

Transport to Learning

Issues , barriers and solutions to transport for adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

A NIACE paper

**Dr Christine Nightingale
March 2004**

This report is based on a short scoping study for the National LSC by NIACE. The recommendations are NIACE's own. Please refer to NIACE website www.niace.org.uk for further developments.

Contents	Page
	3
1. Executive summary	
2. Introduction	9
3. Context	10
4. Background	11
5. Methods	12
6. Barriers to Learning related to transport	13
7. Group 1: Quality and accessibility of public transport	14
8. Group 2: Quality and accessibility of specifically provided or contracted transport	16
9. Group 3: Quality of information and advice on transport	18
10. Group 4: Partnership and co-ordination between agencies	19
11. Group 5: The impact of transport on learning choices	20
12. Group 6: Quality and quantity of transport/independence training	22
13. Group 7: Incomplete legislation	23
14. Group 8: Complexities of funding for transport to learning	24
15. Key recommendations/solutions for the DfES	26
16. Wider solutions to 'Transport to learning' barriers	28
17. Conclusions	30
18. References	32
19. Thanks	34
Appendix A	35

1 Executive summary

1.1 Context

The Government has set targets for more people to achieve a Level 2 qualification.

Disabled people tend to leave continuous full-time education early, and are 50 per cent less likely to continue in education past 20. Fifty per cent of disabled people have no qualifications and 33 per cent of disabled people are qualified at NVQ Level 2, as opposed to 28 per cent and 60 per cent of non-disabled people, respectively.

Disabled people are less economically active: 52 per cent as opposed to 86 percent of non-disabled people, and levels of economic activity vary with category of disability. Sixty per cent of economically inactive disabled people have been out of work for five years or more. Access to learning is of the highest importance in improving the economic position of disabled people, as well as supporting greater inclusion.

Getting to learning opportunities is a priority consideration for adults with disabilities and/or learning difficulties and those not able to drive rely on a range of others to provide transport.

The major inquiries into education and disability, Warnock (1973) and Tomlinson (1996), recognise transport as an essential part of the learning equation for people with disabilities.

1.2 The barriers

This report suggests eight main categories of transport-related barriers to learning. Within each of these broad categories, a number of actual and potential barriers can be identified.

1. Quality and accessibility of **public transport** including:

poor availability, levels and reliability of support, poor information and poor staff attitudes on public transport.

2. Quality and accessibility of specifically **provided or contracted transport** including:

variable delivery, poorly designed, over-long journeys, poor staff training and attitudes and other barriers in funder provided or contracted transport.

3. Quality of **information and advice** on transport including:

variable standards of information on rights to, and availability of transport and transport support, poor levels of awareness of issues amongst education and training providers and staff, lack of awareness of rights.

4. Partnership and **co-ordination** between agencies including:

problems created by the lack of a duty on transport providers or funders to provide transport for learners to access education; poor collaboration and co-ordination between agencies, lack of ring-fencing and/or clarity of funding.

5. The impact of transport on **learning choices** including:

no direct studies have been done on impact of availability of transport or funding for transport on non-participating adults or on disabled learners, but research with young learners and anecdotal evidence from disabled adults does suggest that they need help in resolving transport difficulties in order to participate in learning.

6. Quality and quantity of **transport/independence/mobility training** including:

variability in quality, levels and appropriateness of transport, independence and mobility training, coupled with some lack of awareness of need.

7. Incomplete **legislation** including:

the length of time before the DDA will become fully effective and the power of bodies, but lack of duties to fund.

8. Complexities of **funding** including:

the wide range of funding sources, their lack of co-ordination, the possibility that one user has to turn to several funding sources, lack of consistent funding availability through transitional periods and the possibility that monies may currently be being wasted through the fragmented system.

1.3 Key recommendations/solutions for the DfES

Disabled adults are missing opportunities for education now. If policies designed to increase inclusion are to be successfully implemented, then action needs to happen now.

Without prejudice to longer-term developments, or to the more complex “quick fix” solutions, there are actions that could be taken to improve the situation now.

They include:

- commission a short, well designed project to identify good practice in funding and providing transport to education for disabled adults, and to produce a working practice guide for use by providers;
- identify good practice in transport information and advice by the Connexions service and by other information, advice and guidance services;
- identify successful disability training programmes currently in use amongst public transport providers, and publicise them across the sector (e.g. Transport for London’s equality training);
- produce advice for users and provider staff to clarify user rights and provider duties; this advice to be made available to potential users;
- promote awareness of the availability of LSC funding for independence, mobility and transport training to providers;
- commission research to set standards for the inclusion of independence, transport and mobility training, as appropriate, as part of course induction packages and, where appropriate, in the rest of the curriculum;
- investigate the possibility of organising appropriate area groups, to support co-ordination and delivery of transport and transport support to education for disabled adults;
- encourage development and use of pathfinder scheme approaches; and
- ensure that the principle that providers of transport, whoever they may be, must make provision that fits the learner, their needs and the needs of the educational provision being offered, and not the convenience of the transport provider or contractor is upheld.

The list above is not exclusive; other measures could be added to it. It does, however, provide actions to improve the immediate position that can be taken quickly and at relatively low costs, whilst allowing the other proposed measures to be taken forwards to put in place the more medium and long term measures.

