

## Introduction

The consultation questionnaire was designed to obtain an overview of the general public's views on how welfare reform and the Allocations Policy's stricter bedroom eligibility criteria would specifically affect:

- People with overnight contact with children who live with them some of the time.
- People who may want an extra bedroom for health reasons.

The questionnaire consisted of **32** questions and was split into **9 sections**. The 9 sections were:

- **Section 1: Welfare reform**
- **Section 2: Where you live now**
- **Section 3: Occupation of your home**
- **Section 4: Overnight contact with children**
- **Section 5: An extra room for your health needs**
- **Section 6: Looking for a property**
- **Section 7: The effects of welfare reform**
- **Section 8: About you**
- **Section 9: Closing comments**

The questionnaire was available online and could be accessed via:

- **Sheffield City Council Website**
- **Sheffield Homes Website**
- **Property Shop Website**
- **Sheffield City Council and Sheffield Homes Intranet**
- **Facebook**
- **Twitter**
- **Community Assembly Blogs**
- **Emails to applicants, external organisations and TARA groups**

The questionnaire was also available in paper format. This was available via:

- **Mail out to 2,300 Housing Register applicants.**
- **Mail out to people who answered the previous consultation questionnaire and said that they are disabled, or a household member is and who said they would be happy to be consulted further.**
- **On request by emailing or calling.**

It was advertised in the Property Shop paper. The questionnaire was also available on request in large print, Braille and translation.

This report looks at each question individually in the same structure as the questionnaire. Some questions analysed make reference to other areas within the questionnaire where there is a particular correlation or link. From the **144** responses we received, **not all** respondents answered all **32 questions**. This has been reflected in the breakdown of answers given within this report.

## Summary

The key findings are:

- **144** responses were received, so this is a small sample.
- **71%** of respondents are male.
- **54%** of respondents are in receipt of Housing Benefit.
- **51%** of respondents are council tenants.
- **40%** of respondents said they are under occupying.
- **54%** of under occupying respondents are council tenants.
- **56%** of respondents on Housing Benefit said they can't afford to stay if their Housing Benefit reduces.
- **Council tenants** were the most likely to have someone who cares for them living with them some of the time.

## Questionnaire Respondent Profile

We received **144** questionnaire responses - **73 (51%)** online and **71 (49%)** paper copies.

The respondents' profile is as follows:-

Gender	Number (%)
Male	<b>71%</b>
Female	<b>29%</b>

The number of **men (56)** who answered the questionnaire is significantly higher than the number of **women (23)**, which is not unexpected. This is because more men on the Housing Register are flagged as having overnight contact with children who don't live with them all of the time. **81% (2870)** of the **3536** questionnaire mail out, in respect of overnight contact with children that do not live with parents all of the time, was to men.

Age	Number (%)
16-24	<b>8%</b>
25-44	<b>42%</b>
45-65	<b>45%</b>
66-79	<b>4%</b>
80+	<b>1%</b>

Ethnicity	Number (%)
White British (English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish)	<b>87%</b>
Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) Groups	<b>13%</b>

Sexuality	Number (%)
Heterosexual	<b>72%</b>
Bi-sexual/Gay/Lesbian/Other	<b>1%</b>
Prefer not to say	<b>5%</b>
Not answered	<b>22%</b>

Tenure	Number (%)
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Council Tenant	50%
Private Rented Tenant	14%
Living With Family Or Friends	12%
Housing Association Tenant	11%
Home Owner	10%
Supported Accommodation	1%
Homeless	1%
Other	1%

55% of respondents stated that **they or someone in their household had a disability.**

## Section 1: Welfare reform

As part of the government's **welfare reforms**, they are introducing the **under occupiers' penalty** (or bedroom tax), which will come into effect in April 2013. It will affect **working age** tenants of social housing. Social housing includes council and housing association housing. Claimants with **more bedrooms than they need** will have their **Housing Benefit reduced**.

We wanted to find out how welfare reform will affect two groups of people in particular:

- Those who have **overnight contact with children** who don't live with them all of the time.
- Those with a **health issue** which means they consider they need an extra bedroom, perhaps to sleep separately from a partner or so someone can stay overnight to support them in times of ill health.

In order to find out how welfare reform would affect these two groups we asked the following questions:

### Q1 Which of the two groups described above do you fit into?

**91 (63%)** respondents stated they have overnight **contact with children** who don't live with them all of the time, with **53 (37%)** stating they have **health issues** where they consider they need an **extra bedroom**.

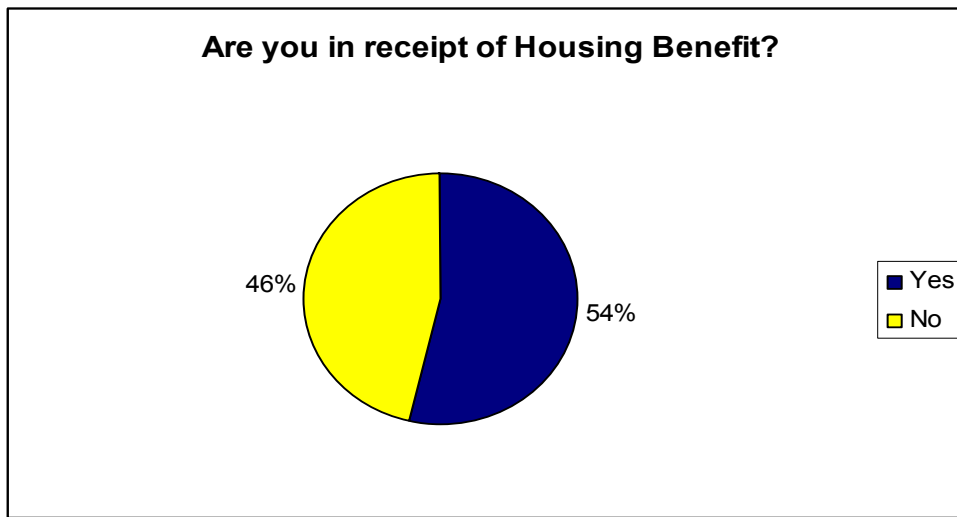
Issue	Number (%)
Overnight contact with children	63%
Health	37%

## Section 2: Where you live now

We wanted to find out where people live now and whether **welfare reforms would impact** them.

### Q2 Are you in receipt of Housing Benefit?

The table below shows how many of the respondents are in receipt of **Housing Benefit**.

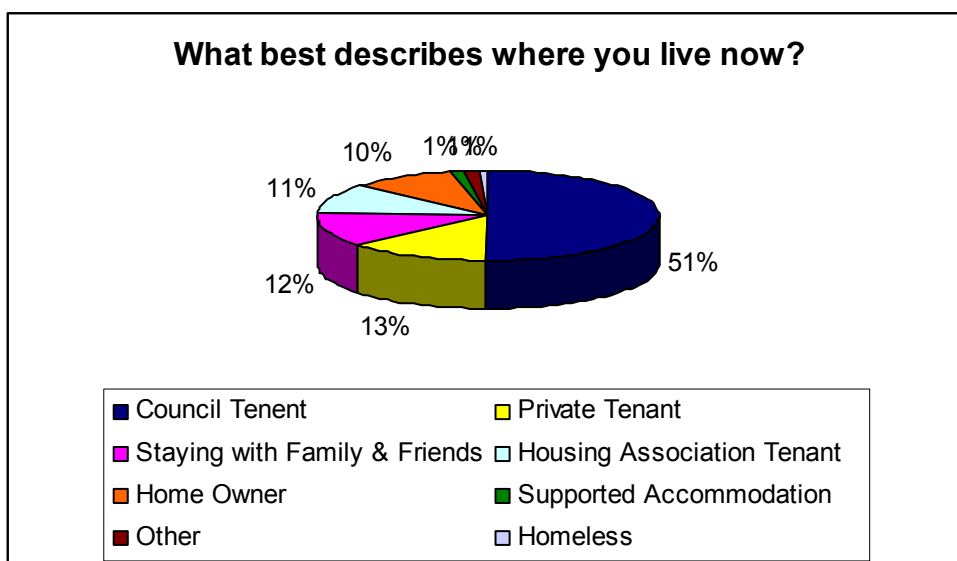


Of the **74** who said they are in receipt of Housing Benefit, **50** of these are on the housing register. The following table shows the tenure of the **50** respondents on the **Housing Register** and in receipt of **Housing Benefit**.

