



# Evaluation of Travel Connections Programme: Final Report

by Kerry Swain and Sarah Frost, July 2023

Independent Research & Evaluation Consultants



Department  
for Transport

Leeds  
Older  
People's  
Forum



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



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The evaluation team would like to thank everyone who helped contribute to this evaluation through sharing their views and experiences.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Evaluation aims and objectives

Travel Connections (TC) is a Department for Transport (DfT) funded programme, via the Tackling Loneliness with Transport fund. In May 2022 Leeds Older People's Forum (LOPF) received a one year grant of £447,500 to deliver the TC programme in Leeds, which included 11 different projects.

This independent evaluation of the TC programme, by Kerry Swain and Sarah Frost, was commissioned in March 2023. The main aim of the evaluation was to establish what was achieved by the 11 TC projects, identifying what worked well and any challenges faced by delivery partners, as well as capturing any learning to inform future provision and potential replication of the project approaches and interventions.

Within this aim the evaluation also sought to establish the impact on project participants, including a focus on loneliness and those factors which can contribute to feelings of loneliness such as; social connections, access to social activities, staying active, confidence and mental well-being. Exploring the role and contribution of the transport element of the projects to achieving these outcomes was a key consideration.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Loneliness and transport: what we know already

#### Why loneliness is a problem

Loneliness presents a significant public health challenge and is a risk to health that has been equated with smoking, obesity or alcoholism<sup>1</sup>. Reducing loneliness is now seen as an important outcome for several areas of policy and practice such as health inequalities, mental health, well-being, better ageing, engagement and participation, safety and transport.

#### Older people and loneliness

Older adults experience higher levels of loneliness with the number of over-50s experiencing loneliness increasing, expected to reach two million by 2026<sup>2</sup>. Older people are also more likely to experience recognised triggers for loneliness such as retirement, bereavement, illness and disability (including sensory loss) and depression<sup>3</sup>.

*"loneliness and social isolation are common experiences that often coincide with stages of life when people may be experiencing transport difficulties." (p3, Williams et al, 2022)*

A systematic review for Sustrans<sup>4</sup> (which looked at 46 research papers published between 1983 and 2021), found **consistent evidence that transport was associated with loneliness**. Several studies found older people who use public transport more regularly had *reduced* feelings of loneliness. Conversely, where there was inadequate public or community transport, studies reported *greater* feelings of loneliness.

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<sup>1</sup> [Loneliness and Health: Campaign to End Loneliness](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/the-facts-on-loneliness/>

<sup>3</sup> Department for Digital et al., 2018

<sup>4</sup> Williams, McHale and Chow (2021), Final report on loneliness and transport systematic review, University of St Andrews (for Sustrans and Transport Scotland)

## Why transport is important

Staying mobile and being able to get out and about helps people retain their independence, stay connected to friends and family, maintain a healthy and active life, and take part in social activities. The ability to use transport is one of the Instrumental Activities of Daily Living for older people.<sup>5</sup>

For some older people, *the fear* of loneliness meant they continued driving against advice. When older people no longer drive, through choice, age, health or legal requirements, they often reduce their social activities. Reliable and accessible alternatives to the car in the form of public and community transport and active travel routes that connect neighbourhoods (and not just services or workplace) are necessary so people can stay connected.

The review for Sustrans<sup>6</sup> highlights three key themes related to transport and loneliness:

- 1. Transport can be a means of reaching destinations where you meet with other people e.g. shops, activities, appointments, visit friends/family, trips out.**
- 2. Transport as a 'third space' in which you meet other people e.g. buses / trains as social spaces, active travel as a group (e.g. walking, cycling).**

Active travel as a group activity could help to avoid loneliness, although there are differences related to the social status of active travel in different communities and locations. Studies found cycling was associated with reduced feelings of loneliness - people walking and cycling met more people and felt greater social cohesion than car drivers. There are also well documented physical and mental health benefits of walking and cycling<sup>7</sup>.

- 3. Transport as a positive source of isolation e.g. travelling alone can be beneficial for mental health, providing time and space for reflection and a simple 'hello' to help to alleviate someone's feelings of isolation and loneliness.**

## Barriers to transport use

The systematic review for Sustrans also highlights the importance of considering barriers to accessing and using transport and recognises that our ability to get around is influenced by factors such as:

- Are people able to walk to meet the people they want to?
- Are there easy links / ways to access the places where people meet people?
- Are there barriers to getting to these places?
- Do people have the means to use the types of transport that work best for them?

The evidence shows that older people face numerous barriers to using transport<sup>8</sup>. Some barriers are practical, such as lack of affordable transport, limited community transport, inadequate access to information, limited bus routes, lack of seating at bus stops, gaps in driver awareness, lack of public benches and toilets. Other barriers are psychological e.g. lack of confidence or motivation to travel, fear of travelling due to concerns over safety or being made to feel they are an inconvenience. Some older people also face barriers as a result of their health (e.g. reduced mobility, poor health, frailty) or situation (e.g. caring responsibilities).

Whilst some of the practical and systemic barriers can partly be addressed through influencing and campaigning for improved provision of, and access to, transport for older people, progress towards addressing the psychological barriers can be made through: provision of 1:1 support to build confidence and address concerns about transport use; supporting groups to connect and travel together on shared journeys, facilitating social interaction; use of befriending / buddying schemes.

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<sup>5</sup> Williams, J. et al (2022). [Ageing Better: Inclusive transport approaches and active travel research](#). Ecorys for National Lottery Community Fund

<sup>6</sup> Williams et al (2021), [Final report on loneliness and transport systematic review, University of St Andrews \(for Sustrans and Transport Scotland\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> J. Thompson Coon et al (2011) Does Participating in Physical Activity in Outdoor Natural Environments Have a Greater Effect on Physical and Mental Well-being than Physical Activity Indoors? A Systematic Review. *Environmental Science & Technology*.

<sup>8</sup> [Findings of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Loneliness inquiry, A connected recovery, which explores transport barriers and the government's second annual loneliness report.](#)

**Four recommendations** for improving transport provision to address loneliness were identified in the review for Sustrans:

1. Interventions are needed to support people in phases of life when driving is not an option, such as older age and single parents. Even when transport options are available, these groups may need support accessing them such as bus passes, low-level buses or easy to read timetables.
2. Public and community transport and active travel routes need to support people reaching friends and family, not just places of work or retail.
3. Some people value opportunities to connect while travelling, while others appreciate the time to disconnect. Modes of travel and transport policy should therefore consider both of these desires.
4. Transport policy and interventions should consider all road users, not just drivers, with the assessment of loneliness or social connections providing valuable insights into the effects of these interventions.”

(p27, Williams et al, 2021).

**The review concludes:**

“Transport schemes need to take better account of the impact on loneliness and isolation.

With consideration of these factors and needs, we can deliver transport in ways that can really improve social connectedness.”





## 2.2 Leeds Older People's Forum

LOPF is a registered charity which exists to promote the wellbeing of older people. LOPF has a network of 90+ Third Sector organisations working to ensure older people have the opportunities, freedom and support to live the life they want. Their key focus is to tackle issues including health, loneliness, social care, housing, transport, diversity, social isolation and leisure. Thanks to their connections to the wider health and social care network in Leeds, LOPF are in a position to promote the wellbeing of older people in a way that's shaped directly by their voices. Transport is one of LOPF's main workstreams, with loneliness, housing and social care.

More broadly in Leeds, Sustainable Infrastructure, Age-Friendly Leeds and Health & Wellbeing are among the eight priorities in the [Best Council Plan 2020-2025](#). Transport is one of the themes in the State of Ageing in Leeds report and one of the eight domains of [Age Friendly Cities](#).

## 2.3 The local context (Leeds)

[The State of Ageing in Leeds](#) report states that one in three people in Leeds are aged 50 and over with the number of residents aged 80 and over set to increase by around 50% in the next 20 years.

Older people live largely in the outer suburbs of Leeds, particularly the south-east, the north-east and the north-west of the city. However, around 20% of those aged 50+ live in neighbourhoods classed as among the top 10% most deprived in the country. People living in these areas tend to experience significantly higher health needs, including levels of frailty and long-term conditions, which present barriers in terms of transport use.

Leeds has excellent transport infrastructure in many respects (frequent buses into the city, cycle paths, taxi companies, community minibuses) and yet older people still cite transport as a significant barrier to participation and many face barriers to accessing accessible transport. Partners across the city have tried to understand and address transport issues. Feedback from older people highlights a number of issues and concerns related to transport use e.g. *"some older people may be happy to use the public bus but aren't confident with their mobility and balance."* We also hear that *"Taxis are expensive"* and *"Sheltered Housing [or hospital transport] takes a long time, it is very time consuming."* This TC programme served to add to knowledge and insight about barriers and enablers to transport use by older people.

Neighbourhood Network Schemes (NNS) in Leeds are a unique network of voluntary organisations working at a local level. This comprises 37 voluntary organisations working in every postcode area in Leeds. Each area works with members and volunteers to deliver a range of activities to improve and promote health and wellbeing and reduce loneliness in older people, including advice and information, help around the home, healthy living activities, leisure and recreation, transport and general support.



## 2.4 About the Travel Connections Programme

The principal aim of the TC programme was to test 11 different approaches under five themes namely;

1. **Active travel**<sup>9</sup>
2. **Community transport**<sup>10</sup>
3. **Buses**
4. **Taxis**
5. **Travel conversations**

The first four themes explored how the network of existing transport resources in Leeds could be better used to reduce loneliness. The fifth theme focused on creating conversations between older people and decision-makers enabling older people's voices to be heard at a more strategic level to raise awareness of challenges and influence provision.

On the next page is the Logic Model developed by LOPF at the start of the programme which details its intentions for the TC programme.



<sup>9</sup> Active travel refers to modes of travel that involve a level of activity such as walking and cycling. Active travel can also include trips made by wheelchair, mobility scooters, adapted cycles, e-cycles, scooters, and cycle sharing schemes.

<sup>10</sup> Community transport is about providing flexible and accessible community-led solutions in response to unmet local transport needs and often represents the only means of transport for many vulnerable and isolated people, often older people or people with disabilities.



Table 1

LOPF Travel Connections Logic Model

Leeds Older People's Forum – Travel Connections Logic Model			
Inputs/Activities	Outputs	Outcomes - short to medium term	Impact
<p>12 projects delivered across the city working across 5 themes highlight connections between loneliness and transport. Creates focused conversations at strategic and operational levels.</p> <p>Understanding transport needs of 50+ and ways existing transport infrastructure can be developed to improve quality of life through reducing loneliness.</p> <p><i>Staff/Volunteers</i></p> <p>Delivery partners trial new/innovative ways to tackle links between loneliness and transport.</p> <p><i>Older people</i></p> <p>Work proactively with 50+ to understand what is important to them leading to collaborative and co-produced solutions.</p> <p><i>Learning</i></p> <p>Share learning on an ongoing basis; peer to peer, partners events, reports, social media to influence transport decisions.</p> <p>Catalyst for partnership work.</p>	<p>600 50+ benefit directly.</p> <p>100 take part in group outings</p> <p>36 engage with Friendly buses</p> <p>20 trial accessible taxi services to increase daytime/eve/weekend social outings.</p> <p>24 trial tailored learning in use of taxi apps</p> <p>3 city wide Taxi firms sign up to become age and dementia friendly and link with Memory Cafes</p> <p>120 participate in local walks</p> <p>40 engage in cycle proficiency sessions</p> <p>70 70+ access local daytime car provision</p> <p>70 Carers enjoy outings/social connections.</p> <p>40 men participate in transport related social activities.</p> <p>25 50+ and 5 Neighbourhood Networks converse with stakeholders to review and shape transport.</p> <p>Networks converse with stakeholders to review and shape transport.</p>	<p>Connecting older people to increased social activities using transport.</p> <p>Increase in digital skills and confidence.</p> <p>Increased confidence in physical abilities after lockdown deconditioning and reduced anxieties connected to getting out of the house</p> <p>Increase in social confidence and development of friendships.</p> <p>Access to local transport improves physical mobility, fitness, and confidence.</p> <p>Extend geographical coverage for work for 50-70's via cycling and other options.</p> <p>Increased availability of age and dementia friendly taxis.</p> <p>Legacy of ongoing learning between older people and decision makers.</p> <p>Increased partnership working with older people, Third Sector, public and private sector stakeholders.</p> <p>Increase in community orgs membership</p>	<p>Safe new ways developed to access existing transport options increase numbers using local transport and active transport options.</p> <p>Co-produced local transport options improve the ability for more 50+ to remain physically and socially active contributing to a reduction in loneliness.</p> <p>Age and Dementia Friendly (AF/DF) activity provides greater access to bus and taxi services for 50+, those living with dementia, physical and mental impairment.</p> <p>Improved opportunities for social engagement / community activities provides increased opportunities contributing to reduction in loneliness.</p> <p>Development of green active travel options provides opportunities for outdoor activity whilst contributing to reducing carbon footprint.</p> <p>Older people's voices heard at strategic city levels shaping and influencing transport plans and strategic priorities for the city.</p>



## 2.5 Leeds Travel Connections programme and the funded projects

The table below gives a brief overview of the 11 projects funded by the TC programme (they intended funding 12 projects originally but two projects merged), providing a short description of the projects, the project lead organisations and key delivery partners, amounts funded and the theme which they relate to.

