



Collaborative Working in the Housing and Disability Steering Groups



An Ghníomhaireacht
Tithíochta
The Housing Agency



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1 Introduction

The National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability was published in 2011 to present a framework for the delivery of housing for people with disabilities through mainstream housing policy. It set out a five-year plan underpinned by nine strategic aims and a detailed programme of action.

The strategy was developed with significant cross-Departmental and interagency support, a whole-of-government approach, which was followed with a similar approach to implementation, through the work of the high-level Implementation Monitoring Group and the Housing Subgroup against the National Implementation Framework.

One of the Strategic Aims is to ensure that implementation is underpinned by a strong interagency framework, supported by national protocols to formalise collaborative relationships between the relevant agencies to enable people with a disability to live independently within the community.

To achieve this, local authority-led Housing and Disability Steering Groups (HDSGs), were established in each county/city council area, tasked with the goal of supporting implementation of the strategy at local level and providing an improved basis for planning and service delivery. After a small number of pilot groups were set up in 2013, the Housing and Disability Steering Groups were established.

This approach to strategy development and implementation is part of a growing trend towards collaborative approaches to the planning and delivery of publicly funded programmes. Multi-stakeholder collaborations are increasingly presented as a potential driving force for national system change and as being critical in finding solutions to complex policy issues (Head 2008; Warburton et al. 2011). By taking a “whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approach”, strategies such as the new National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 - 2027 seek to achieve a collaborative approach to implementation. Intuitively it is assumed that programmes that provide a mechanism for establishing joint programmes between stakeholders, will achieve positive outcomes for people with a disability through their combined efforts.

However, collaboration can be difficult to achieve. To be considered effective it should offer benefits for all stakeholders, the individual participants, their organisations, the network itself and most importantly the community stakeholders whose issues provide the motivation for the establishment of the network. Implicit in the trend towards partnership, network or collaborative working, is the assumption that the structures and mechanisms which bring together stakeholders from public, private and voluntary sectors will produce synergistic outcomes and will ensure that combined resources are used optimally.

2 Research Purpose and Aims

This research aims to take a comprehensive approach to identifying the links between the processes, interactions, and interdependencies of the members of Housing and Disability Steering Groups and the outcomes of the groups. The key questions the research seeks to answer are:

- 1) whether the Housing and Disability Steering Groups are working effectively and collaboratively,
- 2) whether members of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups have experienced barriers preventing them from fully participating in the work of the groups, and
- 3) where there are issues, whether members of the groups can identify changes that could address these.

To answer these questions, we sought to identify the type and frequency of interaction that can be found among members of the groups, we asked whether the group members report that they work collaboratively with each other and how successful they feel the groups have been. Finally, we asked members of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups to identify changes that could help improve the nature or quality of collaboration in the groups.

3 Research Methodology

Joint working, in a cross-sectoral or interagency group, can take many different forms and at the outset it is useful to acknowledge the differences in network type, the willingness to collaborate and the intensity of relationships formed. Networks or groups can vary in the levels of intensity that may apply to relationships, from cooperation to coordination and finally collaboration (*Mandell and Keast, 2008*). These three terms have been described as being part of a continuum starting with cooperation, gradually increasing to coordination and finally to full collaboration which is described as being the most stable and long-term relationship including “comprehensive planning, setting common missions, formulating joint strategies and measures, and often establishing a new organizational structure separate from the individual organizations (*Wood and Gray 1991; Cigler 1999*). One of the main differences between coordination and collaboration is that in coordinative relations, members keep their own organisational and functional identity but aim to agree areas of compatibility between their missions and goals while in collaborative arrangements, members aim to move towards a shared identity for the group (*Mu, de Jong, and Koppenjan 2019*).

International evidence suggests that there are many factors that contribute to the effectiveness of multi-sectoral groups and interagency collaboration. In a review of literature, Ansell and Gash (2008) identified the main determinants of positive outcomes in collaborative groups: the group members commit to the process when there is recognition of their mutual interdependence and agree to share ownership of the process.

Together they agree on common values and develop a shared understanding of both the problem and the solution. Their actions are governed by clear ground rules and through the development of transparent processes and facilitative leadership they communicate or negotiate and take action to achieve ‘small wins’, in a cyclical process which builds trust, thereby increasing their commitment to the process which in turn produces positive outcomes. Emerson and colleagues identified additional factors that contribute to achieving effective collaboration; when members share motivation, this shared motivation along with principled engagement and the capacity for joint action leads to shared activity and outcomes (*Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh, 2011*).

Prior experience of collaboration can be an important factor in the formation and eventual success or failure of a network or group (*Cummings and Kiesler 2008*). A study of executive directors from non-profit agencies found evidence that positive past experience of collaboration and employment by local government were associated with having a more positive attitude towards collaboration but that attitudes were not uniform and that while a positive starting experience could produce “a virtuous cycle of collaboration” (*Ansell and Gash, 2008 p.11*) not all past experiences were positive or resulted in a positive attitude.

The importance of goals and goal setting has been highlighted in much of the research on effectiveness in collaborative groups. When group members have a role in goal setting, those goals are more likely to be understood and accepted, which in turn increases network effectiveness (Provan and Lemaire 2012). Similarly, research has found the link between goals and performance is stronger when they are seen as important by those who are tasked with implementing them (Williams and Hollenbeck 1987). In order to increase commitment to the goal, managers must ensure that the importance of the goal and its outcomes are stressed (Latham and Locke 2007).

In general, public employees and managers are held accountable for the outcomes of the programmes they are responsible for but are frequently not held solely responsible for the activity or outcomes of collaborative groups (Koliba, Mills, and Zia 2011; Provan and Lemaire 2012). Performance management systems within their organisation tend to prioritise the goals of their agency over those of the more distributed goals of the collaboration, sometimes causing a conflict between their pursuit of their organisational goals and the goals of the interagency work, or more specifically between the vertical accountability within their organisation for their 'normal' activities and the less direct accountability of their collaborative activities (Fountain 2013; Koppenjan 2008). This conflict can result in a failure to commit to the goals of the interagency work and a reduction in effectiveness.

Huxham and Vangen (Huxham et al. 2000) identify a number of barriers to collaboration which together contribute to the potential for 'collaborative inertia'. Diversity of membership may result in difficulties in negotiating joint purpose; different organisational cultures or different professional languages may lead to communication difficulties or a difficulty developing joint modes of operating (Hibbert and Huxham 2005 p. 65); failure to identify and manage the perceived power imbalances may lead to or fail to correct trust issues between partners (Huxham et al. 2000).

Those tasked with managing interagency groups and networks face challenges that differ from those of traditional hierarchical structures. For example, managers lack direct managerial supervision over those who are responsible for delivering on the goals of the network; they may lack access to reliable monitoring channels; in the absence of a shared organizational culture or identity, they may lack a mechanism to motivate potentially diverse participants with differing levels of commitment into action (O'Toole 1997). The essential difference, according to Keast and colleagues (2005) is that networks are "horizontally oriented, more egalitarian in their process and membership and rely on social relationships to generate collective action" (Keast, Mandell, and Brown 2005 p.4). This evidence suggests that for many participants, collaborating with others calls for a change in behaviour and approach and an understanding that for collaboration to work, authority must be dispersed, and consensus and mutuality should typify the interactions.

In recent years there has been a growing understanding of the importance of particular skills and competencies in achieving successful collaboration. In addition to skill in the problem area, others such as the ability to resolve conflict, to communicate effectively and the ability to understand other perspectives are considered essential (Foster-Fishman et al. 2001). Taking a different approach to leadership has also been found to increase the effectiveness of collaboration. Evidence suggests a need for both a facilitative style, where leaders are skilled at gaining and valuing input from participants (Getha-Taylor 2008) as well as a shared leadership style which increases involvement in decision-making and promotes higher levels of trust between members of the group or network (D'Innocenzo, Mathieu, and Kukenberger 2016). Both of these styles can produce effective collaborative relationships.

Based on this brief review of the evidence relating to effectiveness in collaborative groups, this research sought to explore a range of issues identified as important: prior experience, the importance of the goals to both the group members and their organisations, member's motivation and contribution as well as their overall view of collaboration as a way of working. We also asked who interacts with whom and about the nature of the collaboration within their Housing and Disability Steering Groups, and their experience of barriers.

