



Supporting People

Key Findings from the Supporting People Baseline User Survey

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Supporting People Summary Number 9

Introduction

This summary outlines the key findings from a survey of people using services that are eligible for funding via the Supporting People programme. It was carried out just before the Supporting People programme went live and may be regarded as a 'baseline' against which progress can be measured.

The Supporting People programme funds a wide variety of services, helping a wide variety of people. Most service providers focus on helping people in particular circumstances, such as families experiencing homelessness, or people with mental health problems trying to live independently.

Each service provider has identified a primary 'user group' in communications with ODPM. This is one of the most convenient ways of classifying the survey respondents and has been used extensively in this report.

At the time of the survey, the vast majority of service users (71%) were classified as 'older people with general support needs'. The rest may be described as 'socially excluded' and this report identifies six groups for separate analysis:

- Single homeless people with support needs (8% of service users);
- People with mental health support needs (5%);
- Homeless families with support needs (2%);
- Young people at risk (2%);
- Offenders and those at risk of offending (2%); and
- Women at risk of domestic violence (1%).

The researchers proportionately over-sampled service users from these socially excluded groups. However, the final data set has been 're-weighted' so that it provides an accurate picture of the whole Supporting People user group.

There were three key questions for the survey to answer:

- What kinds of help were service users getting?
- What kinds of help did they want but were not getting? and
- Overall, how satisfied were they with the service?

What kinds of help were service users getting?

The survey presented 13 different kinds of help which can be banded into five categories:

- **Practical advice** (including (a) improving home security, (b) looking after money, (c) keeping safe when going out, and (d) cooking, cleaning and doing laundry better);
- **Help with dealing with the authorities** (including (a) filling in official forms, (b) speaking to Social Services or the council, and (c) Making appointments to see a doctor, nurse, social worker or solicitor);

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- **Behavioural help** (including (a) improving self-confidence, (b) learning how to control feelings/anxieties better, and (c) learning how to get on with people better);
- **Regular health checks**; and
- **Horizon broadening** (including (a) suggesting groups/activities of interest, and (b) finding about groups/activities identified by the service user).

To get a tick in a category, the survey respondent had to report at least one of the kinds of help listed in the brackets.

Table 1.1 shows what sort of help service users were getting at the time of the survey. Cells are highlighted in red if 90%+ were receiving that kind of help, and in yellow if the figure is between 70% and 89%.

On average, each service user was getting between two and three of the five different categories of help specified above. However, those from socially excluded groups tended to get between three and four.

The most common form of help was ‘regular health checks’, although members of the socially excluded groups were more likely to report getting help dealing with the authorities. Homeless families tended to get a smaller variety of help when compared with other service users from socially excluded groups.

Table 1.1 Reports of help receipt

	Proportion of each group who reported receiving at least one type within each category of HELP (+mean)					MEAN out of 5
	Practical advice	Dealing with authorities	Emotions	Health checks	Horizons	
ALL SERVICE USERS	45%	58%	21%	72%	46%	2.4
All older people with general support needs	39%	48%	10%	74%	40%	2.1
All ‘socially excluded’ groups	65%	90%	57%	65%	66%	3.4
• People with mental health problems	76%	95%	69%	76%	72%	3.9
• Young people at risk	78%	97%	64%	62%	77%	3.8
• Offenders	71%	97%	53%	71%	73%	3.7
• Women at risk of domestic violence	64%	91%	63%	63%	69%	3.5
• Single homeless	61%	90%	57%	71%	65%	3.4
• Homeless families	43%	84%	33%	44%	50%	2.5
Base: all respondents in each group (3617, 900, 2717 (sub-groups = 318, 245, 134, 224, 953, 351))						

Does the service user’s background make a difference?

Although ‘user group’ is a very convenient way of segmenting the service user population, it is not the only one. The user group label is a proxy for the service user’s current circumstances but the formative events in a person’s life have a great influence on how he/she reacts to these circumstances. This is an important context for the ‘help’ data.

