but non-user of these services?

Users of Housing Advice Services (Within the last 12 months)

2. What services have you visited our Housing Advice Centres for in the last 12 months (please select all that apply)?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use phone or Computer | <input type="checkbox"/> Join the Housing Register | <input type="checkbox"/> Present as Homeless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bring in paperwork | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing Advice | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

3. How did you normally get there?

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> On foot | <input type="radio"/> By bike |
| <input type="radio"/> By Car/Motorcycle | <input type="radio"/> Other |
| <input type="radio"/> By Bus/Train | |

4. On your last visit to a Housing Advice Centre, how long was your journey?

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> less than 15 mins | <input type="radio"/> 31-45mins |
| <input type="radio"/> 15-30mins | <input type="radio"/> Over 45 Mins |

5. Before you visited in person, did you try to find information by any of the following means...(please select all that apply)

- ☐ By calling the Birmingham City Council or Housing contact centre?
- ☐ By looking at the Birmingham City Council or Birmingham Housing Options website?
- ☐ By contacting another agency first i.e. advice agency or charity

6. Thinking about the last time you visited our service, could we have dealt with this in any other way listed below? (please select all that apply)

- ☐ By an improved website with clearer on line help and advice
- ☐ By an arranged call back or interview by phone
- ☐ By allowing documents to be emailed in to us
- ☐ By allowing documents to be posted in to us

7. Approximately how many times have you been into a Housing Advice Centre in the past year?

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 6-10 |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 10+ |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | |

8. What is your postcode so we can learn how far you travelled (Optional):

Housing Advice Service - Feedback

It is being proposed that Housing and Homelessness Advice moves to being delivered from a single location at Newtown Customer Service Centre, Birmingham with more advisors on duty and additional available interviews. There would also be improved advice available via phone and web.

This proposal follows exploration of alternate options; these have been considered however none have been found to be viable. Alternate options which we considered included:

1. Do nothing and stay as we are:

After consideration, it was concluded that if the Neighbourhood Advice staff are to be reduced, it would be necessary to balance this with an enhanced ability on the part of the Housing Advice Service to offer more appointments, ensure that the most consistent service is available and secure the high quality decisions which are needed, particularly in the area of homelessness, all of which objectives are in any event desirable in their own right. This option was therefore not found to be viable.

2. Move Housing Advice Delivery to a two centre model:

Upon further exploration it was concluded that this option would still require more Neighbourhood Advice Service staff in support than those actually available or would require additional resources for the Homeless and Pre-Tenancy service. It wouldn't create sufficient increased capacity and would not fully resolve issues around consistency or flexibility of staff cover. This option was not considered viable in view of this.

3. Relocate the Housing Advice Service to a single site in Birmingham City Centre:

This was explored however the Council has no suitable building currently available to use and an evaluation of renting a private building recognised that we would incur significant yearly costs as well as one off set up costs which are unlikely to be sustainable and thus this option was not considered viable.

9. Do you have any comments or feedback regarding the alternate proposals that were considered?

10. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the proposal to centralise Homelessness Advice at one central location at Newtown Customer Service Centre



Agree



Not sure



No opinion



Disagree

11. If we went to a single Housing Advice Centre what if any concerns would you have about this?

12. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about how you might access housing and homelessness advice in the future, in light of the proposals?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
I would still be able to get to the centre in Newtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would use the web or phone to get the service I need instead.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be able to get help from another advice service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a support worker or other professional who could help me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would need support with transport to enable me to get to Newtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. How do you think we could make it easier for you to get the housing and homelessness support you might need?

14. Do you have any other comments on our proposals or benefits you see from them?

Organisations and Professionals delivering advice

The Housing Advice service is proposing that Housing and Homelessness Advice moves from the four present sites (Sparkbrook, Northfield, Newtown and Erdington) to being delivered from a single location at Newtown Customer Service Centre, Birmingham with more advisors on duty and additional available interviews. There would also be improved advice available via phone and web.

15. Are you responding on behalf of an organisation or are these your individual views

☐ I am responding on behalf of my organisation

☐ These are my individual views

16. Please provide some details about your organisation including the type of service it provides?

17. If you are happy for us to contact you regarding any feedback you wish to provide, please provide a means of contact (telephone or email with a contact name) below:

It is being proposed that Housing and Homelessness Advice moves from its four present centres (Newtown, Sparkbrook, Erdington & Northfield) to being delivered from a single location at Newtown Customer Service Centre, Birmingham with more advisors and available interviews. There would also be improved advice available via phone and web.

The proposal in relation to Homelessness & Housing Advice follows exploration of alternate options, these have been considered however none have been found to be viable. Alternate options which we considered included:

1. Do nothing and stay as we are:

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18. Do you have any comments or feedback regarding the alternate proposals that were considered?

19. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the proposal to centralise Homelessness Advice at one central location at Newtown Customer Service Centre

☐ Agree

☐ Not sure

☐ No opinion

☐ Disagree

20. If we went to a single Housing Advice Centre what if any concerns would you have about this?

21. Please provide any comments on how these changes could impact upon the clients you work with?

22. What benefits can you see from the model?

23. Given the current resource restrictions, do you have any further comments which could improve the service?

Equalities Data

Birmingham City Council has responsibilities under the Equalities Act (2010) to work to prevent against people based on protected characteristics. To assist in this we like to gather data regarding the demographics of people providing us with feedback and responding to consultations.

This information is not mandatory and if you do not wish to provide such information a 'Prefer not to say' option is available on each question.

24. Which age group applies to you?

***25. What is your sex?**

Equalities Data

26. As a woman, are you pregnant, on maternity leave or returning from maternity leave?

*** 27. Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to say

Equalities Data

28. If yes, do any of these conditions or illnesses affect you in any of the following areas? (More than one answer is acceptable)

- ☐ 1. Vision (e.g. blindness or partial sight)
- ☐ 2. Hearing (e.g. deafness or partial hearing)
- ☐ 3. Mobility (e.g. walking short distances or climbing stairs)
- ☐ 4. Dexterity (e.g. lifting and carrying and carrying objects, using a keyboard)
- ☐ 5. Learning or understanding or concentrating
- ☐ 6. Memory
- ☐ 7. Mental Health
- ☐ 8. Stamina or breathing or fatigue
- ☐ 9. Socially or behaviourally (e.g. associated with autism, attention deficit disorder or Asperger's syndrome)
- ☐ 10. Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

29. Ethnicity: What is your ethnic group?

30. Sexual Orientation: What is your sexual orientation?

31. Religion What is your religion or belief?

32. What is your marital or same sex civil partnership status?

33. Do you have caring responsibilities?

Finish

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will be reviewed and considered as we develop our proposals and make decisions as to what will happen next.