N.B. For the purpose of this report, we have categorised the projects under their original intended theme, however, it is important to note that during the course of delivery it became evident that some projects, or elements within them, fit under more than one theme (these are shown with \* and code).

**Table 2 The Travel Connections Projects – overview**

Project Name	Lead organisation	Brief project description	Theme	Amount funded *
<b>Shared Outings</b>	Cross Gates and District Good Neighbours' Scheme	Shared Outings is Cross Gates' programme of regular supported minibus trips to places of interest. Specific support is provided for older members who are most at risk of isolation, including men, carers, people who are bereaved and people living with dementia. Staff and volunteers support the social value of the trips by encouraging conversations and social interactions. Every three months a new programme of outings is promoted, all of which have been risk-assessed by staff. A steering group reflects on past outings, suggests new places to visit and considers possible improvements.	Community transport (*AT)	£30,000
<b>Happy Cab</b>	Bramley Elderly Action (BEA)	BEA purchased an accessible, hybrid electric Hackney Cab for use as a daytime car to transport older members in Bramley and Headingley. People share Happy Cab journeys, socialising en-route. Drivers are friendly and supportive and BEA staff administer member bookings. Fares generate income.	Community transport	£15,000
<b>Grand Days Out</b>	Shine Magazine (Leeds)	Group outings on public transport, led by Shine magazine volunteers, focusing on the social aspect and inviting group members to check whether the journey and venue are accessible and age-friendly. This information forms the basis of articles in Shine magazines. The aim is to inspire older readers to visit these places themselves by sharing information on accessibility, bus routes and facilities.	Bus	£22,000
<b>Carers Connecting</b>	Carers Leeds	Supported group outings involving unpaid carers facing the most barriers to making new social connections - or maintaining existing connections - especially those living in poverty and those who don't currently take part in Carers Leeds activities. Carers were invited to bring the person they care for on outings, particularly if this would enable them to attend, or invite a friend they wanted to reconnect with.	Community transport	£30,000

<b>The Great Outdoors</b>	The Conservation Volunteers	The Great Outdoors is a programme of supported social walks based on local bus routes. Support was offered to fledgling walking groups and there was a focus on helping groups to become self-sustaining and lead their own walks within a 10-week period. Walks had varying degrees of difficulty to allow for all abilities. Each started and ended near bus stops to encourage public transport use, while the social element to the walks helped people to reconnect with nature, and each other.	Active travel (*B)	£40,000
<b>SJK Partnership (SJK)</b>	AVSED	The project was initially set up to help older people who have mobility issues to try out the accessible taxi service provided by a large, well-known private hire provider. It became clear early on that their accessible taxi service wasn't sufficiently well-established in Leeds. AVSED quickly switched providers and focused on strengthening pre-existing relationships with their local provider, SJK Private Hire (SJK), and subsidising taxi journeys to encourage some of their older members to start to use this form of transport.	Taxi	£10,000
<b>Men's Matters</b>	AVSED	Men-only minibus trips bring isolated older men together to enjoy banter and regular socials in the company of friendly peers and supportive staff. Men's Matters builds on a similar approach AVSED tested with a few isolated male members during the Covid-19 pandemic. On the trips men are able to chat and help others rather than feeling that they are just receiving help. AVSED used previous learning to strengthen the Men's Matters offer through increased capacity and staffing, more choice, wider engagement, logistics and testing methods of transition from supported male-only trips out into regular AVSED social activities.	Community transport	£20,000
<b>Let's Talk Transport</b>	LOPF	Let's Talk Transport brought together older people to talk about transport issues and review existing provisions in order to share information with transport providers. The following delivery partners were involved: Feel Good Factor, Belle Isle Senior Action, Caring Together in Woodhouse and Little London, Cross Gates & District Good Neighbours' Scheme, MHA South Leeds and Burmantofts Senior Action. Partners recruited older people at risk of loneliness who were living in deprived areas and offered one-to-one and group support to talk about transport, develop social confidence, share their experiences and engage in wider social activities on offer.	Travel	£9,000



<b>Cycle with Confidence</b>	LOPF	This project tried a variety of approaches to encourage older people to cycle more. This included a bike maintenance class, delivered in partnership with Wheels 4 Fun. Guided cycle rides, signposting to existing cycling training in Leeds and providing a taster session using adapted cycles. The most successful element was Senior Spin: a series of daytime spin classes in a local sports centre specifically designed for, and promoted to, older people. Spin classes were mixed ability and incorporated social time.	Active travel	£26,000
<b>Travel Apps/ Bus Passes</b>	LOPF	This project helped to identify and assess the needs of older people relating to the variety of travel apps available. The aim was to support older people to use relevant apps to help them travel independently and confidently. It focused on a variety of transport methods including buses, taxis and trains. The following delivery partners were involved: Leeds Irish Health & Homes, Morley Digital, Cross Gates & District Good Neighbours' Scheme, Holbeck Together, Age UK Leeds and Your Backyard CIC, along with support from 100% Digital Leeds.	Taxi (*B)	£30,000
<b>Age &amp; Dementia Friendly Taxis (AF/DF Taxis)</b>	LOPF	The focus of this project was making links with Leeds taxi firms and Leeds City Council taxi licensing to encourage more taxi businesses to sign up to provide more Age and Dementia Friendly services. Memory cafes consulted on the needs of passengers and the effectiveness of current services. Taxi 'mystery shopping' gathered information about the experience of older passengers in Leeds.	Taxi	£20,000

\* Codes (CT – Community Transport, B = Bus, T = Taxi, AT = Active Travel, TC= Travel conversations)

\*\*N.B. A car was purchased for £57,500 for use by Happy Cab and this will be gifted after the programme has finished and the rest of the funding award was used towards staffing costs, management, overheads, evaluation, hosting events, travel etc...



### 3. Evaluation Approach

This section details the approach used to evaluate the TC programme in Leeds. In summary, the evaluation consisted of the following approaches:

#### 1. Desk research, consisting of;

- a. A review of existing data collected by the programme (monitoring returns, management meeting notes and case studies produced by the projects).
- b. A rapid review of key existing evidence on the topic.

#### 2. Fieldwork involving:

- a. **Insight conversations** with the programme lead and two key project leads at LOPF
- b. **In-depth interviews with all project leads** conducted either face to face or via Zoom
- c. **Face to face visits to 6 projects** - involving observation of project activities (where possible) and conducting interviews or focus groups with project leads, staff, volunteers and project participants.
- d. **Telephone and Zoom interviews** - with participants, staff and volunteers across the other projects not visited

#### 3. Data analysis and reporting

- a. Analysis of the primary and secondary data using an analysis framework enabling the commonalities and differences to be highlighted. Following which this report was produced.

Scripts for the fieldwork elements were designed by the evaluation team and signed off by the TC programme lead at LOPF. All interviewees were provided with a Participant Information Sheet prior to engagement in the evaluation. These explained what their involvement would entail and how their information would be used. Verbal consent to participate was also obtained at the start of each interview / discussion. Interviews and groups were recorded with permission sought to enable accurate notes and quotes to be obtained for analysis and reporting purposes.





## 3.1 Total number of people consulted

The table below shows the total number of people consulted as part of the evaluation.

**Table 3** Total number of people consulted

Project name	Method(s) adopted	Number		
		Project lead(s)	Staff / volunteers	Project participants
SJK	Face to face (F2F) interviews	1	1	1
Shared Outings	F2F visit - interviews & group discussions	1	4	5
Happy Cab	F2F visit - interviews & group discussions	1	1	8
Grand Days Out	Zoom interview	1	0	0
Carers Connecting	Zoom and phone interviews	1	0	2
The Great Outdoors	F2F visit - interviews & group discussions	1	3	8
Men's Matters	F2F visit - interviews & group discussions	1	4	5
Let's Talk Transport	Zoom interview	1	4	0
Cycle with Confidence	F2F visit, interviews & group discussions	1	1	22
Travel Apps/ Bus Passes	Zoom interviews	1	1	1
Age / dementia friendly taxis	Zoom interviews	1	0	0
Total		11	19	52





## 3.2 Limitations

### 3.2.1 Measuring loneliness

A key intended area of impact for the programme was the reduction of loneliness and social isolation. However, loneliness was not measured in any systematic way at funder programme or project level using any of the available validated tools (e.g. UCLA, Campaign To End Loneliness<sup>11</sup>). Reported impact on loneliness and social isolation is therefore, limited to qualitative data collected via interviews and case stories, which is self-reported.

To counter this limitation, the evaluation captured the impact on some of the factors which can contribute to feelings of loneliness such as; limited social connections, feeling or being isolated, inability to access social activities, lacking a sense of purpose /reason to get out, lack of confidence and poor mental well-being.

### 3.2.2 Other limitations

There were several other limitations to the study including:

- **No standardised pre and post measures** of loneliness or social connection
- **Limited conversations with wider stakeholders** on the impact of the programme e.g. re: influencing
- **Relatively low numbers of participants were interviewed** across the 11 projects - 6% in total



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11 <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Loneliness-Measurement-Guidance1.pdf>



## 4. Key Findings – TC projects overall

This section summarises the evaluation findings overall focussing on the following:

- **Project delivery** – achievements, what's helped and challenges faced
- **Impact and outcomes** for project participants, delivery partners and wider system
- **The future** – sustainability and replicability.

N.B. Project specific detail is covered in **Section 5**.

### 4.1 Project delivery

#### 4.1.1 Key achievements

In total, **909 older people** participated in activities delivered across the 11 projects. The projects used different approaches to working with older people, in varying degrees of intensity. Approaches used included the following (some projects did a mixture of these):

- Engaging older people in regular outings and activities (e.g. Shared Outings).
- Delivering training to older people and volunteers (e.g. Great Outdoors).
- Gaining the views and experiences of older people with a view to influencing transport provision (e.g. AF/DF taxis).
- Encouraging and promoting the use of transport (e.g. Grand Days Out).

The average age of participants was 74 years with the oldest being 99 years old. Just over half had either a physical or mental disability and these ranged in type, but included mobility issues, visual and auditory impairment, learning difficulties and Dementia. Two thirds of project participants were female and just over one in ten were from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.

**Table 4**                      **Number / percentage of participants by key demographic data**

	Number	%
Number of participants	909	
Attendances at activities	4000+	
Average age	74 (years)*	
With a disability / physical or mental health issue	500	55%
Male	309	34%
Female	600	66%
White British / Irish / Other	809	89%
BAME	100	11%

*\*Average of those in the target age group of 50+, a small number were younger*

It is also important to acknowledge that the projects had a range of beneficiaries, not just older people. These included; volunteers, delivery partners, businesses, e.g. taxi and bus firms and the wider community.

#### 4.1.2 What worked well

**All 11 projects were different** and so the experiences of project start up and delivery varied. **Several projects were delivered by established groups** / organisations with regular members and who were already running similar activities which made project start up and delivery easier.

*“This project started during covid... having a project and staff ready to go at the start of funding enabled this project to start immediately”.*

For others, **key to their success** was the **ability to make connections with local community groups** and Neighbourhood Networks to be able to access older people to engage in projects, however, this was easier for some projects than others.

*“Often there’s like a neighbourhood network or an organisation that is based within that area and if there is and if they’re interested, we get them involved”.*

**Creating trusted relationships** with delivery partners who had the right skills and were able to dedicate the time was also essential for the smooth running of the projects.

*“[Name partner] have trained staff that understand our clients’ needs”.*

Similarly, having suitably skilled, flexible, qualified and **trained staff, adopting the right approach** to engage with older people, and lead and deliver the projects was really important, in order to support older people’s practical, emotional and physical needs.

*“Because I’ve got quite a lot of experience of working with people with long term health conditions, I’ve been able to really support them”.*

Many projects **relied heavily on volunteers and they highly valued them**, not only in terms of the additional resource they were able to offer but also in terms of the relationships they built with project participants. Many of the volunteers were older people themselves and therefore, often able to engage more effectively providing peer support.

*“The volunteers have been crucial to the smooth running of the trips. They are the drivers and support system for a lot of the people on the trips... Without volunteer drivers we would struggle to run the trips”.*

**All projects worked in a person-centred, welcoming and inclusive way.** They took time to get to know the individuals and understand their needs. Some projects were working with specific communities of interest - for example, those with poor mental health, poor mobility, recently bereaved etc... The project leads and volunteers expressed how important it had been to take time to understand any barriers and enablers to participation, and to work in an inclusive, compassionate way.

*“It’s important to know the community you are working with and what their needs are so you can be prepared and also better meet their needs”.*





### 4.1.3 Use of co-production

The Logic Model stated an intended impact as being ‘Co-produced local transport options improve the ability for more 50+ to remain physically and socially active contributing to a reduction in loneliness’.

The **short time scales** for the set up and delivery of the projects **presented a barrier to the use of effective and meaningful co-production approaches** being adopted from the outset. In one project, older adults have helped grade the difficulties of walks for participants as well as being trained up to become walk leaders. In a few instances research and consultation, via focus groups with local communities, was undertaken by project leads to better understand the needs and preferences of particular groups. In some cases this was done prior to running activities to establish interest and demand and encourage older people and volunteers to input into project activities, shaping how they were delivered and helping choose venues to visit, for example.

*“We discussed with people where they want to go and what sort of things they enjoyed, we also took on board the volunteers’ views”.*

In other projects, the views and experiences of older people were used to inform influencing work with transport providers, for example, Let’s Talk Transport and SJK and AF/DF taxis.