The survey identified seven varieties of negative life experience:

- Physical and sensory disabilities
- Low literacy
- Mental health problems (including depression)
- Substance misuse
- Experience of emergency living arrangements (short-stay hostels or street-life)
- Family problems (including partner abuse or separation from children)

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Table 1.2 Reports of negative life experiences

	Proportion of each group reporting each type of NEGATIVE LIFE EXPERIENCE (now or in past few years)						
	Physical or sensory disabilities	Low literacy	Mental health	Drug or alcohol misuse	Short stay hotels or street life	Family issues	Trouble with Law
ALL SERVICE USERS	70%	11%	35%	10%	11%	10%	7%
All older people with general support needs	80%	8%	25%	2%	1%	2%	1%
All 'socially excluded' groups	38%	21%	69%	35%	42%	37%	27%
• People with mental health problems	46%	25%	91%	34%	29%	22%	15%
• Offenders	46%	20%	76%	75%	63%	34%	71%
• Single homeless	37%	19%	64%	38%	50%	37%	30%
• Homeless families	30%	17%	57%	19%	40%	50%	17%
• Women at risk of domestic violence	19%	18%	67%	15%	38%	91%	12%
• Young people at risk	20%	23%	48%	23%	42%	40%	31%

Base: all respondents in each group (3617, 900, 2717 (sub-groups = 318, 134, 953, 351, 224, 245))

- Trouble with the law

Table 1.2 shows how different user groups reported different life experiences. Cells are highlighted in red if 75%+ reported that type of experience, and in yellow if the figure is between 50% and 74%.

The vast majority (80%) of older people with general support needs reported physical or sensory disabilities and a substantial minority (25%) reported mental health problems, mostly depression. They did not tend to report the other types of experience, although 8% said they had problems reading or writing English.

The 'socially excluded' service users were less likely than the older service users to report physical problems (38%) but much more likely to report mental health problems (69%). Many reported having suffered the other problems too. For example, one third (35%) reported current or recent substance misuse, and one quarter (27%) said they had been in trouble with the law in the last few years. Offenders tended to report a greater variety of problems than anyone else.

Around one in five (21%) of the socially excluded service users said they had problems reading and writing English and this was fairly consistent across all the sub-groups. To put this in context, in a recent survey, only around 2-3% of the general adult population said their reading ability was poor.¹

One way of summarising this data is to work out what proportion of each group reported more than one problem and also what the average is for each group.

Figure 1.1 shows that, overall, only 39% of service users reported more than one problem but this rises to 75% among the socially excluded groups where the mean is 2.7.

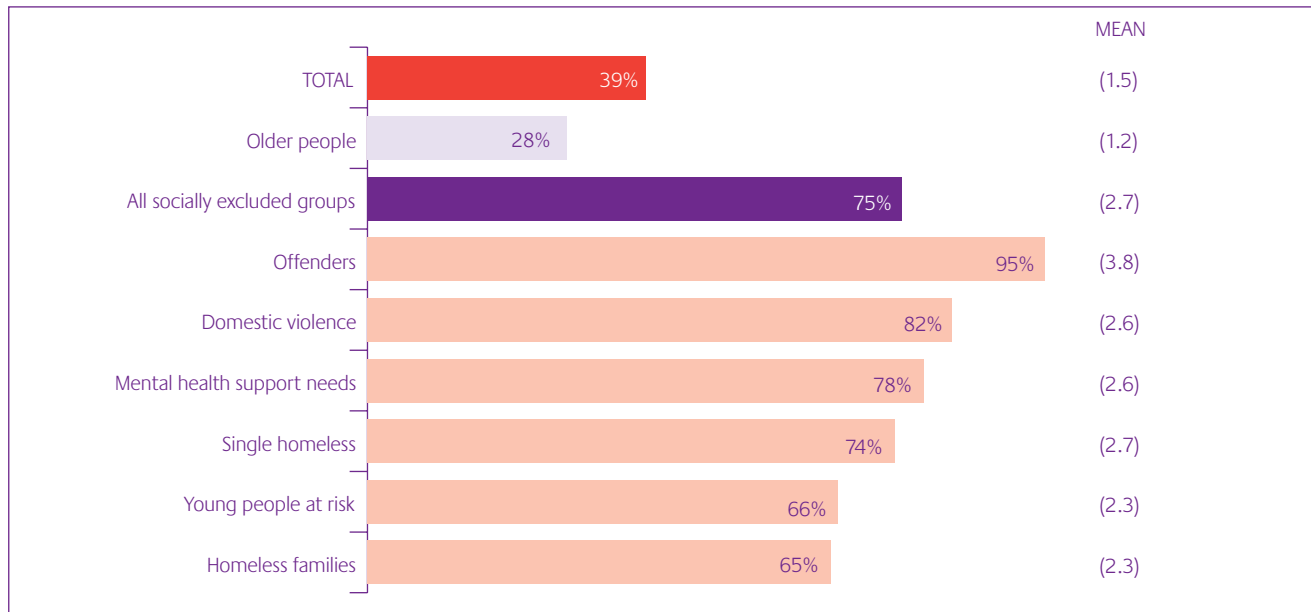
Offenders tended to report more problems than any other group: 95% reported two or more, and 63% reported four or more. This last figure was more than twice that of any of the other socially excluded groups.

