



Ageing Better: Inclusive transport approaches and active travel research

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This paper has been written by Ecorys, the lead independent national evaluator of the Ageing Better programme. Details on the evaluation **methodology** can be found in a [separate note](#). Unless otherwise stated, evidence is drawn from online interviews and focus groups with Ageing Better programme stakeholders conducted in June and July 2021.

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Executive summary

As people age, they may experience challenges leaving home and making journeys. The Ageing Better programme has invested in piloting projects that support people to overcome practical and psychological barriers to travelling, both locally and further afield. This report brings together evidence from the Ageing Better partnerships across England, providing insights into **how to make travel more inclusive** and to **encourage active travel** among people over 50. By improving people's ability to remain connected, these approaches help to reduce or prevent social isolation and loneliness, and improve health and wellbeing.

The Ageing Better programme

Ageing Better is a £87 million, seven-year programme funded by The National Lottery Community Fund. It started in 2015 and will run until 2022. The programme aims to enhance the lives of people over 50 by addressing **social isolation** and **loneliness**, improving social connections and enabling people over 50 to be more engaged in the design of services for their communities. The programme also aims to challenge negative narratives around ageing and promote a positive image of later life. The programme funds voluntary sector-led partnerships in 14 areas across England¹.

Who engaged and what changed?

Ageing Better's travel-related projects were effective at engaging a diverse range of people aged 50+, including groups known to be at particular risk of – or who were already experiencing – loneliness and social isolation. Although there are other influences besides their involvement in the programme, participants in Ageing Better's travel-related projects were, on average, less socially isolated and lonely after taking part, and saw improvements in their health and wellbeing². When joining the programme, 24% of participants reported having low wellbeing, compared to 16% following their involvement, and 51% of participants reported being lonely at the start, compared to 44% after taking part in a travel-related project. They also reported being more mobile and able to connect with people, and feeling more positive as a result.

¹ The partnerships are listed in the accompanying Methods note.

² We have not assessed the impact of Ageing Better travel-related projects. For more information on the impact of the programme, please refer to the programme Impact Evaluation Report.

Improving travel options for people over 50

Co-designing travel-related projects and working with people over 50 to suggest improvements to travel infrastructure can help people regain their confidence and motivation to travel locally. These approaches can also improve transport and travel options for the wider community. Our qualitative research showed that these approaches enable people to access activities which they derive fulfilment and enjoyment from, helping them feel and function better.

People over 50 developing community-based solutions

We found that involving people over 50 in planning and delivering travel-related projects leads to tangible change. By drawing on their own strengths and assets, and those of their local communities, older people developed and delivered **community-based travel options** that work, including community transport schemes and peer-to-peer travel.

Influencing strategy

Supporting people over 50 to partner with transport authorities and providers to **influence strategy** led to the identification of **solutions** that make a difference to people's experience of travel, such as:

- ◆ Ensuring travel information is accessible (audio announcements as well as visual display)
- ◆ Improving seating and access to public toilets across transport hubs
- ◆ Enhancing the built environment (street lighting, pavement quality)

Addressing psychological barriers to travel

Ageing Better's person-centred approach has helped older people improve their **motivation and confidence** to travel. Effective approaches include:

- ◆ Providing information about local travel environments, including where to find places to rest, public toilets, etc.
- ◆ Travel buddying schemes, including peer-to-peer and community connector support
- ◆ Encouraging groups to come together around shared interests and build confidence to travel over time

Opportunities for change

These findings should be used to inform the approaches that commissioners, policy developers and service providers take to address the transport needs of people over 50 at both national and local levels. In particular, the findings are relevant to government agendas for inclusive travel³, active travel⁴ and the COVID-19 recovery.

- ◆ **Making travel inclusive** for people over 50 requires action to address a range of practical and psychological barriers. While lack of public transport, cost and gaps in timetables and routes are an issue for some people, other barriers to inclusion can also be addressed through simple, often low-cost, initiatives that enable people to leave home safely and confidently (ensuring that pavements are well maintained and lit, bus stops have reliable information and somewhere to sit, and bus drivers are aware of mobility issues, for example).
- ◆ **Developing active travel approaches** for the over-50s, particularly improving walking infrastructure and promoting the physical and mental health benefits of gentle exercise, can engage older people effectively. Walking and cycling supports older people to build social connections and improve their health and wellbeing.
- ◆ **Enabling people over 50 to get out and about** and travel in their local communities, especially those who have become more isolated during the **COVID-19 crisis**, will be a vital part of recovery from the pandemic.

³ The Department for Transport (DfT) Inclusive Transport Strategy recognises the importance of the entire journey from door to door. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-transport-strategy/the-inclusive-transport-strategy-achieving-equal-access-for-disabled-people>

⁴ DfT Active Travel initiatives. Encouraging active travel is increasingly recognised as a way to build physical activity levels and improve social connections. DfT announced additional investments in active travel in November 2020, including £175 million for cycling and walking infrastructure across England. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-billion-package-to-create-new-era-for-cycling-and-walking> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/175-million-more-for-cycling-and-walking-as-research-shows-public-support>

Recommendations for action

The findings from this research can be used to inform the approaches that commissioners, policy developers and service providers take to address the transport needs of people over 50 in their communities.

Our key recommendation for **improving transport and mobility opportunities for the over-50s is ensuring that older people are actively involved in identifying, designing and delivering local travel and transport solutions**⁵.

National policymakers:

- ◆ Involve older people in developing transport and mobility policies, and ensure that national policy frameworks support the involvement of older adults in transport planning and decision-making at local levels, for example:
 - Require local transport bodies to consider the views of people over 50 in the development of new strategies and changes that may impact their mobility. Consider the impact of transport provision on the health, wellbeing and social connections of people over 50 alongside other key factors (such as economic impacts)
 - Ensure that policy takes account of both practical and psychological barriers to travel
- ◆ Provide funding to enable the delivery of travel and transport solutions that work for older people, including:
 - Community transport solutions developed in collaboration with people over 50
 - Walkable environments with well-maintained pavements, adequate seating and access to public toilets

⁵ The recommendations in our report are complemented by recent research published by the Centre for Ageing Better which sets out recommendations for national and local government, commissioners and service providers to support the provision of active travel schemes and encourage take-up by people over 50. Centre for Ageing Better, October 2021. Best foot forward: Exploring the barriers and enablers to active travel among 50-70 year olds. Available at: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/best-foot-forward-report.pdf>

Local authorities and transport bodies:

- ◆ Engage with local older people in developing their travel and transport plans, for example:
 - Develop links with local older people's forums/advisory groups to establish mechanisms for sharing emerging plans and gaining insights
 - Commission local older people to undertake mapping exercises/travel audits
 - Link with existing community groups to understand the perspectives and requirements of older adults with additional travel needs (e.g. with sensory loss, dementia, etc.)
- ◆ **Implement travel and transport solutions that work for older people:**
 - At key transport hubs and interchanges, ensure that pavements are in good repair, that resting places and seating are available and that information is provided in a range of formats
 - Consider older people's travel requirements when planning routes and stops (for example, providing bus stops with seating at health centres)
 - Invest in initiatives that enable people to progress from walking to cycling over time

Transport providers:

- ◆ Engage with local older people in developing their services, for example:
 - Invite local older people's forums/advisory groups to meet with key staff in their organisations
 - Commission local older people to develop staff training

Local older people's organisations:

- ◆ Gather evidence of the travel needs of people over 50, for example:
 - Undertake community mapping exercises to identify local travel assets and barriers
 - Build links with local travel authorities and providers to encourage dialogue

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About this report

This report presents independent evaluation evidence and insights from Ageing Better partnerships and stakeholders. The report explores the transport-related barriers affecting people over 50 leaving home and travelling in and beyond their communities. The report sets out how Ageing Better partnerships have sought to overcome these barriers through actions to promote inclusive and active travel. The report explores the benefits of these approaches in supporting social connections, physical and mental health, and wellbeing.

