

# Report on Healthier Me survey

## April-May 2024

### 1. Overview

Mencap are a long-established and leading specialist learning disability organisation, who have been operating across Northern Ireland, England and Wales for over 60 years. Each year, Mencap NI supports thousands of people with a learning disability to live their lives the way they choose, by providing a range of services and activities to people with a learning disability of all ages, and their families. We also work in partnership with people with a learning disability across Northern Ireland to fight to change laws and improve services and access to education, employment and leisure facilities.

In the UK, just over 2% of adults have a learning disability: in Northern Ireland this equates to 42,000 people with a learning disability, including 31,000 adults. Our vision here is for Northern Ireland to be the best place in the world for people with a learning disability to live happy and healthy lives.

However, it is well documented that people with a learning disability have worse physical and mental health than those without a learning disability. For example, the life expectancy of women with a learning disability is 18 years shorter than for women in the general population, while for men this is 14 years shorter (NHS Digital 2017). People with a learning disability are also over 25% more likely to be obese than those without a learning disability (NHS Digital, 2019) and are significantly more likely to die younger (LeDeR 2022).

### 2. Healthier Me survey

In response to this – and following on from Mencap’s health-related campaigning and awareness-raising activities in recent years - Mencap NI have decided to focus on healthier lifestyles, for people with a learning disability, initially for the year ahead.

As part of this, in recent months, Mencap carried out a ‘Healthier Me’ online survey, of people with a learning disability across Northern Ireland. This survey was developed and issued to gather data on the current situation, as this information is not published or updated for people with a learning disability across NI. The survey ran from 24 April – 21 May 2024 and was promoted widely including to Mencap NI services, among NI network partners, through Mencap NI wider networks and on social media.

Key findings from the 54 people with a learning disability and supporters who completed this survey include:

- All 11 Councils had at least 1 respondent to the survey – the biggest number of respondents came from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council (22%), followed by Mid-Ulster (15%), Derry City & Strabane (13%), Belfast (11%), Causeway Coast & Glens (9%) etc;
- Around two thirds of respondents were female. Most of the respondents (53%) were aged 25-44 years and over a quarter (26%) were aged 45-64 years[;];
- While some people were completing the survey for other people with a learning disability, most respondents (65%) completed the survey themselves. Of these, more than three quarters (77%) were happy to state they had a learning disability – most of these (74%) lived with their family
- Most respondents could describe healthy food clearly and 76% of respondents claimed to eat healthy food at least 2-3 times per week;

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- Almost two thirds (63%) of respondents also confirmed they could cook / prepare their own food;
- Equally, most respondents could describe unhealthy or junk food and many (61%) also claimed to eat unhealthy food / junk food at least 2-3 times /week;
- Although 67% of respondents say they exercise at least twice a week (almost all cited walking), more people (74%) said they would like to exercise more;
- Although many respondents were unsure what would help them exercise more, there were many other specific suggestions – including more group activities, more supports and more things to do;
- More than half (57%) of respondents do not belong to a club or society in their area – but a similar number of respondents also said they would like to be more involved in their local community.
- Again, respondents were able to specify what local groups they were in – there was also a wide range of suggestions on the types of activity that people would like to do more of in their local community
- Finally, most final comments were very supportive of any plans for activities and supports that could enable people with a learning disability to live healthier lifestyles.

### 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

Although the findings from this survey really only scratch the surface, Mencap are very pleased with the level of engagement with this research among people with a learning disability across all parts of Northern Ireland.

We are particularly encouraged at the positive initial feedback, from people with a learning disability, their level of self-awareness and their general recognition that they could make further progress and live healthier lifestyles if the right structures and supports are in place.

Mencap are also delighted that a number of 'Healthier Me' Ambassadors with a learning disability, who are local to each Council area, have been identified and are happy to help us make the case for improved local provision. Mencap are keen to engage with local planners and decision makers – particularly in all 11 local Councils – over the coming months, to develop strong partnerships and help local citizens with a learning disability to be more included in local programmes and community life.

### 4. Asks

- (1) That DOH / PHA review the overly clinical messaging and terminology associated with strategies that encourage people to live healthier lifestyles. For example, the focus on 'tackling obesity' may have negative connotations for many – this should, instead, be more holistic and inclusive;
- (2) That the 11 local Councils across NI collaborate with Mencap, drawing on the lived experience of the many people we support. The aim is to improve accessibility and inclusion of people with a learning disability in local provision, thus leading to better health-related outcomes;
- (3) That existing Council provision - particularly relating to leisure, wellbeing, healthy lifestyles and community connectivity - is accessible to all people with a learning disability who live in that area.



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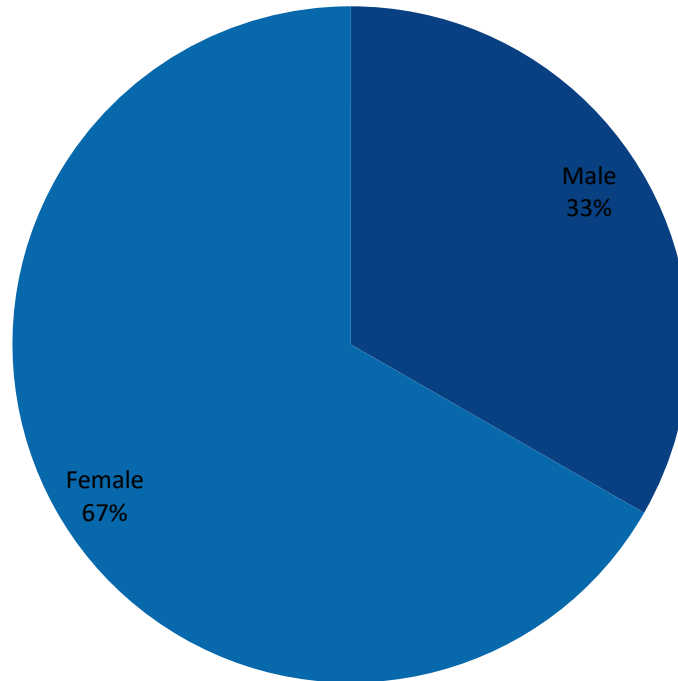
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### Response Statistics

	Count	Percent
Complete	54	100
Totals	54	

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## 1. What gender are you?