We carried out an online survey which was distributed to all Housing and Disability Steering Group members.

The survey link was sent to the Local Authority Coordinator of the Housing and Disability Steering Group who distributed it by email to all Housing and Disability Steering Group members. Several reminders were circulated and from a total of approximately 460 HD SG members we received 177 responses, of which 99 were completed surveys. This represents a response rate of 21%.

4 Results/Findings

4.1 Description of sample respondents

A majority (55%) of respondents were Housing and Disability Steering Group members since 2019, respondents were mostly female (66%), in the 50-59 age group (38%) or aged 40-49 (32%) and almost half (47%) had spent less than 4 years in their current position.

Of the 76 respondents who provided the name of their organisation,

- 33 represented a public sector organisation,
- 32 worked for disability organisations and
- 11 represented Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs).

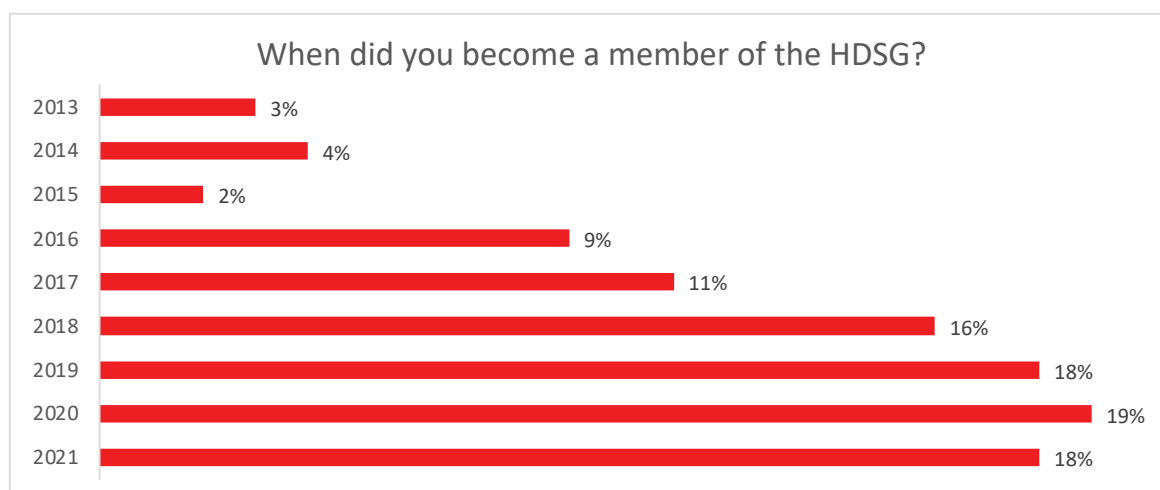


Figure 1: When did you become a member of the HDSG graph

Respondents had attended an average of 2.3 meetings since becoming a member. Many (40%) of the Housing and Disability Steering Group members had attended four meetings or less and only 5% had attended more than 20 meetings.

4.2 Motivation

We asked respondents how they came to be members of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups and found that the majority were nominated by their manager and only a small minority (8%) became members because of their interest or commitment to the issue.

A substantial proportion (41%) were either invited to take part or membership was required as part of their role/job.

These types of cross-sectoral or interagency groups have become increasingly popular in the policy development and implementation space. The majority of respondents (62%) had previously been members of a similar cross-sectoral group and the experience for most of them (76%) was good.

However, a minority (8%) of respondents came to this Housing and Disability Steering Group following a challenging or very challenging experience of collaboration.



Figure 2: Have you previously been a member of a similar multisectoral group?

When we look at a cross-tabulation of prior experience with the attitude towards collaboration we can see some impact – all respondents (100%) who had an excellent prior experience reported that they believe that ‘working together is the best way to achieve our goals’; a smaller number of those whose experience was good held a similar view (90%), while only 67% of those who had a challenging prior experience did so and only 50% of those who had a very challenging experience.

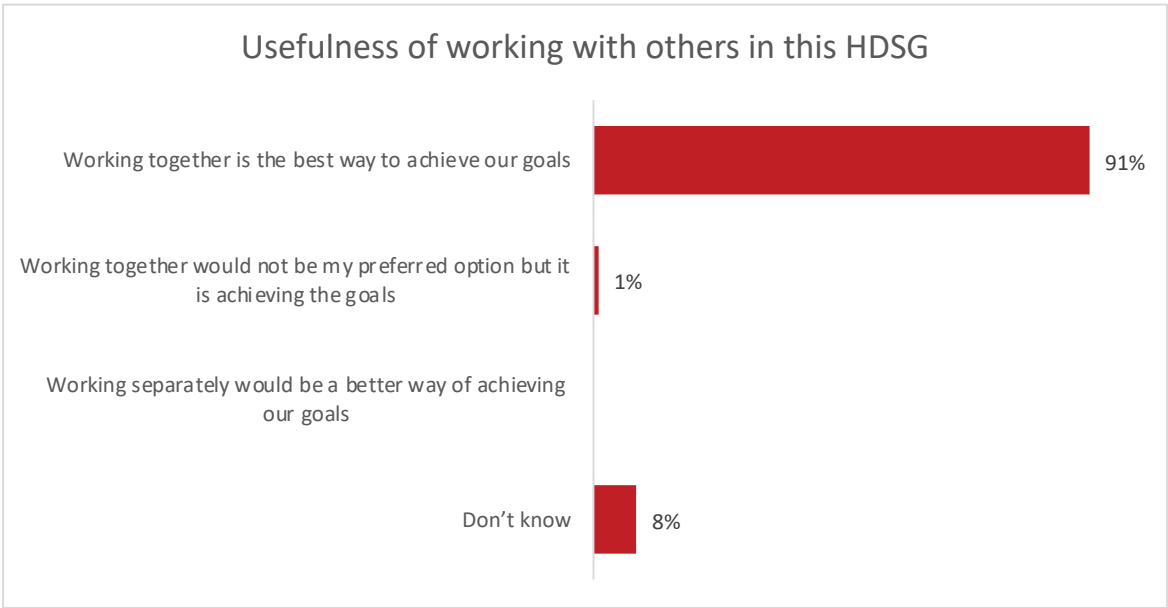


Figure 3: Usefulness of working with others in this HDSG

However, many of those who had negative experiences of collaboration remain undecided rather than negative towards collaboration in general. Prior experience may also be a factor in explaining why a larger number of those who are over ten years in their current role (14%) are unsure about whether working together is the best way of achieving goals.

This compares to 0% of those with less than one year in their current role and 5% of those with less than 3 years. The most common motivation for collaborating with others was to seek or share information (77%) or to seek to solve problems. Joint activity planning, which is often typified as an indicator of true collaboration, is only a motivation for 35% of respondents and joint activity management for only 25% of respondents.

However, planning is the role most commonly performed by members of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups (planning for emerging need). This role is mentioned by the majority (65%). The second most common role is 'Increasing understanding of the needs of people with disability' (62%). These were also the roles considered most important by the majority of respondents.