Evidence used in this report

This report draws on evidence collected through qualitative research with Ageing Better stakeholders.

It also draws on data about who took part in Ageing Better's travel-related projects, and the difference the projects made. This data, from the Ageing Better Common Measurement Framework database, is reported by participants who completed questionnaires at the start of, and during or after, their involvement. Where we have reported on changes in outcomes for participants (e.g. loneliness) we have not assessed the extent to which these changes were influenced by the projects that people attended, or by other factors in their lives.

More information on the research methods used is provided in the Methods note.



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**Ageing Better by enabling
travel and mobility**

About the Ageing Better programme

Ageing Better is a £87 million, seven-year programme funded by The National Lottery Community Fund. The programme started in 2015 and will run until 2022, and covers 14 areas across England.

The aim of Ageing Better is to improve the lives of people over 50 by addressing social isolation and loneliness, improving social connections and enabling them to be more engaged in the design of services for their communities.

The programme outcomes are that:

- ◆ People over 50 are less isolated and lonely
- ◆ People over 50 are actively involved in their communities, with their views and participation valued more highly
- ◆ People over 50 are more engaged in the design and delivery of services to help reduce their isolation and improve their social connections
- ◆ Services that help to reduce isolation are better planned, co-ordinated and delivered
- ◆ Better evidence is available to influence the services that help reduce isolation for people over 50 in the future

Ageing Better partnerships invested in travel-related projects as a means of reducing or preventing social isolation and loneliness by helping people connect to other activities run by the programme or the wider community⁶. The approaches taken were co-designed with local people in response to barriers that they identified.

⁶ Ageing Better partnerships designed and delivered a wide range of support and activities for the over-50s, including: one-to-one befriending and mental health support, community connecting and social prescribing approaches, and group activities (on such topics as arts and crafts, music, exercise, social media and IT, reading and creative writing, healthy eating, gardening and food growing).



**Transport challenges and
opportunities for change**

Staying mobile by being able to leave home helps people keep their independence into later life, maintain a healthy and active life, and take part in social, cultural and leisure activities. The ability to use transport is one of the Instrumental Activities of Daily Living – an assessment of how independent older people are in everyday life⁷.

However, the evidence from Ageing Better and the wider literature shows that many people over 50 face barriers to travel⁸, including practical and psychological barriers.

Physical/practical barriers to travel

Practical barriers to travel for people over 50 include:

Barriers in the design of transport services

- ◆ **Lack of affordable transport:** Travel costs are particularly high in places where public transport is not accessible or suitable. Limitations on the use of bus passes and the cost of taxis also create barriers to travel⁹.
- ◆ **Community transport limitations:** Multiple pick-ups and congestion can render community transport unreliable for accessing appointments and activities.
- ◆ **Lack of access to information:** Issues include information being provided only online, a lack of in-journey information¹⁰ and at bus stops, and a lack of audible announcements for people with visual impairments¹¹.

⁷ Lawton, M.P. and Brody, E.M., 1969. *Assessment of older people: Self-maintaining and instrumental activities of daily living*. *Gerontologist*, 9, pp. 179–185. https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/article-abstract/9/3_Part_1/179/552574

⁸ Findings of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Loneliness inquiry, A connected recovery, which explores transport barriers and the government's second annual loneliness report. Available at: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/action-on-loneliness/all-party-parliamentary-group-on-loneliness-inquiry/a-connected-recovery> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/loneliness-annual-report-the-second-year>

⁹ Age Friendly Transport Learning report, Ageing Better Middlesbrough, Ageing Better Middlesbrough Transport Learning. Available at: <https://www.ageingbettermiddlesbrough.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Ageing-Better-Middlesbrough-Transport-Learning.pdf>

¹⁰ Ageing Well Torbay Transport Summary <https://ageingwelltorbay.com/about/>

¹¹ Age Friendly Island Transport Learning report. Information on Age Friendly Island is available online: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/isleofwight/our-services/age-friendly-island/>

- ◆ **Lack of appropriate seating at bus stops:** Key issues relate to comfort, availability and designs that allow passengers to see buses approaching^{12,13}
- ◆ **Unsuitable bus routes:** Transport routes can be disjointed and require multiple changes to reach destinations (e.g. connecting to and from town centres, but not across areas)^{14,15}. Long distances between homes and bus stops can make bus travel challenging.

Gaps in support for those with additional needs

Many people over 50 live with long-term health conditions and disabilities (such as visual impairment, osteoarthritis and diabetes). These can create barriers to travel and a need for additional assistance.

- ◆ **Consistent access to facilities:** While some transport providers have improved accessibility (e.g. through accessible on-train toilets, improved station facilities and the provision of both audio and visual information), it is not yet consistent.
- ◆ **A lack of door-to-door assistance:** Assistance to open heavy doors to leave home or to navigate a wheelchair out of the building, onto the pavement and into a vehicle is not always available.
- ◆ **Gaps in driver/staff awareness and training:** Common issues include drivers setting off before passengers are seated, taxi drivers not assisting passengers to open doors and drivers being generally unfriendly or unhelpful^{16,17,18}.

¹² Ageing Better Middlesbrough, Ageing Better Middlesbrough Transport Learning. Available at: <https://www.ageingbettermiddlesbrough.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Ageing-Better-Middlesbrough-Transport-Learning.pdf>

¹³ Manchester Community Central, Are we getting there? Age-friendly transport across Greater Manchester. Available at: <https://manchestercommunitycentral.org/sites/manchestercommunitycentral.co.uk/files/Transport%20Report%20GMOPN.pdf>

¹⁴ Ageing Better Middlesbrough, Ageing Better Middlesbrough Transport Learning. Available at: <https://www.ageingbettermiddlesbrough.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Ageing-Better-Middlesbrough-Transport-Learning.pdf>. Ageing Well Torbay Transport Summary <https://ageingwelltorbay.com/about/>

¹⁵ Ageing Well Torbay Transport Summary <https://ageingwelltorbay.com/about/>

¹⁶ Ageing Better Middlesbrough Transport Learning <https://www.ageingbettermiddlesbrough.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Ageing-Better-Middlesbrough-Transport-Learning.pdf>

¹⁷ Evaluation of Time to Shine: Year 2 Interim Findings, Care Connect at the University of Sheffield. Available at: <https://www.opforum.org.uk/resources/evaluation-of-time-to-shine-year-2-interim-findings/>

¹⁸ Manchester Community Central, Are we getting there? Age-friendly transport across Greater Manchester. Available at: <https://manchestercommunitycentral.org/sites/manchestercommunitycentral.co.uk/files/Transport%20Report%20GMOPN.pdf>

Barriers in the built environment

- ◆ **Poorly maintained or inaccessible walking environments:** Many concerns relate to the impacts of building work, poor-quality/uneven pavements and roads (such as broken paving), parked cars or rubbish bins obstructing pavements, and a lack of dropped kerbs^{19,20}. These are barriers to walking to/accessing other transport.
- ◆ **Lack of benches, public toilets and crossings:** Gaps in infrastructure create barriers for those who need to take breaks while walking²¹. Some pedestrian crossings allow insufficient time for people who walk more slowly to cross roads.

