

# Evaluation of the Driving Change Together Project



For Leeds Older People's Forum

By Sarah E Frost

6th May 2024



**“I'm 90 in June, and some people have commented on my age and that I am still driving. ...It does put doubt in your mind, so now I have had an instructor say my driving is safe, I can ignore the doubters”**

**Mature Driver Appraisal Participant**

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## Mature Driver Appraisal Participant

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# Executive Summary

## Background

The Driving Change Together (DCT) project, funded by the Road Safety Trust, ran from August 2023 until March 2024 and was led by Leeds Older People's Forum (LOPF). DCT aimed to understand 'what works' to encourage older drivers in Leeds to consider and review their driving ability as they age. LOPF worked in partnership with the William Merritt Centre (WMC), and the Influencing Travel Behaviour (ITB) team at Leeds City Council and collaborated with the Older Drivers Forum. The DCT project was made up of the following core elements:

- Consultation and co-production with older people on driving in later life and retiring from driving
- Development of a behaviour change campaign to encourage older people to consider their driving capabilities
- Delivery of the campaign through promotional events and activities
- The development and rollout of a Mature Driver Appraisal (MDA).

## Need for DCT and focus on older drivers

The number of older drivers is increasing and evidence suggests that they are more likely to be killed or seriously injured in road traffic incidents. At a local level, DCT also ties in with Leeds City Council's Vision Zero 2040 strategy, which aims to eliminate fatal and serious injuries as a result of road collisions by 2040.

## Evaluation Aim and Methods

This independent evaluation aimed to explore the role and benefits of the DCT project and identify learning and improvements for the future. The following methods were used: review of project documentation; group and individual interviews with key partners; thematic data analysis.

## Key benefits of DCT were:

- Improved partnerships and collaboration across Leeds
- Raised profile of LOPF's work on transport and older drivers
- Older people gained increased confidence and reassurance through the MDA
- MDA is well received by partner agencies identifying a need for further roll-out
- Generated insight into how to target future campaigns

# Executive Summary

## Key successes and enablers in DCT were:

- LOPF as the coordinator and driver of the project
- Individual skills and commitment of LOPF staff
- Consultation with, and feedback from, older people and partner agencies
- The MDA filled a gap in provision as a tool to assess older drivers' competence and enable conversations about driving in later life

As with any new and evolving project, **some challenges were also identified.**

These related to the following areas: timescales and resource limitations; awareness raising and referrals; MDA practical issues; and project management.

## Summary Conclusions

Overall DCT is meeting its objectives which contribute to the overall ambition of understanding 'what works' to encourage older drivers to assess their driving ability as they age. The evaluation presents some clear examples showing how objectives are being achieved.

There is evidence of good engagement by older people and the voice and views of older people in shaping the project were seen as valuable and important. DCT has also served to raise awareness of the subject of retiring from driving and enabled conversations on the topic.

The MDA is seen as a tool that can help improve driver safety and support independence in later life and was well received by partner agencies and by the older people who took part.

The project also enabled collaboration across partner agencies leading to increased connections and awareness of the role of the third sector.

The role and expertise of LOPF and the support and approach of the DCT project worker are particularly valued by staff in partner agencies and older people.

Based on the learning related to the enablers, successes and challenges identified, the report ends with some recommendations for consideration in the future of DCT or similar projects aimed at older drivers.

# 01. Introduction and Background

This independent evaluation report focuses on the development, delivery and learning from the Driving Change Together (DCT) project, funded by the Road Safety Trust. The DCT project ran between August 2023 and March 2024 and aimed to understand ‘what works’ to encourage older drivers in Leeds to consider their driving ability as they age.

DCT was led by Leeds Older People's Forum (LOPF) who worked in partnership with the William Merritt Centre (WMC) and the Influencing Travel Behaviour (ITB) team at Leeds City Council. LOPF also collaborated with Graham Mylward at Hampshire County Council and Rob Heard from the Older Drivers Forum who provided helpful advice and shared resources based on their experience with older drivers.

## Project design and delivery

The DCT project was made up of the following four core elements and had nine objectives (see Box 1):

- Consultation and co-production with older people on driving in later life and retiring from driving
- Development of a behaviour change campaign to encourage older people to consider their driving capabilities
- Delivery of the campaign’s promotional events and activities
- The development and rollout of a Mature Driver Appraisal (MDA).

1. Older people in Leeds are involved in shaping a campaign to improve road safety amongst people aged 60+ to reduce the number of accidents and collisions.
2. Older people in Leeds receive practical support to make more informed choices about why, how and when to stop (or reduce) driving.
3. More older people in Leeds try using alternative transport options.
4. Organisations working with older people have increased knowledge of, and awareness of, older people’s issues generally and more specifically with transport options in the City.
5. To recruit 5 DCT Champions.
6. To hold 4 cross-sector roadshows to showcase alternative forms of transport and provide older people with practical support and information.
7. To refer people for clinical driver assessments at WMC.
8. To take part in Leeds’ Road Safety Awareness Week
9. To measure the reach of the campaign, evaluate its effectiveness and disseminate learning.

