



*DG Employment and
Social Affairs*

The MAPLE Project: Improving Mobility and Accessibility for People with Learning Disabilities in Europe



VP/2003/14

Can People with Cognitive Impairments Use Public Transport Effectively ?: National Report for the United Kingdom

**Prepared for
DG Employment and Social Affairs**

by

The MAPLE Consortium

Merseytravel (UK)
Transport & Travel Research (UK)
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece)
Centre Technique National d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Handicaps et les
Inadaptations (France)
Lund University, Lund Institute of Technology (Sweden)
South Kildare Community Transport (Republic of Ireland)

February 2005

DG Employment and Social Affairs

The European Year of People with Disabilities, 2003

MAPLE

VP/2003/14

Can People with Cognitive Impairments Use Public Transport Effectively?: National Report for the United Kingdom

by

The MAPLE Consortium

Merseytravel (UK)
Transport & Travel Research (UK)
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece)
Centre Technique National d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Handicaps et les Inadaptations (France)
Lund University, Lund Institute of Technology (Sweden)
South Kildare Community Transport (Republic of Ireland)

Author(s)	Russell Tricker & Philip Barham
Quality Control	Philip Barham (TTR)
Version	1.0
Date	February 2005
Last edited	February 26th 2005

This report is a product of the MAPLE Project, which is a project co-funded by the European Commission's DG for Employment and Social Affairs, as part of its activities for the European Year for People with Disabilities 2003. Sole responsibility for the content of this document lies with the authors. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.



ISO 9001
Registered Firm

CE2001 57

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Method	2
2.1 Selection	2
2.2. Approach	2
2.3 Analysis	4
3. How the UK organises surface-based public transport	4
3.1 National Interest Acts, Authorities, Organisations and Advocacy Groups	5
3.2 Transport Authorities	7
3.3 Operators	7
4. Results	7
4.1 Interviewee definitions of ‘cognitive disability’	7
4.2 Travel possibilities	9
4.2.1. Measures in place	9
4.2.2. Policy documents and the future	11
4.3 Special measure	12
4.3.1 Education and Training	13
4.3.2 Information and Assistance	14
4.3.3 Technical Aids	16
4.3.4 Special Transportation Service	19
4.4 Future Prospects	20
5. Conclusion	21
Appendix 1 Organisations and authorities interviewed	
Appendix 2 MAPLE semi-structured telephone interview form	

Can People with Cognitive Impairments Use Public Transport Effectively ?

1. Introduction

The MAPLE project is a European undertaking to discover more about the current situation, with respect to how people affected with cognitive impairments travel. The work being carried out in the UK runs in parallel with that being done in Ireland, Greece, France and Sweden. These partners are conducting sub-studies based on the same questions that form the basis for this report.

The project aims to promote the mobility, and encourage the social inclusion, of two very broad and heterogeneous groups of people: people with learning difficulties and people with mental health problems. This will be done by identifying, investigating and disseminating measures that will improve the accessibility of public transport systems in Europe, so both facilitating the movement of these people within the physical environment, and encouraging their participation in society.

Whilst a considerable amount of work has been done to remove physical barriers in the physical environment, so improving the mobility of people with a physical or sensory impairment, the consortium believes that the problems faced by people with a cognitive impairment or mental health problems (which might include behavioural difficulties or depression etc.) are much less well understood, and that strategies for assisting these people with their mobility are far less well documented. Although these conditions are largely "invisible", they are often no less restricting in their effect of limiting an individual's mobility and participation in mainstream society.

A key part of the research was to target and uncover what public transport operators, authorities, charities and interest/advocacy groups have done so far, with respect to making provisions for people with cognitive impairments, in order to simplify their overall travel requirements. In addition, another component of the work is to target definitions of "cognitive disability" by public transport operators.

Within the study, "public transport operators and providers" included road, rail and sea based modes included in this exhaustive list: bus operators, train operators, tram operators, metro (underground train) operators and ferry operators.

During the telephone interview stage of the research, public transport operators and providers, including PTEs, were approached. Within the telephone interview, operators were asked to define "cognitive disability".

The term “cognition” is defined by the Concise Oxford English Dictionary as:

“the mental acquisition of knowledge through thought, experience, and the senses”.

2 Method

2.1 Selection

The sample selected for the investigation consisted of a variety of organisations and establishments, each concerned with transport from a certain dimension. The sample gained provided sufficient scope for a wide ranging perspective on the interaction between public transport and disability issues, and to explore the overlap that existed. Given that the large Passenger Transport Executives cover relatively large (metropolitan) regions around our major cities, it was imperative that these institutions were involved, together with the major operators who ultimately determine the service level and quality provided to all customers, and will determine the quality, comfort, ease of use etc enjoyed by its passengers with a cognitive impairment. To gain as big a picture as possible, various interest and advocacy groups have been included to maximise the input. During this stage of the investigation, it was interesting to explore what things are currently in place by transport operators and providers, and also to acquire an insight into how public transport trainers (for example, with travel training) assist people with cognitive impairments to use public transport both more effectively, and with greater independence.

The sample included five out of the seven Passenger Transport Executives (PTE) in the UK. These cover the largest metropolitan areas outside of London. Public transport operates in a largely deregulated and privatised environment (outside of London). The role of the PTEs is to oversee the provision of public transport in each area. To ensure the inclusion of London in the study, both London Buses and the London Underground were included in the telephone interview.

