



Barriers to Participation

A review of why specific communities in Northern Ireland do not use the countryside for recreation

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Executive Summary

Previous research from England and anecdotal evidence from Northern Ireland suggested that certain communities were less likely to participate in countryside recreation activities than the general public. The aim of this research therefore was twofold:

- to examine the barriers limiting participation in countryside recreation for
 - people with a disability
 - people from minority ethnic communities
 - people living within areas of disadvantage;
- to examine the barriers faced by providers of countryside recreation activities and amenities when working with these communities.

Twelve focus groups were conducted with the targeted communities, and this qualitative approach allowed for in-depth discussion within a range of topics, to examine perceptions, attitudes, barriers and motivations for participating in countryside recreation. One focus group subsequently planned and organised a visit to the countryside to report any actual barriers it met when participating in countryside recreation.

A postal questionnaire was distributed to 201 providers of countryside recreation to examine topics such as specific facility provision for the targeted groups, policy provision, barriers facing providers and key factors to assist providers in meeting the needs of targeted communities. These questionnaires were followed up with a selection of one-to-one interviews. The main findings are listed below.

Barriers to participation for underrepresented communities

The main barriers for people from the underrepresented groups were as follows:

- **Difficulties with public transport**
There was a lack of regular, public transport services, particularly in rural areas, and also some problems for people with limited mobility accessing all forms of public transport, including taxis.
- **Attitudinal problems**
It was apparent that some providers, parents/carers and participants had negative attitudes towards the participation of some underrepresented groups, particularly people with disabilities.
- **Language barriers**
This affected minority ethnic communities, people with a hearing impairment and people with learning or reading disabilities.
- **Lack of access to appropriate information**
There was a lack of awareness of the needs of underrepresented groups in terms of accessing information in appropriate formats, as well as a lack of readily available information in general.
- **Lack of awareness**
Underrepresented communities are not targeted sufficiently to raise their awareness of opportunities in countryside recreation.
- **Dependence on others**
Some people with disabilities are dependent on others to accompany them to outdoor facilities; this restricts their opportunities to take part in activities.
- **Lack of time and or motivation**
As with the general population, and in common with all forms of sport and physical recreation, a reported lack of time and motivation are major barriers to taking part.
- **Poorly maintained paths**
Well maintained paths are essential, particularly for people with visual impairment and wheelchair users.

Factors which would encourage participation

On the other hand, factors which would encourage participation in countryside recreation were as follows:

- **The availability of trained leaders**
All but one of the focus groups reported that a trained leader would encourage them to take part in countryside activities.
- **Organised activities**
Some groups lacked confidence to become involved without help and they agreed that organised activities would address this issue.
- **A good public transport system**
This would include appropriate training for people driving public transport vehicles and an arrangement with community groups to provide transport to popular destinations, particularly in rural areas.
- **Simple, understandable information in an appropriate format**
People from minority ethnic communities and people who have learning or reading disabilities feel that information in a format they can understand would help them to have a choice about participating in countryside recreation.
- **Family activities and facilities**
People from minority ethnic communities with young families and some people with a disability who require company when visiting the countryside would like more extensive activities for the whole family.
- **Better awareness amongst facility staff**
Properly trained staff, who understand the needs of underrepresented communities, particularly people with a disability, would help to increase opportunities and raise enjoyment levels for all.
- **A change in societal attitudes towards disadvantaged communities**
By a change in attitudes, recognising abilities rather than disability, providers, parents and carers could help enable people with a disability in accessing opportunities for taking part in countryside recreation.

Barriers for providers when working with underrepresented communities

The main barriers for providers, in order of importance were:

- **There is no demand**
This must be seen as a perceptual barrier, as it was difficult to decide whether more people would access the amenities if barriers were addressed.
- **A lack of financial resources**
Providers felt that they did not have sufficient financial resources within their budget to make all the necessary adjustments to the environment or their facilities. This also affected the production of information in different formats.
- **A lack of human resources**
It was perceived that extra staff would be necessary to be able to meet the needs of underrepresented groups.
- **A lack of appropriately trained staff**
Some providers reported that they did not have sufficient support from their organisation to put this training in place.
- **No strategic plan in place**
Most facilities worked under corporate policies and strategies, but these were not specific to individual sites.
- **A lack of appropriate facilities**
Some providers reported that they could not cater for some underrepresented groups, particularly people with a disability, because they did not, and could not provide appropriate facilities.
- **Lack of awareness of the needs and abilities of underrepresented communities**
A lack of awareness through inappropriate and insufficient training has led to a lack of confidence amongst some facility staff when working with people from underrepresented groups.

Key factors to help providers address barriers

The key factors to help address barriers, in order of importance were:

- 'ring fenced' financial resources
- links with local, targeted groups
- regular forums with other providers to review best practice eg seminars, conferences, study trips, field trips.
- practical, specialist advice on site
- appropriate training for all staff
- a handbook/guidelines for staff
- an agreed organisational policy
- specific actions and targets set within a strategic plan

Recommendations

Recommendations were mainly aimed at policy makers and providers of countryside recreation and fell into 7 categories. These were:

• Raising awareness

This has to happen on a number of levels and with a variety of stakeholders. All organisations involved with countryside recreation as well as community leaders and health professionals have a role to play in raising awareness of the health benefits of countryside recreation and how to access opportunities to take part.

• Information and marketing

Information should be made available in a wide range of formats to reach the greatest number of people in all communities. This can best be done through a rigorous marketing programme and a dedicated marketing officer.

• Leadership

A network of appropriately trained leaders throughout Northern Ireland, including those from within the targeted communities, should be developed to work within underrepresented groups and help to increase participation. This can best be done by a dedicated training officer working within a single coordinating body

• Facilities

Regular maintenance programmes should be in place to ensure the safety, comfort and enjoyment of all users. This includes indoor facilities and outdoor paths and spaces. Where necessary, wardens should be appointed to ensure facilities are well maintained and accessible to all.

• Training and capacity building

All providers of countryside recreation should have rigorous training in meeting the needs of underrepresented groups; this should include training in relevant legislation. People from within the targeted communities should have an opportunity to work within outdoor facilities and undertake leadership training.

• Transport

Lack of an appropriate public transport system is a major barrier to participation, particularly amongst rural groups and some people with a disability. Consultation should take place between all stakeholders, including users, to try to reduce the impact of poor public transport systems for people from underrepresented groups.

• Policy development and implementation

Many providers and organisations did not have appropriate policies or monitoring systems in place to ensure adequate provision of facilities and activities for underrepresented groups. Without adequate policies, procedures and monitoring systems, provision for underrepresented communities will be on an ad hoc basis, and little progress can be made in increasing their levels of participation in countryside recreation. A full time coordinator should be tasked with working across organisations and agencies involved with countryside recreation to develop a strategic and coordinated approach to these recommendations.

In light of the research findings, it is recommended that a change should be made in terminology from 'countryside recreation' to 'outdoor recreation', following a level of confusion amongst participants over the range of activities considered under the term 'countryside'. This would also be in line with thinking within the wider outdoor recreation industry.



Background

Introduction

In Northern Ireland, the population density and level of urban development are such as to allow for large areas of open space and significant access to the countryside. Most people live within a short distance of a range of outdoor amenities, either on land or water, and opportunities for physical recreation in the outdoors are endless. Many studies have reported improved health outcomes, both physical and mental, as a result of taking part in physical activity (Haskell & Lee et al 2007; Dept of Health 2004), including countryside recreation (Sugiyama & Thompson 2008; Pretty et al 2005). Despite the evidence, the Northern Irish countryside is still underused, and anecdotal evidence suggests that certain communities in particular are under-represented in terms of participating in countryside recreation activities.

The Countryside Recreation Strategy for Northern Ireland (1998) identified the need to increase participation in outdoor recreation, having the working principle “access for all, but not access to everywhere”. The Strategy’s priorities emphasised the development and sustainability of a “countryside recreation culture, in which responsible and well informed people enjoy high-quality, sustainable and appropriate activities in an accessible, well managed yet challenging environment; where landowners and managers are welcoming and there are accompanying benefits to local communities both in social and economic terms.”

In light of published literature, and taking account of current legislation and a range of Government strategies, the Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) identified the need for a diversity review that was specific to Northern Ireland, and focused on underrepresented groups and their attitudes to countryside recreation.

Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) along with Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) recognised the relevance of this proposal to their established strategies and wider departmental obligations, and as a result CAAN was commissioned to undertake this review with the following aim:

To examine participation in countryside recreation, with specific reference to the following groups of people:

- people with disabilities
- people from minority ethnic communities
- people living within areas of disadvantage.

1 Countryside Recreation defined

The Countryside Recreation Strategy for Northern Ireland (1998) states that countryside recreation “can be taken to apply to those sporting and recreational activities that operate, or have their origin in the use of land, water and air. They can be competitive or non competitive; formal or informal”. The Strategy does not deal with general leisure provision in the countryside such as, picnicking, viewing scenery and visiting stately homes; however, within this research, several participants of the focus groups associated countryside recreation with these activities.

2 Defining visitors to the countryside

In a Countryside Agency report (2005a), three types of visitors to the countryside were identified. These were

- frequent visitors who represent 20% of the nation's population and tend to be the better off two-car families, well informed about what the countryside has to offer and non-disabled
- occasional visitors who represent 40% of the population and tend to be people on middle incomes, with one car per household, living in the towns and suburbs
- missing visitors who represent another 40% of the population and are generally people on low income or state benefit, living in poorer conditions and reliant on public transport. They include some ethnic communities, older people and disabled people.

3 The benefits of Countryside Recreation

Research is on-going to determine the impact of countryside recreation on people's health and wellbeing. A report commissioned by the Forestry Commission in England indicated that the countryside and the natural environment can contribute to individual and public health in four areas:

- physical exercise
 - psychological wellbeing
 - social participation and
 - ecological sustainable lifestyles.
- (Henwood 2001)

4 Defining underrepresented groups

The Leisure Day Visits Report (Countryside Agency 2004) gives a demographic profile of current visitors to the countryside and shows them to be mostly white, usually aged 35-54 with a relatively high income (social groups A, B and C1) and who travel by car. Specific reasons for individuals failing to make use of the countryside include lack of

personal access to a car or van and constraints relating to health or disability. A third of survey respondents reported that either they were 'not interested' or were 'too busy' to make such a visit. (Countryside Agency 2005b)

4.1 People living with disability

The Northern Ireland Survey of Activity Limitation and Disabilities (NISALD) (NISRA 2007) states there is no universally accepted definition of disability that meets the needs of all users at all times. However a model often used in data collection states that disability is a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. The social model of disability on the other hand looks at the impact of the surrounding environment in which the person lives and how this affects their ability to carry out everyday activities. Results from the NISALD have found that, in 2006/07, 18% of all people living in private households in Northern Ireland have some degree of disability; the prevalence rate for adults being 21% and 6% for children. People with a disability often face problems of social exclusion, lower income levels and difficulties with access to services and transport. People with a disability seek to have the same independence and access to opportunities as able-bodied people.

According to the organisation Working with Diversity, there is a wide diversity of abilities within broad definitions of disability.

4.1.1 Physical disability

- 95% of disabled people do not use wheelchairs.
- People are not "wheelchair bound" - they may be permanent, part-time or occasional wheelchair users.
- Disability is not always immediately obvious. There may be no visible signs such as crutches.
- Removing barriers is not just about spending

money on structural alterations it is also about changing society's attitude.

4.1.2 Deaf and hard of hearing

- There are about 8.7 million deaf and hard of hearing people in the UK.
- Of these 8.7 million people, about 8 million have an acquired hearing loss ie. they were not born with the condition.
- About 673,000 people in the UK were born deaf or became deaf early in life, before they had developed language. Many of these people may read and write English perfectly, but some have difficulty.

4.1.3 Serious sight loss

- Visual defect is one of the most common causes of disability in the world.
- Different eye conditions create different problems. Very few blind people see nothing at all.
- The Royal National Institute of Blind People estimates there are over 28,000 blind or partially sighted people in Northern Ireland.
- There are approximately 200 Braille users in Northern Ireland.

4.1.4 Learning disability

- In the UK, 1.5 million people have some form of learning disability. Of these, approximately 200,000 are adults with a severe learning disability.
- It is estimated that 2% of the population - or 33,000 people in Northern Ireland have a learning disability.

4.2 People living in areas of disadvantage - social exclusion

'Poverty' and 'deprivation' are terms that are often seen as synonymous; however, although 'poverty' is generally considered to mean having insufficient financial resources to meet needs, deprivation

refers to unmet needs, which is caused by a lack of resources of all kinds, not just financial. (The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005) (MDM)

There is a clear distinction between social and material deprivation. The latter, and more easily measured, relates to diet, health, clothing, housing, household facilities, environment and work. The term, social deprivation or more commonly used as 'social exclusion', has many definitions. (Slee, Derren and Curry 2001)

One definition offered by Burchard et al. (1999) states: 'An individual is socially excluded if (a) he or she is geographically resident in a society but (b) for reasons beyond his or her control he or she cannot participate in the normal activities of citizens of that society and (c) he or she would like to so participate'

However the term 'social exclusion' is not an official statistical category; so poverty and deprivation (social and material) indicators are often conveniently substituted by other measures, such as the MDM. Multiple deprivation is not some separate form of deprivation, it is simply a combination of more specific forms of deprivation, each of which can be more or less directly measurable.

MDM is an area or ward-based measure and uses 7 'domains' which contribute to the overall measure of deprivation.

The 7 domains are:

- income
- employment
- health
- education
- geographical access to services
- social environment
- housing.

Levels of multiple deprivation vary across Northern Ireland. Although the most deprived 10% of wards are spread throughout the country, there are particularly concentrated areas in Belfast, Londonderry, Craigavon and Newry and Mourne. The least deprived 20% of wards are concentrated in the eastern half of Northern Ireland.

Just over 206,900 people live in the most deprived 10% of the wards, which is 12.2% of Northern Ireland's population. In the least deprived 10% of the wards 211,200 people live, that is 12.5% of the country's population.

The present study used a list of the most deprived 20% of wards in Northern Ireland, provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in order to identify wards for further investigation as described in Chapter 2.

4.3 People from minority ethnic communities

The first people from minority ethnic communities to arrive in Northern Ireland in significant numbers were of Chinese origin. The Chinese Welfare Association estimates the Chinese community to number approximately 8,000 people (Chan 2006). Nevertheless, there is some debate over numbers as the 2001 Census identifies 4,145 members of the Chinese community. Mistrust of official forms and language difficulties could mean that people do not complete the census form, however this is not only a characteristic of the Chinese community but other minority ethnic groups as well.

Apart from the Chinese community, according to an electronic encyclopedia, there are other minority ethnic groups living in Northern Ireland:

- People from Asia are mostly from Commonwealth countries such as Pakistan and India.
- The number of people speaking Portuguese in Northern Ireland is estimated to be over 1000.

Portuguese immigration has been more recent, having started in the 1990s.

- There are now believed to be 30,000 (other sources report 40,000) Polish people living in Northern Ireland.
- Other minority ethnic groups are present in the country, primarily from Eastern Europe. (www.wikipedia.com)

It is very difficult to estimate the exact number of people from minority ethnic communities as there are a limited number of sources from which to obtain specific information. However, the "National Insurance Number Allocations to Overseas Nationals Entering Northern Ireland - 2007" (NISRA 2007) gives an insight into the recent development of the size of minority ethnic communities.

European Union (EU) nationals are free to enter the UK to visit and look for work, without the need for visas or work permits, and as Table 1 shows there is a significant change in the number of Non-UK Nationals entering Northern Ireland and being allocated a National Insurance Number (NI No.) both before and after the EU enlargement in May 2004, when 10 countries joined the EU.

Allocations of NI No. to nationals from EU Accession countries increased by 8,520 between 2004/05 and 2005/06: from 1,687 to 10,177, and 54% (5,460) of this increase was accounted for by Polish migrants. The second highest number of registrations to nationals from the Accession countries was made up of Lithuanians with 21% (2,131), whilst Slovaks made up 15% (1,483) (Table 2).

Table 1

Non-UK Nationals entering Northern Ireland and allocated a NI No. by year of registration and continent of origin

	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
All	2656	4492	5826	15614
Europe - EU Accession Countries	36	148	1657	10177
Europe - EU excluding Accession Countries	1326	2122	1772	2200
Europe - non EU	142	255	436	570
Asia and Middle East	639	1290	1315	1764
Australasia and Oceania	156	201	154	223
The Americas	181	230	251	353
Africa	152	223	225	314
Others and unknown	24	23	16	13

Source: National Insurance Number Allocations to Overseas Nationals Entering Northern Ireland - 2007; a National Statistics Publication

Table 2

Non-UK Nationals entering Northern Ireland and allocated a NI No. Top Ten Countries each Year of Registration

	2003/04		2005/06
Republic of Ireland	942	Poland	5460
Portugal	808	Rep of Lithuania	2131
Phillipines	428	Slovak Rep	1483
India	424	Rep of Ireland	1059
People's Republic of China	206	India	737
Australia	134	Rep of Latvia	531
South Africa	115	Portugal	484
USA	97	Phillippines	422
Germany	85	Czech Rep	364
France	83	People's Republic of China	283

Source: National Insurance Number Allocations to Overseas Nationals Entering Northern Ireland - 2007; a National Statistics Publication

A major difference is noticeable in the Top Ten listing between the years 2003/04 and 2005/06 in terms of the numbers being allocated a NI No. In 2003/04 after the Republic of Ireland (942), Portuguese people were the second highest group to register for NI No (808). This was followed by people from the Philippines (428). In the year 2005/06 the Republic of Ireland was ranked 4 with 1059 registrations, the Portuguese community was ranked 7 (484) and the Philippine community ranked 8 (422). The first three ranked places were taken by Poland, Republic of Lithuania and the Slovak Republic.

The most popular destination in Northern Ireland for non-UK nationals is Belfast (30%), followed by Craigavon (9%) and Dungannon and Newry & Mourne (NISRA 2007).

The present study focused on

- the Chinese Community as one of the first, and longest established minority ethnic communities to settle in Northern Ireland
- the Portuguese speaking community as the second largest minority ethnic group before the EU enlargement
- the Polish community as the largest minority ethnic group entering Northern Ireland at present
- the Lithuanian community as the second largest minority ethnic group at present.

5 Barriers to participation

The Countryside Agencies Diversity review (2005c), identified some common factors restricting access in all underrepresented groups including

- cost of visiting the countryside
- issues linked with transport
- lack of knowledge of the facilities available
- lack of confidence in outdoor settings.

The Diversity Review of Open Space and Countryside Agency (2003) found ten key barriers

to access and participation namely:

- financial costs incurred
- lack of time
- lack of appropriate activities
- lack of awareness
- physical difficulty of access
- lack of confidence and negative perceptions of the environment
- lack of (appropriate) interpretative information
- a neglected or poorly maintained environment
- negative feelings associated with previous experience of the countryside
- lack of (accessible) transport.

Both studies, conducted in England, highlighted that these barriers apply differently to each specific underrepresented group, for example, transport linked issues affect people from minority ethnic communities, given that many are poor and live in inner cities. For people with disabilities, transport and cost were barriers to participation for the same reason as for the minority ethnic groups (low income, living in urban areas). However, disabled people have to face other barriers linked to transport.

6 Legislative context

Several pieces of legislation provide further relevance for this research and give a strong basis for action. For the purpose of this research, focus has fallen on legislation dealing with equal opportunities and rights of access to services and goods.

6.1 Northern Ireland Act 1998 - Section 75 and Schedule 9

Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 came into force on 1 of January 2000, and places responsibility for these provisions with the Secretary of State. The provisions place a statutory obligation on public authorities (Northern Ireland departments, most non-departmental public bodies, District Councils and other bodies

including UK departments designated by the Secretary of State) to carry out their functions relating to Northern Ireland with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity;

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- between men and women generally
- between persons with a disability and persons without, and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, without prejudice to this obligation, public authorities must have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

This research focused on three elements of this legislation ie. race/ethnic origin, disability and dependency.

6.2 Human Rights Act 1988 Article 14

In legal terms, the Human Rights Act incorporates the rights and freedoms of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law, confirms the abolition of the death penalty and enables individuals to bring cases to court in Northern Ireland, to enforce these rights if necessary. It empowers UK courts to award damages and provide other remedies to those whose rights have been violated.

Article 14 states that the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political, or other opinion, national or social origin, association with national minority, property, birth or other status.

6.3 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)

Part III of the Act makes it unlawful for a service provider to discriminate against a disabled person by:

- refusing to provide (or deliberately not providing) any service which it provides to any member of the public; or
- providing service of a lower standard or in a worse manner; or
- providing service on worse terms, whether or not there is a charge for the service.

It is also unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments which may assist a disabled person to make use of any such service. Compliance with the DDA will require different solutions for different situations and the best advice is often to seek professional help from a person with the necessary expertise.

6.4 Race Relations (NI) Order 1997

Race is protected under the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 (RRO) which outlaws discrimination on grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin and membership of the Irish Traveller community. The RRO makes racial discrimination unlawful in the following areas:

- employment
- goods, facilities and services
- education
- housing management and disposal of premises.

The RRO makes it unlawful to discriminate either directly, indirectly or by victimisation of an individual. The Order also allows certain areas of exemption and exception for particular needs of individual minority ethnic groups.

6.5 Race Relations Order (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2003

The Race Relations Order is the local legislation to implement the European Union (EU) Race Directive 2000/43EC. This will for the first time guarantee a common legal framework of minimum protection across all 15-member states of the EU. The scope of the Race Directive includes the provision of, and access to goods and services. NB. After the EU enlargement in 2004 this legislation extended to the ten new members.

7 Strategic and departmental context

The following key Northern Ireland Government strategies and departmental objectives address the issue of diversity and equality of opportunities.

7.1 Building a Better Future Northern Ireland Executive - Draft Programme for Government 2008-2011

The programme expresses the desire to deliver a better and more sustainable future for all of the people in Northern Ireland. The programme aims to build a prosperous, fair and inclusive society, supported by a vibrant and dynamic economy and a rich and sustainable environmental heritage.

‘Equality is an important issue for the Executive and for society. Inequalities exist, and we must strive to eliminate all forms of inequality’. This statement is underlined in the section ‘Priorities and Key Goals’ where one of the priorities is to ‘Promote tolerance, inclusion and health and wellbeing’.

‘Addressing disadvantage and exclusion will require co-ordinated action to support the most vulnerable and to create strong, vibrant sustainable communities which enhance quality of life and which encourage everyone to realise their potential. We must regenerate our urban and rural

areas, build community capacity and leadership, remove the barriers to employment and independent living for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, and address significant inequalities in health and educational outcomes.’

7.2 New Targeting Social Need

New Targeting Social Need (New TSN, 2004) is the Government’s high level policy for tackling poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland. Originally launched in 1991 as Targeting Social Need and re-launched in 1998 as New Targeting Social Need, this policy aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion by:

- promoting employment and employability amongst the most disadvantaged
- tackling other areas of inequality such as health, education and housing, and
- establishing formal arrangements for departments working together to tackle social exclusion in vulnerable groups such as people with a disability, minority ethnic groups etc.

A new Anti Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland called ‘Lifetime Opportunity’ (2008) is about to be launched by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. It is likely to replace the current New TSN 2004, and has similar objectives.

7.3 Environment and Heritage Service Northern Ireland

EHS promotes opportunities for the appreciation and free enjoyment of the countryside, with associated benefits to health, by encouraging and supporting access to the countryside. The authority for this derives from powers in the Access to the Countryside Order (NI) 1983 (EHS 2006).

In encouraging access, it is important that the principles of environmental sustainability are followed. Acceptable activities are those that make low demands on natural resources and are likely to

be welcomed by local communities. The EHS Natural Heritage Grants Programme states that priority will be given to facilitating walking projects and the needs of people who have difficulties in using the countryside for recreation purposes, rather than sport-based forms of countryside recreation.

7.4 The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2007-2017 Consultation Draft October 2007

This document outlines the Government’s commitment to sport and physical recreation. The strategy includes the following targets for sport and physical recreation which are particularly relevant to this research:

- By 2017 to deliver an increase of 6% in the number of people who live in areas of high social need who regularly participate in sport and physical recreation.
- By 2017 to deliver an increase of 6% in the number of people with a disability who regularly participate in sport and physical recreation.
- By 2017 to ensure that all planning decisions follow Planning Policy Statement 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation in relation to the provision of spaces for sport and physical recreation.

7.5 Northern Ireland Forestry - A strategy for sustainability and growth (2006)

The public opinion survey recorded that the 3 most popular reasons to support forestry with public money are “to provide places to walk in”, “to provide places for wildlife”, and “to improve the countryside landscape”. One of the key tasks therefore in Forest Service Strategy is to promote the use of forests for informal public recreation.

The Forest Service aims to enter into partnership agreements whereby facilities can be developed within some forests and used exclusively for

specific activities. The aim is to accommodate more active or high value pursuits in support of wider government objectives for sport and tourism, and enhancement of the environment.

