

RURAL TRANSPORT AND OLDER PEOPLE IN LINCOLNSHIRE



RESEARCH REPORT

In association with the Policy Studies Research Centre
and Lincoln Business School



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Executive Summary

- The population of the UK is ageing and it is predicted that by 2035 people aged 65 and over will comprise 23% of the total UK population.
- These changing demographics are particularly noticeable in rural areas of the UK, where the average age of a rural resident is 42, compared to 36 for an urban resident. The out-migration of younger age groups and the selective re-population of many of England's rural areas with older age groups, means that the rural population is simultaneously growing and ageing.
- Research indicates that among post-retirement older people there is a clear connection between transport and social exclusion, which is especially marked in rural areas. Accessible transport is therefore a key factor in preventing social isolation, facilitating independence and maintaining a high quality of life.
- This report was commissioned to examine these issues and investigate the current and future transportation needs of older people in Lincolnshire after transport was listed as one of three top priorities for older people in a consultation with this age group in the county.
- The report will form part of a wider proposal to develop a community transport strategy for Lincolnshire, supported by a marketing and communication plan that sets out how all transport services can be marketed to older people.
- If well planned, community transport can form a vital component of an integrated transport system as it provides an important passenger transport resource, which complements other transport services such as local bus and rail networks and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) schemes such as CallConnect.
- In so doing, community transport helps to provide and enhance passenger transport accessibility and reduce social isolation in rural areas and for particular categories of people (such as older people), who can find it difficult to access public transport.
- The main conclusions which emerged from the research are as follows:
 - There was a severe lack of knowledge amongst participants about what community transport schemes existed, how they operated and what services they offered.
 - There appeared to be a negative relationship between the number of community transport providers and high levels of socio-economic deprivation. For example, in Gainsborough there were no voluntary/community car schemes, whilst in Louth, there was a large scheme, well operated and well used. However, despite these findings, there were still people living in Louth attending the focus group who had little or no idea about what a voluntary/community car scheme was or what other services like CallConnect could do for them.
 - The dominant role of the car in older people's lives was noticeable: both men and women were very reluctant to give up driving and continued to drive into their 80s.
 - While some older people felt that their free bus passes were a 'lifeline', others felt they were less useful as there were not enough buses to use them on, could not use them due to mobility issues and the distance from their homes to a bus stop, or were not aware that they could be used on DRT services e.g. CallConnect.
 - A severe lack of coordination between transport services was reported by older people. These included connection times between different bus operators and also to railway stations. Furthermore there was also a variety of health care providers who older people felt gave little or no consideration as to how they were to get to appointments and how to deal with potential life changing events, e.g. the cessation of driving.
 - While many older people appeared to own mobile phones, very few used these to send text messages and no participants used their phone to access the internet.



- Very few of the people interviewed used a computer, instead relying on their sons and daughters to find out information when they had no other option but to use a computer and access the internet. However, some older people did express a desire to learn more about computer technology and how to access the internet.
- There are a lack of public and community transport services that operate during the evenings and at weekends in rural communities. This creates a feeling of isolation amongst the older people interviewed and difficulties in accessing essential amenities and services.

Based on the research in this report, a series of short and longer term recommendations are suggested to increase the use of public and community transport services by older people in rural communities:

Short term

- 1 The implementation of a promotional and marketing campaign that would raise awareness of different rural transport services available to older people
- 2 Further development of the Lincolnshire Community Transport Forum
- 3 The promotion of voluntary/community transport as a way to access healthcare

Longer term

- 4 Greater opportunities for older people to access and learn about ICT for transport
- 5 The expansion of the concessionary bus pass scheme to be used on other transport services



Section 1. Introduction and background to the research

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a study into the current and future transport needs of older people (60+) in rural parts of Lincolnshire. In particular the study focused on older people's use and perceptions of public (commercial bus and train companies, including InterConnect routes and CallConnect) and community transport (voluntary/community car schemes) services. This twelve month study was a partnership project between Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and the University of Lincoln (UoL) and some of the recommendations from this report will inform a marketing and communication plan to increase the use of transport services by older people. The work was undertaken with support from the Community Transport Association (CTA), and was funded by LCC through the Excellent Ageing programme. The study supports LCC's 'Excellent Ageing' programme and LCC's smarter choices and accessibility agenda to improve access to essential services using sustainable transport where possible. This introductory section describes the background to the study and addresses the national and regional policy context surrounding old age, rural life and transport. The research questions that guided the study and the structure of the remainder of the report are then outlined.

Context

The population of the UK is aging. According to UK National Statistics, the number of people aged 65 and over increased by 1.7 million people, from 15% of the total population in 1984, to 16% by 2009 (ONS 2010). It is also predicted that by 2035 the number of people aged 65 and over will account for 23% of the total population (Lowe and Speakman 2006). The most marked increase has been in the proportion of the population aged over 85. During the same time period from 1984 – 2034, those aged 16 years and under will decrease from 21% to 16%. In Lincolnshire the population is increasing at a faster rate than the rest of the country with 41% of the population aged over 50, compared to 35% across England and Wales,

and is set to rise to almost 49% by 2035 (Excellent Ageing 2012). This increase will have an impact not only on population demographics, but also on the economy, the provision of goods and services and the resources needed to ensure a high quality of life into old age (SEU 2003; Hardill 2003; Manthorpe et al. 2008; DfT 2012). The transition into later life is also associated with a wide range of events and changes in personal circumstances which can be both anticipated and unanticipated. While retirement alone is a key change in later life, so too are other changes such as a deterioration in health and mobility, altering family structures, moving from a long-term home and experiences of bereavement. These events can have a large impact in older people's lives, including their transport needs. The cessation of driving, for example, can have a huge impact on older people's wellbeing (Glasgow and Blakely 2000; Park 2010) and greatly affect their ability to lead an active, independent life. The opportunities to participate in social activities and access health services are also likely to be restricted (Gilhooly et al. 2002).

In rural areas transport is vital because of the difficulties in travelling to and from remote places (Commission for Rural Communities 2012). For older people the car is the preferred mode of transport, providing access to leisure opportunities and to health services (Banister and Bowing 2004; Commission for Rural Communities 2006; Ahern and Hine 2010; Shergold and Parkhurst 2012). However, Cloke et al. (1997) suggest that living in a rural area for many older people makes owning a vehicle seem essential, not a preference, and as women are less likely to drive than their male counterparts and have a longer life expectancy, they are more disadvantaged by living in the countryside (Davidson et al 2003; Davey 2007; Ahern and Hine 2012). Gilhooly et al. (2002) suggest that, as more people continue to drive well into old age, there appear to be greater difficulties and fewer alternatives for those who do not drive or have to give up driving altogether due to medical reasons (see also Sherwood and Lewis 2000). Restrictions on mobility may therefore lead to isolation and depression (SEU 2003; Commission for Rural Communities 2006).



National policy context

As different authors have pointed out (Oxley 2000; Black and Nijkamp 2002; Davey 2007), successive governments in Britain and other countries have attempted to control or reduce car use and promote the take up of public and sustainable transport (European Commission 2007; DfT 2008; UN 2009; DfT 2011). However, there are significant barriers in achieving these goals as personal expectations and negative attitudes to public transport persist (Anderson and Stradling 2004; DfT 2008; Docherty and Shaw 2008). As Anderson and Stradling (2004: 1) have argued, although the negatives 'of car use are increasingly clear, ownership and use have continued to rise. However, if sustainable development is to be considered, car use must decrease and alternative, more sustainable modes of transport made more attractive'. What is also apparent is that private transport plays a large role in the ability of older people to enjoy and sustain a high quality of life (DfT 2012). The reluctance to give up driving in older age is further coupled with the lack of awareness of alternative options available to them (Gilhooly et al. 2002). While it has been suggested that, in order to reduce car use, behavioural changes are required from individuals (Steg and Gifford 2005), as several other studies have shown this needs to be accompanied by innovative solutions which closely match the flexibility and attractiveness of cars, with public transport services operating to fit the needs of a 24 hour society (Davey 2007; Ahern and Hine 2012).