A total of X phone interviews were conducted. This included X interviews with PTEs, Local Authorities (of which cover smaller areas) and UK bus, train and tram, and ferry operating companies. Disability interest groups, charities and other organisations were also contacted by telephone for general information (rather than structured interviews).

2.2 Approach

The investigation consisted of making contact with both local authorities, PTEs and operators. All operators were approach with a view to conducting a phone interview, other organisations were asked generic questions regarding what they knew.

Here is a list of the UK organisations contacted for the UK National Study.

Arriva Midland Buses (phone interview)
Arriva Trains Northern
Cambridgeshire County Council
Cheshire County Council – Info placed on server
CENTRO (inc. phone interview)
Disability Right Commission
ENABLE – Thistle cards received
GMPTE (inc. phone interview)
Leeds College (Buddying - Travel Training)
Bradford College (Travel Training)
London Buses
London Underground
MACS (Travel Information)
MENCAP – Station Accessibility
Mental Health and Transport Group
METRO (Travel Training and phone interview)
Metrolink (phone interview)
MIND (information)
NEXUS (Phone interview)
Norfolk County Council – Send some literature in post
PhD paper on Dyslexia
Scotrail – Cannot help us
Social Exclusion Unit – Hotlinks to reports on server
Strathclyde PTE (Interview)
Translink (N. Ireland) (Phone Interview)
Virgin Trains (Phone Interview)
Warrington Borough Council (Travel Training)

The investigation has consisted of telephone interviews with operators and Local Government authorities. The telephone interviews were conducted with a structured telephone interview guide, encompassing both overview questions and questions on specific measures.

The questions were presented in two sections vis-à-vis semi-structured interviews. The operators were first asked a series of overview questions, with the very first question assessing the measures taken to assist and facilitate travel for people with functional disabilities. Following on from this, interviewees were then asked to define in their own words “cognitive disability” and to state which groups of people they thought of that might be classified under “cognitive disabilities”. Following on from the definitional question, the interviewees were then asked to comment on whether people with functional *cognitive* impairments used the service provided, and in response to that, whether or not the operators had made any provisions or taken any specific measures targeting people with cognitive impairments. From there, operators were asked to support such measures by being asked about documentation in policy documents about such measures.

In the next section of the semi-structured interview, respondents were asked questions based on specific measures to facilitate travel for people with cognitive impairments, including questions about education programs for staff, training programs for persons with cognitive disabilities, action plans for front line staff to follow in case of an emergency situations, and then questions on “visible” measures, some of which may already be in place, although it has to be noted, may be in place for the assistance of all disabled people rather than those specifically with a cognitive impairment. In all cases, interviewees were first asked to comment on whether or not the measures were provided, and then to comment on them.

2.3 Analysis

All the interviewees answered all the questions as fully as possible. Many of the interviews overshot the 20 minute target time for a telephone interview. This has at least eliminated the problem of half-completed surveys. The data have not been properly analysed, but it is envisaged that measures taken should be compared and contrasted across the PTEs and the major operators. Another part of the analysis will look at how far the measures go at assisting people with cognitive impairments across the interviewees, and reaching some conclusions with reference to examples of might be considered best practice.

An observation was made regarding the extent to which new observations were made, following a certain number of interviews, which was the number of new opinions and ideas declined as the number of interviews increased.

The analysis will be entirely qualitative in its nature.

3 How the UK organises surface-based Public Transport

The Highways Agency is responsible for operating, maintaining and improving the strategic road network in England. Some major roads are controlled and maintained by the Local Authority concerned. The UK rail network and its operations are largely fragmented. There are now 25 Train Operating Companies, each operating on a franchise basis, awarded and controlled by the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA). The SRA operates under directions and guidance issued by the Government and is the strategic, planning and co-ordinating body for the rail industry and the guardian of the interests of rail passengers. It acts as an important purchaser of train services and railway infrastructure. Its task is to provide a clear strategic direction for rail transport in Britain, to promote rail passenger and freight transport and to encourage private investment in the rail industry. Following privatisation, British Rail was divided into two main elements, one being the Train Operating Companies running franchised passenger rail services, the other being Network Rail (previously Railtrack) which is a government owned company charged with responsibility for track, signalling, bridges, tunnels, stations and depots.

National coach services (or long distance buses) are operated mainly by National Express, a private company.

Local bus services are run by private companies that tend to serve particular routes and corridors in town and cities across the UK. The main providers are First, Arriva and Stagecoach.

3.1 National Interest Acts, authorities, organisations and advocacy groups

There are numerous UK organisations and charities in place to assist both directly and indirectly with people with cognitive impairments to use public transport more effectively.

The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) was set up due to an Act of Parliament as an independent body to advise Government on the transport needs of all disabled people across the UK. The aim of DPTAC is to ensure that everyone can travel and go where everybody else goes, both with relative ease and at no extra cost.

The [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#) created statutory rights and obligations. Under the Act, new trains and buses must meet tough accessibility requirements. Although this is a great improvement on where this country was only few years ago, this Act still needs to be improved. This Act aims to end the discrimination which many disabled people face. The Act allows the Government to set minimum standards so that disabled people can use public transport more easily. The Act also applies in Northern Ireland.

