Transport for London

Older people's experience of travel in London

08225
June 2009

Research conducted by Synovate

1. Executive summary

Background and objectives

This project is of interest to both Age Concern London and Transport for London given Age Concern London's remit in promoting accessible transport for older people, and TfL's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and providing accessible transport for all. The overall aim of the research is to identify the impact of a lack of accessible transport on the lives of socially excluded older people in London.

Methodology

Twelve in-depth travel immersions were conducted with older people, each lasting approximately three hours.

They included an accompanied local journey to enable us to understand how respondents feel at different stages of the journey and identify any particular issues or challenges they face.

Key findings

A number of key issues or themes emerged across the research:

1. Experiences of getting older

Over time, some older people start to experience barriers in their daily lives that lead to their lifestyles becoming less active.

Their lifestyles may change in a number of ways. There are some activities that they may do less frequently than they used to, such as walking in local parks. There are also activities that they no longer do at all, such as playing sport. They may also do some activities closer to home than they used to, such as shopping in local markets rather than travelling to more specialist ones further afield.

The extent and speed of this change varies widely from individual to individual and may be caused by one single or a combination of the following factors:
- Decline in health
- Reduced income
- Caring for a partner or family member

- Loss of friends and family

Changes in behaviour and activity may also be closely linked to a change in levels of expectations and confidence. Over time some people gradually come to "accept" that their lifestyles will be less active than they used to be - they see this as an inevitable part of the process of getting older rather than a failure of the world around them to meet their needs. The result is that they can become less confident about what they are able to do and may have lower expectations of what they are able to do and of what public services should provide for them.

2. The role of transport

Transport, and in particular the lack of access to it, has a key role to play in the process of people becoming less active and having lower expectations.

The diagram below demonstrates this process that some people may experience as a result of individual barriers.
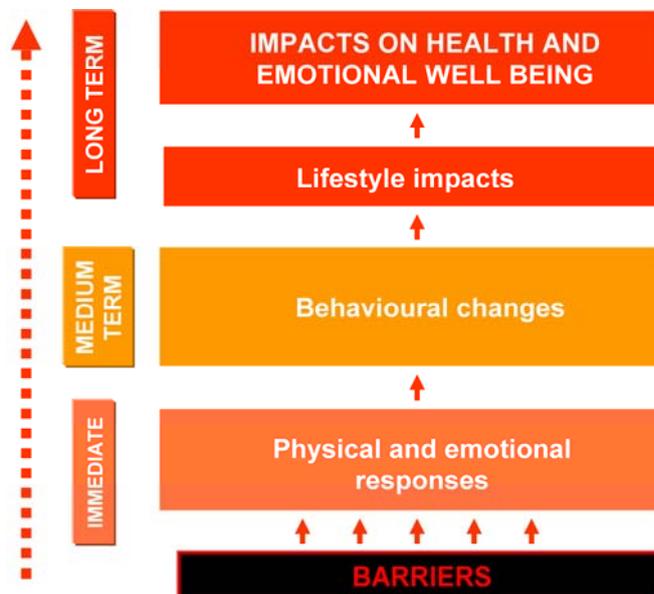
2.1. Barriers to transport

People may experience physical, environmental and information barriers. For example a physical barrier may be the distance from someone's home to the nearest bus stop.

2.2. Physical and emotional responses

Individual barriers to using transport may result in a range of immediate physical (pain, tiredness, discomfort) and emotional (lack of confidence, anxiety, guilt, frustration) impacts. For example, a lack of seats on over-crowded bus may lead to physical discomfort, exhaustion and anxiety about falling.

2.3 Behavioural changes

These immediate impacts can lead to substantial behavioural changes in overall activity and transport use – people may change why they travel (i.e. how essential is a journey), how they plan their travel, which modes they use to travel and how they use those different modes. For example, some people may stop using buses during peak times to avoid crowds and travel during the middle of the day instead.

2.4 Lifestyle impacts

These behavioural changes can have a cumulative effect on people's lifestyles which may lead to less interaction with friends and family, greater reliance on others, restricted to local activity and loss of spontaneity. For example, they can lose choice and control because they have to plan each journey in detail and assess whether it is an essential journey or not.

2.5 Impacts on health and emotional well being

These lifestyle impacts can ultimately affect people's health and emotional wellbeing as they can become more isolated, less socially active and less confident.

The ultimate result of these lifestyle impacts are impacts on health and emotional well being. These different impacts and their inter-related nature are demonstrated in the diagram below.
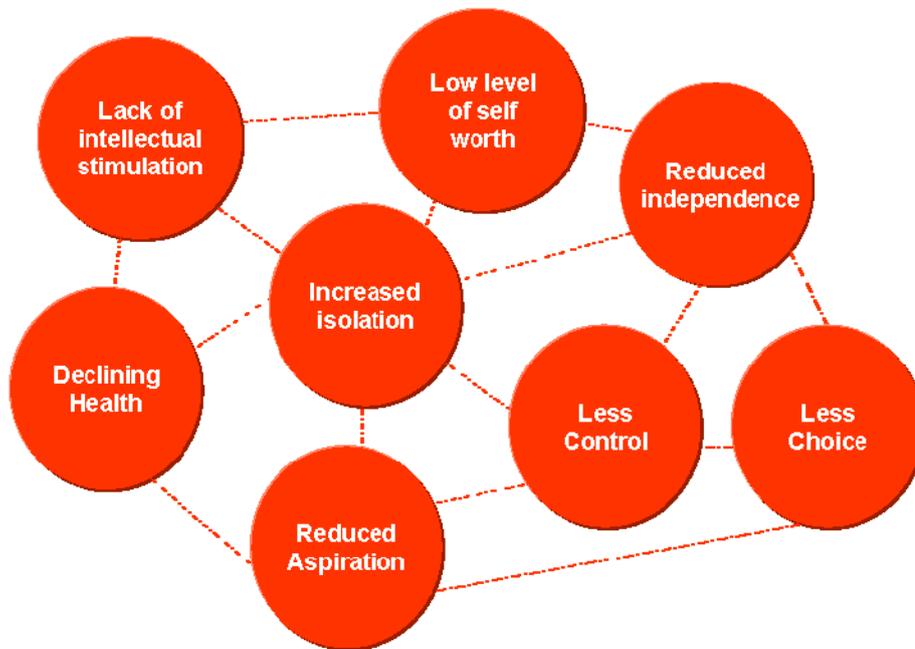
3. Conclusions and recommendations

Making transport more accessible can help people maintain a more active lifestyle ultimately maintain or even improve people's emotional health and wellbeing.

