



Community Transport Consultation – April 2015

Introduction:

It was agreed that one of the thematic areas to research in the last three months of the 2014/15 project (Jan to March) would include Community Transport needs.

Background

Cheshire East's Local Transport Plan relates directly to the priorities of the Sustainable Communities Strategy 2010-2025. The plan illustrates how transport contributes to the achievement of wider aspirations and ambitions for the area over the next 15 years namely:

- Ensure a sustainable future
- Drive out the causes of poor health
- Nurture strong communities
- Support our children and young people
- Prepare for an increasingly older population
- Unlock the potential of our towns

Transport issues faced by **older people are highlighted** - the report states

“Retaining good health longer through life is important, and active travel and access to a range of facilities and services helps older people retain a higher quality of life for longer... older people have expressed more difficulty accessing hospitals than other facilities, and need for better targeted services.”

CEC Director of Public Health Annual Report 13/14

“The 2011 census shows that in the rural communities of Cheshire East ...20% have one car or van in the household... It is therefore likely that parents in most need in rural areas in Cheshire East may not have ready access to private transport during the day.

In addition public transport in rural areas of Cheshire East is limited. ..This leaves the most **vulnerable rural families isolated** from services that should be supporting them.

In a 2012 evaluation of children’s centres services, managers of rural children’s centres spoke of particular problems with transport and long distances between services. They highlighted the **importance of play/outreach buses** going out into rural areas which other transport did not reach.

The JSNA Project research focussed on two main questions:

1. How effective is the Cheshire East Local Transport Plan in providing for the transport needs of communities?

- Older people
- Young people
- Those without access to a car
- Disabled people
- Those who experience difficulty using public transport
- People living in rural areas

2. How does lack of access to transport impact on health and wellbeing?

Methodology

Information was gathered using a variety of methods listed below:

- Telephone interviews were conducted with groups/organisations who are current providers of transport.
- Consultation questionnaires were emailed to relevant VCFS groups/organisations.
- Focus Groups were held with; Stay and Play, Macclesfield Eye Society, South Cheshire CLASP, Eaton Court (Refuge), Wishing Well Luncheon Club & Cheshire Buddies
- Individual questionnaires were completed by people who attend groups at; Eaton Court, Wishing Well, Congleton Senior Forum & Congleton Disabled Group.
- Desktop research with transport agencies in Cheshire East to find out:
If their contact details are up to date
Which geographical area they cover
Which groups of people are using the transport

How many people are using the transport weekly

Transport Key Findings:

- Older people, people with disabilities, those who live in rural areas, young people, and those without access to a car, say community transport is vital in eliminating isolation and improving health and wellbeing
- People in the community who know about, and who are using the community transport schemes, both minibus and private cars, describe the positive difference the service makes to their lives.
- Older people who do not express difficulties with travel rely on family members to provide transport.
- 60% of those without their own transport rated most difficult as; getting to doctors, hospital, and to do their own shopping.
- There are threats to the sustainability of some Community Transport schemes, including ageing volunteers and funders' restrictions that can prevent building up reserves for new vehicles.
- The combination of community minibuses and volunteer drivers using their own cars appears to be a good fit for the local community
- As health services plan on extending their hours, the transport service will need to respond to this. This is likely to cause more reliance on VCFS transport providers.
- There is an expressed need in the Shavington area around the difficulty getting to and from community groups and VCFS services.

Transport Recommendations:

- Commissioners to consider the necessity for VCFS providers to build reserves for vehicles and other equipment.
- Commissioners to consider transport links when developing community services and/or changing service delivery models
- CVSCE to continue to support local VCFS providers to recruit volunteer drivers.
- CEC to consider the taxi token vs Bus Pass scheme, so that our community can choose the most suitable for themselves and their needs.
- Transport services to pay particular attention to the transport difficulties our communities are facing around the Shavington area.
- To carry out further research to ensure/plan for the sustainability of Community Transport services currently under threat
- To support VCFS organisations to identify opportunities for working together and sharing resources to meet needs

Telephone Surveys Results – Current Providers

Project staff conducted surveys with 32 VCFS organisations that provide support with transport. This support included:

Community car schemes

Minibus with drivers

Minibus for hire

Volunteers using their own cars

Mobility scooters

Some services serve small rural areas like Audlem, Bramhall, Woodford, Rainow, Bollington and Disley, and Odd Rode. Others cover the towns of Macclesfield, Crewe, Nantwich, Alsager, Congleton, Knutsford etc.

