

# The Power of Diversity:

Open minds.  
Open conversations.  
Creating Innovation.

(Full Report)



**Porphura**

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# **1. Diversity Drives Innovation and Strengthens Communities**

## **What is Diversity?**

Diversity means that people are different in many ways. We have different interests, beliefs, abilities, perspectives, and appearances. Everyone is unique, and that's a good thing!

When we embrace diversity, we learn from each other, support one another, and create stronger, more innovative, and inclusive communities. Different voices bring new ideas, fresh solutions, and a more sustainable future for all. Diversity makes society fairer, more creative, and more connected. It benefits everyone.

## **What is this report about?**

This report was created by two Dundee-based organisations (Uppertunity and Porphura) who wanted to move beyond frustration and find real solutions to making diversity a reality.

In this report, we will:

- Celebrate what's going well in terms of inclusion.
- Highlight current barriers and the challenges people face.
- Explore ways to overcome these barriers.
- Look to nature for lessons on achieving diversity and inclusion.
- Present bold, big thinking ideas to create real change.

## **The impact of not being diverse**

Imagine a world where everyone thought the same, looked the same, and did the same things. It wouldn't just be boring; it would hold us all back. Without diversity:


- New ideas wouldn't emerge, limiting creativity and progress.
- People wouldn't learn from each other, making it harder to accept and celebrate differences.
- Exclusion would increase, leading to stereotyping, discrimination, and social division.
- Communities would weaken, becoming less inclusive, less supportive, and less innovative.


When we welcome and include everyone, our communities grow stronger, businesses thrive, and new ideas can flourish. Diversity isn't just the right thing to do, it makes life better for everyone.


## 2. The Cost of Exclusion & The Benefits of Inclusion

Excluding individuals with disabilities from full participation in society doesn't just harm those affected, it weakens our communities and economies as a whole. When barriers prevent access to education, employment, and social opportunities, the consequences ripple across society, leading to financial losses, social isolation, and missed potential.


### **Economic Impact: The High Cost of Exclusion**


 **GDP Loss:** Countries can lose up to 7% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by excluding people with disabilities from education and employment. Limited opportunities lead to increased poverty and reliance on social welfare programs. (Portulans Institute, International Labour Organisation).

 **Workplace Exclusion Costs:** The International Labour Organisation (ILO) highlights that excluding people with disabilities from the workforce isn't just a social injustice, it's an economic loss. Their exclusion prevents full participation in society, reducing productivity and economic growth.


 **The Covid Pandemic** has contributed to an increase in mental health disorders, increased depression rates, increased isolation and loneliness, and increased disabilities due to long covid (WHO).


### **Social Impact: The Ripple Effect of Exclusion**


 **Community Well-being:** When people with disabilities face barriers, it affects their families too. Parents and caregivers may have to reduce work hours or leave jobs entirely to provide support, leading to financial strain and missed opportunities for economic participation. (UNICEF).

 **Social Isolation:** 13% of the disabled community report feeling lonely regularly, compared to 4% of the general population. (DWP).

### **Community & Business Benefits: Why Inclusion Matters**

 **Stronger Economies:** Disability inclusion improves the economic health of communities. Research shows that businesses that hire people with disabilities see higher revenues and long-term growth.

 **Business Performance:** Companies that prioritise disability inclusion report 28% higher revenue, double the net income, and 30% higher economic profit margins compared to their peers. (ALSO, Oregon).

 **Innovation Through Diversity:** Diverse teams bring fresh ideas, better decision-making, and more creative problem-solving. However, businesses need to be proactive in managing diversity effectively to unlock its full potential. (Financial Times).

Embracing diversity isn't just the right thing to do, it's a catalyst for economic prosperity, innovation, and a thriving society.

### 3. Fear and Mindset: A Major Barrier to Inclusion

Transforming Fear into Opportunity: The Path to Inclusive Growth.

Many barriers to inclusion don't come from prejudice, they come from fear and uncertainty. People often hesitate to engage with diversity because they worry about:

- ◇ Saying the wrong thing
- ◇ Making a mistake
- ◇ Asking an offensive question
- ◇ Feeling uncomfortable in new situations

But curiosity isn't a bad thing, it's how we grow! Research shows that resistance to diversity often stems from fear of the unknown, not a lack of willingness (Mannaz.com). When people ignore their curiosity, they create unintentional barriers, missing the chance to connect, learn, and build more inclusive communities.

#### **Understanding the Roots of Resistance**

👤 **Fear of the Unknown:** Many people avoid engaging with individuals who have different abilities or backgrounds, not out of prejudice, but because they fear making a mistake or feeling out of place. This discomfort leads to avoidance, which creates deeper divisions in society.

💡 **The Power of Mindset:** Shifting our mindset from fear to curiosity allows us to ask questions, learn, and grow. People aren't expected to know everything about inclusion, but the willingness to learn makes all the difference.

#### **Curiosity Creates Change**

Being curious about people with different experiences, abilities, and backgrounds helps break down barriers:

- ☑ It helps us learn and understand each other
- ☑ It builds meaningful relationships
- ☑ It shifts our mindsets, leading to personal growth and a stronger, more inclusive society

Instead of avoiding diversity, let's embrace it. Ask questions. Listen. Explore. Lean into curiosity instead of fear.

#### **Strategies for Overcoming Fear & Building Inclusion**

🎓 **Education & Exposure:** The more we engage with diverse groups, the more natural and comfortable inclusion becomes. Workshops, training, and lived experiences are powerful ways to break fear-driven barriers.

🗣️ **Fear-Breaking Conversations:** Create safe spaces for people to ask questions and discuss inclusion openly, removing the stigma of not knowing the "right" thing to say.

👥 **Shared Experiences Matter:** Reverse inclusion programs, where people with additional needs lead workshops or spend time in schools to help normalise diversity from a young age.

🏢 **Business & Public Inclusion Labs:** Hands-on challenges where businesses, schools, and communities experience inclusion in action, not just as a policy, but as a mindset shift.

#### **💡 Final Thought: Choose Learning Over Fear**

When we replace fear with curiosity, we open doors to understanding, connection, and progress. True inclusion happens when we stop worrying about doing it perfectly and just start doing it.

🌍 Because when we choose learning over fear, we create a world where everyone belongs.

## 4. How This Study Came About

At Uppertunity and Porphura, we work with adults with additional support needs and their carers, breaking barriers and creating opportunities. But we kept hitting the same roadblocks, again and again: Limited opportunities; Lack of visibility for inclusive spaces; Struggles to expand connections and services. We wanted to dig deeper to understand the barriers, explore solutions, and take action.


### **Uppertunity:**

Uppertunity is a Dundee-based charity dedicated to empowering individuals to lead fuller, more meaningful lives. We work with people aged 16 and over with additional support needs, learning disabilities, autism, and mental health barriers. Our mission is to create safe, supportive and creative spaces that foster growth, equality, and togetherness. We want people to explore their potential, build confidence, and develop life skills that promote independence and connection. People with learning disabilities are among the most marginalised groups, yet opportunities for growth and development remain limited. This can affect families, increase pressure on services, and create further separation in society. Uppertunity exists to bridge this gap.

### **Porphura:**

Porphura is a Disability Inclusion business with a focus to inform, advocate, inspire and connect those who live with a disability or long-term health condition and businesses. We achieve this by bridging the knowledge gap and directly connecting businesses with a specific target market with the aim to increase their potential revenue while creating a fairer and more equal world. Whilst many businesses can demonstrate awareness around disability inclusion, many lack direct strategies to affectively tap into this market. At Porphura we guide businesses in their practices and remove confusion or complexities that hold businesses back from improved and effective accessible practices and facilitate economic recovery from the effects of COVID-19 in 2020 by tapping into the purple pound while driving social change. Porphura is designed to inspire and evoke change for the inclusion of people with disabilities and complex needs, provoke enthusiasm and ignite curiosity. And finally, to drive realistic and tangible change. We create a mutual, unbiased, solution orientated, community where opportunity to work together exists without villainising anyone. A community where the 'them' and 'us' camps come together. A community who cares and want to see actual change.


### **The Reality: A World That Still Excludes**

 1.3 billion people...17% of the world's population...live with a disability (WHO).


Yet, accessibility and inclusion remain afterthoughts.

 **The Isolation Crisis**


82% of families and carers say their loved ones often feel lonely due to rarely being able to leave their homes (Mencap, 2022). 70% say loneliness harms their mental health (Sense, 2021).

 **Mental Health Struggles**

88% say their loved one always or very often feels sad, and nearly a third (32%) struggle with mental health issues (Mencap, 2022).

 **Barriers to Inclusion**

Limited employment, transport challenges, and stigma keep many socially isolated (MacDonald et al., 2018).

 **Health Inequality**

People with learning disabilities die 20 years earlier, often from preventable illnesses (O'Leary et al., 2017).

 **The COVID-19 Impact**

Support services shut down, leaving many lonely, anxious, and without vital help (SCLD, 2020).

## 5. How did we investigate

These barriers aren't permanent, they can be changed. With action, understanding, and inclusive solutions, we can build a society that works for everyone.

So, instead of just talking about the problem, we asked ourselves:

- 🤔 What if we explored this further?
- 🤔 What if we focused not on what's wrong, but on what we could do?
- 🤔 What if we could make Dundee a destination for all?

We wanted to hear from as many voices as possible: people with lived experience, carers, businesses, educators, and local councils. So, we got creative.

🔍 Interviews: We spoke to an amazing mix of people: Carers and support staff; Individuals with learning disabilities and physical disabilities; Dundee City Council; Carers Centre; Local businesses; and Educators.

📊 Surveys & Questionnaires: We ran online surveys and hit the city centre, stopping to chat with anyone open to sharing their experience.

🗣️ Workshops at the V&A Dundee: We hosted three interactive workshops where the general public and diversity-focused organisations joined the conversation. Each session featured 3-4 organisations dedicated to inclusion.

📖 Desk Research: We read... a lot. We gathered reports, data, and research to back up real-life stories with real-world numbers.

📓 Everywhere we went... we listened! This wasn't just a formal process. Three of us carried notebooks everywhere. Whenever we heard something insightful, whether at events, casual chats, or just observing the world, we wrote it down. We kept our ears perked up and minds open to amazing organisations and individuals offering real solutions.

## **6. What did we find out: overview**

Our research identified five major themes impacting inclusion, accessibility, and social participation for individuals with additional needs. These findings highlight the challenges faced, the lessons learned, and bold solutions to move forward.

### **1. Social Isolation & Confidence**

- ◇ Many individuals with additional needs feel forgotten after leaving school or college, with few accessible social spaces to build confidence and friendships.
- ◇ Fear and stigma persist, creating barriers in workplaces, public spaces, and community settings.
- ◇ Post-pandemic: many are still struggling to reintegrate socially.

#### ☒ The Solution:

- Reframe accessibility as a social benefit for all, not just a compliance issue.
- Create more inclusive, structured social spaces where people can build confidence and connections.
- Educate communities on inclusion early, normalising diverse interactions from childhood.

### **2. Expanding Access to Transport**

- ◇ Public transport remains unreliable, inaccessible, and overwhelming, many people rely on expensive taxis as their only option.
- ◇ Fear of travel prevents many from accessing work, education, and social opportunities.
- ◇ Poor drop curbs, pavement conditions, and bus driver awareness create daily challenges.

#### ☒ The Solution:

- Introduce “calm travel” options with sensory-friendly bus hours.
- Develop real-time tracking and support systems to improve safety and confidence.
- Train transport staff on accessibility and the needs of disabled passengers.

### **3. Creating Pathways After Education**

- ◇ Young people with additional needs “fall off a cliff” at 19, there are no structured transitions from school to employment, volunteering, or further education.
- ◇ Employers lack awareness of reasonable adjustments, making job-seeking difficult.
- ◇ Volunteering impacts benefits, discouraging participation.

#### ☒ The Solution:

- Subsidise employment support for businesses to encourage inclusive hiring.
- Create short-term, flexible job placements tailored to different abilities.
- Develop co-learning spaces where businesses, students, and disabled individuals collaborate.

### **4. Advocacy for Inclusion**

- ◇ Disability is still seen as “other”, not a natural part of human diversity.
- ◇ Businesses don’t communicate their accessibility, many have inclusive spaces but don’t promote them.
- ◇ Fear of the unknown stops people from engaging, many avoid diversity not out of prejudice, but uncertainty.

#### ☒ The Solution:

- Launch creative awareness campaigns (e.g., slogan t-shirts, interactive workshops).
- Train businesses and communities on the economic and social benefits of inclusion.
- Normalise disability representation in media, schools, and workplaces.