However, addressing the barriers will not be enough for those who have already significantly changed their behaviour as a result of experiencing barriers. This is because firstly the long term, cumulative effect of barriers to transport can be so extreme that some people are unlikely to feel confident enough to try public transport again without support. Secondly they no longer expect to be able to use public transport so probably would not seek out transport information without support or encouragement.

Therefore initiatives to encourage people to use public transport again need to actively reach out to people to let them know what support is available to them, supporting them to return to modes they have stopped using or to try new modes. In addition, this support needs to be maintained over time to help build up people's confidence in using public transport so they continue to use them in the longer term.

However transport is only one of the factors which drive the overall change in how active older people are. Addressing barriers to using transport alone will not be enough if people simply do not have a reason or the desire to leave the house other than for essential activities. Barriers at end destinations or activities also need to be removed.

Initiatives will be most successful at encouraging public transport usage if they combine accessible transport with accessible destinations such as:

- New activities, such as lunch clubs for older people
- Support to undertake existing activities, such as supported shopping
- Leisure activities that encourage older to travel beyond their immediate area

The need to address multiple barriers and provide tailored, ongoing support suggests a joined up approach between TfL and the voluntary sector. Throughout the research, respondents highlight the importance of organisations such as Age Concern and community transport initiatives in providing them with not only a motivation to leave the house but also support and encouragement to reach and return from their destination.

The key elements that initiatives need to promote are:

- **Awareness** of public transport and other services available to them
- **Reassurance** from peers that transport is accessible to them
- **Encouragement** to try public transport, potentially using accompanied journeys
- **Empowerment** so people build confidence to make new journeys unaided
- **Reinforcement** of the new methods used to encourage their continued use

2.   Introduction

2.1   Background

This project is of interest to both groups given Age Concern London's remit in promoting accessible transport for older people, and TfL's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and providing accessible transport for all.

2.2   Objectives

This research was designed to understand the impact of lack of accessible transport for older people in London.

A significant amount is already known about the barriers experienced by older people when using public transport so it is the intention of both organisations that this research goes beyond this existing knowledge to understand:

- The impact of transport on the quality of life of older people
- What steps can be taken to address barriers and improve the accessibility of transport for older people

TfL and Age Concern London have identified a number of specific areas for investigation based on their existing evidence. This research is focussed on the following areas:

- Understanding whether or not older people scale down their activities outside the home because of expected or experienced transport problems
- Finding out if inaccessible transport means that older people cannot access key services they need, such as health services?
- Identifying if expected or experienced transport problems have an impact on older people's emotional wellbeing and mental health?
- Gauging what impact contact with support services can have on older people's confidence in using public transport?
- Determining if there is a certain point where transport usage reduces rapidly, and if so, how it can be delayed slowed down?

2.3   Methodology

Twelve in-depth travel immersions were conducted with older people in London. These immersions lasted approximately three hours and included:

- An initial in-home interview to explore more about respondents' current life and how it has changed over time and to understand which modes of travel they use
- An accompanied local journey to enable us to understand how respondents feel at different stages of the journey and identify any particular issues or challenges they face
- A post-journey in-home interview to understand the role of transport in respondents' lives, understand the impact of access to transport on their lives, and identify their ideal travel experience

The focus on the impact of lack of accessible transport was the key factor in determining the target audience for the research.

We targeted people aged over 65 who:

- Use transport now less than they used to
- Use transport now less than they would like to
- Could use transport more frequently in the future

Within the sample, we also included:
- A mix of people using different modes of transport, including London Underground, bus services, rail services, walking and Dial-a-Ride services
- A mix of people with different levels of confidence in using public transport
- A mix of people with different levels and types of support e.g. some informal support from friends/family, some formal support, no formal or informal support
- A mix of gender, socio-economic group and ethnicity

The profile of the audience for the research meant that a standard qualitative recruitment approach through recruiter network was unsuitable. Instead, given the networks and established trust Age Concern London has with this audience, Age Concern London used their network to help identify potential participants. In addition a snowball recruitment method was used following Age Concern leads and using them to help introduce us to suitable respondents. Wider networks were also used to reach the desired number within the sample criteria.

3. Understanding the impact of getting older

How do people's lifestyles change as they get older?

The older people spoken to in this research say that over time their lifestyles have become less active. They go from visiting a large number of locations to being limited to a smaller number. They find that they visit these places less regularly and they tend to choose to go to places that are closer to their homes. The ultimate result of this is that many older people say that over time they gradually come to accept that their lifestyles are less active.

What are the causes of these changes in people's lifestyles?

Some of the major factors that contribute to changes in people's lifestyles are:

- **Health**
- **Income**
- **Relationships**
- **Transport**

A decline in a person's health is one of the most common factors that contributes to reduced activity as this can make leaving the house and getting around more difficult and exacerbate other barriers to using transport.

"Well that is the only thing that would stop me using transport – if my health deteriorated from what it is now which I hope not"
Rita, Neasden[1]

A change in income or reduced disposable income is likely to have an impact on the level of activity as many activities that people enjoy cost money in themselves or cost money to get to easily.

Changes in relationships with friends and family can lead to people being less active as friends and family may die or no longer be as easy to visit. Also many older people have to care for partners or relatives with long-term health problems, which necessarily reduces the time they have to do other activities.

---

[1] Names have been changed in the interests of respondent anonymity

"I would like to have more friends, but I have to look after my husband, that is my first concern"
Jane, Wanstead

There are also factors that can either accelerate decline or slow it and sustain current activity levels. Transport is one of these:

- It can help people to access the things they want to do
- But a lack of accessible transport can lead to diminished activity as the barriers prevent people from using public transport

This can make other activities outside the home inaccessible and mean that people only consider going to places that are located within their immediate area.

How older people experience the different factors is highly individual. Typically, though not always, it is a combination of several of these factors that will combine to lead to reduced activity and also to reduced expectations from older people. Similarly the individual character and attitude of people is likely to have a significant impact on how able they are to overcome the triggers to decline in activity and any other barriers that may make activities outside of the home more difficult. Some people with a positive attitude say they are driven to do all that they can to actively resist decline in activity, and look for new ways to maintain a desired level of activity in their lives.

It is possible that one of these factors, most commonly decline in health, will trigger an immediate decline in activity but many participants suggested that these factors are experienced simultaneously. Some spoke of a moment when they realised that they had felt that they were 'old' as they had stopped doing lots of things that they had previously enjoyed due to this combination of factors rather than one specific 'trigger'. Isolation can lead to ill-health which can lead to transport barriers

In addition to the negative factors that can contribute to the scale and speed of change in a person's life, some factors can help to sustain activity levels. In particular available support from friends, relatives, or community organisations can encourage older people to maintain their activities, by assisting with transport and/or day to day tasks such as shopping.

