



Encouraging independent travel

Lessons from the development of travel training programmes in Great Britain

March 2013

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About Imtac

Imtac is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including key transport professionals. Our role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

Our aim is to ensure that older people and disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Imtac receives support from the Department for Regional Development.

About this report

Travel training is a term that describes schemes that provide practical support to people to encourage independent use of public transport as well as travel by other modes such as walking and cycling.

This report looks at the development of travel training programmes in Great Britain. We have examined evidence about the benefits of travel training and best practice based on research undertaken by the Department for Transport (DfT) and others¹. Finally the report looks at potential ways travel training could be made more widely available in Northern Ireland and makes recommendations as to how improvements may be achieved.

¹ See Appendix A for a full list of publications used in compiling this report.

Summary of our findings

In developing this report we have found:

- Travel training programmes have been successful in overcoming the barriers that make travel difficult for disabled people and older people
- Travel training is not only about transport – schemes play an important role in ensuring disabled people and older people can access education, training and employment as well as other key services
- There are milestones in people’s lives where travel training is particularly beneficial and this works best at an early stage
- It has been demonstrated that travel training has clear benefits for a range of stakeholders including the participants, parents and carers, statutory agencies and transport operators
- Travel training works best where stakeholders and agencies work together
- There are a number of successful schemes operating in Northern Ireland
- Many people who could benefit from travel training cannot because of the small number of schemes available

Based on the evidence available we recommend:

- Encouraging travel training should have a greater priority in future transport policy
- Government should develop good practice guidance to encourage the development of travel training programmes

- Government should look at appropriate mechanisms, which might include a Travel Training Forum, to encourage the necessary inter-departmental and cross-sectorial cooperation.

We have also set out how Imtac proposes to assist with this process over the next 12 months.

About Travel Training

Getting around and travelling on public transport can be a challenge for many people in our society including many older people and disabled people. The reasons for this are complex but personal factors including a lack of confidence around travelling can stop people using transport. Not being able to travel (or being restricted in travel choices) can have a significant impact on the lives of many older people and disabled people. Travel Training is a generic term that covers a variety of schemes providing practical and tailored support to enable people to get around in safety and use public transport independently.

Our analysis of schemes and research undertaken by DfT indicates the main groups in society who benefit from travel training schemes are:

- Children and young adults (both disabled and non-disabled) – particularly at or approaching transitional stages
- Disabled people of all ages and in particular people with a learning disability
- Older people who no longer have access to a private car
- People from minority and ethnic groups, particularly when English is not the first language

Evidence suggests that only a small percentage of those who could benefit from travel training are eligible for the programmes available. Evidence also shows that travel training is most effective when delivered from an early age or when someone acquires impairment.

There is great variation between travel training schemes with schemes having different and varied approaches, targets groups, aims and purposes. In broad terms most schemes mix practical support around using transport services with structured learning encompassing all aspects of travel. Most schemes are centred on increasing the confidence and independence of participants but many schemes promote access to a particular activity such as education, training or employment.

One of the key elements of the most successful schemes is partnership and close liaison between a range of stakeholders including the statutory agencies involved, the community and voluntary sector and transport providers.

The benefits of travel training

All evidence suggests that travel training has benefits for a range of stakeholders including the participants, their families/carers, Government and other statutory agencies and transport providers.

Participants benefit from increased confidence and independence and freedom and better opportunities to access education, training, employment and other day to day activities. Families, parents and carers benefit because of a reduction in dependency, greater freedom and opportunity to take up employment.

From a Government perspective it has been demonstrated that travel training schemes help meet key policy objectives around health, education and employment as well as promoting greater equality. From a practical perspective, travel training can result in significant savings to statutory agencies in terms of reduced demand for services, reduced demand for dedicated transport services and reduced reliance on benefits.

Transport providers benefit from gaining new passengers making services more sustainable.