8 Objectives of the research

- To identify and examine the key factors inhibiting recreational use of the Northern Ireland countryside by the following under represented groups:
 - people with a disability, more specifically people with limited mobility, people with a hearing impairment, people with a visual impairment, and people with a mental disability
 - the four largest minority ethnic communities living in Northern Ireland: Polish, Chinese, Portuguese and Lithuanian
 - people living in areas (urban and rural) of disadvantage.
- To identify and examine the key factors that land owners and providers of outdoor recreation face when seeking to work with these communities.
- To collate information on current countryside recreation-based initiatives taking place in Northern Ireland, targeting specifically the above mentioned groups.
- To collate a number of selected best practice case studies for inclusion of underrepresented groups in outdoor recreation from across UK.
- To make recommendations on how to address these barriers to participation and how issues raised, as a result of the consultation process, can be addressed, including potential pilot projects.



Introduction

This chapter explains the rationale behind the specific methodology used. It describes the research design, to further clarify why the particular target populations were chosen, and identifies how the data were collected and subsequently analysed.

1 Preparatory research

Desk research was conducted to assess the literature available with regard to countryside recreation and specifically the barriers to participation. The outcomes of this aspect of the research have been detailed in the previous chapter, and in light of this research, it was recognised that groups such as people with disabilities, minority ethnic communities and those living in disadvantaged areas were less likely to participate in countryside recreation activities.

In order to progress the research and agree the methodology, meetings were held initially with representatives of CAAN and NISRA, to discuss the most appropriate methodology to achieve optimum results within the project's constraints.

Proposals from these exploratory meetings were discussed between the research team and the research steering group made up of representatives from EHS, CAAN and SNI. Following this meeting, the research methodology was designed, and is described below.

2 Research design

2.1 Studying underrepresented groups

Quantitative analysis of underrepresented communities through the use of postal questionnaires was discussed with NISRA, but this approach was not considered feasible. It was

impossible to draw a representative, quantitative sample of minority ethnic people and people with disabilities as no list exists from which samples could be drawn. In terms of accessing people living within areas of disadvantage, NISRA confirmed that it was unable to draw a sample, based around such areas. It was therefore agreed that the most appropriate methodology would be to use focus group meetings. The advantage of this qualitative approach is in the value of the information gathered through in-depth discussion around topics, where participants have an opportunity to fully explore attitudes, views and perceptions, allowing investigation that would not be possible through quantitative techniques.

2.1.1 Questionnaire design – focus groups

Focus group topics of discussion were devised and subsequently approved by all members of the steering group and a representative from NISRA. Questions were designed to be open and semi-structured to allow for maximum participation and input from participating individuals.

Questions fell into 5 main topic areas, in order to examine:

- 1) attitudes and perceptions about countryside recreation
- 2) participation behaviours with regard to countryside recreation
- 3) barriers to participation in countryside recreation

- 4) motivating factors to encourage participation in countryside recreation
- 5) accessing information with regard to countryside recreation.

A series of probes was appended to each question to further explore the topics. For focus group topics see Appendix 1.

2.2 Studying the providers of countryside recreation

Accessing providers of countryside recreation proved considerably easier and given it was estimated that 200 providers would be involved in the research, it was agreed to conduct a postal questionnaire. However, in recognising the limitations of this research method, as previously highlighted, it was decided to follow up the questionnaire with a selection of one-to-one interviews.

2.2.1 Questionnaire design – providers

The postal questionnaire was piloted and approved by staff from CAAN, the steering group and NISRA. The questionnaire was structured in design and covered 5 main areas:

- 1) background and type of facility, including activities on offer
- 2) quality of provision for the targeted communities
- 3) policy provision
- 4) organisational barriers to provision for the targeted communities, and
- 5) perceived assistance necessary to overcome the barriers.

For the postal questionnaire, see Appendix 2.

2.2.2 One-to-one interviews

These interviews were designed to be unstructured and to follow on from information

received through individual questionnaires, therefore no formal format was deployed.

3 Conducting the research

To meet the aim and objectives of the research, the following steps were undertaken:

- A series of 12 focus groups were facilitated, four with each of the three target communities.
- Postal questionnaires were distributed to activity and facility providers.
- Follow-up, one-to-one interviews were conducted with 7 providers to further explore problems in providing countryside recreation opportunities for the target communities.
- Each of the focus groups was given an opportunity to plan and organise a visit to a local countryside amenity, to allow further examination of real barriers to participation.
- Field trips were carried out by the research team to explore examples of good practice.

3.1 Setting up the focus groups

It was agreed to hold focus groups in a variety of locations around Northern Ireland and to include both rural and urban communities. In order to gain approval for, and assistance with organising focus group meetings with representatives of the target communities, a number of communications and meetings were held with a variety of organisations and agencies. These organisations are listed in Appendix 3.

3.1.1 People living within areas of disadvantage

To access people living within areas of disadvantage, communities were chosen from the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005 and a total of four groups were selected from the top 20% of the most deprived wards on this list; two from urban and two from rural locations.

One group, accessed via the Greater Shankill Partnership, was located in Belfast, and was chosen to reflect its proximity to the Belfast Hills, whereas the other Belfast group, accessed via Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG), was located further away from obvious countryside recreational opportunities, although convenient to a city park. The two rural communities were accessed via the Regeneration of South Armagh (ROSA) in Crossmaglen and in Killeter, via the Killeter District Development Trust.

3.1.2 Minority ethnic communities

Four focus groups with minority ethnic communities were arranged: one in Belfast with the Polish community, one with the Chinese community in Belfast, one in Portadown, Co. Armagh with a multi-cultural women's group, and another multi-cultural group in Dungiven, Co. Londonderry, both consisting of people from Lithuania, Poland and Portugal. In addition, an electronic questionnaire was completed by a Chinese youth group as it was not possible to arrange a focus group. Interpreters were employed where necessary.

3.1.3 People with a disability

Four focus group meetings were arranged with disabled people: one with people with a learning disability, arranged by MENCAP in Cookstown, Co. Tyrone; one with people who have limited mobility in North Belfast; one with people with visual impairment in RNIB headquarters, Belfast; and one with people with hearing impairment in RNID headquarters, Belfast. This latter group was made up of people from around Northern Ireland who came together specifically for the meeting. An interpreter was employed for this meeting.

3.2 Managing the postal questionnaires

Countryside recreation providers were identified from 6 broad categories of provision:

- Outdoor Activity Providers
- Outdoor Education Centres
- EHS Country Parks
- Rural/Urban Parks
- Governing Bodies of Sport (GBS)
- Other Government Agencies and landowners.

A total of 201 postal questionnaires was distributed and on the final closing date for receiving responses, reminder letters with a further questionnaire were sent to non-responders. A response rate of 34.3% was achieved which exceeds the average response rate for postal questionnaires, reported by NISRA to be 20%.

3.3 Focus group field trips

Organisers of each of the focus groups were emailed with invitations for group members to participate in countryside recreation in their local area. Each group was sent a list of local amenities and a planning sheet to be completed, highlighting any barriers met when trying to access the countryside for recreation. The planning sheet was based on the 'access chain' as described by The Sensory Trust (2006), to further explore actual barriers for specific communities. Transport and entry costs were offered. For the invitation, the list of suggested amenities and the planning sheet, see Appendix 4.

Despite verbal enthusiasm for such an opportunity during focus group discussions, only one group took part in this element of the research. This may be partly due to the time of year, including winter weather conditions and the fact that some amenities were working on winter schedules.

3.4 One-to-one interviews

Seven providers who had responded to the questionnaires were chosen to represent each category of provider, with the exception of the GBS, who argued that they were not providers but bodies set up to administer the individual sport. As the 'Outdoor Activity Providers' was a significantly larger group than the other categories, three interviews were conducted with representatives from this group. Open discussions around the main topics were held and responses recorded by hand.

3.5 Examples of good practice

During the one-to-one interviews it was evident that three of the interviewees were describing examples of good practice in providing countryside recreation for underrepresented groups. These have been included with three other case studies which are described in Chapter 5. In addition, the research team attended a seminar, organised by the Countryside Recreation Network, entitled 'Accessible Outdoor Environments for All: Shared Understanding' in Sheffield in November 2007, and took the opportunity to meet and discuss with other providers, models of good practice from England, Scotland and Wales.

4 Data Analysis

4.1 Focus Groups

Where possible, focus group proceedings were recorded on a digital sound recorder, with permission from the participants, and in addition, responses were recorded by hand on a pre-prepared template. Written records and audio tapes of the meetings were examined under the five topic areas and the findings are described in Chapter 3.

4.2 Postal questionnaires

Data from the postal questionnaires were collated and analysed using Microsoft Excel, including cross tabulations to examine responses by sub groups of the research population. Results are described in Chapter 4

4.3 Conclusions

The research design for this study involved both qualitative and quantitative methods, including focus group discussions, a postal questionnaire, an electronic questionnaire, individual interviews and field trips by the research team and a focus group.

Groups and individuals from a wide variety of locations throughout Northern Ireland were included in the research design to ensure optimum understanding of the issues surrounding barriers to participation in countryside recreation. Just under 200 people took part in the research and their views have been carefully recorded and analysed. Results are described in the following chapters.



Focus Groups - Introduction

A series of 12 focus groups was organised from across Northern Ireland, including members of each of the targeted communities as described in Chapter 1. The groups included both men and women from a wide range of ages from 18 to 70. Results from all 4 groups of people living within areas of disadvantage are described together, to allow for comparisons between and within specific locations as well as social and environmental circumstances. This was also the case when describing results from groups of people from minority ethnic communities; however, results from focus groups held with people with a disability have been separated into 4 main categories, as each group expressed very different barriers specific to their disability. Results from each of the focus groups are described below. See Appendix 1 for focus groups topics.

1 People living within areas of disadvantage

To examine the perceived barriers to participation in countryside recreation among people living within areas of disadvantage, four areas were chosen from the top 20% of the most deprived wards according to the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005. Each area was chosen as reported in Chapter 2, to reflect different environmental and social factors, in order to examine any barriers that may be specific to location. There was a wide range of ages within each group from 18 - 70 years. Results are described in line with the main topic areas discussed.

1.1 Perceptions and attitudes to countryside recreation

Participants in all four focus groups had a good knowledge of what is meant by countryside recreation and mentioned a wide range of activities including walking, outdoor pursuits, canoeing, horse riding, mountain walking, fishing, paragliding, bouldering and shooting. They also

mentioned the environment in which countryside recreation can take place, such as parks and farmlands. One young female who had studied on a Leisure and Tourism course commented that countryside recreation was "activities on land, on the sea or in the air."

Most group members were very positive about the benefits of taking part in countryside recreation, and all four groups mentioned the importance of enjoying the local habitat, the scenery, the birds and the plants. One Belfast-based male said it was good for "kids, in summer, to run wild, free from the traffic, to see other bits of the country and animals in their natural habitat." Another city dweller stressed the benefit of getting "out of the house; quietness; a day away." One female based in a rural location said it was "a time to think, to clear the head, to pray and reflect." The value of maintaining local historical walks was an important benefit for members of one of the groups living in a rural location.

Other benefits reported by all the groups were:

- "It's good for my health"
- "Helps get me fit"
- "Helps relieve stress"

- "Social aspect – a chance to meet people and make friends"
- "To challenge myself"
- "Educational opportunity, to learn about the environment"

Benefits that were mentioned specifically by the city-based groups were:

- "Helps young people with team building, during residential"
- "It's good for self esteem and learning new skills"
- "Feel better about yourself"
- "It is a good hobby"

On the other hand, in common with the general population, some of the younger group members, living in the city, expressed the view that they would rather do other things, such as kick a football or use computers.

1.2 Participation levels

All group members living within rural areas reported taking part in countryside recreation and on a regular basis, either every day or every weekend. Walking was the most popular activity and this was done either in a park or on local roads. Conversely, there was a mixed response to activity levels from those living in the city, with approximately half of each group stating that they did not take part in countryside recreation. Most of the women in the groups based in the city were less enthusiastic about becoming involved than the men. Group members from the city were more irregular in their participation behaviours, with some young people only taking part during organised residential trips. One group member from a rural location said he enjoyed taking part alone, while all other members, whether from the rural locations or the city said that they preferred to take part with family or friends.

1.3 Planning considerations

When deciding to take part in countryside recreation a variety of planning issues was discussed and these varied according to age, gender and location. One group, based in a rural location, commented on the lack of a regular bus service, therefore transport was top of the list of considerations when planning activity outside the local area, particularly for those people who did not have access to a car. Members of this group also made the point that planning the route for a walk was important as some of the local roads do not have footpaths and are "often covered with dog dirt, making them hazardous and unpleasant to walk on." One older female in this group said that she would not go out, as she was "terrified of dogs." "Cost" was another planning consideration; one younger member of the group remarked that "visiting some facilities with a family can be an expensive outing, taking into consideration the cost of entrance fees and bus tickets".

On the other hand, members of the other group that was based in a rural location commented that they had countryside facilities available on their doorstep and therefore transport was not a planning consideration, unless travelling outside the immediate vicinity. This group also made the point that being close to facilities allows for casual participation, "when the opportunity arises, without any need to plan." However, it was noted that other facilities and activities in the locality that do require planning and special equipment were geared towards tourists, rather than locals.

Personal safety, especially for female group members, was an important planning factor for both groups based in a rural location, and young females in one of the city-based groups made reference to the fact that they were "put off using the local hills and parks because of the presence of hoodies, gangs of young thugs, boozing and lighting fires". They made the point that when

planning a trip, it would be important to tell people where you are going and when you intend to return.

Other planning issues discussed included:

- the availability of toilets, changing facilities, a café and seats
- what clothes and footwear to wear
- need to shop around for cost
- knowing what to expect from previous experience
- what activities are available for children
- car parking
- opening and closing times
- availability of a leader
- availability of specialist clothes and equipment
- time available.

1.4 Barriers to using the countryside for recreation

A minority of the city-based young people were not interested in taking part in countryside recreation, listing a lack of motivation and other distractions such as watching television or playing computer games as barriers to becoming involved. All other group members, whether from a city or rural location, expressed an interest in taking part in countryside recreation; indeed, one older, city-based female said that even though she has limited mobility and cannot walk too far, she still goes for short walks.

As with the general population, lack of time was reported as being a major barrier for group members in each location, especially those in employment or with young families. Another obstacle, common to all groups, was the weather; countryside recreation is seen as a fair weather activity for most people. Lack of information and awareness of what is available was also seen as one of the main impediments for all groups, as was the cost of buying or hiring specialist equipment for some countryside activities.

1.4.1 Barriers specific to people living within a city location

Vandalism in the local hills was a major barrier for some younger females in Belfast. This issue was also linked to concerns for personal safety as a barrier for this group. Others associated countryside recreation with having to travel quite far from home and as such, reported that lack of transport was a barrier.

Some female group members remarked that “they were loathe to leave their area”, and this was borne out by one of the community leaders who mentioned that when he organised a trip across the city, the women “couldn’t wait to get back to their own area.” One male member remarked that there was “a need to break down barriers between different groups of people; Catholics; Protestants; people with a disability; people from minority ethnic; to take people out of their comfort zone, and get them all interacting.”

1.4.2 Barriers specific to people living within a rural location

Both groups based in a rural location complained that information was difficult to access as local Tourist Information Centres were “rarely open, even in summer.” Members of these groups also felt that poorly maintained paths, signs and facilities such as toilets were all barriers to participation. However, despite the availability of facilities within the immediate area for one of the groups, members commented that lack of accessible information on what is available and poor signage meant that local people did not make good use of these amenities.

As previously mentioned, some older women in a rural location complained about the presence of unleashed dogs. They also highlighted the issue of dog fouling as a major impediment to taking part.

The most significant barriers for these groups were:

- lack of time
- lack of accessible information
- lack of appropriate signage (rural locations)
- the weather
- personal safety/security (mainly women)
- country smells (younger women)
- vandalism (younger women)
- transport issues
- cost of hiring specialist equipment.

1.5 Encouragement to take part

There were some encouraging factors proposed by all the groups and these included:

- **The availability of a trained leader**
For all four focus groups, the availability of a leader who could organise activities, transport and group outings was seen as a major encouraging factor for taking part in countryside recreation. Everyone agreed that having activities organised in the local area would encourage participation, as it was felt that activities that fit easily into the daily routine could help address the ‘lack of time’ barrier. The benefit of locally organised activities was highlighted by one female from a rural location who felt this would help her overcome a lack of confidence to do things alone.
- **The availability of appropriate information**
Members of all groups raised ‘information’ as a priority in encouraging participation, pointing out that raising awareness of what is available, through appropriate, simple and easily accessible information would be a major factor in encouraging people to take part. Allied to the request for better information was the issue of improved signage, both going to and within some facilities. Some group members emphasised the need to have signs properly maintained.
- **‘Come and try it’ activities**
One group from a rural location felt that many

people do not participate through lack of knowledge about the range of countryside activities available locally. One solution would be to offer ‘come and try it’ events for established activities, to try to break down barriers.

- **Transport**
One of the groups living in a rural location felt that improved access to public transport, in terms of regularity and choice of destination would encourage participation. However, they admitted that the cost effectiveness for the bus company was an issue when weighed against the number of potential users of the service. One male asked the question “would people use the extra service if it was available?” Nevertheless, transport remains a major impediment for people living in rural areas to access a range of activities, including countryside recreation. One city-based male referred to the cost of providing transport for organised trips and highlighted the problem of attracting funding.
- **Family focused facilities**
Group members from all four groups commented on the need for better, family focused facilities and activities linking these to the necessity for well maintained, clean and readily accessible toilet accommodation.
- **Well maintained paths**
One city-based female with limited mobility pointed out the need for properly maintained paths and walkways, especially for people using wheelchairs or pushing baby buggies. She proposed a wider availability of power scooters along with supervisors and trainers available to avoid their misuse.
- **Enjoyability factor**
This was a particularly important motivation for some older females in a group based in a rural location. They felt that personal choice was very important for enjoyment and inner wellbeing and this would be further enhanced by lovely scenery and good weather.

1.6 Activities of interest

Participants within all four groups showed great enthusiasm for taking part in a wide range of activities including walking, hill walking, rambling, cycling, fishing, horse riding, archery, orienteering, high ropes course, abseiling, canoeing and kayaking. Some of the younger group members also wanted to try pier jumping, paint balling, roller blading, rock climbing, bouldering, caving and bungee jumping while older members of the groups preferred less vigorous pursuits such as forest walks, bird watching, walking round a nature reserve, model planes and clay pigeon shooting.

All group members said they would be prepared to take part in organised activities, provided that correct equipment was available and appropriately accessible for people with disabilities.

1.7 Access to information

A wide range of mediums for accessing information was available depending on location. The most popular way of gaining information for all groups was 'word of mouth', particularly through their own community centres. The internet was also popular; however, some rural locations have difficulty accessing broadband. Those living in rural locations get information via the rural support network and their Countryside Officer, as well as local newspapers and their place of worship.

In addition to 'word of mouth' and the internet, city based groups reported accessing information through the City Council and the Tourist Board. Some also used specialist journals, local newspapers and the TV or radio.

1.8 Other comments

One city-based group felt that countryside recreation should be accessible for all, including new immigrants to Northern Ireland. They would like to see information in different languages to

encourage people from minority ethnic communities to take part. Other comments were:

- "Get rid of the midges and I might get involved" (young female)
- "I would like to jump out of a plane with an instructor" (older female)
- "Insurance is an issue for providing facilities"
- "There's a lack of awareness of what is on your own doorstep"
- "There's a big issue around transport into the countryside"
- "Community development is having an impact on local residents who are well aware of the benefits and opportunities" (city based community leader).

2 People from Minority Ethnic Communities

A series of four focus groups was held with people from minority ethnic communities; Polish, Chinese, Portuguese and Lithuanian. The Chinese group was made up of people in the 50+ age range, therefore, to get a wider perspective on the issues, an electronic questionnaire was also completed by a group of young Chinese people. As many of the issues and barriers discussed at the focus group meetings were common to all participants, comments from each group have not been reported individually, except where there were obvious differences. These were focused mainly on differences associated with living in an urban or rural location.

2.1 Perceptions and attitudes to Countryside Recreation

Most of the participants from these groups had a very good understanding of the meaning of countryside recreation. The Polish and Lithuanian groups were keen to point out that there is a strong culture of walking in their country, much more so than in Northern Ireland. Group members quoted activities such as cycling, walking, canoeing and

activities undertaken outdoors with the family; however, they pointed out that activities in the air or on water are too expensive.

Features of the countryside were also mentioned, such as lakes, rivers, the Mourne Mountains, Cavehill, Giant's Causeway and Carrick-a-Rede, indicating that most of the participants had read about local tourist spots. Indeed some had visited a number of these locations.

The only group members that did not show a good level of understanding about countryside recreation were the older Chinese people who reported that they rarely use these amenities. On the other hand, the younger Chinese people, who have mainly assimilated into the local society, and many of whom have been born in Northern Ireland, have very well informed views of countryside recreation. Many have participated in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and are volunteers within The National Trust, in the Mourne Mountains and Divis and Black Mountain. They have taken part in Outward Bound programmes and visited the Lake District.

The benefits of taking part in countryside recreation were listed as:

- "It's good for my health, both mental and physical"
- "Helps me get fit"
- "To get a breath of fresh air"
- "To be with friends and socialise"
- "To do something different"
- "To challenge myself"
- "Helps relieve stress"
- "To see famous places"
- "Happiness"
- "To lose weight"

On the other hand, the older Chinese group of people expressed the opinion that they were too old to take part in exercise. The weather was not good and they were "better off indoors".

They commented that they had no transportation and that they cannot communicate; however, they would be prepared to take part in a day trip, if transport was provided. They would like to swim if they were able to get there, and some also said they would like to make friends with local people, but language was a barrier.

2.2 Participation levels

As with the general population, some people reported that they participated in countryside recreation, mainly walking in local parks with friends and family. However, two Polish men, living in Belfast, reported that they had hired a car with friends to visit a paint balling facility and also to visit local tourist attractions such as the Giant's Causeway. Conversely, the group living in Dungiven commented that whereas they walked a lot when in their homeland, there was nowhere to go around Dungiven.

Although the older Chinese people were mainly negative about the benefits of countryside recreation, half the group (8 people) admitted to walking in the local park, in fact they acknowledged that they walk there every morning. However, they reported being "bored" with the same routine and would love to try something new, but claimed that they did not know where to go.

2.3 Planning Considerations

When planning to visit the countryside for recreation, the biggest factor for every participant was access to public transport: both the availability and the cost. This was even worse in the rural areas, where transport is less frequent and options for destinations are greatly reduced. Those group members from Poland, Portugal and Lithuania are either working long hours, or are restricted by childcare, having no extended family support system. As a result, they are limited to getting

involved at weekends, in between essential household chores and shopping. It was reported that weekend bus services are even less frequent than during the week, so it is understandable that participation levels are reported to be low, despite an enthusiasm to take part. One person commented that “compared to Poland, Northern Ireland doesn’t have a public transport system”. With reference to childcare, an essential element to be considered when planning is the availability of family friendly facilities and activities, including the cost.

Two other factors mentioned, that require consideration when deciding to visit the countryside were the availability of good information, preferably in their own language, and safety factors, such as whether the facility is free from young people drinking, using drugs and being generally anti-social.

The people who were interviewed in these focus groups appeared to have low levels of participation. There was an apparent seasonal issue however, with some claiming to participate more regularly in summer. Those who do participate prefer to be with friends or family, although there was a widely expressed wish to link with people from Northern Ireland. The reported barriers to participation are detailed below.

2.4 Barriers to using the countryside for recreation

Out of all the focus group members from minority ethnic communities (35 people, excluding the responses from the young Chinese people), only two people said that they were not interested in taking part in countryside recreation. However, many barriers were reported and these included:

- **“I haven’t the time”**

Polish participants commented that normal working hours in Poland are from 7.00am until 3.00pm, allowing for activity after work during daylight hours. In Northern Ireland, working

hours continue until after dark in the winter and this, combined with cold weather is a major disincentive to taking part. As already mentioned, any spare time is spent in childcare or family chores. One person commented “all we do is work, work, work and look after children”.

- **“I don’t know where to go or what there is to do”**

This was a barrier for most people, especially those living in more rural areas. Only the Polish group living in Belfast had a reasonable knowledge of where to go, or how to access the information through the Belfast Welcome Centre. This centre caters specifically for Polish people.

- **“I don’t know where to find information that I understand”**

This highlighted a major issue for most participants; that of language. Whereas group members who came from European destinations are trying to learn English, the older Chinese people had very limited understanding of the language and expressed the opinion that they were too old to learn English.

- **“I have no one to go with; I live too far out of the way and I have no transport.”**

The issue of transport was raised time and again by most participants as being a major barrier to participation, not only for rurally located members but also the Chinese people living in central Belfast. There appears to be a nervousness that because of the language barrier, they might get lost. This is exacerbated when travelling alone.