The Learning Disability White Paper (2001) states that, “access to transport is essential to enable people with learning disabilities to lead full and purposeful lives. However, they currently face many obstacles using public or private transport. Transport staff and operators may not understand their needs and people may lack the necessary support and training to become independent travellers”. Government measures to improve access to transport for disabled people already taken or under way include:

- Implementation of the transport provisions in the Disability Discrimination Act;
- Development of disability training packages by the transport industry;
- Greater emphasis on meeting the transport needs of disabled people, including those with disabilities, through Local Transport Plans;
- Increased focus on learning disability in the membership and agenda of DETR’s Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC).

There are some 210,000 people with severe learning disabilities in England, and about 1.2 million with a mild or moderate disability. The Learning Disability White Paper makes an acknowledgement of barriers that those with learning disabilities face when using and trying to use public transport for everyday purposes. It also notes that transport staff and operators may not always understand their needs and people may lack the necessary support

and training to become independent travellers. Several measures have already been taken in order to attempt to improve access to transport for disabled people – this includes the following:

- Implementation of transport provisions in the DDA
- Development of disability training packages
- Better acknowledgement of the needs of people with learning disabilities through the Local Transport Plans
- Increased focus on people with learning disabilities via DPTAC

MENCAP is the UK's biggest learning disability charity. With reference to transport, MENCAP notes that public transport companies often do not really understand the needs of travellers with learning disabilities. It is only recently that transport has now been included under provisions set out in the DDA, which highlights the fact that all public transport modes must be fully accessible by certain dates. Many people with a learning disability cannot drive and are disproportionately dependent on public transport, in relation to the population as a whole. A series of linked problems can cause access to education and employment to be more restricting than it otherwise would be, hence the reason that many people with learning disabilities generally earn way below the national average. Hence, expensive public transport is of particular concern.

The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities was established in 1998, as part of the Mental Health Problems, a registered charity. A UK organisation, the Foundation works with people and their families to ensure that they can use effective services, play their full part in society, and enjoy equal rights. The Foundation are striving to try and ensure that all those with learning disabilities are supported in living active and normal lives, and that people are able to make real choices for themselves.

RADAR is a UK charity formed in 1977, which works and liaises with organisations of all types, but comprises mainly disabled people. In RADAR's work, there is a continued commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities continue to be at the heart of the decision making process.

The British Dyslexia Association is the voice for dyslexic people in the UK. The BDA promotes early identification and support in schools to ensure opportunity to learn for dyslexic learners. We want to represent the needs of dyslexic people on leaving school, in higher education and in work. The BDA's role has been raising awareness of the evidence and effects of dyslexia. We now also aim to develop and encourage services that meet the needs of dyslexic people. In this way we will shape services to meet needs.

A PhD paper on Dyslexia entitled "Understanding and Addressing Dyslexia in Travel Information Provision" points out that people with learning disabilities make up just a tiny proportion of those with all disabilities. It is likely that the use of transport to access employment opportunities may be a barrier in itself,

in terms of the need to seek and interpret information in order to be able to plan and undertake a journey". It further acknowledges that learning disabilities as a topic within transport has had very limited up-to-date research provision.

MIND is a leading mental health charity in the UK. MIND seeks to challenge discrimination, seek social inclusion and influence government policy through campaigning and promoting education. MIND campaigns seek to improve the lives of those with mental health problems. MIND also produces a wide range of publications, and organises conferences and seminars, dealing with important issues, together with the promotion of strategies for coping and living.

3.2 Transport Authorities

In the UK, there are seven major Passenger Transport Authorities. These serve the metropolitan areas of the country. Elsewhere, transportation matters are dealt with through the Local Authority for that area. The public transport market in the UK (outside of London) is largely privatised and deregulated.

3.3 Operators

There are several big companies that operate the bulk of routes and services on the local bus service. These companies are First Bus, Arriva and Stagecoach. These are all privately owned companies, which are granted the right to run a commercial service on routes in cities where they operate. Certain fares can be subject to subsidisation leading to concessionary fares for some groups of travellers on certain routes. This would be down to the discretion of the operator and the Local Authority. First Bus has a number of "quality partnership" routes in operation. The route is formed as a result of a partnership between the operator and the Local Authority, and will often be operated by a low-floor bus, for ease of access and an enhanced journey. These buses provide easy access for wheelchair users, and sufficient space for a wheelchair. In addition to this, detailed timetable information is sometimes provided, with easy to understand timetable information and fare structures.

There are now 25 Train Operating Companies, each operating on a route franchise basis, awarded and controlled by the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA). The SRA operates under directions and guidance issued by the Government and is the strategic, planning and coordinating body for the rail industry and the guardian of the interests of rail passengers. It acts as an important purchaser of train services and railway infrastructure.

4 Results

4.1 Interviewee definitions of 'cognitive disability'

Cognitive disability is a relative new concept in the whole context of public transport. It did, therefore, provide an interesting insight into what operators know. The definitions provided gave a useful insight into knowing what operators were doing, based on how they viewed the problem. Several different definitions of 'cognitive disability' were provided by those partaking in the telephone interviews.

There was, however, a degree of uncertainty from some regarding the definition of cognitive disability. The following is a list of the responses to this definitional question:

- None (4)
- "Sensory impairments" (2)
- "Learning Impairment" (1)
- "Visual Impairment" (1)
- "Hearing Impairments/Difficulties" (1)
- "Mental Impairments" (1)
- "Learning Difficulties" (2)
- "Learning Disabilities" (2)
- "Non-visible disability" (1)
- "Reasoning difficulties" (1)
- "Differences in inferences and assumptions" (1)
- "People with mild – moderate mental health issues" (1)
- "Difficulties in understanding things" (1)
- "People not understanding what they're being told" (1)
- "Disability impairing day-to-day activities of people" (1)

A full definition of 'cognitive disability' was provided by MENCAP, one of the UK's leading charities concerned with the welfare of people with learning disabilities and mental health impairments. MENCAP prefer to use the term 'learning disability' as opposed to 'cognitive disability' – this is part of an effort to engage with a wider cross-section of society. MENCAP acknowledge that one of the greatest barriers to achieving their ultimate goal of equal rights and chances for people with learning disabilities is the ability to effectively communicate to the general public what a learning disability actually is.