4. Barriers to using transport

Transport is important for accomplishing essential and leisure journeys and so can have an important role in maintaining older people's level of activity. Difficulties occur when access to transport is restricted by barriers. Older people who participated in this research tend to face physical barriers, environmental barriers and information barriers. Older people may also experience communication barriers but these barriers are not experienced by the participants in this research.

4.1   Different barrier types- Physical

Physical barriers to using transport are frequently mentioned as causing difficulties with transport. The most commonly referred to physical barriers are:

Distance to bus stops and other connection points

The distance between home and the nearest bus stop was a crucial physical barrier that restricted their ability to access transport. This barrier can be particularly significant as walking long distances can negatively impact on respiratory problems or injuries.

Long staircases on London Underground

Long staircases and escalators are noted as a significant barrier to using London Underground services. Some with difficulties walking say that having to ascend lots of steps would be impossible for them and for others there is a fear of falling associated with them.

Speed of doors closing on buses and The Tube

Getting stuck in the automatic doors when getting on and off buses and Tube trains is a concern for some people.

"I was on a bus when I got to Camden Town he closed the doors and someone had to shout to release me"
William, Hackney

High steps on to buses

Difficulties with stepping up onto buses are frequently noted as barriers to using buses. Some older people who are confident using buses still experience difficulties getting on and off buses because of the step up. This barrier can be exacerbated when bus drivers fail to pull up close to the kerb at bus stops, as this makes the step

up higher. There is also a feeling that bus drivers do not always lower the buses at stops to help people access the bus and this made it more difficult.

Jerky movements on buses

Some feel particularly vulnerable when they have to stand on bus journeys because of the jerky movements that can cause them to lose balance. In particular, participants mention that bus drivers sometimes start the bus moving before they have a chance to get a seat. This has caused some respondents to suffer falls.

"When you get on the bus sometimes, the driver don't wait until you have a seat before they drive off"
-Sandra, Camden

4.2   Different barrier types- environmental

Compared to physical barriers environmental barriers tend to cause discomfort rather than actually making journeys impossible. The most commonly referred to environmental barriers are:

Overcrowding on buses and tubes

Overcrowding is noted as an ongoing problem with using buses and a significant factor in people avoiding using the tube. Crowds of people can lead to people feeling very hot and uncomfortable. It can also make it harder for people to find a seat.

Other passengers

Other passengers can be a barrier to using public transport. School children can be particularly worrying for some. They are described as loud, disruptive, and having no respect for older people.

A further difficulty comes from passengers with pushchairs. Pushchairs take up a large amount of space which makes access difficult for older people who use walking frames. Some had experienced not being allowed onto a bus because it was full of pushchairs and people were unwilling to move them to allow more access.

"Then again, other people; they see you getting on the bus, they are piling them in the gangway, they will never move for people to get in. That is why really and truly I don't go out a lot"
– Rita, Neasden

Risk of crime

Risk of crime is a barrier to using transport as they say they feel vulnerable at various points while using the network. Older people say they feel particularly vulnerable when waiting at bus stops if they are in poorly lit or isolated areas. Also there is a perception that Underground trains are the least secure mode of transport. Much of the fear of crime older people experience comes, by their own admission, from the media rather than from incidents they have experienced or heard about from friends and family.

"No I don't think so, it's because I have not used them for so long, and reading all the bits in the papers puts me off"
- Ruby, Haringey

Time of day

People say they feel vulnerable when walking to or waiting at the bus stop after dark. They may avoid making journeys after dark as a result of feeling vulnerable.

Adverse weather conditions

Bad weather conditions, such as heavy rain, may be barriers to older people using transport. People can have difficulties carrying an umbrella when using a walking frame. Also fear of falling may prevent people from making journeys if it is icy.

4.3   Different barrier types- information

Respondents tend not to make direct references to having a lack of information about transport but it is clear that lack of information does have an impact on their use of different modes. Many restrict their journeys to modes they are familiar with, and so feel confident using. They may also tend to avoid modes where they feel they do not have good enough route knowledge generally. This is most notably a barrier to using the Underground as the Tube map can cause confusion.

Some older people also have reduced expectations of the system to cater to their transport needs, therefore are less likely to actively seek transport information from formal services. Therefore, a lack of proactive information is a barrier to accessing services which older people are not already aware of.

Even those who are aware that TfL provides travel information by phone are unlikely to use this source of information because of the assumption that it would not lead to useful solutions. This means that not all respondents are aware of the full range of supported transport options, e.g. Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard services, and community transport, which could potentially help them to do more of things they want to do

A number of respondents had only become aware of alternative transport options, such as the shopper bus, through word of mouth. Often a friend or neighbour had used a service and so introduced others to it. Community support organisations are also valuable resources for older people to receive transport information but very few spoke of trying to find out what is available directly with TfL.

"I was chatting to somebody in the queue at Sainsbury's and then she was talking about this Wandsworth Community Transport "
Kath, Wandsworth

4.4 Different barrier types- communication

People can experience barriers to using transport based on communication where information is not available to them because of how it is communicated. This can be because of language barriers or barriers to being able to communicate using the communication method offered. For example, it may be difficult for people with visual impairments to navigate the London Underground network because they are unable to view the Tube map. The participants in this research do not experience barriers of this type.

5.   The impact of barriers to transport use
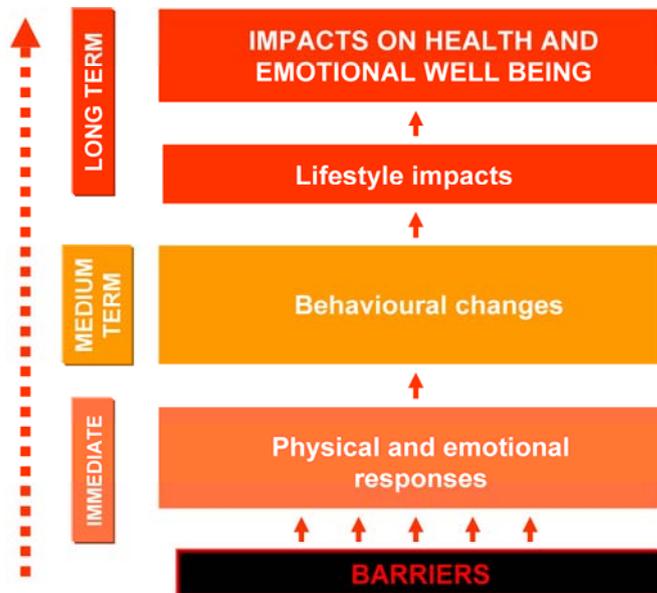
These various barriers can lead to immediate physical and emotional impacts.

