

# Health needs survey of homeless people in Herefordshire

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## Summary

- Only 19 people responded to this questionnaire assessing the health needs of homeless people in Herefordshire. The respondents have a relatively young age profile, three-quarters of them are male and predominantly 'White British'.
- Nearly half lived in 'bricks and mortar' and half had no fixed abode. 53% were not satisfied with their accommodation.
- Most were not in full time work and about a quarter have no qualifications.
- Half felt their health was good or very good, however just over a third stated they have a disability, long term illness or health problem which limits the daily activities or work they can do.
- There was a very high percentage of smokers (89%).
- 72% of respondents had visited or spoken to a GP in the last 6 months, which is much higher than the proportion of people who had visited an optician, dentist or hospital.
- 17% of respondents felt they faced barriers to health services.

## Aim

To assess the health needs of homeless people in Herefordshire. This was done at the same time as two other groups: seasonal and migrant workers and Gypsies and Travellers in the county.

## Methodology

A questionnaire assessing the health needs of homeless people was drafted by staff in public health and the research team to be circulated fairly soon thereafter by key workers in the Primary Care Trust and the Council. This was carried out between July and September in 2008. The aim was for key workers to interview individuals once consent was given (as per an advice sheet), or self-completion by homeless people if they preferred. The questionnaires were all completed by people attending some form of local support to homeless people.

## Results

### About the respondents

#### Age

68% of respondents were 25-44 year olds which is much higher than the population in Herefordshire as a whole. (23%, ONS mid-year estimates, 2007)

Table 1:

What is your age (at last birthday)?	
16-24	11%
25-44	68%
45-64	16%
65-74	0%
75+	5%

(Base 19)

#### Gender

## Homeless People's Health Needs Survey

Approximately three quarters of the respondents are male compared with just under half in the population of Herefordshire as a whole (ONS mid-year estimates, 2007).

### Ethnicity

The majority of homeless respondents (17 out of 19), gave their ethnicity as White British. One person gave their ethnicity as 'other white background' and one did not reply.

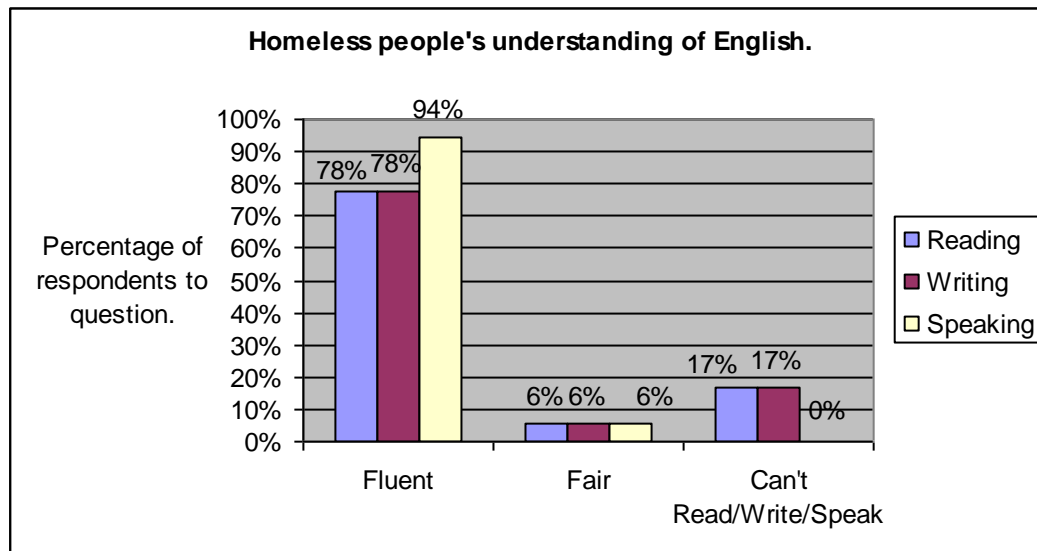
### Language

The main spoken language is English (18 respondents) with 1 person stating Welsh.

