

## **Ageing Better Middlesbrough**

### **Older People and transport – an overview of the learning**

For the last two and a half years Ageing Better Middlesbrough has been delivering a variety of different projects and services aimed at reducing and preventing loneliness and isolation for people aged fifty and over.

The programme is underpinned by a 'Test and Learn' ethos, which means that learning and insights relating to the experience of growing old in Middlesbrough are being routinely gathered and synthesised. This learning has helped us, in partnership with older people, design and develop the programme.

This document provides a brief narrative which describes learning that has emerged from the programme so far relating to transport. It also includes references to work being undertaken in other geographical Ageing Better areas who are also grappling with the challenge of finding solutions to this complex issue.

Ageing Better Middlesbrough has also commissioned Teesside University to undertake a literature review and research project relating to evening and weekend loneliness, which also contains useful insight into the issue of transport for older people. This research can be found here.

<https://www.ageingbettermiddlesbrough.org.uk/documents/>

### **The barriers and challenges**

When staff, volunteers and older people fed back that 'transport is an issue', not everyone was describing the same issue. The barriers faced by older people in relation to getting from one place to another are diverse and sometimes very individual.

In order to better understand the scope of the problem, we asked staff and volunteers to complete at least two different 'personas' based on a real person, or representative of a group of people with common problems. This helped paint a picture of peoples experiences or the experiences of older people they have met. See appendix A

We then brought staff together with older people and wider stakeholders, spending time reading all the personas (approximately 40 in total) and asked workshop members to note down any key issues that started to repeat or reveal themselves within the group of personas.

The key themes were identified as follows (not in any particular order)

1. **People are house bound or 'trapped' in their houses** - due to physical disabilities, transport solutions would need to provide significant support and assistance and be 'door to door' to meet the needs of these people.
2. **Carers** – People who care for another person aren't as able to use transport due to a variety of issues. Issues include having no one to care for their family member if they go out, or public transport such as buses not being suitable for the cared for person.
3. **Use of transport for appointments** – There was a strong theme around people needing, at the very least, to get to their medical appointments. People are using up the 'good will' of family and friends to get them to their appointments, leaving them feeling unable to ask for lifts for 'less important' things, like attending social activity. Sometimes they struggle to even to get to their appointments.  
  
Buses now don't stop at James Cook Hospital, and patients have to walk from Marton Road into the hospital. ABMAG, (Ageing Better Middlesbrough Action Group) are taking this issue up with bus companies.
4. **Bus drivers** – People's negative interactions with bus drivers can be a significant barrier for people to trust public transport. Issues included bus drivers pulling away before the person sat down, driving past bus stops, being unfriendly or unhelpful and not asking people to move from priority seats to enable them to sit down.
5. **Buses not being disability/older person Friendly** – One of the strongest themes was around the lack of adapted or disability friendly buses. Issues included; lack of help/support when getting on the bus, the need for more buses which had low entry steps, lack of space for wheelchairs or scooters, people with mobility issues not feeling safe to get on and off a bus.
6. **Distance to the bus stop** – People who are able to ride buses aren't always able to make it to their nearest bus stop. In some suburban areas the nearest bus stop can be a significant distance.
7. **Bus routes and times** – People are frustrated that they often need to use two buses to get across Middlesbrough, one to get into the centre of town and one back out again. It's not easy to get a bus to the hospital. Buses stop running too early and don't run at times when older people might at their loneliest (evenings, weekends, bank holidays)

8. **The physical environment** – Older people struggle when there isn't a bench at a bus stop, or there are 'slanty' benches which aren't easy to sit on.
9. **Fear of taxis** – Older people are intimidated by using taxis. Issues such as taxi drivers not speaking English, taxi drivers not helping them open doors, driving too fast, taxi drivers not wanting to wait and not wanting to use taxis alone, came through strongly.
10. **Cost of taxis** – Many people can't afford taxis. There was also some evidence that some older people over-estimate how much a taxi ride might cost.
11. **Loss of confidence** – Life events and mental health difficulties leading to loss of confidence are a big barrier to older people using public transport. Trusting that people will be kind and patient with them was a big issue. Older people also feel scared that they won't be able to manage on a bus, there are too many variables in the journey that could go wrong or just leaving the house in itself was a big enough barrier.