Tenure	Number on Housing Register and in receipt of Housing Benefit	Questionnaire Total
Council Tenants	30	71
Housing Association	7	15
Home owner	6	14
Living With Family/ Friends	5	17
Private Rented	1	19
Other	1	2
	<b>50</b>	<b>138</b>

### Q3 What best describes where you live now?

**51%** of respondents are **council tenants**.



#### Q4 How many bedrooms does your property have?

The majority of respondents are currently housed in two bedroom properties.

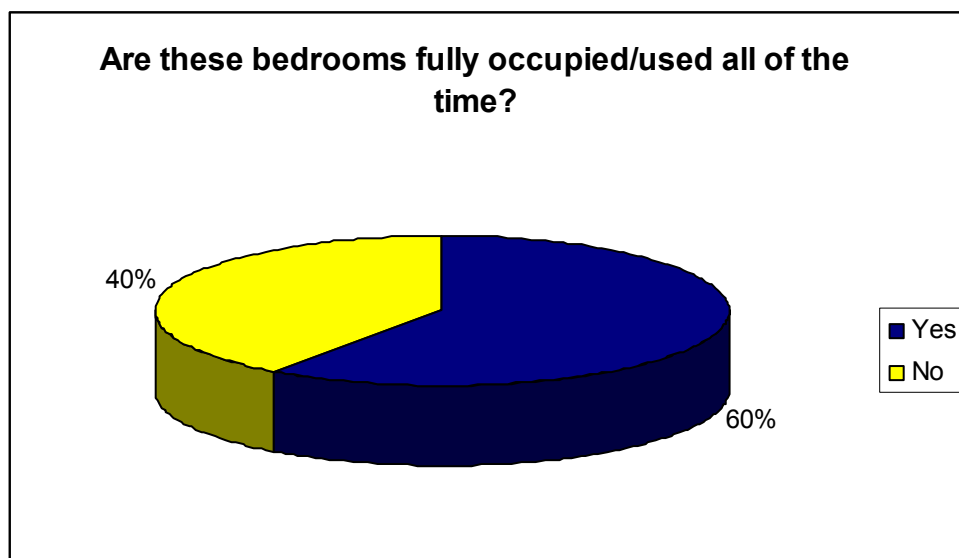


### Section 3: Occupation of your home

This section seeks to ascertain how fully **occupied** the respondent's current home is and whether welfare reform will affect their Housing Benefit entitlement.

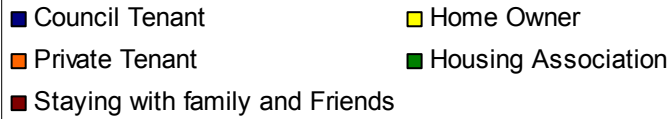
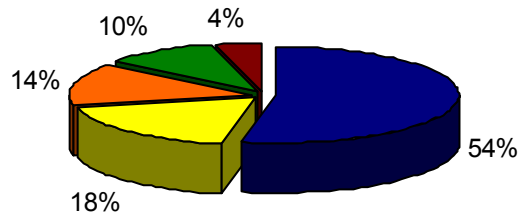
#### Q5 Are these bedrooms fully occupied/used all of the time?

**40%** of respondents said they have bedrooms that are not fully occupied all of the time.



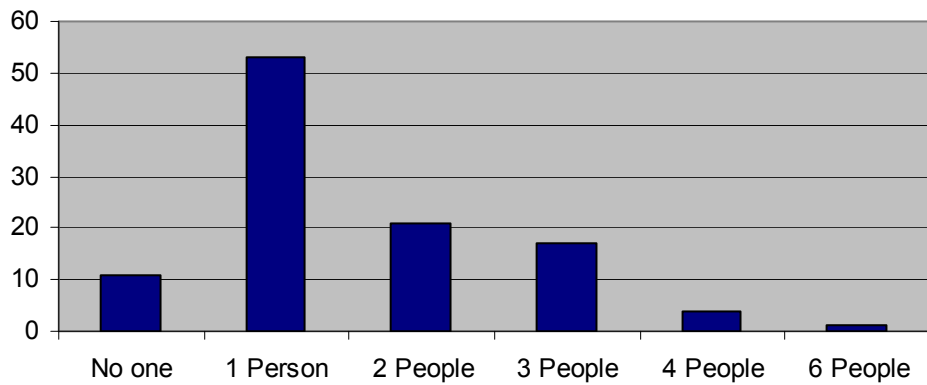
**54%** of under occupied properties are **council tenancies**.

### Tenure of under occupied properties



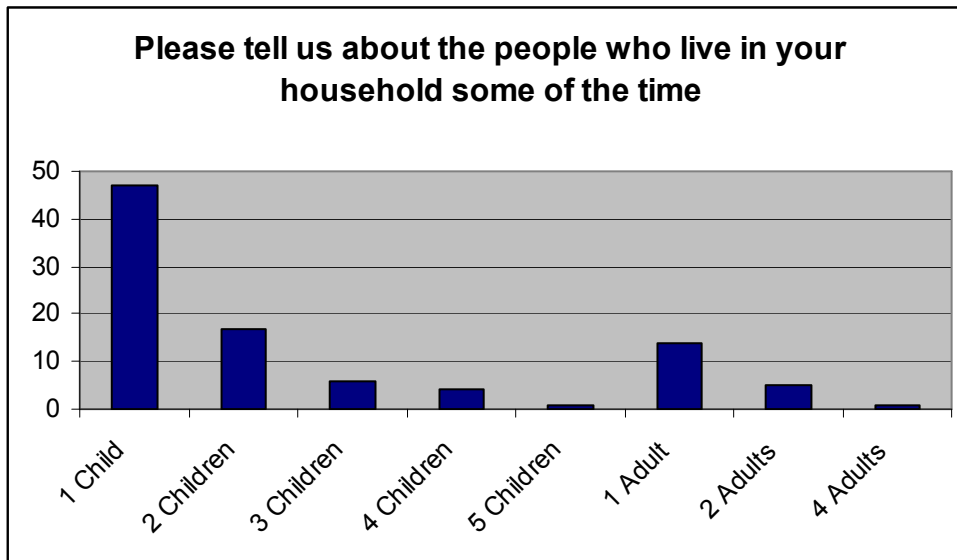
### Q6 How many people live with you all of the time?