However, the *Comprehensive Spending Review* that was undertaken in October 2010 by the Coalition Government highlighted that reductions to transport expenditure had to be made. As a result of this, government funding to local authorities was cut and changes were made to the DfT's formula for concessionary fare reimbursements. The Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) was also cut by 20% from 2012-13. As these reductions have the biggest impact on those living in rural areas and those of retirement age, the provision of community transport has become increasingly significant to rural life and older people. This increased importance was highlighted by Norman

Baker from the Department for Transport, who announced in December 2011, that £10 million would be made available to 76 English local authorities to support and kick-start community transport initiatives.

The Community Transport Association (CTA) has defined community transport as 'safe, accessible, cost-effective flexible transport run by the community for the community. It mobilises and engages local communities as it is provided by charities and voluntary organisations. It meets the needs of people who do not have access to cars, taxis or buses and provides a lifeline in both rural and urban areas' (CTA 2012:2). The sector is growing and there are at least 2000 community transport organisations operating across England. These include group transport, voluntary /community car schemes, door-to door transport (e.g. Dial-A-Ride) and also community bus services, wheels to work schemes, mini-bus brokerage and driver training (CTA 2012). Nonetheless the Commission for Rural Communities (2012) found that there were inconsistencies in local authorities' policies towards public and community transport, including the degree to which scheduled bus services continue to be subsidised, the types of community transport on which concessionary passes are valid and the approach to using concessionary fares before 9.30am. The Commission for Rural Communities (2012) suggests that these inconsistencies have created a situation where older people can experience very different levels of access to public and community transport across the country.



Local policy context

The *Transport Act 2000* and the accompanying DETR report *Transport 2010, The Ten Year Plan* first set out the need for local authorities to prepare a Local Transport Plan (LTP), which would shape the form and delivery of a local integrated transport system. LTPs were originally designed to be five year plans outlining policies and programmes for transport, with a set of targets for monitoring their progress. The 2nd LTP covered the period 2006/07 to 2010/2011. However, the *Transport Act 2008* brought about changes to future LTPs by giving local authorities more freedom to decide for themselves how many years LTPs should cover and how to set different time spans for the strategy and implementation of elements of these plans. As outlined above, in light of the comprehensive spending review that was announced by the coalition government in October 2010, the future of transport nationally was uncertain. As a result, the 3rd Lincolnshire LTP was produced in 2011 to cover just two years 2011/12 and 2012/2013 and would be used to produce a longer term 4th LTP.

Over the past few decades, as commercial bus services have reduced in many rural parts of Lincolnshire (the fourth most sparsely populated county in England) LCC has looked for an effective way to support residents in meeting their travel needs. A large bus network has been developed across the county in partnership with different private operators to link urban areas with feeder services to rural locations. These routes termed 'Interconnect' have their own recognisable brand name and logo, which is used on bus stops, in publicity material and on the buses themselves. In March 2001, LCC established a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service called CallConnect. This public service bus scheme has grown and developed across the region and fits into this wider transport network by providing transport that anyone can use in the most isolated communities. In 2012, 252,000 passenger journeys were made using this service. A variety of funding was gained for CallConnect to be initially developed and then to be extended over the past decade, this has included Rural Bus Grants, funding from the Countryside Agency, the European Commission and more recently the BSOG. While LCC is responsible for the day-to-day running of the service and customer bookings, the vehicles used are leased from private operators or operated on LCC's behalf. There are now almost 30 vehicles operating across the county providing both flexible (those which only operate on customer demand) and more semi-fixed routes. These eight to sixteen seat mini-buses have to be pre-booked from a central call centre or online and operate from 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 6pm Saturday. A door-to door and pick up/drop off service is offered at main points in rural villages. With the introduction of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme in April 2008, older and disabled people are now entitled to free off peak bus travel. These passes can also be used on the CallConnect service¹.

The local authority also works with the voluntary and community sector to provide community transport, an area which the authority and the CTA have identified as a growth market. There are currently 24 independent community transport schemes (voluntary/community car schemes and Lincoln Dial-A-Ride) in the county. From January to December 2012, the car schemes provided in the region of 43,000 passenger journeys. As a voluntary/community car scheme journey is an outward and return trip, this is the equating of 86,000 bus journeys. However, local knowledge and initial consultation work undertaken by the Excellent Ageing team highlighted that despite significant effort by LCC many older people reported that they are not aware of the services available to them (Excellent Ageing 2012). Without the knowledge of the services that are available, significant numbers of older people will remain isolated and frustrated by the difficulties they face in accessing affordable transport.



In order to support local authorities specifically in the development of community transport services, the Department for Transport allocated funding to those local authorities that received the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant. In order to help local authorities utilise this funding, a partnership was then formed with the Community Transport Association's consultancy group to advise on how best to use community transport and assist rural communities. The Community Transport Grant that was awarded to LCC in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 has been used here in order to understand some of the issues older people have accessing rural transport. With transport playing a key role in helping older people to maintain their independence, quality of life, and health and wellbeing, it is essential that people learn how to access the services currently available to them. Also, at this strategically important time, when public sector resources are in decline and the numbers of older people increasing, providing an appropriate range of affordable and accessible transport options that are well used and financially sustainable is crucial for older people. As the figure below illustrates, community transport could provide the missing piece in this overall transport puzzle.

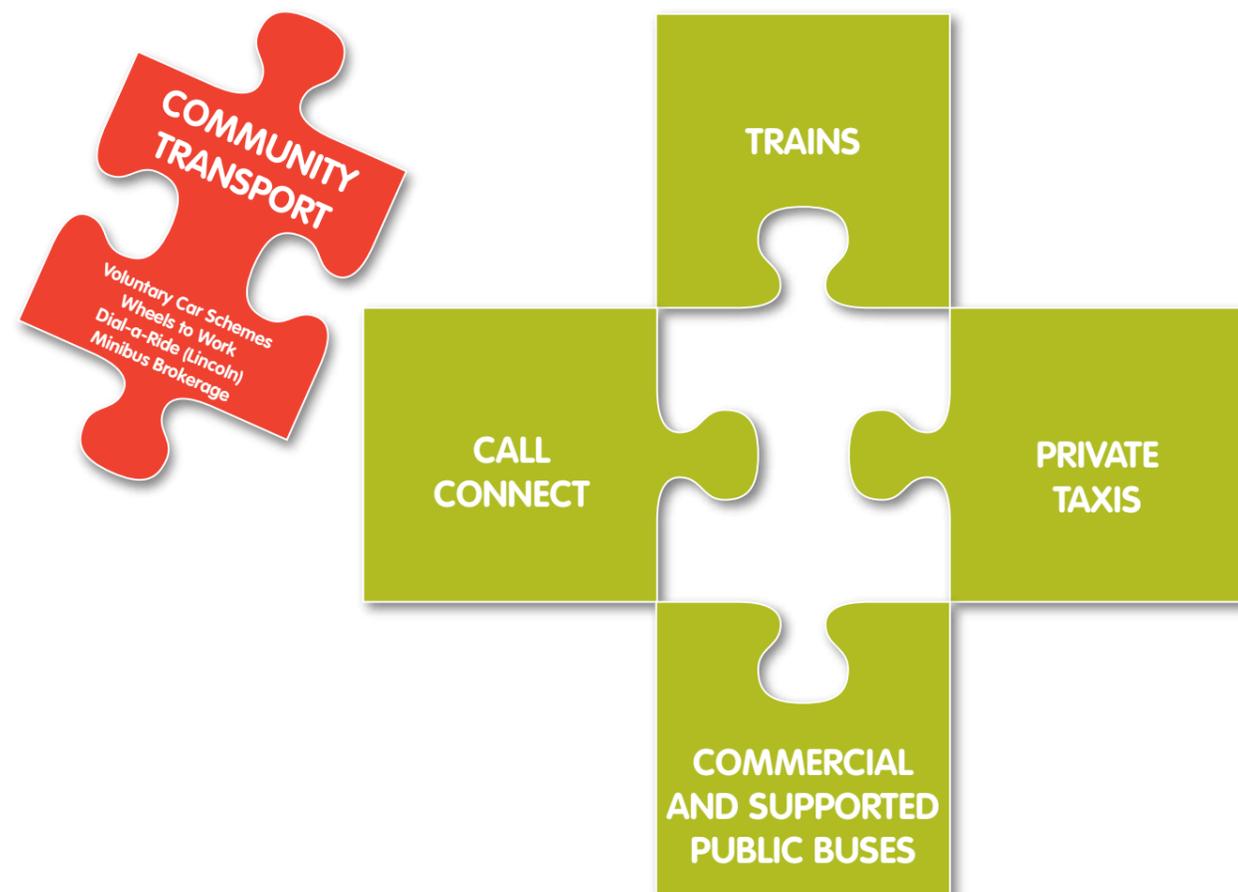


Figure 1.0 Community transport: providing the missing piece in the Lincolnshire transport puzzle

Overall the research to date has shown that older people as a group have diverse needs and live in different circumstances with different experiences influencing transport attitudes, aspirations and behaviours across the country (DfT 2007). For local transport policy to successfully examine current provision and to meet future transport needs of older people, research is required to examine the perceptions old people have of transport in Lincolnshire, the services they regularly use and a greater investigation into the barriers that may hamper the use of these services now and in the future.