There are very specific schemes that serve GP Practices like Holmes Chapel Communicare and Odd Rode Elderley and Disabled Residents Scheme. St Johns' Wood Luncheon Club provides transport for its members as does the Wishing Well Luncheon club in Crewe.

We asked a member of a Luncheon Club what it meant to her, she said,

“It saved my life. It’s the one place I go to every week.”

The transport schemes surveyed carry out a wide variety of services mainly for older people but also for young people, people with disabilities, and those living in rural areas

The services provided enabled people to travel to:

- Local GP practices
- Hospital appointments at Macclesfield, Leighton, Wythenshawe, Christies, North Staffs, Stoke.
- Day clubs
- Luncheon clubs
- Support groups
- High School
- Community Cinema
- Days out
- Local towns
- Evening trips out when bus service no longer operates

One service also delivers hot meals 6 days a week, another flags up any serious health problems with the local GP practice

Some services are just for local residents or for patients registered at a GP practice, but the majority serve anyone who has difficulty in accessing public transport. Some community bus services have designated stops, but some pick up door to door and are flexible if someone has difficulty getting to a bus stop.

Impact on the Community

A conservative estimate suggests that on average **920 individuals per week** use the 32 community transport organisations that took part in the survey

Operating hours:

Half of the schemes surveyed operate week days every day. Some community buses operate outside of public transport hours and some are in use for specific events or support groups. Comments included'

"If needed we would do whatever is necessary."

"We work every day, 7 days a week, including Christmas Day."

"The office is open 10 am - 4 pm but we accommodate medical appointments outside of these times and at the weekends if necessary."

One organisation reported that before receiving funding in 2014 they were doing about 17 trips a year. After getting the funding the number of trips increased by 90%

Impact of lack of transport

"As our car schemes are operated by volunteer drivers, on occasion we have had to let passengers down with trips if we haven't got the drivers available which would result in them cancelling their appointment as they have no other way to get there."

"A passenger had booked to visit her husband in a nursing home, but we couldn't allocate a driver for that day which then left her and her husband distressed as she had no other way to get to see him and couldn't afford taxi fare"

"Access to out of hours GP services based at Leighton Hospital and out of hours pharmacies based in Congleton can be problematic as both are located some 5 miles away from our area."

Anecdotal evidence from an organisation supporting carers,

"...people manage health appointments because of the urgency or difficulty in getting them at all, but feel that they lose out on activities and social things"

The 32 schemes surveyed involve an amazing 506 volunteers, supported by 58 paid staff.

One volunteer said he was out one day from 10.00am to 8.00pm. He said,

" ...When you see the old person coming out of the consulting room looking confused and bewildered , and then they see someone they know and their face lights up, then it's all worth it."

Cost:

There was an equal split between schemes that provide a free service and those who ask for a donation. Six of the organisations asked passengers for a set amount to cover designated journeys.

Expanding the service?

The survey asked Community transport schemes if there were other areas in which they would/could provide a service if the resources were available. Responses included:

“We are seriously considering getting a mini bus for the village so that we can share it with other groups such as the scouts, youth group, faith groups etc. We are aware that in other areas they have a minibus that they use to drop clients off to do some shopping. I do think there is a need for this here as we are aware not everyone wants to come to a group, but they are facing isolation.”

Another organisation said they would consider expanding their current service to include hospital and clinical appointments if the resources were available.

Two schemes were considering expanding either geographically or into a new service. The majority of the schemes felt that they were happy working to their current remit.

Links between services

The survey asked if schemes linked with other transport services to fill gaps.

Some of the community bus services belong to a national body, and use their support services.

Other organisation reported,

“...we do meet with other local Communicare and share info”

“We don’t work alongside any other transport schemes; however we do recommend others if a passenger isn’t able to access our scheme. Perhaps in a different area”

“No - but every time we hire a minibus £150 is going outside of VCFS – we would prefer to pay VCFS provider”

A third of the schemes surveyed said they did not link in with/were not aware of other community transport schemes

Sustainability

The survey asked: Is the delivery of your service under any threat – is it sustainable?