#### How many people live in your household all of the time?



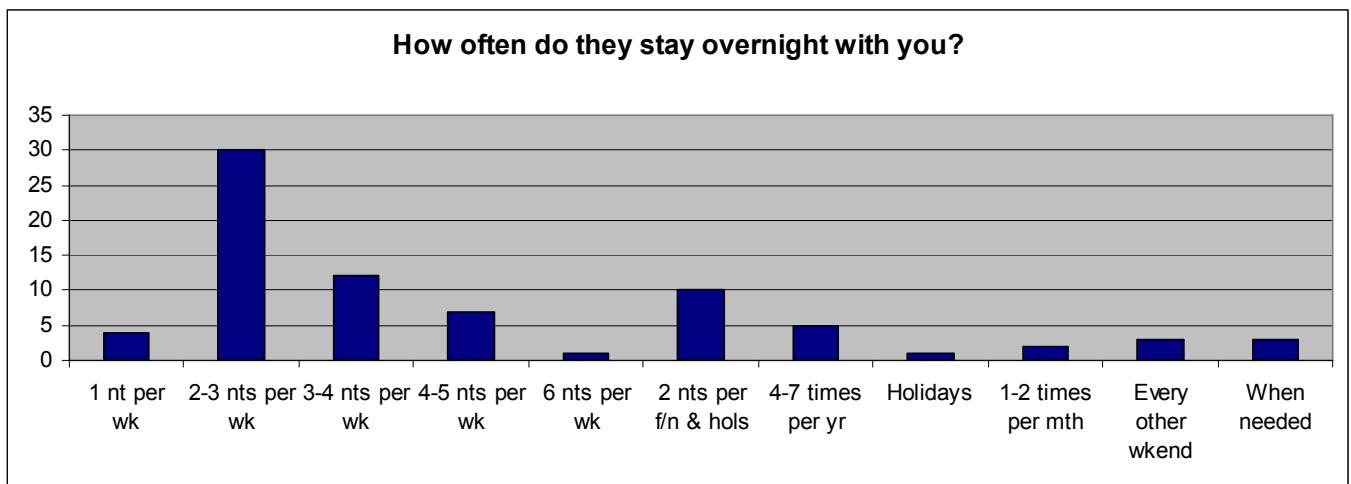
### Q7 Please tell us about the people who live in your household some of the time?

The majority of respondents who have people that live in their household some of the time, have overnight contact with at least one child.



**Q8 How often do they stay overnight with you?**

The majority of respondents who have people that live in their household some of the time had someone staying with them at least two or three nights per week.



**Q9 If you are a working age (16-64) social tenant in receipt of Housing Benefit, you may no longer receive Housing Benefit for bedrooms that are only used some of the time. Can you afford to stay in your current home if your Housing Benefit reduces?**

74 (52%) respondents stated they are in receipt of Housing Benefit. Of these, 32 (43%) respondents said that not all of the bedrooms in their house are occupied all of the time. Of these, 18 (56%) said they could not afford to stay if their Housing Benefit reduced.

Comments made by the 18 respondents that perceive they would have to move include:

*'This is a 3 bedroom house and I have one child with me on a permanent basis and two children of different genders aged 10 and 12 that stay 40% of the time. I feel that all three bedrooms are occupied and not spare rooms and I think this whole ruling should be reconsidered.'*

*'Their Mother takes care of them and their school needs most of the week therefore it is essential for her to have a break and it is my only chance to to spend sometime with them.'*

*'His mum has health issues and needs a break a couple of times per week.'*

*'Paternal grandparents care for my son because my health prevents me being a full time carer. My son would be extremely disstressed if he could not stay overnight.'*

*'I have a court order to have my daughter stay with me so I need a bedroom for her.'*

*'I am not happy to be forced into downsizing as I live in maisonette that has been adapted to suit my health/mobility issues.'*

*'My home is adapted to my needs as a wheelchair user. I have my community and my friends and support around me here. If I have to move, I may not find a property as suitable, plus the fact that I will be cut off from that support network if I am forced to move. I am also not able enough to pack and cart my belongings to a new property. I also could not take the stress of a move.'*

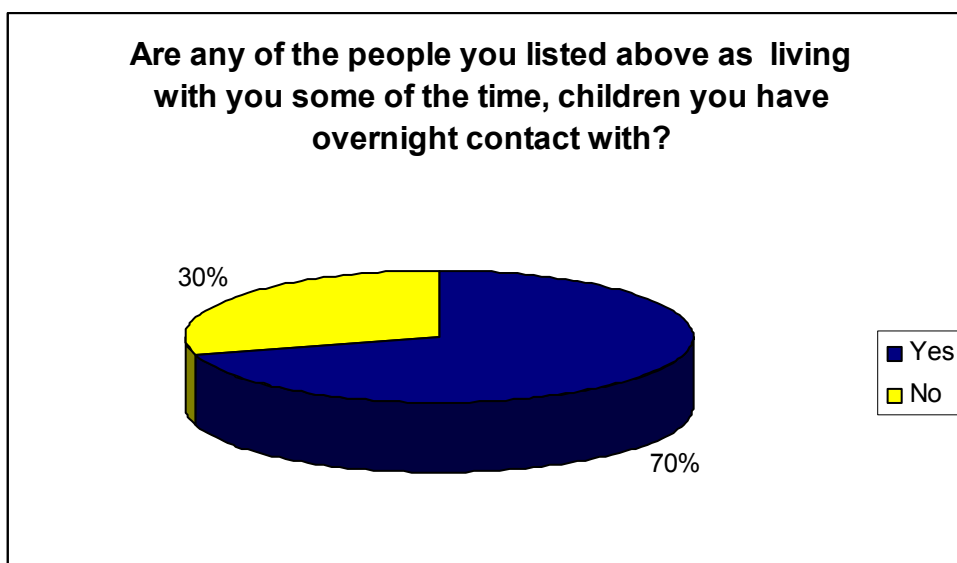
*'It's depressing me because I will not move from Mosborough. I've been here nearly 30 years and I have so much help from friends and neighbours and I would lose this.'*

#### Section 4: Overnight contact with children

This section gives an idea of how many people have **overnight contact with children** that don't live with them all of the time and how **losing bedrooms** might **impact on the family**.

#### Q10 Are any of the people you listed above as, living with you some of the time, children you have overnight contact with?

**70%** of respondents that have people living with them some of the time confirmed these were children they have overnight contact with.

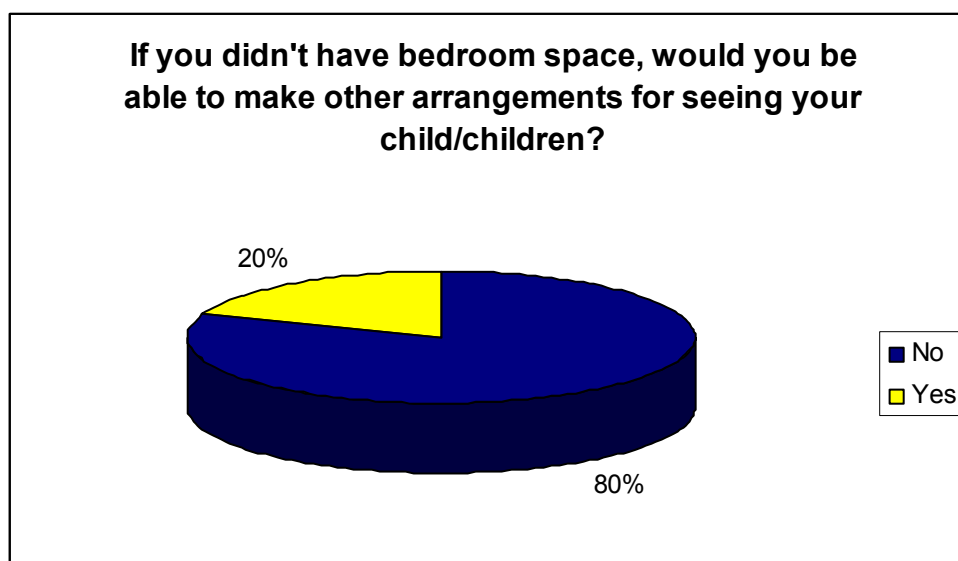


The **25-44 age groups** were far more likely to answer **yes** to this question.



**Q11 If you didn't have bedroom space, would you be able to make other arrangements for seeing your child/children?**

80% of respondents who have overnight contact with children said if they didn't have this bedroom space they wouldn't be able to make other arrangements for seeing their children.