There was a clear correlation between the variety of help reported by a service users and the variety of problems he/she reported. The greater the variety of problems, the greater the variety of help received. Figure 1.2 illustrates this graphically. Those reporting three or more different problems tended to be in receipt of most of the types of help on offer.

¹ Source: DfES *Skills for Life* survey of adults aged 16-65 in England (2002-03)

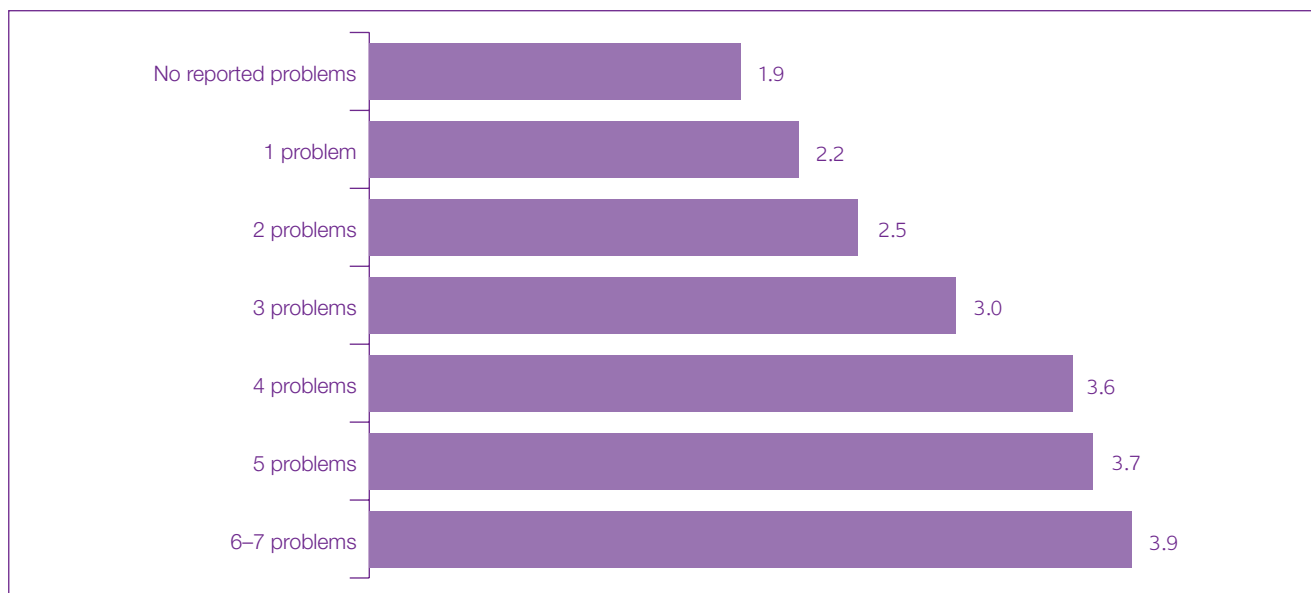
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Figure 1.1 Proportion of each group reporting MORE THAN ONE PROBLEM (+mean number of problems for each group)



Base: all respondents in each group (3617, 900, 2717 (sub-groups = 134, 224, 318, 953, 245, 351))

Figure 1.2 Variety of reported help (mean number of categories – out of 5) set against the variety of reported problems



Base: all respondents in each group (325, 975, 860, 642, 446, 254, 115)

What kinds of help did service users want but were not getting?