### **5. Simplifying Support Systems**

- ◇ Families spend more time fighting bureaucracy than accessing support.
- ◇ Social care is in crisis, only those in extreme need receive help, leaving many struggling.
- ◇ Carers are undervalued, leading to high turnover and burnout.



☒ The Solution:

- Streamline support services into a “one-stop-shop” model.
- Invest in preventative support, early interventions reduce long-term costs.
- Reimagine carer roles, offering better pay, training, and career development.

**The Big Picture: Inclusion Requires Bold Action**

These findings show that inclusion is not just about accessibility, it’s about mindset, innovation, and connection. Moving forward, we must think big, act boldly, and create a world where diversity is not an exception, but the norm.

It’s time to move from conversation to action, because when inclusion thrives, we all thrive.

## 7. Findings: 1. Social Isolation & confidence

### **The Problem:**

- Social isolation is a significant issue, with many individuals with additional needs feeling "forgotten" after school or college.
- There is a lack of accessible, structured social spaces, making it difficult for people to form friendships or build confidence.
- Fear and stigma still persist, causing discomfort in public spaces, workplaces, and social settings.
- Post-pandemic impact, COVID-19 disrupted social habits, leaving many struggling to reintegrate.
- Parents often limit independence out of fear, unintentionally holding back their children's ability to socialise.

### **Key Learning:**

- Confidence comes from opportunities. When individuals engage in inclusive spaces, they develop friendships and skills previously thought impossible.
- People aren't resisting inclusion out of prejudice, but uncertainty. Fear of saying or doing the wrong thing stops engagement.
- Society underestimates people's capabilities. Education and exposure are key to changing misconceptions.

### **Ways Forward:**

- Reframe accessibility as a social benefit for all. Encourage businesses, schools, and organisations to see inclusion as a strength, not a challenge.
- Introduce social confidence workshops, focusing on communication skills, self-expression, and boundary-setting.
- Educate early. Implement school programs where young people interact with individuals with disabilities, normalising inclusion.
- Promote inclusive community events, accessible meet-ups, activity groups, and networking spaces for disabled and non-disabled individuals alike.
- Change the language of disability. Shift from deficit-based language (e.g., "struggles with") to empowerment-focused language (e.g., "thrives with the right support").

## 8. Findings: 2. Expanding access to Transport

### **The Problem:**

- Public transport is unreliable and inaccessible: limited routes, unsafe conditions, and lack of understanding from drivers create daily challenges.
- Taxis are too expensive, yet often the only option for people with disabilities.
- Fear of public transport: many individuals (especially those with autism or anxiety) find buses overwhelming due to noise, unpredictability, and rushed journeys.
- Drop curbs, pavements, and road design are major accessibility barriers.
- Many individuals with additional support needs need support to travel to a destination, though they may not need support at the destination.

### **Key Learning:**

- Transport is about independence, not just mobility. If people can't get around, they can't socialise, work, or contribute to their communities.
- Small changes can make a big difference. Better driver training, clearer accessibility information, and affordable transport options could open up the world for many.

### **Ways Forward:**

- Introduce sensory-friendly travel options, such as "calm travel" hours on buses, reducing noise and distractions for autistic individuals or those with anxiety.
- Improve accessibility awareness among transport staff. Train bus and taxi drivers to be more patient, supportive, and disability aware. Promote Journey Assist Cards for smoother communication.
- Develop a travel mentoring program, pairing individuals with mentors or support workers to help build confidence using public transport.
- Implement real-time tracking and safety systems: GPS monitoring, text-based emergency alerts, and real-time updates for disabled travellers.
- Reintroduce subsidised, community-led transport solutions such as on-demand accessible minibuses, offering an affordable and reliable alternative to taxis. This will also encourage use of community services that are under used due to individuals not being able to get to these services.

## 9. Findings: 3. Create Pathways After Education

### The Problem:

- Young people with additional support needs often “fall off a cliff”. There is no structured transition from school to employment, volunteering, or further education.
- Colleges offer education but no extracurricular activities, leaving students isolated and without social opportunities compared to their non-disabled peers.
- Parents are left to fill the gap, often quitting jobs or reducing work hours to provide support when no services are available.
- Employers lack awareness of reasonable adjustments, making job-seeking difficult for those who need flexible or supported working environments.
- Volunteering can impact benefits, discouraging many from getting involved.

### Key Learnings:

- A structured transition into adulthood is essential. Without a plan, many lose confidence, skills, and opportunities. Some great solutions already exist, but stronger partnerships between schools, businesses, and service providers are needed.
- Employment and volunteering need to be redefined and reimagined. Not everyone needs to follow a traditional job path, but everyone deserves meaningful opportunities to contribute to society in a way that fits their abilities and aspirations.
- Businesses are often willing to be inclusive but lack guidance. With the right support and training, more workplaces could adapt and hire diversely.

### Ways Forward:

- Subsidised employment support for businesses, offering financial incentives, training, and mentorship programs to help businesses hire and retain employees with additional needs.
- Expand post-education support services. Establish clear, structured pathways from school into work, volunteering, or community engagement. There are current projects doing this, but stronger partnerships are needed for it to flourish.
- Rethink traditional employment models. Explore micro-jobs, social enterprises, flexible work, and co-working opportunities designed for neurodivergent and disabled individuals.
- Strengthen life-skills education post school education and college. Offer lifelong learning opportunities.

## 10. Findings: 4. Advocate for Inclusion

### The Problem:

- Society often sees disability as "other" rather than an integral part of human diversity.
- Many businesses don't know how to communicate their accessibility features. Some have accessible spaces but fail to promote or explain them effectively.
- Fear of the unknown discourages interaction. People often avoid engaging with those who seem different, not out of prejudice, but due to discomfort or uncertainty.
- Parents of disabled children face judgment, even within disability communities, due to differing views on education, support, and independence.

### Key Learning:

- Inclusion is more than just physical access, it's about creating welcoming, respectful, and empowering spaces where everyone feels valued and understood.
- Many businesses and communities want to be inclusive but don't know how. Small, cost-effective changes can make a huge difference in accessibility and perception.
- Education is key. Without exposure and awareness, fear and misunderstanding persist.

### Ways Forward:

- Train and support businesses, schools, and community leaders, providing practical guidance on inclusive practices, communication, and accessibility.
- Encourage more interaction between disabled and non-disabled individuals. Creating community events, school engagement programs, and workplace inclusion initiatives to break down barriers of fear and discomfort.
- Recognise and celebrate businesses embracing accessibility through awards, incentives, and public campaigns, showing that inclusion benefits both society and the economy. There are some current programmes running, but further awareness is needed.
- Shift public perception. Promote the message that accessibility isn't about compliance; it's about creating spaces where everyone can thrive.
- Make information about accessibility easy to find. Encourage businesses to list their accessibility features online, and develop city-wide accessibility directories to support inclusive tourism and community participation. There are various websites online, but more partnership work can help amplify these resources.

## 11. Findings: 5. Simplify Support Systems

### **The Problem:**

- The system is overly complex, families spend more time battling bureaucracy than actually receiving support. Many are left feeling exhausted and overwhelmed.
- Short-term funding creates instability. Organisations struggle to plan long-term, constantly chasing small grants instead of focusing on long term impact.
- Social care is in crisis. Only those in severe crisis receive help, leaving many individuals unsupported until they reach breaking point.
- Carers feel undervalued and unsupported. Low pay, high stress, and a lack of career progression result in high turnover and workforce shortages.
- Different services don't communicate, forcing families to navigate multiple systems on their own, often receiving conflicting advice or missing out on key support.

### **Key Learning:**

- Prevention is more effective than crisis management. Investing in early support saves money in the long run and prevents unnecessary suffering.
- Stable, long-term funding leads to better outcomes. Organisations need security to build meaningful, sustainable services rather than relying on short-term fixes.
- Carers are essential to society. They enable independence, reduce healthcare burdens, and contribute to the economy, yet they remain undervalued and underpaid.
- Accessing support should be simple. Families should spend time living, not navigating.

### **Ways Forward:**

- Reimagine the role of carers: increase pay, career progression, and training to attract a skilled and motivated workforce while supporting young people into care careers.
- Create a 'One-Stop-Shop' Support Hub. A single, streamlined system where families can access all relevant services in one place, rather than having to piece together fragmented support. Various resources are available, but partnership is needed to streamline.
- Improve coordination between services. Ensure that different support systems talk to each other, making processes easier for families to navigate.
- Invest in preventative services. Expand respite care, early intervention, mental health support, and practical assistance for carers and individuals with additional needs.

## 12. Big Thinking... Bold Ideas for Real Change

Addressing these challenges isn't about small tweaks, it's about shifting how we think about inclusion entirely. The research highlights a shared desire for connection, independence, and real opportunities. We need to be creative, ambitious, and disruptive in our approach. Instead of making small adjustments to a broken system, we must rethink the way society functions. Here are four bold ways to move forward, not just differently, but better...

### 1. Advocate for Inclusion: Make It Unforgettable

Inclusion needs to be fun, loud, and everywhere. It shouldn't feel like a chore, it should be exciting, inspiring, and something people WANT to be part of. Let's make inclusion the norm, not an afterthought.

#### Slogan Campaign: Wear the Movement

T-shirts, tote bags, and posters with bold, thought-provoking messages: "Talk to Someone Different Today" – an everyday challenge to step outside comfort zones; "Fear Less, Connect More" – addressing the core issue of fear-based exclusion. By making inclusion a visible movement, we spark conversations, and challenge stereotypes.

#### Reverse Inclusion in Schools: Learning Through Experience

Inclusion education often focuses on teaching kids about disabilities, but what if we flipped the model? What if adults with additional needs spent the day leading fun activities in primary schools? Children naturally embrace diversity when it's part of their daily life. By shifting the perspective, kids grow up seeing disability as normal, not as something 'other.'

#### Fear-Breaking Workshops: Teaching Confidence, Not Caution

Many people avoid interacting with disabled individuals, not out of prejudice, but out of fear of saying or doing the wrong thing. Let's fix that: Interactive workshops in shopping centres, businesses, and public spaces to teach people HOW to engage comfortably with individuals with disabilities; Fun, engaging role-playing exercises, turning "fear of the unknown" into curiosity and connection.

#### Business Inclusion Labs: 1-Day Accessibility Challenges

Most businesses want to be inclusive but don't know where to start. Let's show them. Businesses sign up for a 1-day challenge where they: Redesign a service, space, or event with accessibility in mind; Learn that inclusion isn't all-or-nothing, there are different levels of accessibility they can provide; Walk away with practical, affordable ways to make their business more welcoming.. Not every business can offer everything, but every business can do SOMETHING.

### 2. Expand Access to Transport: Rethink Movement Entirely

Transport isn't just about getting from A to B, it's about freedom, independence, and connection. Right now, too many people with additional needs can't travel easily, leading to social isolation and lost opportunities. Instead of minor tweaks, we need to reimagine how transport works for everyone.

#### Community Minibus: Affordable, Reliable, Shared

Right now, taxis are too expensive, and public transport feels unsafe or unreliable. What if we introduced a subsidised mini-bus service running on key accessible routes? Funded partly by local businesses (who benefit from increased customer traffic). Passengers pay a small fee, affordable but still sustainable. Trained drivers and staff to support individuals with different needs. A reliable, shared system could replace taxi dependence, increase independence, and create social travel opportunities.

#### Citywide Transport Challenge: Walk (or Roll) in Their Shoes

The best way to understand a problem? Experience it first-hand. Challenge city leaders, bus drivers, and council members to spend a day navigating the city with a mobility impairment. Blindfolded bus journeys: how accessible is information for the visually impaired? Wheelchair travel across the city: how easy is it to board buses, cross streets, or access shops? Autism-friendly travel simulations: how overwhelming is the noise, lighting, and unpredictability? Nothing teaches change better than living it. Let's make decision-makers feel the struggles first-hand.

#### On-Demand Travel Buddies: A Companion System for Safe Travel

Many people could use public transport if they had support getting there. What if we created an app where volunteers sign up to accompany individuals on their journeys? Like Uber, but for companionship and navigation

help. Volunteers could be students, retired individuals, or community members offering time to support others. Could be linked with a “confidence-building” system, where people gradually move towards independent travel. With the right support, education, and investment, transport can be more than just a service, it can be a lifeline. Let’s make movement possible for everyone.

### 3. Rethink Jobs & Pathways: It’s Time for Something Radical

Traditional employment doesn’t work for everyone. Many individuals with additional needs are locked out of jobs due to rigid structures, inflexible hiring practices, and fear from employers. Instead of forcing people into a broken system, let’s redefine what work, contribution, and success look like. There are already incredible initiatives making a difference. These should be seen as the norm and standard, not as exceptional.