**If you said yes, please tell us what these arrangements would be.**

*'They could come to the house but have to back home at night.'*

*'I would only see them for one day a fortnight as there would not be anywhere to sleep.'*

*'Sofa bed or floor!'*

*'I would only be able to see them during the day and not have them stay overnight.'*

*'I could see her at her own home or at my mother's.'*

*'I would see my children but just one day a week, they would not be able to stay overnight.'*

**Q12 How will these changes affect your children's other parent (i.e., the children's mum or dad not having a break because you can't have them for the night?)**

*'My stepdaughter's mum would have no freedom, this is her opportunity to socialise when our child comes to stay.'*

*'It will cause a lot of stress.'*

*'I will not see my son and grandson.'*

*'The children will suffer.'*

*'It would make it even more difficult for my son to find work and then keep a job.'*

*'My daughter's father would be more impatient and short tempered with my daughter.'*

*'They will not be able to come so I won't see them.'*

*'Their Mother takes care of them and their school needs most of the week therefore it is essential for her to have a break and it is my only chance to spend sometime with them.'*

*'His mum has health issues and needs a break a couple of times per week.'*

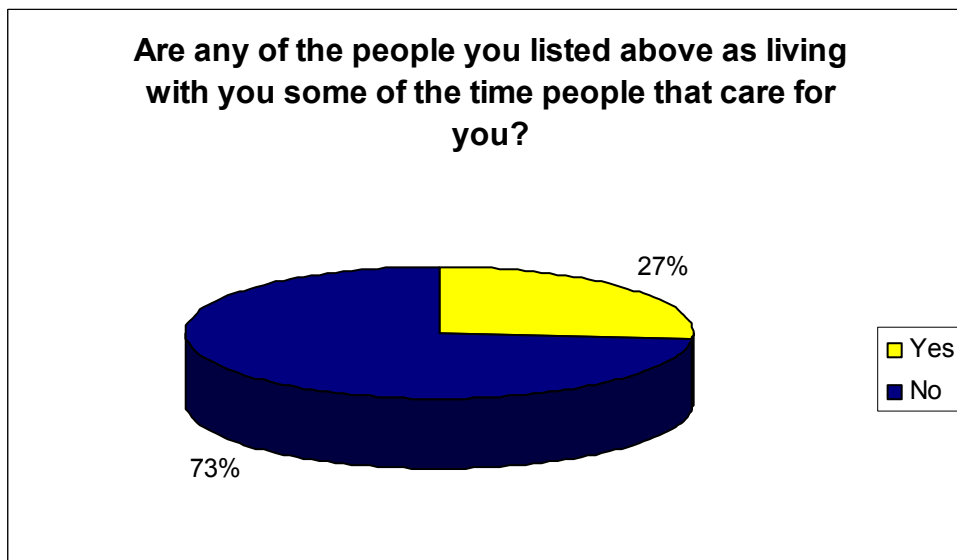
*'Child's mother needs break as son got ADHD'.*

## Section 5: An extra bedroom for your health needs

This section seeks to help us understand the **possible impacts** of welfare reform on people with **health needs** who currently have a spare bedroom they utilise to help manage their health.

### Q13a) Are any of the people you listed above as living with you some of the time, people that care for you?

27% of respondents that said they have people living with them some of the time said these are people that care for them.



The **45-65** age group were the most likely to have **someone who cares for them living with them some of the time**.

Age Group	Yes (number)	Yes (%)
16-24	1	1
25-44	7	10
<b>45-65</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>
66-79	1	1
80+	0	0

**Council tenants** were the most likely to have someone who cares for them living with them some of the time.

Tenure	Yes (number)	Yes (%)
<b>Council Tenants</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>
Private Rented Tenants	2	3
Home Owners	3	4
Living With Family Or Friends	2	3
Housing Association Tenants	3	4

### Q13b) Can you tell us how often they stay overnight to care for you and why?

Some people said that they have overnight care **most nights**, or **two to three nights a week**, or **most weeks**. Most said that it varies, depending on their health needs, and is provided on an ad hoc basis. Reasons varied from physical help due to a long-term health condition or recovery from an operation, to support for people with severe mental health issues, some of whom said that they are likely to become dangerous and/or suicidal without care. Some people have family that care for them but live outside Sheffield and need to be able to stay overnight.

### Q14 If you do not need an extra bedroom for a carer, can you tell us what else you use the extra room for?

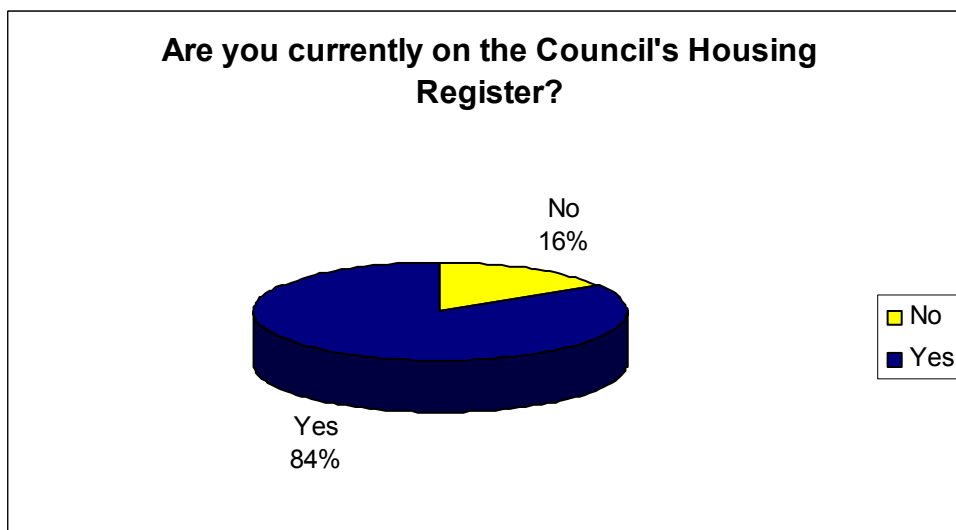
Several people are cared for by a partner who lives with them and uses the room. Reasons for this include that the partner who is cared for has to have a special type of bed and there is no room for another bed in that bedroom.

## Section 6: Looking for a property

This section gives an overview of how many of the respondents are **looking for a property**, and if so, what type of property they want and whether they can afford an extra bedroom than they will receive benefit for.

### Q15 Are you currently on the Council's Housing Register?

**84%** of respondents stated that they are on the Council's Housing Register.



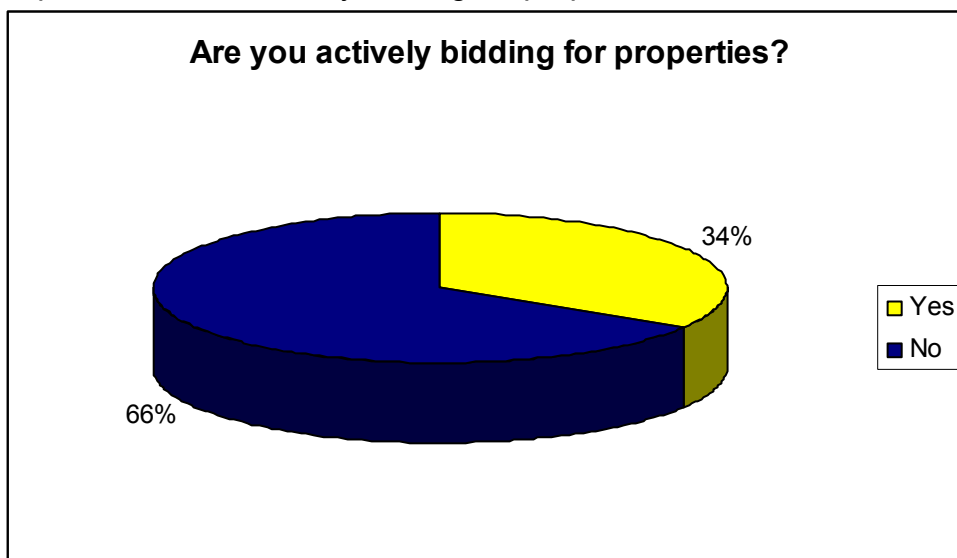
The following table shows a breakdown, by housing tenure, of the **99** respondents who **are** on the Housing Register and disclosed their tenure:

Tenure	Number
Council Tenants	49
Housing Association	11
Home owner	10
Living With Family/ Friends	13
Private Rented	12
Other	2
Supported Accommodation	1
Homeless	1
	99

**49%** of **Council tenants** who responded said they are on the **Housing Register**. This is higher than any of the other tenure types.