5.1   Physical impacts of barriers

The physical impacts of the barriers to using public transport are discomfort, pain and tiredness. The distance from their home to the public transport access point is the key factor as this can make the journey tiring and often painful if walking long distances is difficult. In addition to pain and tiredness, people may experience some discomfort when using public transport. This discomfort may come from needing to stand for long periods of time or spending time in hot, crowded situations on buses or Underground trains.

5.2   Emotional impacts of barriers

Emotional impacts of barriers tend to be less immediately obvious but can be as significant as physical impacts. One impact of the crowding and also the perceived level of crime on public transport is anxiety about personal security. This clearly makes it less comfortable to use public transport. Similarly, some feel anxious about whether they will be able to reach their destination successfully due to not having enough information about the route or not trusting the transport mode to transport them reliably.

Further emotional impacts come from dealing with other members of the public when using transport. Some people feel guilt at their slow movement causing a disruption for other transport users. Others feel a sense of frustration and annoyance at the lack of consideration shown to them by other passengers. Many notice that people are reluctant to give up their seats and this frustrates them and also makes them less confident that they will be able to complete their journey in comfort. Some older people also mention a lack of consideration shown by bus drivers, both in terms of driving jerkily when people are still trying to sit down and also not appreciating that it may take older people a little longer than other passengers to get on and off the bus.

"They get on the bus loaded down with lots of bags of shopping, they occupy one complete seat, you ask them to move so you can sit down, they suck their teeth and they ignore you"
Margaret, Camden

6.   Behavioral changes as a result of impacts from barriers

The result of these immediate physical emotional impacts of barriers to using transport is that older people may modify their behaviour. People tend to modify their behaviour in three broad ways:
- Changes to how they decide whether or not to travel
- Change in how they plan their travel
- Changes to how they use different modes of transport

6.1 Changes to how people decide whether or not to travel
The immediate physical and emotional responses that people experience when using public transport can lead to changes in the way they view journeys, and assess whether they are necessary. Given the amount of energy and forward planning involved in overcoming barriers, some tend to separate journeys into either leisure occasions or essentials. Leisure occasions may include shopping for non-essential items, sightseeing, visiting family and friends, exercise, and adult education. Journeys that are considered essential are likely to include going to doctor's appointments, food shopping, and collecting pension and dealing with other financial matters.

As a result, people may decide to forego leisure occasions as essential journeys are of a greater priority so as to limit the impacts that a large number of journeys will have on them.

6.2   Changes in how people plan their travel

Physical and emotional impacts mean that some people need to do more planning and consider a number of factors to complete their journeys. One consideration is the time of day they make their journey. Making journeys during rush hour can be more difficult than at other times of day because of the sheer number of people. People may also avoid using public transport at times when children are likely to be going to and from school and schoolchildren are frequently mentioned as being particularly intimidating and inconsiderate. In addition, some may decide not to travel after dark as this can make them feel more vulnerable.

People may also decide not to make journeys to avoid adverse weather conditions or plan them more carefully so they avoid bad weather. This can be because of the likelihood of falling if it is icy or cold or windy weather having a negative effect on their breathing.

"If the wind hits me it brings on an asthma attack, so I have to be very careful, so I'll see if it dies down tomorrow so I can pick up my prescription"
Ruby, Haringey

People may also change how they plan their travel to restrict the distance they travel away from home as this will make them feel less anxious about any possible difficulties returning home. Similarly some may alter their journeys to limit the amount of time they have to spend on a particular mode of transport and so limit the discomfort they are likely to experience.

Planning journeys can demand a high level of effort, time and energy. For some this makes the thought of planning a journey exhausting, and reduces their motivation to leave the house for journeys that are not necessary. It can also mean that people try to accomplish more essential activities on a single journey than they might without some of the barriers that exist.

6.3   Changes to how people use different modes of transport

Physical and emotional impacts also affect how people use different modes of transport. Over time, the impacts can mean that people stop using certain modes, try out new modes and use current modes differently.

Some people cease using the London Underground as they get older. Use of the Underground is most notably limited by the crowding that is frequently experienced at peak times and also the difficulties with using stairs and escalators. People also may stop driving as they get older. Respondents explain this as being partly because of the expense and hassle involved in running a car, but most notably they found a slowing of their reactions made them less confident on the roads. People also mention that they no longer use walking as a mode of transport on its own. They will tend to use it mostly to access other modes of transport or for very short journeys in their local area.

"But it got to the stage, you have to admit that your reactions are slower and I thought you know I'm a danger to myself and other road users and about 18 months ago I gave it up"
Jane, Wanstead

People may also modify their behaviour by using new modes of transport. The most common modal migration that older people refer to is changing from primarily using the London Underground to using buses. This is because they are often closer and easier to access. This can also be because their journeys are likely to be limited to more local areas and buses are more suited to these short journeys than journeys across the city.

They may also switch from using buses and tubes to supported modes such as Dial-a-Ride. This process of switching modes can be daunting for some older people as they have to change from modes on which they had been comfortable to ones with which they are less familiar.

People may also change their transport behaviour by using modes that they are familiar with in different ways to how they have before. This may manifest itself as using modes outside of peak times to avoid crowds or by limiting the different bus routes they use to limit the amount of distance to bus stops or to avoid routes that they know are likely to be busy.

7.   The role of supported travel

7.1   Importance of supported travel

Amongst the sample, there was a range of support needs in terms of using transport. Some only require information and encouragement in order to help them to maintain their levels of transport use. For those who experience more severe barriers on public transport, door to-door supported travel options such as Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, patient transport services, and community transport can play an important role in maintaining their activity.

There are a number of benefits that people perceive in using supported travel methods. A major benefit is that they are less likely to be tired when they reach their destinations as they will not have exerted themselves as much as they would have if they had not received such support.

Supported transport can also help people to overcome anxiety about how they are going to get home as they know that the return journey is a guaranteed part of the service. This is particularly important for those who need to transport heavy shopping bags home.

Some communal transport options also have a valuable social element, which may make journeys more like leisure occasions than simply essential trips. Supported transport can also make essential journeys into leisure occasions because they can conserve people's energy so that they are more able to do things they want to do when they reach their destinations rather than just doing essentials and conserving their energy for the return journey.

7.2 Experience of supported travel

Supported travel methods provide benefits in removing some of the physical and emotional barriers to using transport. This section will explore in more detail, the different types of supported travel available and what the benefits and limitations of each method are.

Dial-a-Ride

Older people appreciate Dial-a-Ride because it is a door-to-door service and therefore enables journeys that might otherwise be seen as impossible for them.

