

Overview

Rica's Consumer Panel members were surveyed in spring 2015 to identify current consumer issues and tips.

Our questions were deliberately broad. Respondents were encouraged to provide up to three answers to each of four open questions, writing no more than 150 words in each answer. Responses were then hand coded and categorised.

The questions were:

1. What you like
2. What you don't like
3. What you need
4. Your tips

The questionnaire was published online. Respondents could also fill it in on paper (8 did so) or by phone (5). The survey was open from 1 April to 31 May 2015. 150 people responded, giving 336 answers to Q1, 339 to Q2, 337 to Q3 and 174 to Q4.

Conclusions

- The primary concerns of our respondents were around customer service and accessible environments and services.
- Respondents told us that services can be made more accessible and acceptable by organisations that train their staff to respond positively and flexibly to disabled consumers, and design their facilities and services to be accessible to all.
- They noted that this training and design will be successful if it involves disabled people closely at every stage.
- Our respondents said they need good information about products and services, and often look to community groups and peer networks to provide it. However, they want and expect suppliers and service providers to give better information.

Findings in summary

Question - What you like

- services, specialist (e.g. GP practices, equipment suppliers) and non-specialist (supermarkets, transport)
- products, specialist (e.g. Trabant, mobility scooters) and non-specialist (cleaning products, cars)
- environments, specialist (hospitals) and non-specialist (public buildings, car parks)

Table 1 Recommendation type

Service	126
Product	89
Environment	19
Unallocated	102

The following were all mentioned more than once.

Table 2 Recommendation topic – top 10

Passenger Assist	11
Scooters	9
Motability	5
GP practices	4
London Underground	4
Equipment retailer	3
Morrison's	3
Powered wheelchairs	3
Quickie wheelchair	3
Samsung Galaxy	3

Question: What you don't like

Complaints about:

- services, specialist (GP practices, equipment suppliers) and non-specialist (supermarkets, transport)
- products, specialist (hearing aids, mobility scooters) and non-specialist (packaging, gardening tools)
- environments, specialist (hospitals) and non-specialist (public buildings, car parks)

Table 3 Complaint type

Service	114
Environment	89
Product	29
Unallocated	107

Table 4 Complaint topic – top 20

Shops	19
Pavements	16
Parking	12
Local gov	11
Attitude	11
Bus service	10
Toilets	10
Public buildings	6
Taxis	6
Government	6
Passenger Assist	6
Packaging	5
NHS	5
Air travel	3
BT	3
Motability	3
Call centres	3
Hotels	3
ATMs	2
British Gas	2
Builders	2

Question: What you need

Please for:

- **better customer service**

“Ensure all employees receive disability awareness training”

“Wheelchairs provided at major supermarkets need to be better maintained. It is good that most provide these, but I have used some where footplates are missing or dropping off, canvas on seat is damaged. No one in store seems interested. B & Q are an exception - their wheelchairs are fairly new and in good order.”

- **more accessible environments**

“Put more dropped kerbs near blue badge parking sites.”

“A lot more thought needs to be put into how public spaces, especially footpaths are laid out, this would benefit everyone not just the visually impaired.”

“Something better than the loop system to enhance the listening experience of hearing aid wearers in public places like theatres, reception desks.”

- **better access to information and support, including peer to peer information and support**

“A review of potentially accessible sources of public transport which seeks improvements to current services & enhances disability awareness, not least by contact with disabled service-users who can explain their difficulties & importantly, their feelings about accessing transport.”

- *“A network of disabled people and advocates where disabled people and carers can go to get help in fulfilling their rights under the Equality Act. How do I write a letter to inform someone I feel I have been discriminated against? How do I find out about benefits? Where do I go to find out about driving after disability? One place with an online forum and links to the disability charities - it would make a huge difference, but also, to have on that place, a name and shame area for abuse of disabled people and their rights- it needs to be across the entire country with areas for each nation as the law differs, but it's wrong that people develop expertise as individuals, without a place for others to learn from them. A site that gives things like a basic access audit worksheet so consumers can say "Your hotel room didn't meet standards- and I am going to..." as a result.”*

Table 5 Topic five areas of request

Customer service	26
Accessible environments	16
Shared information	9
Mobility equip	7
Transport	7
Unallocated	173

Respondents were asking for organisations to improve the accessibility of their service, staff training and awareness, information, assistance, enforcement, communication, costs and testing.