"Learning disability is one of the most common forms of disability in the UK. It is also the least understood. There are many different types of learning disability – they can be mild, moderate, severe or profound but all are lifelong. They affect people's ability to learn, communicate or do everyday things. A learning disability is not an illness, nor a disease. It is not always possible to tell if someone has a learning disability from their appearance.

People with a learning disability find it harder to learn and understand than other people. As a result, some need support with everyday practical skills like getting dressed or cooking, or social skills like holding a conversation. Others with a more severe or profound learning disability may require 24-hour care, particularly those with additional physical disabilities.

Many people with a learning disability, however, live independent lives. It's important to understand that people with a learning disability are individuals with their own personalities, likes and dislikes, goals and ambitions. A learning disability does not prevent someone from learning and achieving a lot in life, if given the right support."

4.2 Travel Possibilities

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in the UK is a law designed to protect the rights of disabled people and has recently been tightened to provide greater benefits and protection to people against potential exclusion from using public transport, and to reduce the level they might currently suffer.

Recent relevant amendments include the following:

Mainline train stations must be accessible from 2004. (But there is no date set for when trains have to be accessible. A date will be set soon. It will probably be between 2020 and 2025.)

Buses and coaches must be accessible by 2017. Any new buses built from now on must be able to take wheelchairs.

Black cabs have been accessible since 1999. They have accepted guide dogs since 2002. Minicabs have to be accessible by 2012.

Airports must be accessible from 2004. (But airliners do not need to be accessible.)

4.2.1 Measures in place

Within the phone interview, a series of 'overview questions' were asked. Operators were asked if people with cognitive disabilities travel with the service provided. In all cases, an acknowledgement was made that people with learning disabilities do travel with the service provided. Respondents were asked about measures taken for people with disabilities generally, and specifically, for people with cognitive disabilities. Recent initiatives that are known about include the Quality Partnership scheme between operators and Local Authorities. These measures have been beneficial for all travellers, with notable positive benefits for wheelchair users, and mothers with pushchairs. The Learning Disability White Paper demonstrated a commitment to the inclusion of provisions in the DDA vis-à-vis full accessibility of modes as listed above. However, in relation to transport, the White Paper did not put forward implementation of statutory laws, but instead more emphasis on aspirations on increasing focus on meeting the needs of people with learning disabilities. Hence, until the statutory amendments in the DDA come into effect, there appears to be nothing binding in law right now regarding what transport operators have to do for passengers with learning disabilities.

Here is a breakdown of the responses to the questions concerning measures taken already to assist people with disabilities to travel:

- Supporting bus operators to provide accessible buses
- Upgrading of bus stops
- Improved information provision at bus stops
- Large print timetables available on request, (2)
- Minicom system
- Travel Pass with requirements/information printed on the card (to give user more discretion)
- Travel Pass (for all groups of disability)
- 'Companion passes'
- Concessionary passes (4)
- 'Green-edged' contact card
- Staff training (General measure)
- Tactile paving (2)
- User friendly signage (3)
- Low floor buses
- Dial-a-Ride (4)
- Simplifying application forms for passes, (in conjunction with MENCAP) (2)
- Provisions of symbols / pictures at bus/underground stations (2)
- Provision of bigger, bolder and clearer text at bus stations (specific) (2)
- Travel Training (6)
- Production of new guidelines
- Passenger information points on-board vehicles
- Emergency button on every vehicle and platform
- Touch cards
- Braille timetables
- Vehicles that meet DPTAC criteria

All the operators interviewed were of the belief that people with cognitive disabilities do indeed travel with the service provided, although they were far from clear about numbers or proportions. One operator commented that collecting this kind of data was difficult and potentially unreliable anyway due to the fact that the operators are responsible for collecting much of it, and the quality will be influenced largely by the questions asked and the way they have gone about collecting it. Some of the comments were basic acknowledgements of people with learning disabilities travelling with the service provided, with others being more detailed:

- "Yes, people with learning disabilities do travel with the service provided"
- "It is highly likely that people with learning disabilities do use the services provided"
- "Yes, people with learning disabilities travel on modes in the area"
- "Yes, people with cognitive disabilities travel on the service"

- “Yes, people with cognitive disabilities travel on modes”
- “Yes, people with cognitive disabilities travel on public transport services”

4.2.2 Policy Documents and the future

The DDA has set out what will need to be done in order that all vehicles are fully accessible across various modes by various points in the future. It is envisaged that policy documents will be produced that meet these statutory levels by the time dictated in the DDA.