### Understanding of English

Question 5 asked the respondent to describe their knowledge of the English language for reading, writing and speaking. The majority of respondents are fluent readers, writers and speakers of English. No one considered that they were unable to speak English although 17% are unable to read and 17% are unable to write. See the chart below.

Chart 1:



(Base 18)

### Accommodation

The most common form of accommodation for this sample is 'no fixed abode' (44% of respondents). In addition one person was living in a bedsit and one in a hostel.

Table 2:

House/bungalow	Semi/terraced	Flat/apartment	Caravan (tourer)	Caravan (static)	Pod	No fixed abode	Staying with friends
19%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	44%	13%

(Base 16)

### Accommodation satisfaction

Just over half (53%) were not satisfied with their accommodation (47% were satisfied). Comments from those who were unsatisfied with their accommodation are in Table 3.

Table 3:

## Homeless People's Health Needs Survey

It's a tent
Need a 2 bed flat so my 2 children can see me in a settled environment.
Need own place
Tent insufficient
Too much rent and no services included

(Base 19)

### Employment status

The majority of the respondents were unemployed (53%), followed by retired people (21%). There were no students or part time workers in this sample.

Table 4:

	Percentage of respondents
Fulltime	5%
Part time	0%
Unemployed	53%
Retired	21%
Looking after family or home	11%
Long term sick or disabled	5%
Student	0%
Other	5%

(Base 19)

### Migrant workers

Question 9 asked 'if a migrant worker, please specify how long you've lived in the UK'. 4 respondents responded to this question, 3 of which stated they had been living in the UK over 5 years.

### Education

26% of respondents have no qualifications with 74% having some form of qualification as shown in the table below. 1 person specified their 'other' qualification as 6 CSEs GRD 2/3 and 1 person as 'gardening'. The West Midlands Regional Lifestyle survey 2005 found that 25% of respondents held no formal qualifications and around 50% of men and women held NVQ level 3 or below.

Table 5:

Level of qualifications	Number	Percentage
<i>No qualifications</i>	5	26%
<i>1+'O' Level/CSE/GCSE (any grades), NVQ Level 1, Foundation GNVQ</i>	4	21%
<i>5+ O Level/CSEs (grade 1), 5+ GCSEs (grade A - C), school certificate, 1+ 'A'/AS levels, NVQ Level 2, Intermediate GNVQ</i>	4	21%
<i>2+ 'A' Levels, 4+AS Levels, Higher school certificate, NVQ level 3, Advanced GNVQ</i>	3	16%
<i>Degree, higher degree, NVQ levels 4 &amp; 5, HNC, HND, BTEC</i>	0	0%
<i>Professional (e.g. teaching, nursing, doctor, dentist, accountant, engineer</i>	0	0%
<i>Other</i>	3	16%

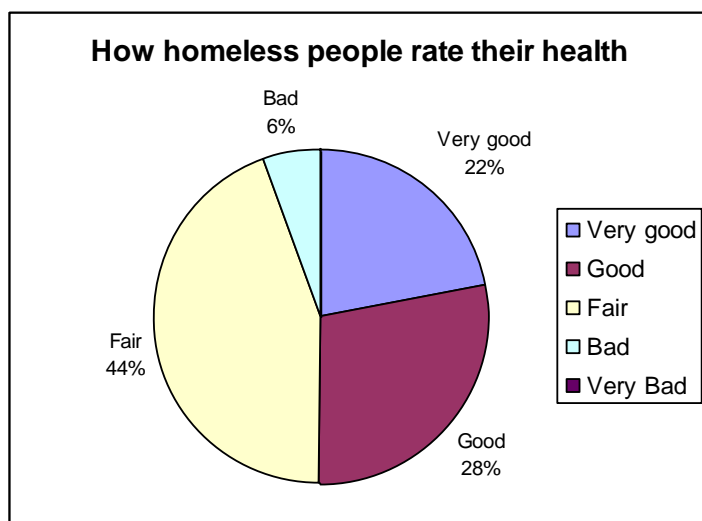
(Base 19)

### Health

## Homeless People's Health Needs Survey

Just under half of the respondents feel that their health is fair (44%). No one felt their health was very bad, as shown in the chart below.

