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Getting Heard, Getting Involved



# **Welfare Reform Consultation Report Findings Nottingham City August 2014**

**Completed by Services for Empowerment and Advocacy (SEA)**

**and**

**Dual Diagnosis Forum (DDF)**

## **Who are SEA?**

SEA (Services for Empowerment and Advocacy) is an independent Advocacy and Participation Service working across Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire.

We enable people within Housing, Health and Social Care Settings to have a voice and participate within the Services they receive. We believe that enabling people to have their say influences change at a grass roots and strategic level.

Our experience has shown us that access to an independent Advocacy Service can lead to positive results for Participants, Staff and Service Providers. Our working practice is firmly based on the concept of "Dialogue not Confrontation" this happens by encouraging and enabling Participants to speak up and have their views heard.

**'Tell me I will forget, Show me I may remember, Involve me and I will understand'**

Contact SEA: [zoe@seaparticipation.org.uk](mailto:zoe@seaparticipation.org.uk) [www.seaparticipation.org.uk](http://www.seaparticipation.org.uk)

## **Who are DDF?**

The DDF (Dual Diagnosis Forum) group was formed in June 2007 as a sub group of the *City Drug/Ex Drug Users Forum* and the *Alcohol Service Users Forum in Nottingham City*.

The purpose of the forum is to involve service users and professionals in dialogue around substance misuse and mental health issues and contribute towards improving treatment and support services to clients with a dual diagnosis. The forum also aims to consult with, and give a voice to current and potential service users with issues around substance misuse and mental health, including those with a dual diagnosis. The group discusses service level and strategic issues relating to the commissioning and running of substance misuse and mental health services. It also provides a forum to exchange information and ideas around support and social activities that may assist service users in their recovery. The meeting also provides space and opportunities to share information and experience in a safe environment.

*The term **dual diagnosis** is used to describe the co morbid condition of a person considered to be experiencing a mental health issue at any level and a substance misuse problem. This includes people in recovery from either or both.*

*The group works to raise awareness about mental health and substance use and is passionate about challenging stigma and intolerance.*

Contact DDF: [glen.jarvis@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:glen.jarvis@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

## **Background to Welfare Reform Consultation**

Services for Empowerment and Advocacy were approached by members of the Dual Diagnosis Forum who wished to enable people who had been affected by welfare reform to speak out about their experiences. Members of the Dual Diagnosis forum felt that organisations and Commissioners needed to hear from citizens regarding the impact welfare reform is having. It was felt that this would allow services, organisations and commissioners to be more informed when looking at planning for future service provision.

## **Content of engagement questionnaire**

Working collaboratively, SEA and DDF devised a consultation document that could be used to gather data and statistics regarding the impact (both positive and negative) that welfare reform is having on some of the most vulnerable citizens within Nottingham City.

DDF members felt it was of paramount importance to also gather comments from individuals as part of the consultation. This enables people to really build a picture and understand how welfare reform is impacting on people's quality of life on a day to day basis. Therefore the questionnaire compiled also allowed for free text to be recorded. Key themes identified by people have been picked out and included in the report findings. It was not possible to include all the free text comments within this report due to the large amount of text gathered.

Some respondents did not complete all parts of the questionnaire

## **Who did we consult with?**

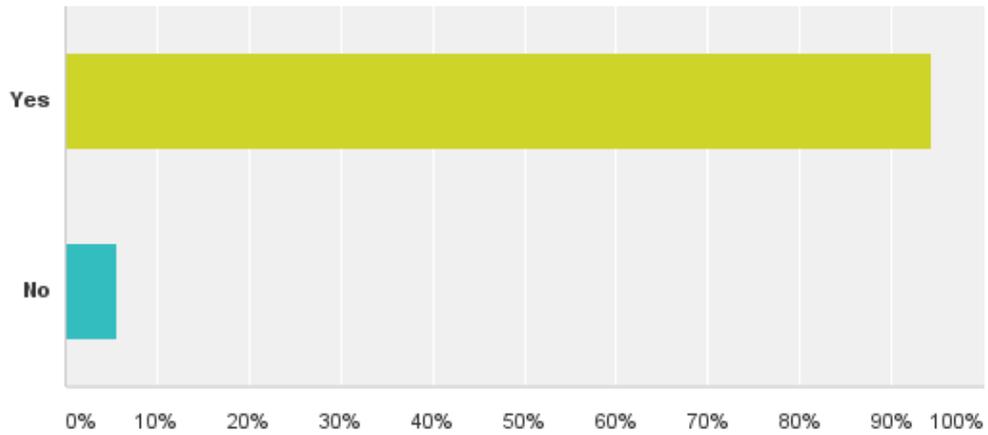
SEA and DDF members have focused this engagement exercise at people who are Nottingham City residents and are:

- Homeless/ Vulnerably Housed
- Have past/present substance misuse problems
- Have mental health issues
- Are at risk or suffer from social isolation

## **Aims and Objectives of this report**

SEA and the DDF would like to share the findings from the engagement exercise to help inform and influence future service delivery and the commissioning of future service provision within Nottingham City.