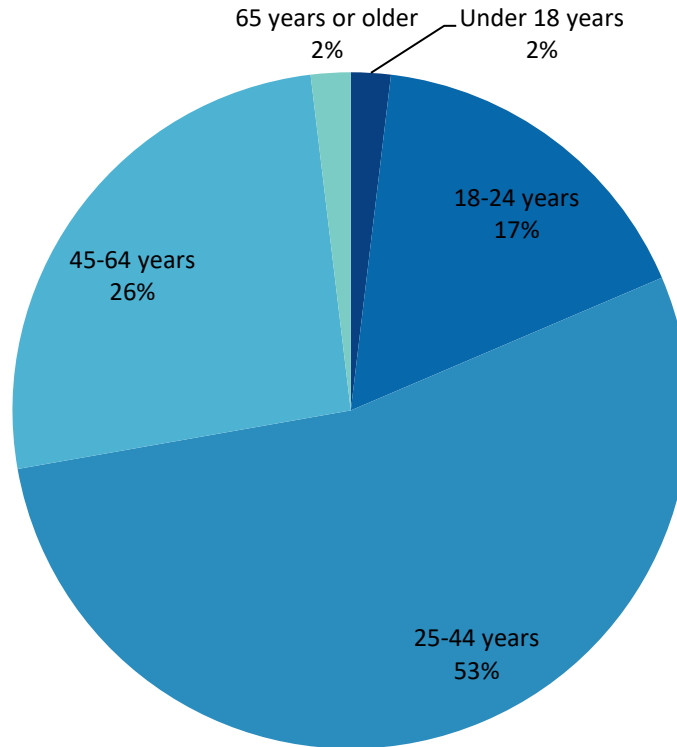


Value	Percent	Count
Male	33.3%	18
Female	66.7%	36
	Totals	54

Other - Write In	Count
Totals	0

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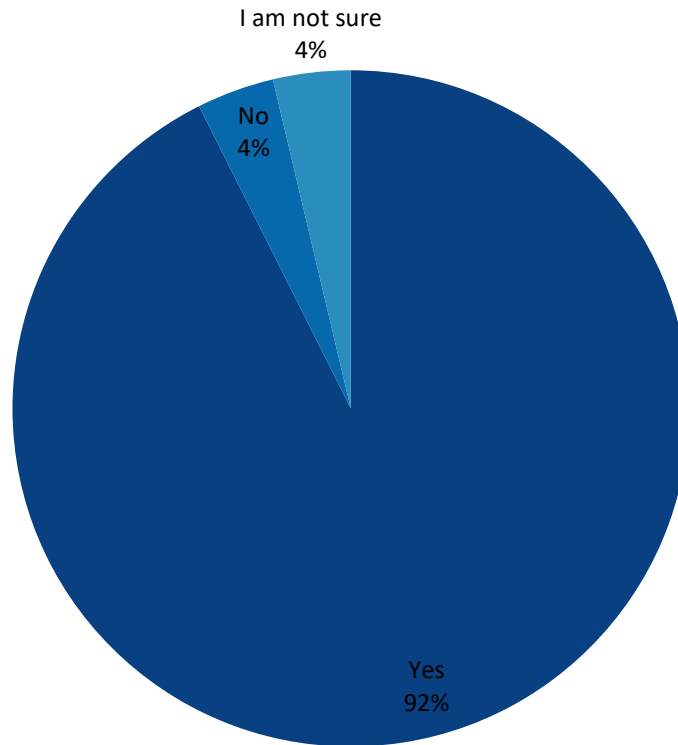
## 2. What age group are you?



Value	Percent	Count
Under 18 years	1.9%	1
18-24 years	16.7%	9
25-44 years	53.7%	29
45-64 years	25.9%	14
65 years or older	1.9%	1
	Totals	54

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### 3. Do you know the local Council area you live in?

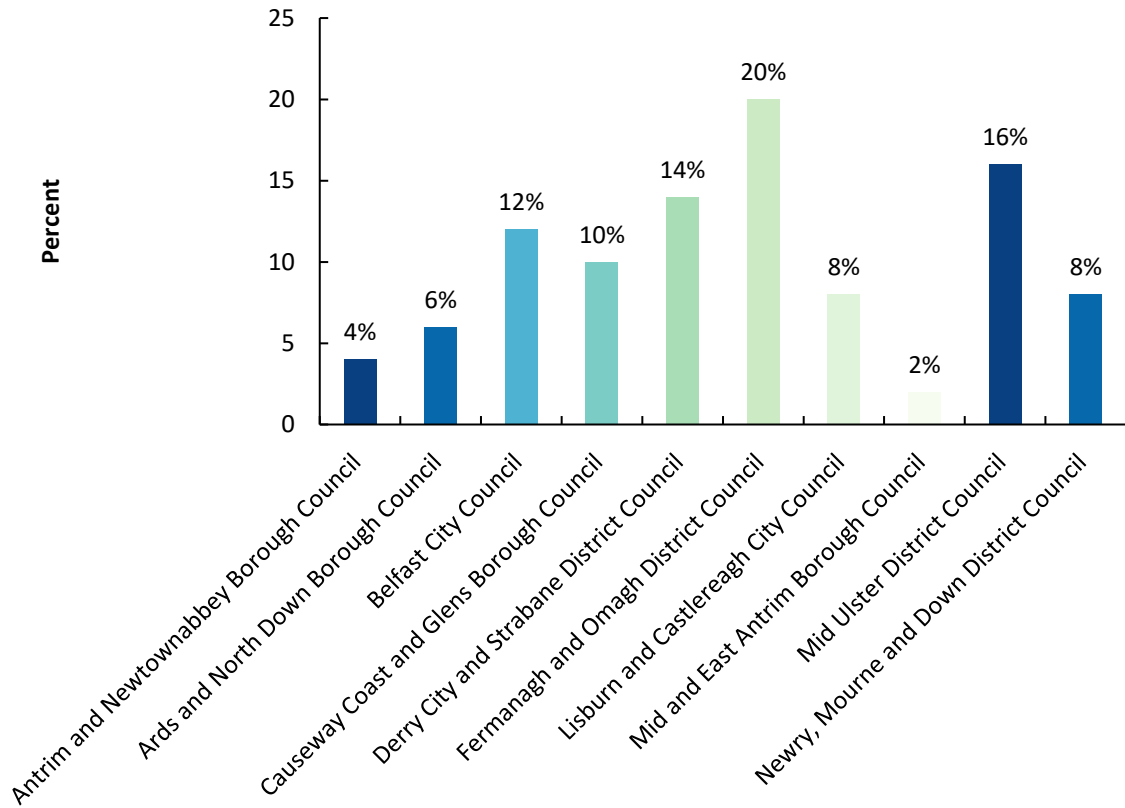


Value	Percent	Count
Yes	92.6%	50
No	3.7%	2
I am not sure	3.7%	2
	Totals	54

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### 3a. What local Council area do you live in?