A third of the respondents said that their scheme was sustainable

A third of the transport services surveyed said their service was sustainable if the funding continued

Four organisations were concerned about recruiting sufficient volunteers to maintain the current service. One organisation voiced a concern about older volunteers continuing to drive past 80. They said they prefer them to stop at 80 but they have no official cut off point. Other organisations that have been in existence for many years, which started up in response to a shared vision, can find themselves in a position where founder members/volunteers are all getting older at the same time. One organisation stated that they have had to withdraw their shopping service due to the lack of volunteers.

Four organisations were concerned about the future of the service because of the age and condition of their minibus.

One service has no funding from next year so the future is uncertain for the 70 people per week who use the service. In addition, the community will lose the added value of 30 volunteers who staff the service every week.

One organisation stated that hospital parking charged were a threat to sustainability.

Focus Group Findings

Voice Forum

In March 2015 CVSCE held a Voice Forum that included a mini Transport Consultation. Organisations taking part included:

- Healthwatch
- Reach Out and Recover (ROAR)
- Citizens Advice North
- Victim Support

The key issues regarding transport that were raised were as follows;

“Cheshire West have a scheme where residents can swap their Bus Pass for £70 taxi tokens, can’t this be an option in Cheshire East?”

“We are not sure if NW Ambulance Service Patient Transport Service (NWS PTS) refers patients to community transport if they are not eligible for NWS PTS?”

“ We have to drive our residents out places at night as there is no public transport, one of them recently joked that I need a bigger car/ mini bus” ROAR (Reach Out And Recover) Macclesfield.

“Patient Transport (NWS PTS) is only 9-5. As health services are extending their hours; the service will also need to reflect this.” This is likely to cause more reliance on VCFS Transport Providers.

Wishing Well – Jubilee House, Crewe

Project staff facilitated the completion of a large number of questionnaires by attendees at the Wishing Well Luncheon Club. The results of these are included within the next section; some examples of the insight we gleaned are quoted below:

“The D&G little Bus Dial a Ride is vital - especially for people with physical and mental health problems.”

“We are not clear who we are phoning, think it is the dial a ride D&G little bus service”

“D&G take me shopping once a week with the dial a ride, today I thought about using the Dial a Ride but I decided to use the bus as I like the challenge of it! ”

“We desperately need Dial a Ride service and more buses, more frequent and a better service to places like Shavington, especially in the evenings, if not people are isolated, lonely and if no relatives can easily be drawn into depression and other mental health conditions.”

“If it wasn't for the service I wouldn't get out, total isolation, I sit on my own..... I have always got out and about - I wouldn't get out, Local bus to Shavington 5.25pm - no service back to Crewe.”

Macclesfield Eye Society

In February 2015 the team spoke with attendees at a local Eye Society group meeting to ask about general issues in accessing health services (see findings in sensory loss reports). Project staff also took the opportunity to hold a mini Transport Consultation.

The key issues regarding transport that were raised were as follows;

Very positive feedback on Communicare -

“Absolutely marvellous, they used to have more drivers; the demand is higher, victim of its own success!”

“Communicare are a really good service and they stay with you while you are at your appointment?”

Some individuals in the group could still use the buses others only went to places when a family member could take them. Because a bus routes was cut one visually impaired lady was no longer able to be independent and get herself into town to do the shopping. She said,

“Now this has stopped I can’t go to the library or the shops anymore, it used to be quite a social things, I used to get books for the blind from the library. Socially it has made a big difference as I would chat to people on the bus, everyone would chat to people they knew on the bus.”

The Visually Impaired Group used to be able to provide transport for its members via the local authority, but since this has been withdrawn the numbers attending the support sessions had halved. Session volunteers pick up some people in their own cars but there is a limit to how many journeys they can make.

Eaton Court – Congleton

In March 2015 Project staff held a mini Transport Consultation at Eaton Court in Congleton, attended by 5 female residents:

There was mixed feedback from this group regarding transport, for example a young member of the group said she would just use google and finds it easy to navigate the travel system.

However as we discussed transport further it came to light that the main issue with transport is the cost, the group discussed that they tend to buy a £5 a day travel token. In addition to getting to Health appointments, viewing potential houses can be an issue, again have to buy a £5 a day travel token

To get to Leighton hospital the group would catch the train to Crewe then a bus to the hospital.

All members of the group said they would be very interested in using community transport.

South Cheshire CLASP (Crewe Lone and Single Parents)

In March 2015 the project team held a mini Transport Consultation at South Cheshire CLASP in Crewe, attended by 7 single parents:

Again there was mixed feedback from this group regarding transport, one member of the group had found using the bus with her two young children very difficult.