- **“I don’t feel welcome”**

Perhaps surprisingly only two people reported feeling uncomfortable and that was because they could not communicate. This did not appear to be a factor for most people in these focus groups, whether living in an urban or rural location. In fact some expressed surprise at being asked the question, commenting that “people are very friendly” and “I feel very welcome”.

The most significant barriers, most frequently expressed were:

- lack of time
- the language barrier, restricting access to information and integrating into local society
- transport, including choice of destinations, regularity and cost
- less significant barriers were the Northern Irish weather and lack of company.

2.5 Encouragement to take part

- **Availability of a properly trained leader**

All respondents in each of the focus groups expressed the opinion that a properly trained leader who could speak their language, would be the single most important factor in encouraging them to take part in countryside recreation. They would prefer activities to be organised as this would help minimise the problems of not knowing where to go and not having company. The group of Chinese people said that a leader would help them to be more confident to get out and about. All groups expressed the wish that these activities should be multi-cultural, as there were strong feelings that they would like to get to know local people. The younger women in particular emphasised that activities should be family focused to include children.

- **Accessible and regular transport**

Accessible and regular public transport would be an encouraging factor, particularly if information regarding time tables and destinations was in their mother tongue. This would be of particular benefit on bus routes to tourist spots. One suggestion from a person living in a rural location was the development of more cycle lanes and the opportunity to hire bicycles, while the group of Chinese people said the availability of power scooters would be of benefit.

2.6 Activities of interest

As with the general population, participants from minority ethnic communities were interested in a wide variety of activities. While older group members expressed a wish to take part in less vigorous activities, such as walking in the fresh air, rambling and viewing the plants and trees, younger people showed an interest in the whole range of countryside activities, whether on land, sea or air. However, they did point out that these wishes were mainly aspirational as some activities, especially water and air activities are too expensive.

When asked if they would be willing to go on a trip to the countryside to take part in a recreational activity, all said yes; including 100% of the group of older Chinese people, who had expressed reluctance to become involved at the beginning of the meeting. Those who work said that any trip would have to take place at the weekend.

2.7 Access to information

A common thread ran through the responses to the question “what is the most convenient outlet for you to access information?” Most people from minority ethnic communities obtain information by word of mouth, from their own community group centre or the internet. The only group that does not have access to the internet thus far is the group of older Chinese people, however, that will happen in the near future.

Other means of accessing information are through specialist newspapers and local shops set up by members of the minority ethnic community. Younger members of the groups also get information at school.

2.8 Other comments

A Portuguese woman commented “I would love to do things that involve the whole family, maybe with other families, especially in the summer. As a mother, it is impossible to go alone and childcare is too expensive.”

Another suggestion made was that it would “be good to organise multi-cultural events, maybe introduce an element of competition”

One Chinese man said “it would be easy if we could speak the language. Maybe we could have a leader and some funding to organise transport to take a trip. There’s no funding”

3 People with disabilities

Four groups of people with disabilities were interviewed in a focus group setting; people with a learning disability, people with limited mobility, people with a visual impairment and people with a hearing impairment. Each group reported very specific barriers to participation in countryside recreation and also suggested possible solutions to the barriers. These are discussed in the final chapter of the report. The results of the discussions are recorded as follows:

3.1 People with a learning disability

A group of young men and women from a variety of destinations throughout the Northern Health Board area were brought together in Cookstown, Co. Tyrone, by MENCAP NI.

3.1.1 Perceptions and attitudes to countryside recreation

The first part of the discussion was designed to examine perceptions and attitudes towards countryside recreation and as the group had been

on an organised trip to an outdoor pursuits centre participants were very aware of the meaning of ‘countryside recreation’, quoting activities such as walking, cycling, hiking, mountaineering, fishing, horse riding, abseiling, pier jumping, archery, camping and rock climbing. They also mentioned the scenery and seeing cattle.

When asked to express their feelings about the benefits of taking part in countryside recreation, they reported having thoroughly enjoyed their experience at the outdoor pursuits centre and would “love to repeat it”. The majority felt that taking part in such activities would help them to get more exercise and become stronger. Building confidence along with the ability to interact with others was also reported as a benefit, as was the opportunity to experience something different and to take on a challenge. One participant said it gave her the chance to “just go for it”.

Other benefits recorded were:

- “To improve health”
- “To get fit”
- “A chance to get away from it all”
- “A chance to meet and make friends”
- “To see the plants and trees”
- “To help relieve stress”

3.1.2 Participation levels

None of the participants ever takes part in countryside recreation on an individual or casual basis. Access to the countryside for recreation is dependent on others, owing to transport difficulties, although one male claimed that he had access to a car.

All group members reported that they only go on organised trips, however, one female stated that she had tried horse riding, but was “put off by the attitude of the leader”. She recalled that she was treated as “special” and not allowed to do what the others were doing. She acknowledged that there were health and safety issues but would have

preferred the leader to have been “more discreet”.

3.1.3 Planning considerations

In answer to the question ‘What things do you think about when deciding to visit the countryside?’, the most important factor for all the participants was “safety”, and this response was linked to “previous experience”, indicating a sense of security in things familiar. “The right equipment” and “well organised and varied activities” were also very important factors and perhaps in light of the horse riding experience, the same female said it would be important that the activities and facilities should be “accessible for all”.

3.1.4 Barriers to using the countryside for recreation

Participants expressed the opinion that it was often the parents of people with a learning disability who created barriers to participation. Some parents are “nervous, in case I get lost or injured”, and as a result, parents may refuse consent for the disabled person to participate.

One female commented that “other people worry more than me”. However, they all agreed that they each had different levels of dependency, as well as a fear of new places and a fear of the unknown. One male said that he needed time to learn directions and all acknowledged that they would need considerable support to enable them to organise and plan visits to the countryside. Nevertheless, they would appreciate being given the chance to try.

Lack of available transport is a major issue for this group of people, linked to dependence on others to accompany them, particularly to new places. One member of the group pointed out that some people with a learning disability do not look disabled and the general public may misunderstand their needs. As with the general population, motivation was also a barrier and taking

part in any physical activity on a regular basis was not a priority for some members of the group.

The final, major barrier which initiated much discussion was the lack of accessible, uncomplicated, clear information in a format that is easily understood, particularly for those with reading difficulties. The group had very good ideas on how this might be addressed and these are included in the recommendations in the final chapter.

The three most relevant and important barriers reported were: “I might get lost and would have difficulty explaining where I was, over the phone”; “We need information in simple terms”; “Carers and others are apprehensive and think we can’t do it. They need to see the ability, not the disability”.

3.1.5 Encouragement to take part

As already reported, people with a learning disability are largely dependent on others to accompany them to facilities for countryside recreation, therefore the most important factors would be firstly, a leader who has had appropriate training in working with people who have a learning disability and understands their needs and abilities and secondly, organised activities that provide transport from their own front door, particularly within a group situation. They did recognise that this would create funding problems, but suggested that funding opportunities should be investigated on a local basis, to allow groups to organise trips.

Other encouraging factors expressed were:

- simple, understandable information
- the availability of specialist equipment
- family activities and facilities
- better awareness amongst facility staff of the needs and abilities of people with a learning disability.

3.1.6 Activities of interest

Participants within the group showed great enthusiasm for taking part in a wide range of activities: walking, hill walking, cycling, fishing, horse riding, archery, orienteering with an accessible map, high ropes course and water skiing. They were quite prepared to be challenged and to try any new activity as long as it was well organised and proper equipment was available. Some members of the group had particularly enjoyed taking part in pier jumping and abseiling on their trip to the outdoor pursuits centre.

3.1.7 Access to information

The most popular way of gaining information on activities was by word of mouth, particularly through their own community groups. However, some said that they would get information through the internet, from tourist information and leisure centres.

3.1.8 Other comments

One female within the group wanted to highlight the problems of access for people with multiple disabilities and the lack of appropriate facilities to meet their needs, for example adults who have special toileting needs. She commented that this problem affects lots of people and their families and creates barriers to accessing countryside facilities for many people.

3.2 People with limited mobility

A group of men and women with a range of ages was brought together by Face: Inclusion Matters, an organisation which works for inclusion of young people with and without a disability in our society. All participants in the group had limited mobility; some were wheelchair users, while others were dependent on crutches.

3.2.1 Perceptions and attitudes to countryside recreation

During the first part of the discussion into perceptions and attitudes to countryside recreation, participants appeared to be rather limited in their knowledge of what was meant by 'countryside recreation'. They mentioned activities such as clay pigeon shooting, cross country running, fishing and walking, but did not realise the extent of activities available. One remarked that it was "different from the city, less noisy".

When asked what benefits would accrue from taking part in countryside activity they said it would be quieter and help them to relax, while improving mental wellbeing. Some felt that it would help them to challenge themselves and learn new things while promoting integration with new friends. Some of the group said it would be an opportunity to see the plants, trees, water, mountains and wide open spaces. On the other hand, one member of the group commented that "it seems a far away place – too far for me" and another said that his experience of the countryside was to "drive there and put the window down".

Other positive benefits reported were:

- "It's good for my health, depending on my fitness"
- "A chance to get away from it all"
- "To get out of the house and get a breath of fresh air"

3.2.2 Participation levels

As with the general population, some group members stated that they visited the countryside for recreation while others did not. For those who did choose to take part in countryside recreation, the main considerations when planning a trip were:

- appropriate access

- accessible and regular public transport, with

- drivers who understand the needs of people with limited mobility
- accessible car parking
- safety and personal security
- cost
- availability of support
- availability of accessible bed and breakfast accommodation.

The weather has a major impact on usage of the countryside which group members rarely visited, particularly in winter. Most participants said that they would go with family or friends; however, two of the group preferred to go to the countryside alone.

3.2.3 Barriers to using the countryside for recreation

The barriers to participation, as reported by this group, were mainly to do with accessibility. The physical accessibility of facilities was a major factor, including the condition of paths with poor surfaces and physical barriers such as gates and stiles. Under this category weather conditions were also mentioned, as they can have an impact on the state of the paths. Accessibility was also a factor in terms of car parking, toilets and café facilities, as well as appropriate information on the provision of such facilities.

Accessible public transport can often create problems for people with limited mobility and one member of the group reported that bus drivers do not always allow sufficient time for people using crutches either to enter the bus or be properly seated before driving off. Group members who were wheelchair users complained that often the ramps on buses were broken and they were left waiting for the next bus. This is a particularly important factor in rural locations where buses can be very irregular.

Another category of barriers related to the attitudes and perceptions of the general public towards people with limited mobility.

The following comments were made:

- "Some people perceive that disabled people shouldn't be in the country"
- "We're used to being treated badly, so we have more perseverance".

The three biggest barriers to taking part, as reported by this group, were:

- the condition of the paths, including access, gates and stiles
- the appropriateness of facilities, including seats, car parking, toilets etc.
- the availability of someone to accompany and support the disabled person.

3.2.4 Encouragement to take part

The most important factor that would encourage this group to take part in countryside recreation was a trained leader who could take the person from their own front door to join a group of people in some organised activities.

Another encouraging factor would be regular, accessible public transport that goes to popular countryside destinations.

Addressing the barriers of accessibility, information and state of the paths would also help to encourage participation, as would appropriate information about suitable facilities, particularly for newly disabled people. Members also said that they would like better signage that could alert them to problems they might encounter, such as blocked paths. One suggestion made was that facilities should be 'charter marked'.

Group members who were aware of the Disabled Ramblers Association suggested that awareness of this organisation should be raised through the

media and Local Councils, to encourage more people to join. There was also a suggestion that groups could advertise their activities to help support those who are on their own.

One final comment was made regarding encouraging factors: "A mobile phone is a must".

3.2.5 Activities of interest

A variety of interests was expressed in terms of activities, such as rambling, cycling, fishing, archery and boules, in fact any activity with trained leaders and proper equipment. Group members did make the point that organised activities with trained leaders help to take away the fear. They also commented that facilities such as toilets should be appropriately sited for disabled people and "not at the top of a hill". Under these conditions, members of the group would be happy to take part in countryside activities.

3.2.6 Access to information

Word of mouth was the most popular way to receive information about activities through carers and social workers, closely followed by the internet and radio/TV. Others accessed information through local papers and Leisure Centres.

3.2.7 Other comments

Members of the group felt very strongly that there should be proper advocates for disability, showing the positive side and the abilities of those with limited mobility. They would like the whole media to be involved to push for disability rights.

In terms of access to the countryside for recreation, they would like to see better awareness training for bus drivers, to appreciate the difficulties of disabled people using public transport. They also asked that people who use both manual and electric scooters and those who use wheelchairs

should test facilities and mark them with a star system. Those hiring out scooters need to have training and be able to train people in their use. One final comment was: "The definition of accessible needs to be looked at – some so called disabled taxis are too high".

3.3 People with visual impairment

A group of visually impaired people was brought together through RNIB. One participant joined the discussion by conference phone and each had varying levels of impairment. RNIB's vision is of a world in which blind and partially sighted people enjoy the same rights, freedom, responsibilities and quality of life as people who are fully sighted. "Our mission is to challenge blindness by empowering people who are blind or partially sighted, removing the barriers they face and helping to prevent blindness". RNIB offers information, advice and support to over two million people with sight loss throughout the UK.

3.3.1 Perceptions and attitudes to countryside recreation

Members of this group had a good perception of the meaning of countryside recreation and mentioned activities such as walking, horse riding, fishing, golf, go-karts, off road driving, rowing on a lake, or "any activity that's non-competitive". They also associated it with rural areas.

When asked to list the possible benefits of taking part in countryside activity, there were mixed responses with some mentioning not only the benefits, but also the problems. For example, one mentioned that it would relieve stress, however another commented "not if you get lost!" Another thought it could be "a confidence boost, but only if you know it's going to work". In general, it was agreed that there were positive benefits, including "it's an opportunity to socialise" and "something to

look forward to".

Other benefits expressed were:

- "It's good for my health"
- "To get out of the house and get a breath of fresh air"
- "To experience the environment, especially if you live in the town"
- "Just to enjoy myself".

3.3.2 Participation levels

Most of the members of the group have taken part in countryside activities, with tandem cycling and walking being most popular. For those who do take part, the main planning issues centred on the availability of public transport and support personnel. People with severe visual impairment cannot join in these activities unless they have a sighted guide, therefore, a lot of preparation is necessary to investigate whether these issues can be addressed. The availability of accessible toilets is also an issue, as is the state of the path, including possible obstacles. If visually impaired people decide to visit an activity centre, they need to know that the staff members are appropriately trained to help them enjoy the experience.

As with the general population, levels of activity in countryside recreation vary from person to person. However, as mentioned, most people with a severe visual impairment cannot go alone, they therefore either go with their guide dog or a sighted friend.

3.3.3 Barriers to using the countryside for recreation

There was a variety of responses to the question "what stops you using the countryside for recreation?" One respondent valued her independence and was prepared to use the internet or tourist information to find out details of places to go and things to do. However, others expressed some concerns over their ability to use

the countryside, stating that they were limited by public transport, particularly at weekends, when there is a restricted service. Other barriers were:

- no street lighting
- footpaths not regular, uneven
- signage and leaflets are no use – I'd rather ring and ask
- colour coded paths would be useful for the sighted supporters
- if you have never heard of a place you wouldn't want to go there
- it takes a lot of forward planning
- often there are no bins to dispose of the guide dog's waste, or water stations for them to drink.

In terms of the uneven paths, one group member declared that "we don't want someone to manicure the Glens of Antrim, but it would be nice to have decent paths".

The three most significant barriers for this group of visually impaired people were:

- not belonging to a group which could supply sighted support on a regular basis. This requires patience to wait until the circumstances are right
- appropriate transport
- staff awareness.

3.3.4 Encouragement to take part

The most important factor for encouraging this group of people to take part would be the availability of a properly trained leader to organise activities, including transport. There should be a team of people to lead and guide, all appropriately trained. It was said that activities can be made more interesting by leaders who can describe places and features of interest. It would also be useful to have audio tapes when touring the facility, particularly in major tourist spots.

Information in a variety of formats should not only be available, but publicised, so that people know it exists. It was reported that Braille is not widely

used; however, large print is particularly useful both for leaflets and on the web.

Other encouraging factors reported were:

- water stations for guide dogs and bins for their waste
- activities arranged on a local basis with courtesy buses available from door to door
- tactile maps
- activities arranged with sighted people, to widen opportunities to make friends.
- to have a standing arrangement with a Braille printer to react to requests for information to be made available in that format.

3.3.5 Activities of interest

This group of visually impaired people showed enthusiasm for taking part in a wide range of countryside activities including walking, hill walking, tandem cycling, fishing, horse riding, archery and orienteering. Some also expressed an interest in taking part in more challenging activities, in particular, a high ropes course, water sports (such as canoeing and kayaking), off road driving, gliding and both water and snow skiing.

When asked if they would join in an organised day of activity, all members of the group agreed that they would like to take part.

3.3.6 Access to information

For this group, a very important channel for information gathering is the monthly magazine produced by the RNIB; this is followed by the internet. Advice from the group was that it is easier to design websites to be inclusive initially, rather than retrospectively.

Other means of gathering information were:

- word of mouth
- tourist information; ring and ask for the information in a chosen format, however, this can sometimes be dependent on the attitude of

- the receptionist
- network of talking newspapers.

3.4 People with a hearing impairment

A group of people from around the Province were brought together in Belfast, by the RNID. The RNID reports that there are “nine million deaf and hard of hearing people throughout the UK”, and their vision is ‘a world where deafness and hearing loss are not barriers to opportunity and fulfilment. We aim to achieve this vision by campaigning and lobbying vigorously, by raising awareness of deafness and hearing loss, by providing services and support, and through social, medical and technical research.’

3.4.1 Perceptions and attitudes to countryside recreation

Working through an interpreter, members of the group appeared to associate countryside recreation with visits to tourist spots, The National Trust properties, such as Mount Stewart, visiting a residential home in Holland, going to the beach to swim and do exercises. One male talked about a camping trip and mentioned that although it was raining he “felt great, it didn’t matter about the rain.” One female was involved with a group of elderly people with hearing impairment and she told how they would visit places of interest when they had access to an interpreter. Group members also associated countryside recreation with “rural areas”.

When asked to list the possible benefits they might gain by taking part in countryside recreation, many negative comments were made initially and these will be reported under 3.4.3. Positive benefits were then discussed and a major factor, agreed by everyone, was “It helps relieve stress”. Another benefit, again agreed by all participants, was the positive impact on health, both mental and physical. While most members felt countryside recreation was a good opportunity to meet and be with friends, one male

commented that he enjoyed fishing, when he could be alone. Other benefits listed were:

- “Enjoy seeing the plants and trees”
- “It’s an opportunity to walk the dog”
- “I do metal detecting and it’s good to see the landscape”
- “Really enjoyed caravanning when there was a club for deaf people. There’s no club anymore”.

3.4.2 Participation levels

All group members reported their participation in countryside recreation, but as with the general population, some take part on a regular basis while others are occasional participants. Most commented that “it depends on the weather”, or “if an interpreter is available”.

A great deal of emphasis was placed on the availability of an interpreter when deciding to take part in countryside recreation, particularly visiting places of interest, when an interpreter could add so much to the participant’s enjoyment of the experience.

As with the general population, other planning issues apply when deciding on a countryside activity. These include: type of footwear, clothes, lunch, water, necessity to book, opening times, availability of toilets and café, cost and availability of information on site.

One male reported that he had gone to a well known, popular facility to find that the toilets were only open in summer, even though the facility itself is open all year. All group members admitted that forward planning was essential in order to get the most out of any countryside activity.

3.4.3 Barriers to using the countryside for recreation

Everyone in the group agreed that the major barrier to taking part in countryside recreation was “language”. Not being able to converse with providers is a major barrier, leading on occasions

to misunderstanding when the person with hearing impairment is trying to get information. One female commented that some service providers treat her “as if I was invisible”. All group members confirmed that they would “really like to go places, but we don’t go because we know there is no interpreter available.”

One other female pleaded that “as English is a deaf person’s second language, please let us have information leaflets in simple, plain English.” This includes information panels and signs at facilities, as well as information at bus stations. People with hearing impairment cannot hear announcements at bus stations and are therefore dependent on good visual information.

The lack of awareness of the problems facing people with a hearing impairment, by those providers charged with producing information, leads to frustration when trying to find out where to go and what to do. One of the group commented; “hearing people can pick up information by word of mouth; this is not an option for people who are deaf”.

Casual transference of information by word of mouth, leading to opportunistic participation is out of reach for people with a hearing impairment. They would like to have access to programmes of activities, but where would they find them? Often, by the time they get the information, it is too late to take part. It was reported that some facilities have a loop telephone system, but often the staff do not know how to use it or it may be broken. Group members commented that mobile phones are useless for people with a hearing impairment; however, they could get information by text or the web, providing the information is sufficiently detailed, including opening times and the availability of an interpreter. One female pointed out that often the kiosk at the entrance to facilities is not very welcoming; sometimes it is difficult to

see inside, and not being able to talk, it is impossible to attract attention.

This group of people with hearing impairment said that the three most important barriers to taking part in countryside recreation were:

- language
- personal safety
- access to information.

Final comments on the barriers to taking part were:

- “Everything is such an effort; everything is available by phone, no fax or any other means of getting information”
- “Lots of older deaf people would like to be taken out, not to be inside all the time”
- “Some churches take older people out. We talk about care in the community; not for deaf people”

3.4.4 Encouragement to take part

In contrast to all the other people who met in focus groups, the people with a hearing impairment did not think that a leader would encourage them to take part in countryside recreation. They commented that it would be better to have staff trained in awareness of their problems and with some signing skills. They did not want to be treated as “special”, but rather have exactly the same access rights as everyone else, including access to information in their own language – sign language. However, they did agree that they would join occasional organised trips with an interpreter. If no interpreter was available, it would be a benefit to have reduced entrance costs, as they cannot fully appreciate the activity or facility.

It was reported that some DVDs with virtual interpreters would be acceptable if human interpreters were not available. These could be produced for major attractions, but everyone in the group felt that an interpreter always makes them feel welcome and older people enjoy “guided tours”. One comment was, “Northern Ireland is way

behind, in terms of provision for deaf people”

Another factor that would encourage some people from this group to take part was easy access to relevant information. Facilities that do provide services for people with a hearing impairment should advertise in the appropriate forum, to enable those people to make an informed choice about using that facility. One male commented that “some facilities are very good, but they need to let people know about what is available.”

3.4.5 Activities of interest

Everyone within this group of people was generally interested in taking part in a range of activities, including walking, hill walking, camping, studying the plants and trees, paragliding and parachuting and outward bound challenges. All group members said that they would enjoy taking part in an activity day, if it could be arranged.

3.4.6 Access to information

The most important medium for this group to access information about countryside recreation was the internet, followed by a specialist journal detailing local events. Other sources are deaf clubs or centres and the bus station.

3.4.7 Other comments

One male made the point that he would like follow-up meetings to ensure that any recommendations made as a result of this meeting were being actioned.

4 Focus Group Field Trip

All focus groups were offered an opportunity to plan and organise a visit to a local amenity to experience countryside recreation. They were given explanatory letters, a planning sheet, suggested locations (see Appendix 4) and asked to plan the day, showing any problems that occurred

either in the planning process or at the actual location. One group from an area of disadvantage in a rural location planned a trip to Slieve Gullion Forest Park and reported back as follows:

Ten people approached the local Countryside Officer who helped them choose the venue and facilitated the trip, therefore no problems were encountered in planning the venue. The date and time of the activity had to be arranged around the availability of the leader, the participants and a guide to give a historical talk on the visit. The weather was also an important factor. The programme was formulated to accommodate some of the older members of the group. Public transport was not available so the group had to hire a 15 seater minibus from a private company.

There were no problems on the journey to the venue, as the facilitator travelled with the group and the bus driver was familiar with the route. The entrance was clearly marked, and although the main hall was closed, they were able to gain access to the amenity. The group did not need to use any facilities as it had made arrangements for refreshments during the planning phase. As the bus driver had remained with the group throughout the day, there were no problems with the return journey. All participants enjoyed the day and the group reported that they will organise further events, particularly in the summer.

Detailed planning of an organised activity was the main reason this field trip was so successful, as was the availability of someone to facilitate the outing and organise transport. As has been highlighted in the results, these were some of the main factors to encourage people to take part in countryside recreation, and the outcomes of this field trip, have demonstrated that the positive impact of these factors in an authentic situation.

5 Conclusions

From focus group discussions, it was obvious that individual groups had different perceptions of countryside recreation; most participants had some understanding of its meaning, however, only a few were aware of the wide range of activities on offer, including land, water and air based activities, throughout Northern Ireland. Most people claimed that they would be interested in becoming involved if only they had better information and access to the facilities. Many said that they would be keen to take part, but that they would need help to do so.

As described throughout the reports of individual focus groups, the main barriers to participation in countryside recreation were as follows:

- difficulties with public transport
- attitudinal problems
- language barriers
- lack of access to appropriate information
- lack of awareness
- dependence on others
- lack of time and or motivation
- poorly maintained paths.