1.4 Wider solutions to transport to learning barriers

Potential solutions may be divided into those that will provide “quick fixes” or information to advise future developments, and those aimed at delivering longer term improvements.

The “quick fixes” include:

- provide driver and transport staff disability awareness training to improve standards and quality of public transport;
- practical research into independence, mobility and transport training approaches and the development of materials to support effective practice;
- introducing funding for independence, mobility and transport training into LSC funding methodology as a standard expectation for providers to consider;
- recognition of the need to fund short term transport needs and provide individual links to corridor transport services;
- increasing range of concessionary fares to include ‘adult learner fare’;
- increasing use of smart cards and other pathfinder scheme approaches;
- identifying good practice in providing transport and transport support, and replicating it;
- identifying previous failures in providing transport and transport support, and their effect on the learning of individuals and learning from these;
- enforcing current statutory rights such as those under the DDA and other current legislation; and
- building on existing co-operative working arrangements between local agencies, so as to provide coherent, cost effective local transport networks, supporting local needs.

In the longer term:

- creating appropriate quality standards and targets for public transport and for Local Authority provided transport;
- researching and reviewing funding and funding mechanisms and mapping funding distribution against funding need;

- breaking the link between funding and age of user, but link instead to Level 2 qualifications with the aim of creating entitlement to support to all assessed as needing it, regardless of levels of learning;
- identifying regional/county based organisations (e.g. Learning Partnerships, Local Government Offices) to be given powers and duties to develop appropriate transport funding strategies;
- reviewing current methods of assessing need and entitlements to transport funding;
- developing expertise in transport assessment and funding at service provider and education provider levels to ensure proper and timely assessment of need and entitlements to transport funding;
- developing both better information sources regarding public and contracted transport routes and funding sources, along with knowledgeable information providers;
- reviewing social care, employment training and learning transport systems identifying consistent approaches; and
- ensuring that the powers of the DDA are recognised and utilised in the contracting of transport services.

1.5 In conclusion

Learners should be at the heart of the planning and funding of the learning and skills sector. It follows from this that,

The individual's experience of transport is central to assessment, training and funding considerations and, therefore:

- journeys should be as short as possible, and fit the learner, not the provider or contractor;
- advice on transport and funding from advice and guidance agencies, education providers and transport providers has to be good and consistent;
- learners should experience consistent and reliable transport assessment;
- independence training needs to be consistent and appropriate;
- the cultural needs of all ethnic majority and minority groups must be taken into account; and

- transport and funding and assessment mechanisms should recognise the changing need of individuals at learning transition times.

Age is not a barrier. The age of a learner with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unlikely to affect their transport needs. Currently there are identified age cut-off points for funding entitlements. It is important that the age of the learner is not a barrier for them accessing both transport funding and learning opportunities.

Transport assessment funding mechanisms should be seen to promote learning for adults – a means to an end, not an end in itself. The provision of transport enables adults to participate in learning that they might not otherwise be able to do. Transport assessment funding should not be viewed as a perk and less than essential. Providing transport assessment and funding to learners with learning difficulties and and/or disabilities of all ages may enable more **new** learners to achieve appropriate levels of learning.

That funders and policy makers are aware that learners may have low self-esteem or poor transport confidence and so may have difficulties in using wider transport systems, public transport or walking, particularly in unfamiliar areas.

Since this paper was commissioned, the DFES has published the School Travel Scheme draft Bill and prospectus for consultation. The Bill implies in its section on Special Educational Needs that consideration should be given to greater levels of co-operation between agencies in the future. This needs to go further, in the ways suggested in this paper.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 This paper was presented in draft to the LSC Forum on Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities on March 2nd 2004. The paper was prepared through a consultation process, involving adult learners with disabilities, the DFES, LSC, Skill, an LEA, further education colleges: learner support staff, transport and disability consultants, representatives of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) and NIACE. This scoping work on transport to learning was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council for the DfES.
- 2.2 The specification for this work was:
- to identify and analyse issues of transport for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 19 and above;
 - to identify and analyse barriers to access and options for solutions including where appropriate cross departmental and interagency approaches in relation to this group of learners;
 - to take into account perspectives of key stakeholders, including learners in the points 1 and 2 above;
 - to input into a report for Ministers giving considerations, recommendations and impact assessments; and
 - in undertaking all of the above, to bear in mind relevant changes in educational context such as the review of adult learner support funding and the skills strategy.
- 2.3 This work was carried out with the intention that it forms part of a submission to Charles Clark, Secretary of State for Education and Skills by DfES officials.

3. Context

- 3.1 The Skills Strategy (21st Century Skills, DfES et al 2003), Inclusive Learning (Inclusive learning: report of the learning difficulties and/or disabilities committee, FEFC 1996) and Widening Participation (Learning works: widening participation in further education, FEFC 1997) reports were all designed to encourage more adults into learning. The Skills Strategy set out the Governments' targets for one million adults to achieve a level 2 qualification between 2003 and 2006 and a further three million by 2010.
- 3.2 Two further reports are relevant to 'Transport to Learning': the Social Exclusion Unit's report '*Making connections: Final report on transport and social exclusion*' (SEU 2003) and the DfES commissioned research (Steer Davies Gleave 2002) '*Transport for students in further education – final report*' The Social Exclusion Unit Report identifies the inter-relationship between and the dependence on transport and access to health, employment, learning and food shopping. The Steer Davies Gleave report covers research on the transport needs of young adults.