Value	Percent	Count
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	4.0%	2
Ards and North Down Borough Council	6.0%	3
Belfast City Council	12.0%	6
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council	10.0%	5
Derry City and Strabane District Council	14.0%	7
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council	20.0%	10



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Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	8.0%	4
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	2.0%	1
Mid Ulster District Council	16.0%	8
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	8.0%	4
	Totals	50





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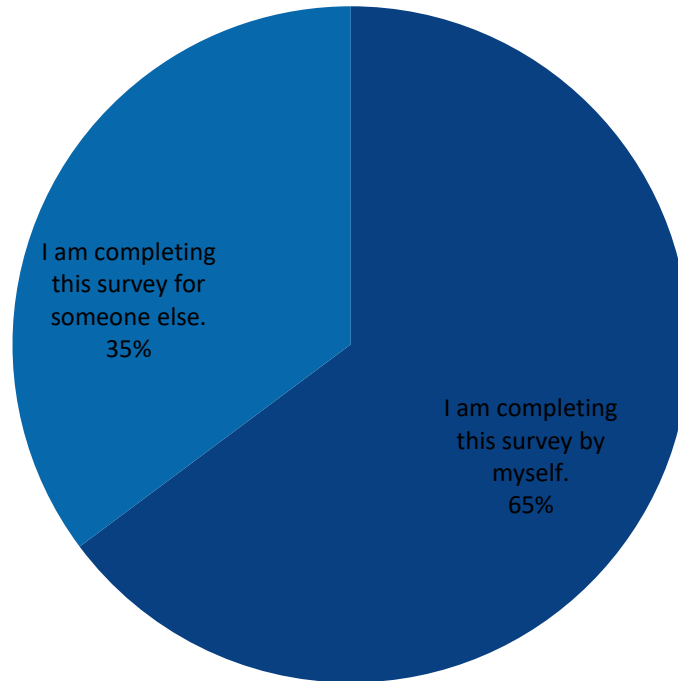
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**3a. Please tell us your nearest town and your county.**

Response
omagh northern ireland
Bangor Northern Ireland
Armagh
Omagh co Tyrone

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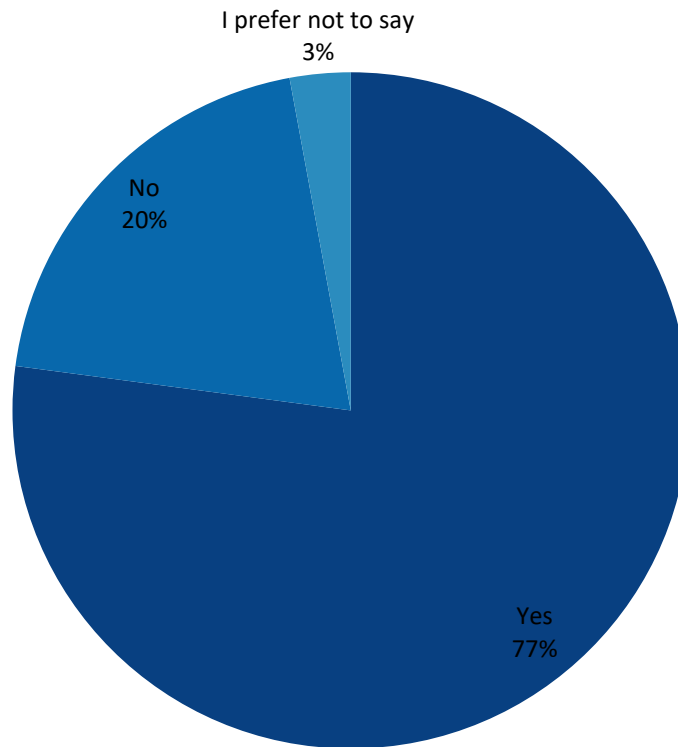
### 4. Are you completing this survey by yourself or for someone else?



Value	Percent	Count
I am completing this survey by myself.	64.8%	35
I am completing this survey for someone else.	35.2%	19
	Totals	54

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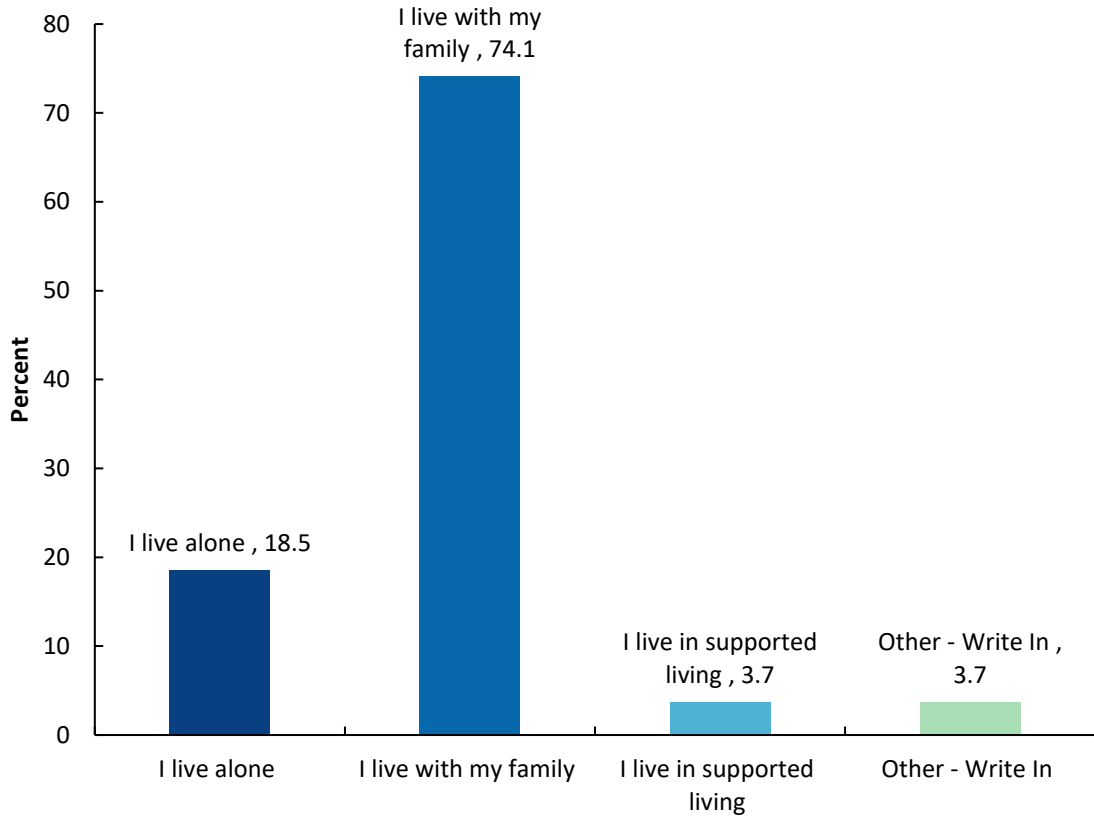
### 4a. Do you have a learning disability?