## Need for DCT and Focus on Older Drivers

Creating a good impact report means being transparent with your audience. Back up your claims with relevant data. Keep your sentences concise when necessary, but dive into detail when it comes to qualitative and quantitative evidence. Remember: an impact report is a combination of understanding your mission, your work, and your audience, and communicating that clearly with the rest of the world.

The need for the DCT project stemmed from the fact that the number of older drivers is increasing. According to the Older Drivers Forum\*, some older drivers have problems assessing complex or high-speed traffic situations and need more time to process information. They may also make slower decisions, fail to predict hazards and may conduct a visual search poorly.

Furthermore, a report by the Older Drivers Forum states that older drivers are more likely to be killed or seriously injured with the number of car driver fatalities amongst older people set to increase over the next 20 years (by 40% amongst the 70-79 age group and by over 25% amongst the 80+ age group).\*\*

**“There are approximately 6.1 million people aged 70 and above driving on our roads, they account for 15% of all licences held, 11% of the miles driven, 8% of all casualties, but alarmingly across the whole of the UK around 28% of all fatalities are down to older drivers, older drivers themselves dying, and therefore, these are a group that we really need to support.” Rob Heard, Older Drivers Forum.**

At a local level, DCT also ties in with Leeds City Council’s Vision Zero 2040 strategy, which aims to eliminate fatal and serious injuries as a result of road collisions by 2040. The DCT project relates to one of the 5 key pillars of the strategy - ‘Safe behaviours and people’ - which encourages road users to behave in a way that keeps everyone safe, including a focus on distraction and careless driving.

\*<https://olderdriversforum.com/advice-for-friends-and-family/older-drivers-and-the-law/>

\*\*Supporting safe driving into old age -An update. Technical report. Older Drivers Forum. October 2021.

\*\*\*Neighbourhood Networks aim to meet local needs and provide services, activities and opportunities that older people want. There are 34 Neighbourhood Networks across Leeds.

# 02. Evaluation Aim and Approach

The overall aims of this independent evaluation were to explore the role and benefits of the DCT project and identify learning and improvements for the future. The evaluation centred around the following questions:

- How successful was the DCT project? Was it a good approach?
- What were the benefits of the approach used? What worked well?
- What were the challenges of the approach used? What could have been done differently?
- How successful was the partnership working element?
- How important was the involvement of older people?
- Was the messaging of the MDA right?
- What were the outcomes for older drivers?
- What has been the learning from the programme?

## Methods

- 1. Reviewing project documentation.** These included data provided by LOPF on campaign work, events attended, monitoring forms, feedback on the MDA experience, project plans, reports, and summary findings of 8 focus groups with older people. Reviewing these helped to identify questions to ask in interviews and provide evidence.
- 2. Group and individual interviews with key partners and stakeholders.** Interviews were undertaken with: William Merritt Centre Staff x 2, Advanced Driving Instructors x 2, Influencing Travel Behaviour Team x 3, Neighbourhood Network\*\*\* CEO x 1, DCT / LOPF Project Worker, and the Older Drivers Forum. All interviews were semi-structured (using questions as a guide) and done online.
- 3. Data analysis:** A thematic framework was designed and used to shape the interview questions and analysis of the information. The key themes were:
  - Successes/Strengths
  - Outcomes and Impact
  - Activities
  - What helps?
  - Progress towards objectives
  - Challenges/What makes things hard
  - Legacy and learning for the future
- 4. Consent/use of data:** Participants were given information about the purpose of the evaluation and how their information would be used. Permission was asked before recording the interviews and the recordings and transcripts were stored securely. These will be deleted at the end of the evaluation.



# 03. Findings

In this section, the evidence from the different sources is summarised to help answer the following questions:

1. How are project activities meeting objectives?
2. What do people think about the MDA?
3. Benefits of the project? What difference has it made?
4. What worked well?
5. What were the challenges? What's been hard?

## 3a. How are project activities meeting objectives?

The DCT project was made up of four core elements and related activities (see i-iv below). Each of these activities can be seen to address one or more of the project objectives (see Box 1). Some of the objectives themselves were outputs/activities (e.g. to hold 4 cross-sector roadshows, to take part in Leeds' Road Safety Awareness Week) and some objectives were outcomes / intended changes (e.g. older people in Leeds try using alternative transport options, organisations working with older people have increased knowledge and awareness). Due to the short time frame of the project and the evaluation, there is little or no evidence yet about some of the project outcomes as relevant data (e.g. changes in older people's transport behaviour because of the campaign) was not routinely collected.

Examples of how the project activities have achieved the intended objectives are given below.

### ***i. Consultation and co-production with older people***

LOPF worked closely with older people to understand 'what works' in Leeds to encourage older drivers to assess their driving ability as they age and consider alternative forms of transport. A total of 128 older people were consulted through focus groups and other events.

LOPF ran 5 focus groups in partnership with 5 community organisations, in September and October '23. A total of 57 older adults, some drivers and some non-drivers, attended the focus groups. Using conversation prompts, participants were invited to share their ideas, opinions, and experiences about transport and driving in later life and explore the barriers, challenges and benefits of retiring from driving. Comments from older people suggested that retiring from driving isn't something they generally think about until they are involved in a collision or are prompted by relatives.