4. Background

- 4.1 Disabled people tend to leave continuous full-time education at an earlier age than non-disabled people, and are 50 percent less likely to continue education past 20 years old (*“Disabled for Life”*, Department for Work and Pensions [DWP], 2002). The DWP report also shows that 50 percent of disabled people have no qualifications, as opposed to 28 percent of people without a disability. In addition, 33 percent of disabled people qualified at NVQ Level 2, as opposed to 60 percent of non-disabled people. There are variations in these figures dependent on age profile, suggesting that the younger groups are being more successful, due perhaps, to more inclusive approaches by learning providers.
- 4.2 Disabled people demonstrate far lower levels of economic activity (52 percent) than non-disabled people (86 percent). Further, levels of economic activity vary with category of disability. For example, 22 percent of people with mental health needs are economically active, whilst the figure rises to 70-80 percent for those with allergies, diabetes, hearing and breathing difficulties. Sixty percent of economically inactive disabled people have been out of work for 5 years or more. The DWP report *“Disabled for Life”* (2002) provides details of both activity levels and of perceived reasons for them. It is clear that access to education and training is of the highest importance in improving the economic position of disabled people, as well as supporting greater inclusion across all forms of activity.
- 4.3 Getting to learning, including work based learning and employment placements is a priority consideration for adults with disabilities and learning difficulties. Adults not able to drive, or without the means of private transport rely on:
- other people, such as carers;
 - arranged and specifically provided transport; or
 - public transport to get to learning opportunities.
- It has to be noted that the majority of disabled travellers, in common with everyone else, state that the privately owned car is their favoured transport. The inclusive agenda requires that transport systems offer integrated services to the whole community and the DPTAC research study (DPTAC 2002) demonstrates that this is what disabled people want.
- 4.4 Both the two key enquiries into disability and education, Warnock (1973) and Tomlinson (1996), recognised that transport is an essential part of the learning equation for young people and adults with disabilities.

5. Methods

- 5.1 NIACE were commissioned to conduct 'blue skies thinking' to both identify transport barriers to learning and possible solutions to these for learners aged 19 and above. To do this NIACE was asked to take into consideration the views of key stakeholders, appropriate learners and the members of the LSC Forum on Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities. The whole project was undertaken in a six-week time-scale.
- 5.2 This report includes a review of available documentation, including those not widely circulated but available as working documents. Generally most documents identified barriers rather than solutions. Consultation meetings of stakeholders (13th February 2004) and of adult learners (17th February 2004) furthered our understanding about barriers and identified more possible solutions to these. Evidence was also collected from discussions with education providers and transport enquiries made through the NIACE Information Service.
- 5.3 The consultation of stakeholders involved representatives from the DFES, LSC, Skill, an LEA, Further Education: learner support, transport, NIACE and disability consultants. Further responses were received from the Disability Rights Commission and representatives of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC).
- 5.4 A focus group of five learners from further education contributed to the consultation. All the learners had one or more impairments that included visual impairment, restricted mobility, learning difficulty and epilepsy. The age of the learners ranged from twenty to forty years. One lived in a rural area, the other four in cities in England, including London. Two of the learners were women. They represented: White British, Asian and Black African ethnic groups.
- 5.5 A draft of this paper was then presented to the LSC Forum, and their comments incorporated in the final document.

6. Barriers to learning related to transport

6.1 For the purposes of this report eight categories of barriers to learning related to transport; were identified, both in the literature and through the expert groups. These were:

- quality and accessibility of **public transport**;
- quality and accessibility of **specifically provided or contracted transport**;
- quality of **information and advice** on transport;
- partnership and **co-ordination** between agencies;
- the impact of transport on **learning choices**;
- quality and quantity of **transport/independence/mobility training**;
- incomplete **legislation**; and
- complexities of **funding**.

6.2 Each category of barrier is described using evidence from the literature, including published case studies and evidence from the consultation groups.

7. Group 1: Quality and accessibility of public transport

- 7.1 For a number of reasons, disabled people travel a third less often than the general public. For many disabled adults with low incomes travelling may be restricted to affordable private transport journeys, travelling with friends or carers, or using public transport. Public transport, including buses, trains and underground trains were the primary means of transport for the learners consulted. All the learners had experienced poor bus services. This included; lack of accessible information (timetables, route changes) and unhelpful staff. The learners who lived in London generally reported good transport experiences, including the provision of free bus passes throughout Greater London.

Support

- 7.2 Lack of accessible vehicles and facilities requires that many disabled people seek support from transport staff. Experiences of booking support for public transport use were generally poor, with reports that despite booking, help did not materialise at rail, underground stations and elsewhere. The need to book in advance in itself created barriers to spontaneity in travel.

Information

- 7.3 Information about travel times, delays and platform changes was reported by learners and stakeholders as consistently poor, particularly for learners with visual or hearing impairments or poor literacy skills. Changes to services or delays were often relayed in only one media, or not at all. Learners with visual impairments reported missing train and bus stops near to the college due to a lack of announcements. One learner reported having to sit as close to the driver of the bus as possible, so that he could check whether they were near to the required stop.