Some service users said they wanted help but also said they were not getting it from the provider. This does not mean that the provider had refused to give that help but it does imply that providers are not offering services routinely.

Figure 1.3 shows the proportion of ‘socially excluded’ service users² who wanted each kind of help set against the proportion who were already in receipt of that help. It also shows a sum of the two, labelled as ‘demand’³. It is a moot point whether wanting/not wanting a service can be equated with needing/not needing that service. Therefore the term ‘demand’ has been used in preference to ‘need’.

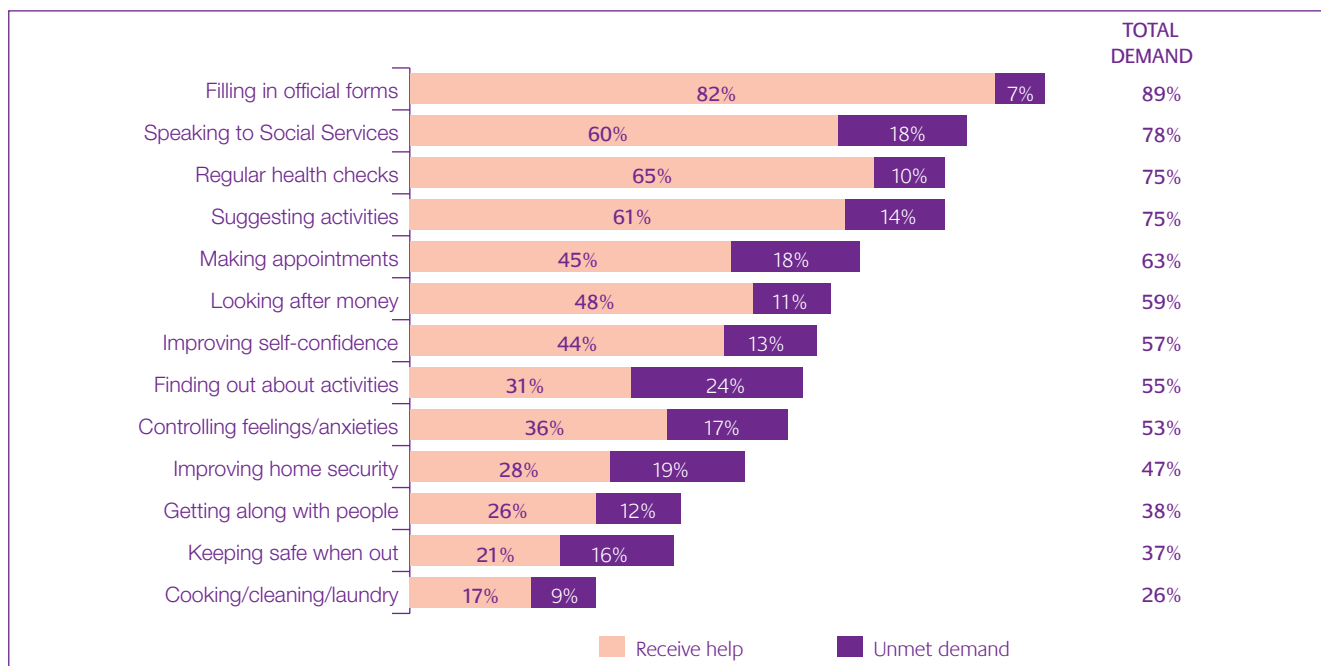
For the most part, demand for each service is met. This is especially true of those services with the greatest demand. However, even here there is substantial unmet demand: between 10% and 20% for each type of help.

