



**Travel
Connections**
From B to A the friendly way

Reflections on Let's Talk Transport at Feel Good Factor, part of the Let's Talk Transport pilot

Shabana Kosar, May 2023

[Feel Good Factor](#) was one of the delivery partners involved in Let's Talk Transport. Initially the staff at Feel Good Factor approached members to ask if they wanted to get together to explore the subject of transport, with the emphasis of using it as a social activity.

Nine members expressed an interest and a group was set up. Members were from diverse communities and some had disabilities, including mobility challenges, hearing loss, sight loss and mental health difficulties. This made for a well-represented group to talk about transport issues.

The group started out taking trips which were organised by Feel Good Factor staff. Members reported on trips using public transport, evaluated Leeds Bus Station improvements and gave feedback to West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

As the project progressed members and staff discussed the option of the Let's Talk Transport group becoming independent from Feel Good Factor and working together to make their own decisions and plan their own outings etc. Support from staff during the transition period and a small budget from Travel Connections funding enabled this to happen. The group collected leaflets and pamphlets on local museums, nature trails and cafes as ideas for future trips out. They meet every Thursday at Feel Good Factor to plan trips. Members developed the confidence to organise their own trips, explore new places, hone their time management skills and they learned how to use bus and train apps.

In this case study Shabana interviewed two of the Let's Talk Transport members to discuss how they have found becoming independent and managing their own Let's Talk Transport group. *Names have been changed.

Naz's* experiences

Naz initially joined the group as he used to be a taxi driver and had to stop driving due to an attack which has left him with a complex brain injury. He is now using public transport and pays for all his transport costs because he hasn't yet reached state retirement age. Naz joined the group for friendship and he feels safe in the company of older adults.

Naz is a natural leader he enjoys being helpful and is passionate about subjects that affect his peers. He was very keen to play an active role in supporting the group to become independent as he has previously volunteered for a charity.

At the first meeting of the group Naz took the lead and made suggestions as to how the group could manage themselves. His leadership was welcomed and his ideas and suggestions implemented. Naz said the first meeting went on for three hours because it was difficult for everyone to stay on point. Naz identified that when you have paid staff present, they control the meeting and that is respected. As Naz was hosting a meeting of friends, he didn't want to be dictatorial and control the flow of the meeting. We discussed that of course he wants to be seen as one of the gang and agreed that meetings may take longer and in a way that's part of the social aspect.

In the meeting they agreed that those present at the meeting would decide on events / outings and the outcome is fixed. They created a WhatsApp group and use this to make suggestions of events and share details. Over the last three months the group has used public transport to visit York, the cinema and to have lunch out.

Between 6 and 7 people attended each outing and they agreed in advance how to use the funding set aside for the trip. The group decided not to incorporate food into all outings, preferring to use the funding for entrance fees / transport instead and to bring their own sandwiches. The group worked out that they have funding for 10 events and look forward to more visits.

Naz said "we are learning as we go but what's great is that we are respectful of each other and there's been no falling out"

Michael's* experiences

Michael has been a member of the group since the start of Let's Talk Transport and enjoys the company of others and getting out and about.

He has taken the role of coordinator which means that when the group decide on a venue / trip he looks at the logistics of transport, costs, and times. He then posts information on the WhatsApp group and visits Feel Good Factor to collect printing and money.

When asked how he was finding having this responsibility Michael said "I'm not a natural leader so some parts I am finding challenging. I am using this role to motivate myself as I can be a person who puts things off and don't get things done but when other are relying on you, you have to get things done."

Michael said organising trips is much harder than he thought it would be. He said "In the past I have just turned up and not really thought about the planning etc. Now I feel what the responsibility is like."

Michael mentioned after each outing they all write a small review about their day. Recently a new member joined the group. She is new to Leeds and didn't have much social activity. In her review she wrote them a letter saying how much of a difference being part of the group has made to her wellbeing and she really enjoyed making new friends.

Michael said when he read the letter it made him feel that by helping to arrange trips and activities he was bring a sense of joy to others – and that made him feel good.

Here's what one group member had to say after their outing:

"I was invited to attend a group visit to York courtesy of Let's Talk Transport at Feel Good Factor. We met at Leeds railway station in good time and caught the local Northern train to York. This was my first experience of a group outing. As a new member I had some contact with other members of the group (7 in all) but knew little of them.

The visit was well organised and introductions made. The train journey was the ideal opportunity to get to know other members of the group. We agreed to visit the nearby Railway museum. This led to a very pleasant visit around the many trains and exhibits featuring well known trains e.g. the Mallard and the Bullet train. Some of our group use mobility aids so we decided to go to a nearby Wetherspoons for lunch by walking. This was a bit further than we hoped for but we all enjoyed the food. Finally we returned by train to Leeds.

The benefits for me personally were the ability to join in a group activity, having many conversations with others who I felt privileged to have met. It meant a lot to me to get to know others. Many of us live alone so a visit such as this is a highlight as it was something I would not have undertaken myself. I had a very enjoyable day out of my house which in itself was a bonus! Many thanks for the successful outing."