Chart 2:



(Base 18)

### Disability

Just over one third of people responding to this question have a disability, long term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits the daily activities or work they can do (6 respondents). When asked to specify the condition, most stated 'mental health' (5 respondents) and 'other' (2 respondents).

### Medical conditions

The most commonly occurring conditions are 'mental illness' and 'asthma' (16% each) followed by back pain and arthritis, as shown in the table below. One person specified their mental illness as schizophrenia.

Table 6:

Do you have any of the following conditions?	Yes	No
<i>High blood pressure</i>	5%	58%
<i>High cholesterol</i>	0%	63%
<i>Heart disease</i>	0%	63%
<i>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (long term chest problem)</i>	0%	63%
<i>Asthma</i>	16%	58%
<i>Diabetes</i>	0%	63%
<i>Arthritis (painful joints)</i>	11%	58%
<i>Back pain</i>	11%	63%
<i>Mental illness</i>	16%	58%

(Base 19)

## **Lifestyle**

### **Smoking**

A very high proportion of the respondents smoke (89%) compared with an estimated 22% of people 16 and over in Herefordshire (source: Regional lifestyle survey 2005, WMRO & WMPHO). 10 respondents (59%) have tried to quit smoking.

### **Alcohol consumption**

56% of respondents to this question drank alcohol. The question was phrased slightly differently in a regional lifestyle survey but the results for Herefordshire were that 71% of people drank alcohol (2005).

When asked how many units they drank per week, people gave answers from 1 unit to 200. When asked what was the most they drank in one day the responses ranged from one bottle to 180 units.

### **Weight**

Just under a quarter (24%) felt they are underweight, 12% felt they were overweight and 64% felt their weight was normal.

## **Uptake of services**

### **Flu immunisation**

There was only one person aged over 65 and they did not respond to this question.

### **Hospital visits**

41% of respondents to the question said yes they had been to hospital in the last 12 months. Comments as to why people had visited hospital were 'Casualty', 'I was sexually assaulted and stalked', 'ripped my finger open' and 'tests'.

### **Dentist visits**

44% of people had visited a dentist in the last 12 months. Reasons given for not visiting a dentist in the last 12 months were dentures, 'no problems', 'not registered with one' and 'unable to get in for 18 months'.

### **GP visits**

72% of respondents had visited or spoken to a GP in the last 6 months. Only one person gave a reason for not having spoken to a GP in the last 6 months and that was that they had 'no problems'.

### **Optician visits**

22% of respondents to this question had visited an optician in the last 12 months. Reasons given for not visiting an optician in the last 12 months were no need/no problems and having never visited one before.

### **Cervical screening**

In 2004 the 5 year coverage rate for women in Herefordshire receiving cervical screenings was 83% (Annual report of cervical screening services 2004, Herefordshire PCT). From a possible 5 women aged 20-64, 3 had had a cervical screening in the last 3-5 years and 2 had not.

### **Breast screening**

There was only one woman in the appropriate age range (50-70 years) to respond to this and she had had a breast screening test.

### Use of unconventional medicine

One person had used complementary medicine and 3 had used alternative medicine. No one had used home treatment (prescription from another country).

### Barriers to services

#### Barriers to health services

17% of respondents felt they faced barriers to healthcare. One person stated transport problems as the barrier, another stated inapproachable staff as the problem and one person said it was because they 'can't get an appointment'

#### Importance of service/information

Advice on sexual health is most commonly felt to be unimportant. More information on following a healthy lifestyle (e.g. information on nutrition and physical activity) was most commonly felt to be important.