“When that car isn’t on the drive anymore you have to deal with all the challenges ...you just don’t think about or plan for the challenges until it happens.”

“I had one bump in my life and my daughter said I can't drive anymore.”

“If I was told to stop driving by a medical professional - I would, but I wouldn’t be happy about it. But life goes on and I would still get around because you have to.”

Whilst the original plan for the focus groups was to have open / free discussions, much of the conversations related to general problems with the public transport infrastructure in Leeds. To help steer the conversation towards the topic of retiring from driving, details of assessments for older drivers delivered in other areas (Hampshire and Gloucester) were shared with participants as a prompt to generate responses, interest and queries about how a similar model could work in Leeds.

A DCT focus group questionnaire was used to gather each person’s views and a summary of findings was produced. LOPF gathered verbal feedback on how participants found the experience after each group.

In addition to the focus groups, 3 public engagement events were held (2 in person, 1 online) involving a total of 71 people. Informed by these consultations, the DCT project created the **Mature Driver Appraisal** and devised a poster to promote this which was launched by partners during Road Safety Week (Nov 2023).

### **Relevant objectives:**

**Objective 1:** Older people in Leeds are involved in shaping a campaign to improve road safety amongst older people to reduce the number of accidents and collisions.

**Objective 4:** Organisations working with older people have increased knowledge of, and awareness of, issues affecting older people and more specifically with transport options in the City.

## **ii. Campaign development**

The focus groups also provided a space to test out potential campaign messages and LOPF used the feedback and consultation with older people to inform the design of a behaviour change campaign aimed at older drivers. The

initial campaign materials were redesigned based on feedback from 38 people (aged between 30 - 70) to ensure they were appealing and relevant to older drivers and their families.

### **Relevant objectives:**

**Objective 1:** Older people in Leeds are involved in shaping a campaign to improve road safety amongst older people to reduce the number of accidents and collisions.

### ***iii. Campaign delivery - promotional events and activities***

A range of promotional and awareness-raising activities were undertaken to share the campaign messages and increase awareness of the MDA. These included:

- 21 formal events, meetings or activities were attended where information was shared about DCT and the MDA. MDAs were also promoted during more informal visits to community activities and stalls in community spaces.
- 254 road safety goody bags (containing information about the MDA and alternative and accessible transport options) were distributed during Road Safety Week and to people attending outreach events.
- The DCT Project Development Officer spoke to 475 people in a wide range of settings in person or via a Webinar between Nov '23 - Feb '24. This included older people, staff and volunteers in relevant organisations in Leeds, and members of the public.
- At least 10 Leeds-based organisations and programmes were targeted to help with the promotion of the MDA, these included: Age UK Leeds, Health for All, Travel Hubs, Seacroft Friends & Neighbours, Enhance programme (led by LOPF), Care & Repair Leeds, Forum Central Networking Meeting, Local Care Partnership.
- DCT and MDAs were also promoted on social media and via a range of media coverage, including radio (Chapel FM community radio and [BBC Radio Leeds](#)), an advertorial in the [Yorkshire Evening Post](#), and an [article for the BBC](#).
- 7 [DCT champions](#) were also recruited in specific localities and organisations to help promote the MDA to their peers. Champions also featured in marketing materials.
- MDA participants were also encouraged to tell their friends and 48% of MDA participants heard about the MDA through word of mouth.
- WMC contributed to the campaign delivery via promotional events and activities.

### **Relevant objectives:**

**Objective 2:** Older people in Leeds receive practical support to make more informed choices about why, how and when to stop (or reduce) driving.

**Objective 3.** More older people in Leeds try using alternative transport options

**Objective 4:** Organisations working with older people have increased knowledge of, and awareness of, issues affecting older people and transport options in the City.

**Objective 5:** To recruit 5 DCT Champions.

**Objective 6:** To hold 4 cross-sector roadshows to showcase alternative forms of transport and provide older people with practical support and information.

**Objective 8:** To take part in Leeds Road Safety Awareness Week

#### ***iv. Mature Driver Appraisal (MDA)***

The Mature Driver Appraisal (MDA) was a key part of the DCT programme. The MDA aims to keep older people driving safely for longer by giving them an opportunity for an informal review of their driving skills. The hour-long appraisals, given by an Advanced Driving Instructor (ADI), are conducted in the drivers' own car and involve driving in their local area to places they usually drive to. Participants are given verbal and written feedback, alongside up-to-date road safety advice and information about vehicle adaptations.

Due to short timescales (4 months between the launch of MDAs and the end of the project) uptake of the MDA bookings was slow initially. A fee of £49 was charged initially for the MDA and it was then offered for free to encourage uptake.

- 40 older people aged between 72 and 90 took an MDA during the DCT project between Nov '23 and March '24.
- Older people had heard about the MDA via Neighbourhood Networks, and articles in the Connecting Leeds newsletter, East Leeds magazine and via events and outreach by LOPF. WMC also promoted the MDA via email and on their [website](#).
- The DCT project referred 4 people who were unsuitable for the MDA due to health challenges to William Merritt Centre for a clinical driving assessment. One person who completed an MDA was recommended to have a driving assessment by the ADI.