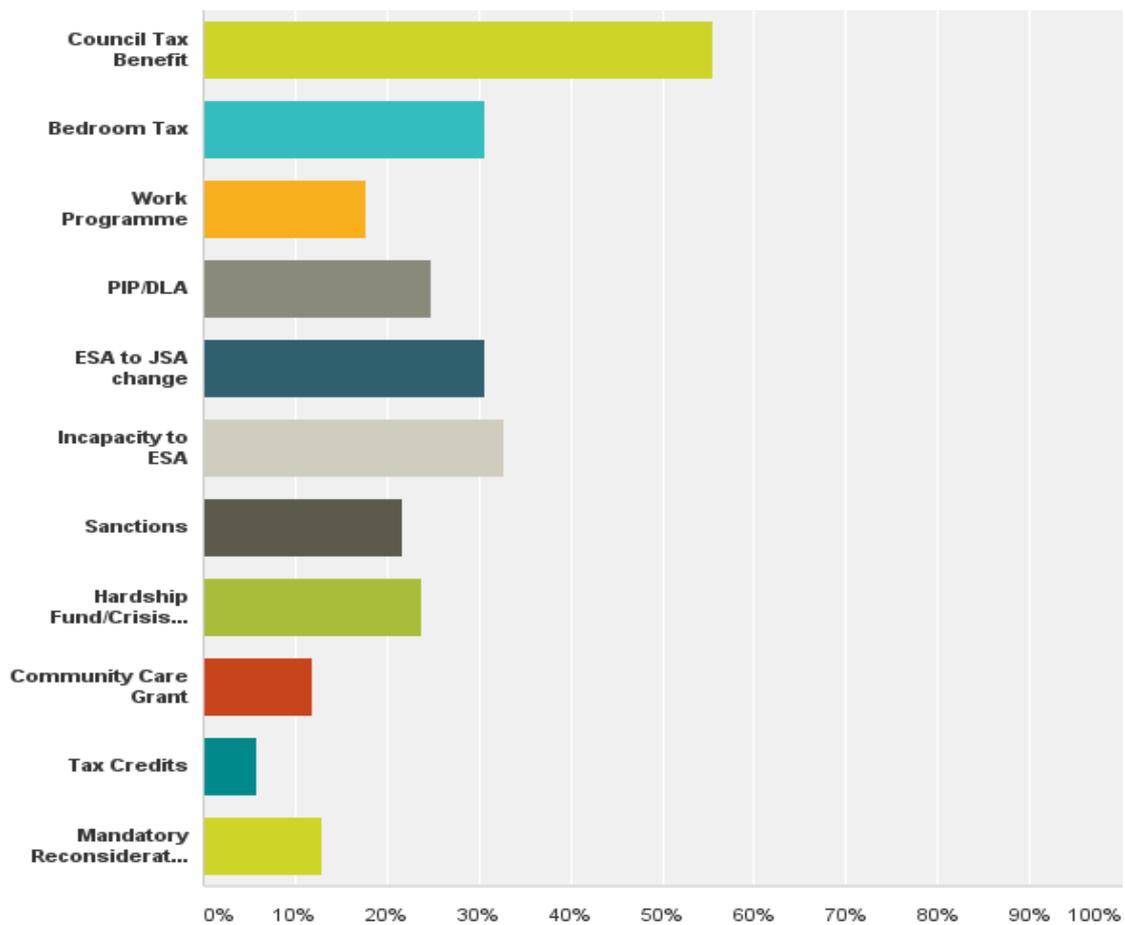
**Do you feel you have been affected by the Welfare Reform or benefit changes?**



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	94.44% 119
No	5.56% 7
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>

\*A number of respondents did state that they had not been affected by welfare reform or that the impact had been a positive one. These responses are included within the No category in the above question\*