#### Skill Swap Program: A Different Measure of Value

Not everyone fits into a standard 9–5 job, but everyone has skills to share. What if we created a community skills exchange? Individuals with additional needs offer their talents (e.g., art, coding, gardening, storytelling) in exchange for: Mentorship; Training opportunities; Small stipends. Encourages learning and contribution without pressure, not just about money, but building confidence, independence, and skills.

#### The Business Access Fund: De-Risk Hiring for Employers

Most businesses want to be inclusive, but fear financial risk or don’t know how to adapt. What if we created a fund to subsidise salaries for workers with disabilities? Instead of businesses covering full wages, the fund supports part of the salary, encouraging hiring. Helps businesses trial inclusive employment models with less risk.

#### Short-Term, Flexible Job Placements: Work That Fits the Person

Many people can’t commit to a full-time job, but that doesn’t mean they can’t contribute. What if companies created flexible, project-based, or short-term roles? 1-month placements, seasonal work, or task-based projects rather than rigid contracts. Individuals gain experience, confidence, and connections without pressure.

#### Social Workspaces: A New Kind of Collaboration

Instead of co-working spaces, let’s create co-learning spaces. Imagine places where: People with disabilities, students, and businesses work on real projects together; Companies gain insight into accessibility and inclusion while benefiting from unique talents; Individuals learn skills in a dynamic, supportive environment. Not just work experience, but real collaboration.

### 4. Build Better Connections: Radical Collaboration

Inclusion thrives when people, businesses, and services connect. We don’t need more isolated solutions, we need an ecosystem where partnerships, shared spaces, and collaboration become the norm, not the exception.

#### Why do we all have separate buildings? Let’s share.

Many disability organisations have their own venues, yet often struggle with resources, funding, or foot traffic. What if we opened up spaces to each other? A rotating shared space model where organisations, businesses, and creatives collaborate under one roof would create more interaction, less duplication, and richer experiences for everyone. This can also provide a platform for a “One-Stop Access Hub”.

#### Collaboration Speed-Dating: Radical Networking for Real Solutions

We don’t just need more ideas, we need action. Picture a fast-paced, high-energy event where businesses, disability organisations, and local creatives sit down for 5-minute conversations to spark partnerships and co-design solutions on the spot. Not a talk shop: a think-and-do space.

#### Accessibility Bootcamps for Businesses: Beyond Compliance

Many businesses want to be inclusive but don’t know how. Instead of dry compliance training, let’s create interactive, hands-on bootcamps where business owners, staff, and managers experience accessibility barriers first-hand and actively redesign their spaces and services with expert guidance, and lived experience.

#### Teach the Art of Partnership

Most collaborations fail not because of bad intentions, but because people don’t know how to work together effectively. Let’s teach businesses, non-profits, and community groups the actual skills of partnership-building, so inclusion efforts don’t just start, but succeed.



Big Picture Vision: Imagine a city where inclusion isn't just an initiative but a built-in part of how we work together. Where businesses, disability groups, councils, and the public collaborate seamlessly, sharing spaces, ideas, and resources to create a thriving, accessible, and welcoming community for all.

## **13. What nature can teach us about diversity and inclusion**

Nature thrives because of diversity, balance, and connection. Every tree, flower, and creature has a role to play in creating a strong, sustainable ecosystem. If nature understands the power of diversity, why don't we?

### **Diversity Makes Us Stronger**

A healthy forest has many different trees, plants, and animals. This diversity protects against disease and keeps the ecosystem balanced. The same applies to society. When we include people with different perspectives, backgrounds, and abilities, we create more resilient, innovative, and connected communities.

- What You Can Do:
- ✓ Be open to new perspectives: connect with people who have different experiences.
- ✓ Support inclusive workplaces, events, and communities.
- ✓ Encourage diversity in leadership, decision-making, and creative spaces.

### **Everyone Has a Place**

Different plants and animals thrive in different environments. Some need shade, others need sunlight. People are the same. We all have strengths, but we need the right environment to grow. Inclusion isn't about making everyone the same; it's about making sure everyone belongs.

- What You Can Do:
- ✓ Help create inclusive spaces where everyone can contribute, whether in workplaces, schools, or social groups.
- ✓ Challenge assumptions about who belongs where. Everyone deserves opportunities to grow.

### **Fairness Means Support, Not Sameness**

In a forest, strong trees share nutrients through their roots to help weaker trees survive. Equity works the same way, some people need more support to thrive, not less. Treating everyone the same isn't fair if people start from different places.

- What You Can Do
- ✓ Advocate for accessible spaces, flexible work, and fair opportunities.
- ✓ Recognise that some people face barriers we don't see, be willing to listen and adjust.

### **Sameness is Risky**

A farm that grows only one crop is vulnerable to disease and disaster. But a wild meadow with many different plants can adapt, survive, and thrive. Communities, workplaces, and organisations that lack diversity become stagnant and fragile.

- What You Can Do
- ✓ Push for diverse teams, ideas, and perspectives, it leads to better decisions and innovation.
- ✓ Support inclusive hiring and leadership opportunities.
- ✓ Encourage businesses, schools, and social groups to embrace variety.

### **We Are All Connected**

In nature, everything is linked: trees, rivers, animals, and fungi work together to sustain life. The same is true for people. When we help each other, we all grow stronger. Inclusion isn't just about helping others. it's about building a healthier, more sustainable society for everyone.

- What You Can Do
- ✓ Recognise how inclusion benefits everyone, not just those who are excluded.
- ✓ Support initiatives that bring people together rather than creating barriers.
- ✓ Start small: a conversation, an open mind, a helping hand can lead to real change.

## 14. What's next: Uppertunity & Porphura Taking Action

We don't just want to talk about inclusion, we want to make it happen. This isn't just about highlighting problems; it's about creating real solutions and building a movement that challenges fear, shifts mindsets, and makes inclusion the norm, not the exception.

Here's what we're doing next:

### 1. The Slogan Campaign: Turning Awareness into Action

We're bringing bold, creative messaging to the streets, sparking curiosity, breaking down fear, and making inclusion something people WANT to be part of. Our next step is to amplify or create a campaign, incorporating a bold statement. This will involve T-shirts, tote bags, and posters with impactful slogans designed to start conversations. The campaign will also offer fear-breaking workshops. Interactive, thought-provoking sessions in public spaces, schools, and businesses, teaching people how to engage without fear. The campaign will also involve reverse inclusion events. Instead of just talking about inclusion, let's live it. Adults with additional needs will lead activities in schools, businesses, and community spaces, turning the usual roles upside down.

### 2. Building Partnerships & Expanding Impact

Change doesn't happen alone; we're creating a network of changemakers. Collaboration Speed-Dating: We'll bring together businesses, community groups, and creatives to rapidly brainstorm and co-create real solutions. Creating more partnership working, and sharing this learning with others. Hosting monthly workshops at Uppertunity, showcasing what is on offer in Dundee. More Inclusive Social Events: We'll host collaborative community meet-ups, merging different groups in fun, natural, and engaging ways.

### 3. Educating & Supporting Businesses: Making Accessibility Effortless

Businesses want to be inclusive, but many don't know how. We're changing that. Accessibility Bootcamps: Hands-on workshops where businesses experience barriers first-hand and learn practical, cost-effective ways to improve inclusion. Inclusion Audits & Support: We'll work directly with businesses to assess, enhance, and communicate their accessibility efforts, helping them make small, meaningful changes that attract more customers and employees.

We're looking for partners, businesses, creatives, and individuals who want to help turn these ideas into action. Inclusion isn't just an idea; it's something we can build together.

✉ Get in touch if you'd like to:

- ✓ Collaborate on a project
- ✓ Join an event
- ✓ Bring these ideas into your workplace, school, or community

Email [info@uppertunity.org.uk](mailto:info@uppertunity.org.uk) or [hello@porphura.co.uk](mailto:hello@porphura.co.uk)

### Use This Report to Drive Change

Please feel free to use this research to support your own work, start conversations, and push for change in your communities, businesses, and decision-making spaces. If you'd like to discuss any of the findings further or co-create solutions, we'd love to hear from you.

## **15. Interview with a purpose-built school for pupils with additional support needs school (AA)**

AA School is a specialised institution, serving approximately 185 pupils aged 5–18 with additional support needs. Many pupils also have physical disabilities or medical conditions, and the school supports families across Dundee, Angus, and Perth & Kinross.

### **Identified Problems**

AA staff highlighted the following issues impacting pupils, families, and the broader community:

1. Lack of Post-School Services
  - Only three limited options: life skills course, next steps course, or day centre.
  - Services are oversubscribed, with only individuals with the most complex needs securing spaces in day centres.
2. Gap in Support
  - Life skills and next steps courses are often too advanced for some, leaving individuals without suitable pathways.
  - Many young adults fall off the radar, missing opportunities and support.
3. Unsuitable College Placements
  - Pressure from parents and social workers to pursue college, even when it's not appropriate for many young adults.
4. Overburdened Services
  - Organisations such as Scottish Autism and others are full, with no pupils from AA placed in these services in recent years.
  - Minimal, unstructured support is available, such as occasional access to a support worker.
5. Impact on Families
  - Parents are forced to give up employment to care for their children, resulting in:
    - Deteriorating mental health.
    - Loss of purpose and social opportunities.
    - Financial strain due to reliance on benefits and reduced community spending.
6. Economic Impact
  - The lack of post-school services creates broader financial consequences:
    - Parents leaving the workforce.
    - Reduced local economic activity.
  - Governments focus on the upfront cost of establishing services rather than the long-term cost of inaction.
7. Barriers to Developing New Services
  - Limited funding is the primary obstacle.
  - A lack of physical space for new service provision.

### **Proposed Solutions**

AA School envisions a more meaningful and inclusive post-school environment for young adults with additional needs:

- Creation of a Community Hub
  - A dedicated centre (not college-based) providing:
    - Activities tailored to diverse abilities.
    - Volunteering opportunities.
    - Social skill development.
    - A space to meet new people and have fun.
- Collaborative Efforts
  - AA can partner with organisations like Uppertunity to share resources, newsletters, and events, ensuring families and pupils are aware of existing opportunities.

### **Key Takeaways for Stakeholders**

1. Broader Implications:

- Addressing gaps in post-school services benefits not only individuals but also families, communities, and the economy.
- 2. Opportunity for Collaboration:
  - Organisations like Uppertunity can act as models or partners for developing meaningful, inclusive services.
- 3. Advocacy for Change:
  - Policymakers must shift focus from the upfront costs of services to the long-term societal and financial impacts of inaction.

### **Learning for Others**

- For Schools: Share success stories and connect families with local organisations offering meaningful post-school opportunities.
- For Service Providers: Collaborate with schools like AA to design and promote tailored services.
- For Policy-Makers: Invest in inclusive spaces to reduce financial and social burdens on families and communities.

The challenges faced by AA School illustrate the pressing need for comprehensive, post-school support services for individuals with additional needs. By addressing these gaps, we can not only improve the lives of young people and their families but also contribute positively to the community and economy.

AA and Uppertunity can lead by example, demonstrating how meaningful collaboration can create lasting change. Sharing newsletters, events, and resources is a strong starting point, but systemic change requires collective action and sustained advocacy.

## 16. Summary of Interview with D & J: The Carer Support Perspective

D & J work for an organisation supporting carers and individuals with additional needs. Their insights highlight the ongoing crisis in social care, the strain on families, and the gaps in long-term support for individuals with disabilities. They emphasise the need for better funding, workforce development, and proactive, long-term solutions rather than crisis intervention.

### **The Social Care Crisis: Families Are Left to Fill the Gaps**

- Staff shortages in social care mean that more family members are forced to step in as unpaid carers.
  - This disrupts careers and financial stability, forcing many to leave work, take on unsociable hours, or rely on benefits.
  - Caring is essential, but undervalued, there is no real incentive for people to stay in these jobs due to low pay, burnout, and a lack of career progression.
  - Brexit and COVID-19 worsened staffing shortages, many carers left the field permanently for better-paying, more stable jobs in supermarkets and retail.
- ◇ Key Learning:
- Carers need financial and mental health support; unpaid care work should not come at the cost of well-being.
  - Investment in social care jobs is critical, higher pay, career pathways, and training will reduce turnover and improve support quality.