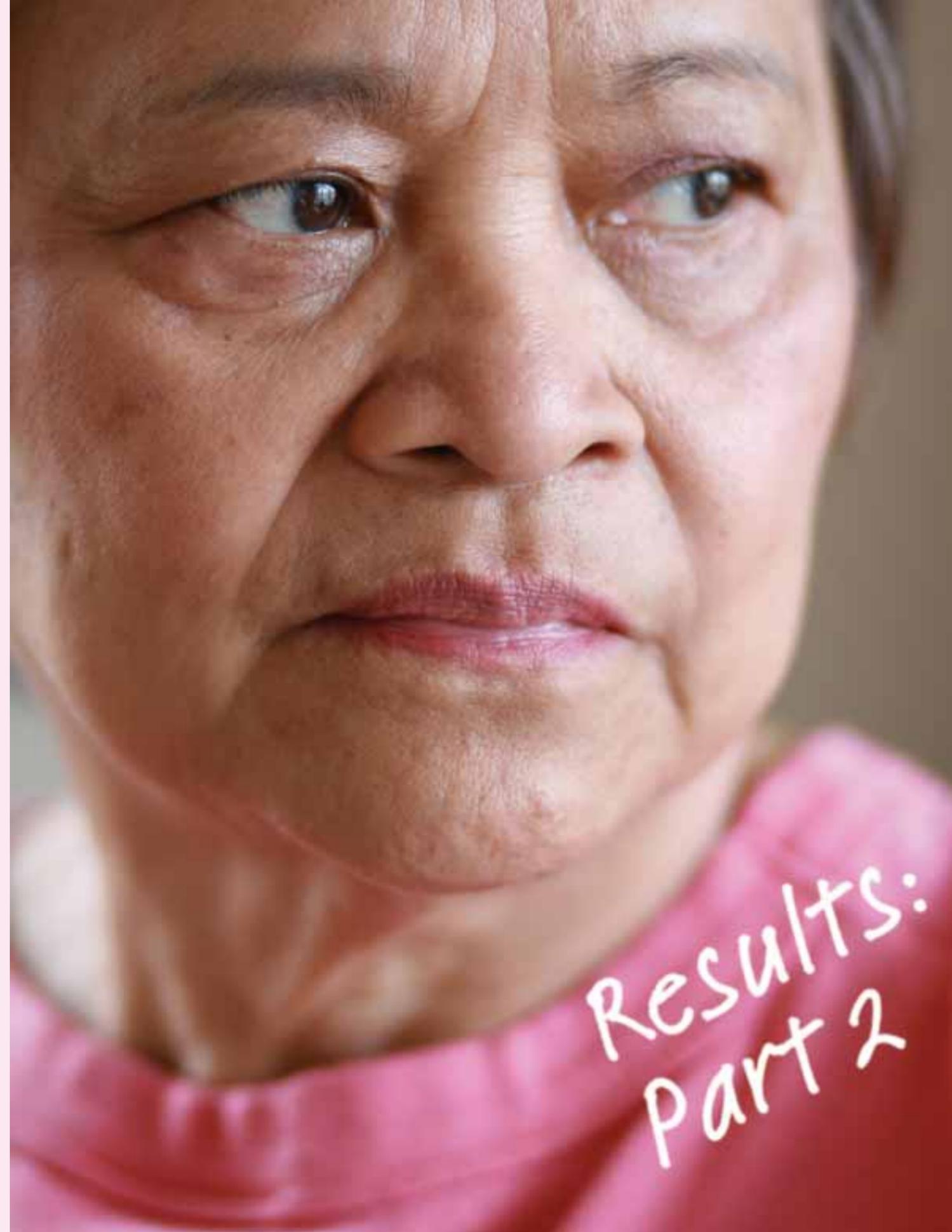
On the other hand, factors which would encourage participation fell into the following main categories:

- the availability of trained leaders
- organised activities
- a good public transport system
- simple, understandable information in an appropriate format
- family activities and facilities
- better awareness amongst facility staff of the needs and abilities of people with a disability
- properly maintained paths
- a change in societal attitudes towards disadvantaged communities.

Results of the focus group discussions highlighted the need for wide ranging actions to help break

down barriers and encourage more people from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in countryside recreation. This was particularly apparent from discussions with groups of disabled people who reported that many changes need to be made in terms of access, not only to the physical environment, but also to information and training. On the other hand, whereas more needs to be done to encourage people living within areas of disadvantage and within minority ethnic communities, efforts should be concentrated more on the distribution of appropriate information, capacity building and raising awareness.

Many suggestions were made by focus group participants as to how barriers against taking part in countryside recreation could be addressed. These are included in Chapter 6.



Providers Survey - Introduction

In order to identify and assess the key issues facing providers of countryside recreation, when seeking to work with the identified communities, a postal questionnaire survey was conducted. This was followed by one-to-one, unstructured interviews with seven respondents, representing the wide range of types of provision included in the survey. A total of 201 questionnaires was distributed throughout Northern Ireland, and 69 completed questionnaires were returned by the final closing date, giving a response rate of 34.3%. The results of the questionnaire are reported below. See Appendix 2 for the questionnaire.

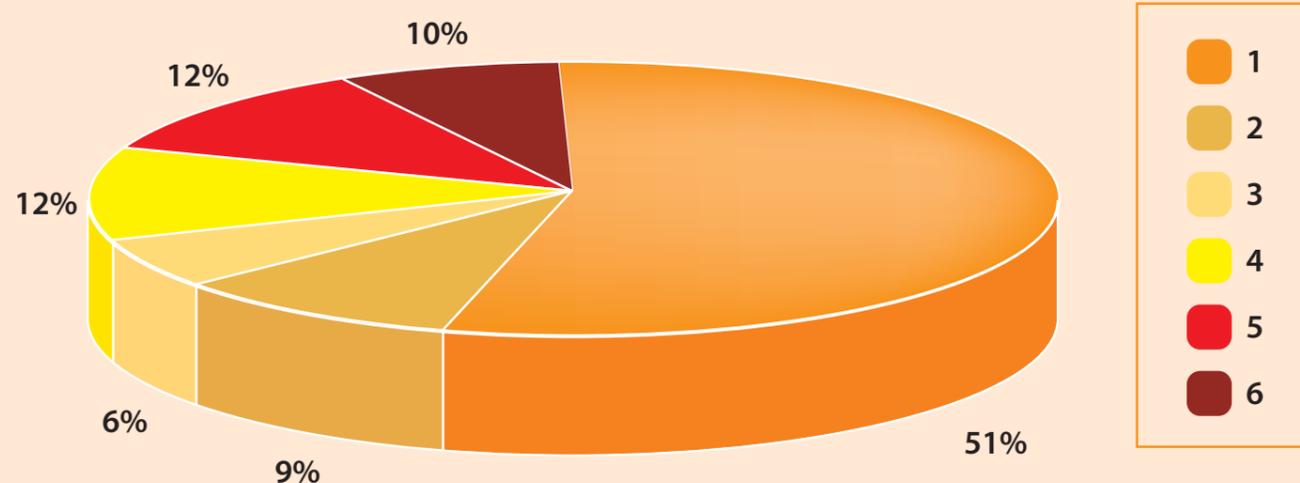
1 The results of the questionnaire

1.1 Types of organisation or facility

The types of organisations or facilities were divided into 6 major categories: outdoor activity providers, outdoor education centres, EHS country parks, urban/rural parks, governing bodies of sport, other landowners and Government Agencies. The largest number of respondents came from the

outdoor activity providers, reflecting the fact that this was by far the biggest sector involved in the survey (66.6 % of the total survey population). Responses from this sector accounted for 52% of all completed questionnaires; a total of 36.) See Figure 1 and Table 1.

Figure 1 Type of organisation/facility



Key: 1- Activity Providers; 2 - Outdoor Education Centres; 3 - EHS Country Parks; 4 - Rural/Urban Parks; 5 - Governing Bodies of Sport; 6 - Other Landowners and Government Agencies

Table 1

Shows the total number of questionnaires sent to each sector, and also the number and percentage of completed questionnaires received, sub divided by provider category.

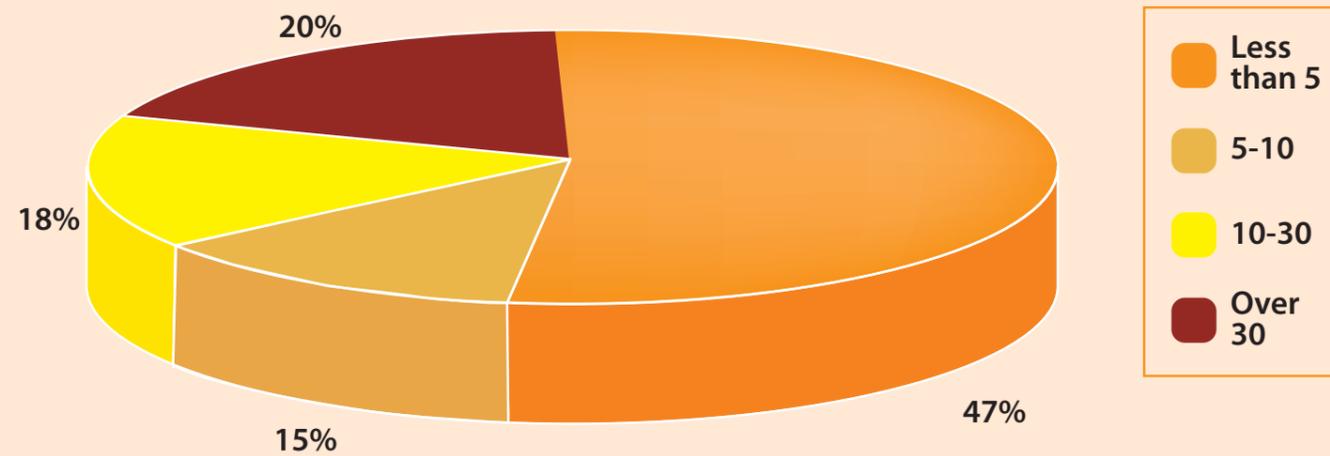
	Category of provider	Total Number	No. of respondents
1	Outdoor Activity Providers	134	36
2	Outdoor Education Centres	9	6
3	EHS Country Parks	6	4
4	Urban/Rural Parks	24	8
5	Governing Bodies of Sport	17	9
6	Other Landowners & Govt. Agencies	11	6
		201	69 (34.3%)

1.2 Position of the respondent within the organisation

Respondents were asked to declare their employee status within the organisation. Of the 69 completed questionnaires, 64 identified their position. These were: 43 managers (67%); 5 assistant managers (7.8%); 11 officers (17%); and 5 secretaries (7.8%).

The high number of respondents recorded as 'managers' reflects the design of the survey, that was specifically aimed at those employees with responsibility for developing and/or implementing policy, with regard to the targeted communities.

Figure 2 Number of employees in organisations

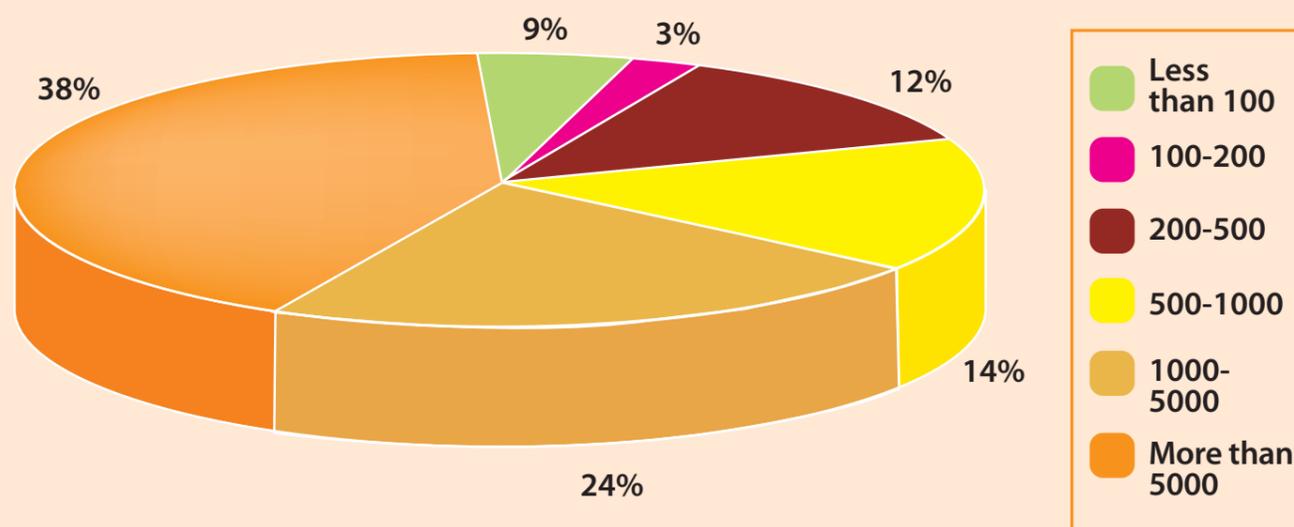


1.3 Number of employees within the organisation

A choice of 4 categories was given, to ascertain the number of employees at each facility. These were: less than 5, 5-10, 10-30 and over 30. The majority of respondents reported working in an organisation

with less than 5 employees (47% of respondents); on the other hand, 20% of respondents claimed to have over 30 employees. The responses to this question are displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 3 Number of people using services/facilities per annum



1.4 Number of people using the services/facilities per annum

A total of 6 categories was given asking respondents to declare the number of people using their services or facilities per annum. These were: less than 100, 100-200, 200-500, 500-1,000, 1000-5,000 and more than 5,000. The majority of organisations provides for more than 5,000 people per annum (38%), closely followed by organisations providing for between 1,000 and 5,000 (24%). The responses are shown in Figure 3.

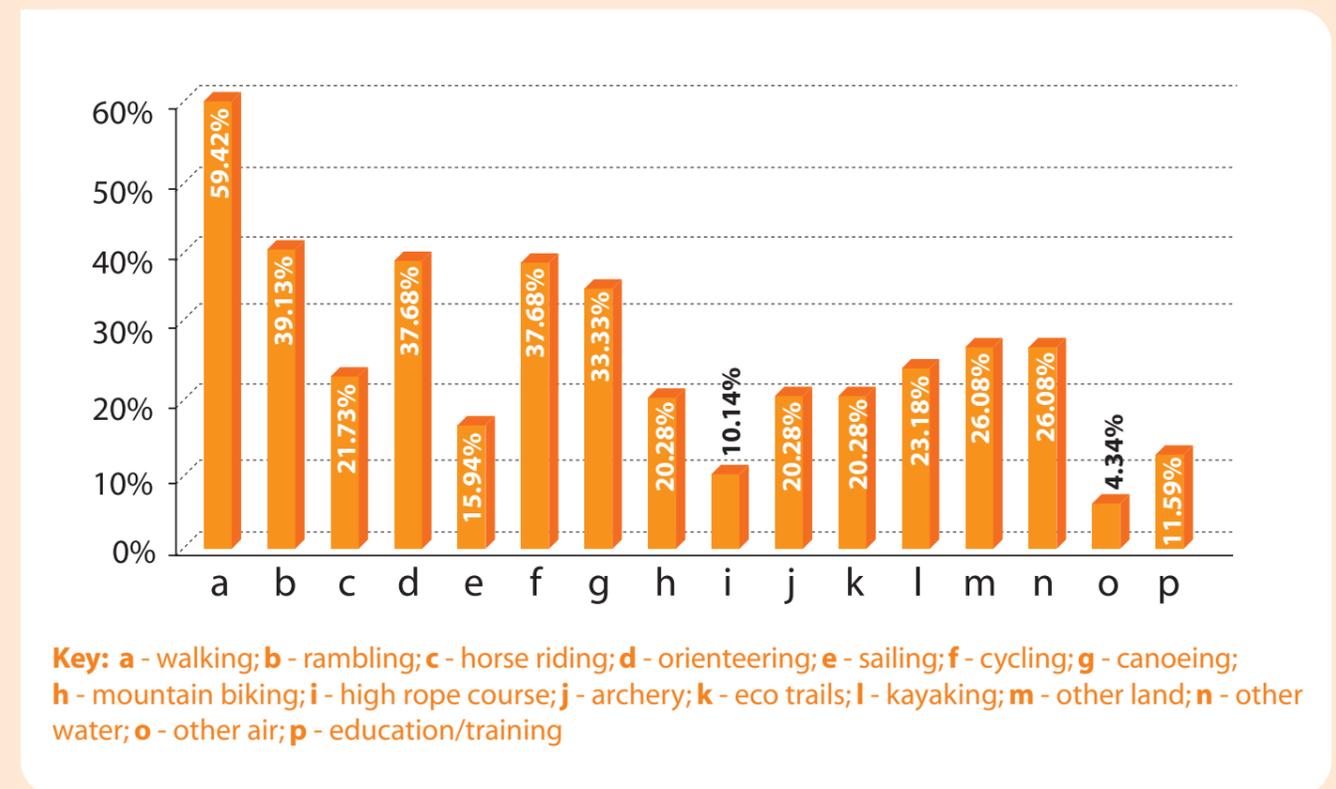
1.5 Types of countryside recreation activities/facilities available

A list of 14 activities was provided, to allow respondents to report which countryside recreation activities or facilities they provide. There was also an opportunity to add to this list under a section marked 'other'. By far the most prevalent activity provided by respondents to the survey

was walking (59%), followed by rambling (39%). Orienteering (38%) and cycling (38%) were also major activities provided by the respondents, as was canoeing at 33%.

The prevalence of walking provision reflects the results of the focus group survey, which reported that walking was the most popular activity amongst focus group participants within each of the targeted communities. Nevertheless, a considerable number of respondents reported that they provide facilities for more specialised activities such as kayaking (23%), horse riding (22%) mountain biking (20%), archery (20%), and eco trails (20%). Results are shown in Figure 4

Figure 4 Countryside activities/facilities provided



Key: a - walking; b - rambling; c - horse riding; d - orienteering; e - sailing; f - cycling; g - canoeing; h - mountain biking; i - high rope course; j - archery; k - eco trails; l - kayaking; m - other land; n - other water; o - other air; p - education/training

Table 2
Other countryside activities available

Land Activities	Water Activities	Air Activities	Education & Training
Paint balling	Boat Trips	Micro lighting	Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme
Laserquest	Caving	Kite sports	Archaeology
Abseiling	Power boat trips	Paragliding	Navigation
Expeditions	Wakeboard	Parachuting	Team building
Camping	Water-skiing		First aid training
Caravanning	Bouldering		Leadership training
Climbing	Canyoning		Field studies
Laser clay pigeon shooting	Surfing and windsurfing		Environmental studies
	Coasteering		Personal development training
	Sea safaris		
	Scuba diving		
	Snorkeling		
	Raft building		

A total of 35 'other' activities was recorded, however, the numbers involved in each activity were very small and therefore not included in Figure 4. Nevertheless, these activities are listed in Table 2, in order to indicate the wide range of countryside activities available throughout Northern Ireland.

NB Although Paragliding and parachuting were included in the main list of activities in the questionnaire, only one respondent reported providing these activities, therefore, they have been included in the 'other' category. See Table 2.

1.6 Special provision to use the activities/facilities for targeted groups

Providers were asked if they made special provision for each of the target groups and it was apparent that provision for people with disabilities was more widely available than that on offer for the other 2 groups (77%), reflecting the conditions of the DDA1995.

Provision for people living within areas of disadvantage was available at 62% of facilities and for minority ethnic communities at 54% of sites. Overall responses are seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Specific provision of facilities/activities for targeted communities

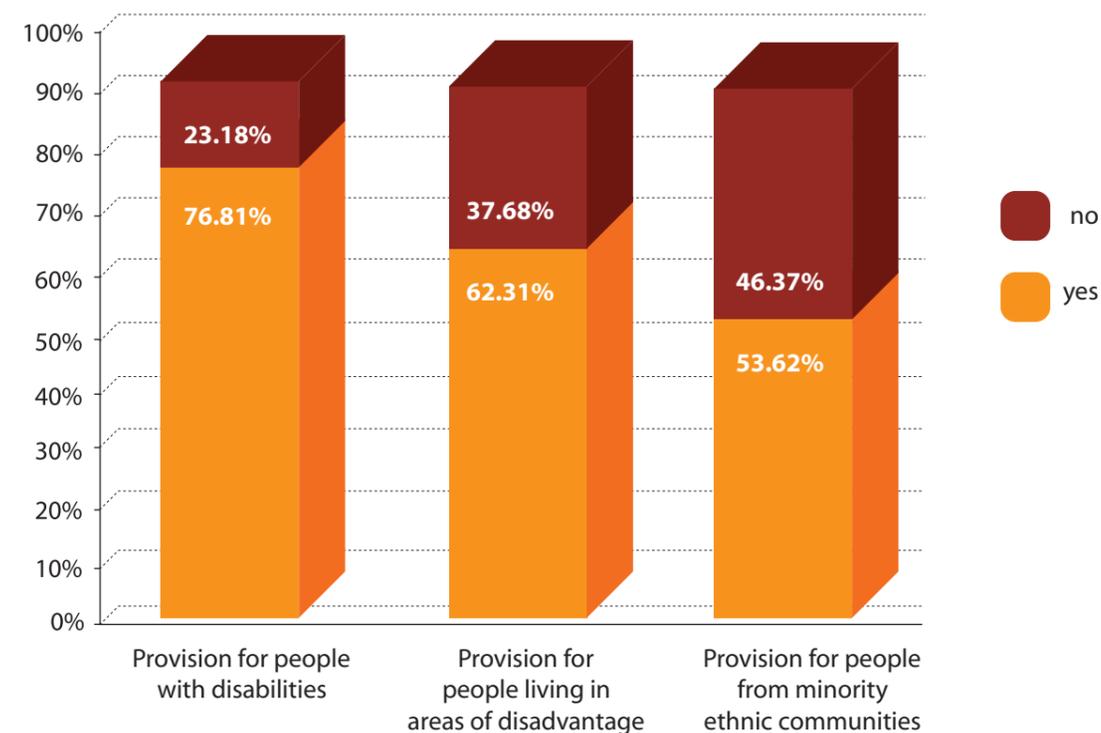


Table 3
Specific provision of facilities/activities by provider category

Type of Provider	Disabled people	People from areas of disadvantage	People from ethnic minorities
Outdoor Activity Providers	69.4%	63.8%	58.3%
Outdoor Education Centres	100%	100%	83.3%
EHS Country Parks	75%	0%	0%
Urban/Rural Parks	87.5%	87.5%	87.5%
Governing Bodies of Sport	44%	33%	22%
Other landowners & Govt. Agencies	100%	67%	33%

1.7 Provision of facilities/activities by provider category

Responses with regard to special provision for each of the targeted groups were further broken down by type of provider and this indicated a wide variety of provision according to the type of provider. Results are shown in Table 3

Some Governing Bodies of countryside activities made the point that they cannot legislate for individual clubs, and that it is the responsibility of each club, rather than the Governing Body, to decide on appropriate provision within their own particular circumstances. This explanation should be taken into account when viewing these results.

It should also be noted, that respondents from EHS country parks reported that although no special provision is made for people living within areas of disadvantage or people from minority ethnic communities, EHS country parks are open to everyone, regardless of social or ethnic background.

1.8 Type of provision for people with a disability

Respondents were asked to identify the specific provision available at their facility for people with a

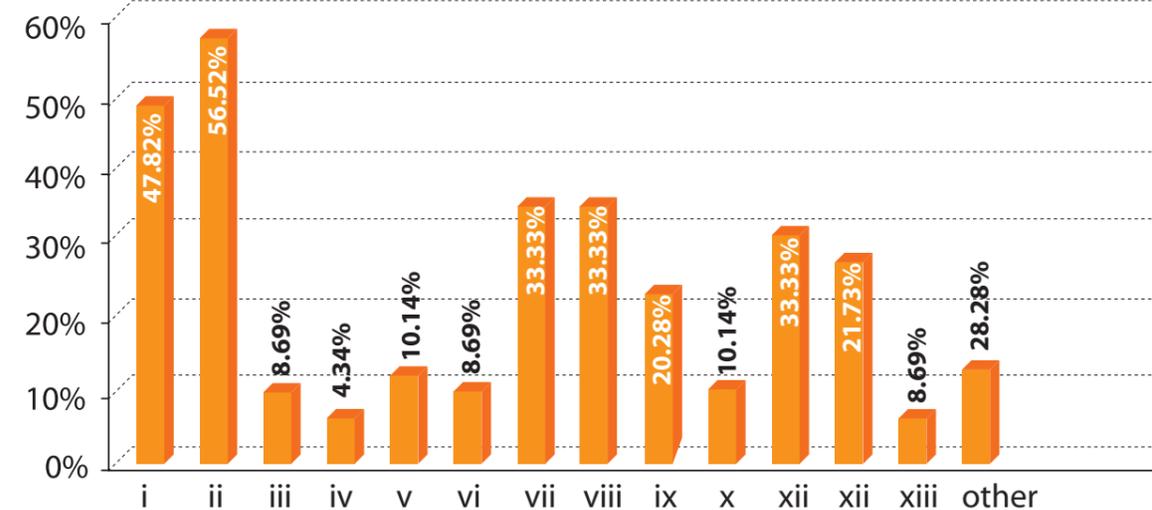
disability. They were given a list of 13 possibilities and could add more under the 'other' section.