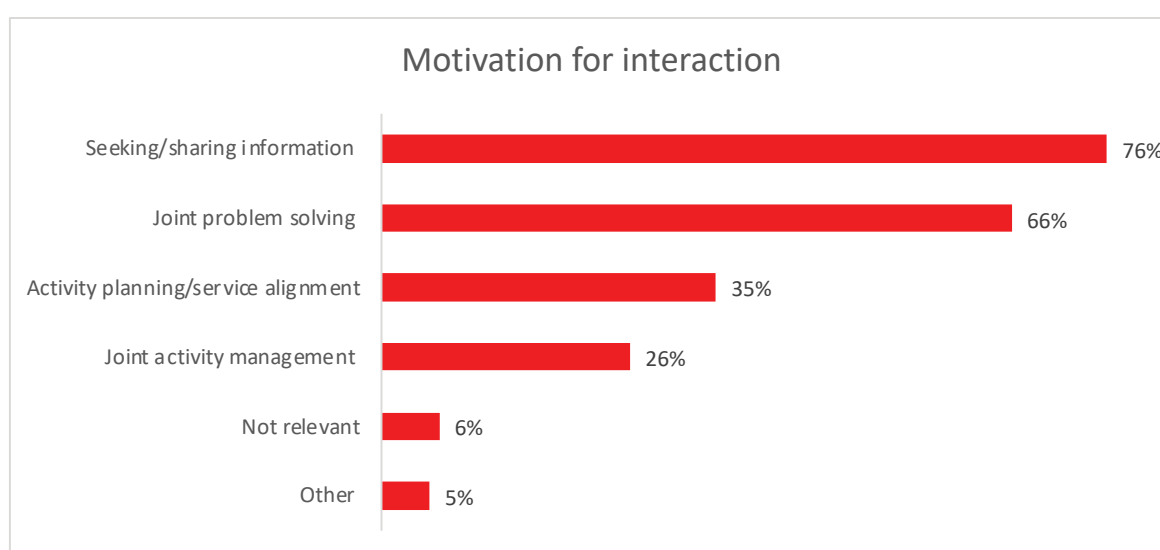


Figure 4: Motivation for interaction

4.3 Goals

We asked how important the goals of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups are for members of the groups personally and for the organisations they represent. Respondents generally rated the importance of goals higher for their organisations than for them personally. Just over 89% report that the goals are very important for their organisations and 68% say that the goals are very important for them personally. This differed slightly with the amount of time respondents had been in their current position, 83% of those who were only one year in their current role reported that it was 'very important' for them personally, compared to 55% of those with 4-10 years' experience. Only a small number (5%) of the full sample reported that the goals of the Housing and Disability Steering Group were not very important for them personally.

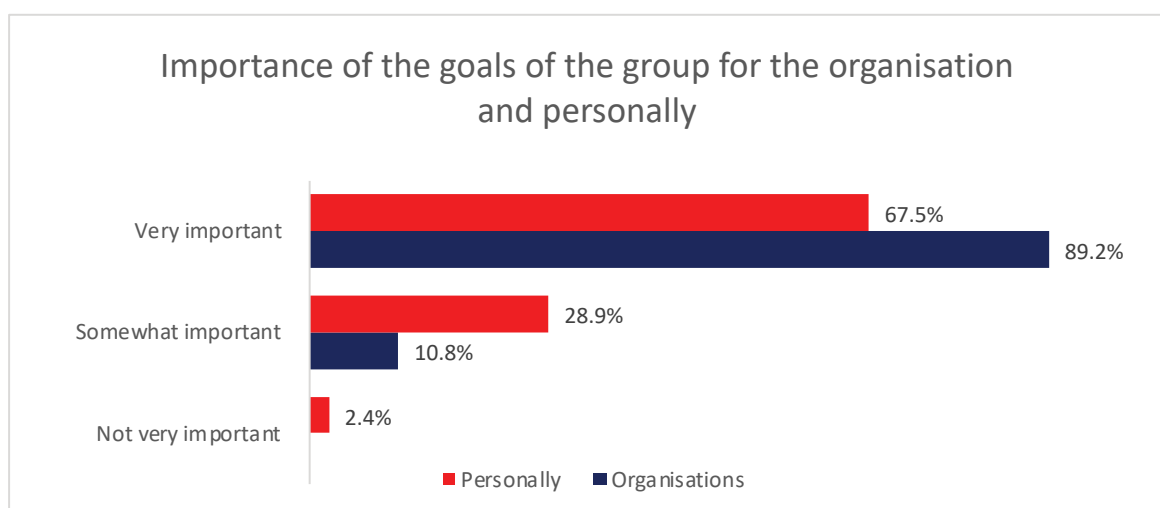


Figure 5: Importance of the goals of the group for the organisation and personally

Respondents are generally clear about the goals of the group; 41% report that they are ‘rarely or never’ unclear about the goals and only 14% report that they are ‘frequently’ unclear. However, a further 42% agree that they are sometimes unclear about the goals. This lack of clarity around the goals may be linked to the amount of time respondents have held their current role, as 17% of those who are less than one year in their current position frequently feel unclear and 83% sometimes feel this way. This contrasts with those who are 10 years or more in their current positions; 65% of them rarely or never feel unclear, 30% sometimes feel this way and only 5% frequently do.

When asked about their perception of other members, again the majority felt that there was a good level of commitment to the goals. Only 8% reported that they frequently feel that other members are not committed to the goals with an additional 24% saying that they sometimes feel this way. When asked how important the goals of the group were to them personally and to their organisation, the majority of Housing and Disability Steering Group members reported that the goals are very important for their organisations and for them personally.

4.4 Interactions

We asked respondents who they interacted with, what the nature of that interaction was and how frequently they interacted with each other. When asking respondents to describe the nature of the interactions we offered three options:

- Collaborative (such as when their interactions related to joint activity, for example, seeking or sharing information/resources)
- Non-work (such as interactions that are mainly small talk, are not work-related conversations, that happen around meeting times)
- None/hardly any

The local authority, as the lead agency, is unsurprisingly the organisation with whom most respondents have collaborative relationships, followed closely by the Approved Housing Bodies. When we look at all interactions with the local authority 86% were reported to be collaborative, and only 9% of respondents reported that they had none, or hardly any interactions with the local authority.

Similarly, 74% of interactions with the Approved Housing Bodies were collaborative. With the HSE, the situation was somewhat different; 54% of all interactions with the HSE Disability Manager were collaborative and 62% of interactions with the HSE representative from mental health services were collaborative.

The disability organisations were grouped into disability type (physical, intellectual, sensory and mental health) and the percentage of interactions that were reported as collaborative ranged from 56% for physical and mental health to 41% for sensory disability organisations and 54% for the intellectual disability organisations. While it is difficult to make a definitive assessment based on this evidence, it would appear that the local authority functions as the main link between participants.

When we look at the frequency of interaction; a majority of respondents (60%) report interacting very frequently with the local authority compared to 22% who report interacting very frequently with the HSE Disability Manager and 26% with the HSE representative of mental health services. For disability organisations the proportions ranged from 20% for physical disability organisations, 18% for intellectual disability and mental health organisations and 13% for sensory disability organisations.

4.5 Collaboration and potential barriers

We asked Housing and Disability Steering Group members to describe their perception of collaborative activity within the group in a number of key areas. While many respondents see the Housing and Disability Steering Groups as collaborative and the majority (89%) agree that collaborative working is the best way to solve problems, only 52% report that most of the time:

“Members of the group share the same goals and are committed to working together to achieve them”.

This could be seen as the clearest indicator of collaboration. Similarly, just over half of all respondents (55%) report that most of the time they feel:

“Members of the group offer support and advice to each other in order to help solve problems”.

A further 37% agree that this is ‘sometimes’ true.

However, many positive statements were strongly supported by respondents, for example 70% of respondents feel that the groups share decisions ‘most of the time’ and almost two thirds (64%) report that group members:

“Share information freely in order to increase understanding of issues” most of the time.

A further 30% report that this is sometimes the case.

Open discussion of issues and the existence of conflict resolution mechanisms are considered important for good collaborative working and a majority (59%) agree that this is in evidence ‘most of the time’ with a further 24% reporting that is ‘sometimes’ the case while 18% say that this is ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ apparent in the HDSGs.

One of the potential barriers to collaboration is disengaged members. We asked whether members of the group felt that some “sit back and let others do the work” and 23% said that they felt that this was the case ‘most of the time’ while a further 55% said that this was sometimes a problem. Most HDSG members (60%) believe that others are primarily focused on the activities carried out by their organisation (most of the time) rather than being involved in the development of collaborative solutions to issues and a further 35% report that this is sometimes the case.

This finding is further supported by the response to a question asking how HDSG members would describe the nature of their individual contribution to the group. Most respondents (40%) report that they generally contribute to discussions and decision-making when the discussion relates to their own organisation's core activities, though an additional 33% report that they are happy to contribute to most discussions and offer help or resources whenever they can. The remaining 27% find it difficult to contribute to the group for various reasons – 11% because of the feeling that their level of experience does not match that of others in the group and 9% because they find it difficult to get to meetings, while the remaining 7% do not specify the reason for their inability to contribute.