### **Funding Gaps: A System Stretched Too Thin**

- Short-term funding isn't working, organisations are constantly chasing small grants instead of receiving stable, long-term funding.
  - Crisis response dominates the system, only those in severe crisis receive immediate help, leaving many without support until it's too late.
  - A shift to prevention is needed, small interventions early on could prevent families and individuals from reaching crisis points.
  - Fewer volunteers are stepping in, as previous funding models (e.g., Barnardo's) no longer exist at the same scale.
- ◇ Key Learning:
- Long-term investment is needed, bigger funding pots provide stability for organisations to plan and sustain meaningful programs.
  - More volunteers and support networks are essential to ensure families don't reach breaking points before receiving help.

### **Education & The Post-Education Void**

- Schools provide support, but what happens after? Once individuals with disabilities leave education, they are often left with no pathways.
  - Mainstream education can fail many students, J's son was bullied in high school, leading to exclusion and isolation. However, when moved to Camphill (a person-centred community), he thrived.
  - Camphill offers meaningful, structured opportunities like gardening, woodwork, meal planning, and life skills, but not everyone has access to such programs.
  - Transitioning from school to adult services is broken, at 19 years old, young people become the responsibility of social services, not schools, leading to disruptions and lack of continuity.
- ◇ Key Learning:
- Post-education support must be structured and ongoing, life skills, employment, and volunteering opportunities should extend beyond school years.
  - More inclusive communities like Camphill are needed, yet they remain underfunded and underpromoted.

### **Solutions & Next Steps**

-  Rethink Carer Support & Workforce Development

- Raise pay and career progression for carers to retain staff and attract new talent.
- Introduce tax breaks or financial support for unpaid carers who leave jobs to support family members.
- Develop a carer training program that ensures staff are in these roles for the right reasons and understand the needs of those they support.

#### Prevent Crisis, Don't Just Respond to It

- Shift focus from crisis management to early intervention, small, consistent support prevents breakdowns in care and well-being.
- Provide direct mental health and respite support for family carers, reducing stress and long-term exhaustion.

#### Bridge the Post-Education Gap

- Expand transition programs beyond education, ensuring young adults don't just 'fall off a cliff' at 19.
- Develop inclusive job and skills programs like Camphill across more regions, focusing on purposeful activities, employment, and independence.
- Advocate for education models that integrate life skills instead of only academic progress.

#### Build Inclusive Communities, Not Just Services

- Normalise inclusive volunteering and social spaces, why don't businesses and schools' partner with places like Camphill or Uppertunity?
- More education on inclusivity is needed, many services exist, but families and individuals don't know about them due to a lack of awareness and funding for promotion.
- Businesses should be supported to create roles for individuals with disabilities rather than waiting for specialist services to do it.

### **Final Thought: Building a Society That Works for Everyone**

D & J's experiences show that the current system isn't designed for long-term success, families are left struggling, carers are undervalued, and individuals with additional needs lose structure and purpose after school. But with targeted investment, early intervention, and community-driven solutions, we can redesign a future where inclusion isn't just an option, it's the norm.

## 17. Summary of Interview with M-0 & P-0 (Member and Parent): Key Themes and Learnings

This interview highlights both the positive impact of peer support and inclusive spaces like Uppertunity, while also exposing major barriers in access to education, social services, and employment for individuals with learning disabilities. It also emphasises the struggles faced by parents as carers, including financial burdens, lack of support, and societal misconceptions about disability.

### **The Power of Peer Support & Inclusive Communities**

- ◇ Peer support is life-changing, talking to other parents in similar situations reduces stress, provides advice, and offers emotional support.
- ◇ Long-term relationships matter, dedicated teachers and staff staying in contact creates a sense of belonging and helps build continuity of care.
- ◇ Access to groups like Uppertunity provides social growth, M-0 was previously told she would never build social relationships, but through consistent engagement in community groups, she proved otherwise.
- ◇ Volunteering and life-skills courses have been beneficial, keeping busy, engaged, and included in the community is crucial for well-being.
- ◇ Key Learning:
  - Peer-led support groups for parents and individuals with disabilities should be expanded to reduce stress and isolation.
  - Programs like Uppertunity work, more accessible, funded community groups could create more success stories like M-0's.

### **Barriers to Education, Services, and Inclusion**

#### Education Fails Many Students with Additional Needs

- M-0 was encouraged to leave high school in fourth year because staff had "run out of things for her to do."
- Many schools and groups have waiting lists, are too expensive, or lack the funding to run effectively.
- After college, the pathway disappears, there were few structured options for M-0 once she completed her courses.

#### Support Systems are Inconsistent and Hard to Access

- Some areas (e.g., Dundee) offer more support than others (e.g., Angus), creating postcode inequality.
- Support services often ignore invisible disabilities, "No wheelchair, no disability", meaning many people go without help.
- Social workers often deny support workers to families who are "managing" despite hidden struggles.
- Finding the right groups is difficult, they aren't well-advertised and rely on word of mouth.

#### ◇ Key Learning:

- Disability support needs to be visible and accessible. No one should have to fight for services that should be standard.
- Post-school and post-college pathways must be prioritised, too many individuals are left without options after education ends.
- Consistent national policies are needed, people shouldn't miss out on support just because of where they live.

#### **The Emotional & Financial Toll on Parents**

- Being a full-time carer limits job opportunities, many parents can't take on full-time work or jobs requiring travel.
- Caring for a child with additional needs is exhausting, yet parents are often told they don't qualify for support because they're "managing fine."
- The stress of uncertainty, M-0's parent had to navigate complex systems alone to find opportunities, as many support services are not advertised well.

#### ◇ Key Learning:

- Financial support and respite care must be more accessible to reduce the burden on parents.

- Better advertising and outreach for support services could help parents find help sooner rather than relying on word of mouth.

### ♥ The Carer Crisis: The Wrong People, The Wrong Pay

- Carers have a huge impact on individuals' well-being, the right carer can help a person thrive, while the wrong one can cause distress and setbacks.
- Many carers aren't fully committed to their jobs and see it as "just a paycheck."
- The lack of trained and dedicated carers is a direct result of poor pay, no career progression, and burnout.
- Social work is underfunded and short-staffed, meaning fewer support workers are being allocated to those who need them most.
- ◇ Key Learning:
  - Carers should be trained properly, valued, and paid well to improve retention and care quality.
  - Carer recruitment should prioritise people with passion for the job, not just those looking for easy work.
  - Better funding is needed for social work teams so they can allocate support workers effectively.

### ✈ Next Steps & Possible Solutions

#### ✈ Improve Disability Awareness & Access to Services

- National awareness campaigns to educate the public on hidden disabilities, "no wheelchair, no disability" needs to be challenged.
- Create a central online directory of support services, no more relying on word of mouth.

#### ✈ Build More Inclusive & Sustainable Education Pathways

- Schools should be obligated to offer meaningful post-education transition plans, so individuals don't "disappear" from the system at 19.
- Expand volunteering, life skills programs, and inclusive job opportunities to keep people engaged after college.

#### ✈ Fix the Carer Crisis with Better Recruitment & Training

- Increase pay and career development for carers to reduce turnover and ensure quality support.
- Introduce a national carer training program to screen out those who aren't in it for the right reasons.

#### ✈ Reduce the Burden on Parents & Families

- Provide financial and mental health support for unpaid carers so they can balance caring and work.
- Make respite care and flexible support packages more accessible, rather than only offering help once families reach breaking point.

### 🌐 Final Thought: Inclusion Shouldn't Be This Hard

M-O & P-O's experience shows the gaps in the system, in education, in support, and in community access. But these are fixable problems. With targeted investment, better awareness, and stronger pathways, we can build a future where inclusion isn't just an option, it's the norm.



## 18. Interview Summary: Council Member Perspective

This interview with a council member offers critical insights into the challenges and opportunities for improving disability inclusion and accessibility in various areas of community life, including awareness, education, transport, and socialising.

### 1. Inclusion and Awareness

#### Barriers

- Service Availability: Many services shut during Covid-19 have not reopened, limiting accessibility.
- Stigma and Misunderstanding: Persistent hate, stigma, and assumptions about disabilities. Examples include the misuse of blue badges and challenges faced by non-verbal individuals in diverse linguistic contexts.
- Cultural and Gender Barriers:
  - Limited diversity in disability services due to cultural stigmas (e.g., disability seen as shameful in some cultures).
  - Emerging but underdeveloped education on gender and sexuality among people with learning disabilities.
- Support Gaps: Travelling communities and others with additional needs face unique challenges.

#### Positives

- 'I Am Me' initiative provides safe and empathetic spaces for individuals with disabilities.

### 2. Working and Education

#### Barriers

- Unidentified Needs: Schools often focus on academic performance, overlooking additional needs.
- Post-Education Gaps:
  - Lack of "connectors" to link individuals to services after education.
  - Difficulties accessing funding for support services.
- Capability Challenges: Issues with navigating daily tasks like parking, using technology, or interacting with staff.

#### Positives

- Support for lifelong learning and employment is growing, with initiatives like:
  - Project Search (DFN) for work readiness.
  - Council programs offering guidance on volunteering without impacting benefits.

### 3. Travel, Transport, and Visiting

#### Barriers

- Limited Bus Services: Reduced routes and timetables create challenges. Buses are perceived as unsafe due to drivers not accommodating passengers adequately.
- High Taxi Costs: Lack of driver education on securing wheelchairs.
- Public Toilets: Inadequate facilities, with barriers like card-only payments.
- Technology Dependence: Poor mobile coverage disrupts tools like Google Maps and communication.

#### Positives

- Kneeling/lowering buses improve accessibility.
- Changing Places toilets provide confidence and support for outings.

### 4. Living and Socialising

#### Barriers

- Cost of Participation: Financial burdens, including paying for carers and their meals.
- Safety Concerns: Stigma, hate crimes, and inconsistent treatment of people with disabilities.
- Housing Challenges:
  - Limited availability of wheelchair-accessible housing.
  - Complexities with housing allocation when family dynamics change.

#### Positives

- Local programs like Boomerang and Green Health Partnership promote well-being and social interaction.
- Dundee provides relatively good housing services compared to other areas.

## **5. Additional Observations and Recommendations**

### **Barriers**

- Digital Accessibility: Over-reliance on digital systems for applications and benefits limits physical interaction, which could identify at-risk individuals.
- Service Costs: Rising energy and rent costs threaten the sustainability of community services.

### **Positives**

- Programs like Neighbourhood Networks (Stirling) and Wellgate Day Support offer excellent models for engaging and supporting communities.
- Digital training courses, such as those by DVA, empower individuals to adapt to technological advancements.

### **Recommendations**

1. Increase cultural competence in services to address diversity-related challenges.
2. Expand education on gender, sexuality, and relationships for people with learning disabilities.
3. Develop "connectors" to help individuals transition from education to services.
4. Advocate for improved transport options and facilities.
5. Ensure physical check-ins alongside digital systems to monitor well-being.

### **Sharing Insights and Learning**

- Host community workshops to discuss findings and co-develop solutions with stakeholders.
- Publish the report as a resource for policymakers, educators, and service providers.
- Collaborate with local organisations to implement best practices like Neighbourhood Networks.

## 19. Interview Findings: Students with Additional Support Needs

### Key Barriers Identified

1. Limited Access to Information
  - Services are not well signposted, making it hard to discover opportunities.
  - A centralised database for information would be helpful.
  - People in supported accommodation have more access to information than those living with family or independently.
2. Challenges After School
  - Lack of suitable post-school options, including work or volunteering.
  - Limited volunteering opportunities unless personal connections exist.
  - Students feel that some parents inadvertently hold them back due to concerns about independence or fear of losing benefits.
3. Transportation Issues
  - Taxis are overused and costly, often hired individually rather than collectively.
  - A dedicated bus service for students could save money, reduce traffic, and create opportunities for social interaction.
4. Social Isolation
  - Students expressed a need for more services like Uppertunity to maintain confidence and social skills after leaving school or college.
  - Sports and social activities were highlighted as particularly beneficial.

### Positives and Suggestions

- Some students are already engaged in clubs or volunteering, showing the benefits of accessible opportunities.
- There's enthusiasm for activities that encourage interaction, such as sports classes and community-based services.

### Recommendations

- Create a central database for information about available services, opportunities, and events.
- Develop tailored post-school support, including volunteering and work opportunities, especially for students without existing connections.
- Improve transportation options, like shared bus services, to enhance access and foster socialisation.
- Increase the availability of inclusive community services like Uppertunity to fill gaps after school/college.
- Collaborate with parents to address concerns about independence and educate them on the benefits of encouraging autonomy.

### Quotes from Participants

- "It's hard to find services – they're not signposted at all."
- "Many individuals seem to be forgotten about after school or college, which affects their confidence and social skills."
- "Sports classes would be really beneficial."