### Q16 Are you actively bidding for properties?

Only **34%** of respondents are currently bidding for properties.



The **25-44** age group is most likely to be bidding for properties.

Age	Number	%
16-24	4	11%
<b>25-44</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>56%</b>
45-65	11	30%
66-79	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Q17 How many bedrooms are you bidding for?

The majority are bidding for two bedroom properties.

Number of bedrooms	Number of respondents bidding
1	4
2	31
3	9
4	2
1-2	7
2-3	2
<b>Total Number Bidding</b>	<b>55 (38%)</b>

**Q18 Could you make up the shortfall in rent if you are bidding for more bedrooms than you will receive Housing Benefit for?**

39% said they wouldn't be able to make up any shortfall in Housing Benefit.

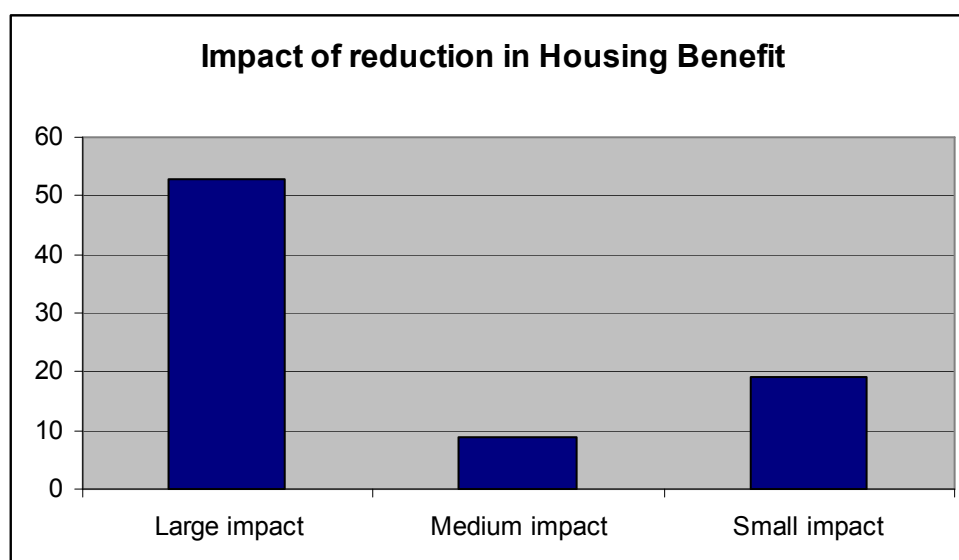
Yes	45 (61%)
No	29 (39%)

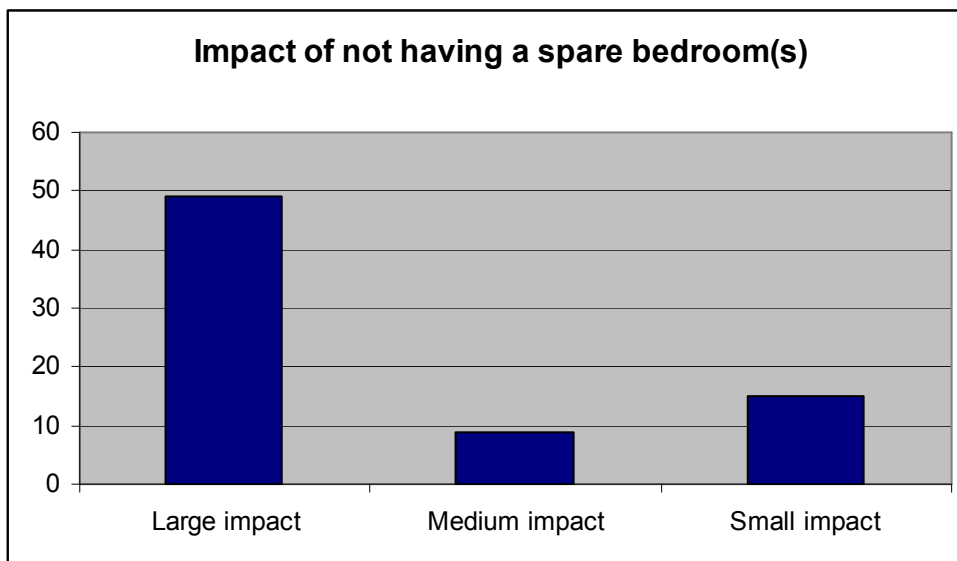
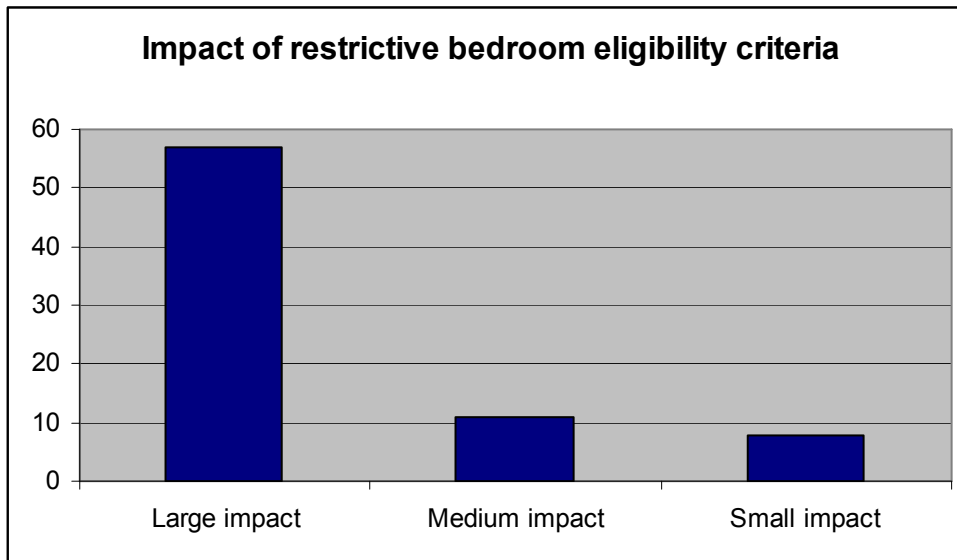
**Section 7: The effects of welfare reform**

The section asks respondents to identify how **large the various impacts will be on them** in terms of reduction in Housing Benefit, the more restrictive bedroom eligibility criteria set out in the draft Allocations Policy and not having a spare bedroom.

**Q19a How will the reduction in Housing Benefit, the more restrictive bedroom eligibility set out in the draft Allocations Policy and/or not having a spare bedroom(s) affect you?**

The majority of respondents reported that the impacts would be high for them in each of the three areas.





### Q19b Why is this?

77 respondents told us more about the impacts that this will have. 38 responses were about having **contact with children**. Many mentioned the need for a spare room so that their child or children can live with them part of the time. 18 people said their children couldn't stay, or it would be very difficult for them to stay, if there was no spare room. Several mentioned the detrimental effects of this for either their children or themselves:

*'no bedroom .. no kids // harms the kids that want to live with dad rather than mum.'*

*'[it] will restrict the time we have together'*

*'...my depression will worsen and my daughter means so much to me.'*

*'...a teenage girl shouldn't have to share a floor with her teenage brothers.'*

Travelling time and the need for children to stay overnight because their other parent lives elsewhere was also mentioned.