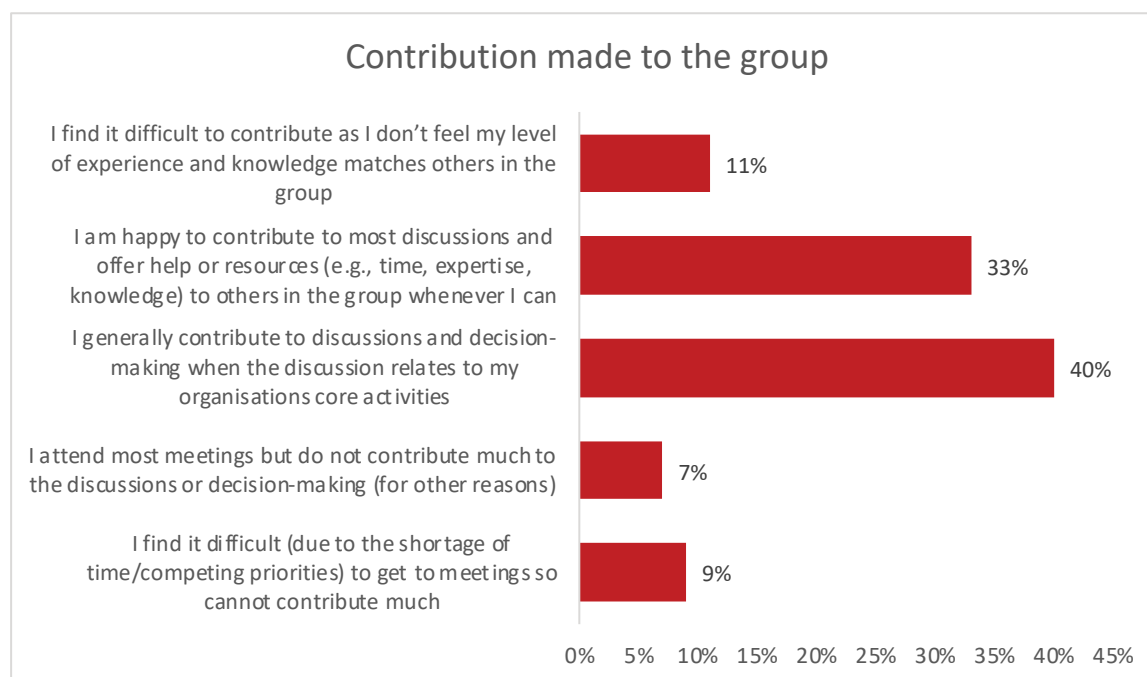


Figure 6: Contribution made to the group

We also looked at other potential barriers to participation and found that in general, members of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups did not experience any barriers 'frequently'.

However, 14% reported that they are frequently unclear about the goals of the group and an additional 43% are 'sometimes' unclear.

One in ten reported that they felt other members of the group did not seem committed to the goals they had agreed on and almost one third (31%) sometimes felt that they could achieve more by working with colleagues in their own organisation.

Nearly one in four (24%) sometimes feel that their contribution to the group is not really encouraged or valued although the majority (72%) rarely or never feel this way.

It is positive to note that very few (only 1%) felt that members of the group frequently did not show respect for them and only 4% reported that they sometimes felt disrespected. On another positive note, members generally feel supported by others in the groups; only 20% said that they 'frequently' or 'sometimes' felt they would not receive support from others if they raised an issue.

We categorised the respondents into three groups based on their organisational affiliation (disability organisations, public sector organisations (PSOs) and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs)). We found some differences between the groups although it must be pointed out that with small

numbers in each group it cannot be claimed that the differences were statistically significant. For example, in relation to the potential barriers, 12% of respondents from public service organisations frequently feel that they could achieve more by working with colleagues in their own organisation, compared to 5% of those in either the disability organisations or AHBs. A majority (78%) of those representing disability organisations ‘rarely or never’ feel this way compared to 61% of those in public sector organisations.

Nearly half (44%) of respondents from disability organisations either frequently or sometimes feel that others “do not seem very committed to achieving the goals we have decided on”. This compares to 26% of those from AHBs and 36% of those in public sector organisations. Those in public sector organisations were also least likely to feel unsupported. 84% said that they ‘rarely or never’ felt that other members of the group would not support them if they raised an issue.

Respondents from AHBs were most likely to report that they do not feel that they belong to this group – 37% said that they ‘frequently’ or ‘sometimes’ feel this way compared to 17% of those from disability organisations and 12% of those from public sector organisations. They were also most likely to state that they generally contribute to discussions and decision-making when the discussion relates to their organisation’s core activities – 60% of respondents from AHBs agreed with this statement compared to 36% of those in disability organisations and 34% of public sector members. Those from disability organisations were most likely to report that they are happy to contribute to most discussions and offer help or resources to others in the group – 50% agreed with this statement compared to 20% in AHBs and 37% in public sector bodies. Finally, 15% of public sector representatives were most likely to report that competing time pressures made it difficult to contribute – compared to no respondents from disability organisations and only 5% in AHBs.

4.6 Outcomes

According to the respondents, the two most important roles played by members of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups are:

- 1) to increase understanding of the needs of disabled people,
- 2) to understand and plan for emerging need.

It is important for members of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups to see that, through collaboration, they have achieved benefits for themselves, their organisations and the wider community. In general, members of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups report having gained personally as a result of their membership of the group.

The benefits most frequently mentioned are increased knowledge and skill (81%) and ‘better understanding of the perspectives of others’ (75%). However, fewer people identified benefits such as increased job satisfaction (31%), personal development from working with others (41%) or support from others in the group (42%). Given that the survey was carried out following a long period of virtual meetings and a lack of face-to-face interactions, it is unsurprising that only 27% mentioned increased social interactions as a benefit.

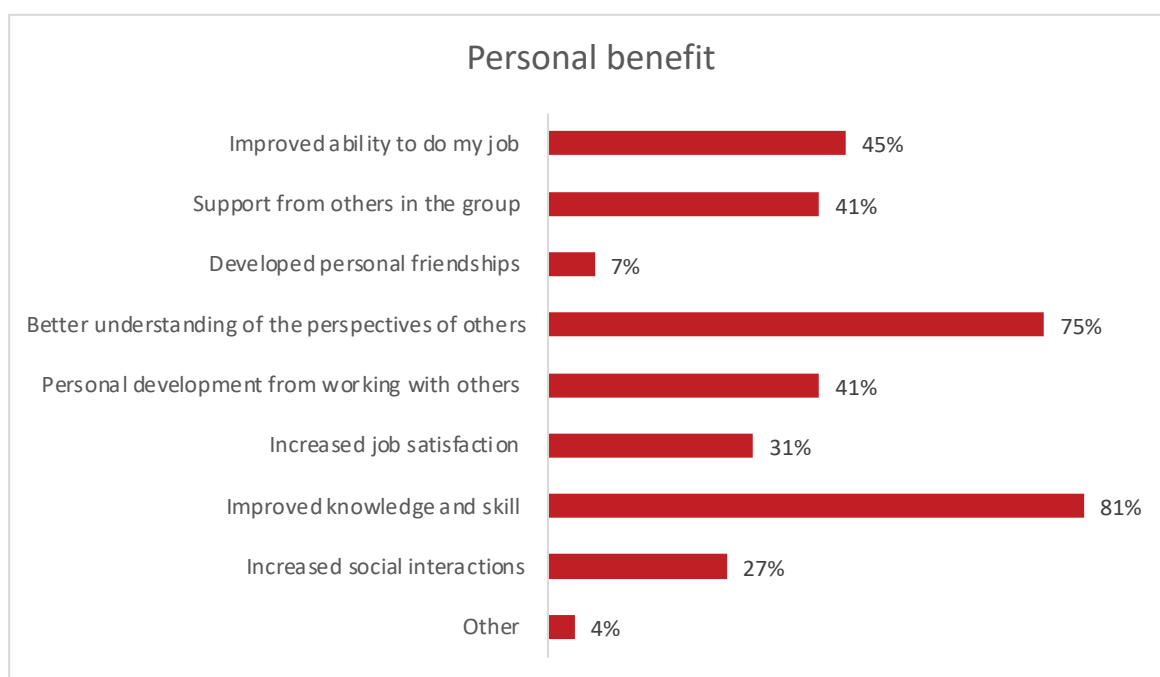


Figure 7: Personal benefit

Achieving better relationships with other organisations and increasing access to information were the two most frequently mentioned benefits achieved through collaborating with others in the Housing and Disability Steering Groups; 79% of respondents stated that they had achieved these benefits while 73% said that they were better able to represent disabled people. Playing a role in the implementation of the National Strategy was a benefit mentioned by 74% of respondents while only 34% identified 'increased legitimacy as an organisation' as a benefit for their organisation. Access to resources was mentioned by fewer than half of all respondents (44%).