However, there are some issues with the service. One obvious limitation of the Dial-a-Ride service is that it is oversubscribed and so people may have to spend an extended period of time on the waiting list before they will be able to use it. Clearly this is a source of frustration. Also, some people say that the Dial-a-Ride service can be unreliable in picking them up for return journeys when arranged and so they have had to use alternative methods. Some also notice that it cannot always be relied upon for timing so they may book a journey earlier than they need to arrive at their destination so that they can be sure of arriving on time.

"If Dial-a-Ride isn't available I then have to use the bus and use that dreaded tunnel one way or another"
-Peter, Redbridge

Shopper buses

Shopper buses provide a great benefit for older people who need to get to their local supermarkets and back with their shopping bags. A benefit of this is that they can shop with greater independence and control than if they have to rely on other people to do shopping for them. The main limitation of the shopper buses is that their service is limited to journeys to and from supermarkets and they are not available in every borough.

Taxis (Black cabs and minicabs)

Taxis provide a highly flexible transport option. The door-to-door service they provide means they are useful when mobility is an extreme difficulty. Taxis are particularly valuable to people who live in areas that are not well served by public transport. In addition, people can enjoy the interaction and conversations have with taxi drivers and sometimes develop friendships with them. The major drawback of taxi use is that it is an expensive mode of transport, particularly given that public transport for older people around London is free with a Freedom Pass. Using taxis on a regular basis is simply not an option for many older people because of the expense. Subsidised taxi services, such as the Taxicard, are available for some older people but not in all boroughs.

"I phoned a cab firm and asked how much it would be to take me from there at 8pm, £27.50, so I couldn't afford that, and then the same back, so I rung her up the day before and said I can't make it "
- Ruby, Haringey

Patient Transport Services

Transport to and from appointments at hospitals is highly valued by the people we spoke to as receiving support for journeys when they are unwell can be especially important. However, this service is only available for these hospital journeys.

8.   The role of community organisations

Community organisations can provide a valuable function in widening older people's transport use and expectations. They can provide occasions to leave the home and so help to reduce the threat of social isolation. Community organisations may be charitable organisations such as local Age Concern offices, religious groups or local community centres. Community organisations can widen older people's transport use and expectations in the following ways:

8.1 Providing Social occasions

Community organisations provide valuable social occasions which give people a reason to leave their homes and be more active. Examples of these sorts of activities are exercise classes, lunchtime groups, and coffee mornings.

"I just go over to Hillwood Centre everyday and have my dinner, and I sometimes sit over there, today I had Tai Chi"
- Sandra, Camden

8.2 Raising expectations

Community groups can encourage people to travel beyond their local areas by running day trips to different parts of London and beyond. This can help raise people's expectations by showing that there are places worth visiting in their local area. Some of these journeys may be possible for people to subsequently complete independently. Similarly, being exposed to areas outside of the immediate area can help to widen expectations of what may be accomplished independently.

8.3 Increasing contact with peers

Greater social interaction with peers can inspire confidence to use transport more widely as people are likely to hear and share their experiences of transport. This sharing of experience is likely to provide great reassurance that journeys on public

transport are manageable as people are more likely to trust experiences of transport from people like themselves and who have similar difficulties.

As well as informal transport information being shared between peers during social occasions, community organisations can also directly provide people with valuable formal information about the transport options that are available to them.

9.   Lifestyle impacts

Over time, changes in transport behaviour can have an impact on people's lifestyles. The cumulative effect of these changes can lead to less interaction with friends and family, greater reliance on others, a restricted area of activity, and a loss of spontaneity.

9.1   Less interaction with friends and family

Travelling less or travelling more locally can lead to less face-to-face contact with friends and family. This is likely to be especially true for those whose friends and family live outside the immediate area. This also has an impact on people's ability to do other leisure activities as they may wish to have companionship for certain leisure activities, or when going on longer journeys.

A further effect of this change in behaviour is that people may maintain their relationships by phone rather than face-to-face. One respondent also talks about using email as a way of communicating with friends and family.

Limited use of transport can also mean that time spent with friends and family is restricted to a person's home. This can be a frustrating experience and seems to be most keenly felt when people are looking after or spending time with grandchildren as often they want to go out and do more outdoor activities with them.

These behaviour changes can also mean that people can spend more of their time pursuing more home-based solitary activities such as crosswords, watching television, and listening to the radio.

"I want to go to the British Museum but I can't find anyone to go with and it is difficult for me to go all that way on my own by tube"
- Shanti, Harrow

9.2   Greater reliance on others

A lack of access to transport necessitates a greater reliance on other people for support. This is particularly true when people want to travel to destinations beyond their local area, such as going on specialist shopping trips to pick up something specific. It is also important when they will need assistance at the destination and returning home, and in particular if they need help trying on clothes at a shop or carrying heavy shopping bags home.

Also, some people rely on others for companionship for leisure activities and for longer journeys. This can be particularly important for journeys on non-familiar modes of transport, or when travelling a relatively distant leisure activity.

"if I want to go to Maplin or Lidls I will wait until my daughter is free with her car as you always end up having lots of bulky things to bring home"
- Rita, Neasen

9.3   Restricted to local activities

Restricted use of transport means people are less likely to experience leisure or social activities beyond their local area. They are also more likely to feel restricted to a small number of activities. Some respondents speak of wanting to visit London attractions like West End shows, museums, parks, and gardens but feel that they are too far away to be considered. This has a greater impact on those who live in areas where few activities and facilities are available nearby, often those who live in outer London boroughs.

The lack of accessible transport may prevent people from exploring new activities which could provide valuable social interaction and mental and physical stimulation. Better access to resources such as adult learning opportunities and swimming classes could be beneficial.

"I mean when I first came to this country I used to love going to the West End and look at the lights and look at the shops because in those days it wasn't like now but as time goes by things have changed and people are frightened of going out "
- Rita, Neasden

9.4   Loss of spontaneity

Lack of accessible transport also reduces the level of spontaneity in a person's life. People lose access to the opportunity to respond to immediate needs and desires as organising transport requires them to consider a great many factors.

This loss of opportunities to be spontaneous can prevent older people from being able to do things such as take advantage of a sunny day. They may want to enjoy the day by going for walk, or having a picnic in the park but this will require considerable forethought and planning to achieve.

Similarly, people can be unable to satisfy impulsive cravings for particular foods. This is particularly true if they use services such as Meals on Wheels that require people to pre-order their meals for the week in advance. Equally some people find that these services provide an adequate level of choice and control as they can choose meals from a range of cuisine types and price bracket. This may be driven by their low expectations of what level of choice and control is now possible in their lives, rather than a genuine feeling that they have a suitable degree of choice.