## **Learning from other Ageing Better Areas**

Key staff members from Ageing Better areas around the country came together in London on 13<sup>th</sup> November to share their learning and information about solutions being tested out.

The most notable points from the learning are as follows

1. The transport issue is significant throughout the country. The population is getting older, but transport planning and local and national policy isn't keeping up.
2. Ageing Better isn't in a position to influence some of the 'macro' issues relating to transport.
3. We are all in a good position to make a difference to some of the 'micro' issues locally.
4. Even in areas with local authority funded 'dial a ride' type services, the transport issue was still significant. It is evident that these sorts of services can help to solve some issues, but not all. These areas are still having significant issues because this transport doesn't provide the required level of assistance for older people with mobility issues. There are also issues with scheduling and lack of flexibility.
5. Transport 'buddy' projects haven't worked. People don't want to be matched with a transport buddy and people also don't want to be 'volunteer buddies'.

6. The transport difficulties of each Ageing Better area are very specific to that area. Although some of the challenges are broadly the same, there were many significant differences. For instance, in metropolitan areas taxi drivers charge for their wait time, meaning an older person at the top of a block of flats pays more for the 'wait' for them to get to the taxi than the actual taxi ride. Rural areas have different challenges, with a lot depending on the way bus company funding is tarified.

### **Some solutions being tested out in other areas**

1. **Taking over the bus routes**– Torbay Ageing Better have employed a transport co-ordinator in response to an almost overnight overhaul of the bus routes. The overhaul meant some estates with large numbers of older people completely lost bus routes. They were gifted three buses and received other external funding. They now employ three bus drivers and use volunteer drivers to cover the closed routes, as well as volunteer bus conductors, to help people get on and off. A few routes are commercial bus routes which make profit. The bus drivers wages are paid for by the solution outlined in point 2. below
2. **Mini-buses** – Torbay did a mapping exercise, identifying all the mini-buses in the local area. They then put on day trips at times the buses were not busy. Older people pay for the trips, and this income pays the wages of the commercial bus drivers.
3. **Travel training** – some specialist travel training schemes are available in some areas. These schemes provide information, guidance and support for people to use transport.
4. **Access assessments** – Supporting older people to walk bus companies 'through' a journey, to describe barriers and issues first hand
5. **Engaging taxi companies** – Thanet have signed up local taxi companies as members to their 'Age Friendly Business' scheme, which means members of the programme receive a discount on their fare. They have also trained taxi drivers to be more aware of the issues faced by older people when riding taxis.
6. **Training bus drivers** – The Isle Of Wight have provided 'Age Friendly' training to all bus drivers on the Island.
7. **Specific targeted schemes** – In Manchester there was a scheme where people could wear a 'please offer me a seat' badge. Bus drivers made a point of reminding customers to move out of priority seating.

8. **Undercover passengers** – Although currently untested, some areas discussed the idea that younger and older people could be incentivised to act as 'good travellers' on buses, to model helpful attitudes and be vigilant and aware of people who might need help, support or a friendly face.

# Appendix A

AGEING BETTER  
MIDDLESBROUGH

TRANSPORT WORKSHOP PERSONA

Picture  


Name Susan, Age 51

Key Quotes  
"You know what I mean"  
"If the government did more for us, then we wouldn't be like this."

Social Network  
- No social network outside of limited family contact.  
- Sees mum and brother.  
- No contact with own children.

Life Story  
- Grown up with violent father & history of trauma  
- Controlling relationships  
- Has 2 grown up children who has no contact with due to blaming her for marriage breakdown.  
- Alcohol misuse as way of coping.  
- Physical difficulty following accident - no longer works, experiences pain

Personality, motivations and priorities  
- Describes herself as a "fighter" and "one of the people"  
- Likes helping others, charity and hobby.  
- Priorities of physical health, needs, anxiety & depression.