Barriers in rural and urban areas

People may experience different challenges accessing transport in urban and rural areas.

Barriers in rural areas include:

- ◆ **Car dependency:** People over 50 living in rural areas tend to rely on cars more²²
- ◆ **Lack of public transport:** Provision in rural areas can be unreliable and infrequent²³

Barriers in urban areas include:

- ◆ **Congestion:** Buses and community transport can be affected by delays caused by congestion, making them unreliable for appointments, etc.

¹⁹ Transport for London, 2016. Older Londoners' perceptions of London streets and the public realm, p. 5. Available at: <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/older-people-walking-report.pdf>

²⁰ Pavements For People <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/isleofwight/our-services/information-and-advice2/pavements-for-people/>

²¹ Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors (IDGO), 2012. Seating Design Guide 001. Available at: http://www.idgo.ac.uk/design_guidance/pdf/DSOPM-Seating-120820.pdf
Ageing Better in Camden and KOVE. Available at: <http://www.ageingbetterincamden.org.uk/latestnews/2018/11/27/what-we-are-learning-fighting-for-benches;>
Manchester Community Central, Are we getting there? Age-friendly transport across Greater Manchester. Available at: <https://manchestercommunitycentral.org/sites/manchestercommunitycentral.co.uk/files/Transport%20Report%20GMOPN.pdf>

²² DfT, Future of Transport: Rural strategy – Call for evidence (updated 2 December 2020). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-transport-rural-strategy-call-for-evidence/future-of-transport-rural-strategy-call-for-evidence>.

²³ Rural Services Network, 2011.

Psychological barriers

Some people over 50 face psychological barriers to getting out and about and using transport, such as a lack of confidence or motivation to travel. Some older people are fearful of travelling due to previous negative experiences²⁴, including crime, antisocial behaviour²⁵ or being made to feel they are a nuisance²⁶.

While practical actions can be taken to address crime and antisocial behaviour and negative attitudes towards older passengers, many people will also need emotional support to rebuild their confidence to travel.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Travel-related barriers have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Long periods of isolation due to lockdown and (for some) additional shielding, and the suspension of services and activities, have led to people becoming isolated from their support network. The pandemic led to a rise in people experiencing high anxiety²⁷ and feeling fearful of leaving home²⁸. In addition, many over-50s have experienced increased frailty and reduced mobility. An Age UK survey found that two in three (64%) respondents over 50 felt less confident taking public transport, while two in five (43%) felt less confident going to the shops²⁹.

²⁴ WIT Press, 2017. The challenges of using a bus as an older person. Available at: <https://www.witpress.com/Secure/elibrary/papers/UT17/UT17046FU1.pdf>

²⁵ Intelligent transport website. Available at: <https://www.intelligenttransport.com/transport-news/23217/operation-blitz-busway/>

²⁶ Evaluation of Time to Shine: Year 2 Interim Findings, Care Connect at the University of Sheffield. Available at: <https://www.opforum.org.uk/resources/evaluation-of-time-to-shine-year-2-interim-findings/>

²⁷ ONS reported that the number of people experiencing high levels of anxiety sharply increased during the pandemic. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/coronavirusandanxietygreatbritain/3april2020to10may2020>

²⁸ Knolle, F. et al., 2021. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health in the general population: A comparison between Germany and the UK. BMC Psychology, 9:60. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-021-00565-y>

²⁹ Age UK, 2020. The impact of COVID-19 to date on older people's mental and physical health. The survey was completed by 569 people: 369 respondents were older people themselves and 200 answered on behalf of an older person. Available at: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-press/articles/2020/10/age-uk--research-into-the-effects-of-the-pandemic-on-the-older-populations-health/> and https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/health--wellbeing/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-older-people_age-uk.pdf

Opportunities for change

The ageing population requires a rethink of current transport strategies. Older people today travel more frequently and have a more active retirement than previous generations³⁰. National and local government and the private and public sectors share responsibility for transport, which means that it can be difficult to implement nationwide improvements to services. Yet access to transport, or the lack of it, can have a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of older people.

Mobility in older age has been associated with a wide range of positive outcomes, including an improvement in quality of life, physical health and wellbeing, as well as reduced feelings of isolation and loneliness³¹.

The experience of Ageing Better partnerships shows that steps can be taken to improve access to transport for people over 50 and to encourage active travel.

The evidence from Ageing Better is relevant to government agendas for inclusive travel³², active travel³³ and the COVID-19 recovery.

³⁰ Musselwhite, C. and Chatterjee, K., 2019. Changing demographics. In: Docherty, I., and Shaw, J. (eds), *The Inside Track: Why Transport Matters and How We Can Make It Better*. Available at: <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/4884134/changing-demographics>

³¹ Ormerod, M., Newton, R., Phillips, J., Musselwhite, C., McGee, S. and Russell, R., 2015. How Can Transport Provision and Associated Built Environment Infrastructure Be Enhanced and Developed to Support the Mobility Needs of Individuals as They Age? Retrieved from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/443508/gs-15-7-future-ageing-transport-er23.pdf;

Coronini-Cronberg, S. et al., 2012. The Impact of a Free Older Person's Bus Pass on Active Travel and Regular Walking in England. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102 (11);


Spinney, J. et al., 2009. Transport Mobility Benefits and Quality of Life: A time-use perspective of elderly Canadians. *Transport Policy*, 16 (1) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0967070X0900002X>

Green, J. et al., 2014. More than A to B: The role of free bus travel for the mobility and wellbeing of older citizens in London. *Ageing and Society*, 34 (3) <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ageing-and-society/article/more-than-a-to-b-the-role-of-free-bus-travel-for-the-mobility-and-wellbeing-of-older-citizens-in-london/C680A7256B40D65683A1AD466388A5EA>

³² The DfT Inclusive Transport Strategy recognises the importance of the entire journey from door to door. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-transport-strategy/the-inclusive-transport-strategy-achieving-equal-access-for-disabled-people>

³³ DfT Active Travel initiatives. Encouraging active travel is increasingly recognised as a way to build physical activity levels and improve social connections. DfT announced additional investments in active travel in November 2020, including £175 million for cycling and walking infrastructure across England. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-billion-package-to-create-new-era-for-cycling-and-walking> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/175-million-more-for-cycling-and-walking-as-research-shows-public-support>

- ◆ Making travel inclusive for people over 50 requires action to address both practical and psychological barriers. While lack of public transport, cost and gaps in timetables and routes are an issue for some people over 50, other barriers can also be addressed through simple, often low-cost, initiatives. Approaches that enable people to leave home safely and confidently include ensuring that pavements are well maintained and lit, that bus stops offer reliable information and somewhere to sit, and that bus drivers are aware of mobility issues.
- ◆ Developing active travel approaches for the over-50s, particularly improving walking infrastructure and promoting the physical and mental health benefits of gentle exercise, can engage older people effectively. Walking and cycling supports the over-50s to build social connections and improve their health and wellbeing.
- ◆ Enabling people over 50 (especially those who have become more isolated during the COVID-19 crisis) to get out and about and travel in their local communities will be a vital part of recovery from the pandemic.