Attitudes

- 7.4 Evidence was given by both expert groups, which suggested bus drivers were sometimes intolerant of individuals who could not get on to the bus or purchase a ticket quickly and this tendency is demonstrated in all other modes of transport. The Disability Rights Commission (2004a) report the case of buses failing to stop for a man who used a wheelchair. On an occasion when he did succeed in boarding a bus, the driver was abusive and pushed him off again. There have been other published cases of disabled people refused carriage or even ejected from public transport and taxis.

Possible solutions to 'quality and accessibility of public transport'

- 7.5 Steer, Davies Gleave (2002:5) in their report for the DfES suggest that 'there is a need for the Department of Transport and the DfES to work together in ensuring that local authority transport plans embrace fully the Government's objectives for transport for FE students'. This could be extended to all adult learners.
- 7.6 Local Authorities could ensure that quality measures and standards for transport access, information and staff training are incorporated into their transport plans and commissioning strategies.
- 7.7 Develop standards for disability awareness training for public transport workers. Transport for London ensure that all drivers have equality training at Btec level. If one authority can do it, can this be extended to all others?

8. Group 2: Quality and accessibility of specifically provided or contracted transport

- 8.1 Specifically provided or contracted transport such as taxis or specially commissioned buses transporting learners from their homes to their places of learning were identified in the literature and by our focus groups as being unsatisfactory.
- 8.2 The expense to learners in time lost, or to their well-being because of long and uncomfortable journeys, must be taken into account. It is not known how many learners do not start or give up on learning because of the poor quality of provided transport. Steer Davies Gleeve (2002:6) suggest that because few learning providers conduct systematic exit interviews it is not possible to find out whether transport is an important factor in non-participation or retention of learners.

Unnecessary travel

- 8.3 Discussions with both statutory and voluntary sector staff and learners have revealed that journeys to learning provision, or work placements, may be unnecessarily long and complicated.
- 8.4 Adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quite often bused to a central point (college/day centre) and then bused on again later. For many this means retracing their earlier journey to get to the next destination as well as long waits and delays.
- 8.5 Transport routes were frequently reported as being planned to convenience the driver or escort rather than learners (the customers). One young woman reported spending over 3 hours per day traveling a mile in total to and from her learning provision. She happened to live near the bus depot; the driver therefore picked her up first and dropped her off last in the afternoon.

Unreliable

- 8.6 The evidence we collected from different parts of the country indicates that specifically provided transport services are often patchy and unreliable. One Connexions-run project for adults with learning difficulties reported that:
- escorts on buses were poorly trained;
 - learners with epilepsy or other health conditions were not properly supervised;
 - transport did not turn up on time or leave on time;
 - minibuses did not have enough diesel to make the runs; and
 - sometimes the transport did not turn up at all.

Attitudes

- 8.7 Teachers in further education colleges reported poor attitudes of drivers that were having **adverse affects on learning**, including:
- learners were often dropped off too late, up to an hour or more later than the course start time;
 - learners were picked up too early, cutting down the length of lessons or activities;
 - drivers would hassle both the teaching and support staff to release learners from their classes to be taken home early (one teacher spoke of drivers tapping on the classroom window);
 - drivers would make learners and staff feel intimidated. Often this resulted in learners not having time to use the toilet before leaving; and
 - drivers fitting learners into the schedule of other contracted work, such as school runs, which they considered more of a priority.

Possible solutions to the variable quality and accessibility of specifically provided or contracted transport

- 8.8 Contracting Authorities to make arrangements to map transport routes and needs (including actual rather than imagined course times) of learners, and other social care transport users. Mapping to identify efficiencies for both the transport services and more importantly the most effective and appropriate routes for the learners and other service users.
- 8.9 Local Authorities and learning providers could ensure that quality measures and standards for transport access, information and staff training are incorporated into their transport plans and commissioning strategies.
- 8.10 Develop standards for disability awareness training for provided or contracted transport workers.
- 8.11 Firm use of the DDA Part 4 powers to ensure compliance with reasonable behaviours in relation to education provision. In part at least, this may also be covered within the provisions of Part 3 of the DDA.

9. Group 3: Quality of information and advice on transport

- 9.1 Knowledge of transport entitlements, funding and assessment processes was patchy. Learners and their families were reported as receiving inconsistent information or none at all. It was believed that many learning advice services knew little or nothing about transport need or provision, and that although FE providers were logically the first points of contact for learners attending college, they too had limited knowledge or experience. Skill reported having over 100 enquiries in the last year from learners specifically about transport barriers and believed that they had many other enquiries where transport was discussed but not categorised as the primary reason for the call.
- 9.2 The learners' group reported that they had learned about transport entitlements, or lack of them, through a variety of routes. One man told us that he had only recently discovered that he was entitled to any additional benefits, after 20 years of his adult life. Those in our small sample who had consulted Social Services Departments had failed to be funded. The Disability Employment Advisor was cited as the most successful and reliable source of information on transport entitlement and funding that users had contact with, in the context of work related training.

Possible solutions to the quality of information and advice on transport

- 9.3 Training for Connexions and other information advice and guidance on transport and funding mechanisms.
- 9.4 Ensure that standards and quality measures for information and guidance on transport and funding are in place for all education providers and local authorities.
- 9.5 Use learning partnerships to create local policies, to direct pathfinder funding and to identify sustainable solutions.
- 9.6 Identify and nurture disability and funding expertise in the Connexions and IAG and other services.
- 9.7 Ensure that the DDA part 3 and 4 is well tested in relation to transport.