There are no instances where the proportion wanting help is greater than the proportion who get that help. However, there are some types of help where ‘demand’ outstrips supply 3:2 or more:

- finding out about groups or activities that interest the service user (demand = 55%, supply = 31%);
- providing advice about home security (demand = 47%, supply = 28%);
- controlling feelings of anxiety (demand = 53%, supply = 36%); and
- advice about keeping safe (demand = 37%, supply = 21%).

There is only mid-level demand for these types of help and there is no strong ‘theme’ linking them together. The most that can be said is that plenty of service users want help getting into new activities and that some providers may have underestimated their clients’ need to feel safe.

Figure 1.3 Proportion of the socially excluded user group who (a) received each type of help, and (b) wanted that type of help



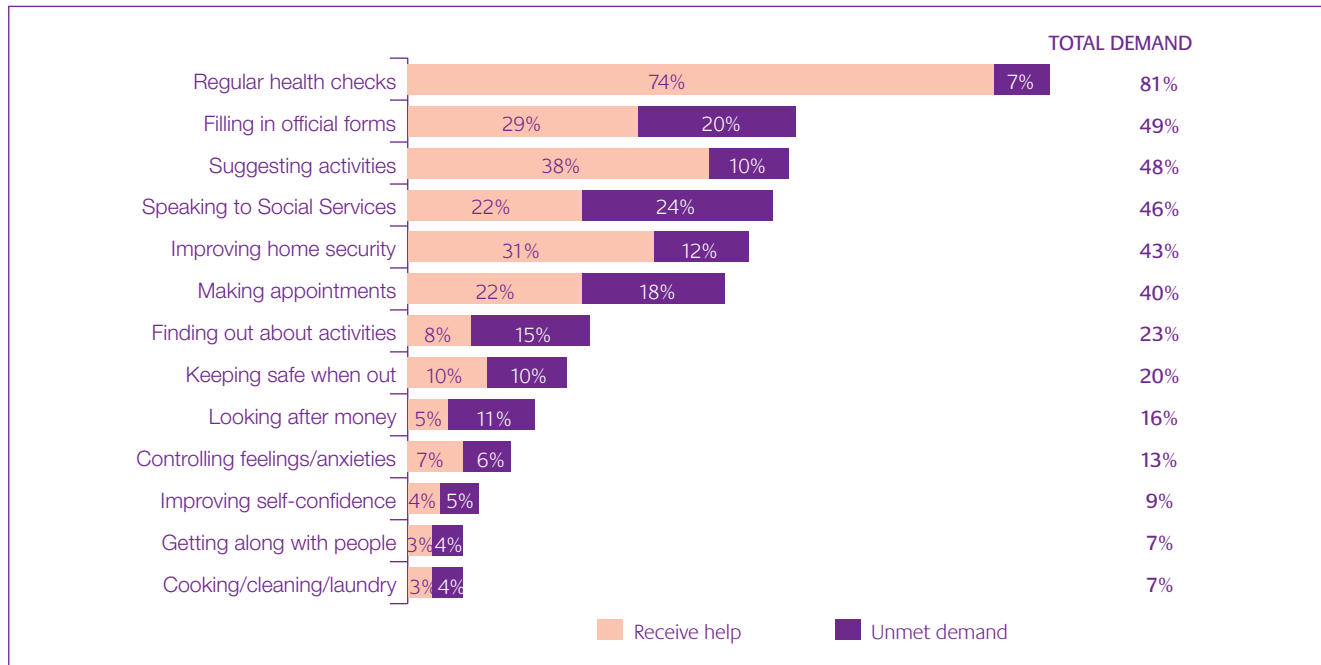
Base: all respondents in ‘socially excluded’ user group (2717)

² For the purposes of analysis, it is best to split the dataset into (a) the socially excluded user groups, and (b) the older people with general support needs.

³ However, it should be borne in mind that some people may be in receipt of services they did not ask for.

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Figure 1.4 Proportion of the older people user group who (a) received each type of help, and (b) wanted that type of help



Base: all respondents in 'older people' user group (900)

Overall, demand for behavioural help (improving self-confidence, controlling anxiety and help getting along with people) was relatively low but the level of unmet demand was quite high. Providers appear to be better at fulfilling demand for practical help than at dealing with less concrete needs.