Accessibility tends to be dealt with in existing policy documents (where they exist) and documentation of measures to do with people with learning disabilities is fairly thin. The Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the Annual Progress Reports that follow are statutory documents, which should include all areas and aspects of local transport, including accessibility, accessibility planning, access to local amenities, and an insight into what is being done to improve accessibility for vulnerable groups of travellers. The recognition of the problems encountered by people with learning disabilities is something outlined in the Learning Disability White Paper, for delivery via LTPs. Operators have also been encouraged to produce industry-wide “Codes of Practice” to act as a benchmark of the minimum standard that companies should be striving to offer customers. Whilst compliance of the codes is not mandatory, it can be in the interests of companies to comply, in order to enhance their image, if they subscribe to such Codes of Practice, as a symbol of quality of service provided to the public at large. The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) has produced guidelines aimed at making private hire services more accessible to disabled people in the UK. Other organisations have voluntarily drawn-up their own codes of practice which act as a type of self-regulatory mechanism. One of the UK’s largest long distance bus operators has produced its own code of practice. The responses gained from the telephone interviews indicate that where policy documentation does exist, much is aimed at those with physical limitations and those with sight impairments.

Responses were as follows,

- “Information in policy documents does not refer to people with learning disabilities specifically”
- “No specific measures have been taken, and hence there is no literature as such in policy documents with regards to learning disabilities”
- “The LTP and 20 year public transport strategy. There is also greater awareness of social inclusion via the LTP. However, comments on themes and measures still seem to have a greater engineering slant to them, as opposed to a social inclusion slant. A new policy document is available called ‘revised policies for public transport’ ”
- “Nothing specific in any documents regarding these measures”
- “Unaware of any documentation”
- “A document is available relating to eligibility for concessionary travel. Project done to provide simpler interpretation of the Metro in the Mackerton language. However, this has not progressed very far.....”

- “There is a policy called ‘Transport for All’ which is an aspiration by the PTA (a social model of disability) which is an aspiration to meet, but no binding targets to meet regarding service improvements e.g. to increase accessibility or whatever.”
- “Disability awareness document produced. Whilst not specific, future measures will hopefully look at extending travel training to use of the train”
- “There is no documentation about helping people with learning disabilities in policy documents, largely because there are no specific measures. The Disabled Person’s Protection policy has been approved by the SRA - this might affect future measures”. (2)
- The Disabled Person’s Protection policy has been approved by the SRA including statements about types of disability. This is embraced within disability awareness training.
- “New policy material must seek to get disabled people’s views – and consult as widely as possible”
- “Travel training is an on-going scheme, but is for disabled people generally”
- “Cognitive impairments not separately considered to date”

4.3 Special measures

Whilst no organisation has any specific measures or schemes in place specifically to help people with learning disabilities, other schemes and measures were included in the answers, as there are apparently potential spin-off benefits from generic measures. The travel training schemes being pioneered by several organisations appear to have had success so far, and lead the way in the example they set. Travel Training caters for all aspects of travelling for people with learning disabilities. They can send specific information to people via symbols, pictures or whatever for specific individuals to cater for their journey requirements. It aims to observe what each client can do and “fill the gaps” wherever possible. One particular scheme involved the user carrying a florescent wallet with them whilst making journeys. Inside the wallet are a series of picture cards, and each has details of regular journeys made by the user, and the corresponding bus number. It also has pictures of landmarks in the town, together with the user’s name and emergency contact details.

The measures available to all disabled travellers are listed above, under “measures in place”. Measures that might have possible spin-off benefits to those with learning disabilities include the following:

- Large print timetables on request
- General disability training
- Travel pass with user requirements printed on it
- Local Traveline service in providing an integrated route plan
- Disability Awareness courses

- Drivers undergoing customer care training courses elements dealing with vulnerable and disabled people
- Concessionary fare scheme
- Easy-to-use website with software to enable audio info for blind and partially sighted people
- Touch cards (awaiting details from Paul Taylor)

The next section deals with education and training programmes that have been designed and implemented in response to the needs of people with disabilities and more specifically, learning disabilities. The questions in this section attempt to ascertain what education and training programmes exist, how the education and training provided has helped those using the services, and the commitment shown by the operators.

4.3.1 Education and Training

Education and training initiatives exist within many organisations. In many cases however, the programmes appeared to generic in order to cover the needs of people with disabilities as a single sample of people out of the population as a whole, rather than addressing the needs of individual groups of disabled people.

Here is a selection of comments provided by operators and UK transport authorities:

- “All staff receive disability awareness training and attend a disability awareness training course”
- “Travel training is provided to people using the service”
- “The Authority and the three main bus companies all do disability awareness training covering learning disabilities and mental impairments”
- “No travel training at the moment. The buddying scheme is the closest thing, but the buddying scheme is not specifically for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems”.
- “Drivers undergo customer care training course elements dealing with vulnerable and disabled people”
- “2 day disability awareness courses are standard”
- “Active driver training given. Drivers were trained to be pro-active. Leaflet published.”
- “National framework for training of staff. Drivers are being put through the NVQ in Disability Awareness Training. NVQ training is a requirement.
- “Travel training is funded by District Councils. This ultimately helps people with Learning Disabilities to become more independent.”
- “Travel training on-going but again for disabled people generally. Education website”
- “Education programme for staff. Disability and equality covered under DDA”

- “Travel training developed voluntary sector (autistic) group”
- “All staff receives 20 days training, including disability (awareness) training. The disability training includes disability awareness with role playing examples. There is also a ‘mystery shopper’ survey in operation”
- “Customer care programme. The driver and inspector undergo disability training”
- “Contracted customer services employees go through induction process including disability awareness and sign language taught. Staff also taught to recognise disabilities”
- “Disability awareness programmes mainly targets front line staff as a priority, together with station staff and on-board staff. Modules include how to help people onto trains or to find their route, but again it is for people with generic needs.”
- “Service users were provided with a static bus to practice boarding and paying fares – arranged by local advocacy group”
- “Focus group type meetings with a broad spectrum of people with varying disabilities, to try and produce a forum uncovering difficulties in travelling. Modules in basic training may overlap to provide some information regarding assisting people with learning disabilities, but again, nothing specific”.