### Sharing the Learning

1. Distribute to Stakeholders
  - Share the findings with local councils, community organisations, and schools to raise awareness of the gaps in services and support.
  - Provide actionable recommendations to funding bodies and service providers.
2. Workshops and Forums
  - Organise events or forums to discuss these findings with stakeholders and explore solutions collaboratively.
  - Involve students directly in these discussions to ensure their voices remain central.
3. Create Accessible Materials

- Develop an easy-to-read summary of the findings for parents, schools, and other relevant audiences.
- Use infographics or videos to make the information more engaging.
- 4. Advocate for Policy Change
  - Use the findings as evidence to advocate for better funding, centralised information systems, and accessible transportation options.

## **20. Case Study: Breaking Barriers to Social Inclusion, A Service User and Parent's Experience**

This case study highlights the challenges faced by a service user (M-1) and their parent (P-1) in accessing social and learning opportunities, as well as their experiences with overcoming these barriers. It provides valuable insights into gaps in services, the role of informal support networks, and the impact of programs like Uppertunity.

### **1. Barriers and Challenges**

#### Physical Accessibility

- Mobility difficulties made stairs and escalators challenging, with elevators often out of the way, busy, or used by people who didn't need them.

#### Social Isolation

- Limited Social Opportunities: After college, there were very few opportunities for socialising, leaving individuals feeling forgotten.
- Geographical Barriers: The lack of social opportunities was especially noticeable in areas like Fife.

#### Funding and Service Availability

- Cuts in funding led to restrictions on services and activities.
- Many services were difficult to find, often only discovered through word of mouth.

#### Relationships and Companionship

- Few platforms exist for individuals with additional needs to meet friends or potential partners. Existing platforms are often expensive, creating further barriers.

#### Parental Role and Pressure

- Parents had to take on the responsibility of ensuring opportunities for socialising and meaningful activities, but recognised that individuals should have the chance to develop independence.

### **2. Strategies to Overcome Challenges**

#### Mobility Improvements

- M-1 has improved walking ability, which increased their sense of freedom and reduced reliance on elevators.

#### Informal Networks and Word of Mouth

- Social opportunities were often identified through informal channels like Facebook or personal connections.

#### Parental Support

- Parents actively facilitated activities, ensuring their child did not miss out on typical social experiences, like going to the pub or attending events.

#### College Support

- College staff and teachers offered some guidance, though support for socialising outside of academic settings remained limited.

### **3. Support That Made a Difference**

#### Key Sources of Support

- Family support was critical in enabling social opportunities.
- Teachers and support staff at college provided some assistance, though more structured support was desired.

### **4. What Was Missing?**

#### Structured Social Opportunities

- More organised social events outside the classroom setting, similar to university societies or clubs.
- Activities focused on building friendships and networks, rather than solely focusing on learning or employment.

#### Inclusive Social Programs

- Therapeutic classes that combine learning and social interaction were highly valued but often costly or limited in availability.

#### Meaningful Learning Environments

- Experiences at some colleges felt more like childcare than education, lacking meaningful development opportunities.

## 5. Positive Outcomes and Reflections

### Personal Growth

- M-1 developed more independence and confidence in social settings.

### Role of Uppertunity

- Uppertunity has provided a safe and welcoming space where M-1 can develop skills, socialise, and feel included.
- Described as a “godsend” by the parent, Uppertunity highlights the importance of accessible and meaningful programs.

## 6. Recommendations for Improvement

1. Centralised Information Hub
  - Create a database or platform where families and individuals can easily find services, activities, and social opportunities.
2. Structured Social Programs
  - Colleges and community organisations should introduce regular social events and clubs to foster friendships and reduce isolation.
3. Affordable Relationship Platforms
  - Develop low-cost or free platforms for individuals with additional needs to connect and form friendships or relationships.
4. Expanded Therapeutic Activities
  - Offer more accessible and affordable therapeutic programs that integrate social interaction with learning or skill-building.
5. Parental Education and Support
  - Provide guidance for parents to empower their children to develop independence without fear of losing benefits.
6. Scaling Successful Models
  - Expand programs like Uppertunity to other areas to meet the demand for inclusive and meaningful services.

## Sharing the Learning

1. Workshops and Training
  - Use this case study in training sessions for service providers, educators, and policymakers to highlight gaps and opportunities for improvement.
2. Community Outreach
  - Collaborate with schools and community organisations to showcase programs like Uppertunity as models for inclusive support.
3. Advocacy and Policy Discussions
  - Use this example to advocate for better funding, centralised service databases, and affordable programs for individuals with additional needs.
4. Publication and Digital Access
  - Share the case study in newsletters, on websites, and across social media to raise awareness and inspire new partnerships.

## **21. Case Study: Overcoming Barriers to Communication and Inclusion, a Service User and Support Worker's Perspective**

This case study highlights the experiences of a wheelchair user (M-2) with cerebral palsy and their support worker (SW) in navigating social and communication barriers. It provides insights into challenges related to attitudes, accessibility, and inclusion, along with strategies for overcoming them.

### **1. Barriers and Challenges**

#### **Social Attitudes and Stigma**

- M-2 experiences people talking down to them and staring, especially when using assistive devices like a talking board.
- Conversations are often directed at support workers instead of M-2, creating feelings of exclusion.

#### **Communication Barriers**

- M-2 relies on a talking board to communicate, but this draws unwanted attention.
- Even well-meaning praise for using the board can feel awkward, highlighting that it is seen as “different” rather than normalised.

#### **Limited Opportunities**

- Dundee lacks affordable activities and social opportunities for people with disabilities.
- People without access to services often spend their time aimlessly, contributing to social isolation and disengagement.

#### **Financial Barriers**

- Limited finances prevent access to clubs or events, compounding feelings of exclusion.

### **2. Strategies to Overcome Challenges**

#### **Supportive Relationships**

- Having a trusted support worker made a significant difference, providing practical and emotional support.
- The support worker focused on listening and treating M-2 with respect, helping build confidence in using the communication board.

#### **Advocacy for Awareness**

- M-2 emphasised the need to normalise talking boards and educate the public about cerebral palsy to reduce stigma.

#### **Government Assistance**

- Financial support from the government was cited as helpful in maintaining independence and accessing services.

### **3. Support That Made a Difference**

#### **Key Sources of Support**

- Communication Board: Acts as M-2's voice, enabling participation in conversations.
- Support Worker: Provided consistent encouragement, respect, and advocacy, acting as a bridge for communication when needed.

### **4. What Was Missing?**

#### **1. Awareness and Education**

- Public education about cerebral palsy and assistive communication tools should be introduced at an early age to normalise differences.
- More focus on disability awareness training for staff, businesses, and communities to foster understanding and inclusivity.

#### **2. Expanded Opportunities**

- Greater investment in accessible and affordable activities, clubs, and social programs for people with disabilities.
- Initiatives to provide free or low-cost recreational options in Dundee.

#### **3. Challenging Negative Attitudes**

- Programs and campaigns to challenge negative behaviours and misconceptions, encouraging people to interact respectfully with individuals with disabilities.

## **5. Positive Reflections**

### **Personal Growth**

- M-2 gained confidence using their communication board with trusted support.

### **Support Worker's Role**

- SW emphasised that respectful and empowering support should be the standard for all workers, not just exceptional practice.

### **Call for Equality**

- M-2 hopes for a future where people treat individuals with disabilities the same as everyone else, removing the need for constant explanations or defences.

## **6. Recommendations for Improvement**

### **1. Normalise Communication Tools**

- Implement awareness campaigns in schools and communities to promote understanding of talking boards and assistive devices.
- Encourage businesses and public spaces to adopt inclusive communication practices.

### **2. Expand Accessible Programs**

- Develop more affordable and accessible clubs, events, and social programs to prevent isolation and create meaningful opportunities for engagement.

### **3. Disability Training and Outreach**

- Introduce disability awareness training for the general public, service providers, and employers to improve attitudes and accessibility.

### **4. Celebrate Role Models**

- Highlight examples like M-2 and their support worker to showcase the impact of inclusive and respectful support relationships.

## **Sharing the Learning**

### **1. Community Awareness Events**

- Host disability inclusion workshops at schools, businesses, and community centres, using this case study as an example of both barriers and solutions.

### **2. Digital Content and Storytelling**

- Create videos or social media posts featuring M-2's story to normalise assistive communication tools and challenge misconceptions.

### **3. Advocacy and Policy Engagement**

- Use the case study to advocate for increased funding for affordable, accessible activities and disability awareness campaigns.

### **4. Professional Development for Support Workers**

- Offer training programs that highlight the practices demonstrated by SW as a model for empowering and inclusive support.

## **Quote Highlight**

"My experience of life would be made easier if people treated me the same as everyone else.", M-2



## **22. General Conversations: Insights from Uppertunity Members and Parents**

This section highlights real-life experiences and challenges faced by Uppertunity members, along with insights from parents and support staff. These conversations reveal recurring themes around social isolation, lack of confidence, barriers to services, and financial limitations, while also offering ideas for solutions and improvements.

### **1. Barriers and Challenges**

#### **Socialising and Confidence**

- **Limited Social Opportunities:** Many individuals struggle to find clubs, activities, and suitable spaces for socialising, often relying on word of mouth to discover services.
- **Impact of COVID-19:** Isolation worsened during the pandemic, with some individuals, like M-3, losing connections entirely. Rebuilding confidence and routines post-pandemic remains difficult.
- **Confidence Issues:** Members like M-5 expressed severe lack of confidence and feelings of depression due to social isolation and past experiences of bullying.
- **Oversharing and Boundaries:** Some individuals have difficulties with safe socialising and sharing personal information, requiring structured support in these areas.

#### **Transport and Accessibility**

- **Fear of Public Transport:** Members like M-3 and M-4 avoid buses due to safety concerns, relying instead on costly taxis, which limit independence.
- **Dependence on Support Staff:** Many individuals are unable to attend events or go out without staff, and sudden staff absences disrupt routines and well-being.
- **Practical Suggestions:** A shared bus service with staff support for outings and errands (e.g., shopping trips) could increase independence and reduce costs.

#### **Opportunities After School/College**

- **Limited Post-Education Options:** Members and parents reported a lack of volunteering or work opportunities, especially for those unable to commit to regular work.
- **Financial Disincentives:** Parents, like P-2, highlighted that volunteering can affect benefits, deterring participation and cutting off informal opportunities for engagement.

#### **Relationships and Independence**

- **Barriers to Relationships:** Members like M-4 noted difficulties in developing relationships, relying on family and staff to arrange outings or meals with partners.
- **Parental Concerns:** Parents sometimes unintentionally limit independence due to fear of harm or financial consequences, such as reassessments for benefits.

#### **Financial Constraints**

- **Costs of Participation:** High costs for clubs, materials, and transportation create additional barriers to social inclusion.
- **Benefits Confusion:** Parents like P-2 reported difficulties navigating the benefits system, highlighting a need for clearer guidance and support.

### **2. Strategies and Solutions**

#### **Support Systems**

- **Building Confidence:** Members like M-5 saw improvements through programs at Uppertunity, attending classes and forming friendships over shared interests like gaming.
- **Family and Staff Support:** Members consistently highlighted trusted support workers and family as critical sources of encouragement and opportunity.

#### **Practical Adjustments**

- **Transport Solutions:** Encouraging supported bus travel to increase confidence and reduce dependence on taxis.

- Structured Workshops: Sessions focused on communication skills, manners, and conversation starters to build social confidence.
- Affordable Volunteering: Campaigns to decouple volunteering from benefit assessments, enabling participation without financial penalties.

### **3. Recommendations for Improvement**

#### **1. Centralised Information Hub**

- Develop an accessible database or app where individuals and families can find clubs, volunteering opportunities, and support services in one place.

#### **2. Social Confidence Programs**

- Introduce workshops on social skills, boundary-setting, and confidence-building, tailored for individuals with additional support needs.

#### **3. Affordable Transport Options**

- Create a shared bus service with support staff to enable safe and social travel, reducing costs and dependence on taxis.

#### **4. Support for Parents and Families**

- Provide guidance on navigating the benefits system to avoid barriers to volunteering and informal work opportunities.
- Offer training sessions for parents to help them empower their children's independence.

#### **5. Expanded Post-School Services**

- Develop flexible volunteering programs for those who can't commit to regular hours, focusing on meaningful engagement without risking benefits.
- Increase community-based programs like Uppertunity to fill the post-education gap.