10. Group 4: Partnership and co-ordination between agencies

- 10.1 The headline barrier identified by the stakeholder group was the lack of **duty** or obligation for local authority transport providers or funders to enable learners to access learning provision. Reports and verbal evidence suggest that local budgets and financial climates dictate whether a learner is likely to succeed in a funding application. Transport funding is not ring-fenced and there is no logical path or set of stages that a learner can take to apply for support. Learners may find that they must apply for transport support at each transition in their education or training career. The learners reported generally poor levels of collaboration between agencies. The experiences ranged from one learner who reported that, prior to the course of learning he was now on, he received no information at all about support funds, to those turned down by social services but without directions to other advice or support, through to some learners who had received help from specialist workers who could negotiate the funding streams.
- 10.2 Evidence from public transport managers suggests that there is a lack of information from education providers about locations, times and expected number of learners. This has made it difficult for them to respond to need in a timely manner.

Possible solutions to partnership and co-ordination between agencies

- 10.3 Steer Davies Gleave (2002:5) recommended that 'partnership between LEAs, Passenger Transport Groups and colleges maximises effectiveness of funding and removes competition for scarce transport resources'. This could apply to all adult learners.
- 10.4 Use of a central organisation such as Local Government Offices, Local Strategic Partnerships, Learning Partnerships at regional or local level to provide a structure for local co-ordination.
- 10.5 Explore the concepts and strategies of Children's Trusts and other co-ordinated approaches to collaboration and funding across sectors.
- 10.6 Ensure that standards and quality measures for information and guidance on transport and funding are in place for all providers and local authorities.

11. Group 5: The impact of transport on learning choices

- 11.1 Steer Davies Gleave (2002) report that young adult learners (16-19) are not influenced by transport considerations when making learning choices. They go on to say, however, that these learners were not often in a position to make informed judgements because they rarely had access to good transport information. There have been few studies on the effect that transport availability or funding has on non-participating adults, or on potential learners with disabilities in making learning choices. However, Skill (2003) recently undertook a project looking at post-16 education for young people with learning difficulties from a South Asian background. Entitled 'Aasha' (the Bengali word for hope), the project centred around groups of young people in Birmingham and in Tower Hamlets, London. Concern for personal safety among the parents of these young people was acute in relation to getting to and from college. Many parents in the study felt that the lack of available transport was the main reason preventing them from sending their son or daughter to college. There were many examples of parents who sent the young disabled people in their family to a day centre, which was not the most appropriate provision, simply because there was regular transport available.
- 11.2 Other studies that look at access to learning from rural or sparsely populated areas suggest that young learners do need help resolving travelling difficulties (Storey and Branson 2000). Forty per cent of 15-16 year olds in rural areas stated that the availability of transport played a part in their decision-making.
- 11.3 Two case-study solutions are cited in the LSC document '*Good Practice: Education and training in sparsely populated areas*' (2003). One is a 'Wheels to Work' scheme in Shropshire that is funded by the Countryside Agency. This offers a moped loan scheme, driving lesson scheme and a minor grants scheme. It has been very successful and other similar schemes have been organised in other parts of the country. This does illustrate the impact of innovative solutions on apparently intractable problems.
- 11.4 The other scheme cited is an 'innovative bus scheme' at North Devon College. Here the college was able through a grant from the 'Rural Bus Challenge', to purchase new buses for the local bus company and supply its students with travel smart cards that entitled them to a free return journey to the college each day. The positive aspects of this scheme were that each local village with a population over 200 had a regular bus service, and that private transport use decreased. However, the case study states that there is no evidence of increased learner enrolments.

Possible solutions to the impact of transport on learning choices

- 11.5 Clear information services and advice on transport choices, assessments and funding mechanisms.
- 11.6 Encouragement of local authorities, Local Learning and Skills Councils and education providers to pool resources to make maximum use of creative solutions.
- 11.7 Use of DDA part 3 to ensure that disabled learners have the same choices as non-disabled learners.

12. Group 6: Quality and quantity of transport/independence training

- 12.1 The Steers Davies Gleave (2002) report for the DfES suggests the need for independence and travel training for 16-19 year olds. As the report 'Lets Go' (2004)(still in draft form) reminds the reader, travelling is not just about transport or vehicles, it encompasses 'road safety awareness, training and skills to build confidence, dealing with the worries of carers and having good information that people can understand'.
- 12.2 The focus groups identified that learners should be assessed for and receive appropriate independence, mobility or transport training programmes prior to starting at a new learning location.
- 12.3 Importantly, many learners lack transport confidence and problem solving skills and there will be some who need high levels of support throughout their whole learning experience.

Possible solutions to quality and quantity of transport/independence training

- 12.4 Carers need to feel confident, reassured and involved in decisions about independence training; this means transport training needs to include them as partners.
- 12.5 The training needs to be effective, appropriate and timely; this requires individual learning plans built from good diagnostic assessment.
- 12.6 Learning providers to work in partnership with transport providers to develop cash-less smart card schemes for transport. For many learners this could circumvent difficulties of money management.
- 12.7 Transport staff should be trained to understand the needs of disabled people and how to effectively meet these; this may be possible as a spin off from DDA implementation.
- 12.8 Funding mechanisms for transport training should be transparent and transport needs must be part of the initial assessment.
- 12.9 Learn to drive schemes for disabled learners, could make a difference to those with the potential to own their own transport.