## Which of the changes has affected you and how?

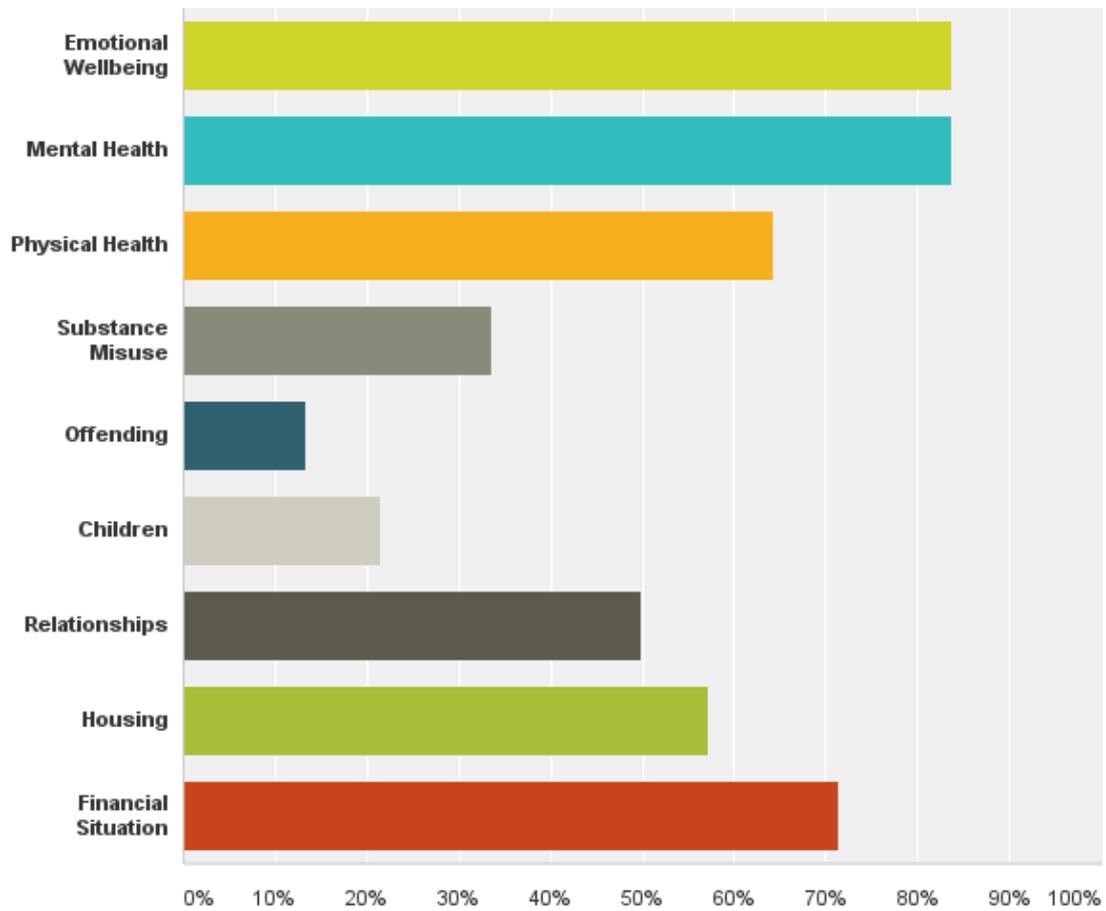


Answer Choices	Responses
Council Tax Benefit	55.45% 56
Bedroom Tax	30.69% 31
Work Programme	17.82% 18
PIP/DLA	24.75% 25
ESA to JSA change	30.69% 31
Incapacity to ESA	32.67% 33
Sanctions	21.78% 22
Hardship Fund/Crisis Loans	23.76% 24
Community Care Grant	11.88% 12
Tax Credits	5.94% 6
Mandatory Reconsiderations	12.87% 13
<b>Total Respondents: 101</b>	

### **Which of the changes has affected you and how?**

- 'The stress levels dealing with them all are horrendous and even just the fears of being rejected when you are genuine, equally as debilitating and depressing too. Not all of us have an able bodied relative to help us through it'
- 'Work Programme – Constant harassment even though I have a severe mental illness'
- 'They have nullified my progress in moving forward through recovery and left me in limbo again'
- 'I'm only on £60 a week JSA and have to pay £14 bedroom tax and £6 council tax before other bills. It's hard to scrape by'
- 'I now have to pay £19 a month Council Tax where previously I paid none. I had to attend the Work Programme for two years but achieved very little and received very little support. I had to appeal Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) decisions but this was before mandatory reconsideration and the whole process took one year'