**Who took part: The reach of
Ageing Better's travel-related
activities**

This report draws on a typology of loneliness interventions that was developed by the Ageing Better programme and used to categorise projects undertaken by local partnerships³⁴.

Just under a fifth (17%) of Ageing Better projects were defined as travel-related projects³⁵, and a quarter (25%) of Ageing Better participants took part in at least one of these projects (Methods note, Table 1). These projects provided vital wrap-around support to Ageing Better participants, enabling them to make connections by providing accessible transport to activities provided by the programme or wider community. Participants said this allowed them to meet new people and take part in new activities. In total, 6% of travel-related project participants volunteered in the projects they took part in.



³⁴ Gibson, S., Hotham, S. and Wigfield, A., 2020. *Categorisations of Ageing Better Programme interventions designed to reduce loneliness and/or social isolation*. A report for the National Lottery Community Fund (unpublished).

³⁵ The data focuses on participants receiving support to travel by community and public transport and promote independent travel. It is likely that participants of other projects also benefited from transport support. For instance, we know from qualitative data that transport often formed a key part of social prescribing/community connector support models, yet not all of these projects were identified as transport projects.

Travel-related project participants at a glance

- ◆ Two-thirds of participants (68%) were women, one-third of participants (32%) were men
- ◆ 59% of participants were aged over 70
- ◆ 75% of participants identified as White, 16% as Asian, 5% as Black, 1% as Mixed ethnicity and 2% as another ethnicity³⁶
- ◆ 2% of participants were LGBTQ+
- ◆ 56% of participants were living alone
- ◆ Two-thirds of participants (64%) had a longstanding illness or disability
- ◆ 18% of participants were carers
- ◆ Half the participants (51%) were lonely
- ◆ A quarter of participants (25%) had low wellbeing

³⁶ Rounding means that not all percentages sum to 100%.



Involving people over 50

By involving over-50s in identifying, designing, testing and developing travel solutions, Ageing Better has driven **systems change** in local transport decision making and planning. This has improved transport services and made communities more inclusive by enabling more people over 50 to get out and about and remain connected.

Ageing Better's transport projects combined the skills, resources and insights of local people to develop services to meet the needs of their communities, by enabling people over 50 to:

- ◆ Conduct research and community asset mapping of their local environment and amenities to enable more people to make local journeys
- ◆ Reflect on current transport provision and identify gaps and areas for improvement
- ◆ Get involved in decision-making processes, for example, through planning meetings with local transport policymakers and providers



It's the satisfaction of getting your voice heard and hopefully getting some change, positive change."

(Volunteer)

Mapping and auditing local amenities

Several Ageing Better partnerships involved people over 50 in local asset mapping, both to create resources to facilitate access to existing travel infrastructure and to gather evidence to influence inclusive and active travel options in local communities. We found that people over 50 are well placed to identify gaps and areas for improvement in their existing local travel infrastructure. For example, in Birmingham, older people audited their local area as part of the Tyburn Walking Maps project to provide information on safe and accessible walking routes for the over-50s. The Walking Maps are available online³⁷, and more information is provided in the case study on page 46.

³⁷ Neighbourhood Network Schemes, Ageing Better in Birmingham website <https://www.ageingbetterinbirmingham.co.uk/neighbourhood-network-schemes>;
Birmingham Neighbourhood Network Schemes <https://brumnns.wordpress.com/>

Ageing Better in Camden: Supporting people over 50 to influence transport infrastructure

In Camden, the local environment presented challenges for some older residents. Ageing Better in Camden worked with a local delivery partner, Kilburn Older Voices Exchange (KOVE), to identify issues with local transport infrastructure and to make the case for change. KOVE's research among people over 50 highlighted the need for an improved street environment, including more public toilets, improved pedestrian crossings and more benches³⁸. The evidence they gathered has been used to campaign for change.

In one project, KOVE invited people over 50 to research and produce films illustrating their experiences crossing Kilburn High Road³⁹. KOVE used these films to make the case for increasing the crossing-time at a pedestrian crossing.

KOVE has also been effective in re-establishing suitable seating at bus stops and in securing four new benches for Kilburn High Road. Ageing Better enabled KOVE to support volunteers to develop the case and influence the local authority to instal the benches.



Before Ageing Better we had installed a few benches, but since Ageing Better it's given us a more valid way of approaching this in terms of applying for funding. It's given us a way of campaigning on the Community Investment Levy⁴⁰ and we have been successful."

(Partnership management team)

³⁸ Ageing Better in Camden and KOVE. See: <http://www.ageingbetterincamden.org.uk/latestnews/2018/11/27/what-we-are-learning-fighting-for-benches>

³⁹ KOVE films illustrating the difficulties of road crossings. Available at: <https://koveweb.wordpress.com/road-crossings/>

⁴⁰ The Community Investment Levy is a fund the local authority collects from local businesses and property developers. The fund is allocated to provide community assets.

Creating resources for transport providers

Another effective approach was to produce resources that helped providers understand the needs and wishes of people over 50. For example, in Bolton, Greater Manchester, a group of people co-produced an age-friendly bus guide, informed by research within the local community, which is now being used by First Bus⁴¹ and is being rolled out across Greater Manchester⁴².

Influencing strategy

Ageing Better partnerships also achieved results by establishing strategic relationships with local transport decision makers and influencers to support understanding of, and action on, issues affecting people over 50.

Partnerships often linked commissioners and providers to local older people's forums and consultation groups. Local travel planners and providers found Ageing Better's work was helpful in enabling people over 50 to contribute to policy and investment decisions on travel-related infrastructure. These relationships led to change. For example, the Greater Manchester Older People's Network (OPN) worked closely with the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub, which is part of the combined authority, and this gave the OPN an opportunity to contribute to strategies such as the Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan⁴³. The OPN also worked to raise Transport for Greater Manchester's⁴⁴ awareness about the need for longer crossing-times at pedestrian crossings.

⁴¹ First Bus operates 150 bus services across Greater Manchester. See: <https://www.firstbus.co.uk/greater-manchester>

⁴² Age Friendly Bus Guide – Next Steps <https://www.ambitionforageing.org.uk/age-friendly-bus-guide-next-steps>

⁴³ Clean Air Greater Manchester. See: <https://cleanairgm.com/clean-air-plans/>

⁴⁴ Transport for Greater Manchester coordinates regional public transport services. It works to improve services, owns Metrolink, pays for buses in areas without commercial services and helps provide concessionary fares. See: <https://tfgm.com/>



This group of older people had somebody come along from Transport for Greater Manchester, and they showed them crossing the road as an older person. They showed them that [the traffic light] went red again halfway across the road. They ended up getting that crossing changed – that was an example of actually having a real impact transport-wise.”