#### 4.1.4 Test and learn

**‘Test and Learn’ approaches were used to differing degrees by the projects** – some project leads who designed and developed projects from scratch (e.g. Cycling with Confidence) were able to try new, innovative approaches and learn and adapt as the projects developed. A couple mentioned that they valued the flexibility and freedom the funding gave.

*“It wasn’t too prescriptive on what needed to be achieved and it gives you that creativity”.*

However, **pre-established projects felt there was less opportunity to ‘test and learn’** as they were often building on activities, processes, systems and relationships that they knew worked already.

Nonetheless, the **majority of projects sought feedback on their projects / activities from older people**, volunteers and delivery partners. Some did this informally through conversations, whilst others did this in a more structured and consistent way, through feedback forms or similar, which helped enhance their projects over the course of the year.

*“She took that information and actually used it in the session...So if somebody said that they found something a bit tricky or something she actually revisited some of that feedback in her sessions... we’re definitely listening to the feedback”.*

#### 4.1.5 Key challenges – what has been hard

There were a range of challenges faced at both programme (LOPF) level and individual project level. The most significant **challenge noted across the board was ‘time’** mainly due to TC being a 1-year funded programme, which had various implications.

##### **Programme level:**

LOPF would have benefited from more lead-in time at the beginning - from hearing that funding was awarded and starting the delivery. This would have **allowed more time to better plan, recruit staff, commission providers, create M&E processes** etc... rather than these being done at pace.

LOPF commissioned **11 separate projects** and in hindsight it was felt **this was too many and too ambitious** for a 1-year programme. This was further complicated by LOPF’s Let’s Talk Transport development and the Taxi App project not having direct contact with older people initially and therefore needing to identify additional delivery partners (11 delivery partners across the two projects).

**DfT M&E deadlines** were tight which put pressure on LOPF due to them working with so many projects and delivery partners. It was challenging to get end of quarter data back, processed and submitted within the stipulated 14 days.

Due to the short timescales, LOPF had to focus on projects that could get up and running quickly. Several projects were delivered by **organisations that already provided similar services and / or activities for older people**, but who were looking for funding to expand or change focus slightly. However, this had a **potential impact on reach**, meaning that they were often involving older people already known to them and engaged and not necessarily reaching older people who were at most risk of loneliness.



### Common project level challenges:

Projects led by LOPF experienced **delays at the start, because staff were not in post** to manage the projects. Some other projects also stated challenges relating to recruitment of staff for project delivery – again as a result of the short funding period.

*“Recruiting somebody for such a short project was really tricky... recruiting somebody on quite a low salary for two days a week for a really short project [was a challenge]”.*

Additional time challenges were also faced by LOPF led projects, in terms of **sourcing partners and getting them on board, because they had no direct access to older people** so they had to build on existing relationships with organisations working with their target audience. Even those projects delivered by organisations with existing strong membership found the timescales tight, especially when they were designing a new project.

*“it’s not a quick project to do...it’s got to build as a slow build”.*

The sourcing of delivery partners took time for some LOPF led projects. Also **finding partners with the required skills** and experience wasn’t easy for some others. One project had to terminate a partnership and form another due to their inability to provide the level of service required. Projects with several delivery partners also mentioned difficulties in bringing them together for meetings and to collaborate again due to time pressures.

*“Lots of problems with setting this up.... trying to get the partners on board and deciding on what the project was aiming to achieve...”*“There’s so much pressure on the partners to deliver in such a short timeframe”.





### Other challenges cited by some projects included:

**Gaining older people's trust and engagement** was a challenge for some, in order to get them on board with their project - whether that was in relation to encouraging them to take part in an activity, outing / journey, or to use IT. They had to work hard to build trusting relationships.

*"It's just that little bit of confidence that they needed".*

**Retention of volunteers**, many projects relied heavily on volunteers but in some instances being able to retain volunteers was problematic – one project stated this was

*"due to the cost of living crisis some are having to seek employment instead"*

**Bad weather** (due to most projects going live at the end of summer) hindered some delivery especially for active travel projects and those activities run outside. Some older people were reluctant to venture outside or travel in poor weather conditions, even to projects delivered inside, and this sometimes affected attendance numbers.

*"We have had a lot less attendances in the Oct - Dec quarter, which is mainly due to the two large seaside trips in the summer time boosting the previous quarters numbers, and two trip cancellations in December due to poor weather".*

**An unclear brief** - despite certain projects enjoying the flexibility the funding offered for project delivery, others felt this was too open and would have preferred more direction and the brief to have been more prescriptive - again due to short timescales, they felt there was insufficient time to think creatively.

*"don't give people too much autonomy ...I think they need more guidance".*

**Lack of suitable facilities**, because certain projects were reliant upon specific equipment or venues, these were not always readily available and /or suitable for use for older people.

*"I had no people, no bikes, no facilities, nothing... although there is a big push on active travel with zero emissions people tend not to know how to approach this with older adults".*



**Monitoring returns and measuring impact** – most project leads found the quarterly monitoring returns easy to complete, but a couple felt they were too onerous and time consuming especially in relation to the small amount of funding received. In addition, little guidance was provided in terms of measuring impact which several said was quite challenging, especially in relation to how the transport element of their project helped reduce loneliness. However, this was overcome to an extent by asking delivery partners to provide case studies and stories with their monitoring returns

*“[current monitoring] it’s not going to prove anything or show anything... it’s just going to show that x number of people took part in the travel connections programme... So, I guess the issue is how do you measure the impact of that?”*

**Funding amount received** – a couple of projects felt the funding they’d been allocated was not commensurate with what they were expected to deliver. For example, one project felt they were not given enough to be able to deliver the project effectively,

*“you’ve got to incorporate it into what you’re doing already, because it’s not enough money for the staff. And it’s been quite a lot of work for not a lot of money.”*

Another said they had been given too much to spend in a short time frame and therefore, spent it on more high value trips and provided more taxis than intended.

*“If it were to continue, we would allow a longer time frame and do more lower value trips – the time frame and amount of funding meant we did more high value trips than planned.”*

**Language barriers** – one project highlighted how most transport Apps were in English only and therefore could exclude certain communities from accessing them, they also felt taxi firms needed to ensure they had staff who could speak the languages of the communities they serve.

*“All [Apps] pretty much English only and there isn’t the option to change the language... then it’s also about forging links with taxi firms as well, so they have people who can answer the phone and speak different languages... it’s important that they work with their local communities”.*





## 4.2 Impact and outcomes

### 4.2.1 Impact overall

The Logic Model for the Travel Connections programme (see table 1 above) identifies the intended impact of the programme and some specific outcomes it was hoped would be achieved. Using the Logic Model to frame our analysis, we have identified outcomes related to the following three key categories:

1. Outcomes for older people as participants
2. Outcomes for organisations
3. Outcomes and impact for the wider system

### 4.2.2 Outcomes for older people as participants

#### a) Improved social connections and reduced loneliness

A key intended area of impact for the programme was increasing older people's social confidence and ability to make social connections to contribute to the reduction of loneliness, through providing opportunities for older people to engage in project activities, connecting them to others and to social activities using transport.

A key challenge for the analysis of impact is that no standard measures of loneliness were used across the programme and so the evidence around the impact on loneliness and social isolation is therefore only to be drawn from case stories and qualitative data collected. Nevertheless, views of those involved at a programme level included;

*"We don't know whether they are lonely or not... but what we do know is they know a lot more people than they did six weeks ago and they are having a great time"*

*"On an individual [project] basis it may not look like it is reducing loneliness, but these projects are giving people a forum to help reduce their loneliness if they so choose".*





To counter this challenge, the evaluation also explored the impact on some of the factors which can contribute to feelings of loneliness such as; limited social connections, feeling or being isolated, inability to access social activities, lacking a sense of purpose /reason to get out, lack of confidence and poor mental well-being.

A number of participants stated they had felt lonely before their engagement in the projects, and many indicated that part of their motivation for getting involved with the project was to meet new people. Others may also have been lonely, but not actually realised it.

The majority of participants valued the opportunities to socialise with others whether through shared activities or on journeys to and from locations.

*“There’s always some social element....it’s been good just having that time to sit and chat...it’s part of the support element.”*

Volunteers and staff members also highlighted the impact of reduced loneliness, especially for those who were most isolated;

*“Men’s Matters is brilliant; it helps alleviate loneliness amongst some of the most isolated in our community.”*

The project activities provided older people with **opportunities to socialise more and develop social connections**. In some groups these social connections were very strong (*“We are like a mini-family, it really helps to fight loneliness”*) and several people referred to the development of genuine friendships, *“we didn’t know people before we came but now have new friends.”* Some explicitly stated that taking part in the activities had helped to **reduce feelings of loneliness**.

*“I wanted to be with a group of people to make friends and not to be as lonely.”*

For some participants, who may be at increased risk of loneliness (e.g. unpaid carers or being bereaved), being with others who had similar life experiences had additional benefits from the connections made such as, peer support and sharing of experiences and information;

*“I’ve seen proper friendships blossom... often between women who have lost husbands, they’ve got something to connect over and talk about.”*

The opportunity to connect and share with others had helped some (especially carers) feel less lonely,

*“we were still chatting on the bus...it were lovely... I think talking helps a lot with getting out of loneliness....going out with other people has been a lifeline for me. We don’t really socialise now because of what’s happened.”*



## Transport element:

The **mechanisms used by projects to enable social connections** varied. For **active travel projects**, walking was seen as a relaxed way to meet new people and chat on the way. In others it was the **shared journey** by bus or taxi and / or the time spent together at destinations or activities.

*“Just sitting on a bus next to somebody promotes conversation... just sitting there - you’re all going to the same place...in the same direction. And so actually, the travel is as much a part of the social side of it as the actual event...”*

Projects sought to **overcome barriers to both use of transport and engagement in social activities** using a range of mechanisms including: increasing skills (e.g. digital skills), improving knowledge (e.g. of bus route and transport options), providing opportunities to use transport with others. As a result, many participants reported feeling more confident to make use of transport and were less worried or concerned about doing this alone.

*“Not everyone lives next door to relatives and friends so by increasing peoples’ confidence in using taxis and buses we are helping them to increase their social opportunities”*

Other projects offered **door to door community transport** enabling older people to participate in activities or visit locations of their choosing. This helped to address barriers such as a lack of local public transport, accessibility issues, uncertainty of bus routes, inability to walk to bus stops.

*“People are lonely and to be in an accessible form of transport is really essential to a lot of people...let’s face it, when you’re getting older sometimes you’re a bit scared of going out – especially if you think I’ve got to be dropped at the bus stop and walk ...with the happy cab it takes us, brings us back...what’s not to like? For loneliness...it cures it!”*

## b) Improved mental health and well-being

In addition to providing opportunities to connect with others, participants talked about how projects had helped **improve their mental well-being** through providing a reason to get out and about and engage in enjoyable activities and trips, increasing their confidence and reducing anxiety linked to getting out and about and engaged in community activity;

*“If I didn’t have this...I will have gone all day, without saying a word to anyone....it’s really upsetting and can be depressing”*

Participants also developed **new knowledge** (e.g. of local transport and destinations) **and skills** (e.g. use of bus /taxi apps) which contributed to increased confidence and well-being.

*“It has completely turned my life around...I’m gaining more confidence... my mental health is definitely improving”.*





### c) Physical health and mobility

Mental well-being and physical health are connected in that physical activity is good for our mental health and wellbeing<sup>12</sup>. One of the outcomes in the TC logic model related to use of local transport improving physical mobility, fitness, and confidence. The active travel element (i.e. walking and cycling) of the programme was a key contributor to this outcome, providing opportunities to take part in walking groups or to develop their confidence in cycling. In addition, some of the projects which were using community transport for outings for older people reported the benefits from both a physical and mental well-being perspective, as the trips often involved being outdoors and / or walking which was encouraged even for those with mobility issues.

*“So it’s getting them out and walking about ...there might be some who are in a wheelchair, but we always encourage a little bit [of walking] if they can... And I think being out and about improves your mental well-being”.*

A further outcome in the Logic Model was to ‘**extend geographical coverage for work for 50-70’s via cycling and other options**’ however, no progress was made towards this due to lack of resources across the city.

### 4.2.3 Outcomes for organisations

Projects were delivered by and with a range of Third Sector organisations across Leeds. Outcomes for delivery organisations were:

- a) **Increased partnership working** with older people, other Third Sector organisations, public and private sector. Examples of partnership include: TCV walking groups linking with other Third Sector organisations through the hub model. Work with the private sector around taxi provision and influencing (see below). Work with White Rose shopping centre and First Bus. Opportunities for older people to inform and lead activities e.g. Feel Good Factor’s self-organised transport group and TCV walk leaders.
- b) **Increase in membership for community organisations.** Projects reported older people accessing other community activities provided by delivery organisations (e.g. lunch clubs) which could help to further reduce feelings of isolation and lead to potential increase in membership.