Research Questions

In particular five key research questions guided the project:

1. What are older people's perceptions of public (commercial bus and train companies, including InterConnect and CallConnect) and community transport services (voluntary/community car schemes, mini-bus brokerage) in rural areas of Lincolnshire?
2. What are the current transport services used by older people?
3. Are there any obstacles or barriers to the use of community transport services?
4. To what extent are older people aware of the services available to them?
5. What issues can be identified that may influence recommendations for the future provision of transport services?

Conclusion

The UK and Lincolnshire's proportion of older people is increasing. This group, especially older women, are likely to be affected by low incomes, limited access to a private car and suffer from one or more disabilities. Access to public transport can help older people to avail themselves of goods, services, employment opportunities and other activities. Inclusive public transport is a passport to independent living and full participation in society. In rural areas, where distances to services are greater, 'transport poverty' can be more profound. In general where services are centralised or closed, older people are often those most affected. The remainder of this report addresses these issues and the research questions outlined above and is split into three sections. In section two the methodology used to conduct the study and locations for data collection are described. In section three the report discusses the key findings from the research before moving on, in section four, to conclude and outline the implications of the findings and provide some recommendations to increase the use of public and community transport services by older people in rural Lincolnshire.





Section 2. Methodology

Introduction

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach (Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Denscombe 2008; Bryman 2012). The exploratory and responsive nature of this type of social science research enables participant's circumstances and experiences to be explored in depth. Qualitative research also helps explore a range of phenomena and processes amongst participants and enables an understanding of how different factors influence attitudes, behaviours and choices. The rates of use of different transport options cannot be produced from qualitative data, but such data does reveal which modes are most common and some of the reasoning behind older people's use of and evaluations of different transportation options. In this section I map out the research methods used to conduct this study, how participants were recruited and the locations that the research was conducted in across Lincolnshire.



Research methods, sampling and recruitment

This project was split into three stages consisting of a desk based study followed by observational fieldwork and a series of individual and focus group interviews conducted across rural Lincolnshire with older people. The first stage took place in April and May 2012 and a review of published government and third sector reports, academic papers and data collected by different organisations relating to travel and older people was carried out to identify issues that were relevant to this study. This established the kinds of problems that older people encounter when travelling to social activities and accessing healthcare. The review also identified that the issues faced by older people when travelling in rural communities are similar in a variety of countries and that driving cessation and lack of public transport are very important factors for older people. What this review further highlighted was the lack of coordination between community transport schemes and other modes of public transport and the lack of awareness about these schemes among older people across Europe.

Accompanying this review, a content analysis was conducted of the literature and web-based services currently being used by different public and community transport organisations in Lincolnshire to provide information to its service users. This was undertaken in order to establish how the current services that older people might use are marketed and branded, the different ways transport services are promoted and the differences in communication content.

This literature included information on the following:

- *Public service buses:* Guides and timetables from both the InterConnect network (Brylane Travel, Norfolk Green, Stagecoach East Midlands and Stagecoach Peterborough) and other bus operators (e.g. PC coaches, Kimes Buses)
- *CallConnect:* Various leaflets on the rural Lincolnshire DRT service
- *Voluntary/community transport schemes:* Promotional material from some of the different schemes across the county such as the Grantham Area Community Transport, Christ Church Stamford Community Transport Scheme, Louth and District Car Services, and Lincoln Area Dial-A-Ride
- *LCC travel guides:* A series of public transport information leaflets by LCC such as the InterConnect Network Guide 2011 and 2012, Passport to Travel, and Parish Lincs
- *Other transport related literature:* Community Minibus Brokerage Schemes leaflets, guides to concessionary bus travel, and other promotional material such as text a bus service and Wheels-to-Work
- *Newsletters used by older people groups:* Louth and District Seniors Forums magazine
- *Online recourses:*
www.a2blincs.org.uk
www.lincinterconnect.com
www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/poacherline
www.lincsbus.info, www.linctravel.info
www.travelline.info

This review revealed that the promotional material used to publicise the Interconnect routes and the CallConnect service offered an easily recognisable brand to service users with a concise focus supported by online access. However, the voluntary/community car schemes which are supported by LCC- but re independent organisations in their own right- have produced their own material to promote their travel schemes. This indicated that although there was a lot of literature available on the many different schemes on offer, it lacks the focus of other promotional

material and there was little web-based material to advertise and guide non-service users to the schemes.

The second stage of the project occurred during June and July 2012 and involved observational research and a series of mobile interviews conducted on public transport with service users. This enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of public service buses and train travel in the county and the experiences of passengers using these services. This observational research also included visiting community car scheme operators to understand how these services worked. Fieldwork was also undertaken on the CallConnect service, both in the matrix booking centre and on the smaller buses themselves to see how customers booked their journeys and used this form of transport in the Boston, Gainsborough and Horncastle areas. This fieldwork proved invaluable as it enabled the researcher to gain an insight into the transport problems facing rural communities in Lincolnshire and the isolation that older people -without access to their own private transport- would experience without these services.

The third stage of the project involved conducting six focus group interviews across the county comprised of people aged 60 or over who were not regular users of public or community transport. These were mixed gender groups and a combination of young-old [60-75], old-old [75-85] and oldest-old [85+] participants. These focus group interviews were held in August and September and were supported by a number of one-to-one interviews with older people who could not attend the group interviews, but who wanted to be a part of the study. These interviews were conducted in different rural areas of the county with different levels of social and economic deprivation, namely:

- Horncastle
- Navenby
- Scotter
- Louth
- Gainsborough
- Stamford



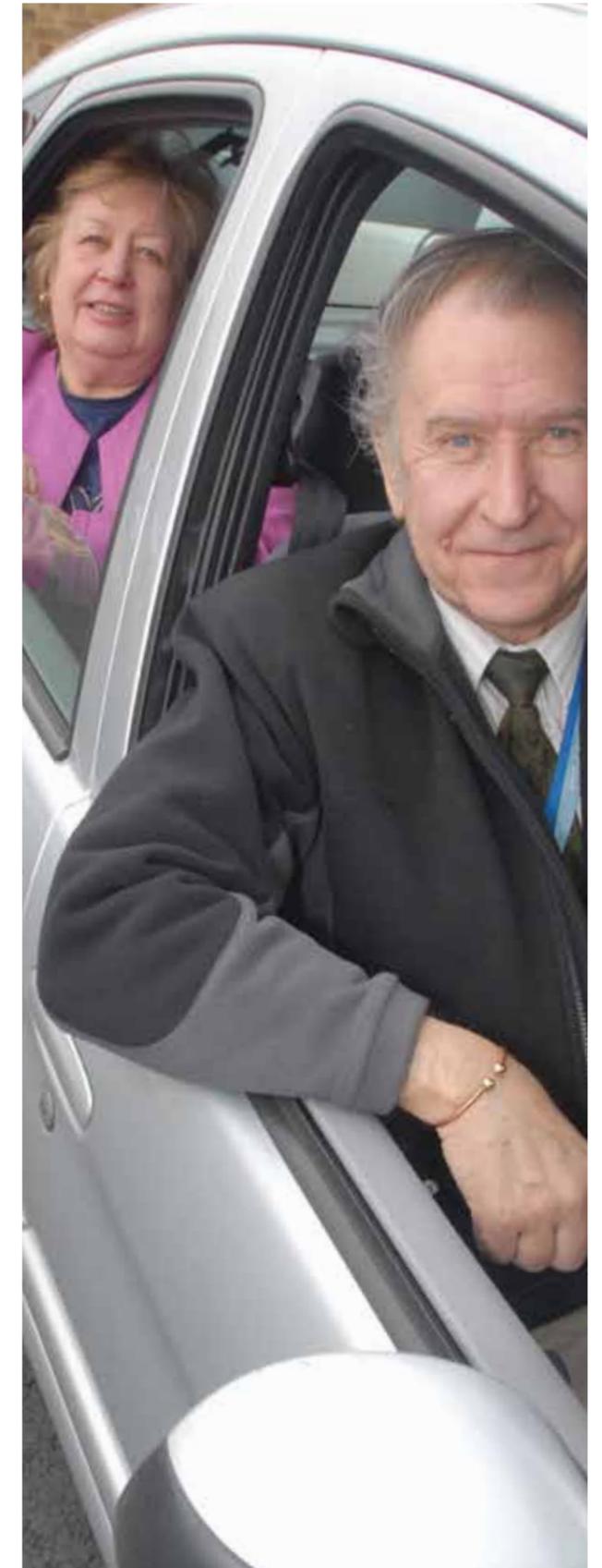
The table below outlines details of the participants who took part in the study and information about their transport usage.