### **4. Key Learnings to Share with Others**

#### **For Policy Makers and Funders**

- Recognise the economic impact of funding cuts, as they limit access to services and increase dependence on benefits.
- Support affordable volunteering and transport programs to reduce barriers.

#### **For Schools and Colleges**

- Establish social clubs and peer mentoring programs to support transitions into adulthood and prevent isolation after education.

#### **For Support Services**

- Offer training on social boundaries and communication skills for individuals with additional needs.
- Provide flexible staffing models to address service disruptions caused by absences.

#### **For Communities**

- Promote awareness campaigns to challenge stigma and normalise assistive devices, communication tools, and diverse needs.
- Encourage local businesses to offer inclusive volunteering opportunities.

### **5. Quotes to Highlight**

- "Opportunities to socialise are not always presented or are limited as they are unsuitable or do not meet my needs.", M-4
- "Volunteering shouldn't mean losing benefits, opportunities should be encouraged, not punished.", P-2
- "I feel I have no confidence at all, and that can make me feel depressed.", M-5
- "Covid put a stop to everything. I want to build myself back up to what I used to be.", M-3

## 23. Summary of Research Notes: Key Learnings & Insights

Over the course of the year, this research revealed ongoing challenges in accessibility, social inclusion, business engagement, and public perceptions of disability. It highlighted how people with disabilities often feel trapped in limited spaces, how support systems are difficult to navigate, and how businesses struggle to communicate their accessibility efforts. Below are the main themes and lessons learned.

### 1. **Limited Accessibility Leads to Social Isolation**

- Many individuals with disabilities stick to familiar places because they know they are accessible.
  - Businesses that do accessibility well gain customer loyalty, but this also limits social experiences for disabled individuals, as they don't feel comfortable venturing into new places.
  - Lack of clear, accessible information makes it worse, people don't know where they can go, leading to isolation and fewer choices.
- ◇ Key Learning:
- Better promotion of accessible spaces is needed, businesses should actively share what they offer.
  - Encouraging businesses to go beyond just wheelchair access can improve wider inclusivity.

### 2. **Navigating Support Services is Confusing & Inefficient**

- Many people with disabilities and carers don't know where to go for support.
  - People are approaching the wrong places, wasting time and energy due to poor communication between services.
  - Services do not work well together; they don't effectively share information or direct people to the right resources.
- ◇ Key Learning:
- A centralised directory or cross-organisational referral system could help people find the right support faster.
  - Organisations should collaborate better to ensure clear signposting to relevant services.

### 3. **Parents & Carers Feel Like They Are in a Constant Battle**

- Carers feel exhausted, stressed, and isolated due to constantly fighting for support.
  - The word "fight" came up repeatedly, showing how accessing services is frustrating and emotionally draining.
  - Many carers can't work due to the demands of looking after their child, this impacts financial stability, well-being, and social opportunities.
- ◇ Key Learning:
- Access to support shouldn't feel like a battle, systems need to be simpler, clearer, and easier to navigate.
  - More respite services and flexible support options could help carers maintain employment and personal well-being.

### 4. **Public Perceptions & Stigma Around Accessibility**

- There is still stigma around disability, for example, non-disabled hotel guests complaining about being put in accessible rooms.
  - Many people still associate disability only with visible, physical conditions, not recognising neurodiversity, hidden disabilities, or varying support needs.
- ◇ Key Learning:
- Public awareness campaigns should challenge outdated views on disability and accessibility.
  - Businesses and public spaces should normalise accessibility features, making them part of mainstream design rather than an afterthought.

### 5. **Businesses Struggle with Accessibility Awareness & Communication**

Businesses often don't know what accessibility features they already have.

- Some businesses incorrectly stated they had no accessibility, even when it was clear they did.
- Others only focused on wheelchair access, without realising accessibility includes much more such as quiet spaces, clear signage, and sensory-friendly environments.

Businesses are hesitant to talk about accessibility publicly.

- When asked to create a 1-minute accessibility video for social media, most businesses
  - Redirected the request to corporate teams, which often never responded.

- Did not feel confident discussing their accessibility efforts, even when they had them.
- One business was receptive, but their social media had never previously mentioned accessibility, showing that even accessible businesses aren't promoting themselves well.
- ◇ Key Learning:
  - Businesses need training and guidance on how to identify, improve, and communicate accessibility features.
  - Incentivising businesses to showcase their accessibility, through awards, promotions, or inclusion in disability-friendly directories, could improve engagement.
  - Accessibility isn't just about compliance; it's about creating an environment where people feel truly welcomed.

## **Next Steps & Recommendations**

### **1. Improve Accessibility Promotion & Awareness**

- Businesses should actively share their accessibility features through social media, websites, and physical signage.
- A universal accessibility badge for businesses that meet specific standards could increase consumer trust.
- City-wide accessibility guides, both digital and print, could highlight inclusive spaces and services.

### **2. Make Support Services Easier to Navigate**

- Develop a clear referral system between services so people aren't wasting time in the wrong places.
- Create one-stop digital platforms where people with disabilities and carers can find all necessary services in one place.

### **3. Support Carers with Flexible & Preventative Services**

- Carers need simpler ways to access funding and support, it shouldn't feel like a fight.
- More respite care and support systems would allow parents to maintain employment and social connections.

### **4. Train Businesses on Accessibility & Inclusive Communication**

- Businesses should undergo accessibility audits so they understand what they offer.
- Provide workshops on disability inclusion, covering hidden disabilities, communication strategies, and customer experiences.
- Encourage businesses to make accessibility part of their brand identity, rather than just a legal requirement.

Accessibility Isn't Just a Feature, It's a Mindset. This research revealed that people with disabilities, carers, and businesses all face similar frustrations, lack of clear information, lack of awareness, and lack of connection between services. The key to change isn't just more accessibility measures, it's about creating a culture where accessibility is recognised, valued, and actively promoted.

## 24. Summary of V&A Dundee Workshops: Key Learnings & Solutions

The workshops held at V&A Dundee brought together individuals with disabilities, carers, parents, accessibility advocates, and organisations to discuss barriers, gaps, and potential solutions for improving accessibility, education, and social inclusion. The discussions highlighted structural, social, and systemic challenges, from education failing young disabled people, inaccessible environments, a lack of lifelong learning opportunities, and the burden placed on families and individuals to "fight" for services. Below is a summary of key findings and actionable insights.

### **Accessibility & Inclusion: Barriers & Breakthroughs**

- ◇ V&A Dundee recognises accessibility challenges but is constrained by external policies.
  - They provide large print handouts, sensory sessions, tactile experiences, and online learning resources, but uptake is low for some services.
  - Lesson: More outreach and awareness-raising is needed to encourage people to use accessibility features.
- ◇ Parents struggle to find lifelong learning opportunities for their children with disabilities.
  - Solution: Create ongoing, accessible learning pathways beyond college.
- ◇ People with disabilities face financial discrimination for normal experiences.
  - Example: Dundee Football Charitable Trust dissolved due to funding cuts, leaving fewer affordable activities for disabled individuals.
  - Solution: Subsidised memberships or social inclusion funding for accessible activities.
- ◇ People with disabilities often "stick to what they know", if a place is accessible, they return frequently but hesitate to explore new areas due to uncertainty or lack of clear information.
  - Solution: Businesses should actively promote their accessibility features to encourage people to explore new places.
- ◇ Built environments are still a major accessibility issue.
  - Obstacles include cars blocking pavements, uneven curbs, inaccessible main entrances, and historical preservation taking priority over accessibility.
  - Quote from participant: "If you're taking me the same route as your rubbish, are you really valuing me as a person?"
  - Solution: Accessibility should not be an afterthought; it should be a core part of all urban planning and business operations.
- ◇ Businesses often respond well to accessibility feedback, but some resist change.
  - Solution: More incentives, legal enforcement, and public education on accessibility benefits.

### **Education & Post-School Pathways: A System That Stops Too Soon**

- ◇ Education is failing to prepare young disabled people for adulthood.
  - Colleges provide education but no extracurricular opportunities, creating a stark contrast between disabled and non-disabled peers.
  - Post-school options are expensive and hard to access, e.g., Sunshine Kitchen in Cupar has a 3-year waiting list and high fees.
- ◇ Specialist education opportunities are inconsistent and depend on location.
  - Dundee is seen as more inclusive than other areas (e.g., Angus).
  - Example: Madras in St. Andrews and Dundee & Angus College are considered accessible education providers, but options elsewhere are limited.
- ◇ Young people are often encouraged to leave school early if there are no more educational "options" for them.
  - M, a participant, was forced out of high school in fourth year because they had "run out" of things for her to do.
  - Solution: More transition planning and continued learning opportunities that don't end at 19.
- ◇ University dreams remain out of reach for many disabled individuals.
  - Example: A non-verbal wheelchair user expressed a desire to go to university but felt her intelligence wasn't recognised or nurtured.
  - Solution: Universities should have clear pathways for students with additional needs, including communication tools, assistive technology, and flexible learning options.

- ◇ Fear of disclosing disabilities in education and work settings prevents people from seeking the support they need.
  - Solution: Change the language around disability disclosure in job applications, it shouldn't sound like a criminal record check.
- ◇ Reasonable adjustments in workplaces are outdated.
  - Government policies on reasonable adjustments haven't been reviewed since 2010, many employers and employees don't even know what's available.
  - Solution: Create an updated, national database of workplace adjustments so disabled employees know what to ask for, and employers know what they should provide.

### **Transport & Mobility: More Than Just Getting from A to B**

- ◇ Public transport remains a major barrier.
  - Buses are overwhelming for autistic individuals due to noise, unpredictability, and distractions.
  - Solution: Training for transport staff, clearer communication, and quieter "calm travel" options for those who need them.
- ◇ Tracking systems could improve travel safety.
  - Suggestion: A GPS-based system for bus and train users so people with disabilities don't go missing or get stranded.
- ◇ Drop curbs are poorly designed, leaving wheelchair users on roads longer than necessary.
  - Solution: Better urban planning, mandatory accessibility audits for city infrastructure.
- ◇ Shop Mobility provides a great model for accessible travel solutions.
  - Offers: Day and hourly mobility equipment hire, free services, and a try-before-you-hire system.
  - Solution: Expand mobility support schemes beyond city centres, into smaller towns and rural areas.

### **Employment & Social Care: A Broken System That Needs Fixing**

- ◇ Parents feel like they are in a constant battle for support.
  - The word "fight" came up repeatedly, stressing, exhausting, frustrating. Parents feel:
    - Trapped in bureaucracy.
    - Forced to give up work to care for children.
    - Left to navigate services alone.
  - Solution: Streamlined support services, with key workers assigned to families to help navigate care and education.
- ◇ Social care services only help those in crisis.
  - Many families feel ignored until they reach breaking point.
  - Solution: More preventative social care support, rather than waiting for crisis situations.
- ◇ Businesses need better resources on accessibility.
  - Suggestion: A national database of reasonable adjustments, so employers know how to support disabled employees instead of relying on individuals to self-advocate.

### **Key Takeaways & Next Steps**

1. Make Accessibility Standard, Not Optional
  - Businesses and cities should be legally required to prioritise accessibility.
  - Ramps, step-free access, and accessible transport routes should be the norm.
2. Redefine Education & Post-School Pathways
  - More transition support is needed so young disabled people aren't left stranded after school/college.
  - Lifelong learning and meaningful social activities should be subsidised and widely available.
3. Fix the Social Care System Before People Reach Crisis
  - Families need proactive support, not just emergency intervention.
  - Parent and carer well-being must be prioritised, they should not have to sacrifice their careers or mental health to provide care.
4. Transport Should Work for Everyone
  - Staff training, clearer accessibility information, and tracking systems could make public transport less overwhelming for disabled users.
5. Shift the Narrative on Disability & Work
  - Disability disclosure shouldn't feel like a disadvantage, workplaces should be proactive in offering reasonable adjustments.

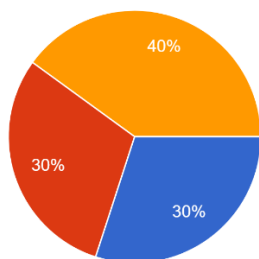
- Government policies on workplace accessibility need urgent updating.

Inclusion Shouldn't Be a Battle. The workshops revealed deep frustrations but also clear solutions, it's time to stop making accessibility a fight and start making it the standard.

## 25. Survey results

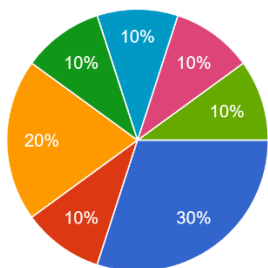
We sent out an online survey to find out what living in Dundee is like for those with a disability, long term health condition or elderly.