*“The project has had a positive impact on Cross Gates Good Neighbours, it’s increasing people’s awareness of us and attendance [at other activities]”*

- c) **Increased understanding and awareness of the barriers and enablers to transport use** for older people - through test and learn, Let’s Talk Transport conversations and activities, consultation exercises.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/physical-activity-and-mental-health>

## 4.2.4 Wider benefits for the system

Some of the benefits and value to the wider system from the programme included:

- a) **Increase in use of public transport** – by providing safe new ways to access existing transport options and giving people the knowledge and confidence to do so. Participants reported using buses more for other purposes outside of the project e.g. shopping, visiting people.
- b) **Increased use of active 'green' travel options** (i.e. walking and cycling) through walking groups - providing opportunities for outdoor social and physical activity whilst contributing to reducing carbon footprint.
- c) **Improvements to transport systems:** the programme has made progress in influencing the availability of age and dementia friendly taxis through awareness raising, delivery of training and new partnerships formed. Projects have gained the views of older people on issues and challenges around transport use which has the potential to be used as additional evidence to shape and influence transport plans and strategic priorities for the city, contributing to a *legacy of ongoing learning between older people and decision makers*.
- d) **Increased use of local businesses / community assets** leading to potential for economic and commercial benefits as older people connect more with the community, local businesses and leisure activities e.g. projects visiting restaurants, cafes and shops as a destination for a trip.





## 4.3 The future

### 4.3.1 Sustainability

**All 11 project leads said they would like to see their projects continue in the future**, due to the successes, achievements and a positive impact their work and activities had had. Many also highlighted continued demand from the older people accessing the projects.

The **availability of future funding was the main barrier** to sustainability cited by the majority of project leads. However, several said they had already applied for other funding including grants from Motability and the Road Safety Trust.

*“[The] project depends on getting money, so you know we put in a funding bid last year and we didn’t get it, we got knocked back... We’re doing another two quite big funding bids, now, if they don’t come to pass, we might really struggle actually”*

**Without more funding** some projects would have to be **scaled back / reduced or potentially charged for**. For example, one project said they would only be able to offer trips once a month rather than once a week, whilst a couple said they would continue regular sessions but they would have to be paid for by the older people. One project said they could not continue without new funding.

*“Sadly, although the project has recently seen a rise in numbers and positive feedback, it is not possible to continue to fund this internally”.*

### 4.3.2 Opportunities

Within the programme as a whole, and across the projects, **key learning and potential opportunities have been identified** that could be helpful for future planning and development. Many of these have been highlighted in the previous sections and are reflected in the recommendations section at the end of this report as considerations for the future.



## 5. Key findings – by the 5 TC themes

This next chapter focuses more closely on the individual projects by TC theme. Sections 5.1-5.5 provide case studies for each project by TC theme, these focus on their achievements, what's helped, what's been hard, the impact they've had and what the future holds.

**Table 5. TC themes and projects that relate to each theme** (N.B. caveat described in Section 2.5).

Theme	Projects
Active travel	The Great Outdoors & Cycle with Confidence
Community Transport	Shared Outings, Happy Cab, Carers Connecting, Men's Matters
Buses	Grand Days Out ( <i>also Travel Apps / Bus passes, Let's Talk Transport, The Great Outdoors</i> )
Taxis	Travel Apps / Bus passes, SJK Private Hire and AF / DF Taxis
Travel Conversations	Let's Talk Transport ( <i>also AF / DF Taxis</i> )

Table 6 presents the key barriers to transport use (as identified in the literature) and the mechanism and approaches used by projects to address these. It is recognised that some projects addressed multiple barriers, but to varying degrees and in different ways. Many of the identified barriers relate to all areas of transport provision (or themes used by TC).

**Table 6. Overview of approaches used by projects to address barriers to transport use, by TC theme**

BARRIER	EXAMPLE PROJECT FEATURES, APPROACHES & ACTIVITIES	THEMES
Lack of confidence and motivation to use transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offered opportunities to gain confidence in using transport independently</li> <li>Arranged shared journeys – allowing connection with others</li> <li>Provided community transport with convenient timing</li> <li>Gave a choice of destinations and encouraging independence</li> </ul>	ALL
Inadequate access to information and knowledge about transport and routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased knowledge and awareness of transport options</li> <li>Increased digital confidence and skills in using transport Apps</li> <li>Enabled access to free bus travel</li> <li>Increased awareness of new places and community activities</li> <li>Inspiring older people to visit new destinations.</li> </ul>	Taxi Bus Travel Conversations Active travel
Lack of skills to use technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing digital confidence and skills in using transport Apps / applying for bus passes.</li> </ul>	Taxi
Psychological barriers e.g. anxiety, fear, feeling alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided a safe environment, and informal space to connect and relax</li> <li>Offered door to door pick up by friendly supportive drivers</li> <li>Facilitated social connections, helping to reduce loneliness e.g. walking groups as a relaxed way to meet new people and chat</li> <li>Planned shared journeys allowing people to connect and feel safer</li> <li>Set up groups that met regularly - giving a sense of purpose</li> <li>Providing a safe environment, confidence to participate at their own level/pace.</li> <li>Provided informal space to connect and relax.</li> </ul>	ALL



Poor health e.g. reduced mobility, frailty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible vehicles, door to door transport, friendly supportive drivers</li> <li>• Supportive and skilled volunteers and staff</li> <li>• Combined use of public transport with active travel</li> <li>• Increased awareness and confidence to take part in physical activities</li> <li>• Connected people with green spaces and benefits of being in nature</li> <li>• Offered opportunities to try cycling using adapted / static bikes</li> </ul>	ALL
Circumstances (e.g. carers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabled peer support opportunities through shared experiences</li> <li>• Allowed carers to bring the person they cared for on trips</li> </ul>	Community Transport Taxi
Lack of affordable transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funded transport and trips for older people, access to bus passes, subsidised taxi trips</li> </ul>	Community Transport Taxis Bus
Lack of public transport provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided door to door service, accessible vehicles, links with other organisations</li> <li>• Facilitated discussion between older people and transport providers.</li> </ul>	Community Transport Taxi Let's Talk Transport
Gaps in driver awareness, skills and knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used friendly supportive drivers</li> <li>• Captured older people's good and bad experiences of transport e.g. use of taxis</li> </ul>	Community Transport Taxis
<p>Lack of transport provision:</p> <p>Lack of awareness of barriers and enablers.</p> <p>Lack of voice of older people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explored views and experiences to help overcome barriers for older people in using public transport and accessing venues</li> <li>• Consulted with and involved older people as campaigners</li> <li>• Development of older people led transport group (FGF)</li> <li>• Raised awareness with taxi and licensing firms e.g. Training of drivers in being AF/DF friendly</li> <li>• Created materials and campaigning resources</li> <li>• Developed partnerships allowing for influencing opportunities to shape transport use going forward e.g. First Bus, taxi firms / licensing</li> </ul>	ALL

## 5.1 Active travel

### Cycling with confidence:

Bike maintenance class, a taster session on adapted bikes and indoor spin classes

**Delivery partner:** Leeds Older People's Forum (LOPF)

<p><b>Evaluators notes:</b> A visit was made to a session consisting of two Senior Spin classes. Participants got fully involved in sessions which were made fun by the instructor with music chosen by the older people. See <a href="#">Video</a> here. Interviews and focus groups were held with the instructor and older people participating.</p>	
<b>Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds</b>	<b>The difference it makes...</b>
<p>This project had a number of different elements – with the project adapting through the year to accommodate the weather and older peoples' needs (particularly through the winter months).</p> <p><b><u>Achievements:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 46 older people participated in this project.</li> <li>• Promotion of the project activities and spin sessions through networking with local community groups.</li> <li>• A successful cycle maintenance course, adapted bike taster session and a series of Senior Spin classes were all well attended.</li> <li>• Securing a qualified spin class instructor able to meet the needs of the older people.</li> <li>• Use of co-production to help shape the project.</li> <li>• The Senior Spin model is now being trialled by Active Leeds.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>What has helped:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project leads' willingness to consult, learn and adapt as the project as necessary.</li> <li>• Gathering feedback after sessions which was taken on board and used to help inform future sessions. <i>"I get the feedback from them and do a recap at the start of each session from previous sessions... and they help choose music that they like".</i></li> <li>• Developing projects at a local level and understanding the communities needs.</li> <li>• Building in social time, with tea and cakes, as part of Senior Spin.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>What has been hard:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A delay in the project lead being in post.</li> <li>• As a new project, more thinking / development time was needed at the outset to get the project off the ground further impacting delivery time.</li> <li>• Lack of suitable bikes for older people prevented delivery of cycling activities outdoors.</li> <li>• Getting older people to venues with their own bikes, <i>"I'm worried cycling amongst traffic...I haven't got the confidence on the roads."</i></li> <li>• Bad weather prevented more outdoor sessions to be offered. <i>"The participants weren't your everyday cyclist.... Leeds just doesn't have adequate facilities to facilitate older adults particularly those who have experienced loss of mobility".</i></li> </ul>	<p><b><u>To older people:</u></b></p> <p>Participants of the <b>bike maintenance sessions</b> felt the course was well delivered and covered lots of cycle safety elements which was really useful and could help save money in the future as they had developed skills to mend their own bikes.</p> <p>Those that attended the <b>adapted bike, outdoor cycling</b> said the event had challenged them to do something different, feedback showed participants had enjoyed being part of a group and sharing the day together. Two participants rode a bike for the first time and one participant shared his story of how cycling since his stroke has improved his life whilst another had been reconnected with his lifelong love of cycling. A video of the day can be found here: <a href="#">Video</a></p> <p>Participants of the <b>spin classes</b> massively praised the sessions. Some had never been on a bike before or not in recent years. It provided an opportunity to cycle in a safe environment and gain confidence to get on a bike. <i>"It's brought a lot of them together and has increased mobility too. There was a lot who didn't believe they would even be able to sit on a bike nevermind spin for 30 minutes. It's just that little bit of confidence that they needed that can help them move on from a spin bike to their next challenge".</i></p> <p>Some participants mentioned they wouldn't feel comfortable going to a standard spin class because they didn't feel they would be fit enough and also felt intimidated. Being amongst peers was really important. <i>"This is good for this age group and ability... it gives you confidence being in a similar group with similar problems and physical issues"</i></p> <p><i>"I would have been frightened going to a spin class before coming here".</i></p> <p>The sessions have some obvious physical benefits allowing for an alternative type of exercise for older adults which is non weight bearing and self regulating. For some with existing mobility issues or injuries the classes had really helped.</p>



## 5.1 Active travel

### Cycling with confidence (cont.)

Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds	The difference it makes...
<p><b><u>The future:</u></b></p> <p>Senior Spin was a new concept to be delivered in partnership with Active Leeds, and there is a definite appetite for the continuation of the sessions from participants and the instructor alike.</p> <p><i>"I've really enjoyed it [instructor]... and have seen them come out of their shells, it's been amazing... I hope it continues".</i></p> <p>The spin classes have now been taken over on a permanent basis by Active Leeds to be delivered at John Smeaton with a view to expand into Rothwell.</p> <p>It is hoped through increased confidence that some older people will progress onto social cycling outside. <i>"I would love to see it [sessions] moving outside - I think it would have even more benefits".</i></p>	<p><i>"I can't do weight bearing exercises (because of spinal injury) so I've really found this has been beneficial"</i></p> <p>The friendly environment and fun delivery style allows people to meet new people in a venue that allows for a social aspect too enabling people to connect with one another and form new friendships. <i>I've really enjoyed coming to the spin classes, it gets me out of the house and I meet other people".</i></p> <p>Within the group discussion a number of older people said the sessions had helped to reduce feelings of loneliness. <i>I'm quite active at home, I do a lot of walking and gardening, but I wanted to be with a group of people to make friends and not to be as lonely.</i></p> <p>Several also said it had given them the motivation and desire to get back on a proper bike, with one stating her husband had recently purchased a bike too and they were looking forward to getting out on the new cycle tracks of Leeds. <i>"I got my bike out at the weekend for the first time in ages and I managed to ride it!"</i></p> <p><b><u>More widely:</u></b></p> <p>There have been additional positive outcomes in that LOPF has strengthened its relationship with Active Leeds which will hopefully provide beneficial going forward. It's also increased some of the older peoples' interest in using other classes or facilities provided by Active Leeds.</p>

## The Great Outdoors:

A programme of supported social walks, based on local bus routes, using existing walking groups for people to meet, chat and explore Leeds together.