Focus Group Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Area	Horncastle	Navenby	Scotter	Louth	Gainsborough	Stamford	
Number of Participants	7	9	10	7	5	6	44
Male	3	2	0	1	1	2	9
Female	4	7	10	6	4	4	35
Drivers	1	7	3	3	1	4	19
Public Transport Users	5	6	2	4	4	2	23
Call Connect Users	2	2	0	0	1	1	6
*Dial-A-Ride Users	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
^Voluntary/ Community Car Scheme Users	0	2	0	1	0	1	4
Free Bus Pass	7	9	9	7	4	6	42
Free Bus Pass Users	5	6	2	2	3	3	21
Mobility Scooters/ Wheelchair Users	1	0	0	1	1	0	3
Regular Taxi Users	1	0	0	4	3	1	9

A number of methods were used to recruit people to the focus groups:

1. LCC, and other agencies working with and on behalf of older people in rural areas (e.g. Age UK, Excellent Ageing and religious organisations), acted as gatekeepers and recruited older people who were not regular users of public or community transport. Focus groups in Horncastle, Navenby, Louth and Stamford were arranged in this way.
2. Direct contact was also made with people who ran social groups for older people, and the Scotter focus group interview was arranged via this means of recruitment.
3. A website was set up through the LCC website encouraging older people to get in touch to take part in the study. When a residential care home manager in Gainsborough saw the website, the final focus group was organised in this way <http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/residents/transport-travel-and-roads/public-transport/lincolnshire-transport-project/>
4. An advertisement was placed in a senior citizens forum magazine about the project and invited people to take part. The individual interviews were arranged in this way via telephone, after people contacted the researcher having seen the notices.

The group interviews took place in churches, libraries, community halls and a hospital unit (see Appendix 1 for the discussion guide used in these interviews). Individual interviews took place at participants' homes at a time that suited them. All interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher. Information sheets in the form of posters and post cards (see Appendix 2 and 3) were provided to explain the research progress and all older people were consulted about the recording of the interviews. All user names have also been changed to protect the anonymity of participants. Although the research process was informative and for the most part conducted successfully, unfortunately some difficulties did occur. These included locations being used where hearing aid loops were not available, and confusion arising among some participants who thought the focus group interviews were information events about transport services. One potential issue was that the participants were overwhelmingly female. However, the men who participated all shared the same issues and provided invaluable experiences of transport issues and problems.





Section 3 Findings

Introduction

This section outlines the key findings from the focus groups and individual interviews. A number of difficulties and issues were identified which older people in rural areas faced when trying to travel. This section explores some of these difficulties. The key findings identify how older people get out and about, the limits of technological solutions for addressing some of these issues, the severe lack of coordination between different service operators, and the confusion and misunderstandings expressed around community transport. The final part of this section provides some of the participant's suggestions for improving transport in the county and how to get more older people using public and community transport services.



How older people get out and about around Lincolnshire

Many older people that attended the group interviews used a variety of transport methods to get out and about. Some still drove and suggested that their car was a lifeline and drove because they felt there were little other options available to them. As John commented in an individual interview: "Now without my car I don't know what I'd do, I think there is a bus that runs twice a day, but I don't know, I'd be a hermit I think without my car". Others used public service buses, or relied on friends and family for lifts. Some commented that they would use the public buses more, but that there were problems with them.

Jean *I would use the bus all the time, but there aren't enough of them around here*

MW *Right*

Brianna *And they stop at 6:30*

Jean *And they stop in the afternoon as well, two o'clock or something*

Brianna *And none on Saturdays or Sundays*

Jean *Yes none on Sunday*

Mavis *That's our bugbear*

Verna *None on a Sunday!*

Brianna *No good if you are in work you see, on a shift or nights, you see*

MW *And was it always like that on a Sunday?*

Chorus *No! No!*

[Scotter FG]

In some areas some people used an around town mini-bus service, such as the Louth Nipper. A few participants were aware of and used the voluntary/community car schemes, but there was general confusion in all interviews conducted about these services:

MW *Now have any of you heard of the voluntary car scheme?*

Jan *No*

Billy *The only ones I've heard of are for the hospital*

Doreen *Yeah the NHS ones*

Billy *And they are stopping that!*

MW *These are separate schemes run by volunteer drivers....*

Jan *What nothing to do with the hospital?*

MW *No nothing to do with that*

Nancy *But the ones who have been fetching me back and forth from the hospital are volunteers though?*

MW *Yes they might well be, but that is the NHS system, not the volunteer car system, which is separate*

Tina *Now I always thought it was the same*

[Gainsborough FG]

CallConnect

As the interview extracts below show, there was also confusion about what CallConnect does and does not do, how one would use it, how to access it and how to book it:

MW *Are we all aware of what the CallConnect service is?*

Betty *What sorry?*

MW *CallConnect service*

Barbara *I've seen it but I don't know!*

Betty *No, but I don't think we need it anyway*

Barbara *Well we might do!*

Mary *Yeah we might do*

Carol *As we get older*

[Horncastle FG]

Karen *Now does it go into Derbyshire? No good to me this is it!*

Brenda *No idea*

Judy *Yes I have, but it still doesn't work on a Sunday or late at night does it!*

Virginia *I've heard of it, but no idea what it is, how do I use it then?*

Gloria *Does it run in this town though? I thought it was a district thing?*

[Scotter FG]

This confusion about CallConnect was also apparent when conducting the focus group held in a residential care home. Here the manager of the care home-who booked transport on the residents' behalf- attended the group interview expressed her dissatisfaction with the CallConnect service:

Doreen *Someone told me about CallConnect and I am only the messenger here, but if you have more than two bags, you are not allowed on the CallConnect*

Tina *I think the whole thing is a bit vague*

MW *What do you mean by vague?*

Tina *Right, where they will go, where they won't go, when they'll go, when they won't go, for instance, I had a residence who needed to go to hospital, I think the appointment was at ten o'clock on a Saturday morning, public transport, bus here, bus there, he was never going to do it, just not going to get there, because the buses don't leave here early enough, to get you to an appointment in Lincoln, um so I thought, I'd use Call Connect, but they wouldn't take him because they won't go to the hospital [Lincoln], they will not go into certain areas.*



Nancy *Well that's the main place!*

Tina *Well half a dozen times I've said, look what I'll do is check and see if they will take you, and there has only been once when they said they would take us and that was to the pub*

Doreen *Yes that's right that is!*

Tina *But we were restricted if you remember, cos they do the children's school runs, so picking us up, they were supposed to come at twelve, but they didn't come till half past, and they picked us up at two and they couldn't pick us up any later*

Doreen *We missed our pudding because he had to pick us up at two o'clock, and we were already half an hour late!*

[Gainsborough FG]

Some older people in the focus groups indicated that they had negative experiences of using CallConnect, so did not use it again. Other complaints about CallConnect from those older people who did not use it were that they were not sure of the differences between the more well-known Dial-A-Ride scheme and CallConnect, and many others were unaware that Dial-A-Ride² no longer operated outside the city of Lincoln. Some users of CallConnect, as Glenda indicates below, were hostile to others, such as school children, using it:

Glenda *CallConnect is very good for the elderly people, but if you've got an appointment, you never know if you are going to be there on time, and in the afternoon it's a job to get one, as they pick children up, it's not just for the elderly any more is it, but they have difficulty using it, which I think is wrong, it was supposed to be for the elderly, who have a job to get out and about.*

[Stamford FG]

There were also further issues around wheelchair access and complaints that mobility scooters could not fit onto all buses.