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	77.1%	27
No	20.0%	7
I prefer not to say	2.9%	1
	Totals	35

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## 4b. Please tell us about living arrangements.



Value	Percent	Count
I live alone	18.5%	5
I live with my family	74.1%	20
I live in supported living	3.7%	1
Other - Write In	3.7%	1
	Totals	27

Other - Write In	Count
With partner	1



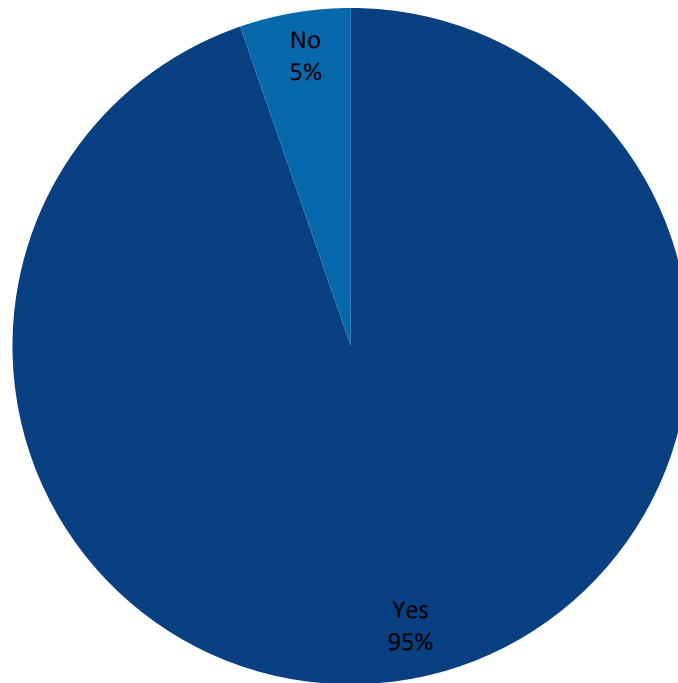
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Totals	1
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4a. Are you supporting someone with a learning disability to complete this survey?



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	94.7%	18
No	5.3%	1
	Totals	19

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### 5. What does 'healthy food' mean to you?

Response
Means if you eat healthy food you keep well.
Fruits and vegetables. Healthy balanced meals
carrots balance diet
Means try to eat well balanced meal
What ever my parents think are healthy for me
Food that will make me feel good. Also food that is safe for me to eat
Less sweet foods more fruit and vegetables included in meals
Healthy food for myself means good nutrition and health . I require good nutrition to help with bowels and well-being.
important
healthy food means eating all the vegetables
eating a balanced diet
It means I get goodness into my body
Fruit, vegetables, protein
Nutrition vitamins skin hair and nails
Fresh good food that's lots off nutrients
Having a longer life span Be fit and health
eating well and keeping fit
keep fit and eating the right food

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Keeping fit and eating the right foods to stay slim

Food that keeps me healthy like strawberries and apples and pineapple

Eating salads drinking water

A balanced and nutritional diet

Food that is good to eat and won't make you put weight on

Balanced diet of veg protein and carbs

Heathy food means to me that I am looking after my body and I am eating the food that are good for me and give me the vitamins and nutrients I need

I try to eat healthy food

Eating plenty of veg, fibre and iron

Eating vegetables, fruit, vitamins and minerals, including wholegrain foods that are good for your body and digestive system. To live a lifestyle knowing what foods to eat and maintaining a diet of eating healthy nutrients and enabling a longer life.

It involves eating more carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables, eating a moderate amount of dairy products and meat, as well as other sources of protein and eating less unhealthy food that are high in sugar and fat.

Fruit vegetables non fatty foods

good

I will be honest I do not eat that many healthy foods.

Balanced diet. Fruit and vegetables. Meat and fish. Rice and pasta.

It's the right kind of food, not junk food

Eating your five a day, and 2 litres of water, and a balancing out your nutrition

It means to keep fit



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Good

Food that gives your body good energy and helps protect against illness/sickness

this individual does not have capacity to answer this question

Eating healthy like fruit and veg and good lifestyle

Something that makes your health good like fruit strawberries watermelon cherries cucumber tomatoes and lettuce

Not eating rubbish. Eating fruit and veg.

It mean a healthy well balanced lifestyle diet

Eat fruit and veg and not always chocolate and crisps

Just to not eat as much

Getting your 5 a day and no junk food

Healthy food means something with nutritional value. For example carbohydrates for energy, fruit and veg for vitamins and minerals and water or milk for drinks. For meals I think this is easier to manage but I get frustrated at the lack of healthy options for snacks - especially for children with either fine motor or oromotor difficulties.

Food that keeps you strong and healthy and reduces the risk of being ill.