The cost of travel training

It is difficult to quantify the true cost of travel training given the variation and diversity in the types of training being provided. The major cost for travel training programmes is staff time and costs for each scheme will vary depending on who is participating in the scheme. For example participants with a learning disability may require substantial one-to-one support over a long period of time whilst other participants may require much less support. There are many examples, including locally, of schemes where the costs of providing travel training are reduced by using appropriately trained volunteers. Whilst the costs of schemes are

generally accepted to be relatively modest. It is accepted that in the current financial climate making even modest additional resource challenging.

Clearly costs of schemes can be offset by savings resulting from people travelling independently. However these savings can be difficult to quantify and may only become apparent in the longer term. If the case for travel training is to be progressed it is essential that monitoring and evaluation of schemes can highlight the financial benefits resulting from their work.

Developments in Great Britain

There are significant numbers of travel training schemes across Great Britain. As we have already identified there is a great diversity in the aims and operation of schemes. Schemes have generally developed in an ad hoc fashion largely driven by the community and voluntary sector with support from a range of statutory and non-statutory funders.

Many schemes focus on encouraging independent travel amongst younger people particularly those younger people about to move from education into employment and training. For example Halton Borough Council offer training to 14-19 year olds enabling independent travel to school and social activities. The scheme covers a range of topics and provides an individually tailored travel plan². Other schemes have a broader scope targeting sections of society most at risk of social exclusion. An example of this type of scheme would be a Buddying service operated by Metro Passenger Transport Executive in the Leeds area. This service offered the support of trained buddies to anyone over the age of 18, but with a particular focus on disabled and older people.

² Taken from "Travel Training Discussion Document and Strategy Outline" published by DfT in 2008

Buddies provided practical support to enable participants to travel by public transport³.

Over the past few decades there has been increasing recognition amongst local and national Government in GB of the value of travel training in encouraging independent travel and meeting other key policy objectives. Locally agencies such as Greater Manchester Transport Executive has been proactive in encouraging the development of schemes. Transport for London has gone one step further by allocating some of the resources used for Dial-a-ride services in London to a scheme that assists Dial-a-Ride users to use mainstream public transport services⁴.

Nationally the Department for Transport has in recent times examined the benefits of travel training. This work resulted in the production of a Good Practice Guide designed to encourage greater provision of travel training schemes. The Guide contains a wealth of information about the value of travel training as well as advice on establishing schemes, sustaining schemes and evaluating their impact. Both guidance from DfT and GMPTE highlight numerous examples of schemes.

Developments in Northern Ireland

As in Great Britain there have been a number of successful travel training schemes in Northern Ireland. As in GB these schemes vary in their design and purpose. The NOW Project in North and West Belfast for instance provides Travel Training for people with a learning disability to enable access to training and employment opportunities.

Organisations such as Guide Dogs provide travel training on an individual basis as part of overall mobility training designed to enable

³ Travel Training Good practice guidance – published by GMPTE July 2005

⁴ For more information on the Travel Mentoring Service in London see <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/assisted-transport-october-2011.pdf>

people with a visual impairment to lead more independent lives. Many of the schemes here work successfully with a range of partners including statutory agencies and transport providers.

Many schemes have developed in similar ways to schemes in Great Britain - largely due to the commitment of individuals or voluntary and community organisations with the support of funding from a range of agencies. However over the last five years the DRD has supported two pilot schemes. The first is a “buddy” scheme for older people and disabled people which has operated in a number of areas at different times including Belfast, Lisburn, Tyrone, the Ards Peninsula and North Down. The scheme has had different purposes depending on its location. In Belfast the focus of the pilot was to specifically encourage older people to use local bus services, in other locations the scheme encouraged the uptake and usage of door2door transport. Most recently the service has operated in North Down seeking to encourage independent use of all modes of transport by people of all ages but particularly amongst younger disabled people.

The second scheme ran for one year in the North Down area. It involved disabled people who use public transport supporting other disabled people to start using services.