## ***What do people think about the MDA?***

The MDA was a core tangible output of the DCT approach that was seen to have benefits for older drivers, partner agencies and wider stakeholders.

### **For older drivers**

“I'm 90 in June and some people have commented on my age and that I am still driving. It does frustrate me to hear these comments and it does put doubt in your mind so now I have had an instructor say my driving is safe I can ignore the doubters.” (MDA Participant)

“I was absolutely delighted with the outcome. I was reasonably confident that my driving was still safe but obviously being assessed by a professional and receiving all green ticks made me feel on top of the world.” (MDA Participant)

### **For William Merritt Centre**

“From the clients that I took out, they seem to think [the MDA] was a really, really good idea. They left saying that they would be recommending it to other people.” (Advanced Driving Instructor).

“The main attraction...is we do a lot of driving assessments and we do clinical assessments and the police prosecution assessments for driving and this did fit very well into our portfolio of assessments for people remaining independently mobile for longer.” (WMC)

### **For the wider agenda**

“The focus of the MDA is on building confidence, signposting and supporting people with alternative transport options. MDA is important in identifying and addressing driving abilities and providing support for older drivers to continue driving safely. They help people identify when it's safe and when it's the time to retire from driving - it provides a softer approach to that decision...rather than a sudden shock.” (Older Drivers Forum)

### **For Neighbourhood Networks**

“We definitely think this is great [the MDA] is a tool for us to be able to use...we do a lot of work with people that are coming to the end of being able to drive so this is absolutely brilliant...and we know that the people are going to be safe if they have been assessed... that's fantastic.” (Neighbourhood Network)

## For Partners in Leeds

“really lovely hearing...about how delighted they were about [the MDA], how much they enjoyed it, how much better they felt, how they would have gladly paid for it...the people that have done it have been really satisfied...So that's got to be a positive thing, which is credit to William Merritt Centre staff, that they did this really well, and to Tracy.” (ITB Team)

### Relevant objectives:

**Objective 7:** To refer people for driver clinical assessments at WMC

- **Objective 2:** Older people in Leeds receive practical support to make more informed choices about why, how and when to stop (or reduce) driving.

## 3b. Benefits of the DCT project: What difference has it made?

The main benefits of the DCT project were:

- Improved partnerships and collaboration across Leeds
- Raised profile of LOPF's work on transport and older drivers
- Generated insight into how to target future campaigns
- MDA gave older drivers confidence and reassurance
- Identified a need for further roll-out of the MDA

### Improved partnerships and collaboration across Leeds

The collaboration and communication between partners involved in DCT were important to the success of the project. Partners shared knowledge and expertise in supporting independence in older age, made new connections with local organisations and strengthened the connection with LOPF. Working with LOPF and the ITB team helped staff at WMC understand the roles and functions of other agencies and enable future partnership work.

“Our relationship with [Leeds City Council] is better because of LOPF...So we've got some new contacts now because we didn't even know that the Influencing Travel Behaviour team existed....and we should have known about it with what we do. So introductions to the individuals there, going forward, I think will be really useful for us ...We will maintain connections with Leeds City Council.” (WMC)

For the ITB Team, DCT provided **an opportunity to work with and learn more about 3rd sector provision**. They found the input from WMC and LOPF really valuable and saw the benefits of joint working between local authorities and community groups to reach target audiences.

**“they [WMC] are an organisation that I didn't know that much about...they do lots of things which I wasn't...aware of.” (ITB Team)**

The DCT project also served to influence the approaches of partners who saw the benefits of the consultation with older adults. As a result, the ITB team are considering how to incorporate co-production and consultation with older adults into their work.

**“We've never done something targeted like this with that group [age 80+] so this has been a nice way...and going to things like focus groups and really seeing and hearing from those groups have been really useful for us.” (ITB Team)**

## **Raised profile of LOPF's transport work and older drivers**

Transport is one of LOPF's key themes and DCT has helped to move this agenda forward, enabling LOPF to build on their reputation for transport-related work. Through creating new working relationships with WMC, the Older Drivers Forum and the ITB team and **enabling conversations around the safety of older drivers**, DCT has helped to raise the profile of LOPF's role and contribution to this arena.

## **Provided insight into how to develop and target future campaigns**

Developing the marketing campaign collaboratively over time with older people, partner agencies and experts in the field was seen to be of value and resulted in learning that may be of use for future campaign development. Sharing ideas and experience from other areas was useful in gaining feedback and prompting further conversations which helped hone the campaign messaging around the MDA. The resulting focus of the campaign was on safer driving and raising awareness of alternative travel options with the promotion of the MDA as a tool to be used by older drivers. The media campaign employed a different approach in sharing stories, raising awareness of the MDA offer and trialling messages for different audiences, including older drivers and their families.

## MDA gave older drivers confidence and reassurance

Feedback about the MDA from participants was extremely positive. They described the benefits as **reassurance, increased confidence and overcoming stigma**. Individuals said that they felt reassured that their driving was objectively safe and participants appreciated the 'green ticks' which were viewed as an objective measure of success.