The most prevalent form of provision for people with a disability was accessibility for wheelchair users to some outdoor trails/activities (57%). Only 9% offered wheelchair access to all their trails and activities, as the topography of the facility did not allow for full access; however, wheelchair users had access to indoor facilities at 48% of the sites. A third of sites (33%) reported having training for all staff in terms of meeting the needs of people with a disability, as well as the relevant legislation with regard to provision for people with a disability. A third (33%) also reported being in consultation with local organisations working specifically with people with a disability.

Information regarding the availability of access was distributed to a variety of outlets by 22% of respondents, while 20% recorded running special events with trained leaders, aimed specifically at people with a disability. In addition, 10% of respondents reported running information and awareness campaigns and 9% ran 'Come and Try it' events aimed specifically at people with a disability.

It was apparent that although special provision was widely available for people with limited mobility,

Figure 6 Specific provision for people with disabilities



Key: **i** - Accessibility for wheelchair users to indoor facilities; **ii** - Accessibility for wheelchair users to some outdoor trails/activities; **iii** - Accessibility for wheelchair users to all outdoor trails and activities; **iv** - Information leaflets in Braille; **v** - Loop telephone system for people with hearing impairment; **vi** - Availability of someone who can communicate in sign language; **vii** - Training for all staff in terms of meeting the needs of people with disability; **viii** - Training for all staff on relevant legislation with regard to provision for people with disability; **ix** - Special events with trained leaders, aimed specifically at people with disability; **x** - Information and awareness campaigns, aimed specifically at people with a disability; **xi** - Consultation with local organisations or agencies working specifically with people with a disability; **xii** - Distribution of information to community groups/libraries/schools/places of worship/health centres etc; **xiii** - 'Come and try it' events for people with disabilities

including wheelchair users, specific provision for people with visual impairment or hearing impairment was not widely available. Only 4% of respondents offered information in Braille, while 10% reported having a loop telephone system, 9% had someone who could communicate in sign language. No specific provision was recorded for people with learning disabilities, however, during one-to-one interviews, it was apparent that training was provided for staff to help them deal with the specific needs of people from this community. Results are recorded in Figure 6.

1.8.1 Other provision for people with a disability

A total of 28% of respondents recorded 'other' responses, with regard to people with a disability,

these were:

- access to Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme
- Big Lottery Programme with discounted rates
- disabled friendly accommodation
- ramp fitted minibus
- tandem jumps
- activity residentials tailored for people with disabilities
- operating within Riding for Disabled network
- developing virtual tours
- disability audits of all sites.

1.9 Type of provision for people living within areas of disadvantage

A list of 7 possibilities was provided to respondents, to help them identify specific provision made at their facility for people living within areas of

disadvantage. They also had an opportunity to add 'other' provision as appropriate. The most prevalent response regarding specific provision for people living within areas of disadvantage was the distribution of information through a variety of outlets including community groups and schools (36%). A total of 32% of respondents had consultations with local organisations working specifically within these communities.

Training for all staff in terms of meeting the needs of people from these communities was provided by 28% of respondents, while 22% had training on relevant legislation. Just 25% of respondents ran special events with trained leaders and 16% ran

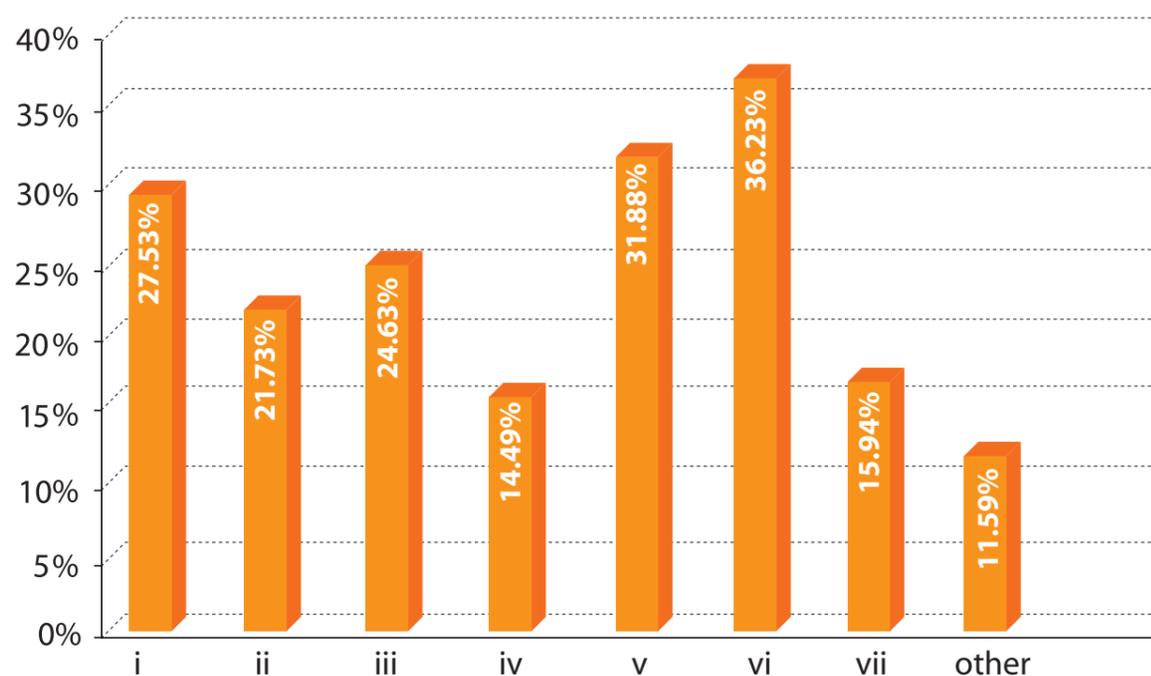
'Come and Try It' events aimed specifically at people living within areas of disadvantage. Information and awareness campaigns were organised by 14% of respondents. Results are recorded in Figure 7.

1.9.1 Other provision for people living within areas of disadvantage

A total of 15% of respondents recorded 'other' responses, with regard to people living within areas of disadvantage, these were:

- instructor training programme for unemployed people
- information distributed by the ELB Youth service
- hosting Youth Service priority groups

Figure 7 Specific provision for people living within areas of disadvantage



Key: **i** - Training for all staff in terms of meeting the needs of people living within areas of disadvantage; **ii** - Training for staff on relevant legislation with regard to provision for people living within areas of disadvantage; **iii** - Special events with trained leaders, aimed specifically at people living within areas of disadvantage; **iv** - Information and awareness campaigns, aimed specifically at people living within areas of disadvantage; **v** - Consultation with local organisations or agencies working specifically with people living within areas of disadvantage; **vi** - Distribution of information to community groups/libraries/schools/places of worship/health centres etc.; **vii** - 'Come and try it' events for people living within areas of disadvantage

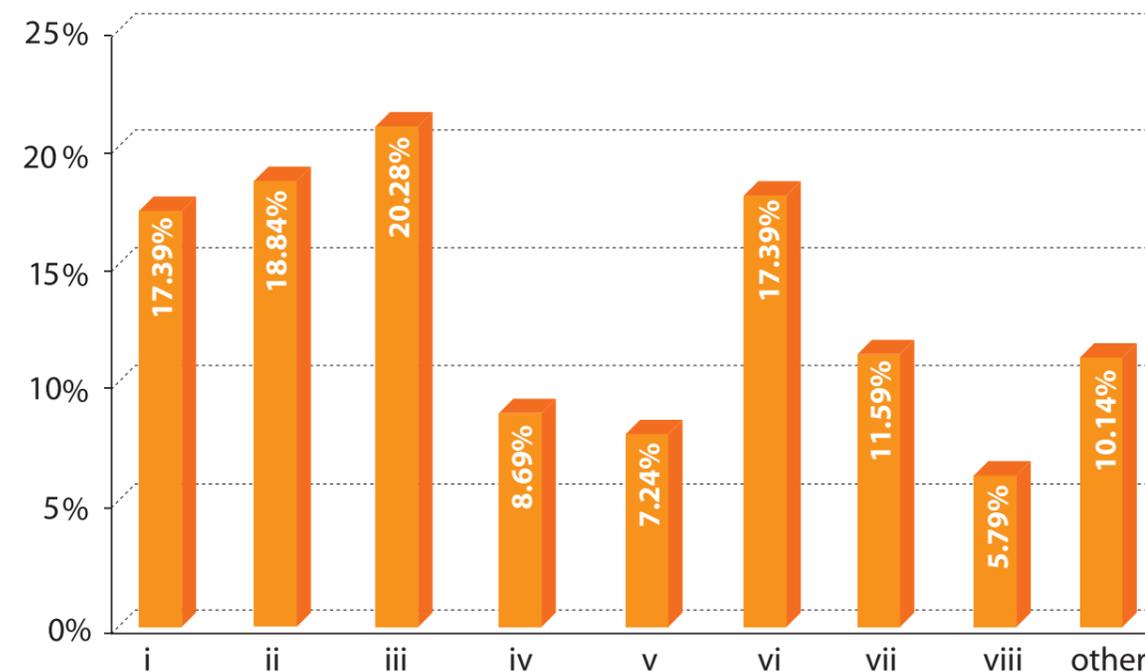
- local outdoor club and supported summer scheme
- promotion of activities/events targeted at everyone.

1.10 Type of provision for people from minority ethnic communities

A list of 7 possibilities was provided to respondents, to help them identify specific provision made at their facility for people from minority ethnic communities. They also had an opportunity to add 'other' provision as appropriate. Training for staff on relevant legislation with regard to provision of countryside facilities and activities for people from minority ethnic

communities was offered by 20% of respondents and training on meeting their needs was provided by 19%. Information in different languages was offered at 17% of facilities, and 17% of respondents had consultations with local organisations or agencies working within these communities. 'Come and Try It' events were offered to people from ethnic minorities at 12% of facilities, whereas only 9% and 7% respectively provided special events with trained leaders and information and awareness campaigns aimed specifically at these communities. Results are recorded in Figure 8

Figure 8 Specific provision for people from minority ethnic communities



Key: **i** - Information in different languages; **ii** - Training for all staff in terms of meeting the needs of people from minority ethnic groups; **iii** - Training for all staff on relevant legislation with regard to provision for people from minority ethnic groups; **iv** - Special events with trained leaders, aimed specifically at people from minority ethnic groups; **v** - Information and awareness campaigns, aimed specifically at people from minority ethnic groups; **vi** - Consultation with local organisations/agencies working specifically with people from minority ethnic groups; **vii** - Distribution of information to community groups/libraries/schools/places of worship/health centres etc; **viii** - 'Come and try it' events for people from minority ethnic groups

1.10.1 Other provision for people from minority ethnic communities

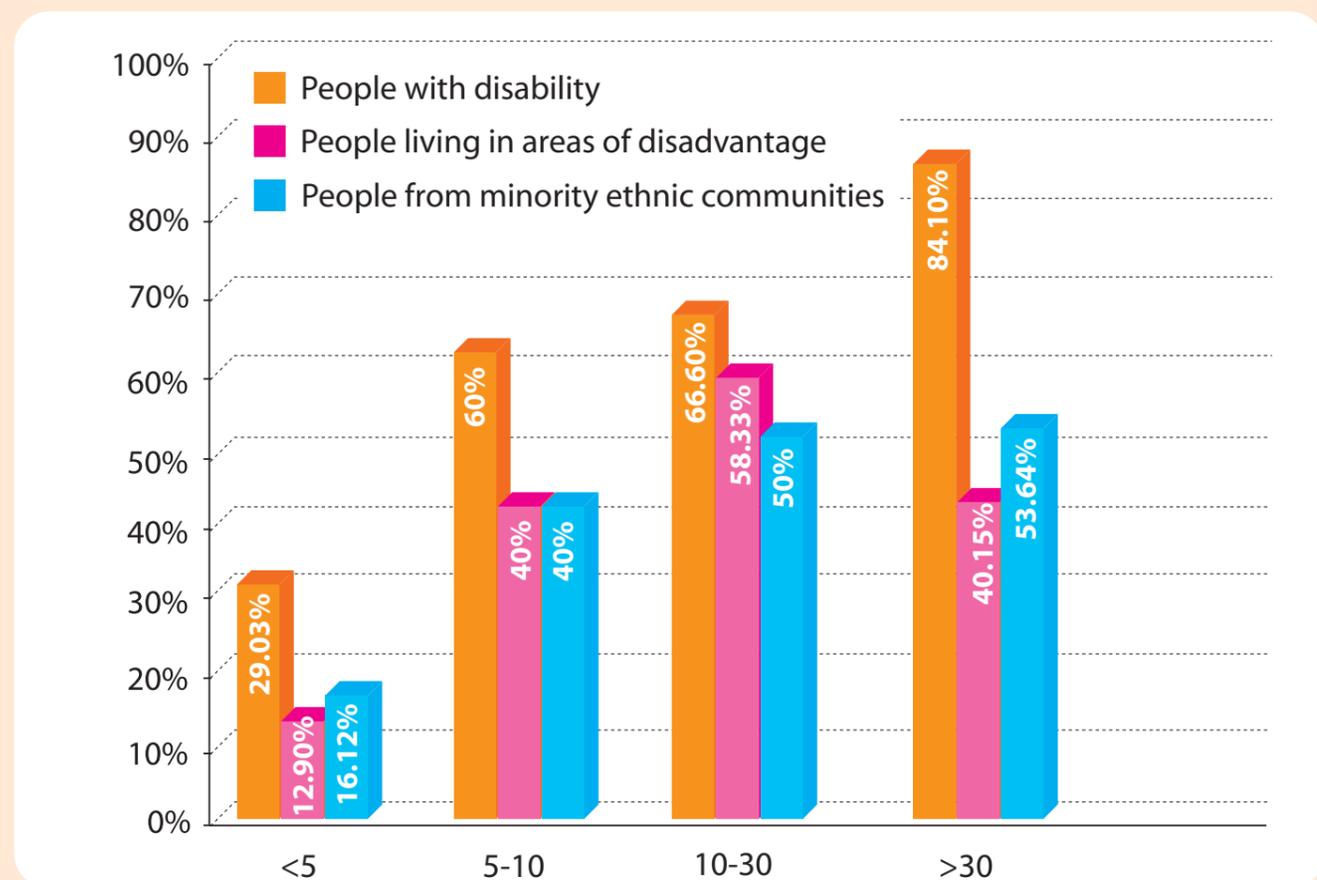
A total of 10% of respondents recorded 'other' responses, with regard to provision for people from ethnic minorities, these were:

- our centre is open to everyone – no exceptions
- advertise through the youth service
- Magilligan Field Centre is open to all schools in Northern Ireland and invariably, classroom assistants are assigned to help these students
- residential for eg Chinese Community Youth Association
- people from minority ethnic communities made as welcome as any other visitors
- we feel no additional provision is necessary
- support for local communities to provide events (music, fun days etc)
- targeted recruitment of volunteers.

1.11 Policy provision for targeted communities

Respondents were asked if they had policies in place to address the needs of each of the targeted communities. Only 48% of respondents had a policy in place for addressing the needs of people with a disability. 30% had a policy for people living within areas of disadvantage and 32% reported having a policy for minority ethnic communities. Policy provision appeared to be linked to the number of employees in each facility, with larger organisations being more likely to have policies in place. In all cases, policies to meet the needs of disabled people were more prevalent than policies for the other two targeted groups. Whereas 84% of organisations with over 30 employees had policies in place for disabled people, only 29% of organisations with less than 5 employees had such a policy. See Figure 9.

Figure 9 Provision of policies for each target group, by numbers of employees



Responses with regard to policy provision for each of the targeted communities were also broken down by provider category and results are shown

as a percentage of the overall number of respondents in each category. See Table 4.

Table 4 Provision of policies for each of the targeted communities, by provider category

Provider Category	People with a disability	People from areas of disadvantage	People from ethnic minorities
Outdoor Activity Providers	38.8%	27.7%	27.7%
Outdoor Education Centres	83.3%	83.3%	83.3%
EHS Country Parks	75%	25%	25%
Urban/Rural Parks	62.5%	37.5%	87.5%
Governing Bodies of Sport	22%	11%	11%
Other Landowners & Govt. Agencies	66%	16.6%	33.3%

1.12 Plans to implement a policy for targeted communities

Those respondents who reported having no policy in place were asked if they intended to implement such a policy for each of the targeted communities. Only 39% of respondents reported that they intended to implement a policy for people with disabilities, which when added to the 48% of total respondents, reported above, who already have such a policy, leaves a gap of 13% with no policy, now or in the immediate future.

It was reported that 25% of respondents intend to implement a policy for people living within areas of disadvantage, and again when this is added to those providers who currently have policies, it leaves a gap of 45% of providers with no current or intended policy for these communities.

Those providers who reported an intention to implement a policy for minority ethnic

communities (21%), when added to the current policy provision of 32%, leaves a gap of 47% in either current or intended provision of policies for people from minority ethnic communities.

1.13 Main elements of policies for addressing the needs of people with a disability

Respondents were asked to describe the main elements of their policy for addressing the needs of people with a disability. Of those respondents who reported that they had such a policy (47%), 48% described the main elements as being in line with either organisational policy, such as Youth Service, Local Authority, Education and Library Board, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Disability Plan; or legislative policy, such as Section 75, DDA, and Equal Opportunities.

Other individual responses were recorded and these are listed below:

- pre-tour questionnaire completed and agreed with visitors
- equality policy
- policy to increase provision and participation for disabled people
- broad, general inclusion policy
- make activities as accessible as possible
- staff trained to assist disabled passengers on board and made secure, taking special care of people with disabilities
- operations manual
- equal opportunity of access
- access needs
- customer care policy
- a questionnaire with a doctor's report.
- assessment lesson
- make them feel part of the group and welcome
- make all facilities accessible to disabled persons
- open up opportunities for disabled persons to participate in sport and leisure
- new structures and events; "we consult and modify where appropriate"
- removing barriers on the Lagan Towpath; "we don't discriminate"
- a commitment to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life, under disability legislation.

1.14 Main elements of policies for addressing the needs of people living in areas of disadvantage

Only 30% of respondents reported having a policy to address the needs of people living within areas of disadvantage, and of those who had such a policy, the majority had already described the main elements as being organisational or legislative policy as for people with disabilities, and therefore gave an overall response to policies for all three targeted communities. However, some

individual responses were recorded and these are listed below:

- centre is to be used by anyone who wishes to do so
- staff instructed to make all welcome
- trips planned for all areas
- work with social services
- make no difference, everyone treated the same
- policy relevant to volunteers, visitors and staff
- target those who don't use the park
- "we don't discriminate"

1.15 Main elements of policies for addressing the needs of people from minority ethnic communities

A total of 32% of respondents reported having a policy to address the needs of people from minority ethnic communities, and as for the previous two targeted groups, respondents gave an overall response regarding the main elements, quoting organisational or legislative policies as their guiding principles. In addition to previously quoted replies, other individual responses are listed below:

- adapted scripts, interpreters and handouts
- in contact with the Chinese community.

1.16 Evaluation process of policies for addressing the needs of all the targeted communities

Of those who had policies in place, only one respondent reported having no evaluation process. In all other cases, the evaluation processes for each of the policy areas were largely generic and fell into the following categories, user evaluation, internal evaluation and external evaluation, more specifically:

- completion of evaluation forms after each tour, by visitors
- feed back from the public
- customer comments

- user group surveys
- record keeping by the centre, with regard to the different groups attending the centre
- monitoring membership numbers
- centre's evaluation process
- participant assessments
- annual evaluation as required
- compulsory evaluation process
- monitoring by officers of the Youth Service
- conforming with Education and Library Board expectations
- evaluations are ongoing.

It was reported that it is difficult to quantify and therefore evaluate services to young people living within areas of disadvantage or from minority ethnic communities, as often these "young people come in as part of a class from school."

In terms of evaluating policy provision for people with disabilities, one specific response from Forest Service, highlighting an example of good practice, explained that it will be complying with the DARD Disability Plan, the first of which was introduced in 2007, covering the years 2007 – 2010. To evaluate progress in implementing this plan, Forest Service will seek feedback from disability organisations and will be obliged to contribute to an annual progress report to the Equality Commission for NI. The Disability Action Plan will be reviewed every 5 years, and DARD also has regular Equality Steering Group meetings attended by equality representatives and a senior official to progress and monitor duties.

1.17 Barriers to encouraging people with a disability to use facilities

A list of 8 possibilities was provided to respondents, to help them identify specific barriers to encouraging people with a disability to use their facilities. They also had an opportunity to add 'other' provision as appropriate. Respondents

could tick more than one option. The most prevalent barrier quoted was 'there is no expressed demand' (34%), followed by 'lack of financial resources' (33%). 'Lack of human resources' (32%) and 'lack of appropriately trained staff' (28%) were also important barriers for providers. Full results are shown in Figure 10.

1.17.1 Other barriers to encouraging people with disabilities to use facilities

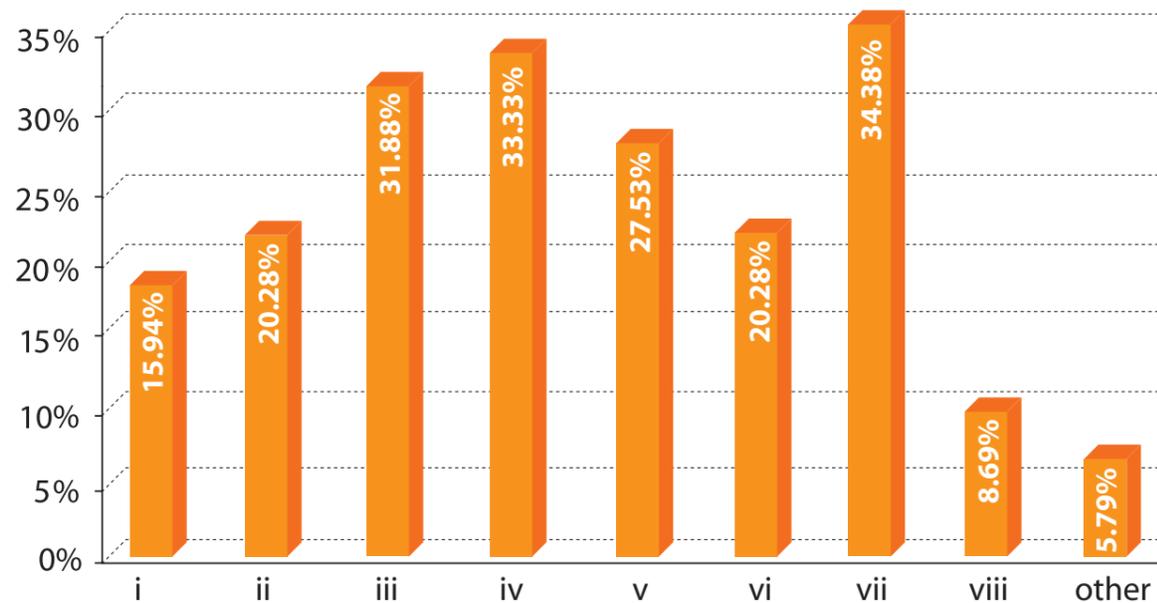
Other reported barriers accounted for 6% of responses and these were:

- "we are currently renovating our building to make it much more accessible for disabled people"
- lack of access to safe, off road riding, due to the disinterest of local council on rights of way.
- practicalities of implementation, conflict at times with conservation, for example not always possible, especially with built heritage
- developing and maintaining general access
- topography – all areas can not be made DDA compliant
- volunteer workforce.

1.18 Barriers to encouraging people living within areas of disadvantage

The same 8 options as shown in Figure 10 were listed as potential barriers for providers working to encourage people living within areas of disadvantage, and as before, respondents had the option of adding 'other' barriers as appropriate. Once again, the most prevalent barriers reported were 'there is no expressed demand' (33%), and 'lack of financial resources' (30%). The full list of results is shown in Figure 11, and follows the same pattern of responses as in Figure 10.

Figure 10 Barriers to encouraging people with disabilities to use facilities



Key: **i** - No organisational policy in place; **ii** - No strategic plan to address the issues; **iii** - Lack of human resources; **iv** - Lack of financial resources; **v** - Lack of appropriately trained staff; **vi** - Lack of appropriate facilities; **vii** - There is no expressed demand; **viii** - Other issues have higher priority

1.18.1 Other barriers to encouraging people living within areas of disadvantage

Other reported barriers accounted for 7% of responses and these were:

- low awareness of National Trust’s relevance
- training is difficult for part time and casual staff
- development and maintenance issues
- working with a small volunteer workforce.