(Project lead)

The role of older champions

People over 50 ‘championing’ a travel issue within a local network can drive strategic conversations into action. For example, Bristol Ageing Better nominated one of its participants – a well-connected older person – to lead on transport issues across its older people’s groups to facilitate action and provide direction. The group produced a paper on transport problems in the city. The lead participant helped to ensure older people’s views were heard in meetings with the council, raising awareness of issues such as the need to improve the availability of public toilets and benches.

Age friendly cities as a vehicle for change

Ageing Better partnerships contribute to local transport decision making through Age Friendly Networks (AFNs)⁴⁵. AFNs have been set up in several communities as part of the World Health Organization initiative to create age-friendly cities and communities that are great places to grow old in⁴⁶. AFNs provide a vehicle for people to have their voices heard in local decision making.

⁴⁵ The Ageing Better national evaluation team is currently researching age-friendly actions for a forthcoming research report.

⁴⁶ See: <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/who-network/>

Challenges in influencing strategy

While Ageing Better partnerships were, in many cases, able to influence local transport planning and strategies, there were some challenges.

- ◆ **The complexity of the operating environment:** In Greater Manchester, work to influence crossing-times at pedestrian crossings was challenging because changing one light affected traffic light sequencing across the entire area.
- ◆ **Challenges in influencing across local authority borders:** In Camden, it was hard to influence crossing-times at a pedestrian crossing that straddled two London boroughs.
- ◆ **Lack of alignment with providers:** In Middlesbrough, work with the local authority to produce journey assistance cards to raise drivers' awareness of challenges faced by some older passengers⁴⁷ faced resistance from providers because they already had their own, similar schemes in place.

Involving people over 50 strengthens communities

Taking an asset-based approach and involving people over 50 in service design is at the heart of the Ageing Better programme. Our evidence shows that these approaches are effective in relation to travel too, because they:

- ◆ Enable people to have their voices heard through local decision-making structures that lead to tangible initiatives and local change
- ◆ Recognise, use and develop people's skills, providing fulfilment by engaging people in volunteering roles, ranging from volunteer drivers to local area auditors and researchers
- ◆ Build confidence and connections around a shared purpose and collective goal through co-producing activities, meaning local people can inform wider community change⁴⁸ and improve the local infrastructure

⁴⁷ Examples of the journey assistance cards are available online. Ageing Better Middlesbrough, Transport Guide 2021, pp. 11–15. Available at: <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Ageing-Better-transport-guide-Oct21.pdf>

⁴⁸ Ecorys & The National Lottery Community Fund, Learning Paper No.5 Micro-funding: Empowering Communities to Create Grassroots Change. Summary report. Available at: https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing_better_learning_report_5.pdf?mtime=20200313112209&focal=none

“

People feel there's some role models here, there's people that make them think, "Well, if they can do it, I can give it a go."

(Volunteer)

We found that being involved in local decision making to improve the local travel infrastructure gives people a sense of direction and purpose. Over time, Ageing Better has highlighted the importance of empowering people over 50 to use their skills and regain a sense of purpose, with knock-on benefits for the wider community⁴⁹. As a volunteer involved in designing journey assistance cards explains:

“

When I first started, I knew nothing at all. There was the people there from the beginning. I relied on their knowledge, their experience, and their know-how. I just followed, listened, took note of what was going on, and then started to get really involved and go all the way through the levels. I'm now chair of the group itself; I would have never thought I'd be able to do that. It's made a big difference to me, and I've made a big difference to other people as well."

(Volunteer)

⁴⁹ Ecorys and The National Lottery Community Fund, Learning Paper No.5 Micro-funding: Empowering Communities to Create Grassroots Change. Summary report. Available at: https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing_better_learning_report_5.pdf?mtime=20200313112209&focal=none

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Improving access to inclusive travel

The work of Ageing Better partnerships helped to address both practical and psychological barriers to travel, enabling more people to access travel options that worked for them. Approaches ranged from offering door-to-door support for people with mobility issues, to improving training of bus drivers and other transport staff.

Making inclusive travel a reality requires action at various levels. At a system level, effective partnerships led to improvements in local travel infrastructure, and helped people over 50 feel confident in getting out and about. Work with transport providers improved services and customer experience. At an individual level, support packages helped over-50s to travel locally, improving their wellbeing.

Building partnerships for inclusive travel

Working with transport authorities

Ageing Better partnerships teamed up with local authorities (as discussed in Section 5) to inform and improve the accessibility and inclusivity of local transport systems through the provision of improved seating and bus shelters. For example, following a meeting with older volunteers from Ageing Better Camden, Transport for London installed a new bus shelter with seats suitable for older passengers near a community centre and GP surgery.



They improved dramatically the bus stop itself. They have since established a bus stop there with a shelter and a seat.”

(Volunteer)

Working with transport providers

Ageing Better partnerships also worked directly with transport providers to identify ways of making their provision more inclusive. This led to changes that made a difference. For example, a meeting at the local bus depot between Ageing Better staff and volunteers with Transport for London managers and

bus drivers helped improve understanding of challenges, such as why drivers are sometimes unable to pull up to the kerb, and how this impacts older passengers, who may be using shopping trolleys, walking aids, etc.

“

When [the bus drivers] meet some of our members, they could be their grandma, mother, or grandfather. It was really raising awareness from local people.”

(Volunteer)

Training for transport providers

Several Ageing Better partnerships created training packages for public transport providers to increase their drivers' understanding of customers' needs. Several used the framing of 'age friendly' public transport to support this work.



Isle of Wight: Age-friendly training for transport providers

On the Isle of Wight, older residents revealed in public consultation events some of the challenges they face when using public transport services, such as buses moving off before they are seated. The Age Friendly Island (AFI) project works to create an environment where the community helps people over 50 live safely, enjoy good health and stay locally involved. As part of this work, the partnership developed age-friendly training for transport providers. People over 50 played an integral role in developing this training, which included role play to help transport providers understand their older passengers' needs.



There was a little role play in the training, so it gave providers real, hands-on experience of trying to get onto a bus with a shopping trolley, walking stick, maybe hearing defenders. They looked at communication skills, and then re-enacted the role play with all the things they'd learned. That went down really well."

(Partnership management team)

As part of age-friendly training, drivers wore an 'age suit', which simulated the experience of age-related mobility difficulties. The age-friendly training is now a compulsory element of the Certificate of Professional Competency training that all Southern Vectis bus drivers must complete and refresh every five years. Before the age-friendly component was added, the training had been limited to physical access issues, such as accommodating wheelchair users. The age-friendly training has supported drivers to develop a more holistic view of older passengers' public transport experiences. The AFI team is also having ongoing conversations with the local authority about providing age-friendly training for taxi drivers on the island. Age suits are now being piloted in other Ageing Better areas, following their success on the Isle of Wight.

Improving access to community transport

The travel needs of some individuals and communities were not met by public transport. Ageing Better partnerships addressed some gaps in transport provision for people with additional needs by improving access to **community transport**. We found that community transport represents the only viable means of transport for some vulnerable and isolated people, and it is vital to enable people to avoid loneliness and social isolation.

The experience of Ageing Better partnerships shows how community transport can be developed to maximise its impact on social connection and wellbeing for people over 50. Providing **help from their doorstep** to a car or minibus is a vital component for enabling some people over 50 to make the most of community transport. In Hackney, the partnership recognised that ensuring that there was assistance from people's doorstep could support inclusion in one of their projects. In this project, the journey itself became an activity, with people getting to know each other by travelling together and developing friendships along the way.