Most individuals said that the MDA was as expected - they were looking for an appraisal of their driving from an expert and some recommendations or advice if needed. For some, it was more positive than anticipated as it felt more relaxed.

### MDA Participants' Feedback

"I thought it may have been more like a test. When [they] explained it's like taking a friend out. I felt quite at ease. Much less stressful."

"I can now show people my badge and say I'm a perfectly good driver thank you, so I won't be stopping as I don't need to."

"[My daughter] was really pleased as she said, 'That's put my mind at rest'."

"I feel now I have knowledge that I'm safe which is important so when I drive my car, I know I am a safe driver".

"I felt totally at ease with the [William Merritt Centre] driving instructor who said my driving was safe and he gave me some helpful advice. I would recommend this to anyone and I'm really glad I did it."

"What a marvellous opportunity this is for older drivers to be able to check their driving skills and I am telling all my friends."

"The appraisal was very good and very reassuring. I know lots of people my age that should be checking their driving skills and I have recommended it to one of my friends."

The MDA prompted some older people to consider their driving ability and make informed decisions:

"It's really good because then it's making people think... one of the guys [identified] a few issues and he said, 'I'm gonna work on them'. So it's making them aware...as people that age, they still want to be able to have the independence. It shouldn't stop unless it really has to." (Neighbourhood Network)



“[One older driver had] difficulty in her shoulders, arthritis in her arms and...she'd been out [for a drive] the day before... it had not gone particularly well, so she'd made the decision to stop driving. And maybe it is just us turning up and giving them that little nudge to say well, 'Which way are you going to go?' ...I said, 'Look, you can go down the clinical route... and we can look at adaptations and... see if we can keep you driving'. But she said she was quite happy with a decision that she'd made to call it a day” (ADI)

## Identified a need for further roll-out of the MDA

Feedback from partner agencies and older people indicated there was an ongoing need for the MDA. WMC saw that the MDA as forming part of a suite on offer to their clients to enable them to, 'remain independently mobile for longer'. Neighbourhood Networks saw the MDA as another 'tool' for them to use as a referral option and enabling conversations about retiring from driving.

“There'll be a demand across Leeds. If we had had this a few years ago, it would have saved us so many issues and helped us a lot...it's another tool for because we do come across this on a regular basis...where we've seen that people aren't safe to drive and so we've had to have a duty of care and do something about it..So we've got to tread really carefully because you've taken somebody's full independence away - that's how they see it..... the transition from somebody driving and having their independence to stopping. It's massive. It's really depressing for them” (Neighbourhood Network)



### 3c. What worked well when developing and running the DCT

The following four factors were identified as enablers in the development and running of the DCT project:

- Leeds Older People's Forum (LOPF) as the coordinator and driver of the project
- Individual skills and commitment of LOPF staff
- Consultation and feedback to develop the initiative
- Success of the MDA

#### LOPF as the coordinator and driver of the project

**Leeds Older People's Forum (LOPF) were seen as an expert, with a track record**, and a wealth of knowledge gained from working with older people. They also had **existing connections** with other organisations that support older people, enabling rapid mobilisation of partnerships. They were described by interviewees as the right organisation to coordinate the project.

“We've got the clientele and we've got the audience that's required. We've got the trust there. WMC know their stuff, but LOPF link us all together, and they're fantastic at what they do... and it's important for the [Leeds City Council] to be doing things like this...” (Neighbourhood Network)

“I think [LOPF] have had the time...to explore other initiatives that are out there. And ones that we perhaps weren't aware of, and that future projects have now come off the back of that. So, Tracy was making contacts with all sorts of different organisations...and started to find out a lot more about what was happening across the country to support older drivers. And that was really useful for us... that's a real positive that's come out of it.” (ITB Team)

The role of LOPF in reaching, engaging with and recruiting older people was also seen to be a key success factor and benefit. They were seen as a trusted and knowledgeable source.

“I think if it was something that LOPF had not taken to their clients, it may have been more difficult to get people on board... because [LOPF] has already got those connections...and using those connections and going in a softly, softly, way ... whereas someone external comes in, saying 'we'd like to give you a driving appraisal' - woah, where does this come from? What are you trying to do to me?” (Advanced Driving Instructor)

“We might have had ideas about what could have worked, but [LOPF are] on the ground and...when there were things that needed to be tested or opinions needed, they could turn that around really quickly, Tracy would just say, ‘There’s a group happening tomorrow. I’ll go there. So their flexibility in terms of meeting the needs of the project, I think it’s a real positive...people trusted her, they believed her and they were willing to give it a go on the back of that.’” (ITB Team)

## **Individual skills and commitment of LOPF staff**

More specifically, the role of the LOPF project development officer (Tracy) was identified as key to the success of the project. Her enthusiasm, passion and determination were seen to be a driving force leading to valuable connections and partnerships which helped build trust with potential clients. Partner agencies said they valued Tracy’s tenacity and learnt from her flexibility and inclusive approach.

