

Accessible Transport: 'What we heard'

Spring meetups 2022

In spring 2022 we held a series of meetups on the topic of accessible transport. A total of 53 people came to 7 in-person and 2 online events. The people who came were mostly disabled people and people with mental health challenges, at some there were a few professionals. This report is a summary of what we heard.

Summary of 'what we heard'

Buses only
take one
wheelchair

Buses don't
run often
enough

Bus passes
cannot be
used before
9:30am

There are
not enough
accessible
taxis

Taxi drivers
do not have
enough
awareness
of disabled
people

Pavements
are poorly
maintained
and so uneven
and bumpy

There is a
lack of choice and
spontaneity in life
because of limited
access to public
transport

The lack of
accessible
transport leads to
more mental health
problems

Training
delivered to bus
and taxi drivers by
disabled people

Bus drivers and
members of the
public are often
very rude.

You can read more in the next pages and a full report of everything that was said is also available.

Summary of ideas

Decision makers should be people with lived experience of disability or mental health challenges

Smaller cheaper accessible minibuses around residential and rural areas

Increased traffic makes it dangerous for pedestrians and people using scooters or wheelchairs

Community Transport and car shares with accessible cars

Bigger spaces for wheelchair users on buses

Peer support workers or buddies for travel companions

You can read more in the next pages and a full report of everything that was said is also available.



Part 1 - challenges of using public transport

"If you want to go to the Cinema, you can't get a bus in the evening."

Buses

- ✦ Only take one wheelchair at a time.
- ✦ There is not enough space to turn the wheelchair round easily.
- ✦ It is more challenging for older people, people with children
- ✦ There are very limited bus services, especially in rural areas
- ✦ There are few or no buses after 6pm or on weekends
- ✦ There are limited routes so it is difficult to get to some places or it takes a very long time
- ✦ Not being able to use bus passes before 9:30 am restricts access to employment and appointments
- ✦ It is complicated to get a bus pass and no longer possible to get assistance from the library
- ✦ Buses are often cancelled or not run according to the timetable because of a lack of drivers
- ✦ Buses are often re routed
- ✦ Bus fares have gone up.

"Stagecoach cancelling or re-routing buses: re-routing results in long walk for elderly or people with young children. Working people have a long walk back in the winter months"

"Timing is a BIG issue - getting to an appointment can take all day with waiting around and changes. Earlier and later trains and buses should run."

"I've only used the bus around 6 times in 3 years. It was just too difficult. Wheelchair spaces are only One, and its uncertain whether it will be free. It can be taken up by mothers with prams and one driver asked me of I 'wanted them moved'."

Taxis

- ✦ *this was a big topic in the Cheltenham and Gloucester meetups as a bullet point
- ✦ There is a lack of taxis and accessible taxis.
- ✦ It's often not possible to book them in advance, and some drivers insist on booking in advance.
- ✦ They are just not available at the time of school runs.
- ✦ There is a lack of disability awareness and skills of taxi drivers.
- ✦ The rudeness of taxi drivers

People's attitudes

- ✦ People experience rudeness and abuse from the general public on the streets and on buses;
- ✦ Some bus drivers have bad attitudes of bus drivers.
- ✦ Sometimes the bus pulls off before I am on properly

"I went to blind tennis, the taxi driver dropped me where he wanted, I had no dog or stick. I didn't go back to tennis again."

"Wheelchair spaces sit you to face the rest of the bus passengers face on. Its really intimidating and embarrassing, especially if they've been huffing and puffing and looking at their watched about how long it takes to get my wheelchair onto the bus."

"The bus drivers are grumpy. Often you feel like you're ruining their day."

Traffic

- ✦ Increasing traffic levels making it dangerous for pedestrians and people using scooters or wheelchairs
- ✦ Parking of higher numbers of cars obstructs roads for buses

Pavements and Parking

- ✦ Tree roots are a problem.
- ✦ Maintenance is poor so that the pavements are bumpy and uneven, this can cause pain for some people.
- ✦ Not enough dropped kerbs.
- ✦ Not clearing up promptly enough after flooding, preventing access for people using a walking frame or wheelchair.
- ✦ Lack of parking spaces for disabled people

"Traffic through the town is busy and dangerous with the lorries. There's been an increase in lorries since lockdown with there being more online deliveries."

"Tree roots and drop curbs are a nightmare around here. All the paths are uneven when we go out and about which makes it difficult for us to manoeuvre our chairs."