4.3.2 Information and assistance

The design, quality, availability and ease of use of information is important for the ability to travel for everyone. The importance level ranking increases significantly with reference to providing useful and accessible information for people with learning disabilities to use public transport as effectively as can be expected. Whilst there is information available that may be useful to people with learning disabilities, what is generally available is not targeted at this group of people, but appears to be either for those with generic disabilities or targeted at those with physical impairments. In this respect, it could be gauged that people with learning disabilities are not being considered to have enough of an importance in the process of policy making vis-à-vis accessibility to the service. In many cases, there is little or no information available. Therefore, those with learning disabilities largely have to rely on the overlap that exists.

- “Web-site has been approved. All publications are in 14-point”
- “Nothing specific. Nothing is done in a simple fashion. Our website has generally been criticised for not being easy to use/understand. Cognitive impairments not considered separately to date. Publications not considered”
- “Three groups of service users have all reported how inaccessible public transport is in this area. With regards to the buses, timetables are confusing. They are all in 24 hour clock format with no explanation of codes in simple text”
- “Information generally not in plain English e.g. about railcards/passes. Braille and large print available, but without supportive pictures”

- “No information”
- “No information for people with cognitive disabilities (specifically)”
- “Written material all on request in any format. Those with the greatest needs would get referred to Travel Training”
- “Information available is not targeted specifically at people with learning disabilities”
- “All information material meets accessibility guidelines. Timetables in this area meet requirements set out by guidelines. Our institution is a corporate member of the Plain English Society. A recent publication was made for people with learning disabilities. Website meets accessibility criteria.”
- “Information is available for people with learning disabilities, including web based material in all formats, to endeavour to be fully accessible”
- “Website is fully accessible. Software on website will enable blind and partially sighted to access audio information. Large print and Braille formats available. Talking newspaper available.”
- “Information potentially available in any format – demand tends to be very low. Nothing specific for people with learning disabilities. Braille copies of publications held”.
- “Website constructed to be as easy to use as possible. Facilities available to assist deaf/blind/mobility impaired at stations. Someone with mobility problems would be entitled to reserve a seat and receive assistance for the entirety of their journey. This would not be appropriate, and hence it is not available, for people with learning disabilities”

An additionally important issue building logically upon personal assistance regarding the provision of information is that of actual personal assistance on board vehicles. The level of personal assistance available on public transport networks varies according to the mode, the level of staffing and the policy held by that particular company in relation to what level and limit is applied to “personal assistance”. The comments received include the following:

- “The driver will assist passengers who need assistance. Guards and conductors on trains can also assist people in difficulty and distress. All of the staff are fully trained”
- “On the Metro, it is the driver only, who has no direct contact with the public. With bus drivers, it is hit and miss as to whether they would help as it is not mandatory. On the local train network, the conductor on board could assist”
- “Bus driver may come out of his cab to provide a ramp for a wheelchair user. No other reason really, especially due to the open moneybox”
- “Level of assistance offered variable. Staff ‘aware’ of normal procedure, which is normally to seek help and advice at the customer relations office”
- “Rail – pre-booking a service 24 hours in advance should ensure that a person with special requirements receives the attention that (s)he needs. There have been some complaints made about this service.

Light Rail – Conductors provide on-board assistance. Buses – Driver required to move ramp for wheelchair user, that aside, no other requirement on the part of the bus driver”

- “Personal assistance on board vehicles can be arranged”
- “Personal assistance on board vehicles is available. This is covered in the initial basic training”
- “Personal assistance for travellers is available. One can phone customer services, arrange to meet at key stations and transfer to trams”
- “Bus – down to driver’s discretion. Tram – Conductors trained to do some things regarding giving personal assistance. Community Transport – Somebody must make sure that client in a wheelchair is fastened properly. Trains – not all fitted with wheelchair ramps. Many small stations inaccessible to wheelchair users”
- “This is a tricky and a grey area. Reasonable amounts of help can be provided by staff, but not to the point where a member of staff can be caused a physical injury. This comes under customer services remit rather than disability training.”

4.3.3 Technical Aids

Examples of technical systems to assist people. However, as mentioned earlier, systems can often have positive spin-off benefits to minority groups, including people with learning disabilities. In virtually all cases examined in this report via exhaustive research, no single scheme had been developed nor was it operating solely in the interests of people with learning disabilities. At best, people with learning disabilities were included in a list of minority user groups for which the technical equipment concerned could seek to help. Many Train Operating Companies, for example, already offer audible announcements regarding journey time information and the upcoming station(s). However this particular measure is generic and for the benefit of all passengers, but could be of disproportionately greater use to minority groups, such as people with learning disabilities. MENCAP, a leading UK charity seeking to promote and campaign in the interests of those with learning disabilities, highlighted a concern regarding the poor quality of audible announcements at many stations and on-board many train services, being of little or no use to people with learning disabilities. None of the technical aids below was centred on people with learning disabilities specifically. The technical aids that exist on board public transport vehicles are mentioned below:

- “There is a new announcement system in place now across our rail network. GPS tracked (bus stops) with real-time information being piloted.
- “Announcements are made on the local train service”
- “On the Metro system, there are announcements of major interchange points and every 3rd station”
- No on-board bus facilities
- Screen scrolling information regarding next stop on the route

- Working towards audible announcements as part of Bus Quality Partnership
- Announcements and Real-time exist but not any specific group of people
- Showcase routes with real-time and audio announcements on vehicles (buses). Suburban rail stations have audio announcements.
- Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (RVAR) requires any new trains to have audio/visual features.
- Stop announcements made on board trams
- Real-time information is available on some trains
- Local train on-board announcements for upcoming stops
- Every stop announced on the tram service
- On board equipment to advise about journey connections
- Retro fitting of CCTV on buses

Certain local authorities in Britain are piloting real-time visual and audio information at bus stops, to gauge its potential usefulness. Warrington Borough Council have developed real time information in conjunction with its "Independent Travel Training" package. There, Independent Travel Training is targeted at four specific types of user, including those with learning disabilities, visually disabled, ethnic minorities and those who cannot read.

- Very limited number of bus stops with real-time information. Looking to expand scheduled information scrolling electronically (although this is not real-time)
- Real-time information at stop
- Announcements and real-time available, but not for cognitive disabilities
- Looking into the idea of real-time information displays at bus stops
- Not required to announce every stop on board the train
- Requirements set out by Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations that audio and visual at-stop facilities must be provided for the light rail service.
- On the bus network, there are a number there are a number of proposals for on-vehicle and at-stop announcements
- Real-time information is available on some trains
- Real-time information for departure at tram stops
- No bus stop announcements
- Real-time information available at stations

Managing to get the right ticket for the right journey can be a complicated task for many people. The problem is exacerbated somewhat by the wide range of tickets available to travel on public transport modes, notably buses and trains. During the late hours of the day, ticket offices have a tendency to be shut. This can lead to problems if a potential traveller wishes to travel, but has trouble using the ticket machine. People with cognitive impairments may have particular difficulty in managing to utilise these machines. One way of

simplifying this has been to provide special help functions. The machines tend to be of most use for rail passengers, as ticket machines can often prove to be a faster alternative than queuing for a ticket. This is not the case for people with cognitive impairments. Bus tickets can normally be obtained from the driver at the point of sale, although some weekly passes can also be obtained from the driver. Certain bus or travel passes are sometimes only available through designated travel offices tied to the operator in question. The point was made by a couple of operators that the general rail station environment is one of confusion and chaos for many people, and that ticket machines seemed to share those same characteristics, and hence in some cases, useless for people with cognitive disabilities. There are also concessionary fares available on production of a concessions card. Most bus operators across towns and cities in the UK carry change, and therefore people do not need to worry about counting out the exact fare for their journey, as change is available. Here are the comments received:

- No use to people with cognitive disabilities. Not very helpful.
- All tickets are issued by staff – there are no ticket machines. Ticket office open during the hours of public transport operation
- No ‘help’ button on ticket machines but there are help points. Instructions are not very user friendly though
- Looking at trialling ticket machines in several sites in Leicester – buy ticket before boarding bus
- No ticket machines where there aren’t staff. Staff provide the interface rather than technology
- Most tickets are only available on board the vehicle. Concessionary permit available.
- No special help functions at ticket machines. Ticket machines only provided at major rail stops, otherwise buy on board if office closed
- Dyslexia group reported having problems with ticket machines. Since then, training material has been provided to drivers vis-à-vis understanding dyslexia
- All stations are staffed so passenger can obtain personal help. Nothing technical available. No ‘special help functions’ at machines
- Ticket machines are fairly standard, but totally designed through Manchester DDA. Passenger emergency button available on every vehicle and platform
- Automatic ticket machines available. No ‘special help functions’. Counters staffed during train operating times

A touchcard system, aimed at people with communication and learning difficulties, was used on bus services in the NEXUS region. There was an icon on the bus that someone who wanted to use the touchcard would point to – the driver would then produce the card and the person would ask for their ticket using the pictograms on the card. However, the use of this facility, and of the cards, has fallen into disuse.

Personal technical aids, where provided, tended to be something made available by local authorities, councils and PTEs rather than something that an operator would provide to users. This follows logically, as has been reported, that many operators do not have any specific measures or information for people with learning disabilities, so on that basis, it is highly doubtful that they would see the need to provide costly personal technical aids for using their service.

- None
- No provisions. There is a contact number available in the event of an emergency
- None
- None
- None
- No personal technical aids supplied
- No personal technical aids
- No personal technical aids exist
- Personal Technical Aids exist in the form of infra-red systems for talking signs at some stations. The service user can use a device to activate the system, this then helps the user around the station
- None
- As part of our travel training package, a “Key Fob” is presented to users as part of the travel package – this enables users to activate real time audio announcements at stops

4.3.4 Special Transportation Services

In many towns and cities across the UK, a service called “Dial-a-Ride” exists. This is fundamentally a minibus service for those people who cannot use public transport due to mobility problems. The vehicles are usually wheelchair accessible and run door-to-door services for an affordable fare. Here are the comments received from our sample. The general eligibility criteria for using the service include that you must have a disability, and that you meet Section 106 criteria.