Key Transport Needs/Issues  
- Never learnt to drive.  
- Has bus passes, due to physical ~~difficulties~~ disabilities, unable to access local buses - bus stop too far away  
- Financially cannot afford to take

Social Network  
 CLOSE FRIENDS  
 HAVE PASSED AWAY  
 RELIES ON HER  
 ONE BROTHER  
 SON DAUGHTER  
 LIVE AWAY  
 NEXT DOOR DOES  
 SOME SHOPPING FOR HER

Key Transport Needs/Issues  
 SHOPPING  
 DOCTORS + OTHER  
 HEALTH APPOINTMENTS  
 SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES  
 REQUIRE TRAVEL

TRANSPORT WORKSHOP PERSONA

AGEING BETTER  
MIDDLESBROUGH



Name Joan 75

Key Quotes

LOTS OF THE EVENTS ARE NOT ON A BUS ROUTE I RELY ON OTHERS

EVEN IF THEY RAN EVERY 10 minutes I would not go out in the dark!

Social Network  
 My sister's key  
 I see her most days  
 I've 4 children -  
 Jean and Pam live  
 near - I see them  
 about once a week  
 AND THEN THERE'S  
 MY USA FRIENDS

Life Story I'M MIDDLESBROUGH BORN & BRED  
 I MARRIED YOUNG AND HAD 4 CHILDREN FAIRLY QUICK  
 I DIDN'T GO BACK TO WORK AFTER THEY WERE BORN  
 MOST OF MY SOCIAL LIFE WAS FAMILY BASED SO WHEN MY KIDS Grew UP THEN MY NM'S AND PIG I WAS A BIT LOST  
 MY SISTER INTRODUCED ME TO USA AND I BEGAN TO GO OUT TO LUNCH & JOIN GROUPS CHESS, KNITTING, WALKING

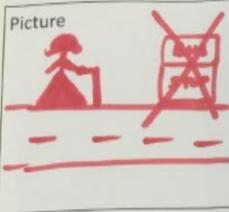
Personality, motivations and priorities  
 I'M A BIT RESERVED & SHY - NOT GOOD AT ASKING FOR FAVOURS  
 I'VE A LOT OF YEARS LEFT BEING ABLE TO GET OUT AND ENJOY THEM WOULD BE GOOD  
 IF THERE WAS A DOOR TO DOOR WAY OF GETTING OUT AT NIGHT - THAT WOULD BE GOOD!

Key Transport Needs/Issues  
 I WANT TO GO TO WHERE MY INTERESTS ARE - A CHAUFFEUR SERVICE WOULD BE NICE!!  
 I WANT TO BE MORE INDEPENDENT - TO GO WHERE I WANT TO GO WITHOUT ALWAYS RELYING ON OTHERS

**AGEING BETTER  
MIDDLESBROUGH**

TRANSPORT WORKSHOP PERSONA

Picture



I am 90  
no way can  
I get the  
bus!

Key Quotes

Why can't we  
have a service  
that comes to  
your house to  
pick me up?

Social Network

I have carers  
4 times a day  
but don't see  
anybody else.

Name

**ANNABEL.**

Life Story

I married a french  
man and because of  
his job travelled and  
lived all over the  
world. I have had an  
amazing life. My  
children now live in  
france and I live in  
Coulby Newham!

Personality, motivations and priorities

I have a wicked  
sense of humour and  
like a good chat.  
I to be honest have  
little motivation now  
as my health isn't too  
good.  
My priority is my family.

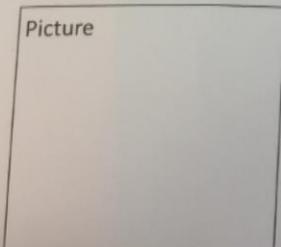
Key Transport Needs/Issues

I would not be  
able to use public  
transport now but  
when fit there was  
no buses on this  
estate anyway.  
I have limited  
mobility and  
hearing problems  
door to door service  
would benefit me.

**AGEING BETTER  
MIDDLESBROUGH**

TRANSPORT WORKSHOP PERSONA

Picture



Key Quotes

I'm scared to walk  
long distances incase  
I fall again.

Social Network

I have a good  
relationship with my neighbour  
often depend on  
take me shopping  
I have a son  
a learning disability  
he lives in a  
in the south of  
often comes  
twice a year  
for a month