Limited use of transport can also limit opportunities for top up shopping, such as going to the convenience store or supermarket to pick up grocery items that have run out. This again limits the choices available to them.

People may also find it difficult to attend events as soon as they have heard about them or accept to a last minute invitation as it will be impossible for them to reach the desired location without planning well in advance.

10. Impacts on health and emotional wellbeing

A lack of accessible transport has an impact on people's lifestyles and consequently has an impact on their health and emotional wellbeing.

10.1   Reduced independence limits choice and control

Lack of accessible transport can mean that people feel forced to choose from a narrower range of options in terms of where they shop for food and clothing, and go to take part in leisure and social activities.

Lack of accessible transport can limit the range available choices in relation to the things people buy so, for example, they can struggle to access a range of different clothing shops to buy clothes that fit their personal taste and preference.

It is important for people to be able to directly choose the food they want to buy and eat when shopping at the supermarket. One respondent specifically spoke of wanting to retain autonomy over their own purchase decisions, particularly when deciding how to balance their money between luxury and necessity items.

"You know I'd have to get a carer or something which wouldn't be the same thing because you might ask her to buy something and she wouldn't really know, she wouldn't know if you could afford it or if you wanted to pay that much for it –or anything like that
– Rita, Neasden

10.2   Reliance on others can lead to low self-worth

Being reliant on others for assistance often requires people to fit in with other people's schedules and can affect confidence and self-esteem. They can be limited in how much control they have over when or how they do things. So they may:

- Need to plan getting to a doctor's appointment around an available Dial-a-Ride time slot
- Need to fit in with the timings of a community shopper bus service in to order to do grocery shopping
- Have to wait for a friend or family member to be free to drive them where they want to go
- Want to spend longer at a shop or supermarket but they feel worried about the time constraints this may place on the person who is accompanying them
- Have to hope that other passengers will provide assistance when using public transport (e.g. finding a seat, disembarking the bus)

For many these impacts result in a reluctance to ask for help, and feelings of guilt around being a 'burden' to society. Some respondents feel more comfortable than others in relying on help from others, though all would prefer to be able to travel more independently.

10.3   Increased isolation impacts on social connectedness

For many, interacting with people and places provides stimulation and a sense of belonging to the community, such as:

- Talking to other older people on community transport, at organised activities
- Attending local meetings
- Seeing and talking with friends and family, especially grandchildren
- Seeing new developments in their community in person, as opposed to just reading about them in the paper,
- Observing people go about their daily lives in public places (in shopping areas, parks)

Lack of accessible transport can limit opportunities to access these valuable social occasions. People whose activity has reduced significantly, say their opportunities to interact with others are restricted to brief exchanges with neighbours, home visits from community groups or support services delivery people, and taxi drivers.

10.4   Increased isolation can lead to a lack of stimulation

Some people talk about feeling bored as a result of not having activities or moments of interaction to 'break up' the day. In particular one respondent talked about the resulting boredom and loneliness she experienced when the Age Concern centre she used to visit regularly relocated further away from her local area.

"Now Age Concern has moved, I have to catch 2 buses, then I've got a long walk, so I just don't go. I used to love going to see all the old ones, we'd have something to eat, play a game of bingo, have a good laugh and that was it, but its all stopped now."
Ruby, Haringey

Other respondents fear the onset of boredom if their activity declines further. This lack of activity may lead to feeling lonely, sad, and even depressed. Whilst it is a concern, some people accept this as part of getting older.

10.5   Impacts on physical and mental health

Some respondents worry that a further decline in activity will negatively impact on their health. They think that a lack of occasions to go out will negatively impact on their fitness, as they will struggle to get exercise. They are worried that this will have a negative impact on their ability to maintain muscle strength and flexibility. Some respondents also mention difficulties in getting out of crowded areas of the city to get fresh air. This can have an impact on both their health and feelings of well-being.

Some respondents also worry that reduced activity is likely to impact on their mental well-being. Some think of themselves as quite depressed because of their isolation and for some there is a fear that a lack of stimulation may lead to symptoms of dementia.

"It'll help me to keep my mental sharpness. I worry that it might affect me mentally if I have to spend lots of time stuck in here"
- Peter, Redbridge

10.6 Reduced activity leads to lowered aspirations

Reduced activity can, over time, have the impact of reducing people's aspirations so that they do not expect to be able to do as much as they used to when they were younger. These narrowed expectations are likely to decrease people's motivation to make plans for future leisure occasions. They are also less likely to expect to try new things and meet new people. Similarly, reduced aspirations lead to people not trying to visit new places beyond their local areas in which they feel comfortable.

Older people say that they would benefit from new opportunities and increased aspirations. They think that being involved in more activities might mean they feel more confident and able to confront their existing fears about the outside world.

11. Ideal journey experience

11.1 Improvements to service

Participants interviewed identify a number of improvements that they would like to see on the Transport for London network in order to reduce the barriers to using transport more and getting more out of it.

For many, top of mind improvements relate to physical barriers, including:
- Community transport to take people from near to their homes to a local bus stop in order to overcome the initial barrier of the distance to a bus stop
- Transport for London providing a greater number of bus stops so that everyone is closer to the bus network
- The provision of a number of less frequent 'hopper' community buses to serve areas with limited access to the main bus network
- Lower steps on buses for easier access and ensuring that bus drivers always lower the bus when appropriate
- Ensuring that bus drivers do not pull away until all bus passengers are seated

- Installing lifts in more train and London Underground stations

Participants also suggest ways in which their journeys could be made more pleasant by addressing environmental barriers, including:
- Extra staff members to control passengers on buses and Tubes, which would give older people greater peace of mind as they would feel less vulnerable
  - This can be particularly important at times when schoolchildren are using buses and at night as these times are when they feel most vulnerable
- Imposing a limit the number of pushchairs allowed on buses at any time so that there is always some room for older people who walk with frames to stand near the front of the bus
- A general increase in civility among passengers on public transport (although this is recognised to be difficult to achieve)
- Bus drivers being more understanding and sympathetic towards older passengers

"Maybe I am wrong, but I think it could be run much better with a little thought and consideration"
Rita, Neasden

Respondents did not make specific reference to requiring improvements to the information they received though this is likely to be due to a lack of awareness about the gaps in their knowledge are rather than an absence of information barriers. Older people are also likely to have reduced expectations of the information that can be provided to them.

11.2 Impact of service improvements
When asked how their lives would change if the transport network in London were made perfect for them, respondents imagined their activities increasing in different ways.

Some people feel that they would be able to do journeys and visit places that they used to enjoy but that they had decided were no longer available to them, particularly visiting parks within London that they had always enjoyed.