16 respondents talked about financial impacts and said that they would not be able to afford to pay for an additional bedroom, or would struggle to afford other things,

***'I wouldn't be able to afford bus fare to collect my daughter or provide for when she stays with me...My daughter cannot sleep in a room with me now as she is too old.'***

15 responses were about health issues and care. Most of these mentioned the intermittent need for care. Some people live at a distance from family who care for them, who need to stay overnight.

***'I have a 32 year old son who stays to keep an eye on me when needed. How can I expect a 32 year old to share a bedroom with his mother? And how could I ask a man of 6'4 to sleep on a couch?'***

The importance of regular contact with family to combat isolation was noted. One respondent said that older carers may have health issues themselves, making it difficult to stay overnight without a spare room.

Some respondents mentioned the need for extra space for medical equipment, or said that their home had been adapted to meet their needs. The difficulties of moving home and moving away from support networks were raised. Several respondents said that they need a separate bedroom from their partner for health reasons. Some also care for their partner.

***'My husband and I can't always sleep in the same bedroom because he has a heart condition (triple bi-pass) and I have diabetes which makes my legs swell and I can't stay still in bed. The bedroom is not big enough for us to have twin beds and store all the equipment we need'.***

***'My husband has health issues and does not sleep well. He is constantly in and out of bed during the night...This disturbs my sleep so I sleep in the other bedroom. I need my rest as I have to take care of my husband and my elderly mother during the day.'***

Four respondents said that they like to have an additional room so that family can visit, including adult children and grandchildren. Other effects included not being able to plan ahead for a growing household and lack of space for children to play, and storage of possessions.

**Q20 Do you have any ideas or suggestions that could help? For example in our new draft Allocations Policy, we are extending the down sizing priority to help people who are under occupying to move to a smaller property, to avoid running up rent arrears.**

***'Architects need to build bigger rooms so people can have separate beds and get all equipment they need in the bedroom if they want people to stay in one bedroom together. My brother has had to sleep on the settee for ten years because his wife has the bedroom and all her equipment takes the rest of the room up.'***

***'I think you should let people that are over working age have a larger property if they can afford it.'***

***'Stop age banding or at least review it, e.g., upstairs flats for over 60s aren't being taken because they can't walk upstairs.'***

***'Build more houses.'***

***'Ensure that all new build properties for older people are two reasonable sized bedrooms i.e., at least 10ft square and that ground floor properties are allowed pets!'***

*'It makes sense that people with large property with unoccupied rooms downsize and allow larger families to occupy properties with more rooms to accommodate people who require the extra space.'*

*'Offer more furnished/part furnished options especially to the elderly. Moving home can be overwhelming and they would appreciate some help. I would think the elderly are the bulk of the under occupiers. Offer to carpet and paint the property. Keep age banded properties if you want to encourage the elderly to move from a house to a flat. Couples with health issues should be allowed a bedroom each.'*

*'I also object to the decision by the government to exempt OAPs from this legislation. If it's one or two people in a three bed, it's under-occupied whether they are under pension age or over. In fact, OAPs are more likely to be rattling round an oversized home. I feel the exemption should apply to people who have disabilities to.'*

*'Pay for carpet, painting and the cost of a move.'*

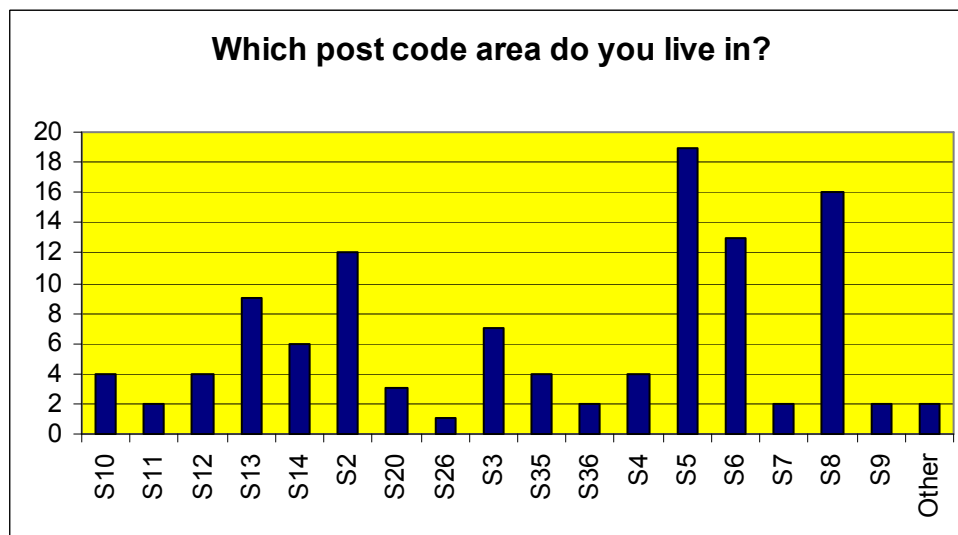
*'Put more emphasis on exchanging.'*

*'Target the people that have no reason to live in a large expensive property.'*

## Section 8: About you

The following section provides **demographic** and **equalities information** about respondents.

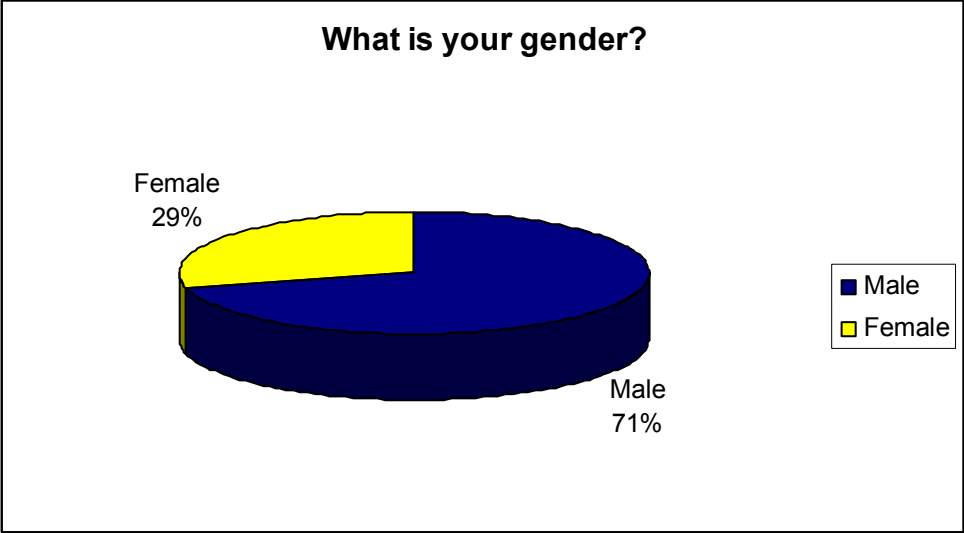
### Q21 Which post code area do you live in?