Demand for services tended to be lower among the older people with general support needs (Figure 1.4). However, the level of unmet demand was still substantial. While the vast majority of providers regularly check the health of these older service users, other services are much less common. In particular, there is a clear unmet demand for help filling in forms, making appointments and speaking to the council or social services. A significant number would also like help developing their own interests by 'finding out about activities' but this is very rarely given. Demand outstripped supply by 3:1 (demand = 23%, supply = 8%).

The level of unmet demand can be summarised with reference to the five help categories defined earlier: (1) practical help, (2) help dealing with authorities, (3) behavioural help, (4) health checks and (5) broadening horizons.

Figure 1.5 gives a point for any unmet demand in each of the five categories. Service users from the socially excluded user groups tended to report a wider variety of unmet demand than the older service users. Nevertheless, in both groups, only a minority reported unmet demand in more than one category.⁴

One in five of the socially excluded service users reported unmet demand in three or more categories and this may be described as 'significant unmet demand'. Only one in ten of the older service users reported the same.

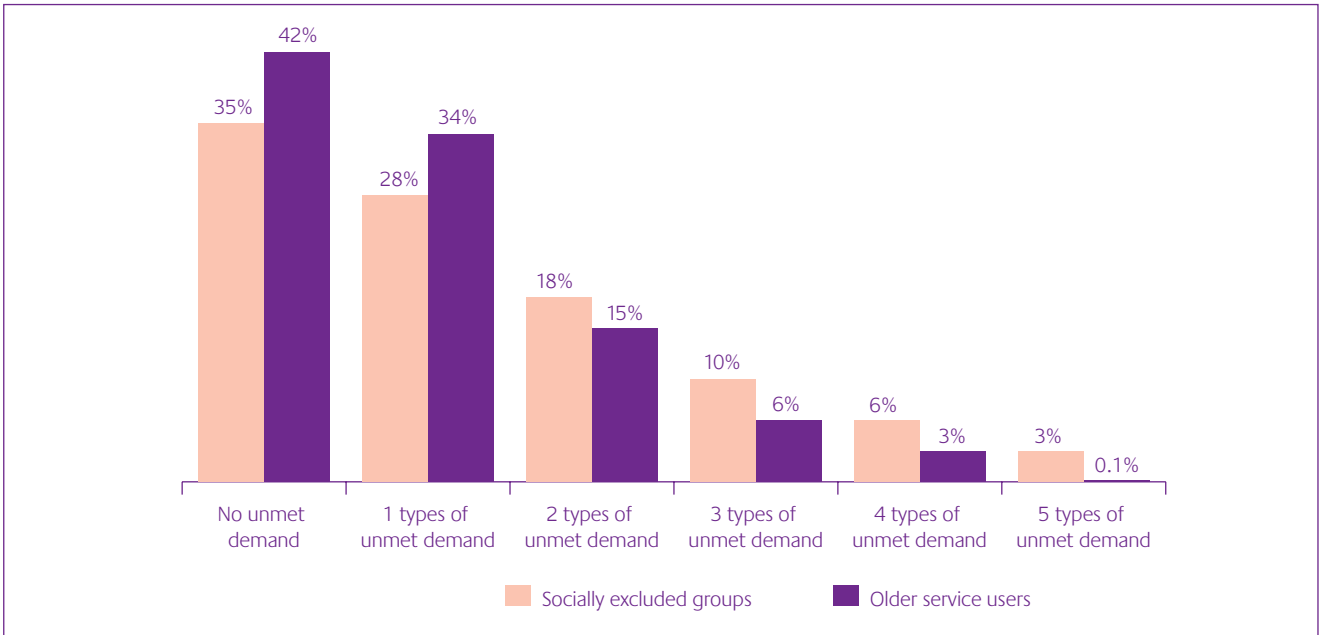
Overall, how satisfied were the service users?

Most service users expressed satisfaction with the overall quality of the service they received. Nearly two thirds (63%) said they were 'very satisfied', and a further 30% said they were 'fairly satisfied'.

There was little variation between user groups, with the proportion 'very satisfied' ranging from 56% (young people at risk) to 66% (women at risk of domestic violence).