13. Group 7: Incomplete legislation

- 13.1 Current legislation leaves disabled people open to discrimination through lack of accessible services. Taking action under the current DDA places heavy demands on individuals and their supporters. To have to fight for redress does not support learning. The new Disability Discrimination Bill will not become effective until at least 2006. The timetable for accessible buses, coaches and trains to be fully compliant to the needs of disabled passengers is also long term, with 2017 proposed for bus services and 2025 for trains.
- 13.2 Legislation on funding gives powers to fund but no duties. (A list of funding sources is set out in Annex A).

Possible solutions to incomplete legislative

- 13.3 Transport should be made fully, not partially, accessible. Compliance has to be monitored and measured.
- 13.4 Powers and duties and entitlement for transport funding need to be clarified. A duty to fund could be created, and that funding should be co-ordinated.
- 13.5 Differences in entitlement between different employment and learning programmes needs to be explored. We should have a consistent approach to ensuring entitlement.
- 13.6 The DfES in partnership with the LSC, may wish to communicate an update from lawyers of the legal duties and powers in relation to adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. The earlier report '*Duties and Powers*' (FEFC 1996) is now not comprehensive enough. The focus of such a review should be to report in as plain English as possible and exclusively on adults.

14. Group 8 – Complexities of funding for transport to learning

- 14.1 Transport to learning for adults is funded from a broad range of sources. Some funding relates to the opportunity itself, some to the funding body and other funding to non-education and training funders. The latter includes social services departments, other local authority departments, commercial transport providers, voluntary sector groups or, of course, the learner themselves, using whatever resources they may have. See Annex A for a list of sources.
- 14.2 One of the problems with funding is that, although many bodies have the power to provide for all or some of the transport costs none have the clear duty to do so. This leads to the potential for confusion, less participation, and some unevenness in provision across the sector.
- 14.3 There are examples of small pilot transport projects such as Workwise in Nottingham and the West Midlands. Here funding is available, managed by Jobcentre plus in the West Midlands, to pay transport costs to interviews, training and to support the first few weeks of employment.
- 14.4 Whatever the funding source, it tends to be individual. It will usually, and properly, be the needs of the individual that determine both the level and type of transport support required. This means that the providers of the funding may be difficult to access and, in some cases, unable to offer funding or only able to provide part funding.
- 14.5 Consistency of funding through transitional periods was identified as a problem by learners. For example, when learners lose their entitlement to transport arrangements at the end of an educational 'statement of need' or on leaving school, or changing learning providers or course type.
- 14.6 As funding is currently dealt with by so many funders, it is not possible to estimate the costs of providing transport support to all disabled people to access learning. It may be that the fragmented nature of the system means that opportunities to save costs by developing a coherent funding system are being missed and that research into these costs, their sources and effectiveness, would begin the process of developing a cost-effective and coherent system of funding transport to education. Such a funding system will, ideally, make it clear where the duty, as opposed to the power, to provide lies.

Possible solutions to complexities of funding for transport to learning

- 14.7 Individuals assessed as needing transport support should have an entitlement to funding, linked with educational provision.
- 14.8 Pooling ring-fenced funding for transport and developing a joint 'transport to learning' strategy, between the Department of Work and Pensions, Department of Transport, Department of Health, Department for Education and Skills would make a major difference. It may be more appropriate to seek development of a joint co-ordinating agency for all forms of transport, for all purposes, as part of an overall strategy of inclusion. Traditionally, health, housing and education managed such shared funding for community care. Funding for education purposes could then be addressed within this overall strategy.
- 14.9 Examples of good practice need to be identified, analysed and replicated.
- 14.10 Transport funding should be equated with level of study rather than age. Currently this should mean that learners studying up to and including Level 2 qualifications (DfES 2003) would be entitled to transport funding based on assessed need, regardless of age. This should be extended to create an entitlement to transport support for all those assessed as needing it, without regard to level of study.

15. Key recommendations/solutions for the DfES

15.1 Disabled adults are missing opportunities for education now. If policies designed to increase inclusion are to be successfully implemented, then action needs to happen now.

15.2 Without prejudice to longer term developments, or to the more complex “quick fix“ solutions, there are actions that could be taken to improve the situation now.

15.3 They include:

- commission a short, well designed project to identify good practice in funding and providing transport to education for disabled adults, and to produce a working practice guide for use by providers;
- identify good practice in transport information and advice by the Connexions service and by other information, advice and guidance services;
- identify successful disability training programmes currently in use amongst public transport providers, and publicise them across the sector (e.g. Transport for London’s equality training);
- produce advice for users and provider staff to clarify user rights and provider duties; this advice to be made available to potential users;
- promote awareness of the availability of LSC funding for independence, mobility and transport training to providers;
-
- commission research to set standards for the inclusion of independence, transport and mobility training, as appropriate, as part of course induction packages and, where appropriate, in the rest of the curriculum;
- investigate the possibility of organising appropriate area groups, to support co-ordination and delivery of transport and transport support to education for disabled adults;
- encourage development and use of pathfinder scheme approaches; and
- ensure that the principle that providers of transport, whoever they may be, must make provision that fits the learner, their

needs and the needs of the educational provision being offered, and not the convenience of the transport provider or contractor is upheld.

