

End of programme summary

June 2023



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

In May 2022 Leeds Older People's Forum received a one year grant from the Department for Transport's Tackling

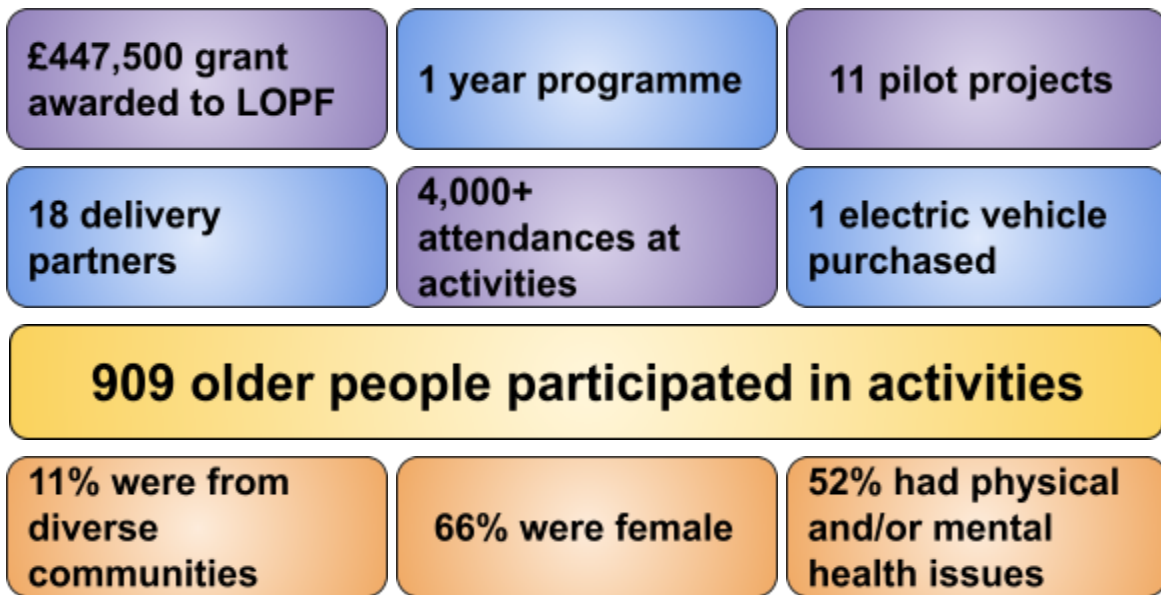
Loneliness with Transport fund. The principal aim of the Travel Connections programme was to test 11 different approaches under five themes. The first four themes - buses, taxis, active travel and community transport - explored how the vast network of existing transport resources in Leeds could be better used to reduce loneliness. The fifth theme - travel conversations - focused on creating conversations between older people and decision-makers so that older people's voices are heard at strategic levels.

Purpose of this report

This report summarises the achievements and legacy of all 11 Travel Connections projects. It also celebrates the programme, bringing each project to life with photos, anonymised short stories and quotes from older participants.

A separate Travel Connections evaluation report (written by Independent Research and Evaluation Consultants, Kerry Swain and Sarah Frost) is available on the resources section of [Leeds Older People's Forum website](#). Their report focuses on the challenges and opportunities relating to the different approaches taken by delivery partners, key learning points and the impact and outcomes for older people, including the extent to which the transport element alleviates loneliness. It also examines the potential for sustainability and replicability and summarises key findings and recommendations.

Travel Connections in Numbers



Programme reflections

The Travel Connections programme enabled Leeds Older People’s Forum, delivery partners and strategic colleagues in the city to learn more about the range of issues and experiences - positive and negative - faced by older people who use, or would like to use, transport in Leeds. Key findings include the need for: sustainable funding for community transport, vital for helping people to maintain social connections; more taxi firms providing accessible vehicles and age and dementia friendly services; digital training and personalised support to help older people use travel apps in order to maintain their independence.

There is an appetite for change. Findings from Travel Connections will inform future funding bids, workstreams and, we hope, strategic planning for the city.

Leeds Older People’s Forum also produced a selection of blogs and learning reports:

- How Travel Connections is helping to tackle loneliness: [Report 1](#) and [Report 2](#)
- [Travel Connections: speeding along](#)
- [Travel Connections: A brief excursion](#)
- [Senior Spin: a tour de force](#)

Shine magazine

A Grand Day Out



Group outings on public transport, led by a Shine magazine volunteer, 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.

Achievements and legacy

- New social connections were made as more people took part in A Grand Day Out.
- Members worked as a team to complete all tasks required to inform the articles in Shine, including research, interviews and accessibility checks.
- Members developed confidence to approach and engage with hundreds of members of the public and venue staff, to gather stories and experiences.
- Thousands of older people across Leeds read inspiring articles in print versions of Shine magazine and online. Here are [links to some of the online Shine articles](#).
- [Click here to download Shine magazine](#) which features Grand Days Out articles from page 38 onwards. Readers are encouraged to share stories of their own outings.
- Shine created a diverse selection of articles to encourage older people to get out and about on the bus.