⁴ There was very little variation in unmet demand between the six main 'socially excluded' sub-groups. Between 16% (offenders) and 20% (single and family homeless) reported three or more unmet wants, and the mean varied from 1.2 (people with mental health problems) to 1.5 (women at risk of domestic violence).

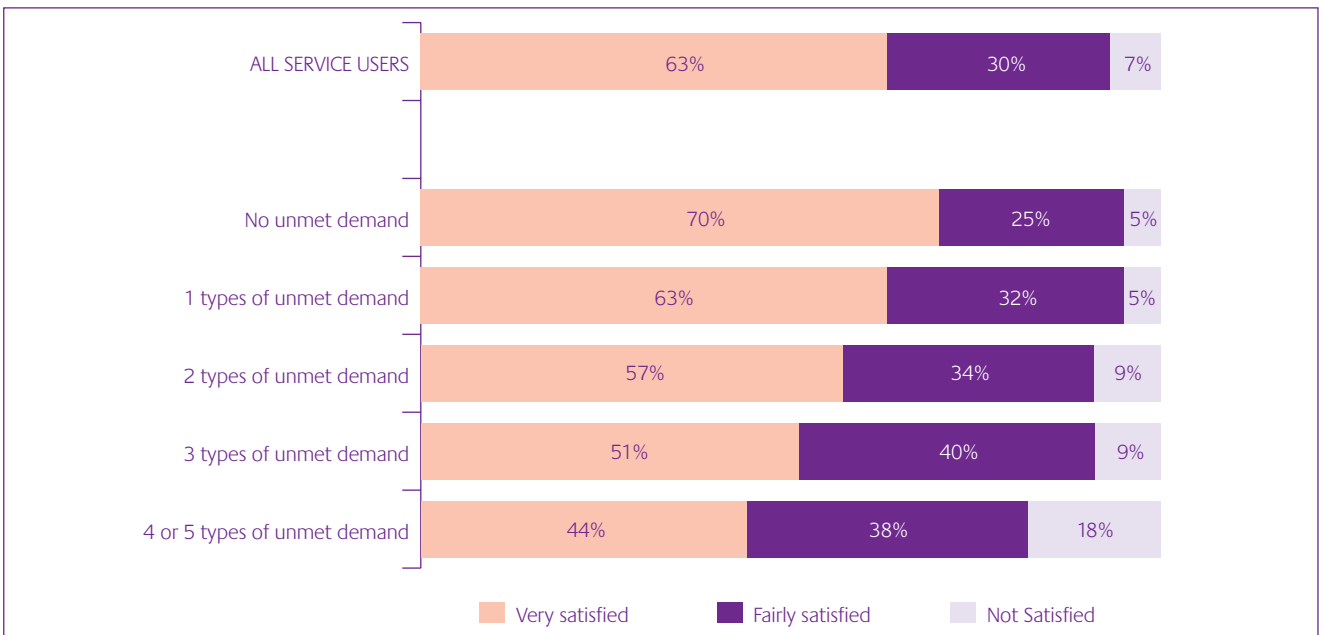
Figure 1.5 Variety of unmet demand



Base: all respondents in 'older people' user group (900) and socially excluded group (2717)

However, there was a significant negative correlation between satisfaction and the level of unmet demand (Figure 1.6). 70% of those with no unmet demands were 'very satisfied' compared to 44% of those with 4 or 5 categories of unmet demand. Nevertheless, 44% is still quite high and, even among this group, only a minority were not satisfied. The vast majority were at least 'fairly' satisfied.

Figure 1.6 Service satisfaction and level of unmet demand



Base: all respondents in each group (3617, 1315, 1048, 628, 344, 282)

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Linear regression analysis suggests that there are six key variables associated with satisfaction. Some are more strongly associated with satisfaction than others but all have a significant independent effect:

- If the service user thinks their current accommodation is ‘very nice’;
- If he/she is getting a wide variety of help and has few unmet needs⁵;
- If he/she is getting that support in their own home;
- If he/she is older;
- If he/she has fewer negative life experiences to deal with; and
- If he/she feels safe when out in the neighbourhood.