As there is no formal evaluation available for either pilot it is difficult to ascertain whether either pilot has been successful in encouraging independent travel.

Although not formal travel training the DRD has also published a Travel Safe Guide for people with learning disabilities giving advice about staying safe when using all forms of transport. Since it was republished in 2011 the Guide has attracted interest from Education Boards with regard to pupils who currently do not use buses to travel to school. This indicates that other Departments are recognising the benefits (both social and financial) of encouraging and supporting disabled people to use public transport more.

Our conclusions

Investment in more accessible public transport services in Northern Ireland means that many disabled people and older people have greater opportunities to travel. For many people other barriers, such as issues around personal confidence, prevent this happening. The result of limited travel options means that many disabled people and older people have restricted life chances with poorer access to key services and activities such as health, education and employment as well as social and leisure activities. It also means that Government spends substantial amounts on additional and expensive transport services.

All the evidence we have looked at indicates that travel training has a key role in addressing the barriers that make using public transport difficult for disabled people and older people. By overcoming such barriers travel training helps people access everyday activities and contributes to a fairer, more equitable and inclusive society. There is also evidence to suggest that schemes can help Government deliver wider policy objectives and at the same time enable savings across Departments in the longer term. However due to the ad hoc development of schemes too few people who could benefit from travel training get the opportunity to participate in schemes – moving forward the key challenge must be to increase travel training opportunities for disabled people and older people.

Imtac welcomes recent DRD commitments⁵ to look to further develop travel training opportunities for disabled people and older people. The Committee will be pleased to advise and assist the Department develop policy in this area based on evidential research.

Our recommendations for the future

Lessons from elsewhere highlight the key role of travel training in making travel easier for disabled people and older people. Imtac recognises that increasing travel training opportunities will be a major

⁵ As set out in the Review of the urban door2door scheme – October 2012 and recent correspondence with Imtac

challenge given constrained funding. Departments including DRD should look to maximise any potential sources of additional funding within Government such as the OFMDFM Delivering Social Change programme. However we do believe that schemes could also be developed through better use of existing resources and exploring alternative funding sources, for example through working with the voluntary sector. The following recommendations are designed to maximise opportunities to develop travel training.

- 1 Imtac recommends that the Department for Regional Development and other Government Departments recognise the strategic importance travel training in future transport policy documents
- 2 Learning from the work undertaken by the Department for Transport Imtac recommends key Government Departments develop practical guidance to encourage the development of travel training opportunities
- 3 Cooperation and partnership working amongst organisations and agencies is a key reason why travel training programmes are successful. Imtac recommends Government look at mechanisms to encourage partnership working – an inter-departmental/cross-sectoral Travel Training Forum could be one mechanism.
- 4 Noting the Department's commitment to encouraging travel training, Imtac is happy to assist with initiatives to encourage the development of travel training. To progress this issue Imtac proposes to include the following tasks in our 2013/14 Work Programme:
 - The Committee will co-ordinate a programme of research into the current provision of travel training in Northern Ireland. We will develop a report identifying opportunities to extend the availability of programmes including identifying potential additional funding opportunities.
 - Subject to budget the Committee will host a seminar aimed at key representatives from Government Departments, statutory agencies, transport providers and the voluntary and

community sector. The aim of the seminar will be to identify ways to extend the provision of travel training programmes through partnership and cooperation.

Appendix 1 - Useful publications

The following publications were used during the development of this report:

Accessible Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland – published by DRD 2005

Review of Urban Door2Door Service – DRD 2012

Travel Training Discussion Document and Strategy Outline - published by DfT in 2008

Travel Training Good Practice Guidance – published by DfT 2011

Travel Training Schemes – a review of travel training schemes in England – published by DfT

Travel Training Good practice guidance – published by GMPTE July 2005

Assisted Transport Services in Greater London – published by Transport for London 2011