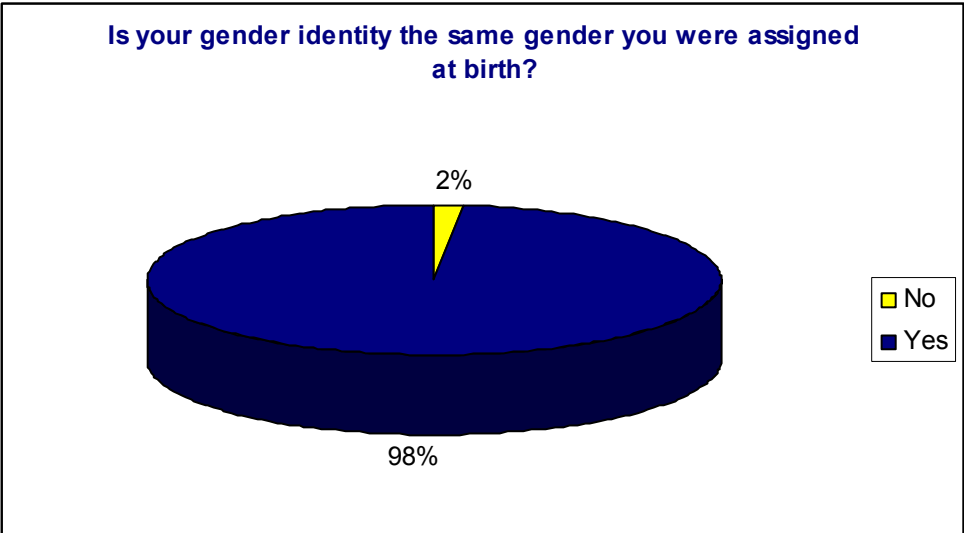
### Q22 What is your gender?

A much higher proportion of men answered the questionnaire than women. **81** out of **114** respondents are **male (71%)**. This compares to **33** out of **114** who are **female (29%)**.

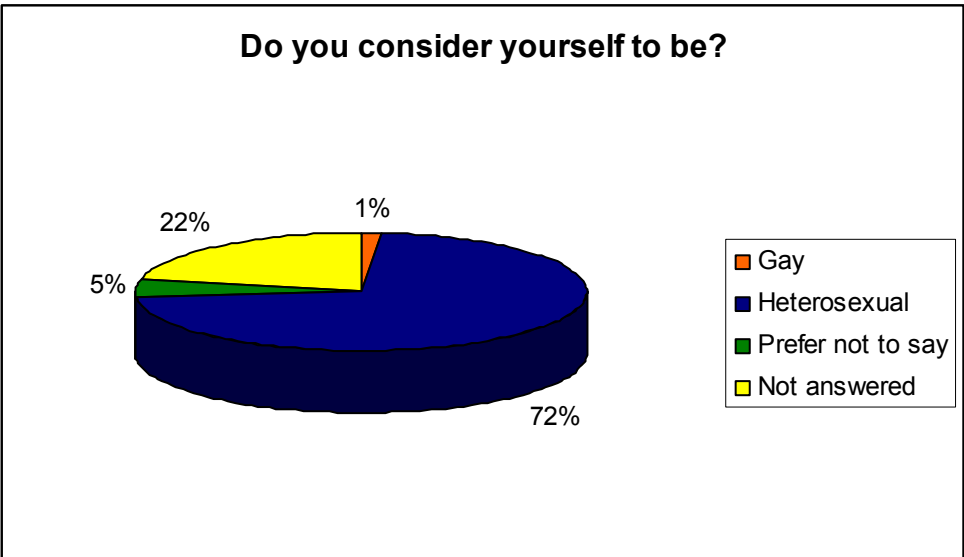




**Q23 Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?**



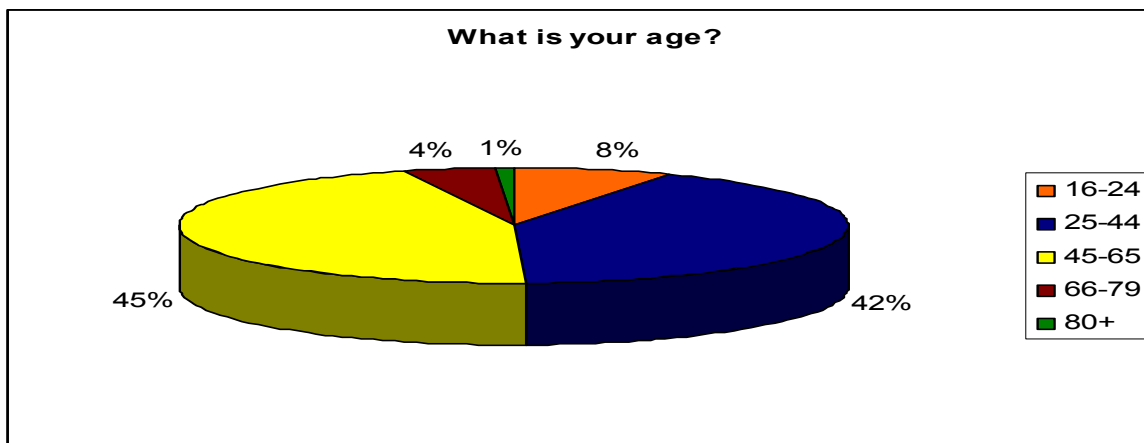
**Q24 What is your sexuality?**



People who are **lesbian, gay and bi-sexual (LGB)** are estimated to make up between **5%-7%** of the UK population.<sup>1</sup>

### Q25 What is your age?

The impacts of the welfare reforms being explored in this questionnaire affect those of working age; the majority of responses were from people of working age, as shown below:



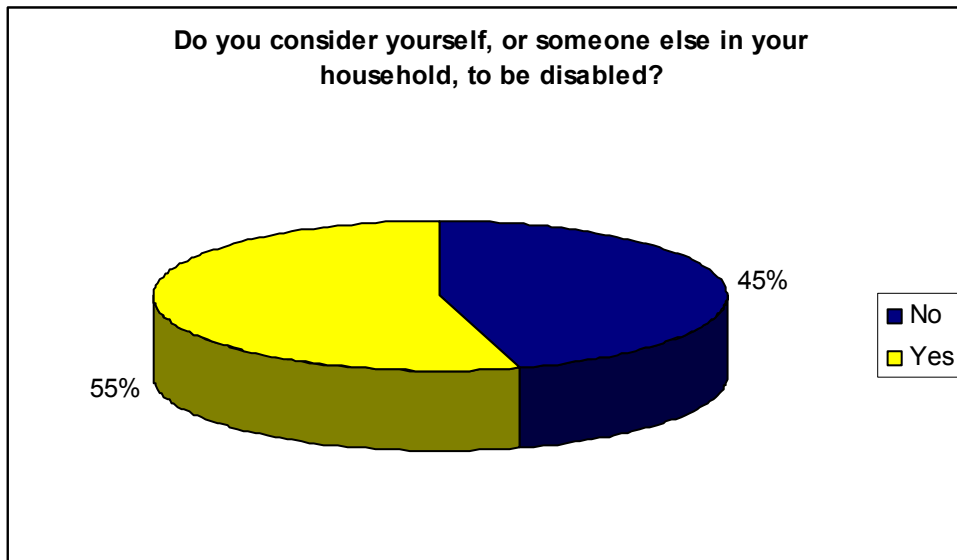
### Q26 Do you provide regular and substantial care to anyone?

Who?	Yes (number)	Yes (%)
Child/ren	36	67
Relative (e.g. disabled child, partner, parent etc)	12	22
Both	6	11
Total	54	100

### Q27a) Do you consider yourself, or someone else in your household, to be disabled?

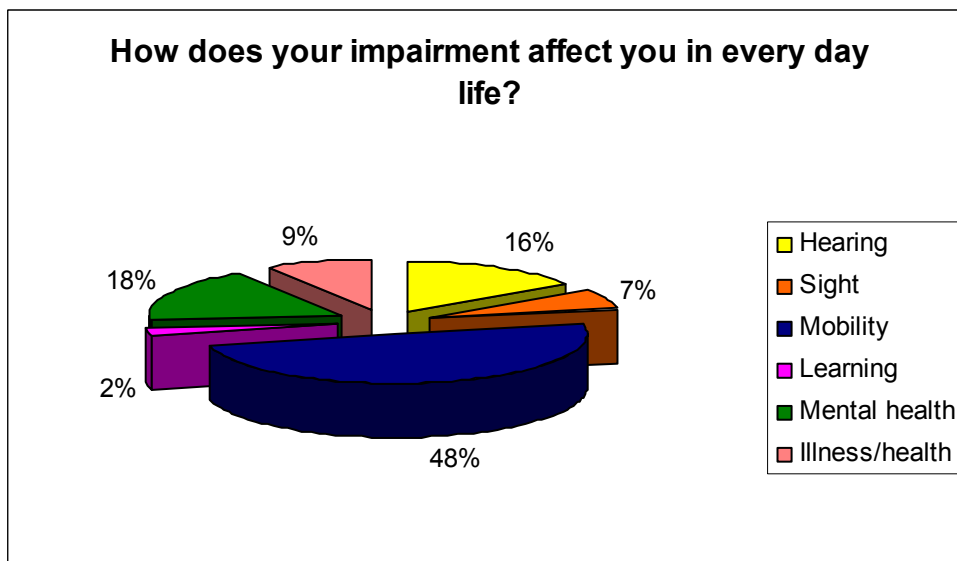
**55%** of respondents consider themselves or someone in their household to be disabled.