Verner's* story

"It's a very good thing that you all do for us. 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."

SJK Partnership



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 company but this didn't work out. AVSED quickly switched providers and focused instead on strengthening pre-existing relationships with SJK, their local private hire provider, to further develop SJK's accessible service offer. AVSED subsidised some taxi journeys

to encourage older members to start to travel in SJK private hire vehicles.

Achievements and legacy

- AVSED has learned a lot about how large-scale taxi / private hire companies operate, and the general lack of accessible taxi transport in Leeds.
- AVSED now encourages older members to share taxi rides to their weekly activity groups. This will continue as it has led to new friendships and social connections.
- A mutually beneficial partnership developed between AVSED and SJK. AVSED offered 'dementia friends' training to SJK and supports members to give feedback on good drivers. Older members are encouraged to share their insight with SJK into what makes taxi journeys easier, friendlier or more accommodating.
- SJK now matches regular drivers with specific AVSED members where possible, so that relationships develop. As a result, older people are more likely to use SJK private hire vehicles for independent journeys which are not linked to AVSED.

Pete's* story

Pete was anxious about joining a new group at AVSED and boarding a busy bus. Staff accompanied Pete on his first taxi journey to the group and introduced him to people there. Pete now shares a taxi with another member and attends social activities regularly.

Leeds Older People's Forum

Travel Apps and Bus Passes



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](#).

Achievements and legacy

- All delivery partners engaged existing older members and worked in a person-centred way to identify a variety of needs and solutions.
- Delivery partners provided face-to-face and online training in groups and one-to-one, and sometimes accompanied members on trips to help them gain confidence in using their new apps. For example, by taking a First Bus into Leeds.
- Older people developed their digital skills and increased their confidence to travel.
- Easy-to-follow guides were developed to help older people use apps for local and larger national taxi firms, Google Maps, Moovit, First Bus, Arriva and Flexi Bus.
- All delivery partners will continue to include travel training in their digital offer.

Irene's* story

"I was initially a little worried that I would not be able to use the First Bus app as it looked quite complex. After the introduction session I felt much better and was soon looking up routes and checking which bus stops I could use. The project has enhanced my self-confidence so much I feel I can look forward to taking regular bus journeys again."

Leeds Older People's Forum

Age and Dementia Friendly Taxis



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.

Achievements and legacy

- 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.
- 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, helped to raise awareness of the issues around taxis, transport and loneliness.
- Contributed to stakeholder consultation meetings to inform a city-wide review of taxi vehicle condition standards, with a focus on wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- Leeds Older People Forum was invited to present at taxi trade forums, to speak directly to taxi firms/drivers to ask them to support a 'Support our Seniors' (SOS) campaign. Research, surveys, consultation, discussions and 'mystery shopping' with older people around taxi usage provided the basis of the SOS campaign. Its aim is to highlight the role that taxi drivers play in helping to reduce social isolation and loneliness. A video 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.

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Hollybush

The Great Outdoors



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.

Achievements and legacy

- Friendships and connections developed and people rediscovered the joy of walking.
- Eight walking groups were supported to become self-sustaining. Seven of these now operate independently, meaning that Leeds now has seven additional walking groups spread across the city. The eighth merged with another group, so members still have the option to walk each week.
- Participants have been signposted to other TCV outdoor activities during the week.
- Some participants have developed confidence to use buses more frequently.
- TCV Hollybush is now a WYCA active travel hub. It is a place where walking groups can come for advice, equipment, and assistance. Staff can provide walk routes and risk assessments for newer groups.
- TCV has created strong connections with the wider Leeds community through this project and intends to build on these connections in future work.

Participants' stories

Here are links for an [East Leeds walking group case study](#) and [stories and quotes from TCV](#).

Leeds Older People's Forum

Cycling with Confidence



This project tried a variety of approaches to encourage older people to cycle more. This included a bike maintenance class, arranging guided cycle rides, signposting to existing cycling training in Leeds and providing a taster session using adapted cycles. By far 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.

Achievements and legacy

- [Click here to see a short video of the adapted cycle session](#), delivered in partnership with Wheels 4 Fun. This social session re-ignited one participant's passion for cycling and enabled two older people to ride a bike for the first time ever.
- The 'Age 50+ Introduction to Cycle Maintenance' course was fully booked, despite it taking place on a very rainy Sunday morning.
- Prior to Senior Spin, Active Leeds had never offered an adapted spin class. Focus groups with 40 older people identified overwhelming support for the idea.
- Both Senior Spin cohorts were fully booked and each session ended with social time where participants chatted and many made new friends. [Click here to see a short video](#) of a Senior Spin session in full flow. [Click here for a summary of the work](#).
- Senior Spin will continue to be delivered by Active Leeds, with participants charged the regular activity rate for each class. Sessions will still incorporate social time.