As well as a driver, you had someone that could assist someone to and from their front door. We were hoping to build social capital. Having conversations on the journey, that's a big part of that, seeing the actual vehicle as a social space."

(Partnership management team)

Volunteer drivers were invaluable to many community transport projects, providing both a reliable service and companionship for local residents, including the OurBus scheme in Torbay (see box overleaf).

Although some approaches were put on hold during the pandemic, many are now resuming and have the potential to offer longer-term transport solutions, which can support social connection.

Investing in community transport to support access

We found that projects sometimes needed to **invest in community transport** to reach the most socially isolated. In Torbay, the local partnership decided to take on provision of local transport routes when the main bus company withdrew (see box overleaf).

Ageing Well Torbay: Our Bus

In Torbay, local bus providers had been unable to provide a cost-effective service in some areas of the community, owing to limited passenger numbers, and this had led to services being withdrawn.

This was a problem for some older residents, particular in hilly areas. In response, Ageing Well in Torbay developed a successful community transport model called OurBus to reach older residents. The programme invested in a small fleet of branded minibuses and used volunteer drivers. This was critical to the partnership's ability to offer a viable service, with relatively low operating costs.

OurBus offered people over 50 an affordable subscription service, with residents paying £3.50 or £6.50 a week (depending on where they live). The subscription covered essential running costs for the service (insurance, vehicle maintenance, etc.) and helped maintain its sustainability.

Passengers also built up connections on the bus, and over time, some people arranged to travel on services together. In this way, the journey became an important point of social connection.

The service was also beneficial for volunteers (who were all over 50), as they enjoyed delivering the scheme and experienced positive impacts from giving back to their community. During the pandemic, when the service was suspended, volunteers were redirected to assist foodbanks. This allowed them to stay active and engaged.



All the people I've met seem to really enjoy it. They're giving back to their communities, and they know the need because they live in these places, they're not separate from them. It's part of their world."

(Partnership management team)

The experience from Torbay demonstrates that minibuses are often the most suitable vehicles for community transport.

The Torbay partnership initially invested in a full-sized bus, but found that the costs of this approach were prohibitive. Contributing factors included the cost of vehicle maintenance, low passenger volumes, driver costs and a lack of trained drivers (as drivers need a Category D licence to drive a full-sized bus, with 35+ seating capacity).

Minibuses were better suited to customer volumes, enabling the partnership to provide a timely service on several routes. Minibuses were also better suited to the hilly residential streets.

Overcoming psychological barriers to travel

Befriending and buddying schemes can help people leave their home and/or travel further afield. Journeys can also be opportunities for social interaction. Ageing Better has tested a range of travel buddying approaches, including:

- ◆ Providing one-to-one support to build confidence and address psychological barriers to travel, as well as practical challenges
- ◆ Supporting peers and groups to bond, promoting a desire to travel together
- ◆ Community connectors⁵⁰ empowering people over 50 to travel, as part of a wider support package

⁵⁰ **Community connectors** are any mechanisms that work to identify isolated people over 50 and help them transition from isolated to less isolated through person-centred, structured support. This includes community navigators, social prescribing and approaches that help people overcome a specific barrier (mental health issues, for example). This definition has been developed by Ageing Better partnerships and Hall Aitken, the Support and Development Contractor for the Ageing Better programme. The Method note accompanying this report contains a glossary of other relevant terms.

One-to-one buddying support

Age Better in Sheffield: Travel buddies empowering people over 50 to boost their social connections and wellbeing

In Sheffield, some older people lacked the confidence to leave home alone. This was for a range of reasons, from practical challenges around mobility to fears rooted in previous experiences of antisocial behaviour. Access Ambassadors matched travel buddies with local people over 50 who found it challenging to leave home. A paid volunteer coordinator organised the matching process, which considered people's interests and locality.

Of the 248 people taking part in the Access Ambassadors project that completed surveys before and after participating, 69% were women and 31% were men. Some 54% of participants lived alone, and 54% had a longstanding illness.

Each Access Ambassador tailored their support to the needs of the participant, and together they discussed travel barriers and goals to work towards. The support often began in the participant's home and gradually transitioned to meeting in the community. Where possible, ambassadors were matched to people nearby so they shared familiarity with the area.

Gradually, participants would feel confident enough to make short journeys on their own, or to travel further afield with their buddy, combining different forms of transport.



The first time I met her was just to walk from one end of the street to the other. It was about just walking out of her house. And then it led slowly but surely to going on buses and trams. I became more and more aware that the more we went out, the more she bumped into people she knew.”

(Access Ambassador volunteer)

Over time, participants felt more connected to their communities and confident to travel independently, and in some cases formed enduring friendships with their ambassador, too.

“

It brought me out of my shell, it made me want to go out and experience other people's company. I had a car crash some years ago now, and it's affected my mental health as well. This built me up, made me see I'd got something to live for.”

(Participant)

Building connections provides motivation to travel and increases confidence to use public transport

Enabling people to come together and build connections as a group can help them to feel more confident and motivated to get out and about. Several partnerships set up projects in which people could bond as a group before thinking about going out together. For example, in Hackney, a project delivered by Groundwork included learning about using digital skills to make transport and travel plans. The group connected over the six weeks of the course and, at the end, used their new digital skills to book a group activity together.

Building confidence to travel

Ageing Better partnerships took a range of approaches to help build people's motivation and confidence to travel.

Offering support in making journeys

Several partnerships supported participants to travel, for example by accompanying them on journeys until their confidence grew. For example, Hackney's Latin American Women's Aid project accompanied members to the same location several times to enable participants (who often did not speak English) to remember routes, and to build their confidence to travel further afield.

“

They found that [by taking] a group of people to a location a couple of times, people would just memorise how to do it, and then they would go independently. They went to the South Bank and then to places they've never been before. It was about making someone confident in those first steps.”

(Partnership management team)

“

When they've built up these social connections, it's actually meant that these women are more willing to go further afield.”

(Partnership management team)

Community connectors supporting travel

Community connectors play an important role in empowering people over 50 to feel confident making local journeys and using public transport. This has been increasingly important for people thinking about getting out and about after periods of isolation during the pandemic. For example, in Camden, Ageing Better's community connectors work with individuals to develop a 'connection plan' to identify their overall goals, concerns and actions to improve their connection. Concerns about transport and getting out and about are often a key barrier to getting involved. For some people, being supported to make a journey to an activity – for example, by travelling with the connector on the first visit – can be enough to encourage participation. The support of community connectors has been particularly effective in rebuilding passenger confidence to use public transport, when safe to do so, during the pandemic.



“

Our unique selling point, differently to a lot of social prescribing services, is that we actually accompany people to activities. It's been one of the ways that we've succeeded. There is something huge around having somebody with you going somewhere. There's a huge barrier about walking into a place that you don't know yourself, without knowing anyone in there.”

(Project lead)

“

We go on the bus and get off, then we go into the town centre with them. If they feel confident, we leave them there; you know, if they said they would get back on their own.”