**Do you feel that the changes have had an impact on any of the following?**



Answer Choices	Responses
Emotional Wellbeing	83.67% 82
Mental Health	83.67% 82
Physical Health	64.29% 63
Substance Misuse	33.67% 33
Offending	13.27% 13
Children	21.43% 21
Relationships	50.00% 49
Housing	57.14% 56
Financial Situation	71.43% 70
<b>Total Respondents: 98</b>	

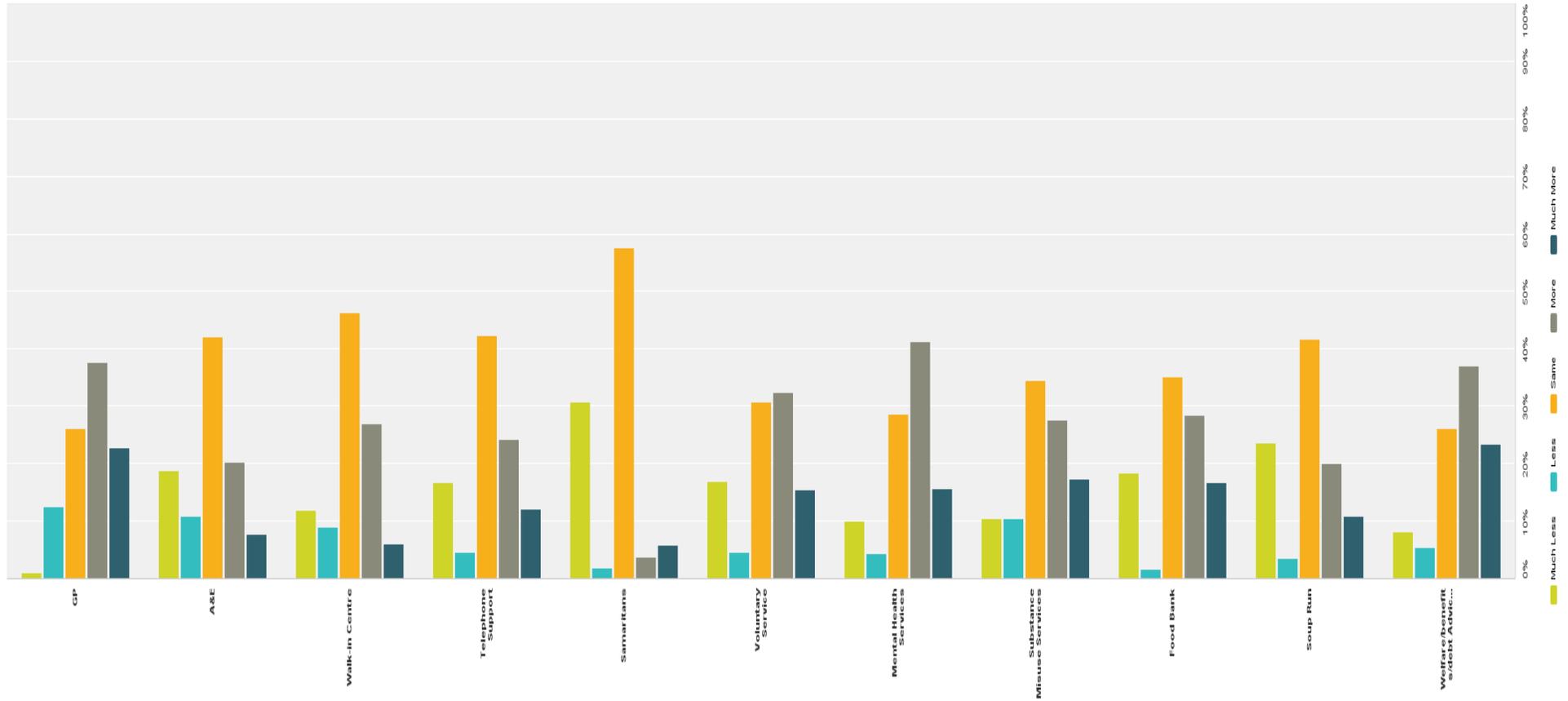
**Do you feel that the changes have had an impact on any of the following?**