Table 7:

Importance of the following to you or your family	Percentage Yes	Percentage No	Percentage don't know
<i>More information on following a healthy lifestyle (e.g. information on nutrition and physical activity)</i>	58%	26%	11%
<i>Advice &amp; guidance for families with young children to encourage healthy lifestyles</i>	42%	47%	5%
<i>Advice on sexual health (contraception etc)</i>	21%	68%	5%
<i>Being kept informed/fully consulted on all aspects of your care</i>	53%	37%	5%
<i>Special help for people caring for family and friends</i>	47%	37%	5%
<i>Joining together health and social care services (a one stop shop approach)</i>	42%	47%	5%
<i>Developing more services that can be provided in your own home or in a local facility.</i>	37%	53%	5%
<i>Help and advice on claiming benefits</i>	32%	53%	5%
<i>Help and advice on housing issues</i>	42%	42%	5%

(Base 19)

### Accessing services

A cultural/recreation facility was most commonly felt to be difficult to access (16% said they found it difficult to access)

Table 8:

Facility	Difficult to access	Not difficult to access
<i>Shop/supermarket</i>	11%	53%
<i>Post office</i>	5%	53%
<i>public transport (bus/ train)</i>	5%	53%
<i>Chemist/pharmacy</i>	5%	58%
<i>Library</i>	5%	53%
<i>Bank or cash point</i>	11%	47%
<i>Sports/leisure centre</i>	11%	47%
<i>Cultural/recreational facility e.g. theatre, cinema</i>	16%	42%
<i>Council office</i>	11%	47%

(Base 19)

**Importance of service**

A Bank or cash point and shop/supermarket were most commonly stated as being important to access (32%). One person noted they had problems accessing homeless team at Garrick House and another said there was an 'OK' house which they could not get. One person also noted that they would like 'housing for the homeless because no one cares'.

Table 9:

	Important	Not important
Shop/supermarket	32%	21%
Post office	21%	26%
Chemist/pharmacy	21%	26%
public transport (bus/ train)	21%	26%
Library	21%	26%
Sports/leisure centre	21%	26%
Cultural/recreational facility e.g. theatre, cinema	16%	32%
Bank or cash point	32%	16%
Council office	21%	26%

(Base 19)

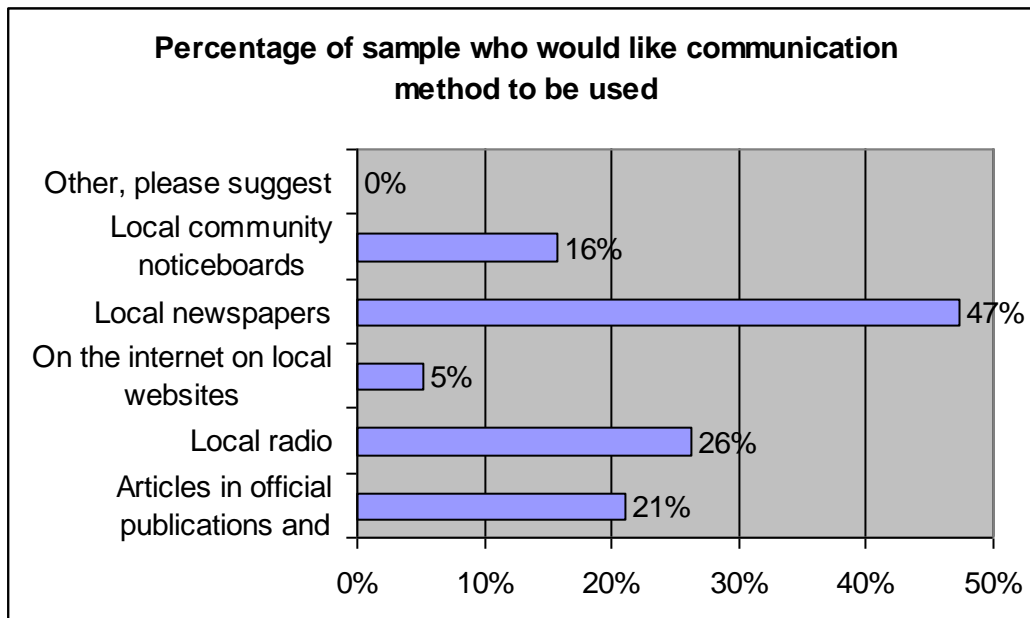
**Future participation in consultation**