However, those who used the CallConnect service found that it made a huge difference to their lives and described it as a 'life-line'. As the following case studies (which are drawn from notes made when travelling on CallConnect in different parts of the county) show for some users in particular, the service was essential for shopping and providing an opportunity to interact with others:

As we pulled up outside her house, Mrs Davies came out to the bus on two crutches and I noticed her right foot was heavily swollen and in a brace. She must have been into her 80s and seemed very frail. The driver got out and offering a cheerful hello, lowered down the ramp at the back of the bus and Mrs Davies hobbled onto it. Even though the bus was supposed to be an accessible bus, the normal step up was way too much for someone in Mrs Davies condition and, I imagine, for a lot of older people with mobility issues, so the accessibility ramp was used to help her board the bus. Mrs Davies sat on the seat at the back of the mini-bus and I moved down the bus to talk to her. I gave her one of my post cards and explained who I was. 'So how long have you been using this bus then' I asked, 'a few years' she replied, 'it's a lifeline, as no one speaks to me in my street, so since the death of my brother, it's the only place to talk to people sometimes'.

[Gainsborough, 28th May 2012]

The CallConnect service was also a vital mode of transport for those without the ability to drive. This tended to apply more to women than men:

At 11:10 we headed out to pick up our 5th passenger of the day. It was a fair way outside the town and the lady who we picked up lived in a very isolated area. In the middle of a huge flat landscape of fields, a very long distance away for any service bus routes, were situated two houses. The road leading up to these houses was in a very poor condition and the CallConnect bus bumped slowly along the single, unmarked road. We picked up an elderly lady who was waiting outside her house. She had moved up from Cambridgeshire with her husband, but he had died 5 years ago leaving her with 42 cats to look after. As she had never learned to drive, the lady told me that she relied on the CallConnect bus and taxis to get

around. Unfortunately, as she would be doing a lot of shopping today, (which included buying a lot of cat food) the CallConnect bus would not be able to bring her home, so she would have to return via a taxi. This would be expensive and would cost her around £20.

[Boston, 30th May 2012]

Voluntary/community car schemes

Those who used the community transport services, such as the voluntary/community car schemes, were also very happy with them and built up a great relationship with the drivers, who helped them get out and about a lot. Both the men and the women in the focus groups were also happy that the volunteer drivers waited with them at hospital, reducing much of the stress and worry about how they would get home from appointments. Nonetheless, some participants were concerned about the price of the scheme and some journeys were still expensive if travelling a long distance alone. Others also complained that they always had to book well in advance and that some voluntary/community car schemes would not always take them where they wanted to go as certain schemes only provide transport for health journeys.

Other modes of transport

Although a railway network does exist in Lincolnshire, it provides limited coverage to the most rural communities and as transport links were perceived to be poor to those stations that do exist, train travel was reported as low amongst all those interviewed. Whilst some older people mentioned walking around their villages, for the most part this was not a major form of transport for covering long distances. Nobody who was interviewed reported cycling, although some participants commented that they had cycled in their youth and wished they could still do so. The data from the different interviews and case studies indicate that, whilst transport services are very important, there are limits to the flexibility of CallConnect and community transport services and, as many older people are unfamiliar with these services, they are under used in some areas of the county.

Importance of accessing health services

A key concern for older people was how to access health services. However, lack of transport was found to act as a major barrier here. Public transport for many was not accessible for a number of reasons, including:

1. Appointments at local doctors' surgery and at the hospital were often early in the morning, meaning those living in rural areas felt they might not be able to attend. This was because public service buses might not get them to their appointments on time and they would not be able to use their free bus passes on other modes of transport e.g. taxis, that would get them there.
2. Many older people were not physically able to use public service buses, as they felt the vehicles were not accessible. Others were unable to walk to a bus stop unaided and, if they did walk, the bus stops were uncomfortable places to wait, often without adequate shelter or seating.
3. CallConnect was unavailable as a solution for many of these problems, as the service does not operate in the City of Lincoln area, so cannot bring people direct to the hospital from outlying villages.

As a result of transport difficulties, hospital appointments were a major source of worry and concern for the older people interviewed. Health and transport policy and provision do not seem to be joined up. Furthermore, most of those interviewed relied greatly on family and friends to take them to appointments, while the most vulnerable and those without families able to take them suffered huge amounts of stress when dealing with the ambulance booking system. Many were unaware of the voluntary/community car schemes that might have been available to them as an alternative to alleviate some of this stress and worry.

² A county-wide Dial-A-Ride service in Lincolnshire stopped at the end of March 2011, as all funders could not sustain the level of subsidy provided to the service - the estimated passenger subsidy for Dial-A-Ride services was as high as £17- £18 per passenger. CallConnect took over many of these routes, supported by community transport initiatives. LCC continues to support the Lincoln City Dial-A-Ride scheme, along with the City of Lincoln Council, North Kesteven District Council and West Lindsey District Council.



Role of bus passes in combating social exclusion and promoting sustainable travel

The introduction of the free bus pass has been greatly beneficial to the participants in this study. Many found it helped to reduce car use:

Janet If I'm going into town I'll just use my bus pass, leave car at home.

[Scotter FG]

Charles If I go into town, I'll take the bus, saves dealing with parking.

[Navenby FG]

Judith I do have a bus pass, and if I need to go into town, I don't go in very often, but I do find it very convenient for going up to the hospital, to save on parking.

[Navenby FG]

Lois I do have a free bus pass and use it frequently, living out there it's almost essential, the bus passes are almost like gold.

[Stamford FG]

The free bus pass was also useful when visiting other areas away from Lincolnshire on holiday to reduce transport costs.

Linda I do have a bus pass, but I do have very great difficulty in using it, as the buses in my area are not convenient, but I did manage to use it on the tram in Blackpool!

Charles I also have a bus pass which I have used in Nottingham and London, and I've used it around Lincoln as well, very good they are.

[Navenby FG]

However, the times one could use a bus pass were seen by some participants as problematic and provided useful discussion about their importance:

James One thing I have noticed, though, is the county provide a nine o'clock start, whereas a lot of the rest of the country and if you go outside of the county it's nine thirty ...now what I've noticed is that because it's any time pass, quite a lot of people go out and use local services, when they don't really need to, they have no pressure on time and it squeezes pressure on people who are trying to get their kids to school... so I'm not a 100% convinced that the anytime option is a good one.

Robert I think you would have to take on board that in the days of age equality that some pensioners might actually want to work and if you took that away from them, it would be an impediment to them working. They should keep it [the passes] anytime.

Carol Because they might have hospital appointments before nine AM so we should be able to use them.

[Horncastle FG]

Other people were unsure about when the bus pass could be used and when it couldn't:

Diane Well from here we can't get on a bus at all before ten o'clock and if you got to be at Lincoln Hospital for nine o'clock or eight thirty you got to pay. I thought it was free anytime when I got it, but it's not

[Louth FG]

While free bus passes were undoubtedly valuable for the older people interviewed, there were also a number of issues that came up when discussing free bus passes. Some older people, it seems, did not bother to apply for their free bus passes because they couldn't physically access the vehicles or felt there were so few service buses available in their areas, it did not warrant the effort. In the excerpt below,

Tina, who was a practice manager of a residential care home, talked about some of these issues when discussing some of her residents' transport difficulties:

Tina Then we've got problems where we've got someone like Jan, who doesn't bother getting a bus pass, because although she's entitled to it, it's not [automatic]. I always thought it was an automatic thing, that, when you get to a particular age, when you are entitled to your bus pass, I thought automatically your bus pass came. [But] you have to apply for it, and it's not as easy as it used to be, as you have to apply to the county council, not the local council, and if you move from one area to another, you have to pay an admin charge.