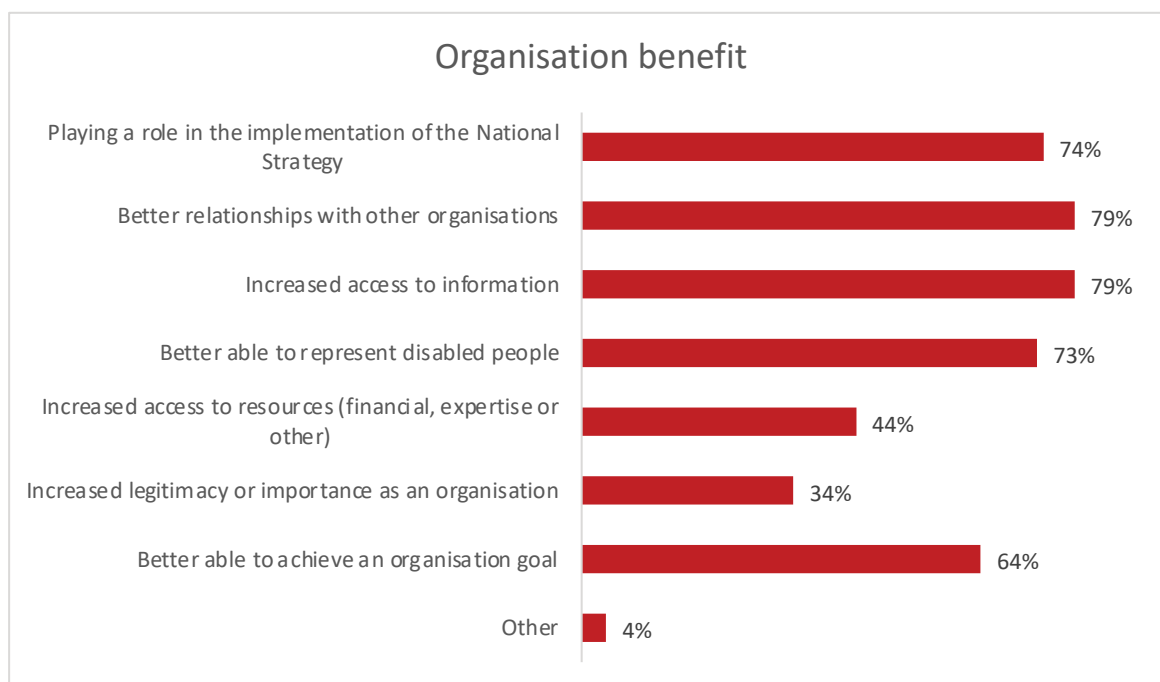


Figure 8: Organisation benefit

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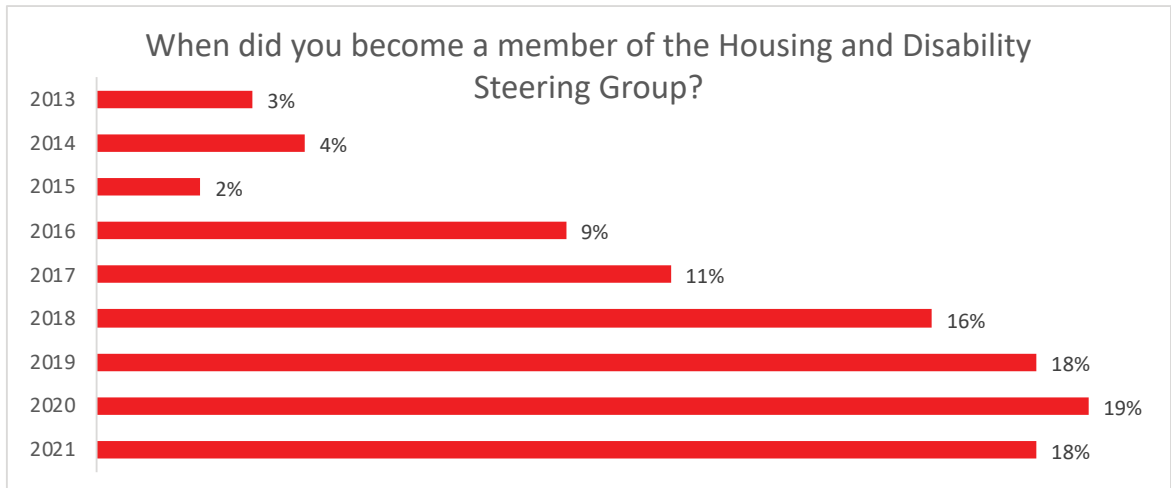
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Appendix 1:

Headline Data from HDSG Survey

When did you become a member of the Housing and Disability Steering Group?



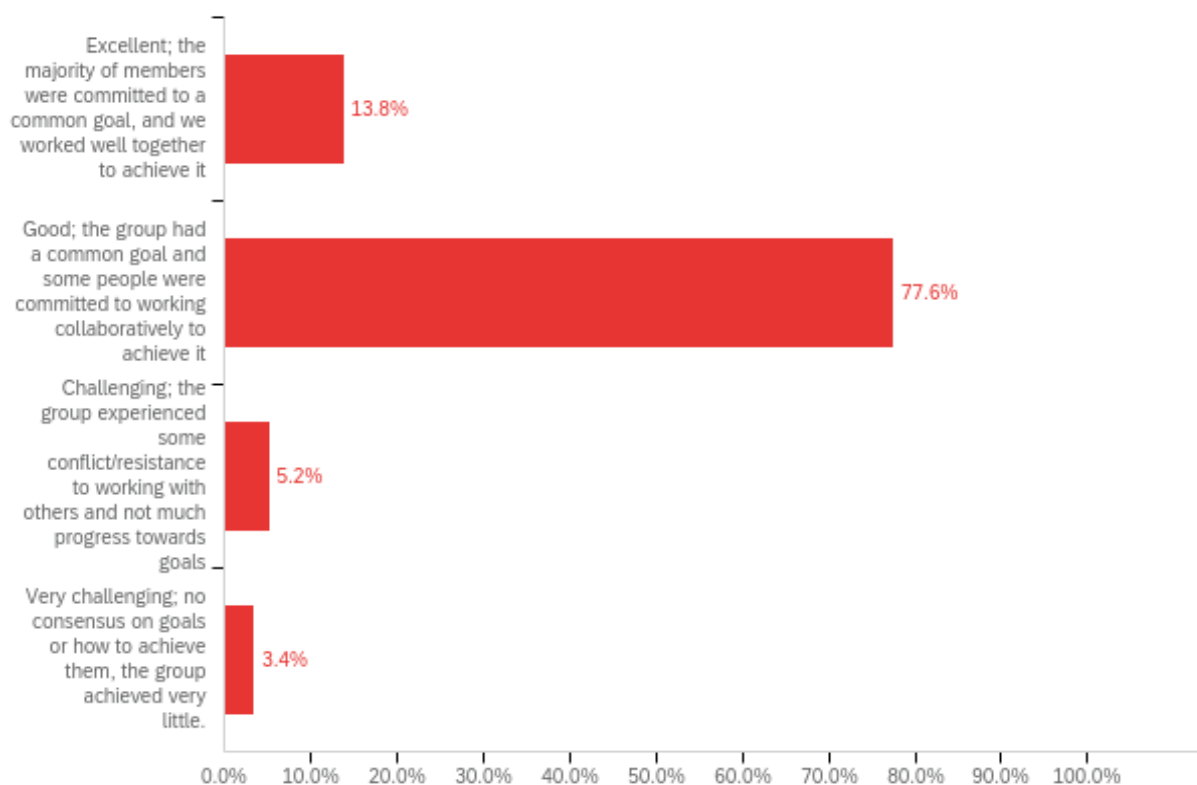
Roughly how many meetings did you attend since becoming a member?