However, similar to the Eaton Court focus group the general consensus was that buses are too expensive. One mum said she only got the bus if it was raining as she

couldn't afford it all the time. It was stated that it cost £1.80 to just 'get on/ literally go down the street', and that you have to pay for small children as well.

"To get from Crewe to Leighton Hospital you have to get into town first then its two buses."

"I tend to get taxis with my kids as the buses are too unreliable"

When asked if they used community buses they answered that these are only aimed at the Elderly and those with Disabilities.

One lady reported that it is very difficult for teenagers to go anywhere, as there are lots of buses during the day in Crewe but hardly any in the evening. This is also the cases for working parents who may need transport in the evening. One person queried why we couldn't have the same system as in London where teenagers (under 16) get free travel.

One member of the group stated that they felt very unsafe at Crewe Bus station.

Central Cheshire Buddies Scheme

On discovering just how much transport the Central Cheshire Buddies provide to their members, the Project team were invited to attend one of their 'meet- ups'. The Cheshire Buddies Scheme provides transport for all their services users who require it, either by minibus or car. On average this number is between 90-100 per week, involving 3 main drivers who are all CCBS staff. The Project team got the opportunity to speak with both carers and adults with disabilities who are involved with the scheme.

The key issues that were raised by carers are quoted below:

- CEC have changed the school transport providers three times in the last 18 months for Springfield School. This is worrying for parents and can be detrimental for the children, especially if they need to be on a quiet bus or if they struggle with unfamiliar faces.
- School transport can be quite hit and miss. Children can be on the transport for an hour at a time depending on where they live.

In addition the key issues raised by the Adults' Group were:

- Similar transport issues getting to other groups in the Shavington area. (youth club on a Tuesday evening) due to the venue. Parents who do not drive struggle to get their children to the youth centre on a Tuesday or in the evening
- Public Transport being too expensive.
- The benefits from being able to attend Buddies meetings – including reduced social isolation and having someone to talk to
- The benefit of being able to use community transport to get to other support groups and services.

CCBS staff comments:

CCBS currently collects 8 children every Tuesday evening and takes them to Shavington youth centre. All of the parents do not own vehicles and do not drive, therefore the service is a lifeline. CCBS collect children, young people and carers for trips and activities. During the Easter holidays CCBS ran day trips for the children and on average collected 8 children per trip. These are children who would not/could not have gone without transport being provided.

In term time CCBS run carers' activities and on average 5 carers are collected and taken to events. Carers talk about the time involved in using public transport, the cost, moving large items, problems of getting shopping home on the bus. Many do not have the funds for public transport and have disabilities so are unable to walk or cycle.

Some comments from the group included:

“ Buddies picks me up otherwise I couldn't go!”

“This group is a lifeline to me – and they make sure I can get here”

“ I get to go to the bowling disco – I get picked up on the bus”

The need for transport provision continues to increase. One recent example involved 47 children and young people being picked up by Buddies own transport but an additional 18 had to be collected by taxi. Without this service the 18 would not have attended the club.

Results – Individual Questionnaire

In addition to the focus groups, Project staff handed individual questionnaires out to those attending the Congleton Senior Forum, Congleton Disabled Group, Wishing Well Luncheon Club, CLASP and Eaton Court. A total of 47 individual questionnaires were completed.

Firstly respondents were asked to tick which were the most important to them;

- Getting to hospital
- Getting to see your GP
- Getting to your place of work

- Getting out of the house
- Getting to social groups
- Getting to support groups
- Getting to play groups with your children
- Getting to school/getting your children to school
- Getting out to see your friends
- Getting your own shopping

The top three most important to those that completed the questionnaires were:

- Getting to hospital
- Getting to see your GP
- Getting to social groups

The survey then asked respondents which were the most difficult to manage, almost 60% of those surveyed said they had difficulty getting to places, this time the top three were:

- Getting to hospital
- Getting to see your GP
- Getting your own shopping

For those under 65 transport difficulties arose because of physical disabilities. Those over 66 who had no difficulty getting to places were transported by family members. Based on the insight we have gleaned from the telephone surveys it would seem that getting to social groups is likely to not be as difficult as shopping, there are often volunteers willing to collect individuals to attend social groups.

The majority of the respondents were residents from Congleton, 49% (23) followed by 26% (12) from Crewe, 19% (9) from other areas in Cheshire East and the remainder not stating.