“I would say Tracy is a bit of a force of nature, and I think she’s made this happen... there’s no doubt about it... it’s been her tenacity and her personality that have kind of....pushed this along.” (ITB Team)

“Tracy’s passion was another level. I can’t fault her on that at all, she was very much the driving force behind it. And the passion and the inclusivity. And I was, ‘Oh, can you introduce me to people?’... So the networking, the inclusivity.” (WMC)

“[Tracy’s] got tons of experience with...working with the older people of Leeds. I think her input has been invaluable.” (ADI)

## **Consultation and feedback to develop the initiative**

Interviewees saw the benefit of the ‘package’ of the stages of DCT, developed through consultation with organisations with relevant expertise and experience. The ‘test and learn approach’ championed by LOPF - which encouraged delivery partners to work flexibly and develop their project by making changes to their approach based on learning and insight - was seen as valuable.

The consultation with older people at the start was felt to be essential in understanding their views and experiences to inform the design of the project. This was achieved through the focus groups, giving older people a voice and an opportunity to share their thoughts and views on driving as they age.

Interviewees reported that the learning and insight gained through this process increased understanding of the sensitivities of the topic amongst partner agencies and helped to inform the campaign messages. This, in turn, increased the reach and impact of the MDA.

“[Consulting older people was] really important because they want to know all the ins and outs - they want to be able to ask questions...it's alright trying to set something up but if you don't ask the people that are going to be benefiting and using that service, you're never going to get it right... it's good that the [Neighbourhood Network] members are involved in it, rather than something's been handed to them. They do like to be actively involved here, and it's them that it's gonna benefit.” (Neighbourhood Network)

“I've learned like lots of things about the stages...particularly around the co-production stuff because I think it's something we need to get better at and do more of I think as an organisation and, it clearly works better if people think it's a good idea, you know, rather than you imposing it on them.” (ITB Team)

“I think the great thing about it is that, rather than just coming up with the idea, [LOPF] actually spoke to a lot of...older people involved...and asked them for their opinions, which really helped cement the reasons why we're doing this...it's rubber-stamped by having...older people themselves saying actually this is the sort of thing we're looking for. This is what we need. And I think that that has been invaluable to see that.” (Rob Heard, Older Driver's Forum).

## Partnership working to deliver the initiative

The DCT project **drew on the time, expertise and connections** of a broad range of different agencies, offering shared ownership of the project. New connections were formed as a result of the work, for example with the William Merritt Centre, the ITB Team at Leeds City Council and the Older Drivers Forum. These connections have helped lay the path for future partnership working and collaboration.

Feedback from those involved in the project highlighted that partnership working with local authorities and community groups helped **expand the reach** of the project to a range of older people. Working with the WMC, local authority partners and expert advisors ensured **specific relevant input and advice**.

“The only way of successfully achieving something is working together with different organisations, different people to try and get it put out there...so people get to know about it, but also helping support each other as, financially through it, but also... giving the time and expertise that goes with that as well.” (Rob Heard, Older Driver's Forum).

“We've worked...great together [the ITB Team and LOPF] ...we've built such a strong relationship now...[the DCT project] complemented their [Vision Zero] strategy and... they've been a good source of advice [and] great at bouncing things around and making suggestions...it's been good to have that much expertise...at the council level to be able to help and dictate which directions we should be going in..... it's cemented a relationship for the future because...we need to keep continually working on transport issues.” (Project worker, LOPF)

## Success of the MDA

The MDA was successful on many levels and feedback from partner agencies was unanimously positive. The MDA was seen to fill a gap in provision as a tool to assess older drivers' competence and enable conversations about driving in later life. The positive aspects highlighted are listed below.

### Positive Aspects of the MDA:

- The **'friendly entry point'** and personalised approach to booking, which gave individuals time to talk.
- The introduction of a **'goody bag'** which those involved seemed to value.
- Skilled and supportive **Advanced Driving Instructors** who helped the participants build confidence.
- The **traffic light method of feedback** was useful for clients to quickly see their strengths and weaknesses.
- **Reassuring family and support workers** that drivers are safe.
- The introduction of **'Driving Champions'** from the Neighbourhood Network to offer peer support and encourage others to take the MDA.
- **Filling a gap in provision** for older people who are not eligible for a clinical assessment of their driving but may need some reassurance or advice.
- **Helping to signpost and support alternative transport options** e.g. Access Bus.
- Providing a **gentle approach to helping older individuals consider their driving capabilities** and be able to make informed decisions or adjustments.
- Offering an **independent, objective expert voice** (from an ADI) to raise any concerns and engage in difficult discussions about driving capability, so that other agencies can stay neutral and continue to support individuals with other aspects of their lives.

Feedback about the MDA from other stakeholders and partners was also encouraging and highlighted the benefits of the approach.