Number of Meetings	Percent
0-4	40%
5-8	23%
9-12	20%
13-16	9%
17-20	3%
21-24	1%
More than 24	4%
Total	100%

Have you previously been a member of a similar multisectoral group (working with others to tackle a social issue or implement a national policy/strategy)?

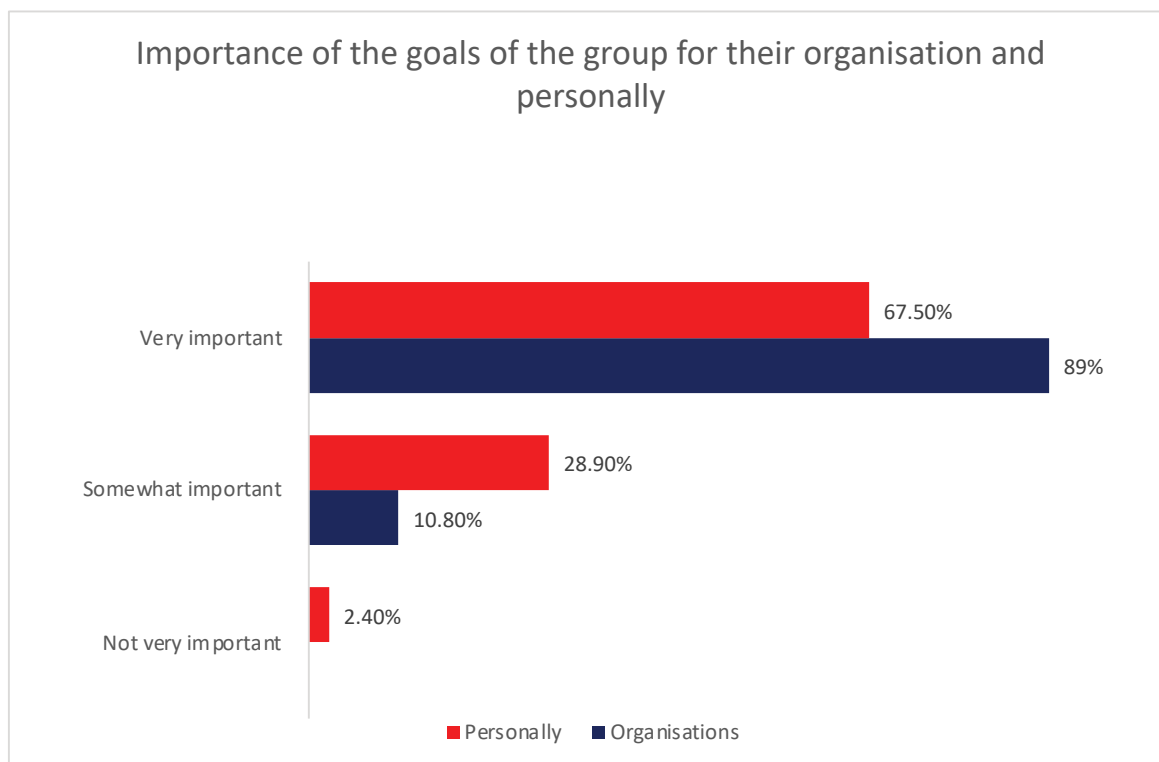
Answer	%	Count
Yes	62.24%	61
No	37.76%	37
Total	100%	98

If yes, how would you describe the experience?

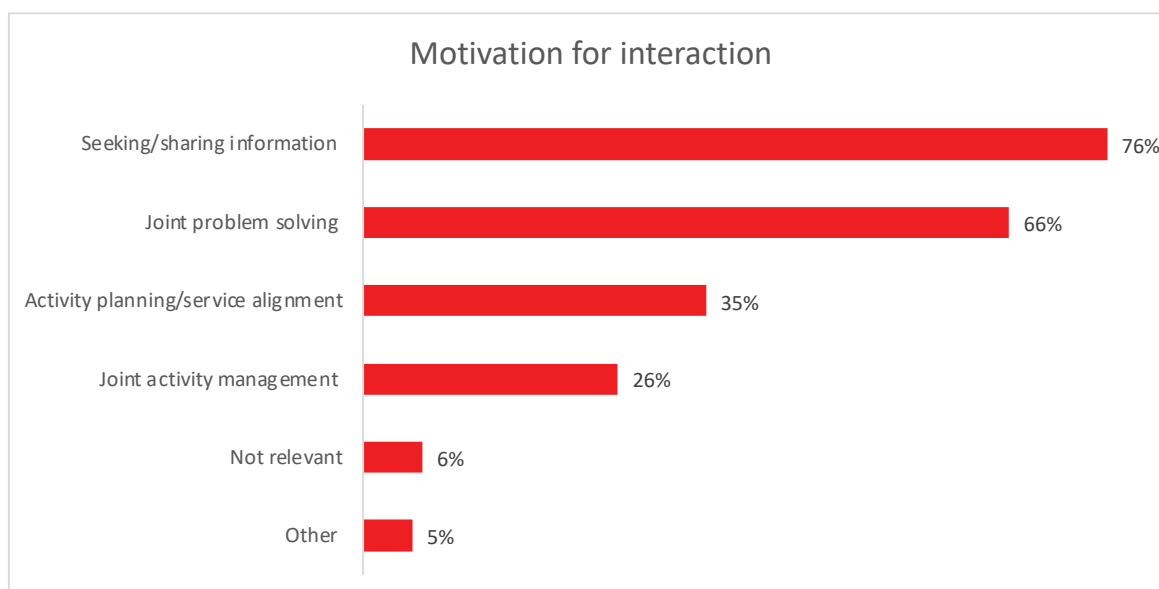


In relation to the aims or goals of this Housing and Disability Steering Group, how important do you think they are for your organisation and how important are they for you personally?

The majority of Housing and Disability Steering Group members report that the goals are very important for their organisations and for them personally.



Motivation for interaction



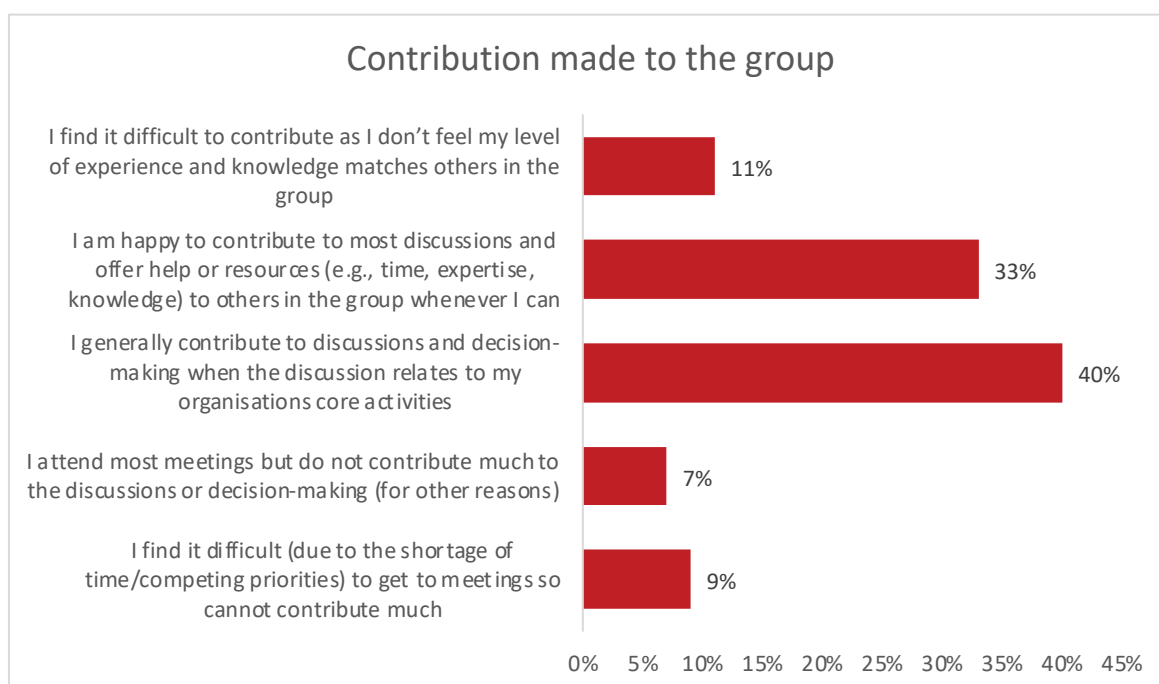
As a member of the Housing and Disability Steering Group, which of the following roles do you regularly fulfil?