MW Do you have a free bus pass?

Jan No I don't, because I can't get on a bus at all

MW Ok

Jan No point in having one if you can't get on it

[Gainsborough FG]

Others interviewed also talked about issues they encountered when using their bus passes:

Donna Well I do have one, but I don't use it, wasn't like this during the war see

Bonnie Used it twice last year

Gloria Never used it

Donna If there's no bus, you can't use it can you! No chance of using it around here in the evenings and on a Sunday, forget it! What do these people think, life just stops out here after five o'clock, it's pathetic!

Brenda We'd rather pay half the price than have the free bus pass

MW Oh right, why's that?

Bonnie Well you feel a bit of a fraud you know, taking everything, I do anyway

[Scotter FG]

One solution to this problem that was suggested was the reintroduction of tokens that could be used to pay for taxis and which would then be reimbursed by the local authority:

Charles That's where the taxi tokens would have come in handy

Shirley I don't know about them, what are they?

Charles They've stopped um now luv, but you used to be able to get taxi tokens from the council, instead of using a bus pass, pay the taxi in bus tokens

Linda It was a bit like the milk tokens

Charles You had a choice of three things, bus pass, taxi tokens or televisions licence

Shirley Oh right

MW You had a choice then?

Charles Yes, but they stopped it now, just get a bus pass

[Navenby FG]

While some older people like Billy (below) found the bus pass useful, he also stated that when trying to use the local bus service, he was always unsure of how long it would take for a bus to turn up and also expressed problems when trying to read the timetables on the bus stops:

MW Do you have free bus passes then?

Billy Yes I do

MW How do you find them then?

Billy They are useful yes, but it's the buses that are the problem you see, you never know when it's [the bus] going to turn up and they just put these new timetables out and well...I just can't understand them...

[Gainsborough FG]



Rather alarmingly, as Hilda illustrated below, some older people interviewed stated that while they had their free bus pass, they still preferred to drive as they got dizzy spells whilst using the bus:

Hilda Well I still drive, I love my car, but I have got a free bus pass, but I've only used it twice though, because I get frightened on the bus as I get dizzy spells. I'm ok to drive though!

[Stamford FG]

The focus groups showed that when free bus passes are used in and around the City of Lincoln, this allows for car drivers to use public transport instead of cars. This indicates that a good public transport system, combined with a free bus pass, can combat social exclusion among older people by allowing them to travel to a variety of social and leisure opportunities for free. The concessionary pass also helps to reduce car dependency and promote sustainable travel and help prepare older drivers for a time when they might not be able to drive any more. However, free passes do nothing specifically to improve access to services or activities for the most isolated or frail people (as Jan, indicates above) as they are often still unable to physically use these services. Many participants who used to drive were also unaware of how to use a public service bus or where to find information about times and routes.

Lack of coordination between service providers

The focus groups indicate that there seems to be a perception amongst some older people that there is a lack of cooperation between services providers in rural areas, both across a range of transport operators and between different local authorities. As indicate below, whilst some found they could use some local transport schemes to get to the main transport hubs, they would still have long waits for other services.

MW So is there anything that you would like changed?

Margaret Well I used to get the ten o'clock Nipper

into town so I could get the bus to Grimsby, but it goes at ten till the hour now, so I can't use the Nipper bus to do that anymore

MW Ah right

Margaret Two different companies operating

Betty That's right, it happens all the time, why don't these companies talk to each other? Half the time I don't bother, I think one of the worst things about using public transport is the waiting, waiting on a pavement in the rain and so on and so forth, I think that is the very worst thing and the bus station. Lincoln bus station is beyond belief really!

[Louth FG]

Furthermore the lack of fit between health policy and transport policy is very serious. While it may be beneficial to health care providers to centralise certain treatments and procedures, this will not fully achieve their aims if those who are most likely to need to access these treatments and procedures (older people) cannot get to these hospitals and clinics. Much greater consideration needs to be given to the location of treatment centres and the needs of those who will be treated at these centres and how patients travel to and from their appointments. Some respondents reported having to travel very early to appointments, and then had to sit around waiting for a long time for transport back home.

Limits to technological solutions

It is arguable that the internet is likely to become a key information resource for transport services for older people over the next twenty years. However, the majority of older people spoken to in this study did not use the internet. Those who did sometimes complained about slow connect speeds in rural areas. Many older people that were involved in the focus groups had mobile phones, but these were mostly used for emergencies and were switched off most of the time. Mobile phone signal was also reported to be weak in many parts of the county, so they experienced further difficulties with trying to use mobile phones:

MW Ok, so say I said all the information is on the internet for you?

Jan Ehhh! I don't even touch a blinking button on it

MW Ok, so you would never think of texting a number to see when the next bus was coming?

Billy No, no way

Nancy I can't use them, I can't even touch a button, I'm useless with it all.

[Gainsborough FG]

MW So what about if I said to you all the information is on the internet, go look for it?

Chorus No, no (loud talking)

Larry No computer, don't want one!

MW So does anyone use a computer here? [Anne puts her hand up], You do, ok so we have one out of the whole group (group laughter)

Rose Now my daughter, if I have to, I ask her or my granddaughter or my grandson

Connie Now you are talking about transportation for the elderly here, and most of the elderly don't do it, so it's got to be where they go

[Stamford FG]

While many people that were interviewed relied on their children to access the internet for them, it was clear that information about the services that exist has to be available to older people where they are likely to access it. Nonetheless, as the population of the UK continues to age, the number of people using the internet and other technological solutions to access information (e.g. smart phones) will increase, so future generations of older people might be less likely to suffer some of the issues reported here.



Participants' suggestions for improving and encouraging more usage of public and community transport

This section has shown that some older people experience great difficulties in making journeys due to a lack of access to transport. This supports other research that has found that an inability to participate fully in an active social life can have drastic effects on mental health, independence and physical well-being (Clope et al 1997; Glasgow and Blakely 2000; Gilhooly et al. 2002; SEU 2003; Commission for Rural Communities 2006; Manthorpe et al 2008; DfT 2012; Shergold and Parkhurst 2012). The focus groups further demonstrated that public transport services are often too infrequent during the day (and non-existent during the evenings and at weekends in some areas) to generate sufficient usage amongst older people, despite the availability of free bus-passes. What was also evident was that there was general confusion about what community transport schemes and CallConnect actually were. As Tina, the manager of the residential care home quoted above pointed out in relation to CallConnect:

Tina There needs to be more information about the routes, the times, about where they can and can't go, like Call Connect, it can't go to the hospital, well why not? There is not a public service bus which goes [from Gainsborough] at that time in the morning. What's the point of it, if you want to take me to a village in the middle of nowhere, so I can go to a garden centre? That's not what I need, what I need is to go to the hospital!

[Gainsborough FG].

To help understand this confusion further, during the course of the focus group interviews, participants were asked for their constructive comments and opinions for the improvement of current modes of transport. They were also asked what could be done to get more people to use the voluntary/community car schemes. A variety of advertising and publicity opportunities were mentioned by older people in the focus groups. These included:

- Putting more traditional bus timetables in places where old people went, such as post offices, in churches, information points in towns and villages, arts centres, village shops, community centres and pubs
- Placing notices in parish magazines and local free newspapers
- General letter box drops in isolated areas
- Using senior forums to spread the word about these services
- Putting posters and notices in health centres, doctors surgery's, opticians, dentists

Other suggestions that were made were around service improvement. These included smaller accessible buses instead of double decker's, more helpful drivers, better bus shelters, fewer restrictions on where buses may set down passengers in rural locations and the improvement of the central bus station in the City of Lincoln. One participant James, who was registered blind, described some of the challenges he faced when arriving at the end of his journey at the central bus station:

James Well Lincoln bus station is very challenging for me and it's so dangerous, hard to walk around even with my [guide] dog, they don't really know where the buses are coming and they change the bus stops and don't really tell you they are coming, some of the staff don't know when they are coming. I have heard they are trying to move the bus station, near the train station, which would tie in with the rail services, so that would be better, but who knows it that is ever going to happen.

