



Equality bulletin number 29 –  
Housing Executive Staff and  
Tenants Attitudes to Disability

January 2011

## Background

The Disability Action Plan (2008) stated that “The Housing Executive is committed to challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all staff, tenants and other customers”. We recognise that barriers exist for people with disabilities in relation to opportunities available to them that permits full participation in public life, and in relation to perceptions of people with disabilities in all areas of society.

Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland Order 2006), the Housing Executive is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life (‘the disability duties’).

One of the key measures of mainstreaming these duties is the inclusion of attitudinal questions in main research projects including the Continuous Tenants Omnibus Survey (CTOS) and the NIHE Staff Survey. This bulletin highlights key findings on attitudes to disability taken from (Wave 4) of the CTOS in 2008 and (Wave 4) of the CTOS in 2009. The bulletin also includes the results of the attitudinal questions on disability included for the first time in the 2010 NIHE Staff Survey.

## Overview of the 2009 CTOS

From the base of 875 completed interviews the survey estimated that there were approximately 87,325 Housing Executive tenant households. Key findings from the 875 interviews include:

- 16% of households are either slightly concerned (8%) or very concerned (8%) about attitudes of others towards people with a disability living in their local estate/area. This compares to 21% of households either slightly concerned (10%), or very concerned (11%) in the 2008 CTOS. The 2009 CTOS showed that 74% of households were not very or not at all concerned. The 2008 CTOS also showed 64% not very or not at all concerned.

- 25% of households in the 2008 CTOS and 24% of households in the 2009 CTOS, were either slightly concerned or very concerned about attitudes of others towards people with a disability living in Northern Ireland as a whole. In 2009, 62% of households were not very or not at all concerned compared to 54% in 2008.
- In 2009, 39% of households think there is prejudice against people with disabilities in Northern Ireland. 50% of households thought that there is no prejudice. In the 2008 survey the findings were more evenly split with 41% thinking that there was prejudice and 42% thinking that there was no prejudice.
- The households that thought there was prejudices were asked to highlight types of disabilities people are most likely to face prejudice due to. The breakdown is shown in Table 1 as follows:

	2009 CTOS (41% or 36,056 of estimated total)	2008 CTOS(39% or 34,065 of estimated total)
A mental health issue(s)	91%	93%
A learning disability	87%	86%
A Physical Disability	83%	88%
Communication difficulties	81%	83%
A sensory disability	66%	72%
A hidden physical condition or illness	65%	72%
A progressive illness	55%	68%

- 4% of respondents to the 2009 CTOS would be slightly concerned or very concerned if a property in their immediate neighbourhood was converted into a hostel for people with a physical disability, compared to 3% of respondents to the 2008 CTOS.
- 5% of respondents to the 2009 CTOS would be slightly concerned or very concerned if a property in their immediate neighbourhood was converted into a hostel for people with a

learning disability, compared to 3% of respondents to the 2008 CTOS.

- 20% of respondents to the 2009 CTOS would be slightly concerned or very concerned if a property in their immediate neighbourhood was converted into a hostel for people with a mental health issues, compared to 17% of respondents to the 2008 CTOS.
- 93% of respondents to the 2009 CTOS agreed that people with disabilities should have the same opportunities in life as people with no disabilities, compared with 94% of respondents to the 2008 CTOS.
- 93% of respondents to the 2009 CTOS agree that people with disabilities have the same hopes and ambitions as people with no disabilities. This compares with 92% of respondents to the 2008 CTOS.
- 86% of respondents to the 2009 CTOS agree that in the workplace people with disabilities can be as productive as people who do not have disabilities. This compares with 87% of respondents to the 2008 CTOS.
- 71% of respondents to the 2009 CTOS agree that the main problem faced by people with disabilities at work is other people's prejudice. This compares to 70% of respondents to the 2008 CTOS.
- 50% of respondents to the 2009 CTOS think that employers should make special allowances for people with disabilities. This compares to 56% of respondents to the 2008 CTOS. The main reason in both surveys was that "employers should help / give assistance or make allowances / provisions".
- 10% of respondents to the 2009 CTOS think that employers should not make special allowances for people with disabilities compared to 11% of respondents to the 2008 CTOS. The main reason in both surveys was that people with disabilities "should be treated as equals".

## 2010 Staff Survey

The staff survey is carried out every two years by the Housing Executive's Research Unit. Responses were received from 2,018 members of staff, 72% of the 2,814 members of staff eligible to take part in the survey. For the first time, questions were asked on staff attitudes towards other members of staff and customers who have a disability. Key findings are set out below:

- 11% of respondents were very/slightly concerned about attitudes of others within the Housing Executive towards staff who have a disability. Main reasons included that "There should be more fairness and equality" (21%), "Accessibility issues" (18%), and a "lack of tolerance/respect" (11%).
- 11% of respondents were also very/slightly concerned about attitudes of others within the Housing Executive towards customers who have a disability. Main reasons included that "NIHE should provide accessible homes and offices" (17%), "there should be equality of service provision" (14%) and "the individual needs of customers should be met" (10%).

Respondents were asked to make suggestions for improving support for NIHE staff with disabilities. A total of 155 respondents made a comment. The most common suggestions are shown in Table 2 below:

Accessible workplaces	18%
Awareness training for staff who don't have a disability	18%
Provide a support officer for staff who have a disability	8%
More understanding	5%
Better communication	5%
Treat staff who have a disability fairly and with respect	5%

Respondents were also asked to make suggestions for improving services to customers with disabilities. A total of 144 respondents made suggestions, the most common of which are included in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Suggestions for improving service to NIHE customers with a disability	
Accessible home and NIHE offices	29%
Staff Training	14%
Provide a nominated member of staff to deal with customers who have a disability	8%
Offer home visits	7%
Provide information in alternative formats	5%

If you would like further information, please contact:

Stephen Reynolds,

Equality Monitoring and Research Officer

DDI: 9031 8535

[stephen.reynolds@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.reynolds@nihe.gov.uk)

Tony Steed, Equality Unit Manager

DDI: 9031 8556

[tony.steed@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:tony.steed@nihe.gov.uk)