- 15.4 The list above is not exclusive; other measures could be added to it. It does, however, provide actions to improve the immediate position that can be taken quickly and at relatively low costs, whilst allowing the other proposed measures to be taken forwards to put in place the more medium and long term measures.

16. Wider solutions to ‘Transport to learning’ barriers

16.1 Potential solutions may be divided into those that will provide “quick fixes” or information to advise future developments, and those aimed at delivering longer term improvements.

16.2 The “quick fixes” include:

- provide driver and transport staff disability awareness training to improve standards and quality of public transport;
- practical research into independence, mobility and transport training approaches and the development of materials to support effective practice;
- introducing funding for independence, mobility and transport training into LSC funding methodology as a standard expectation for providers to consider;
- recognition of the need to fund short term transport needs and provide individual links to corridor transport services;
- increasing range of concessionary fares to include ‘adult learner fare’;
- increasing use of smart cards and other pathfinder scheme approaches;
- identifying good practice in providing transport and transport support, and replicating it;
- identifying previous failures in providing transport and transport support, and their effect on the learning of individuals and learning from these;
- enforcing current statutory rights such as those under the DDA and other current legislation; and
- building on existing co-operative working arrangements between local agencies, so as to provide coherent, cost effective local transport networks, supporting local needs.

16.3 In the longer term:

- creating appropriate quality standards and targets for public transport and for Local Authority provided transport;
- researching and reviewing funding and funding mechanisms and mapping funding distribution against funding need;

- breaking the link between funding and age of user, but link instead to Level 2 qualifications with the aim of creating entitlement to support to all assessed as needing it, regardless of levels of learning;
- identifying regional/county based organisations (e.g. Learning Partnerships, Local Government Offices) to be given powers and duties to develop appropriate transport funding strategies;
- reviewing current methods of assessing need and entitlements to transport funding;
- developing expertise in transport assessment and funding at service provider and education provider levels to ensure proper and timely assessment of need and entitlements to transport funding;
- developing both better information sources regarding public and contracted transport routes and funding sources, along with knowledgeable information providers;
- reviewing social care, employment training and learning transport systems identifying consistent approaches; and
- ensuring that the powers of the DDA are recognised and utilised in the contracting of transport services.

17. In conclusion

Learners should be at the heart of the planning and funding of the learning and skills sector. It follows from this that,

the individual's experience of transport is central to assessment, training and funding considerations and, therefore:

- journeys should be as short as possible, and fit the learner, not the provider or contractor;
- advice on transport and funding from advice and guidance agencies, education providers and transport providers has to be good and consistent;
- learners should experience consistent and reliable transport assessment;
- independence training needs to be consistent and appropriate;
- the cultural needs of all ethnic majority and minority groups must be taken into account; and
- transport and funding and assessment mechanisms should recognise the changing need of individuals at learning transition times.

Age is not a barrier. The age of a learner with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unlikely to affect their transport needs. Currently there are identified age cut-off points for funding entitlements. It is important that the age of the learner is not a barrier for them accessing both transport funding and learning opportunities.

Transport assessment funding mechanisms should be seen to promote learning for adults – a means to an end, not an end in itself. The provision of transport enables adults to participate in learning that they might not otherwise be able to do. Transport assessment funding should not be viewed as a perk and less than essential. Providing transport assessment and funding to learners with learning difficulties and and/or disabilities of all ages may enable more **new** learners to achieve appropriate levels of learning.

That funders and policy makers are aware that learners may have low self-esteem or poor transport confidence and so may have difficulties in using wider transport systems, public transport or walking, particularly in unfamiliar areas.

Since this paper was commissioned, the DFES has published the School Travel Scheme draft Bill and prospectus for consultation. The Bill implies in its section on Special Educational Needs that

consideration should be given to greater levels of co-operation between agencies in the future. This needs to go further, in the ways suggested in this paper.

18. References

Department for Education and Skills, Department of Trade and Industry, Her Majesty's Treasury, Department for Work and Pensions (2003). *21st Century skills: realising our potential: individuals, employers, nation*, London, Stationary Office

Department of Health (2004). *Valuing People "Let's Go' Transport Toolkit" (Draft)*, DoH

Department for Work and Pensions (2002). *Disabled for Life*, London, DWP

Disability Rights Commission (2004a). *Memorandum to the joint committee on the Draft Disability Discrimination Bill*, London, DRC

Disability Rights Commission (2004). *Consultation response to Department for Transport consultation*

www.drc.org.uk/campaigns/campaigndetails.asp?id=214

Disability Rights Commission (2004). *Consultation responses to Cabinet Office Consultation on Transport and Social Exclusion*

www.drc.org.uk/campaigns/campaigndetails.asp?id=186

DPTAC (2002). *Attitudes of Disabled People to Public Transport: Research Study*, London, DPTAC

Further Education Funding Council (1996). *Inclusive learning: report of the learning difficulties and/or disabilities committee*, London, HMSO

Further Education Funding Council (1996). *Duties and Powers: The law governing the provision of further education to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities*, Coventry, FEFC

Further Education Funding Council (1997). *Learning works: widening participation in further education*, Coventry, FEFC

Learning and Skills Council (2003). *Good Practice: Education and Training in Sparsely Populated Areas*, Coventry, LSC.