Some also speak of this ideal transport network allowing them greater contact with family and friends. It could allow people to re-establish relationships that had dwindled due to the difficulties involved in meeting up. People may also be able to change relationships from being based primarily on telephone conversations to reverting to more face to face contact.

More accessible transport would also mean people could take their grandchildren out to see fun things and have more fun with them if transport improved.
In addition, some people would like the opportunity to go further and visit places that they might normally consider outside their sphere of activity. This would also help to increase their own expectations of what they are capable of doing.

"I know I will go to Brent Cross for a day out, a day out, get the bus, even if you don't buy anything, have something to eat, you meet people, you talk to people, get back on the bus, come home and you think to yourself, I am tired but I have had a nice day out"
Ruby, Haringey

A further way in which people might see their lives changing would be by doing more activities independently. They say they would be less reliant on getting help from others in order to accomplish tasks and so would also have more freedom to be spontaneous and not have to arrange their plans around help they might receive.

"*It means I could buy what I feel like, and decide when I want to treat myself. Like sometimes I want duck or salmon or something more expensive than, say, sausages*"
- Kath, Wandsworth

12. Summary and conclusions

This research suggests that over time, some older people start to experience barriers in their daily lives that lead to their lifestyles become less active which can result in doing things less frequently than they used to, or not at all, and/or doing things that are closer to home. The scale and speed of this change varies widely from individual to individual and may be caused by one single or a combination of factors including not being able to access public or private transport.

People can experience a range of physical, environmental and information barriers to using transport, which over time can have a long term cumulative impact on the health and emotional wellbeing of older people. Greater accessibility could help people maintain a more active lifestyle and consequently improve their emotional health and wellbeing. However, there are a number of associated challenges in reducing the cumulative impact of barriers because as people's level of activity declines, they may experience lower levels of confidence about using public transport and have low expectations of the transport system.

However, addressing the barriers will not be enough for those who have already significantly changed their behaviour as a result of experiencing barriers. This is because firstly the long term, cumulative effect of barriers to transport can be so extreme that some people are unlikely to feel confident enough to try public transport again without support. Secondly they no longer expect to be able to use public transport so probably would not seek out transport information without support or encouragement.

Therefore initiatives to encourage people to use public transport again need to actively reach out to people to let them know what support is available to them, supporting them to return to modes they have stopped using or try new modes. In addition, this support needs to be maintained over time to help build up people's confidence in using public transport so they continue to use them in the longer term.

However transport is only one of the factors which drive the overall change in how active older people are. Addressing barriers to using transport alone will not be enough if people simply do not have a reason or the desire to leave the house other

than for essential activities. Barriers at end destinations or activities also need to be removed.

Initiatives will be most successful at encouraging public transport usage if they combine accessible transport with accessible destinations such as:

- New activities, such as lunch clubs for older people
- Support to undertake existing activities, such as supported shopping
- Leisure activities that encourage older to travel beyond their immediate area

The need to address multiple barriers and provide tailored, ongoing support suggests a joined up approach between TfL and the voluntary sector. Throughout the research, respondents highlight the importance of organisations such as Age Concern and community transport initiatives in providing them with not only a motivation to leave the house but also support and encouragement to reach and return from their destination.

People will require different levels of support depending on their individual circumstances, confidence and prevalence of a particular barrier. For example, people who are relatively confident about using public transport may simply require route information for less familiar modes of transport or information about the availability of community transport initiatives in their local area. Those who are relatively active and confident about using public transport may only require support to reach their nearest public transport access point, for example via a service like Dial-a-Ride. Others may require more comprehensive levels support, for example being supported from the moment they leave their home to when they return.

Therefore, future initiatives need to be tailored to individual needs and promote the following key elements:

Awareness: As a result of the tendency to not seek out information and to expect that services will not meet their needs, any initiatives need to actively reach out to older people to let them know what support is available to them. Initiatives also need to support them to return to modes they have stopped using or try new modes

Reassurance: People need to know that services will help them to travel more easily. They typically seek this reassurance from 'people like them', especially from peers who can relay a positive experience of using a particular mode of transport or community initiative

Encouragement: People may need active encouragement to try modes of transport or travel initiatives themselves, potentially via accompanied or group journeys

Empowerment: People will require further support and encouragement to build their confidence to use new modes independently (where possible) or use community transport initiatives again

Reinforcement: Support needs to be maintained over time to help build up people's confidence and embed new travel behaviours

13. Appendix: Feedback on transport modes

Participants' views of the advantages and disadvantages of each mode – bus

Buses are the most commonly used mode of transport. They are primarily used for short journeys within the local area.

Advantages
- Have local and frequent pick-up points
- Are comparatively easy to get on and off
- Are free to use with a freedom pass
- People can see where they are going
- They feel light and airy

Disadvantages
- Some locations can be far from a bus stop
- Crowds can cause added difficulties
- Prams taking up the area near the front of the bus can make it inaccessible for those with stability aids
- Steps up to buses can be difficult
- Fear of falling over when bus moves before people have sat down

"It just takes me where I want to go and it's pretty regular. Yeah, it's alright"
– Sandra, Camden

"Getting on and off the bus sometimes worries me, when you get on the bus if the bus moves off when you happen to fall or anything, I am worried I am going to fall and damage my hip"
- Rita, Neasden

Participants' views of the advantages and disadvantages of each mode – train

Trains are typically only used for longer journeys outside London, often when accompanied by someone else. Also, it is a more frequently used mode for people whose closest station is over land.

Advantages
- Is fast and comfortable for traveling long distances
- Station access typically involves fewer steps than on the Tube
- Staff are considered helpful with assisting people with getting on trains

Disadvantages
- Requires a journey to the station to access
- Some security concerns
- Unaided, getting on and off trains can be a challenge

"I am not scared of the trains, I am scared of what goes on there, you read of people storming through the trains even now robbing people, pick pockets and all that, and it frightens me"
- Ruby, Haringey,

"That was very, very good, it was very good, they helped us on to the train and put us in disabled spaces. Really helpful."
- Jane, Redbridge

Participants' views of the advantages and disadvantages of each mode – tube

Tubes are used less by older people due to barriers to accessing them, but are most commonly used for travelling longer distances through London

Advantages
- Are fast and reliable
- It provides flexibility in terms of time of travel
- Is free to Freedom Pass holders

Disadvantages
- The number of stairs make it difficult to access
- Stations can be too far away
- Getting on and off trains can be difficult
- Heat and crowds cause discomfort, particularly at peak times
- Seen by many as the least secure mode of transport
- Route planning can be difficult as tube map is complicated

"It's the heat as well as anything else, and I try if possible, well I used to try if possible not to go when it's crowded but Euston is always crowded you know and you are getting pushed and shoved, I don't expect people to get away from me but it's a little bit worrying when you are all jammed, and that is why I won't go on the tube"

- Sylvia, Camden,

"There is loads of steps to go down in the tube and it's the speed and everything of that door, I'm a bit slow so that door, I'm frightened it will shut on me, I'm worried about tubes"

- Margaret, Euston

Participants' views of the advantages and disadvantages of each mode – driving

Driving is typically used for longer journeys by those with licences. It is often abandoned as a mode as people get older.