- Dial-a-Bus and community transport are both available. Anyone with a disability is eligible. Anyone who meets Section 106 criteria.
- “Easy Bus” is dedicated to helping people with disabilities. It is sponsored by the Department for Regional Development. Ongoing tendering for transport for door-to-door service (all disabilities)
- No. This service is covered by the local districts.
- Dial-a-Ride service providing door-to-door service
- Anyone can register to use a special transport service such as the Ring and Ride service if they find it difficult or impossible to use public transport. People with learning disabilities could apply
- Dial-a-Bus door to door service available. Available for people with mobility problems and those registered blind. Available to those aged 80+ and in receipt of attendance allowance

- Ring and Ride only available where there is very poor public transport, or where journey is not covered at all by public transport
- Door-to-door Dial-a-Ride service offered to those with mental health problems

4.4 Future Prospects

The interviewees were then asked to think back through their answers and comment on any additional services or measures that would be relevant to people with learning disabilities. Here are the comments received:

- Design of new and improved trains to improve accessibility
- Training material provided to tram operating staff to understand Dyslexia better
- Directional signage (especially for bus station) being rolled out now across the region – this is aimed specifically for people with learning disabilities
- A set of Good Practice Guidelines will be produced to help people with learning disabilities use the service with more confidence and to act as a guide to the operator in how to manage passengers with learning disabilities in case of a problem or query
- Disabled Person's Protection policy has been approved by the SRA – Provides statements about types of disability embraced within disability awareness training
- Looking at simplifying the application process for concessionary passes on public transport (for people with learning disabilities)
- Three groups of service users have reported how inaccessible public transport is generally in this area
- Simpler interpretation of the METRO system in the Mackerton language
- Operators "aware" of problems

The interviewees were asked about their thoughts towards the current and future prospects for travel by public transport by people with learning disabilities and mental health problems. The message that seemed to come over was one of a lack of knowledge about learning disabilities, and an acknowledgement that there was probably still a long way to go:

- Information provision should be made much simpler
- If awareness of people using the service with additional needs increases, service features will be simplified i.e. ticketing and timetabling
- We have not thought sufficiently about services to help people with learning disabilities specifically. Printed information could be simpler and more accessible
- Clear information, easy to understand, Buddying system expansion and to build up confidence. All initiatives that would help prospects of those with learning disabilities to use public transport better
- There is a long way to go for driver training and understanding the differing needs and requirements of passengers
- Most people with learning disabilities will continue to use buses, with far fewer on trains

- Calibre of staff leaves a lot to be desired
- Difficult to get good driving staff

5 Conclusion

“Learning disabilities classes largely as the Cinderella of the disability world”

It appears that after considering the material available, there is not a great deal that has been done for people with cognitive impairments / learning disabilities. Many of the measures, services and assistance available are targeted at a far wider audience, with the probability of including people with cognitive impairments, but without the guarantee.

The travel training packages in operation across the country seem to be one of the most effective and inclusive mechanisms for addressing and improving the mobility and access to public transport for people with cognitive disabilities. Even with this measure though, travel training is not targeted at people with learning disabilities, although the target audience is far tighter than for many other schemes and measures, so is better focussed on delivering results to a smaller and targeted population.

Appendix 1:

Organisations and authorities interviewed

Appendix 1 Organisations and authorities interviewed

National Organisations

- Social Exclusion Unit

Transit authorities

Local Transit authorities

- Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive
- West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive
- West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive
- Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive
- Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive
- Translink (Northern Ireland)

Operators

- Arriva Midland Buses
- Arriva Trains Northern
- London Buses
- London Underground
- Serco Metrolink
- Scotrail
- Virgin Trains

Local Authorities

- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Cheshire County Council
- Norfolk county Council
- Warrington Borough Council

End-user organisations

- Disability Rights Commission
- MENCAP
- Mental Health and Transport Group
- MIND

Appendix 2:

MAPLE semi-structured telephone interview form

Appendix 2 MAPLE semi-structured telephone interview form

MAPLE Semi-Structured Telephone Interview Questions; Transport providers and operators

Overview questions

Have you taken any specific measures to make it possible for persons with disabilities to travel?

How do you define cognitive disability? Which groups of persons do you think of?

(Interviewer: If persons does not have an answer: Prompt by giving example of problems from the MAPLE user group definition list)

Do persons with cognitive disabilities travel with the service you provide?

Have you made any measures specifically targeting persons with cognitive disabilities?

Is there any documentation in policy documents, etc. on such measures?

Are there any ongoing discussions on any such future measures in your organisation?

Questions on specific measures

Based on previous experiences, I have some examples of specific measure taken, in order to make it easier for persons with cognitive disabilities to travel in public transport. Please answer whether you provide the following services, and comment on them:

Education program for staff

Training programs for persons with cognitive disabilities, e.g. travel training

Information for persons with cognitive disabilities, e.g. meetings, written material, web based information

Special transport service

Action plans for staff to follow, e.g. if a person gets lost, gets aggressive or very confused, in emergency situations.

Bus stop announcement on board buses, trams, and trains

Real time information for departure at bus stops

Personal assistance on board vehicles

Special help functions at ticket machines; personal or technical

Personal technical aids, e.g. palm computers, mobile phones

After having considered these examples, are there any other services you come to think of, specifically relevant for persons with cognitive disabilities?

Concluding questions

Do you have any concluding remarks regarding persons with cognitive disabilities and their current and future possibilities to travel with public transport?

(Interviewer: These two questions are for snowball sampling, please note contact addresses and telephone numbers:)

Are there any other persons in your organisation I should ask these questions?

Are there any other organisations I should ask these questions?