"I've wanted to have a go at a Spin class for some time but never felt confident enough to go to a class, mainly because I thought I would probably feel intimidated by a younger, fitter group of people! So I think this is a super project for us 'older' folk to get involved in"

Bramley Elderly Action (BEA)

Happy Cab



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. The longer term aim is for the project to become self-sustaining.

Achievements and legacy

- BEA purchased a new vehicle which will be an asset to members for years to come.
- The high-specification vehicle, distinctive wrap, accessibility features and friendly drivers all help to make members feel valued, happy and special.
- Sharing Happy Cab journeys has led to new friendships and social connections.
- Members can book their own trips, with friends, to locations that they choose.
- The Happy Cab supplements BEA's existing transport options, ensuring that there is space available for everyone who wants to go on social outings with BEA.
- An opportunity to purchase an accessible Hackney Cab was a new experience for BEA. It has broadened BEA's transport capacity and learning and raised the profile of BEA's work with older people. BEA is due to start a comprehensive review of their transport offer which will benefit older members longer term.

Helen* and Andy's* story

BEA invited Helen and Andy to be the very first couple to travel in the Happy Cab. They said it made them feel like royalty and they gave the royal wave to passers-by. On their next journey they both wore crowns! Andy recently passed away and Helen misses him dearly. She was so happy that BEA gave her a photo of Andy wearing his crown in the Happy Cab, as they both loved the whole experience and this brought back happy memories.

Carers Leeds

Carers Connecting



Supported group outings involve 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.

Achievements and legacy

- The most significant achievements relate to the experiences of carers attending the varied range of activities, all of which included transport by taxi, minibus or coach, so that they didn't waste precious time away from home waiting around for buses.
- One person said it was the first time in 18 years she has switched off and done something for herself. Another explained that the transport element really helped her as her husband, who has dementia, frets when she takes the car out alone.
- Carers have started to connect independently, swapping numbers, setting up a WhatsApp group, joining other Carers Leeds activities and meeting up socially.
- Carers Leeds believes that the offer of transport was central to this project's success. Although outings can't continue beyond May, future funding will be sought.

Salma's* story

"It was absolutely incredible the whole experience, I can't thank you enough. The last year has been not only tough but very isolating as it's difficult to burden other people with challenges that we face as carers. But what was so lovely was meeting others and speaking to another carer, and immediately we connected as we have similar circumstances. In fact, it felt as though we've known each other for years. I'm truly grateful for everything you do"

AVSED

Men's Matters



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.

Achievements and legacy

- Friendships and social connections developed during trips, and men felt useful and appreciated when helping to plan trips and supporting peers with additional needs.
- Based on their learning, AVSED switched from paid to volunteer drivers and put paid staff on the minibus to facilitate conversations and banter between members.
- Men's Matters outings were extremely popular, demonstrating the demand is there.
- A number of members moved onto regular social activities at AVSED, freeing up space on the minibus for men who required extra support to socialise.
- Men's Matters helped to highlight the specific needs of older males - particularly around mental health, peer support and bereavement. The project will continue, albeit with a set venue and at a cost to participants

Jim's* story

"My daughter said I needed to get out more but I thought it was a bit silly joining a group of old fellas - I'm a bit past that! But on the bus the atmosphere is great, we have a right laugh and you forget about all your troubles. I've made some great new friends and I've really opened up to some of them which I never thought I would, I surprised myself there."

Cross Gates & District Good Neighbours' Scheme

Shared Outings



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.

Achievements and legacy

- Many friendships and social connections have been formed during trips.
- The huge variety of Shared Outings trips is appealing and this has brought a large number of new members into Cross Gates Good Neighbours, all of whom are encouraged to take part in other social activities on offer.
- Staff are trialling an option to use public transport on supported trips, planning a trip by train from Cross Gates to Halifax Piece Hall. The aim is to help members develop the confidence to use public transport on their own, and to trial new, cost-effective ways for Cross Gates to continue to offer Shared Outings longer term.

Mary's* story

As a new member, Mary* was reluctant to attend a Shared Outing due to not knowing anyone. However, she joined the Fish & Chip trip and soon realised that she wasn't alone and thoroughly enjoyed it. On the same trip was another lady who had only just moved to Leeds. They began to chat and over time they formed a friendship and now regularly attend Shared Outings together. They also travel together to visit new places independently.

Leeds Older People's Forum

Let's Talk Transport



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. All delivery partners structured their Let's Talk Transport approach in different ways resulting in a diverse range of activities.

Achievements and legacy

- Delivery partners took part in Best Practice Meetings to share ideas.
- Members gained confidence to use public transport independently.
- The [consultation event held at the White Rose Shopping Centre](#) was a huge success.
- New participants joined the White Rose Centre's mall-walking group.
- Older people have taken part in focus groups about Flexi buses and Access buses.
- Walking groups and friendship groups continue to meet regularly for social events.
- Feel Good Factor's project [enabled older members to lead and run their own group](#).
- Learning will feed into the transport section of one organisation's four year plan.

"I'm extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to take part in this project. It's been fun and I have enjoyed it very much. Never thought I'd ever go to the cinema to watch a Marvel movie - I'm so glad I went"