- 'Because of my Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and my autism I have struggled without being constantly reminded to attend my appointments and then on attending my appointment I do not understand what they are asking me to do. I get emotionally and mentally frustrated because I only remember one task at a time and my physical health deteriorated because of a lack of food and I am at risk of losing my accommodation because I can't pay me rent'
- 'Struggle to pay bus fares to job interviews or courses to help aid me to get a job'
- 'Having to pay Council tax has increased my outgoings, but it is still manageable for me. It will have some impact and reduce the amount I can save or pay off credit cards'
- 'I have been diagnosed with Borderline personality disorder and I feel emotionally unwell when I am not in control of my own situation financially. Getting in debt and not being able to see my son who is in hospital miles away causes myself and my family a lot of sadness and upset'
- 'Depression, lost weight. Contributed to re-lapse. No money – so how am I supposed to cope? Can't help my partner and son financially. Depression making me withdraw and turn back to drugs. No Fixed Abode (NFA) and no money for ages. Now assessment rate Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)'

**Q. Have the changes impacted on your life in other ways (please give details)**

- 'I have become withdrawn because my confidence is low so I struggle in social situations and Jobcentre plus (JCP) offer no support'
- 'I feel I am fighting a losing battle with a system forever moving the goal posts'
- 'I no longer go out because bus fares or trips to the shops are out of the question. I no longer have a hairdresser and cut my own, have lost friends because I am unable to socialise anymore'
- 'Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) appeals are a little stressful but I have good support through local organisations'

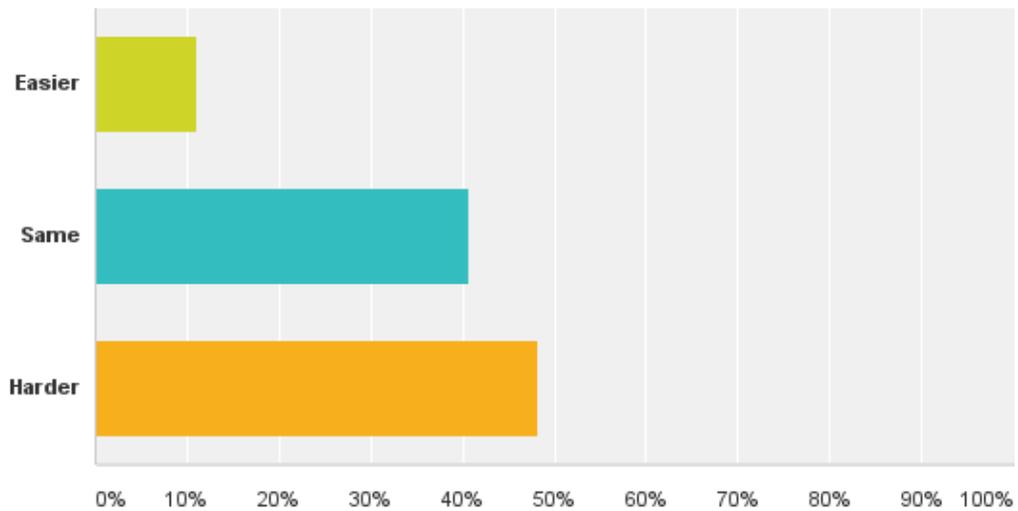
## In the last two years, have you used any of the following services?



**In the last two years, have you used any of the following services?**

	<b>Much Less</b>	<b>Less</b>	<b>Same</b>	<b>More</b>	<b>Much More</b>	<b>Total</b>
GP	<b>1.14%</b> 1	<b>12.50%</b> 11	<b>26.14%</b> 23	<b>37.50%</b> 33	<b>22.73%</b> 20	88
A&E	<b>18.75%</b> 12	<b>10.94%</b> 7	<b>42.19%</b> 27	<b>20.31%</b> 13	<b>7.81%</b> 5	64
Walk-in Centre	<b>11.94%</b> 8	<b>8.96%</b> 6	<b>46.27%</b> 31	<b>26.87%</b> 18	<b>5.97%</b> 4	67
Telephone Support	<b>16.67%</b> 11	<b>4.55%</b> 3	<b>42.42%</b> 28	<b>24.24%</b> 16	<b>12.12%</b> 8	66
Samaritans	<b>30.77%</b> 16	<b>1.92%</b> 1	<b>57.69%</b> 30	<b>3.85%</b> 2	<b>5.77%</b> 3	52
Voluntary Service	<b>16.92%</b> 11	<b>4.62%</b> 3	<b>30.77%</b> 20	<b>32.31%</b> 21	<b>15.38%</b> 10	65
Mental Health Services	<b>10.00%</b> 7	<b>4.29%</b> 3	<b>28.57%</b> 20	<b>41.43%</b> 29	<b>15.71%</b> 11	70
Substance Misuse Services	<b>10.34%</b> 6	<b>10.34%</b> 6	<b>34.48%</b> 20	<b>27.59%</b> 16	<b>17.24%</b> 10	58
Food Bank	<b>18.33%</b> 11	<b>1.67%</b> 1	<b>35.00%</b> 21	<b>28.33%</b> 17	<b>16.67%</b> 10	60
Soup Run	<b>23.64%</b> 13	<b>3.64%</b> 2	<b>41.82%</b> 23	<b>20.00%</b> 11	<b>10.91%</b> 6	55
Welfare/benefits/debt Advice Service	<b>8.22%</b> 6	<b>5.48%</b> 4	<b>26.03%</b> 19	<b>36.99%</b> 27	<b>23.29%</b> 17	73