(Project lead)

Addressing fears linked to COVID-19

A range of Ageing Better projects worked to support people over 50 to rebuild their confidence in local travel options as pandemic restrictions eased. One initiative produced cards for older people to carry and communicate their need for assistance. Other partnerships produced videos with information about what COVID-19 precautions were being taken to help older people feel more confident. For example, on the Isle of Wight, a secondment from the AFI team to the local authority's COVID-19 recovery cell produced some practical tools to help local people over 50 rebuild their confidence to get out of the house.



[They] have produced a set of “Out and About” cards. They originally came about from an older person who spoke about how scared they were going out. [One card] is about social distancing, another is about people who may find it difficult to communicate with someone wearing a face mask because they can't lip-read them.' (Partnership management team)."⁵¹

(Partnership management team)

⁵¹ Ageing Better is partly addressing transport challenges by offering more blended delivery options, which reduce the need for travel by providing online and telephone activities and support, reaching some of the most isolated and lonely. See: Ecorys, 2020, COVID-19 – Rapid report #4 – Learning from our COVID-19 response to enhance future delivery. Available at: <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-learning-from-covid.docx?mtime=20210518114510&focal=none>.

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Encouraging and enabling active travel

Evidence from the Ageing Better programme demonstrates that walking and cycling supports the over-50s to build social connections and improve their health and wellbeing (see case study below). Across the Ageing Better programme, we found more projects focused on walking than on cycling⁵².

Research from the Centre for Ageing Better found that people over 50 are motivated to walk or cycle for enjoyment and because they are keen to engage with the natural environment. The research also found that over-50s perceive the dangers of being in traffic as a barrier to cycling more than to walking (although traffic was a concern for walkers in rural areas with no pavements and in some urban areas that feel unsafe). Well-maintained dedicated footpaths and cycle paths are a key factor in encouraging active travel⁵³.

Encouraging active travel

Better information to support active travel

Several Ageing Better partnerships developed guides to help people over 50 identify ways to get involved in active travel. These were effective both in encouraging people to get involved and providing evidence to influence change for the future. For example, in Sheffield, the Access Ambassadors project (see box on page 39) led to the creation of the Better Journeys project, which provides travel information on, among other things, safe walking and cycling routes⁵⁴. The project identified a range of barriers to cycling, including hills, a lack of cycle paths and inconsiderate drivers⁵⁵.

⁵² This aligns with findings from the Centre for Ageing Better's research on active travel, which found participants preferred walking over cycling. Their research found this was associated with perceptions that cycling requires a greater level of physical fitness and there are more barriers to cycling than walking. However, they found some people who find walking difficult due to long-term conditions or disabilities can find cycling to be more accessible than walking. Centre for Ageing Better, October 2021. Best foot forward: Exploring the barriers and enablers to active travel among 50-70 year olds. Available at: <https://ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/best-foot-forward-report.pdf>

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Age Better in Sheffield. Better Journeys. See Age Better in Sheffield website: <https://www.agebettersheff.co.uk/what-we-do/projects/project/>

⁵⁵ Age Better in Sheffield. Two wheels good: In support of cycling. See Age Better in Sheffield website: <https://agefriendlysheffield.org.uk/news-and-blogs/two-wheels-good-in-support-of-cycling/>

Walking projects boosting social connections and wellbeing

In Tyburn, major roads – including the M6, dual carriageways and the Birmingham City ring road – cut through communities. Many people are unable to cross dual carriageways safely within the time allowed at pedestrian crossings. Ageing Better in Birmingham's Local Action Plan commissioned the Tyburn Walking Maps project to address barriers to walking safely around the local area. The project supported people to connect with their local area and raised awareness of walking routes that are safe and accessible for older people.

Community events were held at the outset to engage local people over 50 in making decisions about project development and design. High-quality maps were designed and tested with older people to make sure local needs were met.



When the maps were being designed, they looked at the pathways, lighting and benches so was there somewhere for people to sit. They looked at the whole environment, the road crossings, how long it would take to get across, if the pelican crossings give you enough time. They looked at the dropped kerbs. From that they decided what the best and most appropriate, safest route for people to use would be.”

(Project worker)

Walking engaged people living with physical and mental health challenges and people who had been inactive. It helped people to manage their conditions and boosted confidence and wellbeing. For some people, it represented a start before progressing to more strenuous exercise. The Walking Maps group met for an hour before the Bereavement group, and walking helped many people to process difficult emotions and connect with others. In this way, walking offered people a way to reconnect with their communities, gradually increased their sense of confidence and wellbeing and helped them move on with their lives.



It was recommended by my counsellor, because I'm off with depression. She recommended I go to the Bereavement group, and from the Bereavement group I heard about the walking. It's fab, because when you're walking it gives you time to think; it's good for your wellbeing."

(Participant)

The Walking Maps are available to all, and are now also being used by established walking groups. Details of walking groups are available on the Neighbourhood Network Schemes website, raising awareness for others⁵⁶.

In Bristol, people over 50 mapped the local walking environment, including the location of public toilets and benches in the city. The Let's Walk Bedminster project aims to make the neighbourhood 'walkable'⁵⁷. A walkability audit involved people over 50 in the village of Westbury-on-Trym⁵⁸. The maps were subsequently printed so people who were digitally excluded could use them, and they were made available locally.

The mapping exercise also provided evidence for conversations with local businesses and with the local authority about improving the local walking environment.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Let's Walk Bedminster developed the Walk this Way initiative to encourage people to get outside and walk. The project reported more people over 50 walking during the pandemic⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ Neighbourhood Network Schemes, Ageing Better in Birmingham website <https://www.ageingbetterinbirmingham.co.uk/neighbourhood-network-schemes>;
Birmingham Neighbourhood Network Schemes <https://brumnns.wordpress.com/>

⁵⁷ Progress report on the Bedminster Friendly Shops Project and Let's Walk Bedminster (January to May 2019) <https://bristolwalkingalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Interim-Progress-Report-Bedminster-Friendly-Shops-Project.pdf>

⁵⁸ Walkability audit of Westbury-on-Trym village <https://bristolwalkingalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Walkability-audit-of-Westbury-on-Trym-v3-clean.pdf>

⁵⁹ See Walk this Way report. However, the mapping project has faced challenges since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as maps became outdated when the pandemic forced the closure of some facilities. The future of these facilities (and therefore the accuracy of the maps) remains in doubt

Inputting to local strategies

The strategic relationships developed by Ageing Better partnerships (explored in Section 5) enabled them to provide inputs for local active travel plans, such as those developed as part of the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods initiative⁶⁰, which is partly designed to encourage walking and cycling.



Enabling more people over 50 to walk

The condition of the built environment – and access to clean, well-maintained public toilets and places to rest – affects people’s choices about whether to go on local journeys.

- ◆ **Clear walkways:** For example, in Bristol, mapping work led to work with local businesses to clear obstructions.

⁶⁰ A low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) is a scheme to greatly reduce motor vehicle traffic on residential streets. The initiative includes cycle lanes, wider pavements and planters on roads to reduce local traffic volume. The initiative is designed to make streets safer and more appealing for walking and cycling. See: <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/get-active/2020/in-your-community/what-is-a-low-traffic-neighbourhood>

“

They started going to shops and businesses, and saying, “Can you put your bins in?”, “Can you move your sign over because wheelchairs need to get through here?”.”

