The survey shows that people with learning difficulties visit their GPs a lot. In our experience it is important to know your doctor and have a doctor that knows you.

Independence is important to us. The survey shows that a lot of people are worried, feel left out, feel helpless and lack confidence. To be independent in the community people with learning difficulties need to have places where they take part, are in control and make their own decisions.

Ian Davies & Karen Spencer

We asked people about their health, their use of health services and how happy they were.

Health

We asked people about their general health.

- Nearly half of the people (45%) said their health was 'very good'
- Two out of five (41%) said it was 'good'
- One in six (15%) said it was 'not good'.

We wanted to find out which people were more likely to say that their health was 'not good'. The following list starts with the things that were most important and ends with the things that were least important. People were more likely to say that their health was 'not good' if they:

- Were poor
We also asked people whether they had an illness or disability that they had had for a long time. Nearly two out of three people (61%) said that they had. This is much more than people in the UK in general, just under one in three (31%) have a long-standing illness. The most common types of illnesses or disabilities they told us about are shown in Figure 25.

![Figure 25: Percentage of People with Specific Long-Standing Illnesses or Disabilities](image)
Again, we wanted to find out which people were more likely to have a long-standing illness or disability. The following list starts with the things that were most important and ends with the things that were least important. People were more likely to say that they had a long-standing illness or disability if they:

- Had higher support needs
- Did not have a paid job
- Lived in NHS accommodation
- Lived alone
- Lived in more deprived communities

We asked people about some of the things that can make you more or less healthy.

- Nearly one in five people (19%) said they smoked cigarettes nowadays.
- Nearly half of the people (46%) said they did exercise that made them out of breath and sweaty. Nearly one in six (15%) said they did this at least three times a week.
We wanted to find out which people were more likely to smoke and which people were more likely to exercise at least three times a week. People were more likely to smoke if (in order of importance) they:

- Had low support needs
- Were poor
- Did not see friends with learning difficulties very often
- Lived in more deprived areas
- Were men
- Were White
- Did fewer different types of community activities
- Were younger
- Saw friends who do not have learning difficulties more often

People were more likely to exercise at least three times a week if (in order of importance) they:

- Were younger
- Had lower support needs
- Did a wider range of community-based activities
- Were men
- Were Black
- Did not see friends with learning difficulties very often

**Use of Health Services**

Nearly everyone (99%) said they had a doctor and nearly everyone (99%) said they were registered with a GP. Nearly everyone (94%) said they got on with their doctor. Just over three out of four people (78%) said they had seen their doctor in the last year.
We asked people who they would go to for help if they were ill. People said they would go to

- A doctor (50%)
- A relative (26%)
- A support worker (23%)
- A hospital (4%)
- Their partner (3%)
- Their parent (3%)
- A friend (1%)

Just over one in four people (27%) said they had had problems with their teeth in the last six months. We asked people whether they went to the dentists for a check up or only when their teeth hurt. A few people (4%) said they never went to the dentists, nearly one in five (18%) said they only went when their teeth hurt. Over three out of four people (78%) said they had been to a dentist for a check up. Four out of five people (82%) said they were registered with a dentist.

We asked people about different kinds of tests they may have had.

- Just over half (52%) had their eyes tested in the last year
- One in five (21%) had their hearing tested in the last year
- Only one in four women (27%) had ever had a cervical smear
- Only one in four women (24%) had ever had their breasts checked for lumps by a doctor or nurse
Well-Being

We asked people how happy they felt about their life at the moment.

- Nearly half (47%) said they were ‘very happy’
- Over one in four (29%) said they were ‘quite happy’
- One in five (21%) said they were ‘sometimes happy’, and ‘sometimes unhappy’
- One in twenty (4%) said they were ‘mostly unhappy’

Because it is often difficult for people to know whether someone else is really happy or not, we also looked at what support people told us and what people with learning difficulties told us themselves. When people with learning difficulties answered the question themselves they were more likely to say they were ‘sometimes happy and sometimes unhappy’ (25% compared with 17% when the support person answered). They were a bit less likely to say they were ‘very happy’, ‘quite happy’ and ‘mostly unhappy’.

We wanted to find out which people were more likely to be ‘very’ or ‘quite’ happy with their lives at the moment. People were more likely to say they were happy if (in order of importance) they

- Had good general health
- Were older
- Were not poor
- Had higher support needs
- Did a wider range of leisure activities
- Did not live alone
- Lived in a Registered Residential Care Home
- Had a paid job
- Saw friends with learning difficulties more often
- Lived in a more affluent community

We also asked people how often they felt sad or worried, left out, helpless, and confident.

- One in ten people (11%) said they felt sad or worried ‘a lot’. Another two out of three (65%) said they felt sad or worried ‘sometimes’.
- One in ten people (9%) said they felt left out ‘a lot’. Another two out of five (41%) said they felt left out ‘sometimes’.
- One in ten people (9%) said they felt helpless ‘a lot’. Nearly another half (45%) said they felt helpless ‘sometimes’.
- Over one in three people (39%) said they felt confident ‘a lot’. Another half (48%) said they felt confident ‘sometimes’. Over one in ten people (13%) said they ‘never’ felt confident.

Nearly all people (95%) said they had someone to talk to if they felt sad or down.

Because it is often difficult for people to know what someone else really feels, we also looked at what support people told us and what people with learning difficulties told us themselves. There were no real differences between what support people told us and what people with learning difficulties told us themselves. The one difference was that people with learning difficulties were more likely to say they were confident a lot of the time (42% compared with 31% when a support person answered the question).
We wanted to find out which people were more likely to feel sad or worried, left out or helpless ‘a lot’ of the time and ‘never’ feel confident.

People were more likely to feel sad or worried ‘a lot’ of the time if (in order of importance) they:

- Had poor general health
- Were poor
- Lived alone
- Were Asian or Black
- Were younger
- Were women
- Had a long-standing illness or disability

People were more likely to feel left out ‘a lot’ of the time if (in order of importance) they

- Were younger
- Lived alone
- Had poor health
- Saw friends with learning difficulties less often
- Were Asian
- Were poor

People were more likely to feel helpless ‘a lot’ of the time if (in order of importance) they

- Had poor health
- Had higher support needs
- Were poor
- Were younger
- Saw friends with learning difficulties less often
- Lived alone
- Saw their family less often
People were more likely to ‘never’ feel confident if (in order of importance) they

- Were poor
- Had poor health
- Were younger
- Lived with fewer people
- Saw friends who do not have learning difficulties less often
- Were Asian
- Had higher support needs
- Lived in a private household
- Lived in more deprived neighbourhoods
- Had a long-standing illness or disability