1.19 Barriers to encouraging people from minority ethnic communities

Once again, the same 8 options, as shown in Figure 10 were listed as potential barriers for providers working to encourage people from minority ethnic communities, and as before, respondents had the option of adding ‘other’ barriers as appropriate. As with the other two targeted communities, the

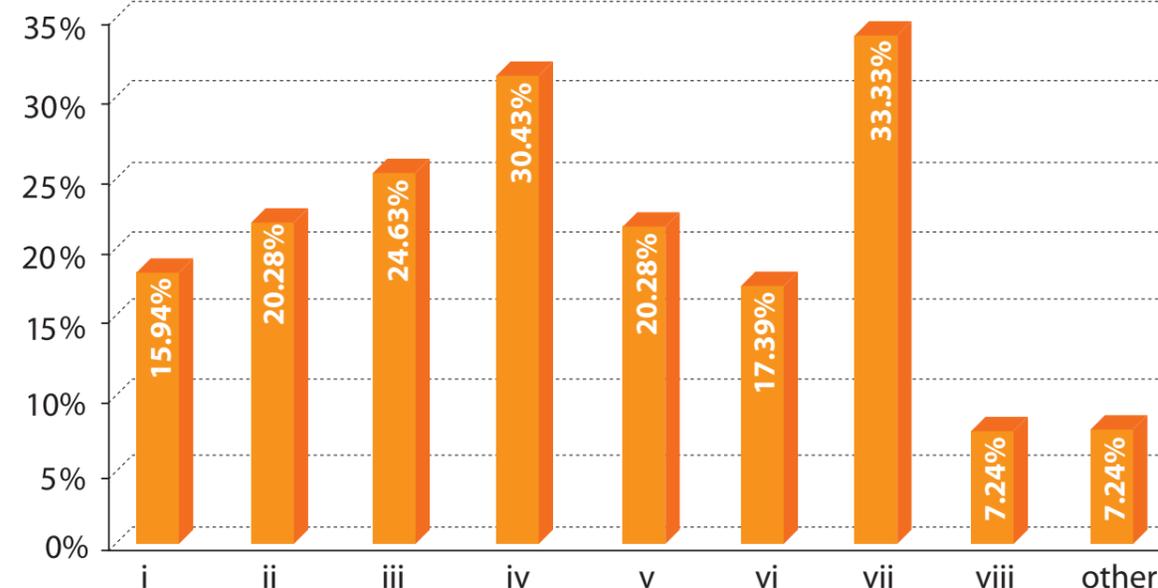
most prevalent barriers reported by providers were ‘there is no expressed demand’ (43%), and ‘lack of financial resources’ (26%). It is interesting to note that the percentage of respondents quoting ‘there is no expressed demand’ is considerably more for people from minority ethnic communities than either of the two other communities. The full list of results is shown in Figure 12, and once again, indicates the same pattern of responses as in Figures 10 and 11.

1.19.1 Other barriers to encouraging people from minority ethnic communities

Other reported barriers accounted for 7% of responses and these were:

- general development and maintenance issues
- working with a small volunteer force.

Figure 11 Barriers to encouraging people living within areas of disadvantage to use facilities



Key: **i** - Nor organisational policy in place; **ii** - No strategic plan to address the issues; **iii** - Lack of human resources; **iv** - Lack of financial resources; **v** - Lack of appropriately trained staff; **vi** - Lack of appropriate facilities; **vii** - There is no expressed demand; **viii** - Other issues have higher priority

1.20 Factors to address barriers and increase participation

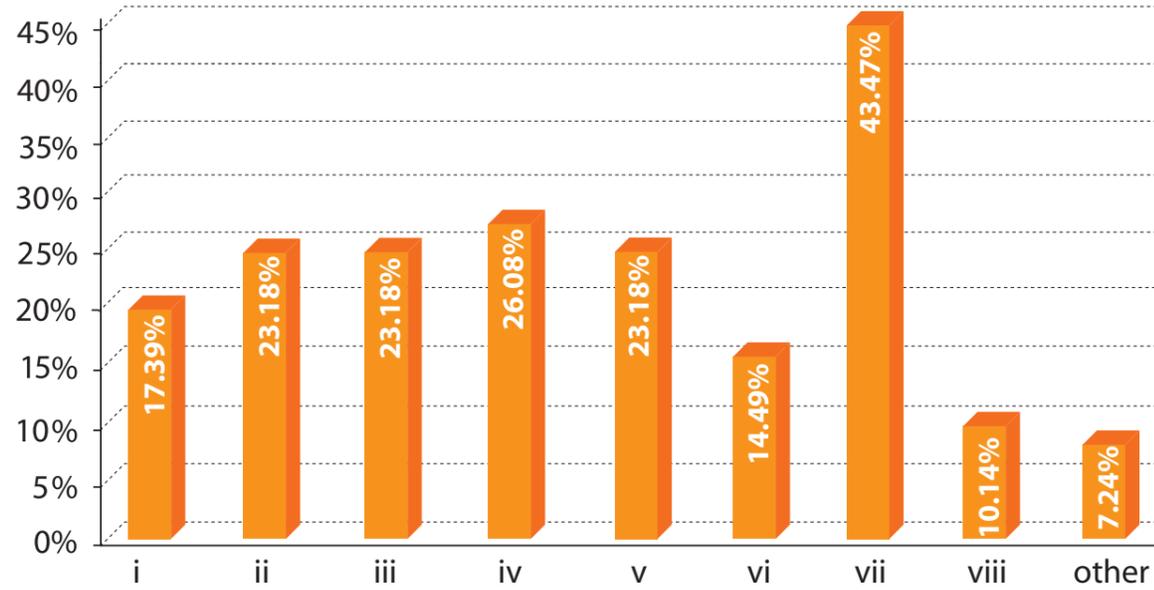
The final set of questions asked providers to identify key factors that might address the barriers and as a result, help to increase participation in countryside recreation. There were 8 options given and respondents could add other options of their choice; the same question was asked separately with regard to each of the three targeted groups. It is interesting, although not surprising, to note that whereas the most often reported factor for addressing barriers for people with a disability is ‘ring fenced financial resources to improve/provide essential facilities’ (46%); the most often reported factor for the other two communities is ‘links with local targeted groups’ (both at 45%). Full responses are seen in Figures 13, 14 and 15.

1.20.1 Other factors to address barriers and increase participation

Other reported factors for addressing the needs of the targeted communities were:

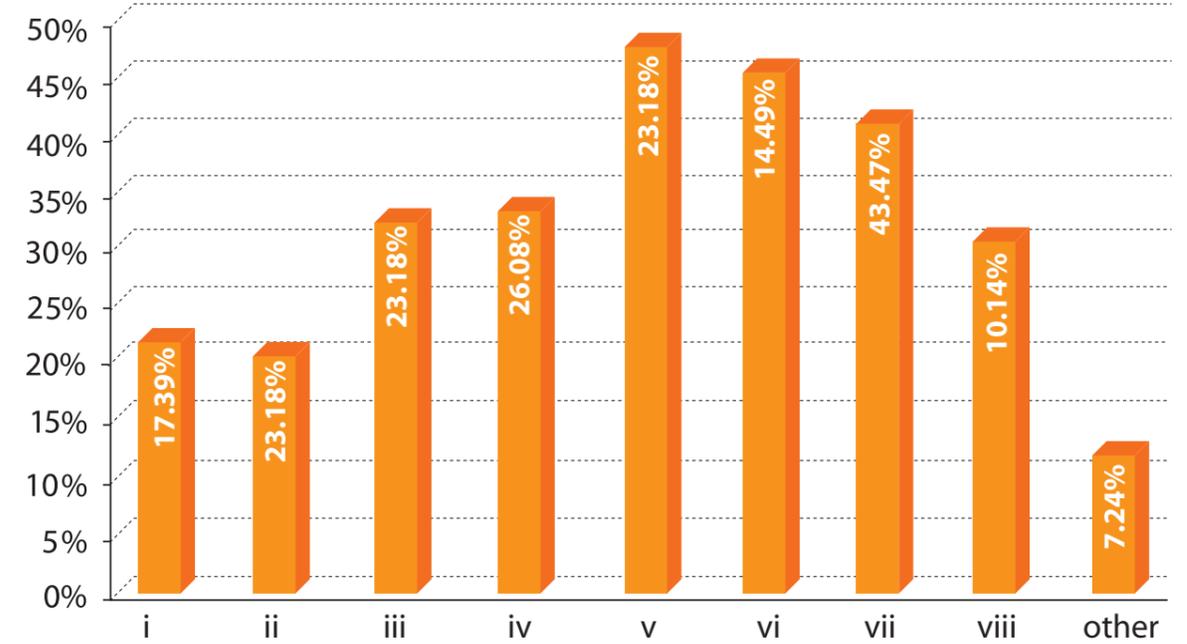
- “only a new boat could help”
- “groups should contact us early to avoid lack of availability”
- “more help with safe riding access through countryside lanes and paths to be adopted by council”
- “our product is not converted/suitable to facilitate disability”
- specialist volunteers.

Figure 12 Barriers to encouraging people from minority ethnic communities to use facilities



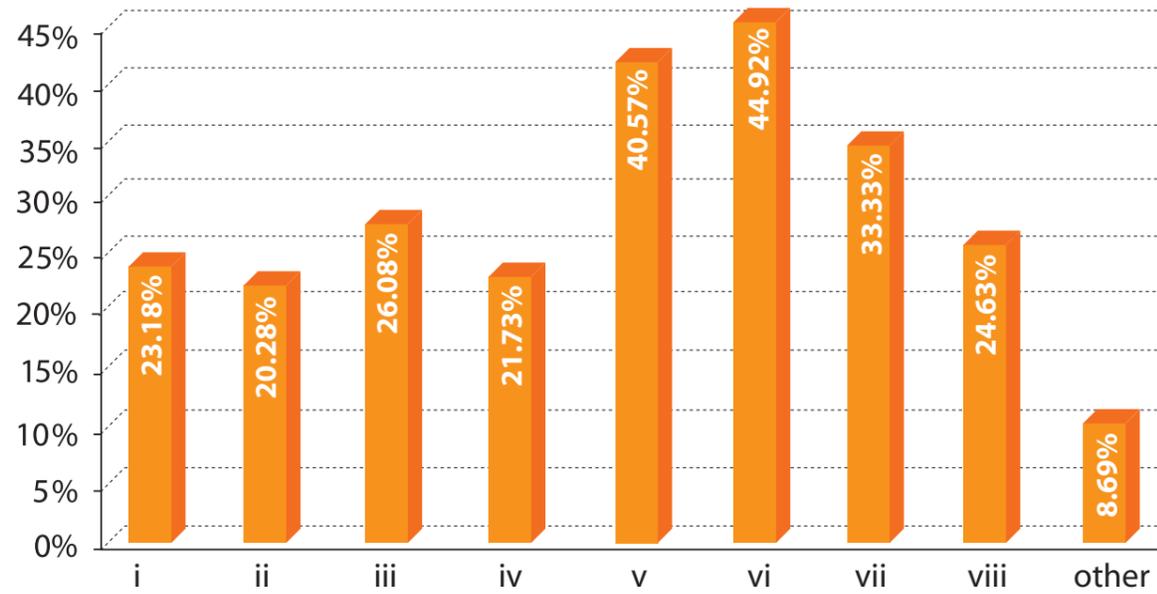
Key: **i** - No organisational policy in place; **ii** - No strategic plan to address the issues; **iii** - Lack of human resources; **iv** - Lack of financial resources; **v** - Lack of appropriately trained staff; **vi** - Lack of appropriate facilities; **vii** - There is no expressed demand; **viii** - Other issues have higher priority

Figure 13 Factors to address barriers and increase participation for people with disabilities



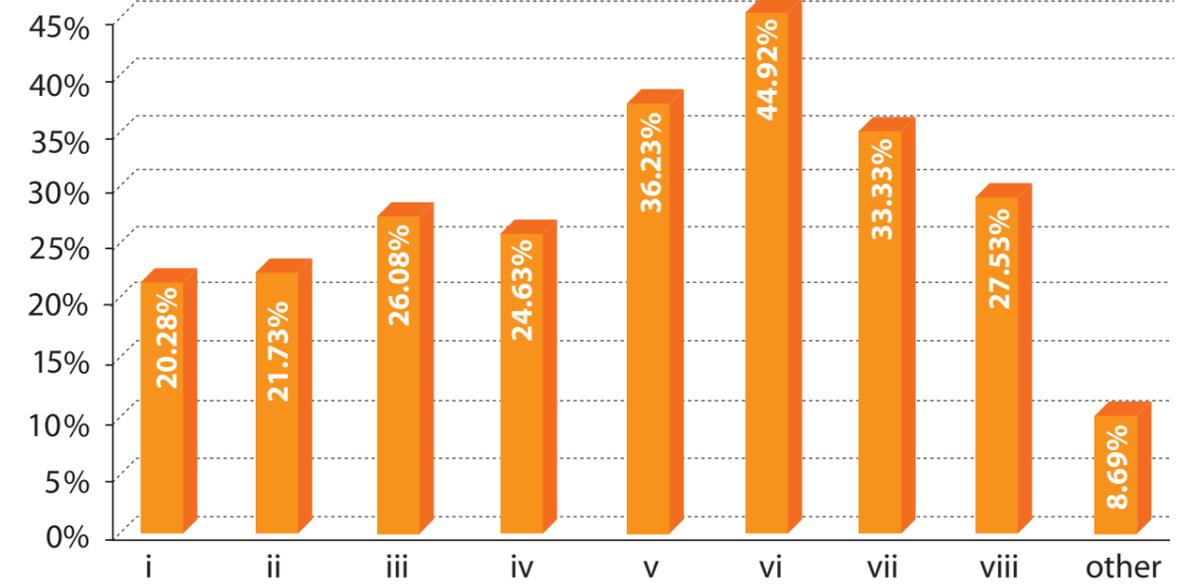
Key: **i** - Agreed organisational policy; **ii** - Specific actions and targets set within a strategic plan; **iii** - Appropriate training provided for all staff; **iv** - Practical, specialist advice on site; **v** - 'Ring fenced' financial resources to improve/provide essential facilities; **vi** - Links with local targeted groups; **vii** - Regular forums with other providers to review best practice eg seminars, conferences, study trips, field trips; **viii** - Handbook/guidelines for staff

Figure 14 Factors to address barriers and increase participation for people living within areas of disadvantage?



Key: **i** - Agreed organisational policy; **ii** - Specific actions and targets set within a strategic plan
iii - Appropriate training provided for all staff; **iv** - Practical, specialist advice on site; **v** - 'Ring fenced' financial resources to improve/provide essential facilities; **vi** - Links with local targeted groups; **vii** - Regular forums with other providers to review best practice eg seminars, conferences, study trips, field trips **viii** - Handbook/guidelines for staff

Figure 15 Factors to address barriers and increase participation for people from minority ethnic communities



Key: **i** - Agreed organisational policy; **ii** - Specific actions and targets set within a strategic plan
iii - Appropriate training provided for all staff; **iv** - Practical, specialist advice on site; **v** - 'Ring fenced' financial resources to improve/provide essential facilities; **vi** - Links with local targeted groups; **vii** - Regular forums with other providers to review best practice eg seminars, conferences, study trips, field trips; **viii** - Handbook/guidelines for staff

2 One-to-one interviews

2.1 Introduction

Following analysis of the postal questionnaire, interviews were held with seven selected respondents to further investigate the barriers facing them when providing countryside activities or amenities for underrepresented groups. Interviews were unstructured and based on individual responses to the questionnaire. This allowed the research team to examine, on a case by case basis, issues that were specific to each location, thus helping to shed more light on some of the questionnaire responses. At the same time, responders were able to present much more information on each particular aspect of their provision and the rationale behind their decisions. Discussions from four of the interviews are described below and the other three are detailed in the section 'Case Studies' in Chapter 5.

2.2 A Rural Country Park

The park manager of a rural country park, owned by the Local Authority, reported that the park was open all year round for walking, orienteering and cycling, however, other amenities such as the café, visitor centre and many of the family focused activities were closed in winter. Entrance to the park was free.

As well as walking, cycling and orienteering, the park caters for a new activity called 'geocaching' which is becoming popular internationally; this combines the sport of orienteering with treasure hunting using satellite technology. Other summer activities include mini golf, caravan and camping and a miniature railway.

2.2.1 Provisions for people with a disability

The site is accessible for wheelchairs on most of the paths, but the natural topography does not

allow for total accessibility. The park manager indicated that "there has to be a balance between what is practical and what is ideal." There are plans to approach Shopmobility with the intention of introducing power scooters, and management has been in consultation with Disability Action for advice on a project by project basis. It was reported that a local counsellor, who is a disabled person, is a "great advocate" for disabled people.

A house in the grounds which is run by the Lions Club, is often used by groups of people with a learning disability. The interviewee expressed a desire that the playground should be adjusted to take into consideration the needs of these young people. Although there is no specific training available for staff working with these groups, general training emphasises customer care.

All panels throughout the site are in Braille; however, although their website has information in large print, leaflets do not. It was reported that people with a visual impairment are generally accompanied by a sighted person when visiting the park. There is a loop telephone system for use by people with a hearing impairment but no staff can communicate in sign language.

2.2.2 Provision for people living within areas of disadvantage and minority ethnic communities

There is no specific targeting of people living in areas of disadvantage or people from minority ethnic communities, but entry to the park is free and people come from all over Northern Ireland and beyond to visit the amenity. The ethos of park management is to keep a neutral environment and staff members are trained to adhere to this philosophy within the scope of good customer care. Due to the large numbers of visitors from outside Northern Ireland who visit the park in summer, signs for toilets and other amenities are

being produced in several European languages, including Polish. It was reported that budgets for producing leaflets in other languages were "non-existent".

2.2.3 Staff training and Policy provision

Staff members have induction training lasting 2 days on Health and Safety, Child Protection, Customer Service and Equality; however, there are no specific policies in place to address the needs of the three targeted groups. Staff members work under the generic policies of the Borough Council and in compliance with the BT Countryside for All standards. The park manager would like to see a system of recognised standards, to allow amenities to benchmark and network with other providers. Whereas the Council policy advises on equality issues, there is no system of evaluation and monitoring. Plans are in place to develop a policy for both people with disabilities and people from minority ethnic communities but there are no plans for a policy on people living within areas of disadvantage.

2.2.4 Key factors to help remove barriers

In order to remove barriers and improve access for the target communities to the country park, the following key factors were identified:

- an agreed organisational policy
- specific actions and targets set within a strategic plan
- appropriate training for all staff
- practical, specialist advice on site
- 'Ring fenced' financial resources to improve/provide essential facilities
- links with local targeted groups
- regular forums with other providers to review best practice
- a handbook/guidelines for staff.

2.3 Forest Service

Rather than involve individual forest parks in responding to the postal questionnaire, Forest Service chose to centralise its response. One questionnaire was therefore returned to give an overall picture of issues facing forest parks when providing facilities and amenities for underrepresented groups. An interview was conducted with two officials from Forest Service and the results of that discussion are described below.

There are 124 state forests in Northern Ireland and these are managed by DARD, through Forest Service. As their web site explains, "Northern Ireland's forests are open all year round and provide a wonderful setting for all types of activities from gentle walks to invigorating hikes. We also have family cycle paths, orienteering trails, fishing and best of all some of the finest scenery in the country". There are two levels of provision within forest parks in terms of recreation: the highest level provides toilets, rangers, car parking and some cafés. All other sites provide recreation areas that may simply have pedestrian access to allow for walking. There is a charge for entry to these parks.

2.3.1 Provisions for people with a disability

The interview focused mainly on policy issues with regard to provision for people with a disability in Forest Service amenities. It was explained that DARD has developed a Disability Plan for 2007 - 2010 which will commit Forest Service to "promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life."

Forest Service, along with DARD will monitor and evaluate progress in implementing the Disability Action Plan, including seeking feedback from disability organisations. DARD has quarterly

meetings to monitor provision. In addition to policy guidelines, other provisions for people with a disability include:

- accessibility for wheelchair users to indoor facilities
- accessibility for wheelchair users to some outdoor trails
- a loop telephone system at some sites
- training for all relevant staff in terms of meeting the needs of people with a disability
- training staff on relevant legislation on provision for people with a disability
- consultation with local, relevant organisations
- distribution of information through a variety of mediums
- 'Come and Try It' events for people with a disability.

2.3.2 Provision for people living within areas of disadvantage

As with provision for people with a disability, discussion with regard to people living within areas of disadvantage focused mainly on policy arrangements. Forest Service contributes to DARD's vision of "a thriving and sustainable rural community and environment in Northern Ireland." On a macro level, therefore, barriers facing people living within areas of disadvantage will be addressed through Forest Service contribution to the Government's Anti-Poverty Strategy, which includes issues such as 'health' and 'living environment'. It is the intention of Forest Service to draw up more focused strategies to deal with the social use of forests, as the Forestry Strategy is implemented. It was reported that key policy makers have had training in addressing poverty.

2.3.3 Provision for people from minority ethnic communities

Discussion on provision for people from minority ethnic communities was again centred on policy. As an Agency of DARD, Forest Service complies with the Racial Equality Strategy/A Shared Future

and the Equality Agenda. Forest Service will also contribute to DARD's annual Race Action Plan.

The practical outworking of this policy is that people from minority ethnic communities have been encouraged by Forest Service to write to their representatives to identify any barriers and to suggest possible means of addressing them. In addition, 100 front line staff members who welcome the public to forest parks received equality training, as do all new entrants to Forest Service. It was reported that Forest Service web site has key information in 5 languages, other than English. These are Irish, Ulster Scots, Mandarin, Polish and Portuguese.

2.3.4 Other comments

One of the interviewees stated that information with regard to Forest Service amenities can be accessed in a range of formats and this allows freedom of choice to all users. He explained that some people have complained about information panels as they can take away from the panoramic perspective. Cultural differences can create barriers for some people from minority ethnic communities, who required passes to gain access to forests in their homeland. In Northern Ireland they may question "Can I go in there?" It is therefore necessary to make this information available at a very basic level.

The interview concluded with the expressed opinion that policies need to be rolled out and evaluated before identifying needs of the underrepresented groups. It was also highlighted that any future programme should not be developed on an 'ad hoc' basis, but be structured and based on good practice examples from elsewhere. One final observation was that recreational provision is not the sole objective of Forest Service; rather there needs to be a balance between sustainable management, both financial

and environmental as well as recreation. It was emphasised that "A forest is a workplace".

It is evident that Forest Service is in the process of developing and implementing strong strategies and policies to meet the needs of under-represented groups in terms of access to their amenities; however, it was not possible to report on the outworking of these policies on an individual basis as no responses were received from individual forest parks.

2.4 An Environment and Heritage Service Country Park

The warden of a country park, under the control of the EHS, reported that the amenity is open all year round and there is no charge for entry. It boasts its own Information Centre which includes:

- an interactive display
- toilets
- car and coach parking on site
- an approved 3 mile running trail
- a café
- way marked trails, including a coastal path, glen walk and meadow walk.

2.4.1 Provisions for people from underrepresented groups

In addition to having access for wheelchair users to both indoor and some outdoor facilities, the park has power scooters available through Shopmobility. Some staff members were educated to train people to use these scooters; however, it was pointed out that to meet health and safety issues and for insurance purposes, visitors must have a pass from the Disabled Ramblers Association. It was felt that this process was a barrier for some people and did not allow for flexibility or spontaneous use by casual visitors. The topography of the site does not allow full access for wheelchair users.

In terms of provision for people with other classifications of disability, the picture is less satisfactory. A loop telephone system to aid communication for people with a hearing impairment is available, however, it was reported that it often malfunctioned and some staff did not know how to use it. No specific provision for people living within areas of disadvantage or from minority ethnic communities was available.

2.4.2 Staff Training

Staff training was seen as a major issue with regard to provision for underrepresented groups. It was reported that whereas seasonal staff used to have induction training, this has been dropped, and although their names are listed to have training, due to their seasonal employment, the season is generally over by the time training becomes available. Reception staff are either employed through an agency or are civil servants and it was reported that EHS expect training to be the responsibility of the employing agency.

It was recommended by the interviewee that specialised training was essential for all staff to be able to deal with the needs of individual, underrepresented groups and summer staff should have proper induction training. It was further suggested that permanent staff training should be more in depth, with regular updates.

2.4.3 Policy provision for underrepresented groups

Policies were based on Equal Opportunities, NTSN and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) legislation and were set by EHS and were not site specific. There was no formalised evaluation process, but monitoring was conducted by individual site managers. It was reported that personnel from different sites never meet to compare good practice guidelines; managers were left to their own devices with no monitoring from EHS.

2.4.4 Key factors to help remove barriers

In order to remove barriers and improve access for all the target communities to the country park, the following key factors were identified by the interviewee:

- specific actions and targets set within a strategic plan
- appropriate training for all staff
- practical, specialist advice on site
- regular forums with other providers to review best practice
- a handbook/guidelines for staff.

2.5 The National Trust

The National Trust has been active in Northern Ireland since 1936 and has a total of 63 Northern Irish places, covering around 120 square kilometres of scenic local countryside and around 200 kilometres of the Northern Ireland coastline under its care. Activities available within The National Trust places include walking, rambling, orienteering, cycling, mountain biking, horse riding, kayaking and canoeing. One questionnaire was completed by The National Trust on behalf of all their amenities, as there is such a diverse range of amenities from coastal paths to hills to historic buildings. Within the scope of this research, it would not have been possible to include each individual amenity.