<sup>1</sup> Sheffield First Partnership



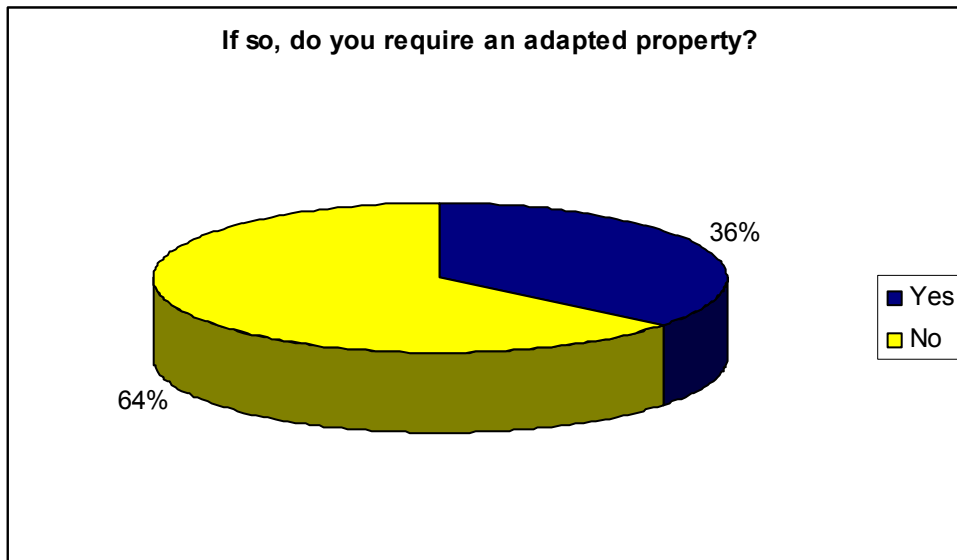
**Q27b) If so, how does your impairment affect you in everyday life?**

Responses were mainly split between those with physical disabilities and those with mental health issues:



**Q27c) If so, do you require an adapted property?**

Out of the **60** respondents that stated they or someone in their household had a disability, **19 (36%)** answered **yes** to requiring an adapted property, with **34 (64%)** answering **no**. (**7** did not answer this question).

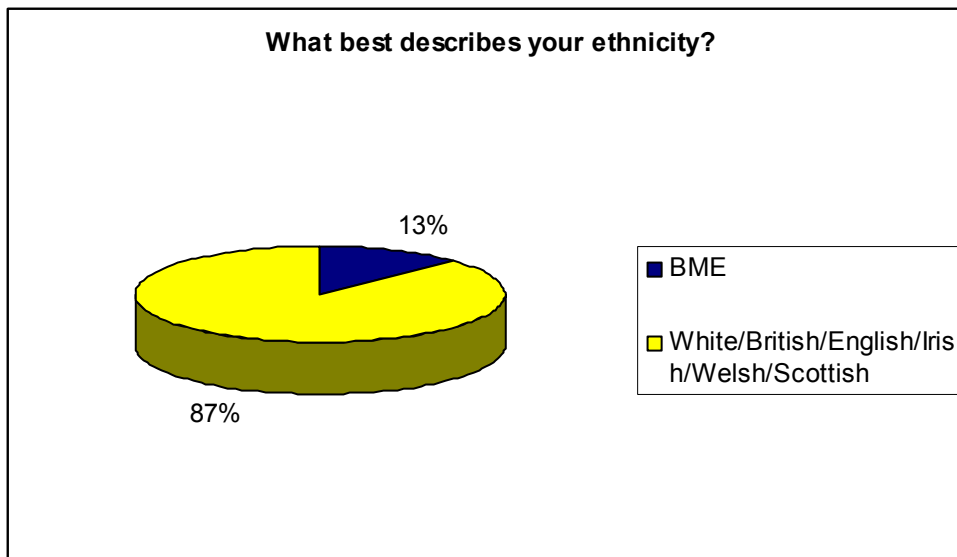


**Q28 What is your language preference?**

Of those that answered this question, **5** stated a language preference other than English. These included:

- Irish
- Kurdish
- Slovakian
- Somali
- Writing (deaf respondent).

**Q29 What best describes your ethnicity?**



The **BME** population in Sheffield is approximately **17% (2009)**.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Sheffield First Partnership – State Of Sheffield Report 2012

## Section 9: Closing Comments

This section gave respondents the opportunity of adding anything and helped us identify whether there were responses from any organisations that might express the opinions of any particular groups.

**Q30 If you would be happy for us to contact you about your answers please leave your contact details below.**

44 (31%) of the 144 respondents left further details for us to contact them.

**Q31a) Are you representing an organisation when completing this questionnaire?**

Organisation Representation	%	Total
Yes	2%	2
No	98%	108
	100%	110

**Q31b) If so which organisation?**

Organisation	Total
Manor Children's Centre	1

**Q32 Do you have any other observations, comments, ideas or solutions you can add?**

The final question provided respondents the opportunity to add any additional thoughts and comments. This provided a varied response and emphasised some thoughts and feelings that had been previously been touched on. Below is a selection of these:-

*'I think this reform will cause some hardship and a good deal of stress to a lot of people but in the long run it is fair - people who cannot afford to pay rent should have ADEQUATE housing provided but not the luxury of spare rooms. Why should others subsidise them beyond their needs? They have to realise that if they want more they must make more effort to earn it!'*

*'It's not fair that benefit is being reduced for men with access to their children.'*

*'To emphasise, I need the extra bedroom for my sons weekly overnight stay and rest for grandparents.'*

*'I would be glad to downsize if I could get a bungalow or a ranch style flat in the areas I require.'*

*'I don't agree with any of this, I have a daughter with access, this is hindering my life and my daughter's right to spend time with me, I feel punished for having a child! This isn't on!'*

*'If we cannot afford to live in large houses in our preferred areas then it's right, in times of need, to relocate to where I can afford. This is life! Some, who have special needs or*

***who have adapted their homes may need special care - but they are few and not the norm.'***

***'Forcing older people from the home they have occupied for many years is unfair. Build the houses needed to place younger people in the homes they deserve. Tenants of social housing landlords have no control over the mass demolition of houses in good serviceable condition. The government should fix the problem they have created by building to replace what they destroyed.'***

***'The government's changes are going to punish the most vulnerable in society. Non resident parents will lose contact with kids, disabled people will be forced into less suitable properties. It's unfair and discriminatory.'***

***Disabled people are been driven into poverty. The whole system is in tatters!'***

***'Allocations should be based on need and staff need to investigate fully any situation so people can not abuse the policy.'***

***'Not fair system for single parents whose children do not live with them.'***

***'I don't want to change my property as this house has been adapted inside and out for my needs and I need my daughter to be with me to help care for me.'***