How important are these roles for you?

#	Question	1	2	3	4	5	Total Respondents
1	Providing expertise and advice to other members of the Steering Group	16%	15%	19%	19%	30%	79
2	Disseminating information to other stakeholders outside of the Steering Group	19%	18%	18%	24%	22%	79
3	Increasing understanding of the needs of disabled people	41%	20%	25%	10%	4%	80
4	Understanding and planning for emerging need	36%	30%	15%	9%	10%	80
5	Implementing the National Strategy at local level	23%	23%	17%	21%	17%	78

This question is about the contribution you make to the group. Which of the following statements best describes your contribution?

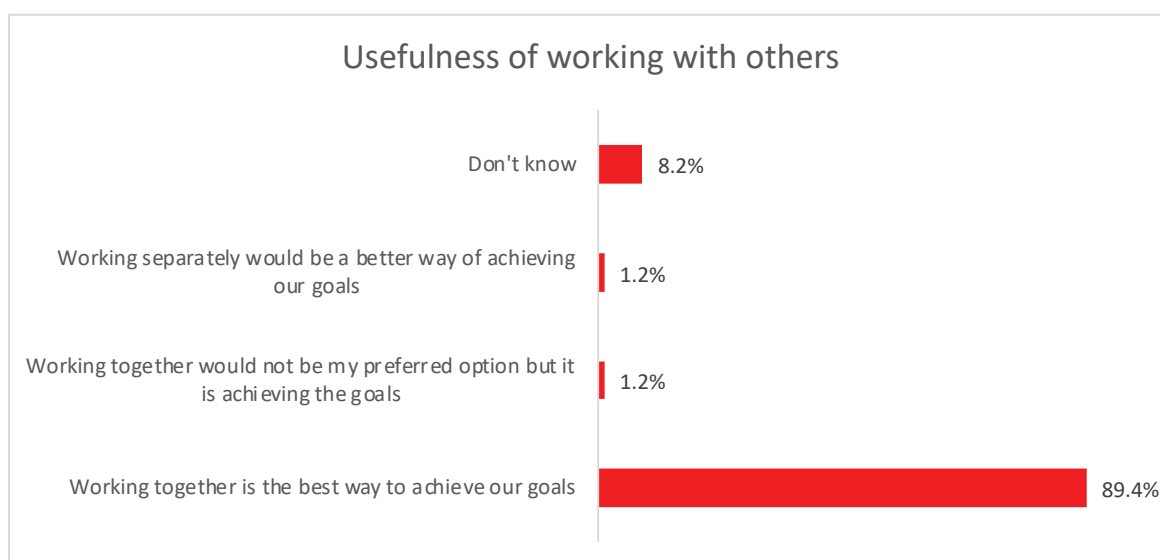


In your opinion, how often are the following statements true for the Housing and Disability Steering Group?

#	Question	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely/ Never	Total Respondents
1	If conflicts or disagreements arise, members of the group discuss them openly to find a solution	62%	21%	17%	77
2	Different people lead the discussion, and most people contribute equally	32%	56%	13%	79
3	Members of the group challenge each other in order to find better solutions to issues	18%	51%	30%	76
4	Members of the group offer support and advice to each other in order to help solve problems	55%	39%	7%	75
5	Members of the group share information freely in order to increase understanding of issues	67%	26%	7%	76
6	Members of the group are primarily focused on the activities carried out by their organisation	62%	32%	5%	74

#	Question	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely/ Never	Total Respondents
7	Members of the group are encouraged to express their views before a decision is made	70%	22%	8%	74
8	Members of the group seem reluctant to tell others what they really think	11%	49%	41%	76
9	Many members of the group sit back and let others do the work	17%	59%	24%	75
10	Members of the group share the same goals and are committed to working together to achieve them	51%	40%	10%	73
11	Other	43%	43%	14%	7

What is your overall view on the usefulness of working with others in this Housing and Disability Steering Group?



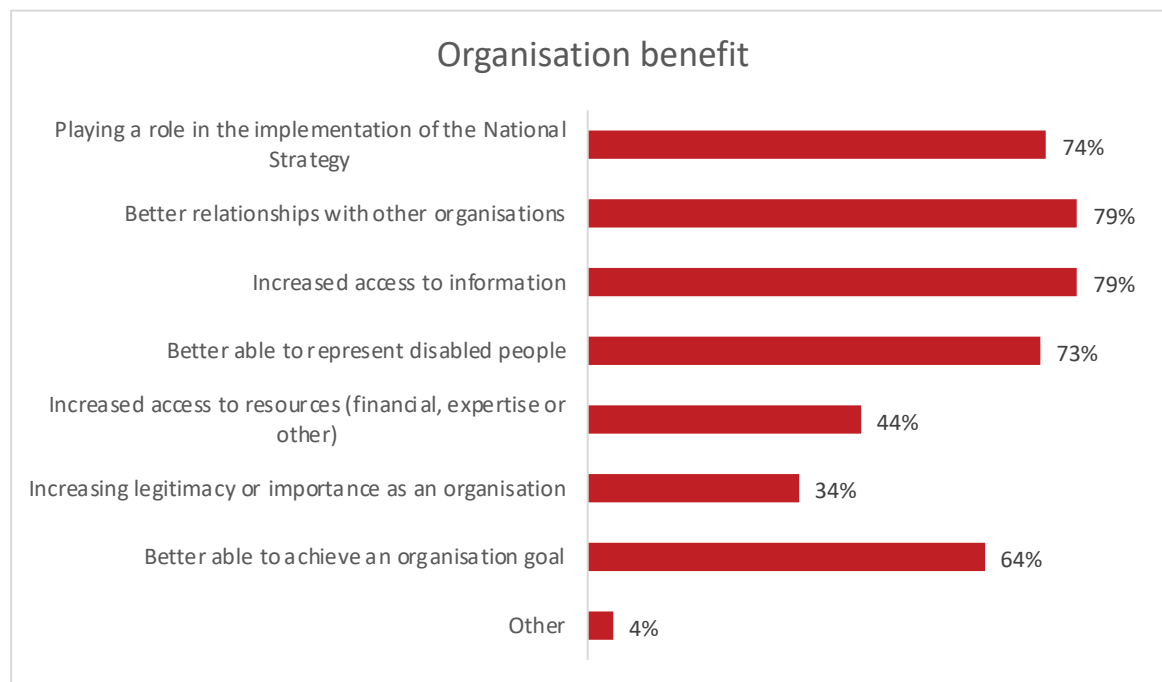
Barriers to participation. In your opinion, how often would you feel the following statements are true of your Housing and Disability Steering Group?

Question	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely/ Never	Total Respondents
I am unclear about the goals of the group	14%	43%	42%	83
I am reluctant to offer my opinion about the matters being discussed	6%	33%	61%	83
My contribution to the group is not really encouraged or valued	4%	24%	72%	82
I do not feel that I really belong to this group	5%	17%	78%	82
I could achieve more by working with colleagues in my own organisation	7%	31%	62%	81
Members of the group do not show much respect for me or my views	1%	4%	95%	80
Members of the group do not seem very committed to achieving the goals we have decided on	9%	27%	65%	79
I do not feel members of the group would support me if I raised an issue that required their help	9%	13%	79%	80