**Delivery partner:** The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)

<b>Evaluators notes:</b> Met up with one of the walking groups for a bus ride and walk to Hollybush. Chatted with group members on the way and interviewed staff and volunteers.	
<b>Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds</b>	<b>The difference it has made...</b>
<p>The model of this project is that TCV supports the walking groups (community groups and volunteers) to become established and so the walk leaders are main beneficiaries and older people as participants are indirect beneficiaries.</p> <p><b><u>Achievements:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 fledgling walking groups were supported to become self-sustaining and lead their own walks within a 10-week period. 7 of the groups now operate independently across the city. The eighth merged with another group.</li> <li>111 people took part in the walking groups.</li> <li>Volunteers took part in walk leader training (delivered in partnership with the Ramblers and Walking for Health - not funded by this project).</li> <li>The social element helped people to connect with nature and each other.</li> <li>Groups encouraged use of public transport and promoted active travel benefiting individuals and the environment.</li> <li>Co production: Older adults have helped grade the difficulties of walks for participants as well as being trained up to become walk leaders.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>What's helped?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeting groups who were already known / connected to TCV – or who previously ran walking groups - in order to re-establish them.</li> <li>Take up of walk leader training.</li> <li>Groups are welcoming and inclusive.</li> <li>Walks offered are suitable for all ability levels.</li> <li>Securing batches of Day Rider bus tickets removing the need to reimburse participants.</li> <li>Ensuring there is time allocated for lunch / hot drink and a chat on each walk to facilitate conversations and connections.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>To older people:</u></b></p> <p>Through the groups, people discovered (or rediscovered) the joy of walking as a source of physical and social activity. Participants saw how the walking groups helped with their physical and mental health.</p> <p><i>"it's been a lifesaver for me ...I suffered with mental health problems."</i></p> <p><i>"Coming out for a walk is really good for me, it's good for my mental health, I was anxious this morning but now I'm here I'm glad I came."</i></p> <p><i>"These walks helped me after my bad health episode...I feel like my lung capacity has improved since joining the group."</i></p> <p>Walks were planned with varying degrees of difficulty to allow for all abilities. <i>"My poor health means I can't walk like I used to. I can only do short distances on the flat but I can take part in this. I'm never left behind"</i></p> <p>The groups helped enable social connections to be made and friendships to be formed. Walking was seen as a relaxed way to meet new people and connect with old friends. Some groups set up WhatsApp groups and now keep in touch in-between walks. The groups are inclusive and supportive and members said they always feel 'looked after' by volunteers and group members. <i>"Didn't know people before we came but now have new friends."</i></p> <p><i>"We are a bit like a mini-family, it really helps to fight loneliness."</i></p> <p>For others, the groups provided some space (me time) and a reason to get out of the house, providing some structure and routine to their week.</p> <p><i>"I enjoy coming to these walks. It gives me a reason to get up in the mornings."</i></p> <p><i>"I find it hard some days to motivate myself to come out, but ...I always feel better when I've been for a walk."</i></p> <p><i>"I don't really go out much apart from to the local shops. My husband ...doesn't want to come on the walks so this is my bit of me time. I really look forward to it."</i></p>



## The Great Outdoors (cont.)

Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds	The difference it has made...
<p><b><u>What's been hard?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough time - especially to reach those communities or organisations who didn't have an existing group or may not traditionally take part in walking groups or who face other barriers to engagement.</li> <li>• Knowing which groups to approach earlier would have been useful.</li> <li>• Day Rider bus tickets can only be used on First Bus and this has impacted on the choice of destinations for walks.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>The future:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TCV are looking to continue the project as part of their role as an Active Travel Hub and will continue to offer support to existing groups e.g. walk leader training, advice and equipment.</li> <li>• TCV are seeking additional funding to adapt the project.</li> <li>• TCV plan to create a network of walking groups across Leeds so that more people can take part.</li> <li>• TCV can provide walk routes and risk assessments for newer groups wanting to go further afield.</li> </ul>	<p>As well as using active travel through walking, each walk encourages public transport use by starting and ending near bus stops. Participants make use of their free bus passes meaning the trips are free. Some have developed knowledge and confidence to use buses more frequently and more awareness of places they can visit by public transport: Walk group participants said they enjoyed exploring new places and learning new things about the city. <i>"The walk helps me to stay active and I enjoy both the company and the scenery. I get to visit places that I wouldn't go to on the bus on my own."</i></p> <p><i>"This walking group allows me to do walks that I otherwise wouldn't be able to do by myself."</i></p> <p>Participants have said they now use public transport more often and some would now use the bus for journeys rather than drive; <i>"It's so nice being high up on the bus. You can see all the trees and lovely gardens. You never get to see all this stuck in traffic in a car."</i></p> <p><b>For volunteer walk leaders</b> the TCV support, including training and advice, has been well received and appreciated; <i>"it got us through the teething problems...and gave me [as leader] a little bit more confidence in what I was doing.... it means that we feel we have somewhere to go, if we've got a problem that we want some advice with... if we find ourselves in a pickle over something, we know we can come to them [TCV]."</i></p> <p><b><u>More widely:</u></b></p> <p>Participants have been signposted to other TCV led outdoor activities to further help reduce loneliness and TCV Hollybush is now a WYCA active travel hub. TCV has created strong connections with the wider Leeds community and intends to build on these connections in future projects.</p>

## 5.2 Community transport theme

### Shared Outings:

Regular supported minibus trips to places of interest

**Delivery partner:** Cross Gates and District Good Neighbours' Scheme

<p><b>Evaluators notes:</b> At a Cross Gates Good Neighbours coffee morning I met the project lead for Shared Outings as well as volunteers and participants of the project to gather their views and experiences of being involved. The venue was full of energy - there was a real buzz and the project was highly praised.</p>	
Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds	The difference it makes...
<p><b><u>Achievements:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project had a big impact on the local community - Shared Outings had 910 attendances from 228 different members.</li> <li>Targeted work supporting specific groups and those most at risk of isolation e.g. male only trips, support for those who have recently been bereaved, those living with dementia etc.</li> <li>Provision of accessible, appropriate trips to meet older peoples' needs and interests. <i>"It's about getting the right people who don't have the access to get out, who don't have the confidence to get out. Some of them have got disabilities, but we have the facility where we can actually go and pick people up..."</i></li> <li>Despite a slow uptake, the trips were hugely popular and have helped attract new members. <i>"it's grown because it was only a small group to begin with, there weren't many members attending, only women mainly and we were just using the 9 seater to start with, now we're using the 17 seater and 9 seater and we're over-subscribed."</i></li> </ul> <p><b><u>What has helped:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being an established Neighbourhood Network with an existing large membership meant it was easier to get this project off the ground.</li> <li>Owning minibuses that can be used for the trips and being able to provide door to door transport service.</li> <li>Having trained staff and dedicated volunteers who developed meaningful and trusting relationships to better support participants. <i>"Credit has to go to the hard work of the team... We've brought it together and made it more accessible..."</i></li> <li>Using their learning to help shape the project – e.g. how long it takes to pick people up and drop them off, how much organisation needs to go into each trip, forward planning and notifying the venues ahead of the visit so they are prepared and ensuring the venues are suitable to meet everyone's needs. <i>"Especially when you've got your people with disabilities. It's getting them on and off the bus, so it's about allowing that time... before we weren't actually getting the timings right."</i></li> </ul>	<p><b><u>To older people:</u></b></p> <p>This project has given people the confidence to get out and about and get involved in social activities again. <i>"There's people that are isolated that can't get out and we're bringing them together...they are mixing with people, whereas at home they see nobody and they very rarely phone somebody, so they're in the house getting depressed"</i>.</p> <p>It has helped connect them to new people and reduce loneliness, particularly post Covid. <i>"Increasing confidence and building friendships, particularly after the pandemic and people being in lockdown, 'cos a lot of people lost a lot of confidence and they've lost friends...I've seen proper friendships blossom...it is often between women who have lost husbands, they've got something to connect over and talk about... and men too"</i>.</p> <p>A couple of participants who were recently bereaved echoed this – explaining much of their lives had been spent doing things together with their husband or wife and relying on them, that they felt quite lost, isolated and lacking confidence once their spouses had passed away. <i>"My husband passed away last year, so at first I wasn't going anywhere. But I mean, this has been an actual bonus, you know, and it's the people here, [they] are so friendly and helpful"</i>.</p> <p><i>"The shared outings have just been absolutely amazing, because after finishing work [retiring], my husband died, and I was just lost, completely"</i>.</p> <p>The participants particularly valued how the trips were tailored to specific groups or people's interests. One male enthused about a trip to the Air Museum which was somewhere he'd always wanted to go. <i>"A fortnight ago, I was climbing into a bomber. You know I would never go to somewhere like that"</i>.</p> <p>Other stated benefits from involvement were physical and mental health and general wellbeing. It was explained that many of the older people spent a lot of time in their homes alone sitting and being inactive, but the trips got them moving again.</p>



## Shared Outings (cont.)

Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds	The difference it makes...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gathering participants ideas and feedback to help inform future trips. <i>"We have meetings about where we think people would like to go because we listen to what they want."</i></li> </ul> <p><b>What has been hard:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The costing of the trips - ensuring they were on budget.</li> <li>Building in enough time for forward planning and risk assessments etc... <i>"But the planning pays off.... so over time it's been monitoring and keeping an eye on how long things take, how much it costs for us to make sure that everything's within the budget."</i></li> <li>Bad weather (snow) during the winter months meant a couple of planned trips had to be cancelled.</li> </ul> <p><b>The future:</b></p> <p>Cross Gates intends to continue to deliver Shared Outings, but without further funding it may need to reduce its current offer. <i>"We would love to get further funding to continue as is and grow it if possible... but funding is the key issue"</i>.</p> <p>They are, however, trialling an option to use public transport on supported trips via bus and train. They aim to continue developing members' confidence to use public transport on their own and with new friends they've made via Shared Outings.</p>	<p><i>"Some people have no exercise, they might just sit in the chair - you know these recliners... so it's getting them out and walking about ...there might be some who are in a wheelchair, but we always encourage a little bit [of walking] if they can... And I think being out and about improves your mental well-being"</i></p> <p>One volunteer explained how the project was also giving people the confidence to use other forms of transport which helps them do their shopping and go to other activities. <i>"They will use the Access Bus and the Flexi-Bus now...They wouldn't have dreamt of using [before], but now they are getting out and about getting confidence... I've met quite a few recently that have said, 'oh, it's great we are now using the Access Bus', they're going up to like Sainsburys"</i>.</p> <p><b>More widely:</b></p> <p>The volunteers involved in the project believed they too have benefited from their involvement. They enjoyed the social aspect and making the bus ride a fun experience. <i>"I feel a sense of achievement. Because the people on the bus that I'm driving are enjoying themselves, you know?"</i></p> <p>Several volunteers were older people themselves and they felt it had helped give them a purpose and also keep them connected to others. Two out of the four interviewed also lived alone. <i>"I knew for a fact that I would be bored silly when I became fully retired because of most of my friends were my work colleagues"</i></p> <p>The project had also had a knock-on effect for some of the participants' families. A couple explained how the project had helped relieve anxiety for their sons and daughters as they could see the positive change in them – due to them being involved in the outings. <i>My daughter, she's in Australia and she phones me every night to make sure that I'm OK [since husband passed away]. And she says the difference in me now compared to last year, when she was phoning... she doesn't worry about me now"</i>.</p> <p>Several also said since being involved in Shared Outings they are now regularly attending other activities and events via Cross Gates.</p>

## Carers Connecting:

Provided transport and group outings for unpaid carers who faced barriers to making new social connections.

**Delivery partner:** Carers Leeds

Evaluators notes: A Zoom interview with the project lead and phone interviews with two of the carers who took part.	
Achievements, what has helped and been hard and what the future holds	The difference it made...
<p><b>What has been achieved?:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In total 50 carers took part in the project.</li> <li>Over 40 trips took place to a variety of locations / activities with door to door transport provided by taxi, minibus or coach.</li> <li>Carers enjoyed the trips and meeting other carers and sharing experiences and information.</li> </ul> <p><b>What's helped?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being able to fund the transport and the activity (cost would be a barrier).</li> <li>Having a skilled and dedicated and flexible staff member.</li> <li>A supportive and 'no pressure' approach enabled participation.</li> <li>Allowing carers to bring the person they care for (in some cases).</li> <li>Providing door to door transport - meaning that carers were not away from home and their caring responsibilities too long.</li> <li>Making use of taxis and buddying people up to share where possible.</li> <li>Being canny about how you market the project i.e. not telling people where the trip is to: <i>"Because then people come for the trip...and it's supposed to be about the experience and meeting other people."</i></li> </ul> <p><b>What has been hard?:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short time scale - needed more lead in time and time to deliver.</li> <li>Staff recruitment for a part-time post on a short-term project.</li> <li>Low uptake / low numbers of participants. Carers are time poor and haven't wanted to do the whole series of 6 trips as intended <i>"they've very much cherry picked"</i></li> <li>Using public transport for a city-wide project. <i>"We tried to use public transport ...but there was just no appetite for it... if they're picking you up at the door – why would they be interested [in using public transport]?"</i></li> <li>Using and finding minibuses - pick-ups and drop-offs would take two hours each which left little time for the activity and meant carers were away from home for too long.</li> </ul>	<p><b>To older people:</b></p> <p>For unpaid carers, the project offered a chance to access activities and trips and to meet up with others in similar situations. For some it gave chance to have a break and get out of the house and for others it meant doing something they would not have done alone (e.g. theatre or cinema);</p> <p><i>"one benefit has been...doing things that I would never have done on my own. ...I would never think of going to the theatre or the pictures on my own."</i></p> <p>The project enabled social interactions, conversations and connections between carers who had not accessed support via Carers Leeds before. Carers were able to share experiences and information with each other whilst on the trips (on the transport or at the location). <i>"we were still chatting on the bus...it were lovely... I think talking helps a lot with getting out of loneliness....going out with other people has been a lifeline for me. We don't really socialise now because of what's happened."</i></p> <p><i>"There's always some social element....it's been good just having that time to sit and chat. ...it's part of the support element...realising there's people worse off than me."</i></p> <p><i>"just sitting on a bus next to somebody promotes conversation... you're all going to the same place... in the same direction. And so actually, the travel is as much a part of the social side of it as the actual event..."</i></p> <p><i>"It was absolutely marvellous to be able to speak to people who are in the same boat... I used to think – there's only me going through this and there's all these ladies...with the same experience...I couldn't believe it."</i></p> <p><i>"information sharing ...around all kinds of things... all the kind of intricacies of the carer role ...just having a coffee and chatting to people you learn lots of things that are really useful."</i></p>