2.5.1 Provisions for people with a disability

It was explained that by the nature of The National Trust properties it was not always possible to provide access as they must fall in line with conservation constraints. As a result, The Trust is looking for alternatives such as 'virtual tours', presently being developed in Mount Stewart. A DDA audit has been carried out and recommendations are in process of being implemented, "it is a work in progress". Each site has to be taken individually as legislation

concerning listed buildings, conservation and other designations impose restrictions. For example, car parking presents no problems, but entrance, lifts etc. can pose a conflict of interest. Nevertheless, where possible, some indoor facilities are accessible for wheelchairs, as are some outdoor trails.

Other provision for people with a disability includes:

- some information leaflets in Braille
- information on the web site aimed specifically at people with a disability
- virtual tours
- some trails with wheelchair symbols
- laminated maps for wheelchair users.

2.5.2 Provisions for people living within areas of disadvantage and from minority ethnic communities

It was reported that there was no specific provision for these groups; however the promotion of activities is targeted at everyone. It was remarked that although Mount Stewart is a local amenity, very few people from housing estates within Newtownards come to visit. Divis and Black Mountain are considered by The Trust to be prime sites, providing opportunities for disadvantaged groups to participate in countryside recreation. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that people living in North and West Belfast rarely visit the facilities. It was agreed that there is some anti-social behaviour within these sites; nevertheless, it is mainly confined to the car parks and wardens are employed to patrol the area.

In terms of people from minority ethnic communities, staff members at some tourist sites can speak some European languages and there are plans to hold celebration days for specific, ethnic festivals. It was reported that there is a notable

increase in Eastern European visitors at key sites and usually, at least one speaks good English. At present there is no local Diversity Officer, but one is available nationally.

2.5.3 Staff Training

Staff training is rigorous and ongoing, particularly for frontline staff. Training takes place twice a year with additional training for new staff, including volunteers if appropriate. Training includes meeting the needs of people with a disability, particularly wheelchair users, and also the relevant legislation. It was noted that training for people with a learning disability was not so comprehensive, as people from this community are generally accompanied. It was pointed out that it is not the job of The National Trust to provide specific types of care but rather to provide the destinations and opportunities.

2.5.4 Policy provision

All The National Trust policies fall within current legislation in terms of Equality and Diversity. These ensure access to properties, employment and volunteering opportunities. They also have a monitoring policy and carry out formal audits, having regular contact with 'Enable' to check appropriate designs against the DDA.

2.5.5 Key factors to help remove barriers

The following key factors were suggested as being important to help remove barriers for underrepresented groups:

- specific actions and targets set within a strategic plan
- 'Ring fenced' financial resources to provide essential facilities
- links with local underrepresented groups
- specialist volunteers
- handbook/guidelines for staff
- raised awareness of the relevance of The National Trust.

2.5.6 Final comments

Despite advertising in local papers to raise awareness of facilities and amenities amongst underrepresented groups it is difficult to turn awareness into action. A big challenge for the National Trust is to decide between making major changes to a few key sites or minor changes to many. The National Trust strap line is 'For ever, for everyone'.

3 Conclusion

It was apparent from questionnaire responses that provision of specific arrangements for the three targeted groups to take part in countryside recreation varied widely, according to the type of provider and the size of the organisation. Those organisations with over 30 employees were nearly three times more likely to have policies in place to meet the needs of the targeted groups, as those with less than 5 employees. Although there was no obvious reason why this should be the case, one respondent claimed that his small organisation could not afford to provide special facilities.

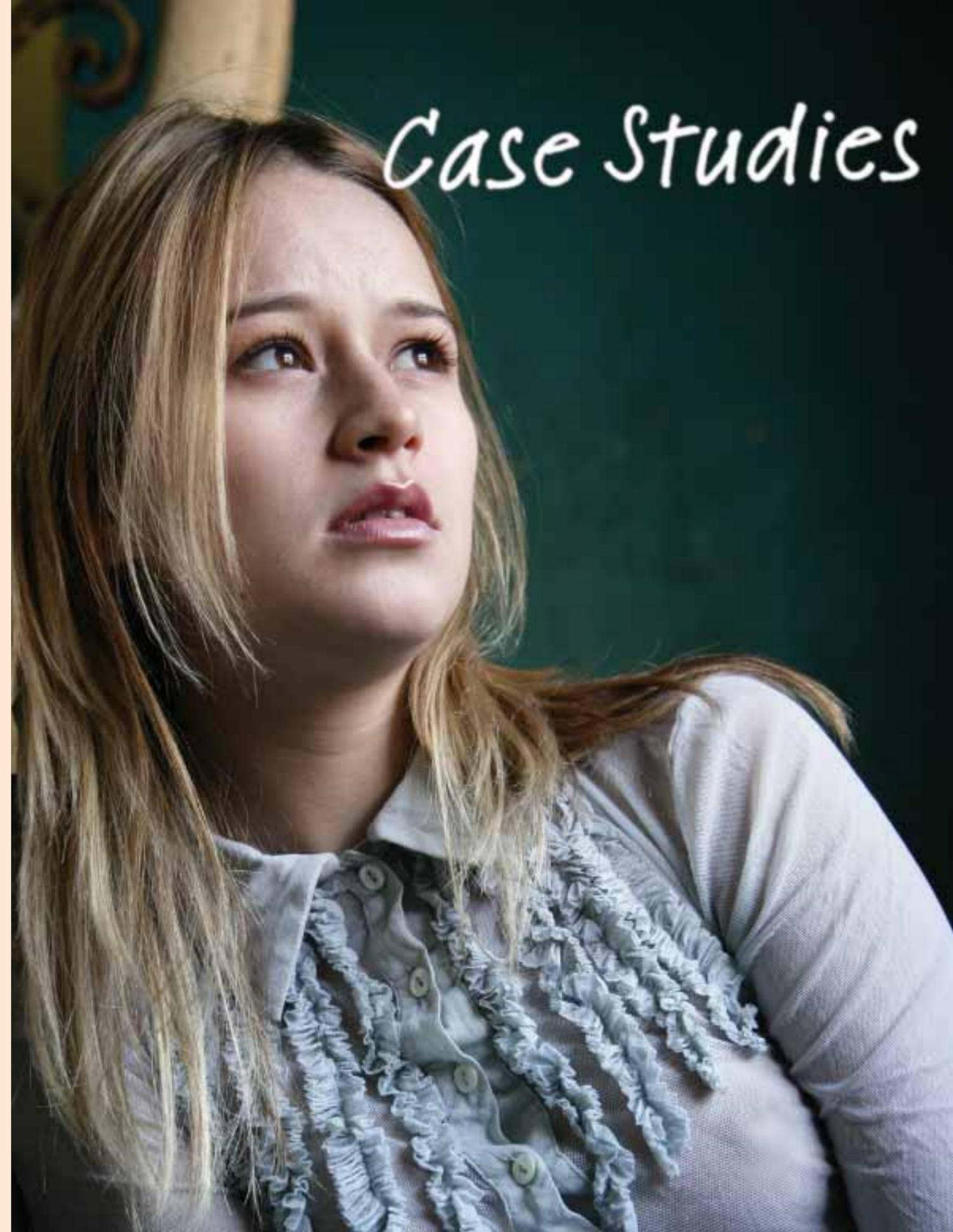
There was an apparent perception that when talking about provision for disadvantaged groups, the main issue to be considered was the level of accessibility for people with limited mobility, whereas other disadvantaged groups from each of the targeted communities were less well accommodated. Financial constraints may affect the provision of structural and environmental changes, however, other changes with minimal financial outlay could help break down some of the barriers for other underrepresented groups; this could be simply a case of providing appropriate information or training.

In some cases, there was an evident lack of consultation with users of the facilities to ensure appropriate access to information and the amenities that would enable everyone to enjoy outdoor activity opportunities. This lack of consultation suggested that attitudes of providers may have created a potential barrier to increasing participation in countryside recreation for underrepresented groups, and this was borne out by comments from the focus group survey.

Policy provision varied greatly between respondents to the questionnaire and this is a key issue to be addressed, to ensure appropriate provision for each of the targeted communities. With no specific policy to guide their working practice, this may have created problems for staff when dealing with people from these communities.

As reported by the respondents, key factors to help address the barriers are detailed in Tables 13, 14 and 15. Further recommendations are made in Chapter 6.

Case Studies



Case Studies - Introduction

To assist with the future development and implementation of any recommendations made as a result of this research, it was agreed to collate some case studies describing the provision of countryside recreation around the UK, particularly within Northern Ireland. The following case studies have been chosen to give a variety of situations and environments in which countryside recreation takes place and to highlight examples of good practice encouraging people from underrepresented groups to participate.

1 Belfast Activity Centre

Belfast Activity Centre (BAC) is a charitable organisation, working with young people of all abilities from all communities, on long term personal development programmes. It employs 14 full time staff, including a Disability Project Worker. The centre makes special provision for each of the targeted underrepresented groups. These include the following:

- working with RNIB to enable young people with vision impairment to achieve the Duke of Edinburgh Award (DOE), with handbooks available in Braille;
- special provision for guide dogs;
- changing rooms with visual alarms;
- availability of someone who can communicate in basic sign language and having signs in reception in the phonetic alphabet;
- young carers programme, allowing young people who are caring for relatives to work towards the DOE Award;
- BAC Disability Project worker having an input into the DOE Leadership Award, to ensure disability awareness;

- providing sessions specifically for young people with a learning disability;
- providing activities exactly the same for all groups, however with sessions adapted to ensure an appropriate pace of learning for individual needs;
- using photographic route cards and symbols for people with a learning disability;
- wheelchair access to indoor facilities, some trails and also mini buses;
- engaging with schools to integrate young people, referred through social services, with other groups;
- 'drop in' club for DOE Award scheme;
- provision for some minority ethnic communities to engage with the centre as a group or as individuals, to integrate with other groups;
- some staff from minority ethnic backgrounds;
- DOE leaflets available in a wide range of languages;
- maintaining a zero tolerance ethos towards issues such as racism and bullying, with staff members giving courses on these topics to other organisations.

These are only some of the special provisions made at BAC to ensure participation in countryside recreation by underrepresented groups. The director commented "We are not held back by our imagination; only by resources. We look at the young person's ability and see how we can work around that."

2 Killowen Outdoor Education Centre

Killowen's mission states that it uses the outdoors to design adventurous residential experiences to deliver quality social, personal, and educational opportunities which will enhance and complement the development, awareness and environmental responsibility of young people and their leaders. The centre makes special provision for each of the targeted underrepresented groups and these include the following:

- wheelchair access to indoor facilities;
- wheelchair access to some outdoor trails and activities such as a rope traverse;
- training for all staff, including administration, kitchen and cleaning staff, in terms of meeting the needs of people with a disability;
- through the Youth Service, targeting young people with a disability and organising special events with trained leaders;
- staff members having inclusion training through the Youth Service to raise awareness of the needs of disadvantaged groups;
- seeking specialist advice and assistance if special needs groups are using the centre;
- The Youth Service assisting in accessing young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, through Social Services;
- accommodating young people with a learning

disability in groups generally accompanied by their own leader or teacher;

- careful monitoring to keep a record of the different groups using the centre;
- young people from minority ethnic groups generally integrated within their school groups;
- integrating groups to include young people with a disability, young people from a minority ethnic community and those living within areas of disadvantage.

The Centre warden commented that attitudes to young people from underrepresented groups often create the most difficult barriers and insists that these attitudes must be challenged.

The philosophy of the centre is to "take all kids and let them try, we want everyone to have the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability."

3 Share Holiday Village

The Share Holiday Village (Share) was established in 1981 as Northern Ireland's contribution to the International Year of the Disabled. The Centre was established by a group of families who were frustrated they had nowhere to bring their disabled children on holidays. Share was therefore set up with the mission of promoting inclusion between people with disabilities and those without, through education, recreation and arts programmes.

Share has grown exponentially over the past 27 years to become Ireland's largest multi-activity centre attracting on average 10,000 residential visitors and 5,000 day visitors per year. The centre provides a wide range of watersports and land-based activities such as sailing, canoeing, climbing and archery.

Although Share has grown it has been careful not to lose its original focus. The centre's special provisions for the underrepresented groups are the following:

- all members of staff take part annually in disability awareness training, provided by a specialist trainer;
- 5 of the 17 chalets in the centre are used by organisations such as RNIB, Down Syndrome Association, Order of Malta etc. for residential activities. Other organisations like RNID bring residential groups throughout the year.
- all activities are wheelchair accessible. The first wheelchair accessible swimming-pool in Northern Ireland was built in the centre;
- a youth sailing scheme is available for visually impaired young people;
- loop system is provided in the conference suite;
- a successful summer scheme is provided for young people from 7-16 years old from TSN wards near to the centre;
- members of minority ethnic communities in the area are also involved in the summer scheme;
- a volunteer scheme is in place.

Share emphasises a "Can do" attitude throughout its service and always wants to stay a step ahead within the industry. Lately, this has become more challenging as other members of the industry "are catching up", therefore Share needs to improve constantly in order to keep its leading position secure.

4 Disabled Ramblers Northern Ireland

Disabled Ramblers Northern Ireland (DRNI) is an initiative of Shopmobility Belfast (SMB). It gives an opportunity to people with limited mobility to enjoy the countryside. In 2003, the Year of Disabled People SMB applied successfully for funding to appoint a Ramble Organiser and to organise 6 rambles.

Since then, various rambles have been organised every year between April and September. The rambles take place on a Sunday at various venues. Scooters are transported to the venue by the DRNI, but individuals need to make their own travel arrangements to the venue. Each ramble lasts at least 2-3 hours with a lunch break mid-way and finishes with a hot meal in a restaurant or café. Rambles always start off with a safety induction.

In order to meet the special needs of the participants during the rambles and to make sure that they are having an exceptional experience in the countryside the routes are assessed thoroughly beforehand. Approximately 10 criteria need to be fulfilled, such as accessible toilets, reasonable length (4-6 miles), reasonably surfaced paths, no steps, café or restaurant etc.

DRNI has approximately 80 members, mainly between 50-60 years of age, of which two thirds are able bodied, mainly family members and carers. The disabled members have exclusively mobility impairments.

DRNI with SMB is trying to encourage outdoor providers and landowners to provide accessible

walks and scooters. Within this programme providers/site managers can apply to rent four scooters for a three year period. During this time the scooters are maintained by DRNI/SMB and staff members receive training. After the three year period new scooters are provided. This has a cost of £1000. At the moment there are 12 sites which take part in this programme and more sites are showing interest in the scheme. However, to be able to use the scooters on these sites one has to be a member of SMB, or needs to be able to produce ID and proof of address, which can sometimes create difficulties.

DRNI and SMB are providing a Scooter Driving Licence which is a fairly simple procedure. Members are encouraged to do the test to assure scooter providers that they have the necessary skills to use the machine. It is a big responsibility for providers to supply scooters or powered wheelchairs on their sites.

As most of the members of the DRNI are aged between 50-60 years, an application has been made to the Big Lottery Fund to address the needs of younger people with limited mobility. The "TYREOUT" project aims to promote disabled rambling for people between 15-35 years. This project would be more adventurous, probably with special "all terrain" scooters involved for mountain use.

DRNI also aims to expand geographically, as at present, most members are from the greater Belfast area and the rambles are organized within a 40 mile radius from Belfast. In the future DRNI hopes to start regional groups in Enniskillen and

Londonderry. DRNI also plans to continue with the accreditation process of walks which are accessible for people with limited mobility. A free booklet - published by SMB - contains a selection of walks accredited by DRNI with easy to follow descriptions and maps.

5 The Cheetham Al Hilal Community Project

In the heart of 'sunny' Manchester, palm trees line the street and small children play safely in a paradise garden. At the Cheetham Al Hilal Community Project, the whole Muslim community has participated in an innovative project to improve the built and natural environment in a way which reflects the cultural diversity of the area. Female and male, young and old, everyone has contributed something to change this tiny plot from a waste ground into a rich resource for outdoor activities.

The Cheetham Al Hilal Community Project has been active since 1978 providing support to Muslim / Asian (predominantly Pakistani) people in the area and engaging in anti-racist and interfaith work. It moved to its current premises in 1982 and now caters for all ages, with activities such as the adult and toddler group, women's and men's groups, youth clubs for both girls and boys, supplementary education and mother tongue classes in English, Urdu and Arabic, training courses, recreation and leisure facilities, charity and cultural events, activities for disabled and elderly people, specialist and general advice and support.

Although the centre now has a team of paid staff, many of the activities are still volunteer led.

The centre itself is in two parts, the original building and a newer, purpose built structure housing recreation and leisure facilities. A narrow triangle of land in front of the old building was formerly used as a short cut by passers-by.

According to a case study by Groundwork Manchester Salford and Trafford (MST), “the garden was previously neglected, overgrown and full of broken glass and rubbish. This created a danger to local people, portrayed a poor visual impression of the area and did little to enhance the appearance of the well-maintained building, but with help from BEN, Groundwork (MST) and the multi-agency Environment Working Group in Cheetham, Al Hilal has been able to completely transform this postage stamp of land from an eyesore to an attractive feature and a useful facility for the community.

The first phase of the project began to tackle the front garden in January 2003. The Al Hilal Adult and Toddler group which meets here twice a week is linked with the Sure Start programme and has among its aims the provision of quality learning environments to promote early learning and enjoyable play for babies and children up to the age of 4. The community is justifiably proud of its new garden as being situated right on the main road as previously, there was no safe outdoor space in which the children could play.

Throughout the project the Al Hilal user group has been consulted about each phase of development. New flower beds have been made and plants and shrubs have been planted. When the garden was first opened, the adult and toddler leader was delighted with the sight of 100 children out in the

sunshine for the first time. Boys aged 5-16 years from the supplementary school volunteered to water the new garden regularly, using a hose pipe run through the window.

Al Hilal is really starting to think about how to make their project more environmentally sustainable. For instance, they already participate in a Muslim ‘clothes for charity’ scheme and have clothes banks outside the community centre. One leader suggested that in order to address the litter problem they might consider installing some drinks can recycling bins.

In the longer term, a range of building improvements and extensions are envisaged. An additional row of palm trees has been planted along the side of the building with the planting of others planned for the rear of the building. These are the first of their kind to appear in Manchester, and now other mosques and community groups are inspired and want to follow suit.

6 The Sensory Trust – Eden Project

The Sensory Trust promotes and implements:

- **An inclusive approach to design and management of outdoor spaces**
- **Richer connections between people and place**
- **Equality of access for all people, regardless of age, disability or background**

The Sensory Trust advises on issues, influences policy, assists professional practice, showcases good practice, conducts public consultation, organises user testing in collaboration with disabled people, provides training and education,

and develops design and management projects. It works with organisations in the UK and internationally to try out new ideas, share knowledge, create on-the-ground examples of best practice and evaluate the success of different techniques.

Working with the Eden Project in Cornwall, the Sensory Trust has assisted with the following projects:

The Core – This is a new education centre that was completed last year. The aim was to design and build it in as sustainable a way as possible, building up the social sustainability aspects throughout all stages of planning and construction. This included inclusive design briefs, setting real targets and providing training for the range of folks involved.

Rediscover – This project created exhibits and information about the Core. It was developed in a series of alternative formats including Braille, Large Print, Easy English, German, Japanese, French and Widgit.

Eden’s interpretation – A series of banners was designed to line the main walkway into and out of Eden. These simple and engaging messages set the scene when people arrive at Eden and provoke thought when they leave.

Eden exhibits – Ongoing support and advice are provided to help make the range of exhibits and messaging at Eden more engaging and accessible to the whole range of visitors, in particular, enriching the range of different sensory experiences and introducing accessible information techniques.

Play project – This is a new project, creating inclusive nature-based play for children of all ages and abilities. It will focus on hands-on, creative play, getting away from the idea that children’s play has to involve static play equipment from a catalogue.

New Ground – Working in partnership with the New Ground project, led by Eden and supported by the Carnegie Trust, the focus is on asset based community regeneration in peripheral rural areas like Cornwall. Community engagement sessions have been organised with older people investigating the subject of local community, what it means, how they have coped with changes in their lives and perspectives on the future.

Banrock garden – This is an exhibit in the outdoor landscape at Eden. In the early stages of the project, user consultations were held with people of different ages and with different disabilities, to inform the ideas. These user groups were also consulted after completion of the project to see how well the design had served to meet the expectations of the full range of people.

Eden’s summer music sessions – The Sensory Trust has worked with Eden to make sure the sessions are fantastic nights of entertainment for the whole range of visitors. As part of this, people with different disabilities were invited to give feedback about their experiences, thus advising how access and the quality of the sessions could be improved.



Recommendations - Introduction

The principal objectives of this research were to provide evidence of the barriers to participation in countryside recreation for people from the following communities:

- people with limited mobility
- people with a learning disability
- people with hearing impairment
- people with a visual impairment
- people living within areas of disadvantage
- people from minority ethnic communities.

In addition, the research set out to examine the barriers faced by providers and landowners in providing countryside activities and amenities for the targeted groups. Case studies were also examined to identify examples of good practice. It is anticipated that these case studies could be used as a basis for pilot projects amongst policy makers and as a learning tool for providers who wish to implement policies and actions to address these barriers.

As a result of the research and in order to address the reported barriers for both participants and providers, the following recommendations are made, under 7 key areas.

1 Raising Awareness

- 1.1** The phrase 'countryside recreation' was not well understood by most respondents, with few realising that urban parks could be classified as such. A similar lack of knowledge was evident for water and air activities. In order to standardise its meaning for future awareness and information purposes it is recommended that the term 'outdoor recreation' would better reflect the width of activities available in this category of sport and physical recreation.
- 1.2** In addition to raising awareness with regard to outdoor recreation amongst underrepresented communities, there is an equal responsibility amongst policy makers and providers to be more aware of the needs and abilities of these groups. This can best be done through appropriate training.
- 1.3** Any information on countryside recreation activities should include the benefits of taking part, particularly the benefits to health, both physical and mental.

1.4 The perception that ‘countryside recreation’ is something that takes place “far away” needs to be challenged. This could be done by organisations such as community groups and their leaders raising awareness of local amenities and initiatives.

1.5 Local community groups should be encouraged to initiate ‘outreach’ programmes to build bridges with minority ethnic communities, helping them to integrate into local society and become more aware of recreational opportunities.

1.6 Acceptable and accessible terminology should be used to describe the various activities and amenities available at each location.

1.7 Links should be made with schools to encourage them to make more use of countryside amenities and activities for their pupils, not just for a yearly trip to the outdoor education centre, but on a regular basis using local amenities. Behaviours that have been established early in life help to induce a lifelong habit.

1.8 Organisations involved in countryside recreation should be encouraged to liaise with local schools to develop school/club links.

1.9 Organisations involved in countryside recreational activities should organise ‘come and try it’ events to encourage wider participation. These should not be ‘one off’ events, but should continue for a minimum of 6 sessions after which, contact should be

maintained. Properly trained leaders and any specialist equipment required should be available.

2 Information and marketing

2.1 A major barrier for all underrepresented communities was the lack of information and knowledge of what was available in terms of countryside recreation opportunities. It is therefore recommended that organisations involved in countryside recreation should liaise with these groups when developing information and marketing strategies to ensure they are compliant with best practice.

2.2 Providers should target local people as well as tourists.

2.3 Among respondents who contributed to the focus groups, there was widespread use of the web to access information, therefore, web sites need to be accessible to all underrepresented groups.

2.4 Many groups, such as RNIB, RNID and MENCAP have web sites devoted to advising policy makers on the appropriate format to use when producing information leaflets and websites. It is recommended that this should happen before designing the web site, rather than retrospectively. Some web site addresses are available at Appendix 5.

2.5 Many people from minority ethnic communities speak some English. Others are learning English and therefore the need for widespread translation into many of these languages is not recommended as being

cost effective. However, it is recommended that policy makers make contact with translators to enable them to produce leaflets in a range of languages, should the need arise.

2.6 There are only approximately 200 people who use Braille in Northern Ireland, therefore it is not recommended that all information should be translated into Braille, however, as with minority ethnic languages, contact should be made with a Braille writer who can produce information in this format on request.

2.7 Information regarding the availability of different formats on web sites should be clearly stated on the home page.

2.8 Web sites, set up for individual minority ethnic communities, should be able to link with websites devoted to countryside recreation.

2.9 People who have a hearing impairment are not able to pick up casual information regarding opportunities for participating in countryside recreation, and many are restricted to visiting tourist spots, simply because they do not know ‘what’s on’. It is therefore necessary for providers to make links with groups such as the RNID to ensure information about their amenities and activities is available to all.

2.10 Reception kiosks at the entrance to amenities should have paper and pencil available for people with a hearing impairment to be able to ask questions and

receive information. Information can also be accessed using text messages on mobile phones.