“[ADIs are] really nice and they're official and they sit down but they're quite chatty with the people and made them really relaxed. I think they were at the right level...I think it's been done in a good way.” (Neighbourhood Network)

“[ADIs] have been absolutely magnificent...they are absolutely the right people to do the job.” (Project Worker, LOPF)

“I was a little uncertain...[about] the goodie bag with a little badge in it ...but that went down really, really well for everyone that we gave it to. They wore it with pride and were quite happy to receive it...they've got something they can show family members or friends and sort of take pride in the fact that they've done it.” (ADI)

“I think...it gives them reassurance or if a family are saying, 'Oh dad, you need to give up driving'...You can actually show them that you're okay to drive.” (Neighbourhood Network)

“There are many older people who have gone through the [MDA] that wouldn't have otherwise...there is something new that's been offered to those who are not being told they can't drive or need an assessment on medical grounds. It's just something that's filling that gap.” (ITB Team)

### **3d. Challenges - What could have been better?**

Whilst there were numerous benefits and successes of the DCT work, as with any new and evolving project using a test-and-learn approach, there will inevitably be unplanned issues that arise. The challenges outlined below, and related learning from these, form the basis for some of the recommendations for the future should the project be repeated or continue.

The main challenges faced in the project related to the following areas:

- Timescales
- Resource limitations
- Project management issues
- Awareness raising and referrals
- MDA practical issues

#### **Timescales**

The DCT project had to come together quickly and the tight timelines posed significant challenges affecting the planning, engagement and potential for impact, sometimes leading to rushed decisions.

“Time has been the biggest challenge...putting the campaign and getting the research together...we were constantly against the clock.” (LOPF Project Lead)

“I must admit the timeframe...wasn't suitable to us...and with very little resource and funds to it - and that I suppose that for me, has been one of the big learning curves, but it's been a fantastic experience.” (WMC)

“The biggest thing that hasn't gone well is just the time limitation of this project meant then it sort of started fully formed before we really got a sense of what were trying to achieve.” (ITB Team)

Also, the amount of time and support some older people have needed around signing up and doing MDA has impacted time and resource allocation.

“Older adults need handholding...you need a really, really person-centred approach and help them as much as you can.” (LOPF Project Worker)

## **Resource Limitations**

The limited amount of resource allocated to the project was prohibitive and this hindered the project's effectiveness. Partner agencies felt there were insufficient resources for admin tasks and marketing. In particular, the amount of resource allocated to WMC was not sufficient to fully cover the necessary admin costs and MDAs also took a significant amount of time alongside the core work that WMC deliver.

“Admin was a big part that was underestimated...there's a lot more admin in it than we expected.” (WMC)

“[Initially] envisaged our input into this was, a comms only sort of function and it certainly grew a bit beyond that...and it had to be kind of reigned in a bit, to what was realistic within the very, very limited budget.” (ITB Team)

The pilot has identified a need and an appetite for the MDA but additional funding will be required in order for MDAs to continue to be available.

## **MDA practical issues**

Some challenges related to the administration and delivery of the MDA.

## Using WMC as an administrator

There were some issues identified with the WMC booking system. As WMC is set up to deliver clinical assessments the language used initially was felt to be off-putting for older adults completing the online form. There was also some confusion initially amongst WMC staff between the MDA and clinical assessments which caused delays. Following some initial feedback, the WMC online process was simplified with more appropriate language.

Individual older people who booked an MDA online had mixed experiences. Contact details were not provided so individuals had to wait for a call on the day of the appraisal and couldn't change dates, one person had an initial appointment cancelled at very short notice, and two others reported a lack of sensitivity about the topic:

“I did it online and everything seemed fine. However, I wrote that I had restricted vision in one eye which I have had for years and never told it was a problem. On the morning of the assessment I received a call from the Instructor, and this was then checked with the DVLA which made me very nervous. If I could have spoken to someone at the time of booking that moment of anxiety could have been avoided.”  
(MDA Participant)

“I received a three-page letter prior to the appraisal which I found the wording to be intimidating. It referred a lot to reporting to the DVLA but the wording was in your face. My son read it and said, "Why are you doing this, you could be setting yourself up to fail?" I obviously wasn't put off but I could see if someone was nervous about their driving they might not go ahead.” (MDA Participant)

**Gaps in communication** around the bookings of MDAs sometimes resulted in confusion and misinformation for ADIs and participants.

“Sometimes there was an issue where ...I will come in and find that there was a space in the diary...and suddenly I get a phone call saying, 'you're meant to be somewhere' ...the information didn't always get to the delivery side of it.” (ADI)

The admin tasks required to be done by ADIs as part of the MDA were sometimes off-putting for participants.

Partway through the project, as a result of these issues, Tracy took on the role of administrator and ensured MDA appointment details were sent directly to instructors. WMC also created dedicated slots for the MDA were also added to ADI diaries to make MDA booking process smoother.



## Project management issues

Some partners felt there was some initial ambiguity about the project aims and partner roles which led to confusion and inefficiency. As a developing project, there was a sense that the 'goalposts' were moving which led to some frustration and a perceived waste of resources.

“It was difficult because it wasn't our project...The shifting of the goalposts...where I thought we've got an agreement and then something else happened...that happened more than once.” (ITB Team)

“The boundaries of the project were a bit fuzzy...but because there was so little time to deliver it ...we did do a lot of to-ing and fro-ing, where things kept getting chopped and changed and time was wasted.” (ITB Team)

Some partners stated that the **expertise across the partnership could have been better utilised** with clearer goals and more time.