I am a  
10 responses



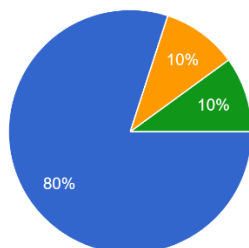
- Person living with a disability
- A carer to a person with a disability or long term health condition
- A person living with a long term health condition

I (or the person I am answering on behalf of)  
10 responses



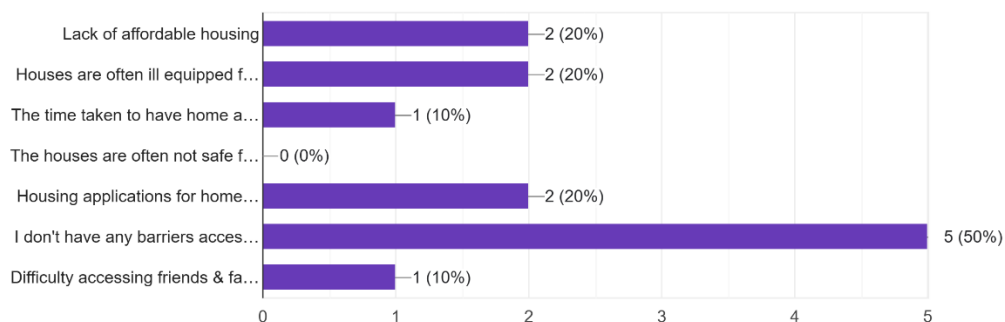
- Have a physical disability including mobility
- Am neurodivergent
- Have a long term health condition
- Have a mental health condition
- Have a sensory condition or disability
- I have an age related condition that significantly impacts me
- functional neurological disorder
- i'm supporting people with multiple co...

My current housing needs  
10 responses



- Meet my needs
- Meet some of my needs
- Doesn't meet my needs
- Private house adapted for my needs.

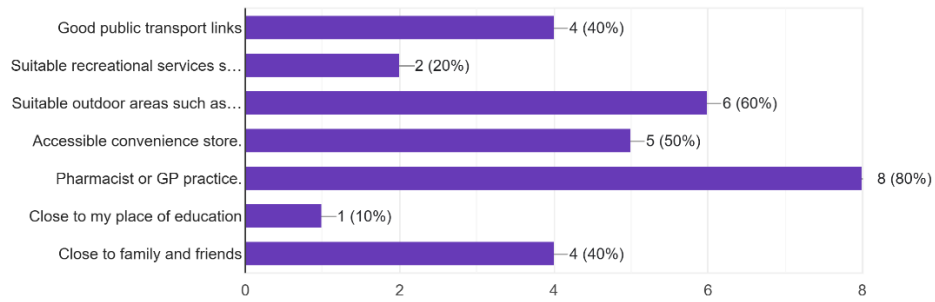
The barriers I have faced when trying to access appropriate housing include:  
10 responses





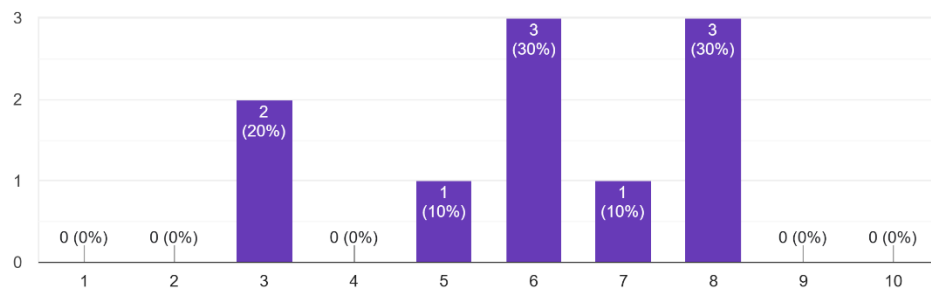
### Do you class any of the following services near your home?

10 responses



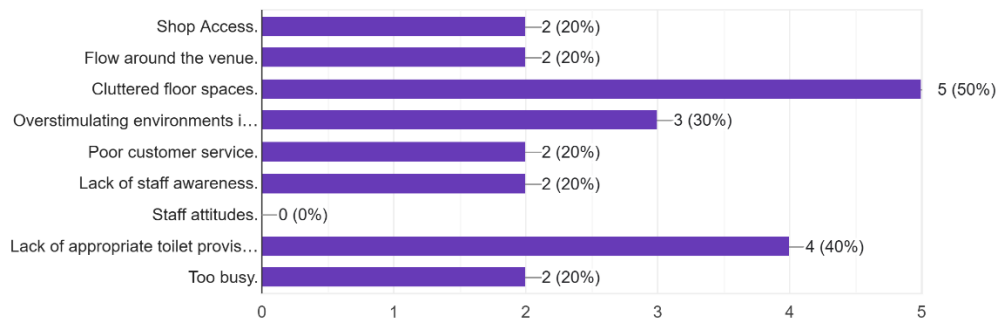
### On a scale of 1-10 I would rate my retail experience in Dundee as:

10 responses



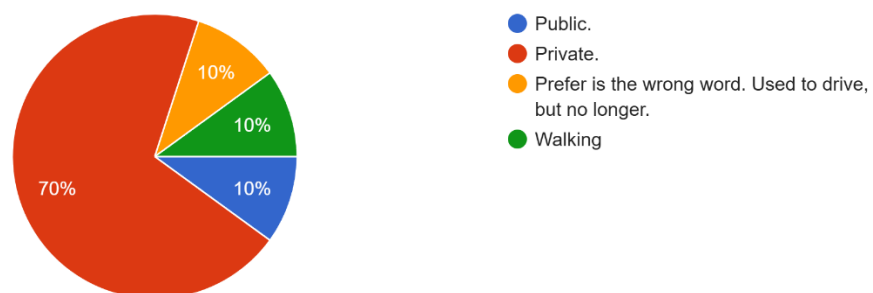
### Barriers I face accessing retail in Dundee include

10 responses



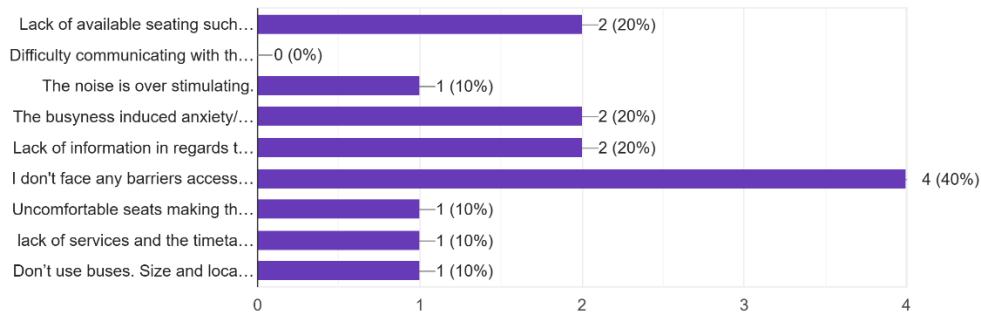
### My preferred method of transport is

10 responses



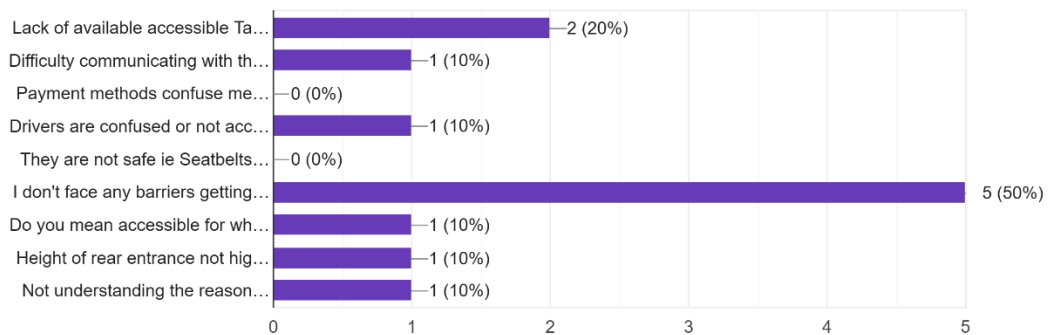
### Barriers I face accessing public buses include

10 responses



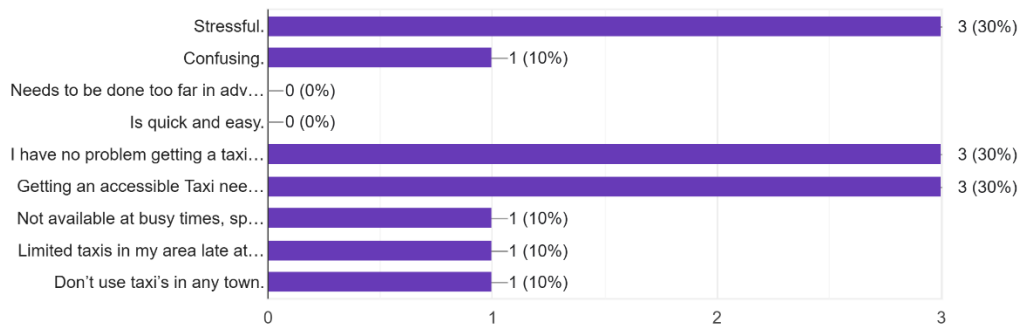
### Barriers I have faced when accessing taxi's include

10 responses



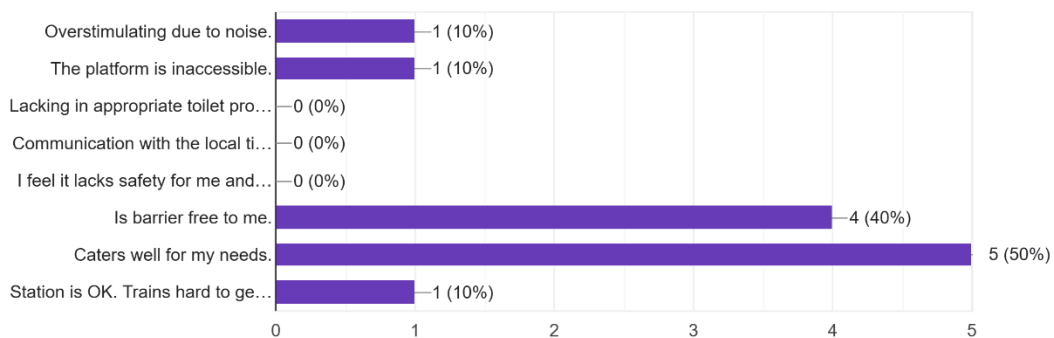
### I find pre-booking a taxi

10 responses



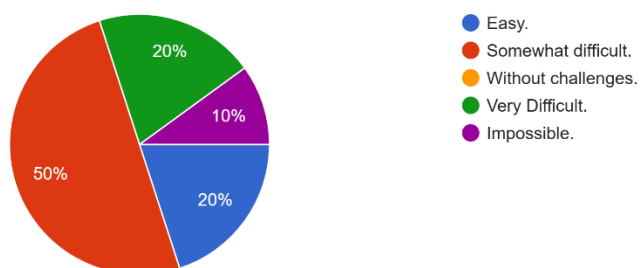
### I find accessing Dundee train station

10 responses



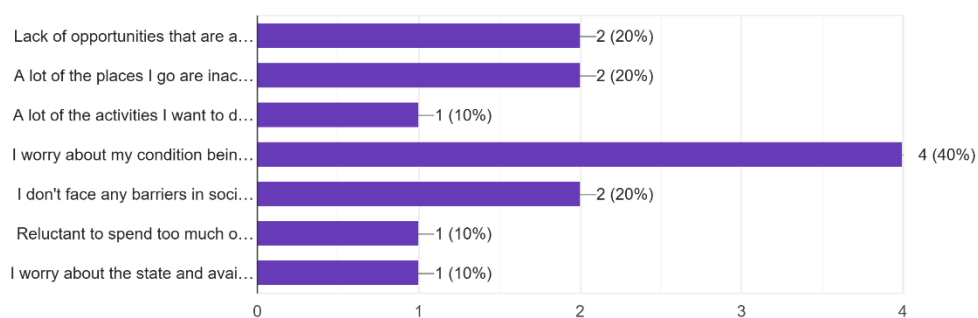
### I find socialising in Dundee

10 responses



### The barriers I face when socialising include

10 responses



### I prefer social events/activities that are

10 responses



## 26. Reflection and Insights from Student Placement: Support Systems in Scotland vs Sweden

### 1. Overview of Findings

This reflection explores differences in support systems for carers and individuals with additional needs in Scotland and Sweden. It highlights gaps in Scotland's approach and offers recommendations to strengthen support for carers and the workforce.