### Have you found it harder to access any of these services?

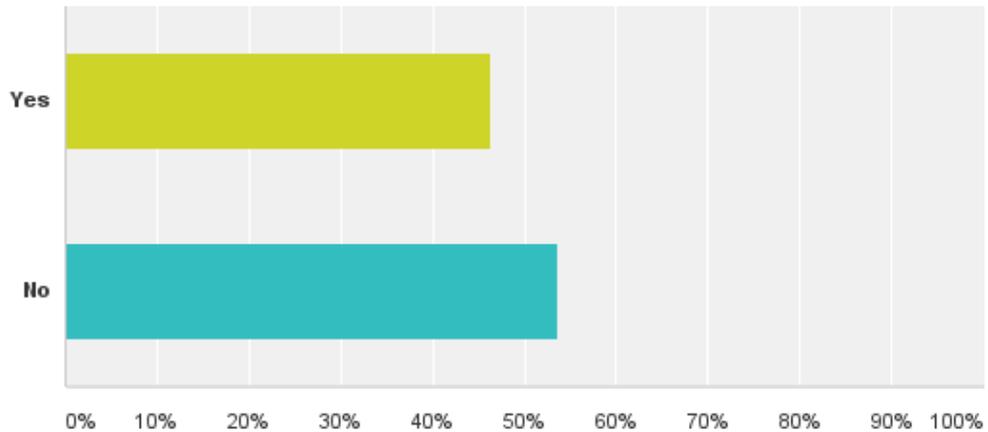


Answer Choices	Responses
Easier	11.11% 9
Same	40.74% 33
Harder	48.15% 39
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>

### Have you found it harder to access any of these services?

- 'Harder, Appointments are very hard to get'
- 'Unless you know someone who has used the service no-one tells you what you are entitled too'
- 'Waiting times for welfare advice have increased and local services have had funding cut'
- 'Harder, due to me withdrawing from people'
- 'Didn't know could access food bank'

**In the past two years, have you had to access a food bank/soup kitchen as a result of changes to your benefits?**

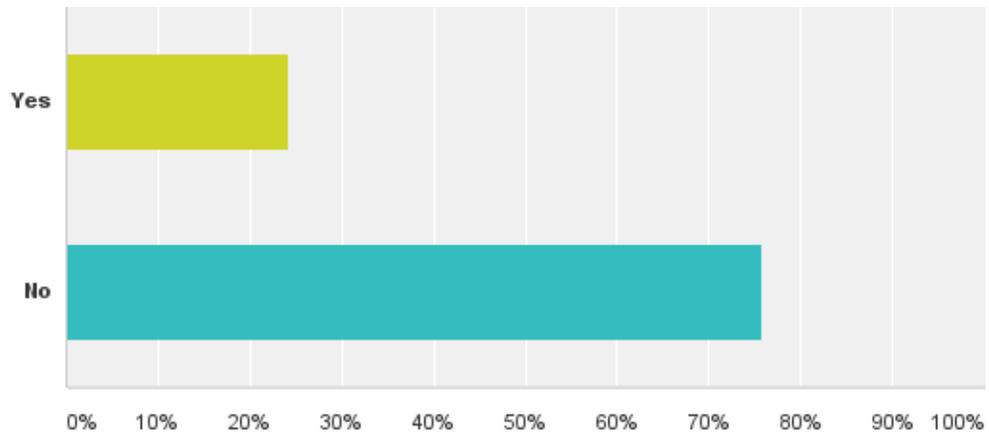


Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	46.34%	38
No	53.66%	44
<b>Total</b>		<b>82</b>