75% said they would be willing to give their views in the future.

**Favoured communication methods**

Local newspapers are the most popular form of communication suggested as shown in the chart below.

Chart 3:



(Base 19)

**Appendix 1: Questionnaire**

Questionnaire to assess service needs of homeless people in Herefordshire

**Part 1 – About you**

1. What is your age (at last birthday)?  
 16-24 years  25-44 years  45-64 years  65-74 years  75+ years

2. Gender  
 Male  Female

3. What is your ethnic group?

White	<input type="checkbox"/> British	<input type="checkbox"/> Irish Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/> Romany/Gypsy
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other White background, please specify:		
Black	<input type="checkbox"/> British	<input type="checkbox"/> African	<input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Black background, please specify:		
Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> British	<input type="checkbox"/> Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Asian background, please specify:		
Mixed	<input type="checkbox"/> British	<input type="checkbox"/> White & Black African	<input type="checkbox"/> White & Black Caribbean
	<input type="checkbox"/> White & Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> White & Chinese	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Mixed background, please specify:		
Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> British	<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Chinese background, please specify:		
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Any other White background, please specify:		

4. What is your main spoken language? *(Please write in)*

5. How would you describe your knowledge of the English language?

Reading	<input type="checkbox"/> Fluent	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Can't speak
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/> Fluent	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Can't speak
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/> Fluent	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Can't speak

6. What type of accommodation do you currently live in?

Bricks & mortar	<input type="checkbox"/> House/bungalow	<input type="checkbox"/> Semi-/terraced	<input type="checkbox"/> Flat/apartment
Mobile/Temp.	<input type="checkbox"/> Caravan (tourer)	<input type="checkbox"/> Caravan (static)	<input type="checkbox"/> Pod
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> No fixed abode	<input type="checkbox"/> Staying with friends	

Are you satisfied with your accommodation?

Yes  No

*If not, please say why:*

7. Last week were you:

- |                     |                                    |   |   |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Employed?           | <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time | <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed                 |
| <i>If employed:</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent | <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Casual/seasonal            |
| Not working         | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired   | <input type="checkbox"/> Looking after home or family | <input type="checkbox"/> Long-term sick or disabled |
|                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Student   | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired                      |   |
- Other**

8. *If a migrant worker:*

How long have you been living in the UK?

- Less than 6 months  6 – 12 months  1 – 2 years  3-5 years  5+ years

9. Which of the following qualifications do you have, if any:?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No qualifications  | <input type="checkbox"/> 1+'O' Level/CSE/GCSE (any grades NVQ Level 1, Foundation GNVQ)                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5+ O Level/CSEs (grade 1), 5+ GCSEs (grade A-C), School certificate, 1+'A'/AS Levels, NVQ Level 2, Intermediate GNVQ | <input type="checkbox"/> 2+'A' Levels, 4+AS levels, Higher School Certificate, NVQ level 3, Advanced GNVQ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Degree, higher degree, NVQ levels 4 & 5, HNC, HND, BTEC  | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional (e.g. teaching, nursing, doctor, dentist, accountant, engineer)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify:   |   |

**Part 2 – Your health**

10. How is your health in general?

- Very good  Good  Fair  Bad  Very bad

11. Do you have a disability, long-term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits daily activities or the work you can do?