## Carers Connecting (cont.)

Achievements, what has helped and been hard and what the future holds	The difference it made...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reluctance to use taxis by some <i>"some people were uncomfortable getting a taxi on their own... they might feel a bit vulnerable"</i></li> <li>High costs of minibus hire and taxis to get participants to a central location before departing on the trips.</li> </ul> <p><b>The future:</b></p> <p>The project is unable to continue without additional funding but Carers Leeds will look for future funds.</p> <p><i>"We have found...if we put any cost on it, people don't tend to come. And when we have said to carers, we could continue this, but you'd have to find your own way. They're just not interested."</i></p> <p>If it were to continue, they would allow a longer time frame and do more lower value trips (time frame and amount of funding meant they did more high value trips than planned)</p> <p>The group set up a WhatsApp group so that carers could keep getting together after the project ends.</p>	<p>The transport was a key enabler to participation and made it easy for carers to take part. <i>"the transport was absolutely essential for me...if I'd had to get in the car and drive and try and find it - it would have been another strain...but because it was - 'just get in a taxi and go' - it were lovely"</i></p> <p><i>"there was no hassle... I didn't have to get myself anywhere under my own steam - I didn't have to navigate getting somewhere. Stressing about parking and wherever else."</i></p> <p>The project served to increase confidence for some carers, enabling them to leave the house and take a break from caring responsibilities and to realise the benefits of getting out and meeting others.</p> <p><i>"it can be quite...lonely, you know, caring and taking on that role - so to break out and do something that was just about me was great ..."</i></p> <p><i>"I think I underestimated how much it will boost your confidence and just getting out of the house and getting back into those kind of social settings that was not pressured."</i></p> <p>Feedback from participants highlights that being a carer can be a lonely place and how the group had really helped them feel more connected:</p> <p><i>"I am often lonely... quite a lot of the time, I think that's one of the worst things really. ...it's been lovely just been able to switch off and breathe."</i></p> <p><i>"being busy with caring responsibilities, it's a very lonely place, so it was great to connect with others, who really 'get it' and understand"</i></p> <p>One carer, who had lost four friends recently and whose husband had moved into a care home, said: <i>"this group has lifted my spirits and made me realise there are thousands of people like me desperately wanting companionship and feel the need to be included again. I hope we will maintain links and develop lasting friendships ."</i></p> <p>The 'easy' no pressure engagement style"</p> <p><i>"you didn't have to engage if you didn't want to... You could be a wallflower if you wanted to...and that's probably what I wanted, and needed to just get out the house, but I didn't want to be put in a position where I was gonna have to do Alcoholics Anonymous, kinda of, 'Hi, my name is XXX.' I didn't feel brave enough for that."</i></p> <p><b>More widely:</b></p> <p>Some carers are now accessing more support and activities via Carers Leeds and other sources. Some carers have connected outside of the group, swapping numbers, setting up a WhatsApp group, and meeting up socially.</p>

## Men's Matters:

Men only mini-bus trips to social venues

Delivery partner: AVSED

<p><b>Evaluation notes:</b> An outing to a local pub was joined by the evaluators – during which project leads, key staff, volunteers and male participants were all consulted. There was a great camaraderie amongst the men, staff and volunteers, with informal chats and jokes being shared.</p>	
Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds	The difference it makes...
<p><b><u>Achievements</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>39 men took part in the project.</li> <li>Provision of peer support – formed through the development of the group.</li> <li>The outings were very popular, often over-subscribed with a waiting list.</li> <li>A number of men have moved into regular AVSED outings.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>What has helped:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because a version of the project had run previously, Men's Matters was able to get up and running quickly and AVSED had members who they could approach to be involved. <i>"It's actually a really simple idea and relatively easy to run compared to some of the other social events, but has a much bigger impact [on the men]"</i></li> <li>Taking on board key learning about the participants and their needs, enabling them to tailor their support (around 65% joined due to bereavement, which hadn't been factored in during the early stages).</li> <li>Switching to a volunteer driver allowed a paid staff member to be present on the bus to support and facilitate discussions enabling the men to open up. This was very beneficial. <i>"We soon realised there were benefits in having the paid member of staff interacting with and listening to the conversations"</i>.</li> <li>Gathering feedback regularly from the men so they could input into venues they wanted to visit. <i>"We use a Tripadvisor style survey which the men complete"</i></li> </ul> <p><b><u>What has been hard:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retention of volunteer drivers. <i>"Due to the cost of living crisis some are having to seek employment instead"</i></li> </ul> <p><b><u>The future:</u></b></p> <p>The project is set to continue. However, it will be run slightly differently - it will have a set venue and participants will be asked to pay towards the costs. AVSED are seeking additional funding to support transport costs and staff involvement.</p>	<p><b><u>To older people:</u></b></p> <p>One volunteer stated <i>"Men's Matters is brilliant, it helps alleviate loneliness amongst some of the most isolated in our community"</i></p> <p>This project has helped social connections to be made and genuine friendships to be formed. <i>"When my wife died it really hit me hard and I didn't want to do anything at all other than sit in a chair ... but everyone is so friendly here, I haven't looked back since, we all get on really well together"</i></p> <p>A number of the men interviewed were bereaved and they explained how this group had helped give them confidence to get involved in the community again which in turn had helped alleviate loneliness. <i>"If I didn't have this, on a day like today when it's raining I'd get up in the morning and go to bed at night and I will have gone all day, all day, without saying a word to anyone.... it's really upsetting and can be depressing"</i></p> <p>The minibus ride helps people interact and connects them before they actually get to the venue. They have a lot of talking points and banter on the minibus which the men enjoy. <i>"We all have a laugh and a joke... the transport is so important - I used to drive and have my own car and go wherever I wanted, when I wanted, but I'm stuck now"</i>.</p> <p>A number of the men would have been reluctant to join traditional group events held by AVSED or other charities. <i>"We have to break down as many barriers as possible and transport can be a big barrier for some of these men"</i></p> <p>Peer support has naturally occurred and some men described enjoying helping to plan trips and supporting others emotionally and helping those with additional needs.</p> <p><b><u>More widely:</u></b></p> <p>The volunteers said they had really benefited from their involvement, they enjoyed supporting and helping the men have a good time whilst also giving them a sense of purpose. <i>"We have a real good time together, we joke together... I just love what I'm doing. I have been with AVSED now for nearly 7 years...I enjoy bringing people out, mixing with them and seeing how they mix with each other...it gets me out as well"</i>.</p> <p>The local community was also said to benefit – by visiting and supporting local venues and raising AVSED's profile. <i>"We always visit local pubs - it's important to support the local community... The minibus itself being seen out and about raises our profile"</i>.</p>



## Happy Cab:

An accessible Hackney Cab with a friendly, helpful driver used to transport older people in Bramley and Headingley to places they want to go.

**Delivery partner:** Bramley Elderly Action (BEA)

<p><b>Evaluation notes:</b> A visit to a lunch club was made to meet some Happy Cab passengers and the project lead – followed by a trip in the Happy Cab and a chat with the driver. Focus groups were held with 8 of the older people who had used the Happy Cab and an interview and with the project worker.</p>	
Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds	The difference it makes...
<p><b><u>Achievements:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>111 people took part in the project.</li> <li>The Happy Cab has taken people to a broad range of places and social activities.</li> <li>Happy Cab journeys led to new friendships and connections because 5 passengers travel in the Happy Cab together.</li> <li>A new hybrid electric vehicle was purchased so will continue to be an asset to BEA members.</li> <li>The high-specification, accessible, distinctive-looking vehicle and friendly drivers helped make members feel valued, happy and special.</li> <li>Members booked their own trips, with friends, to locations that they choose.</li> <li>The Happy Cab supplements BEA's existing transport options, ensuring that there is space available for everyone who wants to go on social outings.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>What's been hard?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time needed to set up the project <i>"it's not a quick project to do...it's got to build as a slow build."</i></li> <li>Promotion and uptake of the service – letting people know what it's for and how they can use it.</li> <li>Using a hybrid vehicle, costs of charging, safe parking and maintenance issues.</li> <li>Time needed for planning and organising trips <i>"It takes a lot of planning and a lot of people wanting to be going to the same place at the same time."</i></li> <li>Recruiting and retaining drivers.</li> <li>Balancing the financial aspects and keeping it affordable for users.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>What's helped?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role of the driver is key to facilitating social interaction and helping people feel safe in the cab <i>"we need the driver to be that catalyst. To introduce people, to have a laugh...you need to get the right skills and the right kind of person who takes that bit of joy and enthusiasm into what they're doing, because sometimes the only person they see is the driver."</i></li> </ul>	<p><b><u>To older people:</u></b></p> <p>The door-to-door pick-up and drop-off, with a friendly, helpful and supportive driver, was hugely appreciated by many, especially those with mobility problems or who did not have easy access to public transport.</p> <p><i>"[in a normal taxi] they won't get as much help [as Happy Cab] because we do ...'door-to-door' rather than curb-to-curb."</i></p> <p><i>"Where I live it's quite remote and I have no bus services...or even a bus stop that's easily accessible so to have this...and to come here...before I was so insular and really depressed ...this [Happy Cab] has brought us together and we have become friends."</i></p> <p><i>"there isn't a [direct] bus that goes from their house... And then there's the risk...so it's that safety for them, making them feel secure that they can get there and they can get back so they can relax..."</i></p> <p><i>"A lot of these people wouldn't get out if it wasn't for the Cab. It's about community. It's about giving people some fun days out."</i></p> <p>The cab ride itself provided a time and space for people to interact with others before reaching their destination. This 'social time' has led to new friendships and connections being made.</p> <p><i>"The main difference is they feel because it's a London cab, instead of people sat in rows...[like on a bus] people have now got three people that are facing each other. So they will chat because they're looking at each other".</i></p> <p>The driver has an important role in facilitating social chat and building rapport.</p> <p>The Happy Cab helps remove some of the barriers some older people may face in using public transport such as fear, confidence and mobility issues.</p> <p><i>"it may not be quite as daunting as a bus of 12 people coming to your door, you know, there'll be six. It reduces a little bit of anxiety that you're all sort of going to go into a big bus of lots of people you don't know"</i></p>

## Happy Cab (cont.)

Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds	The difference it makes...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having an experienced transport worker lead the project.</li> <li>• The configuration of the seating in Happy Cab enabled people to naturally start conversation</li> <li>• Being deliberate about who to invite on each shared journey to enable social connections</li> </ul> <p><b><u>The future:</u></b></p> <p>The project is set to continue with more drivers being recruited to offer a greater variety of trips and outings <i>“things where they don’t really want to go as one person, but would do as a group.”</i></p> <p>There is an ambition for provision to run at other times (e.g. evenings and weekends) and to reach more people <i>“to try and get the people that really need to get out.”</i></p>	<p><i>“People are lonely and to be in an accessible form of transport is really essential to a lot of people...let’s face it, when you’re getting older sometimes you’re a bit scared of going out – especially if you think I’ve got to be dropped at the bus stop and walk ...with the Happy Cab it takes us, brings us back...what’s not to like? For loneliness...it cures it!”</i></p> <p>The Happy Cab has provided people with access to a broader range of places and social activities and gives them some independence in choosing where they want to go, with existing friends, and in being able to get there easily.</p> <p><i>“we go places we wouldn’t usually have gone to ... we would have had to rely on family to take us...but now we can hire the cab and go ourselves...so it gives us independence and we meet new people and new friends”</i></p> <p><b><u>More widely:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Happy Cab has raised the profile of BEA’s work with older people.</li> <li>• BEA plans to do a comprehensive review of their transport offer which will benefit older members longer term.</li> <li>• It has broadened BEA’s transport capacity and learning.</li> <li>• Member fares could subsidise the cost of Happy Cab in the future</li> </ul>

## 5.3 Buses

### Grand Days Out:

Group outings on public transport, led by Shine magazine volunteers, informing and writing inspirational articles in Shine magazine about the venue and bus journey.