The age breakdown of the respondents can be seen in the figure below.

Age	Number Of Respondents	Percentage
16-25	1	2
26-35	2	4
36-50	2	4
51-65	9	19
66-75	19	40
76+	9	19
Empty	5	11
Total	47	100

Of the 47 respondents only 7 had their own transport.

We then went on to ask a series of open questions (see below)

- How do you usually get to where you need to be?
- Have you ever missed getting to an appointment because of transport difficulties? Please give details
- Which hospitals or health centres do you usually have to travel to?
- How easy is it to use public transport to get to hospitals or health centres? Please give details
- What other places do you want to go to that help you to feel well?
- How do you travel to these places?
- Where would you go for help to find transport to get somewhere?
- Are you able to use the internet to find out information?
- Tell us about a time when you couldn't get somewhere that was important to you, and how it affected you?
- Can you think of anything that would make it better for you when you have to get somewhere?
- Is there anything else you want to tell us about?

The key messages were as follows:

"Our Bus Pass is vital"

"Rely on family but it's difficult when they are not around"

"We need a better service as I am entirely reliant on family"

"More services like Dial a Ride, they are desperately important"

"We are not clear who we are calling, I think it's dial a ride or D&G little Bus!"

Evidence of What Works – April 2015

The information collected for this report illustrates how the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector community transport services fill gaps in current provision. Here are some examples of how these VCFS services help people to solve the problem of how to get out and about:

"We try to cover every eventuality. i.e. If a service-user has a hospital appointment and is unable to alight our volunteers vehicle, and to walk to the appointment"

location, then we arrange for two volunteers to accompany them. The driver will drop off the service-user and second volunteer, before going to park the vehicle. When the service user has attended their appointment the driver will collect after receiving a call on their mobile phone stating location and time of pick-up.

“Most of our clients experience considerable difficulties accessing public transport, mainly through a loss of confidence resulting from their sight loss.”

“If we had more drivers and more funding then we could offer more trips to the passengers.”

“For some of our passengers they may live on a bus route but can’t manage to get on a bus, others live in rural areas and do not have access to public transport.”

“We take clients to hospital for Day Care at say 8:00 am. Public transport would not be available at that time.”

“When you see the old person coming out of the consulting room looking confused and bewildered, and then they see someone they know and their face lights up, then it’s all worth it.”

“For people living in Knutsford, there is only an hourly bus service to Macclesfield, and no direct service to Wythenshawe. There is a local bus service that stops near to Knutsford Community Hospital. So our service is very needed”

Service-users say:

“Absolutely marvellous, they used to have more drivers; the demand is higher, victim of its own success!”

“Communicare are a really good service and they stay with you while you are at your appointment?”

“More services like Dial a Ride, they are desperately important”

“If it wasn’t for the service I wouldn’t get out, total isolation.

People in the community who know about, and who are using the community transport schemes, both minibus and private cars, describe the positive difference the service makes to their lives.

The organisations listed below contributed to the insight contained in this report. The draft report has been emailed to these VCFS organisations for their comments:

Alsager Voluntary Care
Audlem and District Community Action
Bramhall & Woodford Christian Communicare
British Red Cross Accessequip Service
Carer's Trust Young adult carer 16-25yrs
Carers Trust 4all
Central Cheshire Buddies Scheme
Cheshire Centre for Independent Living
Cheshire Community Action
Community Transport Macclesfield
Congleton Communicare
Congleton Disabled Group.
Congleton Senior Forum
Crewe YMCA
Disley Parish Council
Haslington Neighbours Network
High Leigh Community Association
Holmes Chapel and area Christian Communicare
IRIS Vision Cheshire
Knutsford Community Transport Scheme
Knutsford & District Good Neighbours
Macclesfield Eye Society
Odd Rode Elderly and Disabled Residents Group
Odd Rode Parish Council
Odd Rode Ward of Cheshire East Council
Play and Stay Congleton
Rainow Village Bus
Sandbach Communicare
Shopmobility
Stroke association
Wishing Well project
Youth Federation

N.B. Where quotes may identify the contributor, these are annotated or removed from published reports to protect anonymity.

Louise Daniels, Third Sector JSNA Coordinator, CVSCE

Louise.daniels@cvsce.org.uk

Jayne Cunningham, Network Coordinator, CVSCE

Jayne.cunningham@cvsce.org.uk

June 2015