- Yes  No

If 'yes', please specify (tick all that apply):

- Deaf/hard of hearing/acute hearing
- Blind/partially sighted/sensitive to light
- Learning disability or difficulty
- Mental health
- Progressive/chronic illness (e.g. MS, cancer)
- Mobility difficulties
- Other (*please specify*):

12. Do you have any of the following medical conditions?

Condition	Yes	No	Don't know	Prefer not to say
High blood pressure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High cholesterol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heart disease	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (Long-term chest problem)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asthma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arthritis (painful joints)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Back pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental illness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Part 3 - Your lifestyle**

13. Do you smoke?

Yes  No

14. Have you ever tried to quit smoking?

Yes  No

15. Do you currently drink alcohol?

Yes  No

If yes, please indicate how much you typically drink:

Per week   
 Most in one day   
standard pub measure of sherry/port)

1 unit = ½ pint of beer/lager/cider, = 1 small glass of wine = 1 small pub measure of spirits e.g. vodka/ brandy = 1

16. How would you describe your weight?

Under weight  Normal  Overweight

**Part 4 – Access to health and other services**

17. (If respondent is aged 65 or more) Did you have a flu jab last autumn?

Yes  No  If not, please say why:

18. Have you been in hospital in the last 12 months?

Yes  No  If Yes, please say why:

19. Have you visited a dentist in the last 12 months?

Yes  No  If not, please say why:

20. Have you spoken to a GP about your health in the last 6 months (visit or telephone call)

Homeless People's Health Needs Survey

Yes  No  *If not, please say why:*

21. Have you visited an optician in the last 12 months?

Yes  No  *If not, please say why:*

22. (If respondent is female and aged 20 – 64)

Have you had a cervical screening test in the last 3 to 5 years?

Yes  No  *If not, please say why:*

23. (If respondent is female and aged 50 - 70)

Have you had a breast screening test in the last 3 years?

Yes  No  *If not, please say why:*

24. Have you used any of the following for a medical condition?

Complementary medicine  Alternative medicine  Home treatment (prescription from another country)

25. Do you face any barriers to accessing health services?

Yes  No  *If yes, please specify all that apply:*

- Language
- Inconvenient hours
- Choice of doctor
- Lack of privacy
- Transport problems
- Knowledge of service
- Inapproachable staff
- Can't get an appointment
- Other

26. Please rate if any of the following is important to you or your family

	Yes	No	Don't know
More information on following a healthy lifestyle (e.g. information on nutrition & physical activity)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advice & guidance for families with young children to encourage healthy lifestyles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advice on sexual health (contraception etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being kept informed/fully consulted on all aspects of your care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special help for people caring for family and friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joining together health and social care services (a one-stop-shop approach)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing more services that can be provided in your own home or in a local facility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help and advice on claiming benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help and advice on housing issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Homeless People's Health Needs Survey*

27. Do you find it difficult to access any other services? (see below, tick all that apply)

	<b>Difficult to access? (yes/no)</b>	<b>Important to you? (yes/no)</b>
Shop/supermarket		
Post office		
Chemist/pharmacy		
Public transport (bus, train)		
Library		
Sports/leisure centre		
Cultural/recreational facility e.g. theatre, cinema		
Bank or cashpoint		
Council office		
Any other? (please specify)		

28. If we visited your community to seek views about services again, would you want to take part/give your view?

Yes  No  Unsure

If you have any suggestions on a particular place or activity where people usually get together in your community, please tell us here:

29. We aim to ensure that people get to hear about how they can have a say and find out how services are developing. Which of the following ways would you like information

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Articles in official publications and newsletters (e.g. 'Herefordshire Matters')<br><input type="checkbox"/> On the internet on local websites<br><input type="checkbox"/> Local community notice boards | <input type="checkbox"/> Local radio<br><input type="checkbox"/> Local newspapers<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other, please suggest: |
|---|--|