Fruit and vegetables

Vegetables and fruit and pulses. Non fried

Fruit and vegetables

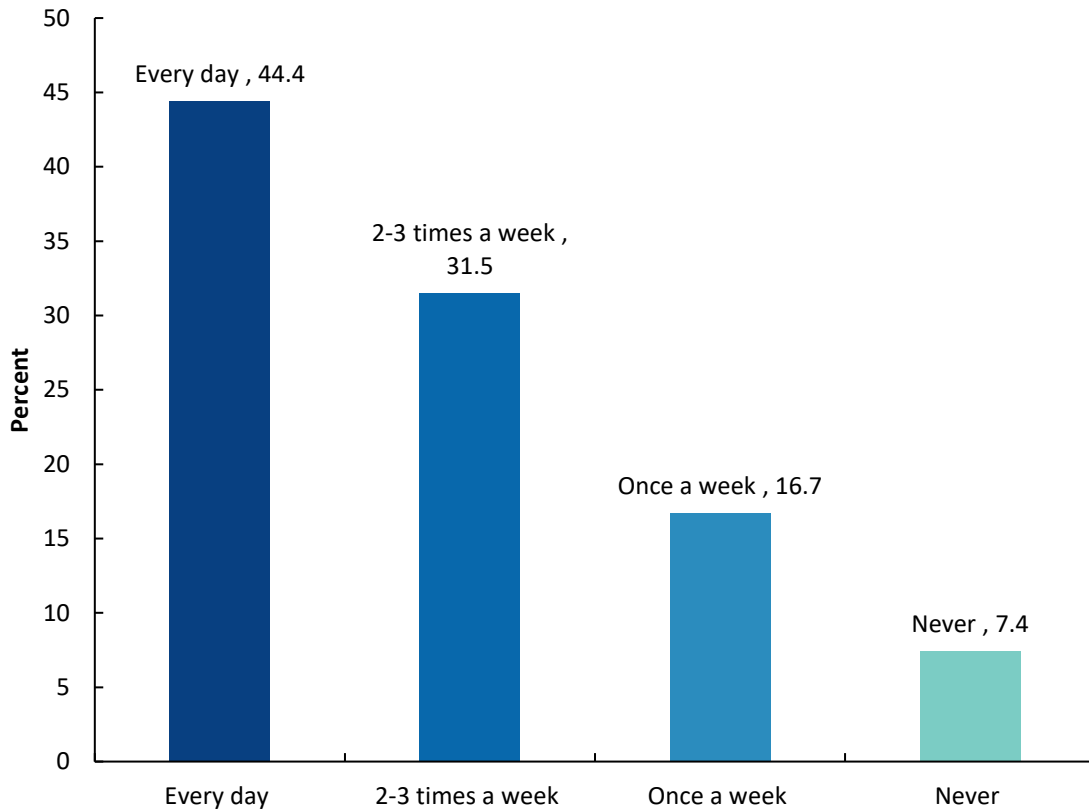
Salad

Like fruit and veg 5 a day

Proper food that is healthy for you like potatoes veg fruit

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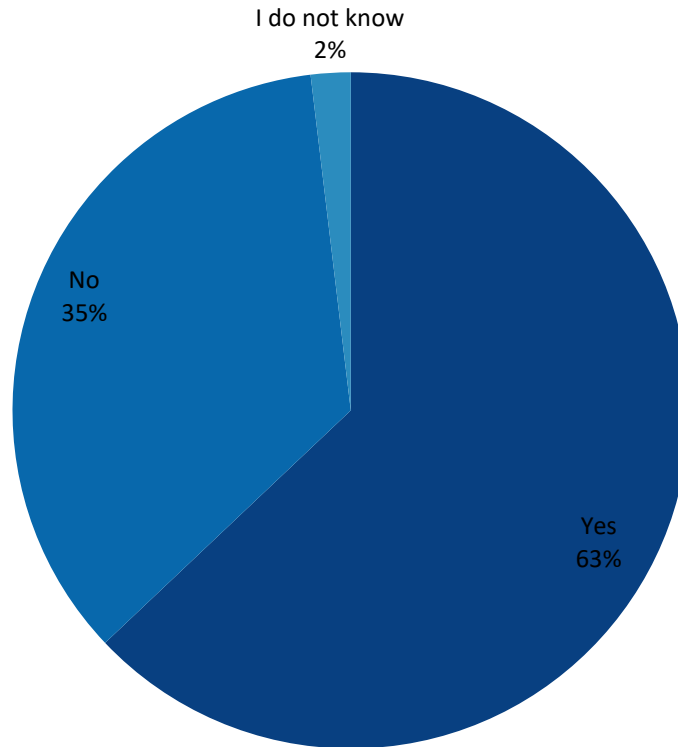
## 6. How often do you eat healthy food?



Value	Percent	Count
Every day	44.4%	24
2-3 times a week	31.5%	17
Once a week	16.7%	9
Never	7.4%	4
	Totals	54

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### 7. Can you cook or prepare your own food?



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	63.0%	34
No	35.2%	19
I do not know	1.9%	1
	Totals	54

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### 8. What does 'unhealthy food' or 'junk food' mean to you?

Response
Takeaways and chips and greasy food.
Fried food and high sugar levels
All take aways and fatty food
Fried foods Chippy Chips
Food i only every now and again. A treat
Sweets crisps - foods high in fat
Nil
bad foods
take away foods crisps chocolate
takeaways high saturated fat content
It means it not good for my body
Snacks, biscuits, crisps, chocolate
Processed meat Fat Chemicals E numbers
Fast food easy quick meal
Crisps
fast food fating food
make you not feel good
Takeaways

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I don't know
Takeaways fatty food
Foods that have little nutritional value
Crisps and buns
Sweets, biscuits, chocolate, cake
Junk food is not good for you enrgy wise and junk food is too suger and not great for your body
I try to avoid junk food
Foods that are high in fat including foods that have a high amount of sugar or sweeteners, are quite starchy and have a lot of salt.
It means foods that are high in sugar and fat.
Burgers chips takeaway food
bad
Anything that contains fats and sugars.
Sugar. Cakes, biscuits, sweets, fizzy drinks.
Stuff like take aways and buns
Convenience food alternatively known as what people can microwave or actify. These foods heighten the cholesterol levels due to the high fatty content.
I'll get too fat
Bad
Food that is highly processed, high in saturated fats and sugars.
this individual does not have capacity to answer this question

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Like eating burgers and takeaways. Eating too much junk food is bad for you

Something that can make you put on weight or be sick if you eat too much. Chocolate cakes sweets crisps

Chips burgers chocolate

Takeaway and sugar stuff it's okay to balance it out

Chocolate crisps and fizzy juic

To just have as a treat

fried food, sugar foods

Anything with empty calories - ie crisps/ sweets/ biscuits/cakes

Food that makes you feel sick and increases the risk of damaging your body.