### 2. Key Observations

Comparison: Scotland vs Sweden

- Scotland:
  - Support for carers is indirectly assessed through Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSP) or Young Carer Statements (YCS), which focus mainly on the needs of the cared-for person rather than the carer themselves.
  - Assessments are carried out by local councils, but staffing shortages and budget cuts can lead to delays, adding stress to carers.
  - Available resources are listed as training, development, and individual support, but the demand far exceeds supply.
- Sweden:
  - Focuses not only on the needs of the cared-for person but also on the carer's well-being.
  - Ensures carers are supported emotionally, mentally, and physically to continue providing quality care.
  - Emphasises workforce investment, better wages, and development opportunities, making caring professions more attractive.

### 3. Challenges Identified

1. Staffing Shortages
  - Impact of Brexit: Reduced the number of workers in the care sector.
  - Budget cuts limit wages, training, and recruitment efforts, making caring roles less appealing to younger workers.
2. Overworked Staff and Long Waiting Times
  - Social workers face heavy caseloads and long hours, leading to burnout and delays in assessments and support delivery.
3. Carer Support Gaps
  - Lack of targeted carer assessments focused on the carer's own needs and well-being.
  - Limited emotional and mental health support for carers.

### 4. Proposed Solutions

#### A. Workforce Development

- Invest in Recruitment and Training: Offer career pathways and certified training programs to attract younger workers and retain existing staff.
- Flexible Hours and Better Pay: Make caring jobs appealing and sustainable by improving wages, benefits, and flexible schedules.

#### B. Carer-Specific Support

- Dedicated Assessments for Carers: Implement standalone assessments that evaluate the carer's well-being, not just their ability to provide care.
- Emotional and Mental Health Support: Provide supervision meetings, counselling, and peer support groups for carers to share challenges and solutions.

#### C. Policy Improvements

- Clear Job Roles and Expectations: Avoid hidden tasks and create well-defined job descriptions to reduce stress.
- Accessible Information: Develop a centralised hub for carers to easily find resources, training, and available services.

#### D. Better Resources and Equipment

- Ensure adequate equipment and assistive technologies are available to reduce physical strain on carers.

#### 5. Key Takeaways

- Scotland's Approach Needs Strengthening: Current systems focus more on the cared-for person and lack tailored support for carers.
- Investment in Workforce is Essential: Address staffing shortages, improve training, and create attractive career pathways to reduce strain and improve service quality.
- Support for Carers Must Go Beyond Theory: Practical solutions, such as emotional support and clear policies, must be prioritised to improve carers' well-being and performance.

#### 6. Recommendations and Next Steps

1. Advocate for Policy Change
  - Push for legislation requiring carer assessments focused on well-being, not just caregiving capacity.
  - Promote policies supporting workforce funding and fair pay.
2. Pilot Carer Support Programs
  - Launch mental health support groups and peer mentoring programs to help carers manage stress and isolation.
3. Develop Training and Career Pathways
  - Introduce certification programs and career ladders for staff to encourage retention and growth.
4. Engage Employers and Businesses
  - Provide training on disability awareness and flexible working policies to create supportive environments.
5. Build Resource Hubs
  - Create a centralised platform for carers to find training, assessments, and funding opportunities.

#### 7. Sharing the Learning

For Policymakers and Funders:

- Highlight gaps in legislation and advocate for improved support systems.
- Use case studies and reflections like this to push for targeted investments in workforce development.

For Service Providers:

- Offer training workshops and flexible job opportunities to attract and retain younger workers.
- Create programs addressing emotional resilience and burnout prevention.

For Employers and Communities:

- Encourage businesses to adopt flexible policies for staff with caring responsibilities.
- Promote public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and increase understanding of carer roles.

#### 8. Closing Quote

"Support systems should empower not only the individuals receiving care but also those providing it. Investing in carers means investing in stronger, more resilient communities."

## 27. Organisational Barriers to Change & Their Impact on Disability Inclusion:

Organisational change is crucial for a company's growth and adaptability, yet it often encounters significant challenges that slow progress. Despite the best efforts, many change initiatives fail due to common workplace barriers. Identifying and overcoming these obstacles is essential for successfully implementing change.

While specific UK statistics on staff awareness regarding the necessity of organisational change for enhanced disability inclusion are limited, existing data and reports shed light on related aspects:

- **Increased Employer Awareness:** The UK's Disability Confident scheme aims to assist employers in creating inclusive workplaces. Self-reported data indicates that 88% of participating employers have heightened awareness of disability equality among their recruitment teams.
- **Prevalence of Workplace Challenges:** A Deloitte study reveals that 40% of UK employees with disabilities or chronic health conditions have experienced workplace bullying. Additionally, 24% reported being overlooked for promotions, and 23% faced doubts about their competence from colleagues.
- **Employment Disparity:** Approximately 50% of disabled individuals in the UK are employed, in contrast to 81% of non-disabled individuals. Addressing this employment gap could potentially contribute an additional £17 billion to the UK economy annually.

These findings underscore the importance of organisational change to foster disability inclusion. While many employers are becoming more aware of disability equality, significant challenges persist, including workplace bullying and promotion barriers for disabled employees. Proactive measures, such as comprehensive training and inclusive policies, are essential to cultivate supportive work environments and bridge the employment gap.

Many barriers to organisational change also hinder disability inclusion efforts. Key challenges include lack of clarity, poor communication, and strategic shortcomings, which result in unclear policies and inconsistent implementation. A change-resistant culture and limited organisational buy-in can further stall progress, while change fatigue may cause inclusion efforts to be deprioritised.

Additionally, a lack of governance, insufficient training, and unrealistic expectations can lead to ineffective inclusion strategies. Limited resources and weak leadership support also contribute to the failure of meaningful disability inclusion.

To foster a truly inclusive workplace, organisations must embed disability inclusion into their culture, strategy, and operations, ensuring clear goals, leadership commitment, strong communication, and adequate resources for sustainable change.

### **Organisational Barriers & Their Impact on Disabled Customers:**

Many barriers to organisational change also affect disabled customers, limiting their access to products and services. Businesses that fail to address these challenges risk exclusion, reputational damage, and lost revenue.

Key obstacles include unclear accessibility policies, poor communication, and a lack of strategic commitment to disability inclusion. A resistance to accessibility improvements, limited staff training, and insufficient resources further hinder progress. Without leadership support and proper governance, accessibility initiatives may be inconsistent or ineffective.

### **The Business Case for Accessibility**

Addressing these barriers is not just about compliance, it's about creating an inclusive and welcoming experience. Businesses that prioritise accessibility can expand their customer base, enhance loyalty, and improve their reputation.

To better serve disabled customers, organisations must:

- ☒ Establish clear accessibility policies and communicate them effectively.
- ☒ Provide staff training on disability awareness and inclusive customer service.

- ☒ Allocate resources for accessibility improvements.
- ☒ Ensure leadership drives inclusion efforts.

By proactively overcoming these barriers, businesses can deliver equal access and exceptional service, benefiting both their customers and their bottom line.

## 28. Partners and Thank You's

We recognise and celebrate the incredible work being done by many projects and organisations. Our aim is not to detract from their efforts but to amplify their impact, support their progress, and inspire others to build on this foundation by addressing gaps and creating even more opportunities for inclusion and accessibility.

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- Dundee City Council – EDI team
- Dundee and Angus College
- Kingspark School
- Dundee Carers Centre
- Springboard Creative Arts
- Dundee Access Group



## 29. Resources

- Reports and Publications

### Research on Social Inclusion, Employment & Health

1. **Mencap (2019)** – Research on social isolation and outdoor activity among individuals with learning disabilities.
  - [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)
2. **Sense (2021)** – Survey on loneliness and its impact on mental and physical health among disabled individuals.
  - [www.sense.org.uk](http://www.sense.org.uk)
3. **Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory (SLDO, 2020)** – Evidence on mortality rates and preventable illnesses among individuals with learning disabilities.
  - [www.slido.ac.uk](http://www.slido.ac.uk)
4. **Scottish Commission for Learning Disability (SCLD, 2019)** – Data on employment rates and social challenges for individuals with learning disabilities.
  - [www.sclld.org.uk](http://www.sclld.org.uk)
5. **World Health Organization (WHO)** – Global Disability Report on barriers, health disparities, and inclusion efforts.
  - [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
6. **UNICEF (2022)** – Combatting the Costs of Exclusion: The impact of disability on education and employment.
  - [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)
7. **Portulans Institute** – The High Cost of Exclusion: Economic and societal impacts of disability exclusion.
  - [www.portulansinstitute.org](http://www.portulansinstitute.org)

- Organisations and Initiatives

### Global and UK-based Inclusion Programs

8. **Disability Rights UK** – Guidance and resources for improving accessibility and inclusion.
  - [www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)
9. **International Disability Alliance (IDA)** – Programs supporting disability rights and empowerment globally.
  - [www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org)
10. **Motability Foundation** – Reports and support for improving transport accessibility.
  - [www.motabilityfoundation.org.uk](http://www.motabilityfoundation.org.uk)
11. **Cities For All – Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities** – Guidelines for creating inclusive urban spaces.
  - [www.cities4all.org](http://www.cities4all.org)
12. **Neighbourhood Networks** – Community-based support for independent living.
  - [www.neighbourhoodnetworks.org](http://www.neighbourhoodnetworks.org)
13. **DFN Project Search** – Employment readiness programs for individuals with disabilities.
  - [www.dfnprojectsearch.org](http://www.dfnprojectsearch.org)
14. **ILO Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN)** – Resources for businesses to promote disability inclusion.
  - [www.businessanddisability.org](http://www.businessanddisability.org)
15. **BoingBoing Resilience Research Centre** – Resilience-building for people with disabilities.
  - [www.boingboing.org.uk](http://www.boingboing.org.uk)
16. **Euan's Guide** – Disability access reviews for venues across the UK.
  - [www.euansguide.com](http://www.euansguide.com)

- Research Studies and Articles

### Academic and Evidence-Based Research

17. **Leigh-Hunt et al. (2017)** – The impact of loneliness on physical and mental health.

- [ResearchGate](#)
- 18. **MacDonald et al. (2018)** – Risk factors for loneliness among people with learning disabilities.
- [PubMed Central](#)
- 19. **O’Leary et al. (2017)** – Health inequalities and premature mortality rates among people with learning disabilities.
- [PubMed Central](#)
- 20. **Rebecca Haythorne et al. (2021)** – Barriers to active recreation for people with disabilities.
- [Taylor & Francis Online](#)
- 21. **Accenture Research (2023)** – Disability inclusion and financial performance of businesses.
- [www.accenture.com](#)
- 22. **ILO Research (2020)** – The economic impact of disability inclusion in workplaces.
- [www.ilo.org](#)
- 23. **European Transport Research Review (2022)** – Shared mobility services and accessibility.
- [SpringerOpen](#)

- **Policy and Government Guidance**

#### UK and Global Legislation on Disability Inclusion

- 24. **Scottish Government (2021)** – Learning/Intellectual Disability and Autism policy statements.
- [www.gov.scot](#)
- 25. **UK Department for Education** – Resources for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- [www.gov.uk](#)
- 26. **Public Services Committee (2022)** – Inquiry into transitions from education to employment for young disabled people.
- [www.parliament.uk](#)
- 27. **The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)** – UK disability rights, workplace accommodations, and accessibility law.
- [www.equalityhumanrights.com](#)
- 28. **Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)** – Best practices for disability inclusion in social care.
- [www.scie.org.uk](#)
- 29. **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** – Global policies and rights frameworks.
- [www.un.org](#)

- **Websites and Tools**

#### Accessibility-Focused Digital Platforms

- 30. **Wheelmap.org** – Interactive map for finding wheelchair-accessible places worldwide.
- [www.wheelmap.org](#)
- 31. **Project Sidewalk** – Crowdsourced mapping for accessibility barriers in cities.
- [www.sidewalk.io](#)
- 32. **Accessible Social** – Best practices for accessible social media content.
- [www.accessible-social.com](#)
- 33. **Microsoft Inclusive Design Toolkit** – Digital accessibility and workplace inclusivity tools.
- [www.microsoft.com/design/inclusive](#)
- 34. **Captioning & Audio Descriptions** – Tools for making events and media accessible.
- [www.rev.com](#) | [www.otter.ai](#)
- 35. **Canva & Visme** – Tools for designing accessible and inclusive reports.
- [www.canva.com](#) | [www.visme.co](#)