Advantages
- It is an entirely independent mode
- Has complete flexibility

Disadvantages
- Running a car is expensive
- Requires somewhere to park
- Only available to those with licences
- Requires people to have confidence in their driving abilities

"Well can I just go back to Oxford, the day before we moved was the last day I drove a car because coming to London I was almost eighty and I decided I wasn't going to drive"

- Jane, Redbridge

"But it got to the stage, you have to admit that your reactions are slower and I thought you know I'm a danger to myself and other road users and about 18 months ago I gave it up, and that wasn't bad you know"

- Peter, Redbridge

Participants' views of the advantages and disadvantages of each mode – walking

Walking is used for short journeys and for accessing other transport modes. It also serves as a leisure activity for some.

Advantages
- Is flexible and requires little planning
- Is free
- Can be enjoyable

Disadvantages
- Can be slow
- Can be tiring
- Can lead to people feeling vulnerable, especially at night
- Not suitable for longer journeys

"I used to love taking my dog for a walk in the park but now I can't. It's just too difficult"

- Ruby, Haringey

"I mean I walk with a stick, it's sort of getting, it's not only that, it's balance, when you get older you lose your balance, especially if you have had a broken ankle, once I start going I am not too bad but getting out of some of the shops I am dreadful because of my balance."

- Jane, Redbridge

Participants' views of the advantages and disadvantages of each mode – taxi

Taxis are particularly used for journeys late at night and when transporting shopping and luggage. They are primarily used by those with greater wealth.

Advantages
- Provides flexibility in terms of places to travel
- Provides flexibility in terms of time of travel
- Is fast
- Special rates are often provided for people in particular residential areas, making them more affordable

- Reassuringly secure

Disadvantages
- Is expensive
- Can require a wait at peak times
- Access can depend on the individual taxi driver's willingness to help

"The Britannia Building Society have an office where taxis can stop outside and I go inside and I say can I sit here, because I can't stand for a long time, I can't stand for a long time, I can't walk far and I can't stand and they let me go in and wait for my taxi."

- Jane, Redbridge

"I phoned a cab firm and asked how much it would be to take me from there at 8pm, £27.50, so I couldn't afford that, and then the same back, so I rung her up the day before and said I can't make it"

- Ruby, Haringey

14. Appendix: Pen portraits

Shanta, 67, Harrow

Shanta lives in Harrow with her Mother, and retired when she was 60 years old. Much of Shanta's day is spent caring for her mother, which has become more time consuming since her mother had a heart attack a year ago and is less able to do things for herself.

Shanta has diabetes and some difficulties in walking caused by problems with her legs exacerbated by her weight. However, she is very positive about "staying mobile" and goes swimming everyday to improve her flexibility and walks where she can. She enjoys meeting up with friends for coffee and also going to the cinema, and she used to really enjoy travelling and still likes to keep in touch with what is going on all over the world.

Shanta misses not being to get out and do the things she used to do, but realises that her age and physical condition has made her slow down. She accepts that she doesn't have as much money as she used to, therefore she has to be selective about

what she spends it on, e.g. she would love to go to a West End show, but worries about the ticket cost.

"I know that I can't do all the things I used to and it'll get worse. I see other people struggling I think that will be me soon"
Shanta, Harrow

Ruby, 76, Haringey

Ruby lives alone in her council house in Haringey. Until her health deteriorated a few years ago she was quite active and loved walking her dog and youth hostelling with her grandchildren or staying in her caravan by the sea.

Ruby can no longer do these things as her asthma and problems with her legs and heart means she can't walk very far and mean that she needs ready access to hospital services.

She typically uses buses though her nearest bus stop is 25mins walk away so she only uses it for essentials as getting there can be a real struggle. Ruby is scared of using the Tube as she fears that she will be robbed or attacked.

Until recently, an Age Concern office was located near to Ruby. She used to really enjoy seeing people and spending time there. Now her major source of social interaction has gone.

If transport provision was perfect she would visit lots of places throughout London, starting with Alexandra Palace. At the moment she is very bored and finds her situation frustrating. Visit places would help relieve this.

"I was up at 6am, and I thought god almighty its going to be a long day, and you think, there is nowhere to go, I mean I have been on that walk with you, I won't be going out again today, maybe not tomorrow, if the wind drops tomorrow I will take my prescription into Boots, that shortens the day a bit"
Ruby, Haringey

Peter, 89, Redbridge

Peter lives in his own house in Redbridge. He will be 90 later this year.

He has been very socially active for most of his life and enjoys being involved in community issues.

As he has got older and his health has declines he relies on help from a neighbour, and a nurse visits him twice weekly. He finds it increasingly difficult to make it out to the meetings and engagements he previously enjoyed.

Peter finds that it is too far for him to walk to his nearest bus stop and that he becomes frightened waiting there because it is in a very isolated area. He also finds that it is difficult to get on and off buses because of the large step up and down. Peter relies on using subsidised taxis, Dial-a-Ride, and on help from friends to get out and do the things that he wants to do. He only uses buses when other sources are unavailable and so tends to fit his schedule around others.

"If Dial-a-Ride isn't available I then have to use the bus and use that dreaded tunnel one way or another you know whichever way I go. If I go to Romford by the bus I have to use the tunnel going."
Peter, Redbridge

Jane, 81, Wanstead

Jane lives with her husband in a flat in Wanstead. She is 81. Jane has to look after her husband who cannot leave their home and requires visits from a nurse everyday so she is limited in how much she can do and where she can go. She uses buses for journeys to local shopping areas, although there are also shops very near to her for buying essentials.

Jane used to drive before they moved to London but now feels that she can manage using a combination of buses and taxis for returning home with shopping
She won't use the Tube because of the number steps and also the difficulties with the crowds and is very happy with buses, but still feels cautious and worried when using them, particularly when there are lots of school children using them.

"Well they are airy for a start, not always but there is a bit of air in a bus, I find they are very enclosed in the tubes, and as I say I have to walk down loads of steps to get to the tube and I can't get on that moving staircase that frightens me so I won't use that so I won't use the tube because you don't know where you are, I'll end up at the bottom" - Jane, Wanstead