Sweets chocolate and crisps Takeaway

Sweets, biscuits, chips, crisps, fizzy drinks

Sweets

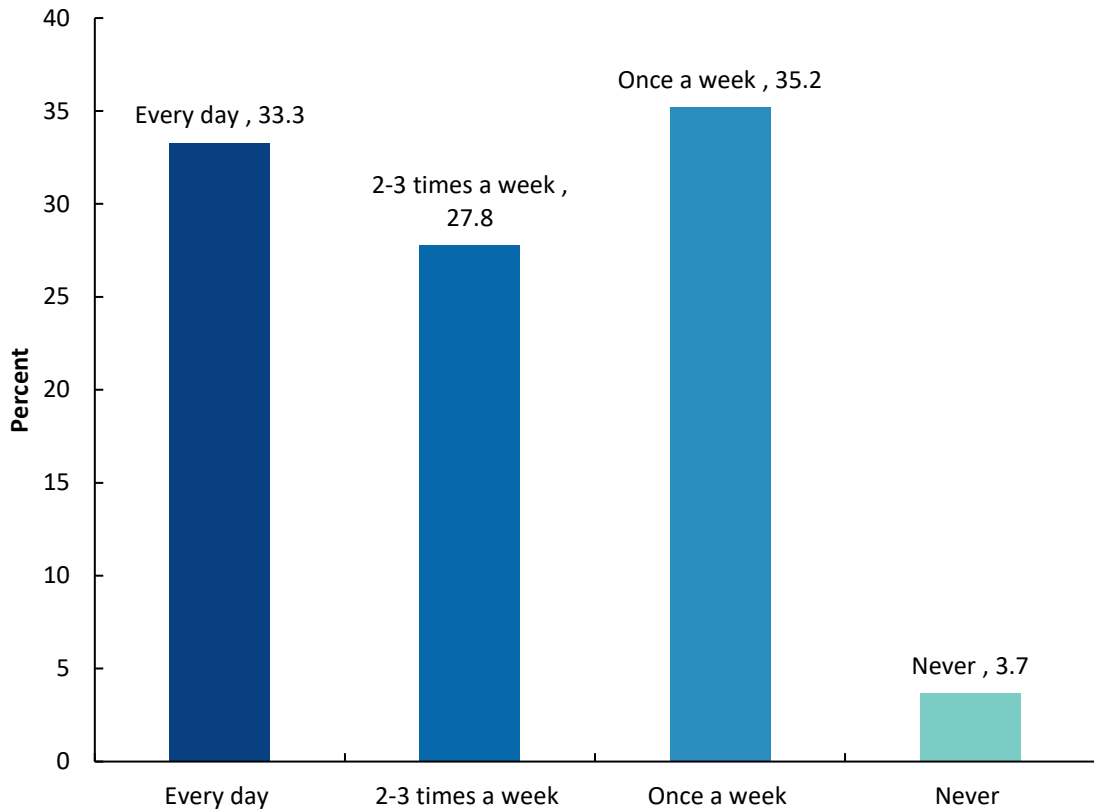
McDonald's

I'm not allow it every day but will get it for a treat.

Chocolate sweets crisps

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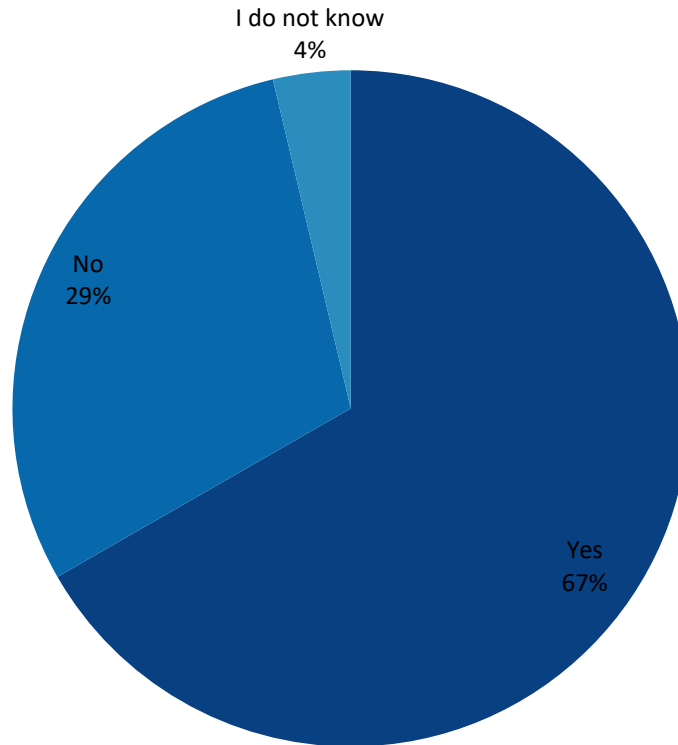
## 9. How often do you eat unhealthy food or junk food?



Value	Percent	Count
Every day	33.3%	18
2-3 times a week	27.8%	15
Once a week	35.2%	19
Never	3.7%	2
	Totals	54

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### 10. Would you say you exercise often (at least twice a week)?

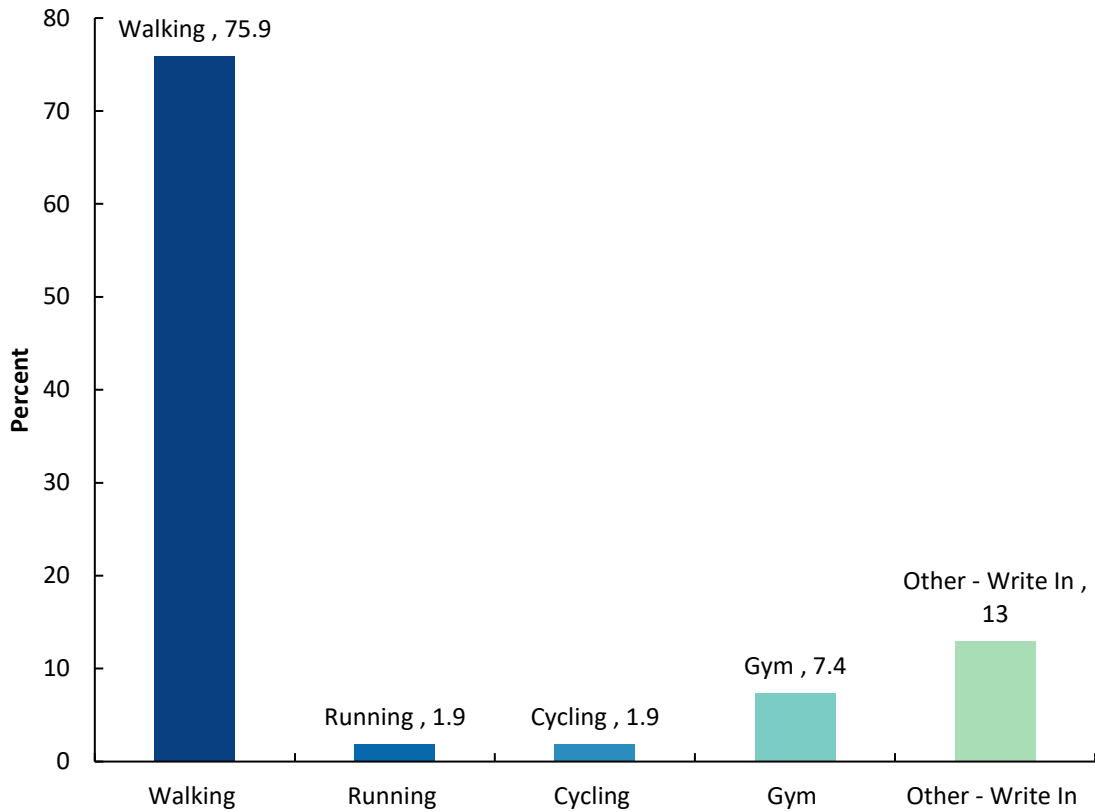


Value	Percent	Count
Yes	66.7%	36
No	29.6%	16
I do not know	3.7%	2
	Totals	54



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## 11. What sort of exercise do you do most (please select one)?