Skill (2003). *Funding for disabled students in further education*, London, SKILL

Skill (2003). *Aasha: working with young people with a learning difficulty from a South Asian background*, London, Skill

Social Exclusion Unit (2003). *Making connections: Final report on transport and social exclusion*, London, SEU

Steer Davies Gleave (2002). *Transport for students in further education*
– *final report*, London, DfES

19. Thanks

Thank you to both focus groups for their invaluable contributions. To Kit Roberts of the LSC, the LSC Forum and particularly the encouragement of its chair Professor John Tomlinson CBE.

This paper was drawn together with papers commissioned by NIACE for this scoping study from: Skill, SRA (Social Research Associates) and P.J. O'Rourke, consultant.

Appendix A:

Available Funding Sources

Non-Education or Training Related

The Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit that disabled people have access to. This includes a **mobility component**, which is paid at two rates, Higher and Lower. This can then be used, at the discretion of the individual. A problem with the mobility component of DLA is that, in many cases, it becomes an integral part of the family budget, and any additional demand, such as travel to learning, can have a considerable effect on family or individual finances.

Local Authorities may provide help and support to disabled individuals in accessing and paying for transport. This can take the form of travel passes, for bus, train or underground services or taxi tokens, vouchers or cards. This form of support varies across the country, with some authorities providing more than others. Whilst not directly related to education, these systems can support access to education and, importantly, for those who can access and use mainstream transport, increased opportunity to do so, where public transport is adequate. They cannot, however, cover the needs of everybody or help where public transport is poor or inaccessible.

Community transport schemes are variously funded, by Local Authority grant, Lottery funding, charitable grants and by fares paid by users. Some of these are not available for education use, or may limit the numbers of journeys that an individual can make in a set period. They can offer door to door transport, but are subject to high demand and often need booking well in advance. As with all schemes needing grants from statutory or charitable bodies, these are at risk due to their dependence on the priorities and economic health of other organisations.

Commercial companies, such as railway companies, may offer concessions, either in terms of reduced or free travel on request, or by purchase of concession cards, allowing reduced fares.

Local Voluntary Organisations may provide voluntary car schemes, funded through a range of sources, including the volunteers themselves. Again, these vary across the country, both in availability and effectiveness.

Social Service Departments have a duty, under a number of Acts, to offer assessments to determine a person's needs and the services required to cater for those needs. Where the services determined include adult education, then the Social Services Department has the power, under Section 29 of the National Assistance Act, 1949 and Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (1970), to

provide transport to the services. Where they do not have their own transport available, they should pay for an alternative. They do, however, have the right to consider their budget when decided whether to provide this and can make a “reasonable” charge for the service. Where a person is living in a care or community home and going to an education facility, then transport is frequently available through the home itself, or from Social Services, with the same budgetary constraints.

Individuals may pay their own costs, although for many, this is not an option, as demonstrated in the introduction.

Education or training related

There is no current legislation available to ensure full provision of transport to learning for all post-school students who need it, but, as well as Social Services Departments, there are bodies with the power to fund transport, often in conjunction with a consideration of the individuals financial circumstances.

The position is further complicated by the transition from school to college, and the rights that post-19 students may derive from starting a course before they reach 19.

Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have a duty to consult on, prepare and publish local transport policy statements setting out the transport arrangements and support available to students in the 16-19 age range. This affects older students, in that provision should also be made for students with learning difficulties and disabilities up to 21 year old and “ideally” up to 25, and who need additional transport support. Where deemed appropriate, the LEA can make a charge for the service, on a full or part recovery basis.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC), through the local LSCs, is responsible for funding courses in the post 16 sector. Students whose needs for learning and other support can be demonstrated can have the additional support provided through the LSC **Additional Learning Support (ALS)** funding system, which can provide monies for transport between sites but not home to college transport support, as long as it is dependent on needs, relative to the course of study being undertaken.

Further, the LSC provides **Learner Support Funds**. These are allocated to FE providers and are used to support individual needs of students, on a discretionary basis, including support with transport costs. They are also allocated for general access needs and may be used to contribute to the costs of free or subsidised transport services.

Further and Higher Education Colleges may have their own system of Access Funds, designed to support individual students, and these, with hardship funds, may support transport to college.

The Disabled Student Allowance is available to Higher Education Students, and may be used, in part, to support transport, as may student loans.

Job Centre Plus offers routes to a number of work-related learning opportunities, some of which do have course related transport support. People who are on the New Deal for 18-25 and for 25+ are given training by a range of providers. In this provision, the training provider pays for transport costs, which do not directly relate to disability, and then claims back the outlay from the funder. Job Centre Plus also provides an additional £10.00 per week to people on work based learning programmes, intended as a contribution to travel costs incurred. Again, this goes to all participants in the programme. New Deal for Disabled People does not offer training as such, but delivers sign-posting, job search and placement services.

The Residential Training Unit funds one-year work based training for disabled people at specialist residential colleges. They cover the costs of travel to and from the centres throughout the year's placement.