**Delivery partner:** Shine magazine (Leeds)

Evaluation notes: A Zoom interview was conducted with the project lead to discuss the project in detail.	
Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds	The difference it makes...
<p><b>Achievements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shine has created a range of interesting and engaging articles aimed at older people.</li> <li>They have engaged with a large number of older people from across the city. <i>We've met lots of people, we've connected with lots of people</i></li> <li>Volunteers have developed confidence and learnt new skills including, interviewing, researching and writing skills. <i>"I think it's turning people who didn't think they were writers into writers"</i></li> <li>New relationships were formed between Shine and Neighbourhood Networks and local community groups across Leeds.</li> <li>Some trips have engaged with specific community groups of older people. <i>"This has added value and strength to the work because we've been able to expand the reach of the articles".</i></li> </ul> <p><b>What has helped:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-production - the volunteers were encouraged to suggest locations and advise on key content of interest, some of which the project lead hadn't considered. <i>"It's all decided by the group...So every time we've gone somewhere, it's not been my decision... Someone came up with the idea of let's do a bit about the history of a place, because actually that's quite interesting and I haven't really thought of that".</i></li> <li>Taking key learning on board to help shape the project - initially, local Neighbourhood Networks were contacted in areas where visits were taking place and asked if any members wanted to join them, but it soon transpired that local people had often visited these venues. A better approach was to have several Neighbourhood Networks on board from across the city allowing their members to visit new locations or places of interest.</li> <li>Including information on a venue's accessibility, toilets, admission prices, bus numbers and bus stop location help Shine readers to make informed decisions about any potential visits they make.</li> </ul>	<p><b>To older people:</b></p> <p>For those reading the articles it's inspiring people and giving them the knowledge and confidence to get out and about and travel around Leeds on the buses visiting some amazing locations and venues it has to offer.</p> <p>The articles are written by older people for older people, therefore covering issues of key importance to them. <i>"hopefully it will help people think, you can go for a day trip and you don't have to just be stuck at home. You've got your free bus pass and it's just remembering that, you know, putting that into people's minds... they may not have been to Kirkstall Abbey [e.g.] for years, but actually, it's quite easy on the bus"</i></p> <p>For those attending the outings it's provided them with an opportunity to get out of the house, meet new people and explore places they perhaps haven't been before. <i>"If it wasn't for people like you, we would probably still be at home, watching television and vegetating. It takes a long time for us to want to get up and go. But if you know you have somewhere to go - you get up and go. I enjoyed you giving us all such a wonderful day out".</i></p>



## Grand Days Out (cont.)

Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds	The difference it makes...
<p><b><u>What has been hard:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The time frame for delivery <i>“being done in such a short space of time.”</i></li> <li>• There was a delay between outings taking place and articles going to print (due to it being a bi-monthly magazine) which was frustrating as it looked like little activity was happening in the early stages. <i>“We were still doing visits and we were still working on the project, but there was nothing really to show”.</i></li> <li>• Measuring impact - because it’s difficult to know how many of its readers will be motivated to go on one of the outings. <i>“There are over 4000 readers of the magazine, so impact could be huge, but at the minute there is no way of measuring it”.</i></li> </ul> <p><b><u>The future:</u></b></p> <p>It is hoped that a number of the readers will enjoy the articles and be inspired to take journeys to some of the venues and locations visited.</p> <p>If future funding is secured Shine magazine would like to continue the trips with support from the volunteers. They would also like to consider using other forms of public transport e.g. trains.</p>	<p><b><u>More widely:</u></b></p> <p>The magazine articles have helped promote First Bus and some of the great places Leeds has to offer.</p> <p>It is hoped that the venues also take on board some of the suggestions made by the project lead / volunteers to ensure they are suitable for older people to visit. <i>“We’re sort of reminding them that it’s not just about kids, it’s about older people too ... it’s about making Leeds an age friendly city”.</i></p>

## 5.4 Taxis

### Travel Apps & bus passes:

Helping older people to access and use a variety of travel Apps available via key delivery partners working with older people in Leeds.

**Delivery partners:** Leeds Irish Health & Homes, Morley Digital, Cross Gates & District Good Neighbours' Scheme, Holbeck Together, Age UK Leeds and Your Backyard CIC, along with support from 100% Digital Leeds

<b>Evaluation notes:</b> A Zoom interview was conducted with the project lead, a volunteer from a delivery partner and a project participant.	
<b>Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds</b>	<b>The difference it makes...</b>
<p>Originally two separate projects - Taxi Apps &amp; Open Project (Buses) - but it was decided part way through the funding period to merge the projects into one.</p> <p><b><u>Achievements</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In total 46 older people have engaged with this project.</li> <li>Helped older people overcome barriers to using Apps / applying for bus passes.</li> <li>Production of a range of easy-to-follow guides which will be continued to be used.</li> <li>Delivery partners provided face-to-face and online training to older people in groups and one to one.</li> <li>Staff and volunteers have developed new skills.</li> <li>New relationships formed with delivery partners and transport providers e.g. First Bus.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>What has helped:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The range of knowledge and skills brought to the project by the different delivery partners – in terms of understanding their communities, technical skills and experience in delivering training to older people.</li> <li>Using a person-centred approach to ensure individual needs were being met – with delivery partners tailoring their offer and going beyond the original brief (e.g. some workers accompanied members on trips to help them gain confidence in using their new apps). <i>“When people have been to see us they have thanked us for being patient with them and helping them”</i></li> <li>Using peer learning to help others to access and use Apps, which has been really positive. <i>“I’ve seen a YouTube video of one of the members [participants] explaining how to do something...in another project someone had an Uber App which they showed and shared their learning of how to use it [with the group]”</i></li> </ul>	<p><b><u>To older people:</u></b></p> <p>More older people have been encouraged to use public transport. Many have developed their digital skills and increased their confidence to use Apps and bus passes to travel around Leeds and beyond. In turn this has meant that more people are able to reconnect with their friends, families and communities.</p> <p><i>“Not everyone lives next door to relatives and friends so by increasing peoples’ confidence in using taxis and buses we are helping them to increase their social opportunities... to meet at a coffee shop etc... on an individual [project] basis it may not look like it is reducing loneliness, but these projects are giving people a forum to help reduce their loneliness if they so choose”.</i></p> <p>One participant interviewed explained how easy they found travelling around Leeds on the bus and using their Apps. <i>“It’s so simple to do. I mean I can go from here now...We’ve got six buses an hour into and out of Leeds. Except Sunday, when I’ve only got 4 buses. I get into Leeds, I walk down to the station and I go to Harrogate or York or anywhere else”</i></p> <p>He also described how being able to travel helped reduce feelings of loneliness because he lived alone having lost both his wife and daughter. <i>“I’ve been on my own for the last three years since my wife passed and then 18 months ago I buried my daughter... so it’s good for me [to get out] because I am on my own”.</i></p> <p>Awareness of the range of Apps available has been increased and key barriers – such as fear and reluctance to use Apps (and in particular to add bank details) have been overcome. A number of older people have developed their digital skills and confidence which is enabling them to connect in other ways too. <i>“It can open up a whole new world for them...this project is maybe one of the first steps some of the members will take to trust adding their bank details to their phone or on an App”</i></p>

## Travel Apps & bus passes (cont.)

Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds	The difference it makes...
<p><b><u>What has been hard:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The short time scales for delivery which were further impacted by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project lead coming into post a few months into the funding period.</li> <li>A delayed start.</li> <li>The Bus Pass project was an open/flexible project which resulted in more challenges, in terms of establishing what the project was aiming to achieve and getting it off the ground.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Co-ordinating 5 Delivery Partners (for meetings etc...) again in a short time.</li> <li>One-year funded projects are difficult to deliver if staff and delivery partners are not on board at the outset. <i>"In hindsight - it's a mistake to have an open project in such a small time frame ...there's so much pressure on the partners to deliver in such a short time frame".</i></li> <li>Overcoming older people's reluctance and nervousness to adding their bank details to digital devices for certain Apps. <i>"A key thing is that a high proportion of people are not comfortable using IT to make payments, not happy using a Credit Card or PayPal and that's a problem that we've got and when you use a lot of apps you generally have to use online payment".</i></li> <li>A lack of interest amongst some older people to use buses and taxis.</li> <li>The majority of Apps being in English only, causing an additional barrier for some communities.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>The future:</u></b></p> <p>Through the project it has become apparent that applications for bus passes in Leeds are relatively low. Delivery partners are surveying project participants and their members to explore this further to gather more insight. <i>"What we've learned very early on is there is a lack of uptake of bus passes ... since the pandemic something like 60% have applied for bus passes".</i></p> <p>The majority of delivery partners are already delivering digital training to their members, so it is hoped that transport and travel will remain part of their offer.</p> <p>The relationship with First Bus and other transport operators needs to be further developed, because there is a lot of work that could be done in terms of educating older people about buses and how they look, feel and operate. <i>"There's lots of concerns [by some older people] getting on the bus especially at certain times of the day... a lot of people haven't been on a bus in years, but First Bus has made strides to massively improve the buses".</i></p>	<p><b><u>More widely:</u></b></p> <p>Staff and volunteers across the delivery partners said they'd also developed skills and feel more confident in supporting older people in using transport Apps and applying for bus passes. <i>"People that have come along to us have various levels of interest and expertise and some are now providing volunteer support at the drop in sessions, which is great".</i></p> <p>Bus companies and taxi firms are likely to see an increase in revenue if more people are aware of and are using their Apps and passes.</p>



## SJK Partnership:

Organised, subsidised taxi journeys and collaborative working with a private hire firm to enable members to access activities delivered by AVSED

**Delivery partner:** AVSED

<b>Evaluation notes:</b> A site visit was conducted with AVSED, the project lead, a key worker and project participant were interview face to face	
<b>Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds</b>	<b>The difference it makes...</b>
<p><b><u>Achievements:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In total, 12 participants enjoyed 57 trips, of which 19 were shared.</li> <li>The system AVSED put in place to assess members' needs and join people and journeys up has been really beneficial and will continue to be used.</li> <li>Use of shared taxis have reduced journey costs for older people.</li> <li>AVSED offered 'dementia friends' training to SJK enabling them to better understand some of its members' needs.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>What has helped:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared journeys have helped connect people prior to attending the activities <i>"It can help overcome nerves, particularly for those attending for the first time"</i>.</li> <li>Strong, trusted partnerships have been essential for project success, through using a local firm which knows the area and the community the older people's needs have been better met. <i>"We now use SJK, they are great and have trained staff that understand our clients' needs."</i></li> <li>AVSED gathers feedback from drivers on their journeys so that they can build learning into the project in order that both organisations can continuously improve their services.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>What has been hard:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project initially started out as a partnership with a national provider, but following a number of issues (such as drivers not turning up, cancelling trips) they parted ways and formed a partnership with a local taxi firm.</li> <li>Due to these issues the project was delayed in getting started properly.</li> <li>One-year funded projects are very difficult, particularly when setting up a new project from scratch.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>The future:</u></b></p> <p>Without funding the project is not sustainable as it is. AVSED will continue to support the logistics of people sharing taxis but it will not be able to subsidise these, without additional monies. AVSED and SJK will continue to build on their partnership, working together to provide good taxi services for members.</p>	<p><b><u>To older people:</u></b></p> <p>Although AVSED has its own minibuses and transports some of its members to activities using those, some properties are not easily accessible by minibus requiring the need for taxis. Also, the number of minibus drivers available is limited which means they can only transport a number of members on a rota basis. Therefore this project has allowed more older people to access AVSED activities. <i>"it's allowing people the chance to participate in groups, events and socials that they wouldn't have because transport can be a huge barrier"</i>.</p> <p>By giving older people the experience of using a trusted taxi service which has been booked by AVSED, means they are developing confidence in using taxis and other public transport independently for other activities and to get around Leeds. <i>"Some will now feel comfortable getting them on their own"</i>.</p> <p>One participant explained the huge impact SJK has had on his life since his wife recently passed away. It has increased his confidence, his mental health and reduced his loneliness allowing him to connect with others via both the taxi ride and the activities. <i>"It has completely turned my life around, I was lost..., if I didn't come here I would be sat in my house and wouldn't see anyone...I was very lonely and getting very down and depressed... I'm gaining more confidence... my mental health is definitely improving"</i>.</p> <p>He went on to say he is now also using the same private hire firm for his shopping and to take him to the golf club and other places he wouldn't have accessed before. <i>"I can really trust SJK, they know me now when I phone and they know what my needs are...I know they will turn up"</i></p> <p><b><u>More widely:</u></b></p> <p>The project has some wider benefits for the project partners by potentially expanding their client base. <i>"More people are likely to be aware of and use the taxi company because they are now trusted"</i>.</p>

## Age and Dementia Friendly Taxis:

Encouraging local taxi businesses and private hire companies to provide more Age and Dementia Friendly services.

**Delivery partner:** Leeds Older People's Forum (LOPF)

<b>Evaluation notes:</b> A Zoom call with the project lead.	
<b>Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds</b>	<b>The difference it makes...</b>
<p>This project was about increasing understanding and influencing practice and as such had no older people as direct beneficiaries. Research has been done and conversations with older people have been had to better understand the challenges and the barriers faced when using taxis. Connections have been made and conversations had with key players in the taxi industry to improve understanding from their perspective about what could change.</p> <p><b>Achievements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raised awareness of the issues around taxis, transport and loneliness via meetings with strategic partners, including private providers, the taxi licensing team at Leeds City Council and the Head of Regulatory and City Centre Services for Leeds.</li> <li>• Contributed to a city-wide review of taxi vehicle condition standards, with a focus on wheelchair accessible vehicles (via stakeholder consultation meetings).</li> <li>• Leeds Older People Forum presented at taxi trade forums, to speak directly to taxi firms/drivers to ask them to support a 'Support our Seniors' (SOS) campaign.</li> <li>• Surveys, consultation, discussions and 'mystery shopping' with older people around taxi usage provided the basis of the SOS campaign to highlight how taxi drivers can help reduce isolation and loneliness.</li> <li>• A <a href="#">short film</a> demonstrating the importance of door-to-door taxi services and highlighting good practice when providing age and dementia friendly services was also developed by older people, in partnership with Leeds Older People's Forum.</li> </ul> <p><b>What's helped:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project leads' persistence, determination and passion.</li> <li>• Finding the right people to talk to <i>"you've got to knock on a lot of doors."</i></li> <li>• Targeting people at a city level (i.e. licencing) rather than individual taxi firms.</li> <li>• Highlighting the issues - gaining and sharing the needs and experiences of older people using multiple methods e.g. a short film, at meetings, through training.</li> <li>• Gaining and sharing examples of 'bad' practice.</li> <li>• Developing understanding of taxi drivers' perspectives on the challenges they face e.g. the fears taxi drivers have related to potential risks when taking older frail adults on taxi journeys.</li> <li>• Have a clear offer e.g. training / awareness raising.</li> </ul>	<p>This project was more about influencing practice and as such had no older people as direct beneficiaries.</p> <p><i>"you've got a massive mountain to climb to ask them to do anything that's gonna slow them down. And that's the reason why we're finding all the challenges with taxi drivers driving off when they see that they're picking up an older person, especially when they've got a walking aid... they're choosing the jobs that are the easiest because it takes them so much more time to wait. If they're going to be waiting more than a few minutes, and they realise that this is now an older adult, then they're gone. And that's an awful experience. Because, you know, that might be the only day you go out. And, that experience of an older person seeing that taxi driver drive off, just puts them off."</i></p>