Value	Percent	Count
Walking	75.9%	41
Running	1.9%	1
Cycling	1.9%	1
Gym	7.4%	4
Other - Write In	13.0%	7
	Totals	54

Other - Write In	Count



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None	2
Exercise program with shsct	1
Line dancing	1
Mobility requires hoist transfers unable walk	1
n/a	1
small walks as in a wheelchair	1
Totals	7

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### 12. Please tell us what other exercise you do often.

Response
None
Walking I do drama so dancing also do sometimes bowling boccie
Athletics once a week and static bike at home
Crawl
cant do much
yoga
Walking
Dance at home Gymnastics at home
I do swimming once a week, gym workout Cycling
Walking
Football
I attend fit 4 u program on a Thursday and follow it via zoom on a Monday it's all different exercises
Walking
I go to detla health and performance gym in omagh I also do walking and running
Walking swimming sometime I used to play alot of football
N/A
I play Basketball once a week and occasionally play Football.
I also do a bit of yoga and dancing.



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Just walking
none
Running up and down stairs whether at home or at work. I avoid lifts and escalators.
None
Swimming and tag rugby
Dancing
Nothing
Fit 4 u
n/a
this individual does not have capacity to answer this question
None
Running
None
I do drama so dancing a part of it.
Sometimes go swimming
Just walking
i have cerebral Palsy so i cant exercise much
Walking
I go swimming at least once a week.
Just walking



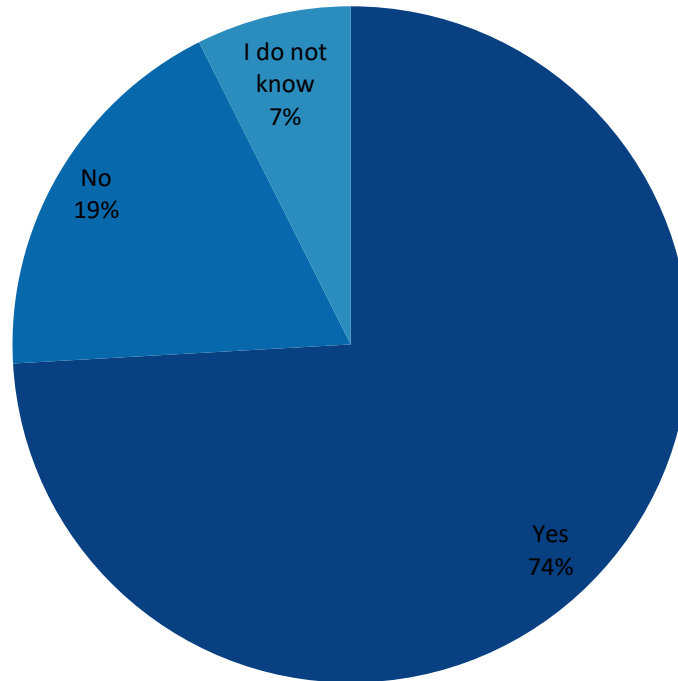
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None
Squats,push-ups, Mr. Motivation YouTube video
None

## Report on Healthier Me survey April-May 2024

13. If you could, would you like to exercise more?



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	74.1%	40
No	18.5%	10
I do not know	7.4%	4
	Totals	54

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### 13a. What would help you to exercise more?

Response
Not sure.
Support and encouragement
More things to do
More places to go
Suitable exercise classes
Unable due mobility
in a wheelchair so limited
getting out more going to the pool
being more confident
Have a friend to join me
Swimming, gym
Child care
Not sure
Need energy
yes
if I had a group to go to
Motivation
Coaching or part of a group

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Getting myself to try different exercises class and to go swimming and just trying to do more exercise than I have before for my own health

I don't need help to exercise more I do enough exercise

Im not sure

If i had the hours in the day I would go on walking trips with a group of people or increase my capacity of walking or jogging around the town with somebody I know.

If I was enrolled into different clubs.

Good weather

time

Like if I heard about a local walking club or something like that or walking with a group of people who I may know.

Learning disability friendly gym sessions. More staff in adult day centre to take clients out for longer, more strenuous walks. More council facilities for disabled people - trikes/bikes, outdoor games.

If I could go walking with a group

Exercising socially with a group of people, and having a set time and place to meet up at the gym

Group activity

Better weather, goal to work to

this individual does not have capacity to answer this question

Need to check with doctor

I would say do more things sports related

Encourage to go and do walks

To live near places





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I have Cerebral Palsy so it is not possible for me to exercise a lot

More time (esp in the evenings) and better weather

Maybe having a fitness coach and going to the gym.

More sports activities and youth clubs places to go

Being able to get out more

Going to the gym

Positive mental health and wellbeing like helping to focus on it Helps to lose weight as well  
Listen to music

Better weather. Beach time.

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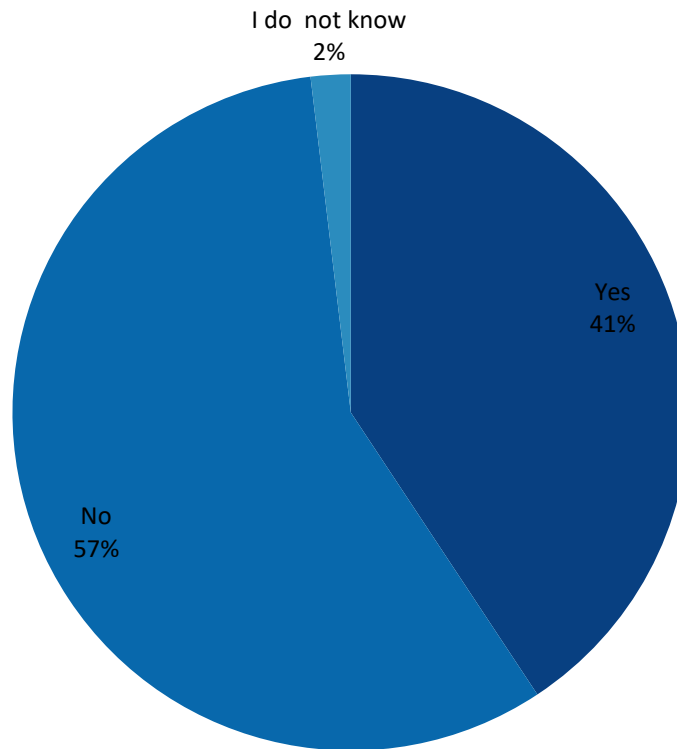
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### 13a. Please tell us why not.