2.11 Information that is contained in leaflets, posters and websites should state clearly which facilities and activities are available for all people with a disability, not just those with limited mobility.

2.12 Local shops should be used as information and leaflet depots, particularly in rural areas where local tourist offices are often closed.

2.13 The popular article ‘Walk of the Week’, currently featured in the Belfast Telegraph should be included in specialist web sites and magazines such as those aimed at minority ethnic communities or people with disabilities.

2.14 Information should be available in simple, plain English to allow its accessibility for people who have a learning disability and those who have reading difficulties. This is also recommended to assist people for whom English is a second language and also people with a hearing impairment.

2.15 A system of symbol assisted language called ‘Widgits’ is available for people with learning disabilities. Policy makers and providers should be aware of this system when developing their amenities and information. For contact details see Appendix 5.

2.16 A system of universal and inclusive design is being developed to ensure accessibility for everyone. Universal Design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. For contact details see Appendix 5.

2.17 It is recommended that language should not only be in plain English but that the text should be short and uncomplicated. As one respondent commented “Less information is more”. See MENCAP’s website in Appendix 5.

2.18 Information should be available to parents regarding the types of activities to be enjoyed by young people at specific activity centres, including procedures in place for safety and risk management, to ensure all young people have permission to participate fully with the programme.

2.19 When maps are produced for forest parks or activities such as orienteering they should be easily understood and consideration should be given to making them available in a tactile format for people with a visual impairment.

2.20 Problems with information and marketing were reported to be a major barrier to participation for underrepresented groups; it is therefore recommended that a full time marketing officer is appointed to address this issue.

3 Leadership

3.1 All focus group members, with the exception of people with a hearing impairment, said that a leader with responsibility for organising activities would encourage them to become involved in countryside recreation. It is therefore recommended that a network of leaders is employed to work with the underrepresented groups to develop initiatives to increase participation.

3.2 Although many walk leaders are working through a variety of organisations, there is no co-ordination of this work and no standardised training system. It is strongly recommended that further research is carried out to audit the current situation and identify gaps in provision. One body should therefore have the role of coordinating this work through a dedicated officer to ensure an overall approach.

3.3 Recruitment of leaders should be encouraged from within the underrepresented groups to encourage capacity building and increase confidence within specific communities. This would also help to address the feelings of isolation felt by some people from minority ethnic communities.

3.4 Leaders should be encouraged to build up a network of sighted people who would be willing to act as partners for people with a visual impairment.

3.5 Leaders should be encouraged to arrange local activities to help raise awareness of local amenities and help to overcome the lack of confidence expressed by some respondents regarding travelling outside their ‘comfort zone’. Lack of time was reported as a barrier for some respondents so the use of local amenities may help to lessen this barrier.

3.6 A local leaders’ network should establish appropriate links to providers and policy makers to act as advocates and consultants in addressing the barriers to participation for individual communities.

3.7 Regular seminars, forums and network meetings should be available to bring together leaders, providers and community representatives to give confidence to both providers and consumers in the use of the countryside for recreation.

4 Facilities

4.1 Signs within and around amenities should be clear and well maintained, using well known and easily recognised symbols.

4.2 Where possible, wardens should be available to deter anti-social behaviour and to monitor the condition of paths and signs.

4.3 Entry conditions to amenities should be clearly marked, including entry fees, opening and closing times and availability of toilet and café facilities.

4.4 Many facilities are DDA compliant in terms of wheelchair access; however, it was reported that many facilities that are supposed to be wheelchair user friendly were unsuitable. It is therefore recommended that people who use wheelchairs and/or power scooters should test the facilities and use a rating system to endorse satisfactory provision.

4.5 People within other categories of disability are not so well catered for; it is recommended that providers should carry out an audit of their facilities, in light of these findings, with a view to implementing appropriate changes.

4.6 Places of popular interest and outdoor activity centres should have access to someone who can use sign language, or failing the availability of an actual person, the use of DVDs with virtual signers should be considered.

4.7 Amenities that have telephone access should have a loop telephone system.

4.8 Toilet and changing facilities should include provision for adults with multiple disabilities.

4.9 Consideration should be given to the provision of amenities for guide dogs eg. water bowls and waste bins.

4.10 Paths should be well maintained, free from obstructions and monitored on a regular basis.

4.11 Consideration should be given to the introduction of a standardised marking system for outdoor recreation amenities.

5 Training and capacity building

- 5.1 Results of the research indicated that training on a variety of levels should be developed to improve opportunities for, and encourage participation in, outdoor recreation.
- 5.2 There should be leadership training for community leaders, particularly those from within the underrepresented communities to help with capacity building and sustainability of projects.
- 5.3 Awareness training, child protection training, equity training and training on relevant legislation should be in place for all staff working with the public in outdoor facilities, including part-time and seasonal staff. This extensive training programme should help ensure equitable practice when working with underrepresented groups.
- 5.4 Training for policy makers should include awareness training and training on all relevant legislation. This should include links with organisations working with underrepresented communities, to ensure a 'buy in' by all stake holders and consultation on the development of future strategies.
- 5.5 In order to ensure sustainability and further development in the use of the outdoors for recreation, it is strongly recommended that a full-time training officer should be in place, to develop and expand current training for providers and to build capacity amongst underrepresented communities.

6 Transport

- 6.1 Lack of regular transport, particularly in rural areas was reported as being a major barrier to accessing countryside amenities for recreation, therefore links should be made between community leaders and bus companies to try to arrange an accommodation. This may involve hiring buses to visit local amenities for organised activities or local pick-up services operating at weekends to popular destinations.
- 6.2 Transport companies should monitor their provision on public transport for wheelchair access, to ensure that ramps etc are properly maintained and in working order.
- 6.3 Drivers of public transport should have awareness training to ensure that they meet the needs of people with disabilities when entering and leaving their vehicle.
- 6.4 Taxi companies providing 'wheelchair friendly' cabs should ensure that they comply with regulations to ensure that they can accommodate all wheelchairs.

7 Policy development and implementation

- 7.1 All providers of countryside activities and facilities should be working towards developing and implementing policies for meeting the needs of the underrepresented communities. These policies should be in line with current legislation as described in Chapter 1; a monitoring and evaluation process should be integral to all policies.

- 7.2 Some good work is ongoing between providers of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, President's Award, uniformed organisations and the underrepresented groups. This area of work should be expanded where possible to build bridges and strengthen those links.
- 7.3 Organisations and agencies with a countryside recreation remit should work in close co-operation to ensure a 'joined up' approach and ensure equal opportunities for all to enjoy the many benefits of outdoor recreation,

Finally, on a broader, societal level, it was clear from the research that there is an attitudinal problem towards people from the underrepresented communities and this has adversely affected their integration into everyday activities, including outdoor recreation. It was reported that these attitudes include negativity towards the abilities of people with a disability to take part, and are apparent amongst the general public and providers as well as parents and carers. It was the intention of this research project to give a voice to some people from underrepresented communities to enable them to highlight these and other barriers. By giving their time to become involved in focus groups, these people will have contributed to the anticipated outcomes of the research which is to initiate change that will give them the choice of increasing their participation in outdoor recreation, and in the process, contributing to a more inclusive society.



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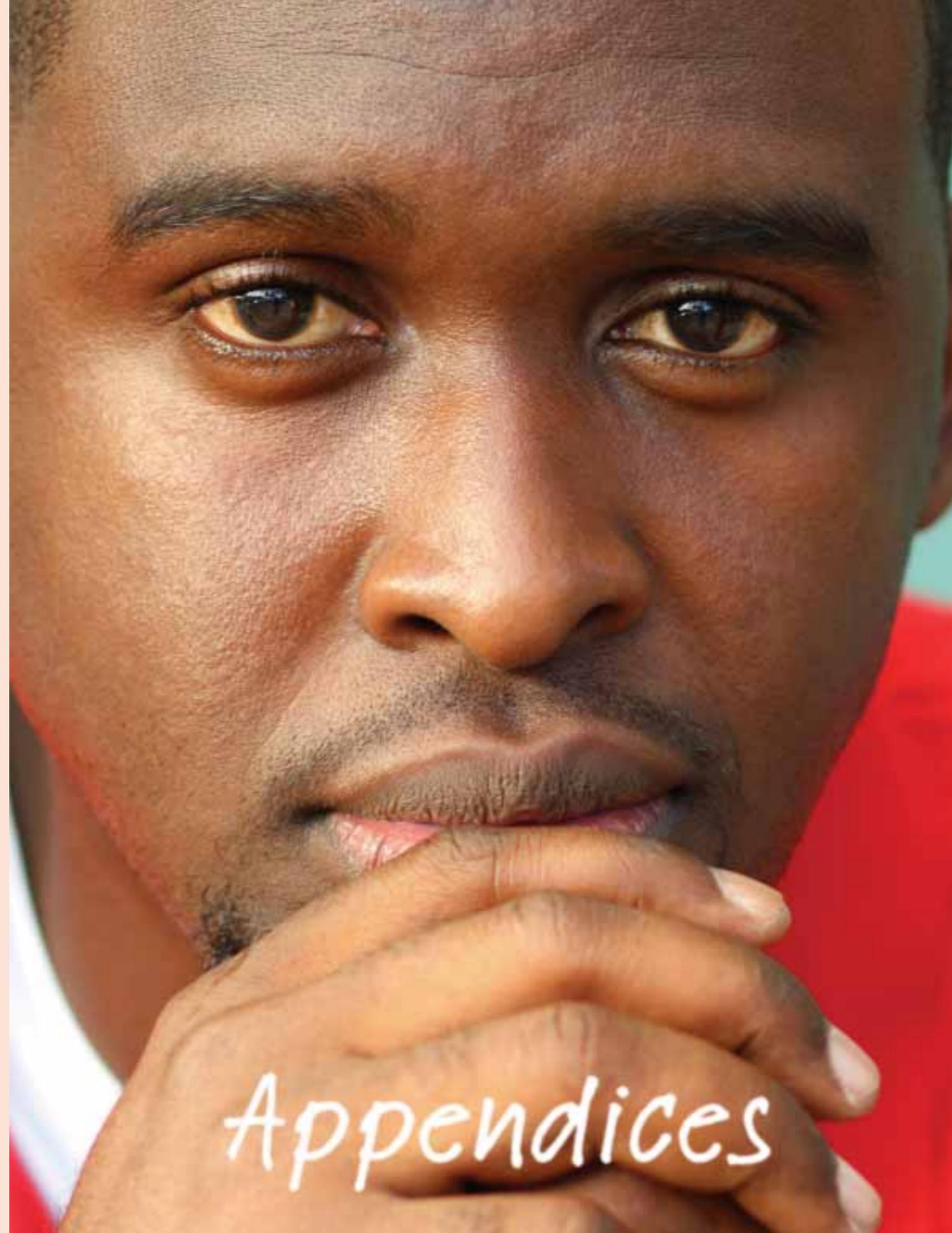
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Appendices

1 Focus Group questions

1 When I say 'countryside recreation or activities', what do you think of?

2 What benefits do you feel you would get from taking part in countryside recreation or activities?

Probes:

- It's good for my health
- Helps me get fit
- A chance to get away from it all
- To get out of the house
- To get a breath of fresh air
- To be by myself
- To be with friends
- A chance to meet people, to make friends
- To do something different
- To challenge myself
- To see the plants and trees
- Just to enjoy myself
- Helps relieve stress
- None

3 Do you visit the countryside for recreation?

4 If yes. What things do you think about when deciding to visit the countryside?

Probes:

- Distance from home
- Transport
- Facilities available (including toilets, café etc)
- Car parking
- Activities available
- Appropriate access
- Previous experience
- Safety
- Cost

5 How often would you visit the countryside for recreation?

Probes:

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once a fortnight
- Once a month
- Infrequently (once or twice a year)

6 Do you generally go alone, with family or with friends?

7 What stops you using the countryside for recreation?

Probes:

- I don't want to
- I'm not interested
- I haven't the time
- I already do enough physical activity/sport in other ways
- I don't know where to go
- I don't know what there is to do
- I don't know where to find information
- I have no one to go with
- I live too far out of the way
- I can't get there – don't have transport.
- I'm afraid I might get lost
- I'm afraid I might injure myself
- I'm afraid for my safety
- I can't afford to buy special clothes or equipment
- I prefer to stay close to home
- I don't know whether it caters for my disability
- I don't feel welcome/comfortable

8 Of all the things you have mentioned that stops you going to the countryside for recreation, what are the three most important?

9 What would encourage you to use the countryside/outdoors for recreation?

Probes:

- Nothing – I'm not interested
- Someone to go with
- Someone to show me what to do and where to go – a leader
- If I could do it from my front door
- If there was a group of people I could join
- Organised activities
- Organised transport – from my front door
- Better information
- Better signposting in the countryside
- More appropriate facilities to cater for my disability
- Better facilities
- Family focused activities/facilities
- Information and signage in
 - a) Braille
 - b) my mother tongue
- Availability of specialist equipment

10 What sort of activities would interest you in the countryside?

Probes:

- A gentle walk/dander on flat ground
- Hill walking
- Rambling
- Cycling
- Fishing
- Horse riding
- The environment – plants, insects, trees
- History trails
- Orienteering
- High ropes course

- Adventure playgrounds
- Mountain biking
- Water sports (canoeing, kayaking etc)
- Air sports (paragliding, parachuting etc)

11 If you had an opportunity to visit the countryside to take part in an activity of your choice, would you go?

12 Where/what is the most convenient place/outlet for you to find out about countryside activities?

Probes:

- Health centre
- School
- Community centre
- Youth club
- Specialist journal
- Libraries
- Local newspaper
- Place of worship
- Radio/TV
- Internet

13 Is there anything else you would like to say about how you could be helped to get involved in countryside recreation?

2 Questionnaire for Countryside Recreation Providers/Site Managers

		For Office Use Only
1. Name? _____		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Organisation/Facility? _____		<input type="checkbox"/>
3. What is your position in your organisation/facility? _____		
4. How many employees are there in your organisation?		
i) Less than 5	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ii) 5-10	<input type="checkbox"/>	
iii) 10-30	<input type="checkbox"/>	
iv) Over 30	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. How many people use your services/facilities per annum?		
i) Less than 100	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ii) 100-200	<input type="checkbox"/>	
iii) 200-500	<input type="checkbox"/>	
iv) 500-1000	<input type="checkbox"/>	
v) 1000-5000	<input type="checkbox"/>	
vi) More than 5000	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Which countryside activities/facilities do you provide? (Please tick all that apply)		
a) Walking <input type="checkbox"/>	b) Parachuting <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
c) Rambling <input type="checkbox"/>	d) Horse riding <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
e) Orienteering <input type="checkbox"/>	f) Sailing <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
g) Cycling <input type="checkbox"/>	h) Canoeing <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
i) Mountain Biking <input type="checkbox"/>	j) High ropes course <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
k) Archery <input type="checkbox"/>	l) Ecotrails <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
m) Kayaking <input type="checkbox"/>	n) Para-gliding <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

2 Questionnaire for Countryside Recreation Providers/Site Managers

		For Office Use Only
Other (please specify) _____		
Other _____		
Other _____		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do you offer provision for people with a disability to use your facilities? (Please circle) Yes No		<input type="checkbox"/>
8. If you answered 'yes' to question 7, what provision do you make? If you answered 'no' move to question 9 (Please tick all that apply)		
i) Accessibility for wheelchair users to indoor facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) Accessibility for wheelchair users to some outdoor trails/activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Accessibility for wheelchair users to all outdoor trails and activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Information leaflets in Braille	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v) Loop telephone system for people with hearing impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vi) Availability of someone who can communicate in sign language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vii) Training for all staff in terms of meeting the needs of people with a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
viii) Training for staff on relevant legislation with regard to provision for people with a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ix) Special events with trained leaders, aimed specifically at people with a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
x) Information and awareness campaigns, aimed specifically at people with a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
xi) Consultation with local organisations or agencies working specifically with people with a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
xii) Distribution of information to community groups/libraries/schools/ places of worship/health clinics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
xiii) 'Come and try it' events for people with a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____		
Other _____		
Other _____		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

2 Questionnaire for Countryside Recreation Providers/Site Managers

	For Office Use Only												
<p>14. If you answered 'yes' to i), ii) or iii) of question 13 please outline below:</p> <p>a) the main elements of your policy and b) the processes used to evaluate the outcomes of the policy for each group. If you answered 'no' to question 13 move to question 15</p>													
<p>i) Policy for addressing the needs of people with a disability</p> <p>a) Main elements _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>b) Evaluation process _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>													
<p>ii) Policy for addressing the needs of people living within areas of disadvantage</p> <p>a) Main elements _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>b) Evaluation process _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>													
<p>iii) Policy for addressing the needs of people from ethnic minorities</p> <p>a) Main elements _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>b) Evaluation process _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>													
<p>15. If you answered 'no' to question 13, do you plan to implement such a policy for: (please circle)</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">i) People with a disability?</td> <td style="width: 10%;">Yes</td> <td style="width: 10%;">No</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>ii) People living within areas of disadvantage?</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>iii) People from ethnic minorities?</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		i) People with a disability?	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	ii) People living within areas of disadvantage?	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	iii) People from ethnic minorities?	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) People with a disability?	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/>										
ii) People living within areas of disadvantage?	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/>										
iii) People from ethnic minorities?	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/>										

2 Questionnaire for Countryside Recreation Providers/Site Managers

	For Office Use Only
<p>16. What are the barriers, if any, for you as an organisation in encouraging people from the following communities to use your facilities/activities? (Please tick all that apply)</p>	
<p>a) People with a disability</p> <p>i) No organisational policy in place <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>ii) No strategic plan to address the issues <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>iii) Lack of human resources <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>iv) Lack of financial resources <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>v) Lack of appropriately trained staff <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>vi) Lack of appropriate facilities <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>vii) There is no expressed demand <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>viii) Other issues have higher priority <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>b) People living within areas of disadvantage</p> <p>i) No organisational policy in place <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>ii) No strategic plan to address the issues <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>iii) Lack of human resources <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>iv) Lack of financial resources <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>v) Lack of appropriately trained staff <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>vi) Lack of appropriate facilities <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>vii) There is no expressed demand <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>viii) Other issues have higher priority <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other (please Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

2 Questionnaire for Countryside Recreation Providers/Site Managers

	For Office Use Only	
c) People from ethnic minorities		
i) No organisational policy in place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) No strategic plan to address the issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Lack of human resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Lack of financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v) Lack of appropriately trained staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vi) Lack of appropriate facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vii) There is no expressed demand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
viii) Other issues have higher priority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____		
Other _____		
17. What would help you as an organisation to address these barriers and increase participation in countryside recreation for:		
a) People with a disability? (Please tick all that apply)		
i) Agreed organisational policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) Specific actions and targets set within your strategic plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Appropriate training provided for all staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Practical, specialist advice on site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v) 'Ring fenced' financial resources to improve/provide essential facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vi) Links with local targeted groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vii) Regular forums with other providers to review best practice eg seminars, conferences, study trips, field trips.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
viii) Handbook/guidelines for staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____		
Other _____		

2 Questionnaire for Countryside Recreation Providers/Site Managers

	For Office Use Only	
b) People living within areas of disadvantage? (Please tick all that apply)		
i) Agreed organisational policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) Specific actions and targets set within your strategic plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Appropriate training provided for all staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Practical, specialist advice on site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v) 'Ring fenced' financial resources to improve/provide essential facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vi) Links with local targeted groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vii) Regular forums with other providers to review best practice eg seminars, conferences, study trips, field trips.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
viii) Handbook/guidelines for staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____		
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____		
c) People from ethnic minorities (Please tick all that apply)		
i) Agreed organisational policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) Specific actions and targets set within your strategic plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Appropriate training provided for all staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Practical, specialist advice on site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v) 'Ring fenced' financial resources to improve/provide essential facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vi) Links with local targeted groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vii) Regular forums with other providers to review best practice eg seminars, conferences, study trips, field trips.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
viii) Handbook/guidelines for staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____		
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____		

4 To all who supported us by arranging focus groups for our Research into Barriers to Participation in Countryside Recreation.

My colleague, Eszter Ballo and I would like to thank you most sincerely for your assistance in organising a focus group for us for the above project. I know how difficult it is to get people together, particularly at a busy time of the year. Your help is greatly appreciated and I hope you will find it has been of use to you and your group when you get the final report. The report is due to be published by the end of March 2008.

At the focus group meetings, we asked if participants would be willing to take part in a day of activity, and everyone seemed keen to take part. We are now asking you and your group to assist us further, by organising a day trip to one of your local countryside facilities. We are keen to find out if the barriers we discussed at the focus group meetings are apparent when you actually undertake a trip. We are therefore, asking you to plan a trip using the attached planning sheet for the whole group and when complete, return the sheet on line to this email address. We will pay for any reasonable transport costs incurred, if you forward your receipts to us at CAAN, The Stableyard, Barnett's Demesne, Malone Road, Belfast BT9 5PB

We are asking if it would be possible for you to carry out your trip on any date up until the weekend of 9th/10th of February and return the completed planning sheet on-line, by 11th/12th of February.

For your convenience, a list of facilities for each location is attached and I do hope that your group will take this opportunity to take part in what should be an enjoyable and beneficial day for all.

Thanks again for your help and please contact us if you need any more information or assistance.

Olive Brown & Eszter Ballo

Suggestions for field trip venues

NB These are only suggestions – you may pick a local venue of your choice

Belfast

Cavehill Country Park
Ormeau Park
Shaws Bridge
Lagan Valley towpath
Divis Mountain
Waterworks
Connswater Greenway

Portadown

Tannaghmore Gardens
Craigavon Lakes
Oxford Island

Crossmaglen

Slieve Gullion Forest Park

Ballymena

People's Park
ECOS Centre

Cookstown

Drum Manor Forest Park
Loughrey College

Dungiven

Roe Valley Country Park
Banagher Glen
Ness Wood

Killeter

Killeter Forest Park

Visit to the Countryside - Planning sheet

Group _____

Contact name, tel no. & email _____

Activity venue & date _____

Participants' names _____

Please list your planning steps, including any problems encountered in each of the following aspects of your plan:

NB. Please complete sections 1 – 3 before you set off for your day out, the remainder of the form will be completed after the event

1. The date and time of the activity – What factors did you have to take into account when planning the date and time of your trip? _____

Any problems? _____

2. The Venue – Where did you find information about the venue? Was it easy to access? Did it tell you all you needed to know about the facilities, toilets, café, wheelchair accessibility, state of the paths? car parking, costs? Etc. _____

Any problems? _____

3. Organising transport to the venue - Is there easily accessible public transport? Are time tables and routes clearly set out and suitable for everyone? What form of transport did you take and why?

Any problems? _____

4. Your journey to the venue - Were the signposts suitable and easily understood? Was it easy to find the entrance to the facility? _____

Any problems? _____

5. Arrival at the venue - Was the entrance clearly marked? Was signposting within the facility easily understood? Was there a welcoming look to the facility? Was information easily accessible and understood at the venue? Were facilities such as toilets/cafes etc easily accessible for all and clearly signposted? Were points of interest clearly available and accessible for all?

Any problems? _____

6. On-site experience - Was the facility well maintained, including paths, toilets, seats, café? Were you able to go everywhere you wanted to go? Did you enjoy yourself?

Any problems? _____

7. Return home - How was your journey home, in terms of transport?

Any problems? _____

8. Any other comments, including suggestions on how your experience could have been improved.

Is there anything that could have made your day more enjoyable? Would you visit this venue again?

Will you continue to take part in countryside activities?

Thank you

5 Useful Contacts and Websites

Belfast Activity Centre - www.belfastactivitycentre.com

Black Environment Network - www.ben-network.org.uk

Chinese Welfare Association - www.cwa-ni.org

Disabled Ramblers - www.shopmobilitybelfast.co.uk/ramblers.htm

Disability Action - www.disabilityaction.org

FACE Inclusion Matters - www.inclusionmatters.org

Glenshane Community Development - www.glenshane.ik.com

Greater Shankill Partnership - www.mygroupni.com/shankillpartnership/

MENCAP - www.mencap.org.uk

MENCAP's guidelines for accessible writing -

http://www.mencap.org.uk/download/making_myself_clear.pdf

Polish Association Northern Ireland - www.polskibelfast.pl

Regeneration of South Armagh - www.rosa.ie

Royal National Institute of Blind People - www.rnib.org.uk

Royal National Institute of Deaf People - www.rnid.org.uk

Sensory Trust - www.sensorytrust.org.uk

Share Holiday Village - www.sharevillage.org

Shopmobility Belfast - www.shopmobilitybelfast.co.uk

Software for Accessible Symbols - www.widgit.com

The Centre for Universal Design - www.design.ncsu.edu/cud

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Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) is an umbrella organisation that brings together groups and bodies that have an interest in, or involvement with, countryside recreation. This includes those taking part in countryside recreation activities, local and central government organisations, farmers and landowners, environmental and community organisations, youth organisations and providers of outdoor education.

The Network is tasked with the strategic development, management and promotion of countryside recreation across Northern Ireland.

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