[Horncastle FG]

Some technological improvements that were suggested included real-time noticeboards at bus stops, to precisely show when the next bus would arrive, and on-board automated bus stop announcements. Overwhelmingly, what also seemed to be most desired from the older people interviewed was having someone to speak to communities and older people's groups about the different services on offer to them and how they could access them.

Conclusion

This section has outlined the key findings that have emerged from the research study. It was found that older people used a variety of different ways of getting out and about, but that there was a huge reliance on cars. Of all the transport journeys made, it was journeys for health reasons that were deemed most important, but there were serious issues with transport and coordination between service providers that made this difficult for some participants. What also became clear was that there was a great deal of confusion surrounding community transport schemes and CallConnect amongst those people interviewed. It would also seem that, whilst free bus passes are extremely useful for helping combat social exclusion, this does not seem to help the frailest or those with mobility issues and those who do not live near a bus route that meets their particular needs. The findings presented here also point to the limits of technological solutions for addressing some of these issues (e.g. accessing information about transport options via the internet) as there was a lack of ICT usage among people interviewed. The report now turns to look at some recommendations that can be made in light of these findings and how they can be implemented.





Section 4 Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

The older people interviewed in this report did not fully understand the transport options available to them in Lincolnshire, and it was perceived that there is a lack of coordination between transport providers and key services used by this age group. Community transport schemes offer solutions to these problems; nonetheless, as the findings in section 3 of this report show, the lack of awareness about these services, and the confusion that surrounds them amongst older people means that they are not fully achieving their potential. In order to make a real difference to rural communities these services need to increase their customer patronage and recruit more volunteer drivers to help the service grow. However, this can only be done if people are aware of what these services can do and if different services work together to promote and use them. The authors of this report would therefore like to make a number of short and longer term recommendations based on the findings of this research study and following research into potential local solutions.

Short term recommendations

1. A promotional and marketing campaign that would raise awareness of different rural transport services available to older people

As this study has found, transport plays a key role in tackling social exclusion and reducing health related costs. There are also significant differences between the travel experiences of older women and older men, as older women are less likely to own cars and be able to drive than older men. As men are highly likely to die earlier than their female partners, consideration must be given to how older women will make important trips without a car when they are left alone. Furthermore, older men, and an increasing number of older women, have experienced lifestyles where they have always driven, so losing the ability to drive will have a drastic impact on their lives, for which they need to be prepared. Using community transport

schemes should be emphasised as a means to help with this preparation.

However, rural public and community transport must be seen as more than just providing a vital social service that reduces social exclusion. It must also be seen as something that could be a vital alternative to using a car, which will become increasingly important as the population continues to age over the coming decades. The focus group interviews demonstrated that some older people perceived that public transport services were often too infrequent during the day (and non-existent during the evenings and at weekends in some areas) to generate sufficient usage amongst older people, despite the availability of free bus-passes. As the previous section illustrated what was also evident was that there was general confusion amongst those interviewed about the concept of the public bus service CallConnect, especially around booking and accessing the service. This confusion also extended to community transport. Furthermore, as the content analysis of the different information resources for transport in the methods section highlighted, the confusing array of literature on voluntary/community car schemes in particular could be a key part of this confusion. Drawing on the suggestions made by older people themselves that were outlined in the previous section, if transport services were advertised in key locations and publications used by older people, there might be a greater take up of them, which could also reduce car dependency. These could include:

- Putting more transport information in places where old people went, such as post offices, in churches, information points in towns and villages, arts centres, village shops, community centres and halls, pubs
- Placing regular notices about transport in parish magazines and local free newspapers
- General letter box drops in isolated areas
- Using senior forums to spread the word about different services
- Putting posters and notices in health centres, doctors surgery's, opticians, dentists
- Adding community transport details to LCCs area guides and information leaflets

On a longer term basis, a range of technological solutions to improve transport in the county could also be implemented. These might include introducing real-time noticeboards at all bus stops, to precisely show when the next bus will arrive, talking bus stops to help those with sight problems and on-board automated bus stop announcements. Given the rural nature of the area, some of these technological suggestions (e.g. real-time noticeboards) might not be possible in some of the more remote communities in Lincolnshire, and automated bus stop announcements may be expensive to implement across all service operators. However, as the UK becomes increasing aged, these longer term solutions might prove cost effective over the coming decades, and bus companies could still be encouraged to implement key bus stop announcements by their drivers. This would not only benefit older people, some of whom may be unfamiliar to the area after relocating on retirement, or never have used a public bus until they had to cease driving, but also to other bus users. Bus route guides and key destination guides could also be introduced on board buses and bus stops at all main bus routes, to help passengers unsure of where to alight.

As the older people's suggestions for improving transport indicated in the previous section of this report (pages 26-27), what many participants wanted

was for someone to outline and explain the services on offer to them. Therefore alongside a general marketing and communications strategy to promote the services on offer to older people, LCC should further explore the possibility of allocating some of the funding from the community transport grant to foster greater public awareness of public and community transport services on offer to older people. This could be done through the creation of an Older Persons Transport Adviser (OPTA) or using the existing Smarter Choices and Accessibility team. This could entail promoting the different transport services on offer to older people, and would fit in with the work currently being done by LCC surrounding community transport and First Contact. Community champions and key gate keepers could then support these developments by acting as a local point of contact for transport information. These could be drawn from parish clerks, post office owners, pub landlords and scheme administrators who could be trained to offer advice and increase awareness of transport options.

2. Further development of the Lincolnshire Community Transport Forum

The existing voluntary/community car scheme forum, through which the different schemes in the county meet to share ideas and discuss issues, could be further developed to publicise the work already being done and to build a more focused and concise approach to delivery. As the findings from this report have suggested, some older people interviewed were unaware of what community transport schemes exist, how they can be accessed and what they can do for them. As part of the promotional and marketing campaign discussed in recommendation 1 above, a specific focus should be to give the Lincolnshire Community Transport Forum a greater recognisable identity. In order to increase awareness of the community transport network across Lincolnshire a unique brand through which all the individual schemes could operate under should be introduced. This could then enable the benefits of community transport in Lincolnshire to be better promoted and increase the impact of community transport in the county³.



It would also highlight the services on offer and could lead to an increase in the passenger usage of the individual schemes. An easily recognisable logo could be designed to be included on a variety of publicity to aid and promote public recognition of the forum. Some of the schemes have begun to use the CTA logo on their promotional material, so there are links already being made to wider organisations. LCC also provides each organisation with an annual grant, which with the agreement of the different schemes, could be extended. While each individual scheme could still be responsible for publicising their own services, this good work could be supported and developed by LCC to ensure a more strategic approach to promotion of community transport is developed. These could include car stickers to illustrate membership and build confidence in the branding with service users and the wider population, advert panels to be inserted into publications, simple and clear information posters for display in key information locations and a county wide community transport user guide available online.

Although many older people in this study reported that they were not regular users of information technology, the current website information that is available for the different community transport options could also be developed to be more interactive and user friendly to aid those who do. Furthermore it is arguable that as the internet is likely to become a key information resource for transport services for older people over the next twenty years, the importance of web based resources for future generations of older people is vital.

3. The promotion of voluntary/community transport as a way to access healthcare

As this research has highlighted through participants discussions about health and transport services (see the importance of accessing health services on page 20 in section 3 of this report), hospital appointments were a major source of worry for the older people interviewed. As a result of transport difficulties, hospital appointments were often made more stressful for some of the people interviewed. Therefore health and transport policy and provision

do not seem to be joined up. Furthermore, most of those interviewed relied greatly on family and friends to take them to appointments, while the most vulnerable and those without families able to take them, suffered huge amounts of anxiety when dealing with the ambulance booking system. Many were unaware of the voluntary/community car schemes that might have been available to them as an alternative to alleviate some of this stress and worry. It would seem that the voluntary/community transport schemes could be better promoted through health services to tackle some of these issues.