Response
cba
I don't like the gym or cycling
I have sore ankle
Because I like walking
I'm busy and have arthritis
I don't like exercise
Because I like fit 4 u
I walk a lot
I don't like being out of breath and it can make me very thirsty
Pain

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### 14. Do you belong to a society or club in your local area?



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	40.7%	22
No	57.4%	31
I do not know	1.9%	1
	Totals	54



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### 14a. Please tell us what is the name of the society or club.

Response
Moving on up in limavady 3 times a week.
ASpace 2
I go to superstars drama club. I know this isn't really a club but I also go to day service thing called the base
Mencap Youth Belfast but I live in Bangor
Special Olympics athletics club
station centre
Open doors
Mencap Buzz Group
Walking club, singing group, men shed
Aghyaran St Davogs GAA club
Gateway
Delta Health & Performance Gym
Delta health and performance gym in omagh
Skyzdalimit Theatre Club and Omagh Gateway Club
New Mossley Special Needs Youth Club
Skyzdalimit drama group
Spires special olympics
Incredible



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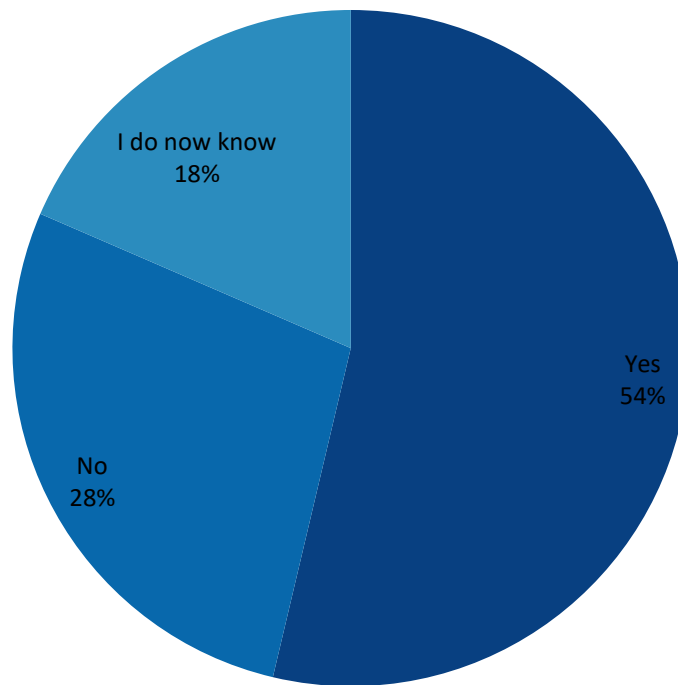
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GAA club
I sing in a choir
Superstars drama threate. I also go.to base sometimes we go bowling also in a choir
Mencap

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15. If you could, would you like to be more involved in your local community?



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	53.7%	29
No	27.8%	15
I do now know	18.5%	10
	Totals	54

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### 15a. What would help you to be more involved in your local community?

Response
Feels that she does enough at moving on up.
I think I am involved enough with day opportunities and work and activities o do
Youth. Clubs
More places where I feel safe. Quiet places. People understand what I need. Somewhere I can go with my friends
Fun exercise classes
More wheelchair accessible vechiles taxis
knitting clubs
i dont no
Nothing more
Clubs
More activities for disabled children and families.the borough says they want to be inclusive but really they're not
help with transport
more information for people with a learning disability
I am very involved in my community already
More activities
I don't know
To be able to have my daughter (who has LD) to be accepted and respected as an equal
Just learning more about what is needed in my local community and volunteer when needed

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Attending clubs for people with learning disabilities but I would need more staff on shift to accomplish this

Do some research into what groups would interest me and have more of an active lifestyle with meeting people who have similar interests/hobbies.

I would do things that involves helping out with animals and day trips.

I don't know

dont know

Despite being autistic I like to socialise and I like people so to get out and about and to be mixing with people more for me would be beneficial.

More suitable events for learning disability clients.

More opportunities for me

By helping out more

More venues to meet

More club

More dance clubs or more drama clubs

More stuff to do

Just more places being accepted

Doing something with animals

Website with lists of what is available. le one place where all the information is collated

Finding more social groups to be involved in.

More things to do

If I could go out alone





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More events

More clubs and groups

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### 15a. Please tell us why not.

Response
N/A
alway busy
na
I'm not a confident person
Not in coleraine but I'm portstewart
I don't like it
I'm working and go to line dancing
To much things on on mencap
I like exercising on my own with headphones
this individual does not have capacity to answer this question
I don't really have time to do anything else
Just
i like to be private and work outside my own town
Looked down on
Because there is nothing to do in my local area



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**16. Please let us know if you have any other thoughts, comments or suggestions. Please also tell us what you think about Mencap's plans for a 'Healthy Me' campaign this year. If you wish, you can also email any comments to: [Campaigns.NI@mencap.org.uk](mailto:Campaigns.NI@mencap.org.uk)**

Response
Great idea would be lovely to see more classes and group activities for adults with learning disabilities to engage in exercise together
Lack wheelchair taxis and accessible vechiles to allow me fulfill my interests .. no wheelchair taxis available in my area . I have hire wheelchair vechile to use for community events and day trips at high cost to hire vechile
No
I would like to go swimming but we don't have enough staff to be able to go
I think it is an excellent plan and hopefully will inspire more carers/learning disabled to be more aware of the connection between healthy food and healthy body/mindset
I think Mencap plans for a healthy me campaign is a brilliant idea as it gives people with a learning disability to experience new things and maybe excises they would off never thought off doing until they experience it themselves
Excellent idea
N/A
No comment
Can't think of anything
no
My diet is monitored by my family and is good. So is my weight. The biggest issue is lack of meaningful exercise that puts the heart rate up and burns calories. A few years ago I had several weekly sessions with a 1-1 instructor in the local leisure centre making use of lots of the gym equipment. This was enjoyable and fun and was keeping me fit and healthy.
It's a good idea. I was unhealthy until I got a personal trainer and lost 4 stone.



# Report on Healthier Me survey

## April-May 2024

I think it is a great idea and we can all get healthy together
No
No
No
Yea I think it great
Thank you for taking the time to do design and send us the survey
I think Mencap's plans for Healthy Me would be very beneficial for a lot of people. I would also like it if Mencap could be helpful for people with autism find a date.
Thank you
Make disability benefits higher
No I'm happy enough