Other Importance themes

- ✦ For people in supported and residential care access to transport is much more limited; we only have one minibus; book in advance and not enough people to accompany and support us to go out.
- ✦ The lack of proper accessible transport is stressful and has an impact on mental health – physical barriers lead to more mental health problems
- ✦ The lack of access and choice impacts on independence, it limits social life and restricts employment possibilities.
- ✦ Lack of spontaneity.
- ✦ The job centre do not understand the lack of transport and its implications

Positive Experiences

- ✦ Newer busses are better
- ✦ Using the stagecoach app is really useful not 100% accurate but generally up to date.
- ✦ The System with assistants to help on the trains works well.
- ✦ Taxis can be a good service – especially Driving Miss Daisy – bookable, flexible (but limited in resource).



The impact of coming out of lockdown

- ✦ Vulnerable people are scared to go out now and there's no incentive for them to either.
- ✦ People are using the bus less.
- ✦ There are less buses running – they weren't put back into operation at the end of lock down
- ✦ Budgets have been cut since pandemic, so there are less trips and opportunities to go out
- ✦ Taxi providers have lost most of their drivers after the pandemic [and Brexit].
- ✦ There was a Travel Enablement Team but since Covid they need to re-establish their volunteer base.
- ✦ Taxi drivers now have contracted school runs, so it's even more difficult to get a taxi now.



Part 2 - What would make a difference?

Buses

- ✦ Talking buses - to tell you the next stop and a visible sign telling you the stop name.
- ✦ Picture maps and signs on buses and bus routes
- ✦ An easy guide on how to obtain things like a bus pass, blue badge.
Bigger space on bus for wheelchairs (more than 1) This could be by removing or flipping up unused chairs in priority seating area.
- ✦ Bus passes to be used beyond off peak times, especially if only 1 or 2 buses a day at peak times.
- ✦ More buses in the evenings and weekends, especially in rural areas.
- ✦ Cross county collaboration on this.
- ✦ Lots of smaller, cheap and regular accessible minibuses to do regular trips around the large towns, residential and rural areas. Like community shopper buses.

"There used to be a private shopper bus that run shopping trips between Cleeve & Tewkesbury. It was great! it only cost 50p a journey - it went every 20 minutes and was always on time. We need something somethig like this again."



Taxis, Trains and Community Transport

- ✦ Barnwood bolstering ring and ride/community car/car share schemes with accessible cars. Maybe through another business or charity.
- ✦ More localised public transport with voluntary drivers and funded by the Council.
- ✦ Barnwood Trust could provide a loan for prospective drivers to set up with their own taxis. Promote more Driving Miss Daisy.
- ✦ Step free, roll-on, roll-off train access and accessible stations. Its' been done on trams in Blackpool
- ✦ Organisations like Leonard Cheshire and Star College could share their vehicles to cut costs
- ✦ Concessions for taxi costs

"Get someone at the top who has experience - this goes across everything to do with accessibility: Transport, toilets, taxis, shops, everything."

Safety, Navigation, Information

- ✦ A phone app which helps you navigate
- ✦ More visible bus stops and safety features
- ✦ Parish Councils should disseminate the information they have

Training – Peoples' Attitudes

- ✦ Drivers training to be delivered by disabled people, including those with hidden disabilities.
- ✦ More awareness of hidden disabilities.
- ✦ Get organisations to think out of the box more and FIND A WAY rather than think, oh it's too expensive to make these adaptations.
- ✦ More people to have awareness of how to load and unload accessible transport.
- ✦ Raise awareness of disability in schools.
- ✦ Have a publicity campaign that raises awareness of the issues faced by disabled people out and about.
- ✦ People with lived experience should train drivers.
- ✦ Drivers should spend a day in a manual wheelchair.
- ✦ Accessibility rating system where people are rewarded for their accessibility and service and lose out when they are not considerate.



Systems and Infrastructure

- ✦ Getting a Blue badge is complex; it would be good to have help to navigate the application process.
- ✦ Roads in the Forest very dark – there could be pedestrian safety plans to enable people to walk safely on roads after dark.
- ✦ If people are organising activities/events maybe include transport as part of offer.
- ✦ Drop curbs need to be marked more clearly and there should be a restriction on how high they can be.
- ✦ Talk to the council about pavements, transport etc.
- ✦ Information about accessible transport needs to be more readily available.
- ✦ Decision makers need to be people with lived experience e.g., wheelchair users.
- ✦ There should be peer support for journeys. Bank of peer support workers/ buddies/volunteers or companions to assist with journeys or trips out for, also help those experiencing Mental ill health



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