Obviously, policy cannot affect some of these (e.g. age and negative life experiences). However, it is clear that if someone feels safe and comfortable in their own home he/she is more likely to be satisfied with the services that are delivered.

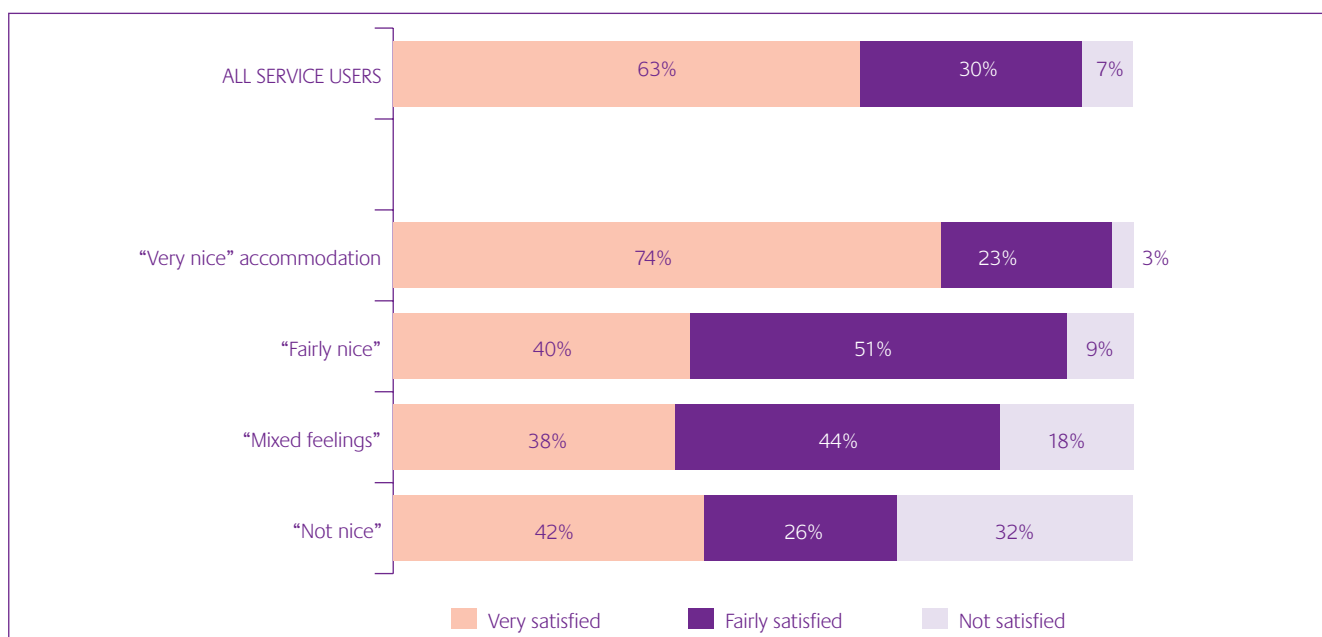
Figure 1.7 shows that the proportion very satisfied with services drops from 74% to 40% when the standard of accommodation drops from ‘very nice’ to ‘fairly nice’. However, this percentage does not go down any further, even when the accommodation is described as ‘not nice’. This suggests that a substantial number of service users are able to separate the quality of personal help they receive from the quality of the accommodation.

Having said that, around a third of those who said their accommodation was ‘not nice’ were also ‘not satisfied’ with the overall service they received. Clearly, for some others, the two are very closely linked.

The older service users tended to be much happier than the socially excluded groups with their accommodation. Three quarters (76%) thought it was ‘very nice’, compared to only 42% of the socially excluded service users. Half of all those who didn’t like their accommodation came from the latter group, although they comprised only one quarter of all service users.

Nevertheless, the vast majority (81%) of those who had moved in the last twelve months thought the new place was better than the previous place. This at least suggests some positive changes in the accommodation available to people.

Figure 1.7 Assessment of current accommodation and service satisfaction



Base: all service users in each group (3617, 1758, 957, 687, 211)

⁵ ‘Need’ is defined here as unmet demand for certain types of help or support.



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