**In the past two years, have you had to access a food bank/soup kitchen as a result of changes to your benefits?**

- 'I am too proud so I go without'
- 'Due to change in Housing benefit/ Council Tax lost home so had to use soup kitchens'
- 'There are people who need to use these more than me'

**Have changes to your benefits been explained clearly to you by the people making the changes?**

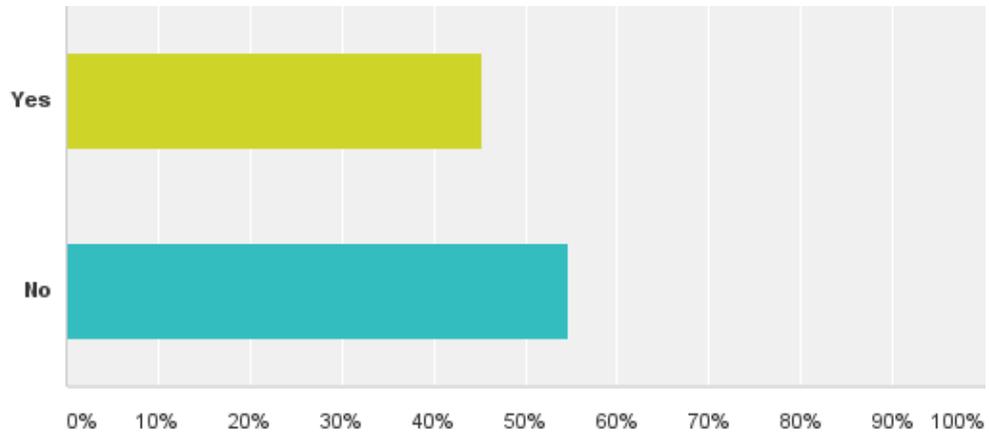


Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	24.14%	21
No	75.86%	66
<b>Total</b>		<b>87</b>

**Have changes to your benefits been explained clearly to you by the people making the changes?**

- 'No, Very abrupt'
- 'Yes'
- 'No, Every time you ring you speak to someone different and get a different story. No one seems to know the right answers'
- 'No one has explained, just been told how it's going to be'
- 'Yes, letters have been received and I have understood them, though many would have difficulty with the language used'
- 'Yes, if you understand the lingo'

### Has anyone else explained the changes to you?

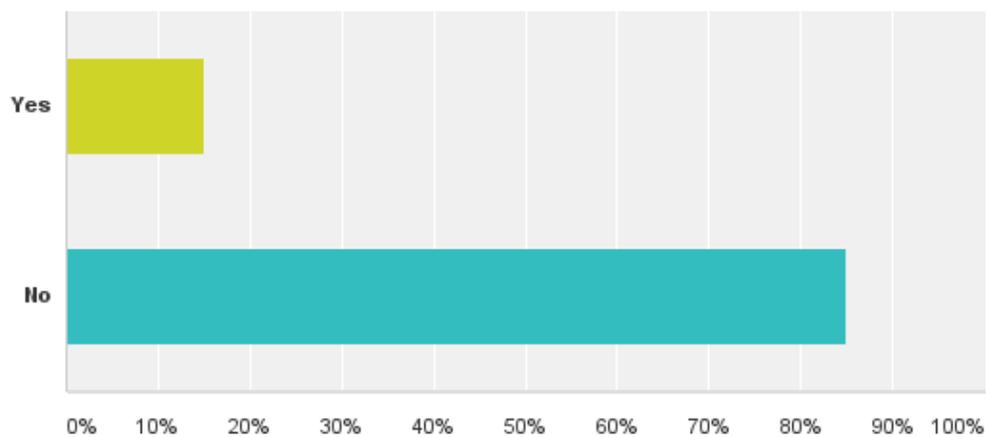


Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Yes	45.24%	38
No	54.76%	46
<b>Total</b>		<b>84</b>

### Has anyone else explained the changes to you?

- 'The changes are changing so quickly, even they are confused from day to day'

### Have you had a referral to support from the Job Centre or DWP?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	15.12%	13
No	84.88%	73
<b>Total</b>		<b>86</b>