At the local level there needs to be more cooperation between doctors, consultants, public health, transport providers and those working at local authority level. An awareness of the transport problems faced by older people in rural areas of Lincolnshire needs to be created in hospitals and amongst consultants when making appointments for older people. This should form part of the Smarter Choices and Accessibility team and community champions. The amount of stress and frustration that even routine appointments can cause for older people, their families and carers needs to be addressed. What would also be beneficial is if other health care providers such as optometrists, who often have to advise older patients that they have to cease driving, had access to literature from the voluntary/community car schemes which could point older people to other transport options in order to ease the transition to being a non-driver. This literature also needs to be available in doctors' surgeries, hospital waiting areas and on hospital websites. This will be undertaken as part of a long term communication strategy within the Smarter Choices and Accessibility Team at LCC. The development of the Lincolnshire Community Transport Forum in recommendation 2, and a single brand identity with supporting publicity material, could further help with this promotion.

Longer Term recommendations

4. Greater opportunities for older people to access and learn about ICT for transport

Over the next twenty years ICT is likely to play an important role in how an ageing population access information about transport services. However, the majority of older people spoken to in this study did not use the internet or computers. Those who did often complained about the slow connect speeds in rural areas. Many older people that were involved in the focus groups had mobile phones, but these were often used only for emergencies and for the most part were switched off. Mobile phone signal was also reported to be weak in many parts of the county, so older people experienced further difficulties with trying to use mobile phones to ring taxis or friends to pick them up when away from their homes. While many people interviewed relied on their children to access the internet on their behalf and one respondent talked about giving up computers after she retired (as her work life had revolved around them), there were many instances where older people expressed a desire to learn about how to use ICT.

Excellent Ageing (2013) have indicated that there are a variety of opportunities currently available for older people in Lincolnshire to become more involved in ICT courses. For example free IT courses for beginners are available now through Lincolnshire County Councils Community Learning Service which works with a number of contracted learning providers throughout Lincolnshire. Some of the I.T courses on offer include *Computers for the Terrified*, *First Look at Facebook & Twitter*, *ICT for Beginners* and *Introductions to Internet and Email*. The different providers include a range of educational institutions such as Boston College, Grantham Collage, Horncastle College and Lincoln College; training providers like Riverside Training, SkillsLinc and Taylor Tex; community trust schemes, heritage centres and leisure centres across the county.

Given the findings from this report, it would therefore seem to be beneficial if these ICT opportunities were extended to engage larger numbers of older people

and enable them to have greater opportunities to learn about information resources for transport options and how to access discounted travel across the county and further afield. Apart from the providers mentioned here, ICT courses could be further conducted in parish or community halls or local libraries and with support from the University of the Third Age (U3A).

Some older people reported that broadband and mobile phone signal was poor where they lived, which prevented them from accessing transport information. The onlincolnshire⁴ programme, a partnership between LCC, District Councils, NHS Lincolnshire, Community Lincs, the UoL and others, will invest over £57 million before March 2015 to improve broadband and telephony infrastructure in rural Lincolnshire. This could build confidence in older people's internet usage, and provide greater access to ICT.

5. The expansion of the concessionary bus pass scheme to be used on other transport services

Free bus passes are extremely useful to older people, but as this report has indicated they were not used by everyone, as many of the older people interviewed lived in isolated communities and perceived there to be no regular bus services or were not physically able to use a public service bus. Some of these older people were also unaware of how to use services such as CallConnect where these bus passes could be used. Therefore, free bus passes do nothing specifically to improve access to services and activities for the most isolated or those with mobility issues. The free bus pass scheme should be extended in some way to the transport services that are used the most, namely taxis. As all of the English concessionary bus passes issued to people who have reached the pensionable age for women are ITSO⁵ smartcards, the card functionality allow for multiple applications and numerous purses. It is therefore possible to add further transport and non-transport options onto the cards, e.g. functions that allow use of leisure centres, libraries and other services. These cards would allow older people to make trips to health services via other means and prove cheaper than introducing more services that older people do not use.

⁴ See <http://www.onlincolnshire.org/News-Events/Project-News>, <accessed on 08/03/2013>

⁵ The Integrated Transport Smartcard Organisation issues smart cards that can be developed for multiple uses, including council services such as leisure centres or libraries. These can then also be used with other forms of transport across the county.



Conclusion

This study sought to address the following questions:

- What are older people's perceptions of public (commercial bus and train companies, including InterConnect and CallConnect) and community transport services (voluntary car schemes, mini-bus brokerage) in rural areas of Lincolnshire?
- What are the current transport services used by older people?
- Are there any obstacles or barriers to the use of community transport services?
- To what extent are older people aware of the services available to them?
- What issues can be identified that may influence recommendations for the future provision of transport services?

This report has identified that older people used a variety of transport options including driving, lifts with family and friends, buses and trains, with some using the voluntary/community car schemes and the CallConnect service. Others walked around their local villages, but this was not a dominant mode of transport. Those interviewed had both positive and negative perceptions of public transport, but there was a serious lack of knowledge amongst participants about what community transport schemes exist, how they operate and what services they offer. There also appeared to be a negative relationship between the number of community transport providers and levels of socio-economic deprivation. For example, in Gainsborough there were no voluntary/community car schemes, whilst in Louth there was a large scheme, well operated and well used. However, despite these findings, there were still people who attended the focus group in Louth who had little or no idea about what a voluntary/community car scheme was or what CallConnect could do for them.

A serious lack of coordination between transport services was also reported by older people. These included connection times between different bus operators and also to railway stations. Furthermore,

there was also a variety of health care providers who older people felt gave little or no consideration to how they were to get to appointments and how to deal with potential life changing events, e.g. the cessation of driving. ICT usage was identified as being low in all groups interviewed, which would seem to indicate that there are limits to relying on ICT to solve transportation issues for older people. Based on the research in this report, a series of recommendations have been suggested, which aim to increase the use of transport services by older people in rural communities and to shape future transportation planning.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Focus Group discussion guide

General Introduction

Outline of project, aims of focus group, discuss issues of confidentiality, ground rules, names

Ice Breaker

1. So how did you get here today?

Developing questions

2. How do you normally get out and about and travel around the county?
3. Which public/community services are you aware of in your area? How did you come to know about them?
4. Do any of your friends/neighbours/relatives use these services? What do they think about these services?
5. Did you ever use the Dial-a-ride service? Or have you ever tried the Call Connect service?

Key questions

6. What are your perceptions of these services?
7. Do you know how you'd go about accessing them?
8. Are there any reasons why you don't use or rarely use these types of services?
9. What would make you more likely to use them?
10. What do you think are the best ways to get information to people about transport options, timetables, and routes? Do you ever use internet, mobile phone to look up bus/train times?

Concluding Question

11. 'Magic Wand' time, if you were given an unlimited pot of money, how would you organise transport in Lincolnshire? Are there things you would change?



Appendix 2 Recruitment Poster

Lincolnshire Transport Project

miward@lincoln.ac.uk
 T: 01522 552555
 M: 07890 874188

Tell us your opinions on transport services

Over 60's Focus Group Wednesday 13th June
 10.30-11.30am
 Horncastle Community Centre

Would you like to be involved in a focus group?
 Have your say about transport - or the lack of it - in your community.
 Your opinions will help make recommendations for the future provision of transport services for older people in Lincolnshire.
 You will receive a membership pack and a free return pass on the CallConnect service as a token of appreciation for taking part.
 The focus group will run for about an hour. All information will be strictly confidential and anonymous.

To participate please contact Mike Ward
 Phone 01522 552555 or 07890 874188
 Email miward@lincoln.ac.uk

Appendix 3 Recruitment Postcard

Mike Ward

LINCOLNSHIRE TRANSPORT PROJECT

miward@lincoln.ac.uk
 T: 01522 552555
 M: 07890 874188

My name's **Mike Ward...**

...and I'm a **researcher** conducting a study that explores **older people's transport needs** in Lincolnshire.

I'm really interested in your **views and opinions** on a range of topics dealing with both **public** (commercial bus and train operators, including CallConnect) and **community transport services** (e.g. dial-a-ride, car share schemes).

This 12 month research study is a partnership between **Lincolnshire County Council** and the **University of Lincoln**, which seeks to understand your perceptions and experiences of different transport services.

Any information you may reveal to me during the research is **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL** and the findings of this study will be treated with utmost care. If you decide not to take part, or if you do then change your mind later on, this is ok.

This study will make **recommendations** for the future provision of transport services for older people in Lincolnshire.



Lincolnshire County Council

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Alternatively visit our websites:

www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/busrailtravel

www.lincsbus.info

www.lincstravel.info

www.lincspartnerconnect.com