Table 6 Pleas for organisations

Accessibility	43
Training	24
Awareness	17
Information	14
Assistance	5
Enforcement	4
Communication	3
Cost	1
Testing	1
Unallocated	136

Respondents were asking for improvements in the design of products (including participatory design and usability testing), their quality and the availability of information about them.

Table 7 Pleas for improvement of products top five categories

Design	28
Information	9
Training	3
Customisation	2
Support	2

Question: Your tips

Respondents gave recommendations about:

- behaviour and attitude (e.g. be assertive, positive, grateful)
- information sources and information sharing (e.g. Euan's Guide, community groups)
- products (e.g. Sugru, Trabasack)
- 'life hacks' (tips and tricks)
- giving feedback (positive and negative, using social media)
- good services, including assistance services and the Motability scheme.

Table 8 **Classification of tips**

Behaviour	39
Information	21
Particular Product	19
Life hack	16
Feedback	6
Assistance	3
Motability	3
Unallocated	67

APPENDIX

Below are some quotes taken from the people responding to the consumer panel survey.

- What you like
- What you don't like
- What you need
- Your tips

What you like

“Trabasack. It’s an innovative design and is useful for me as a wheelchair user. It’s not ugly (so many things for disabled people are ugly!). Its not super-expensive. It works with more of my life and how I want to present to the world.”

“The service I get on London Transport buses. If they see me walking to bus stop they wait for me and do not try to rush me when I am on the bus. Wait until I am sitting down before pulling away, I am on sticks find it hard to keep my balance so this is very helpful.”

“Co-op, received great assistance, support them implementing braille on some of their own brand products.”

What you don't like

"I don't like the price charged for equipment that disabled people need. There are huge differences in price from all the different sources from which a new scooter can be bought."

"A swivel cushion I bought for my car seat. It is rubbish. It doesn't swivel!"

"Badly designed products; too many gimmicks, too much technology inappropriately used, failure of designers to grasp basic fundamentals."

"[Stairlift supplier]. Having bullied me into a maintenance agreement, I'm told that they are behind, and only get annual service when I ring and remind them. It is a good product, but I don't like them as a company."

"When in a super market, in the wheel chair, ignored when free sample food/drinks are given out. My wife has to ask for me - then they see me."

"Impossibly strong spring on door into adapted loo (in M & S!!). I and friends avoid going for coffee there, for that reason."

What you need

“Have sensible displays on power chairs / scooters to tell you actually how much battery you have left. There's lights, but they don't tell you anything. They seem to change depending on the temperature as much as on how far you've gone.”

“Involve customers in every stage of design of a product or service, instead of 'knowing what people want'.”

“A directory, that lists places to buy/research disability products.”

“We put ‘bumpons’ from the RNIB on our charging plugs so that my wife could see which way up it needed to be to plug in.”

“A network of disabled people and advocates where disabled people and carers can go to get help in fulfilling their rights under the Equality Act.”

“Good customer care training and being disabled aware, to watch what language people use perhaps have more disability training undertaken by trained disabled people.”

Your tips

“Networking, sharing helps a lot for yourself and others.”

“As a deaf person when you purchase something like a mobile phone or subscribe to something always research it, check to see what other people have said, the deaf community is great for giving good feedback.”

“If you have a positive experience then let the company know and try and remember the names of the staff who have helped you. Positive feedback is addictive and the company will carry on in the correct way if you tell them all the good things.”

“Get carers to walk away when a shop assistant is answering the carer when you have asked the question.”

“We put ‘bumpons’ from the RNIB on our charging plugs so that my wife could see which way up it needed to be to plug in.”

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