### Q. What would help you moving forward in your recovery?

- 'Full support from Jobcentre plus (JCP) with my health condition and for them to understand how my health condition affects me'
- 'To be left alone too get better'
- 'Stability, housing, realisation of my health needs and impact this is having, less stress'
- 'More information in advance so I can plan for changes'
- 'Not having to do their Job search requirements. Having it done the old way with an advisor helping you at your appointment. Adequate support around job search. Things being explained in an easier way to understand'
- 'Accommodation and work. Employees have no rights/probation period/can just get rid of you. Zero hour contracts. Got a job this was a zero hour contract wasn't informed. Got called in and told no more work. Lost accommodation as a result now no fixed abode (NFA). Also got arrears so can't get housing. Benefits help and signposting is very dependent on who your advisor is'
- 'Better more reliable information which would make me at ease'

## What is your age?

Answer Choices	Responses	
16-17	0.00%	0
18-25	4.17%	3
26-35	18.06%	13
36-45	25.00%	18
46-55	40.28%	29
56-65	12.50%	9
66+	0.00%	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>72</b>

## Are you...?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	71.62%	53
Female	27.03%	20
Prefer not to say	1.35%	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>74</b>

## What is your employment status?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Part-time	1.96%	1
Full-time	1.96%	1
Unemployed	86.27%	44
Voluntary	7.84%	4
In Education	1.96%	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>51</b>

## What is your housing status?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Hostel	13.04%	9
Social Housing	37.68%	26
Rented Property	36.23%	25
Home Owner	4.35%	3
Sofa Surfing	4.35%	3
NFA	4.35%	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>69</b>

## What is your ethnicity?

Answer Choices	Responses	
White British	83.78%	62
White Irish	5.41%	4
Other White Background	4.05%	3
White and Black Caribbean	4.05%	3
White and Black African	0.00%	0
White and Asian	1.35%	1
Other Mixed Background	1.35%	1
Indian or British Indian	0.00%	0
Pakistani or British Pakistani	0.00%	0
Bangladeshi or British Bangladeshi	0.00%	0
Other Asian Background	0.00%	0
Caribbean	0.00%	0
African	0.00%	0
Other Black Background	0.00%	0
Chinese	0.00%	0
Arab	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>74</b>

## Which area of Nottingham do you live in?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Bulwell	1.45%	1
Bulwell Forest	0.00%	0
Bestwood	5.80%	4
Basford	11.59%	8
Aspley	0.00%	0
Leen Valley	1.45%	1
Bilborough	0.00%	0
Sherwood	7.25%	5
Berridge	1.45%	1
Arboretum	8.70%	6
Radford & Park	5.80%	4
Wollaton West	0.00%	0
Wollaton East & Lenton Abbey	0.00%	0
Dunkirk & Lenton	1.45%	1
Mapperley	4.35%	3
St Ann's	8.70%	6
Dales	5.80%	4
Bridge	8.70%	6
Clifton North	0.00%	0
Clifton South	0.00%	0
Don't Know	8.70%	6
Prefer not to say	18.84%	13
<b>Total</b>		<b>69</b>

## **Conclusions**

This report aims to give a voice to people in Nottingham. Providing information regarding the impact welfare reform is having on Citizens.

When developing this engagement exercise it was not the intention of SEA and the DDF to make recommendations based on the findings of this report.

However the responses received highlighting language as a barrier, and the lack of signposting/referrals is a common theme and something we all need to consider when we are supporting individuals. The language we use needs to meet the needs of the person and not the service.

In Nottingham work is being undertaken to look at how we can work collaboratively, to ensure people receive the correct information in a timely manner and are signposted to services which could be of benefit to them.

If we can continue to establish a collective approach this will lend itself to improving access to the services which the people we support could benefit from. This can help ensure that an individual receives appropriate and timely support whilst also ensuring we develop opportunities to work smarter for our Citizens, working to build more responsive, collaborative and cost effective services.

## **Next Steps**

The DDF and SEA will be sharing this report with anyone who would like to see it. We will also be undertaking some filming to highlight people's stories regarding welfare reform and again will be making this film available, to enable services, organisations and Commissioners to hear from people who are affected and their thoughts about what could help them to move forward.

**You can view the film here** <http://youtu.be/mrqGxAtnn0s>

We would also like to use this report and the film to develop a good practice guide.

DDF and SEA have also spoken to people within our day to day work who have commented on the issues that receiving a large backdated payment can cause to their recovery particularly in relation to substance misuse. This is something we would like to look into further.

DDF members would also like to redo this consultation in twelve months to see how things have changed for people.

**Thank you to all the people who took the time to speak to SEA and the DDF to help us complete this engagement exercise.**