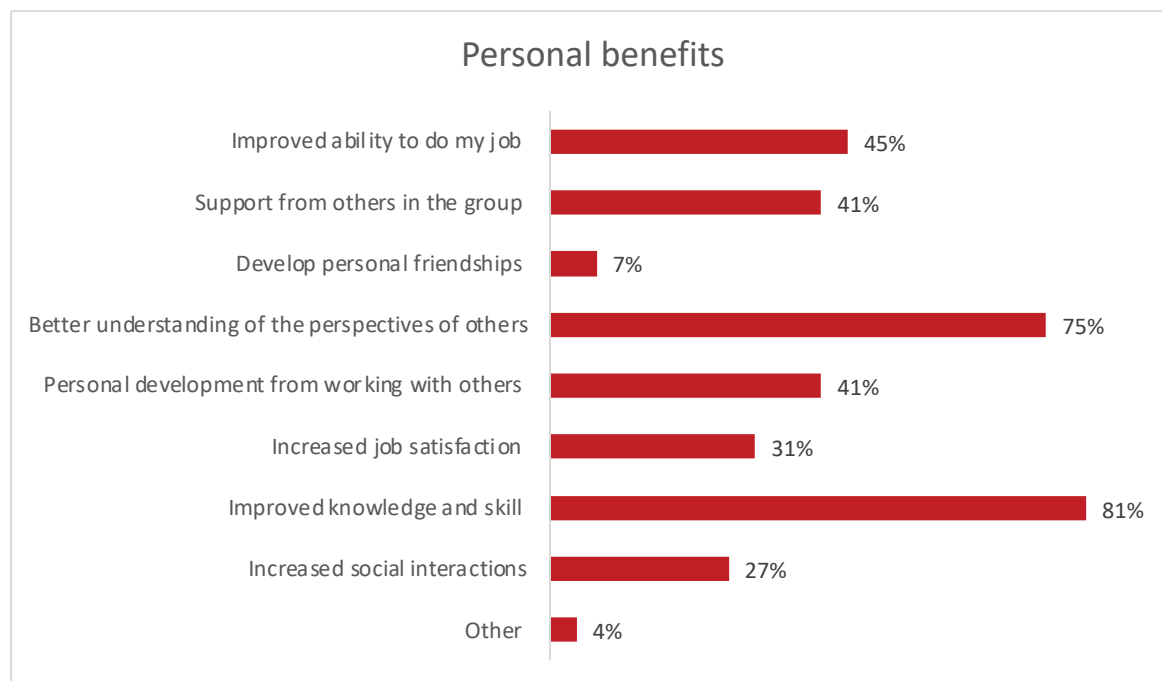
Organisational benefits. How important do you think each of these benefits could be for your organisation?

Question	Not at all important	Reasonably important	Very important	Total Respondents
Playing a role in the implementation of the National Strategy	2%	16%	82%	87
Better able to achieve an organisational goal	1%	23%	76%	86
Increasing legitimacy or importance as an organisation	16%	37%	47%	87
Increased access to resources (financial, expertise or other)	3%	34%	63%	86
Increased access to information	0%	15%	85%	86
Better able to represent the needs of disabled people	0%	6%	94%	84
Better relationships with other organisations	0%	15%	85%	84

Organisational benefits – do you feel that, by collaborating with others, you have achieved any of the following benefits for your organisation?



Personal benefits



Overall how do you feel the group work together?

The majority – more than two thirds feel that the groups are ‘reasonably effective’. However, only 8% report that they are ‘highly effective’ and one in five (20%) report that the groups are either ‘not very effective’ or ‘not at all effective’.



Which of the following do you feel the Housing and Disability Steering Group has achieved?

The achievement most frequently mentioned is increasing awareness of the availability of housing for disabled people. However, a small number of respondents offered additional comment...

"I am not sure what the group has achieved versus what the Local Authority has achieved".

"To date I am not quite sure yet – need more time to see tangible results".

"Improved allocation of housing to people with a disability who have a Low or No social/care support need. Better reporting of allocations to people with mild or minimal disabilities or being decongregated from a no-longer policy compliant institutionalised housing setting".



Appendix 2: Issues Raised

While many of the findings of the survey suggest that, in general, members of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups are happy with the level of collaboration achieved, issues have nevertheless been highlighted. The following are quotes from respondents under various headings.

Representatives of Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs)

"Under the CRPD (General Comment 7, para. 10, the only representative organisations in the disability area are DPOs ("organizations of people with disabilities)," who need to be prioritised in consultations and distinguished from service-providers".

"It's crucial that disability organisations are at the table from the outset when planning housing".

"More representation from disability groups representing sensory and physical disabled people".

"Need more disability representative groups to attend meetings".

"...need for better collaboration between Local Authority/AHBs and various disability organisations in order to properly address the issues of housing for people with various disabilities".

Contribution of the Disability Sector

"More than half of the members of the SG I sit on do not have one on one engagement with applicants/clients and are reporting based on reports they have received or information they have obtained as opposed to experience on the ground...Talking about things is fine but real-life experience is vital to ensure that all aspects of the needs of service users are covered. I would like to see more involvement from staff on the ground as opposed to managers and that is not a criticism of the good work any member of the SG has done and continues to do".

"Appoint Disability Sector Chair of HDSG".

"Each Disability Pillar should be represented within the group...to identify any issues and concerns, and to be empowered to research and review and propose solutions".

Sub-Groups

"There needs to be a channel whereby HDSG Pillar Representatives can network with counterparts in other HDSGs".

"I believe that Steering Group requires separate sub-groups per each disability area".

"The development of closer interagency working for the benefit of service users...best via working subgroups".

"...they need clear leadership that engages, and tasks, members between meetings i.e., get people involved. I would welcome inter agency task groups rather than just turning up for meetings".

"...need to meet outside of organised meetings or set up small groups to work together".

Commitment to Collaboration and Building Relationships

"Need to get buy in from all sides and find out the aim and how to reach these goals".

"The current group lacks energy and focus. I feel we are just going through the motions of trying to achieve what the group was set up to do".

"There has been no relationship building whatsoever so it's not a 'group', it's a number of individuals with no shared vision – that's my sense of things".

"The gap of time between each meeting results in little ownership, no continuity, and different people turning up from agencies to each meeting...there is no sense of 'ownership', 'belonging' or sense of responsibility".

"We need to meet to develop working relationships as this is the core to good interagency working along with key goals/objectives for the Steering Committee and a shared work plan".

"It takes regular communication outside of meetings to progress issues. I use this quote by Bruce Perry to explain it – relationships matter: the currency for systemic change is trust, and trust comes through forming healthy working relationships. People, not programs, change people".

"Transition HDSG meetings from being a Report on Allocations to being proactive engagement to seek solutions to challenges identified".

"If housing could liaise with the external agencies as they have the expertise in relation to disabilities. Planning and collaboration is needed as currently there is very little. It is very difficult to plan when you never know when a house will become available, especially when there is no liaising or updating from housing".

"If I felt that the LA was more committed to the process and the working (and I mean senior management and not the staff who coordinate the group) of the Steering Group, then I feel we could achieve more together".

Sharing Information and Interagency Protocols

"There needs to be a better sharing of information/understanding of the housing needs of those who are transitioning from congregated settings between AHBs/service providers and the LAs".

"The system of Data Recording for Planning Purposes MUST BE enhanced to include visibility and correlation of Housing AND Social/Care Support Assessments and Applications to facilitate meaningful pipeline planning and resource planning".

"Would be interested in developing protocols to ensure comprehensive information is shared to inform allocation decisions".

"Development of protocols to ensure full consideration of those disabled by their mental health, such as those with dual diagnosis."

"I believe there is value in exploring interagency protocols which would help all stakeholders better understand roles, raise awareness and strengthen relationships".

"Would be interested in exploring potential for drafting interagency protocols."

"As a LA manager we are encouraging members to give more information in relation to their service/needs".

"The Steering Group is a great arena for sharing information, planning and collaboration. More emphasis could be put on joint working approaches".

Structure of the Meetings and Accountability

"The agenda is set and sent out but an opportunity to include items of relevance would be a good thing".

"... time to showcase the "Good Stories", sometimes we are so busy with the doing that we do not reflect enough".

"Continue to review membership and invite members to make presentations at the various meetings".

"I think we need to set targets that are measurable to enable further development and maintain purpose".

"Annual reviews of the actions/targets of the group".

"...it would be great to have a review of the work, have more clarity on the responsibility of each organisation".

"a set of agreed KPIs circulated at least a week in advance of each meeting. Identification of and updates relating to policy barriers for escalation".

"Priority by parent organisations needs to be given to the activity of their staff on this group; staff need to be given autonomy to make decisions around service supports; where there are blockages, there needs to be a vehicle through which these can be raised ...with the authority with responsibility to deal with the issue".



An Ghníomhaireacht
Tithíochta
The Housing Agency