“there is a lot of experience and expertise across the partnership...but maybe it wasn't made best use of perhaps because of those time constraints and lack of clarity about where the goalposts should be or whether they needed to move.” (ITB Team)

## Awareness raising and referrals

Whilst a large amount of networking, engagement and promotional activity took place, a lack or low level of engagement from some partners/agencies restricted the promotion and uptake of the campaign and the MDA. To increase awareness of the MDA, the project worker attempted to connect with health professionals and social prescribing services but faced some resistance.

“getting my foot through the door has been challenging... social prescribing have totally resisted me....it's such a disappointment because [they're] the people that are talking to people in GP practices., they said, ‘ just send us the leaflet’.” (LOPF Project worker)

Initially uptake for the MDA was slow and there were mixed views on whether making a charge affected this. The focus group findings suggested many older people would be willing to pay a fee, however, the uptake increased when the fee was removed. Some partners felt that offering funded MDAs would make them more accessible to a broader range of people.

# 04. Conclusions and Recommendations

## Summary conclusions

The DCT project has been effective in raising awareness of road safety issues and the need to consider safer alternatives to driving in later life. Despite the project being developed and delivered in a short time frame of 8 months, there has been a range of activity and engagement.

Overall DCT is meeting its objectives which contribute to the overall ambition of understanding 'what works' to encourage older drivers to assess their driving ability as they age and consider safer alternatives. There are some clear examples showing how objectives are being achieved.

The project elements which have had the most tangible impacts on older people's lives are the consultation with older people and the MDA.

There is evidence of good engagement by older people in focus groups and as driver champions. Capturing the views and experiences of older people helped generate knowledge and insight relating to transport, road safety and retiring from driving. The voices and views of older people in shaping the project were seen as valuable in informing the MDA and related campaign messages. DCT has also served to raise awareness of the subject of retiring from driving and enabled conversations between older drivers (and their families) on the topic.

The project also made some differences to partner organisations and the way they work together in Leeds. DCT has enabled and supported collaboration across partner agencies leading to increased connections and awareness of the role of the third sector. The role and expertise of LOPF and the support and approach of the DCT project worker are particularly valued by staff in partner agencies and by older people.

The MDA was well received by partner agencies and by the older people who took part and is seen as a tool that can help improve driver safety and support independence in later life. Staff at LOPF and WMC see the value of continuing the MDA as a means of assessing driving abilities and also enabling difficult conversations about retiring from driving.

Whilst there are no concrete examples, the work of the DCT project has scope to influence road safety policy and practice. For example, through the networking, promotion and influence with various partners across the city and the connection with the Older Drivers Forum and links with the Vision Zero campaign (led by the ITB team at Leeds City Council). At an individual level, referrals for clinical driver assessments have increased because of DCT due to signposting. An increased uptake of MDAs should result in safer older drivers on the roads.

Some outcomes and impacts have not been measurable during this evaluation due to a lack of time and lack of data. For example, data on the extent to which older people are making use of alternative transport options because of the campaign was not available, and views of people who chose not to do an MDA were not collected.

In analysing what helped the DCT project be successful and identifying the challenges, the following recommendations are presented for consideration. In addition, a mini toolkit, designed by LOPF to share practical information and learning, has been created. Its purpose is to help people who may be interested in replicating the approach within their organisation. The toolkit is available on the [resources section of the LOPF website](#).

## **Recommendations**

The findings and learning from this evaluation present some opportunities and recommendations for LOPF or other agencies wishing to replicate similar work.

- a. Ensure clear systems for communication between project partners and clarity about the roles and expectations of partner agencies.
- b. Ensure adequate time and resources are available (e.g. to cover staff time) and gain agreement on project timelines.
- c. Have a plan for the continuation of the MDA before funding ends.
- d. Simplify the MDA booking system to improve accessibility and offer training to admin staff on how to increase the engagement of older people (and ensure time and resources for this e.g. time needed to have a call, answer questions).
- e. Streamline the pre-MDA paperwork process to reduce the time needed on the day e.g. clients fill out some paperwork in advance.
- f. Incorporate MDA as part of a wider offer related to keeping older people independent for longer. Provide advice and information on alternatives to driving including signposting to other provision (e.g. refresher lessons) where appropriate.

- g. Continue to make use of / recruit DCT champions and create opportunities for them to share their enthusiasm and experience to promote the MDA and support conversations about transport in later life.
- h. Involve older people in developing marketing messages for different audiences to widen the reach of MDA e.g. those older drivers who may be more complacent.
- i. Encourage agencies who work with older drivers to ask about their driving status when they register.
- j. Explore opportunities to increase uptake of MDA e.g. at licence renewal, offer free/subsidised places, link to annual 'MOT' health checks.
- k. Make the most of opportunities for collaboration and influencing around safe driving in older age particularly with organisations, partnerships and agendas focused on older people and transport (locally and nationally).
- l. Review MDA monitoring systems to include data collection on: changes in MDA participants' attitudes/behaviours at 3-time points (i.e. before MDA, after MDA and 6 months post-MDA)
- m. Continue to capture the experience and feedback from MDA participants (including those advised not to drive) and those who choose not to volunteer for an MDA.



**“I do think it's been successful...it needs time to establish and grow and become part of Leeds and what we have to offer.”**