(Partnership management team)

- ◆ **Places to stop and rest:** For example, in Middlesbrough, the local partnership launched the Have a Seat campaign to encourage local businesses to allow people into their store to sit and rest with no obligation to purchase anything. Some businesses also let people use their toilet. This approach helped to encourage people over 50 to travel to the town centre.
- ◆ **Walking initiatives:** Various Ageing Better partnerships developed projects to encourage participants to walk more locally, to help them maintain a healthy lifestyle during the pandemic⁶¹. For example, Ageing Better Sheffield’s Walk and Talk project offers companionship by matching people to chat to on their mobiles about what they see on their individual walks.



⁶¹ Further information is available online.

See: Ageing Better: Local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic – promoting healthy lifestyle to build resilience. Available at: <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/ageing-better/Ageing-Better-Healthy-lifestyles.pdf?mtime=20201012125446&focal=none>

Encouraging cycling

While fewer Ageing Better partnerships ran cycling projects, some identified effective ways of encouraging older people to cycle, for example a Cycle Buddies scheme in Bristol that paired newer cyclists with more confident cyclists, and a scheme in Camden where volunteers were involved in a bike repair project to encourage people to go cycling.

In some schemes, people were encouraged to start with more gentle exercise, such as walking, before progressing to cycling. For example, in Birmingham, some participants in the Walking Maps project began to express an interest in cycling, and were supported to set up a non-constituted voluntary community group to take this forward. The group was helped to access the Ageing Better Fund⁶² to cover some of the set-up and running costs of community activities, including cycling.



People were going along saying “Wouldn’t it be nice to ride a bike?”, and then someone else would echo it down the back of the group, and from that it sort of developed to “Well, why can’t we?””

(Project worker)

⁶² The Ageing Better Fund in Birmingham provides up to £2,000 to support the set-up and running costs of non-constituted voluntary community groups that involve people over-50s in decision making and local action. Available at: <https://www.ageingbetterinbirmingham.co.uk/make-a-difference-in-your-neighbourhood/ageing-better-fund>



**Benefits of participating in
travel-related projects**

Travel-related initiatives can play a vital role in supporting people over 50 to engage with their communities, not only by ensuring that they have access to suitable transport options to attend groups and activities and to see friends and family, but also by creating opportunities for social interaction and community engagement.

Our outcomes data shows that Ageing Better participants involved in travel-related projects saw improvements in their levels of social contact, health, wellbeing and loneliness during the period of their involvement. However, it is important to note that we cannot say with certainty how much of this outcome was the impact of this programme as other factors may also have had an effect⁶³.

When participants joined the programme...	At their latest follow up...
71% said they saw family or friends at least once a week	77% said they saw family or friends at least once a week
65% said they spoke with someone locally at least three times a week	70% said they spoke with someone locally at least three times a week
Participants reported an average (median) health score of 62 out of 100	Participants reported an average (median) health score of 70 out of 100
24% reported having low wellbeing	16% reported having low wellbeing
51% reported being lonely	44% reported being lonely

⁶³ The Methods note provides further information on the methodology. We report anything as a change where it is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, with anything below this threshold not being reported as a change. For outcomes data see Methods note: Social contact Table A6, Health Table A7, Wellbeing Table A8, Loneliness Table A9.

Our Impact Evaluation Report⁶⁴ analysed the impact of participation in Ageing Better by comparing key outcome data for participants and non-participants. We found no clear links between types of activity and more positive changes. Instead, we found that the breadth of activities offered, responsiveness to local needs and opportunities for people over 50 to get involved seemed to be most important. Therefore, travel-related projects should be just one of a wider range of options for over-50s to get involved. More detailed analysis, available in that report, suggested there was a link between travel-related projects and improved outcomes for people with a disability, suggesting additional focus on these approaches may be particularly valuable for this group.

Our qualitative evidence highlights the ways that Ageing Better supported participants through travel-related projects.

- ◆ Travel buddies and community connectors helped people over 50 to regain their confidence and motivation to travel locally. In this way, people gradually increased their social contact, initially building trust with their buddy or connector before progressing to community activities and connecting with others through independent travel.
- ◆ Groups mapped their local areas, identifying areas for improvement and creating 'walking maps' to encourage other people to engage with their local environment. These approaches support mental health, promote physical activity and produce a sense of wellbeing by increasing people's sense of control and ability to create change.
- ◆ Community-based actions may help to reduce loneliness by reaching out to local people to help improve their neighbourhoods. Volunteering in roles such as auditors or drivers may appeal to some people more than an invitation to attend community activities.

⁶⁴ We have not conducted a study to isolate the impact of travel-related projects on participant outcomes. Please see the programme Impact Evaluation Report for more information about the overall impact of the Ageing Better programme on participant outcomes. <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/strategic-investments/ageing-better#section-2>



Conclusions and recommendations

The Ageing Better programme has generated valuable learning about reaching people over 50 through travel-related projects. Ageing Better's travel-related projects were effective at engaging a range of people aged 50+, including people from groups known to be at risk of loneliness and social isolation and people who were already experiencing loneliness.

Our qualitative research showed that these approaches enable people to access activities from which they derive fulfilment and enjoyment, helping them to feel and function better. A range of approaches can help people over 50 to overcome both practical and psychological barriers to travel. By drawing on their own strengths and assets, people can develop and deliver solutions appropriate to their local context.

On average, participants of travel-related projects experienced positive changes in social contact, health, wellbeing and loneliness from when they joined the programme to their most recent follow-up. These findings are supported by our qualitative research that showed involving people over 50 in planning and delivering travel-related projects leads to tangible change that improves both local travel options and people's health, wellbeing and social connection, and can reduce loneliness.

By working at a **strategic level** to influence local transport authorities and providers, people over 50 have been able to identify **solutions** that can make a tangible difference to their experience of travel, and many of these are simple and low-cost. Approaches include:

- ◆ Reformatting travel information to make it accessible to all
- ◆ Improving access to seating and public toilets across transport hubs
- ◆ Improving the built environment to make it easier for people over 50 to walk around their neighbourhoods and access transport to travel further afield

By listening to and working with people over 50, partnerships developed and delivered **community-based travel options** that work for older people – including community transport schemes and peer-to-peer travel.

Working in a person-centred way with people over 50 enabled Ageing Better partnerships to identify effective ways of improving people's **motivation and confidence** to travel, including by walking and cycling more. These include:

- ◆ Providing information about local travel environments, including the location of places to rest and public toilets, etc.
- ◆ Travel buddying schemes, including peer-to-peer and community connectors' support
- ◆ Encouraging groups to come together around shared interests and build confidence to travel over time

These findings should be used to inform the approaches commissioners, policy developers and service providers take to address the transport needs of people over 50 in their communities.

Enabling people over 50, especially those who have become more isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic, to get out and about and travel in their local communities, will be a vital part of the pandemic recovery. All forms of travel benefit social connection, health and wellbeing, so ensuring that people have access to transport and travel options that work for them is vital.

Our key recommendation is that, **to improve transport and mobility opportunities, we need to ensure that older people are actively involved in identifying, designing and delivering local transport solutions**. A series of detailed recommendations is provided in the Executive summary.

This report is accompanied by a Method note, available [online](#).





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