## Age and Dementia Friendly Taxis (cont.)

Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds	The difference it makes...
<p><b><u>What has been hard:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not having enough time to affect change / see things through / maintain momentum <i>"a project like this was never going to be achieved in 12 months, it probably isn't going to be achieved in the next 12 months. It's a long term project."</i></li> <li>• Gaining engagement with taxi firms <i>"I've been gradually building and building the contacts and relationships"</i></li> <li>• Having no financial incentive for taxi firms / drivers to be more age and dementia friendly (time is money).</li> <li>• Differing perceptions of what drivers do (should do) already and reported experience of older people.</li> <li>• How to gain commitment from individual drivers as well as from the firms – otherwise it becomes a tick box exercise.</li> <li>• Overlap with the SJK Private Hire project.</li> <li>• Large number of taxi drivers in Leeds (5000+).</li> <li>• Lack of wheelchair accessible taxis.</li> <li>• Taxi drivers coming in from other cities to work in Leeds – have different licensing and training.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>The future:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leeds Older People's Forum learned a lot about older people's experiences of using taxis in Leeds, which will help to inform future work priorities and funding bids.</li> <li>• Continue to influence now that LOPF is a key stakeholder.</li> <li>• LOPF could help to build and support relationships between local taxi firms and Neighbourhood Networks <i>"we could introduce people to the key people that work in the city with older adults, and build them relationships"</i></li> <li>• Work towards Taxi firms being seen more as a community resource: <i>"most taxi firms are part of a community and don't realise that they're a key part of that. I would like to see taxi firms becoming more of a community-orientated service and to see older adults using that and supporting their local taxi firm, it's a two way process. And it's a trusted service that's local to them, the drivers are offering a service and in return, the loyalty of using that service is returned."</i></li> <li>• Continue campaigning: <i>"a short, sharp campaign needs to be built, something that's going to say, almost like an ABC - when a driver picks up an older passenger. Think this - do that, then do this"</i></li> </ul>	



## 5.5 Travel Conversations

*This theme differs from the other four in that it was more focussed on increasing understanding and influencing practice or provision. Whilst older people were involved in sharing their experience and views – they were less likely to be direct beneficiaries as they are in some of the other projects.*

### Let's Talk Transport:

brought groups of older people together to talk about transport issues and review existing provision to influence providers.

**Delivery partners:** Feel Good Factor, Belle Isle Senior Action, Caring Together in Woodhouse and Little London, Cross Gates & District Good Neighbours' Scheme, MHA South Leeds and Burmantofts Senior Action.

Evaluation notes: Zoom interview with project lead and with 4 of the 6 delivery partner organisations.	
Achievements, what has helped, what has been hard and what the future holds	The difference it makes...
<p>All 6 delivery partners structured their Let's Talk Transport approach in different ways resulting in a diverse range of activities.</p> <p><b>Achievements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In total, 200 individual participants were involved in LTT via 6 DPs</li> <li>Delivery partners took part in Best Practice Meetings to share ideas.</li> <li>A consultation event held at the White Rose Shopping Centre in collaboration with First Bus and William Merritt Disabled Living Centre was a huge success.</li> <li>Older people shared their views about various aspects of transport (including Flexi Buses and Access Buses) through focus groups etc.</li> <li>Neighbourhood Networks have an improved understanding of the barriers and enablers of transport use in different areas meaning they can adapt their provision.</li> <li>Feel Good Factor supported and enabled older members to lead and run their own transport group.</li> </ul> <p><b>What was hard?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not enough lead in / set up time.</li> <li>Unclear purpose and approach at the start and lack of guidance <i>"don't give people too much autonomy ...I think they need more guidance."</i></li> <li>Partner's different levels of understanding of the brief.</li> <li>Design of the project could have been more creative.</li> <li>Small budget allocated per partner (£1,500 for 1 year delivery).</li> <li>Monitoring requirements disproportionate to budget.</li> <li>Being limited to 6 Neighbourhood Networks <i>"working with more varied partners would have allowed for larger reach."</i></li> <li>Partner level: unreliable transport <i>"we've had lots of issues with the buses. ..LTT hasn't been as good as it could have been, because we haven't been able to take [people] out and let them see a really good thing happening."</i></li> </ul>	<p><b><u>To older people:</u></b></p> <p>Older people have had the opportunity to share their views, experiences and concerns about public transport: <i>"they felt really privileged to be able to be in a position to share their concerns with somebody from First Bus direct."</i></p> <p><i>"our members love to get involved [and it means] a lot to be appreciated and get their views taken on board".</i></p> <p>Through these conversations, people have learnt about other activities available to them:</p> <p><i>"I attended [a Drop-in] to discuss transport over a cup of tea just to have a moan about things...[I found] out that there were other things going on locally and I signed up for a couple of local trips that I didn't know about".</i></p> <p>Older people have been supported to make use of transport independently and gained increased confidence and new skills e.g. use the First Bus App, encouraged to go on a bus journey with friends.</p> <p><i>"we said, you have to plan the route, and how we're going to get there... So we had one person looking at the App, we had one person looking at timetables, and one person went to the travel centre"</i></p> <p><i>"Used the Access Bus to come to activities independently increasing their confidence to travel on public transport again."</i></p> <p><i>"I feel like it's definitely made them more comfortable using [public transport]."</i></p> <p>Some older people have supported others to use transport: <i>"people are now more independent in terms of taking other people with them on this journey, because they've already done it."</i></p> <p>Older people have joined new activities and organised and taken part in trips e.g. White Rose Centre's mall-walking group. Walking groups and friendship groups continue to meet regularly for social events.</p>

## Let's Talk Transport (cont.)

<p><b><u>What helped?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to pay for trips / meals out for older people.</li> <li>• Integrating travel conversations into existing activities and targeting key groups.</li> <li>• Involving older people in planning trips.</li> <li>• Having flexibility in the approach.</li> <li>• The project lead's passion for the project and supportive approach.</li> <li>• Getting to know about the Neighbourhood Network members and their needs.</li> <li>• Facilitating conversations between transport providers and older people.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>The future:</u></b></p> <p>Some of the groups and work on transport will continue:</p> <p><i>"I think they've got into this habit and have a routine of going out every other week. So they'll continue [and we'll] encourage them to continue with that."</i></p>	<p><i>"they've been exposed to a lot more ...they've been going out a lot more than they normally would ... and that social element has definitely had an impact on their health and well-being - the sense that you feel happier, you're looking forward to something... I think in that sense of the massive impact."</i></p> <p><i>"The group successfully organised 3 trips taking on board everyone's views and opinions...trips were organised taking into consideration time, length of journey, interest, mobility, weather and accessibility."</i></p> <p><i>"They love the idea of going on transport and going somewhere... because it just takes them out of where they live."</i></p> <p>Older people came together for activities and made new social connections and friendships, helping to reducing isolation:</p> <p><i>"it's a good social group and gives them something to look forward to ...there's a bit of structure to their day. A lot of them are lonely, have mobility issues...besides the hospital appointments or going to the post office... there's not a reason to go out."</i></p> <p><i>"it's got people connected with one another, friendships have developed"</i></p> <p><i>" This experience was nice helping me with my anxiety and isolation"</i></p> <p><i>" Many of us live alone. So ...this is something I would not have undertaken myself."</i></p> <p><i>'Its been lovely having someone to walk to the Soup and a Roll sessions with each Wednesday. I wouldn't have attended if this was not offered'.</i></p> <p>For some older people, transport was a crucial enabler to their engagement: <i>'Without the transport organised by [Delivery Partner] I would never leave the house. I rarely feel like going but don't like to cancel when transport has been organised. I'm always glad when I get there though'.</i></p> <p><b><u>More widely:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influencing White Rose shopping centre : <i>"White Rose were absolutely brilliant... they had never worked in a community-focused way before... now [a Director] has hooked up with his local Neighbourhood Network... asking them to do some focus groups around seating .... I think it made them look at their community proposition."</i></li> <li>• Learning gained will inform the transport section of one organisation's four year plan.</li> </ul>
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## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 6.1 Conclusions

Having access to transport and travel options that work for older people is vital for maintaining their social connections, health and well-being and ability to get out and about.

In relation to the evidence on loneliness and transport, this evaluation found projects related to two of the main themes identified in the Sustrans report i.e. 'transport as a means of reaching destinations where you meet with other people (e.g. shops, activities, trips out)' and 'transport as a 'third space' in which you meet other people e.g. buses / taxis / minibuses as social spaces, active travel as a group (e.g. walking cycling)'.

The Travel Connections programme has generated valuable learning and insight about increasing transport use for older people through 11 transport related projects engaging over 900 older people across Leeds. Through varied approaches, Travel Connections projects have addressed some of the known practical/ physical and psychological barriers to transport use and learnt more about the enablers for older people.

Some key reported benefits for older people have been increased awareness of, and confidence in using, public transport. For many, engagement in the project activities had led to increased social connections and the development of friendships - contributing to a reduction of loneliness. Improvements in the mental well-being of older people were also reported e.g. reduced anxiety, increased confidence, increased knowledge/ skills, purpose and structure. Projects also offered opportunities for older people to improve physical mobility and fitness through active travel.

A key benefit for delivery organisations was an increased understanding of the barriers and enablers to using public transport for older people. Some organisations also benefited from increased reach and membership (as older people accessed / were signposted to other community activities) and from increased opportunities for partnership working with other Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations (VCSO) and wider stakeholders such as local businesses and organisations.

In terms of benefits for the wider system, projects had influenced the increased use of existing public transport and use of active transport options (i.e. walking /cycling), leading to potential environmental and health benefits. Through activities and trips out, older people had increased awareness of local businesses and community assets (e.g. cafes, restaurants) leading to potential economic benefits from increased use of these. Projects also made progress towards influencing improvements to transport provision (e.g. the availability of age and dementia friendly taxis) through capturing views and experiences of older people, sharing learning and highlighting good practice.





## 6.2 Recommendations:

The findings and learning from this evaluation present a number of opportunities for funders, LOPF and for delivery partners. These opportunities are captured in the recommendations below. Some of these can be addressed at a programme and/or project level whilst others need addressing at a more strategic level in order to support wider system change to happen.

### Recommendations - Project & Programme level

- a) **Address the practical and psychological barriers** older people face in relation to travel and using transport
- b) **Encourage and support co-production** - involving older people in design and delivery of projects - and in influencing work - recognise and value their contribution
- c) Be **inclusive and accessible** - use knowledge of target communities to tailor provision and meet the needs of specific groups and work in **person-centred ways**
- d) Target those **most at risk of social isolation**
- e) **Work in partnership** to enable sharing of skills, knowledge and resources - preventing duplication and making best use of community assets
- f) Provide **more clarity, guidance and training** to projects about key deliverables, measuring impact and capturing learning
- g) Ensure **monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements are proportionate** to the funding awarded
- h) **Allow adequate time** for projects to get up and running - to design, plan, recruit staff and participants and embed processes (e.g. M&E) – and be realistic about what can be achieved

### Recommendations - Wider system

Whilst some progress towards influencing the provision of transport was made by the programme, work remains to be done at a strategic level. Specific recommendations are:

- a) **Actively involve older people** in decision-making, developing policies and transport options and planning at a local level
- b) Transport and travel policies and provision need to **address the practical and psychological barriers** older people face in using transport
- c) Give consideration to the **design and features of places that promote use of transport** by older people (e.g. seating and shelters at bus stops)
- d) Support and fund **community-led transport options** e.g. shared journeys, travel buddy schemes.
- e) Ensure **information about travel options and schemes is accessible** and inclusive
- f) **Continue to work with the VCSO sector** across the city and with LOPF on transport and travel solutions as a means to reduce social isolation and loneliness for older people as a key part of the work towards becoming an age friendly city

## 7 Resources and further reading

The Travel Connections team at Leeds Older People's Forum created a range of resources during the programme and links to these are included below:

[Travel Connections End-of-programme summary](#) (Report)

[The Great Outdoors case studies](#) and [East Leeds Walking Group case study](#)

Brief stories – how Travel Connections is helping older people to tackle loneliness with transport:

[Learning briefing 1](#)

[Learning briefing 2](#)

[Reflections on Let's Talk Transport at Feel Good Factor](#) (Report)

[Raiders of the White Rose](#) (Blog)

[Senior Spin: a tour de force](#) (Blog)

[Reflections on Senior Spin](#) (Report)

[Travel Connections: a brief excursion](#) (Blog)

[Travel Connections: speeding along](#) (Blog)

[Cycling with confidence, Meanwood Valley Urban Farm, Leeds, 26 October 2022](#) (Video)

[Senior Spin](#) (Video)

[Support our seniors campaign](#) (Video)

This evaluation report was produced by independent evaluation consultants, Kerry Swain and Sarah Frost, for Leeds Older People's Forum in July 2023.