

Setting the Scene: travelling with hidden disabilities

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Think about your journey coming here today

- If you have been here before, you had to remember how to get here.
- If you have not been here before, you had to find out how to get here and then read signs and other aspects of the landscape to find your way.
- You had to make decisions – where to turn etc.
- You may have had to talk to people to buy a ticket or ask the way.
- You had to be confident that you could manage all this.
- You had to behave reasonably towards other people.

This implies the use of the following cognitive skills

- The ability to remember information
- The ability to comprehend external information
- Decision making based on this information
- Communication with other people
- Having the confidence to use these skills when travelling alone
- The ability to behave appropriately for the age of the person.

The UK Equality Act 2010

- In the UK, the Equality Act 2010 was passed to reduce socio-economic inequalities and eliminate discrimination, covering various characteristics including age, race, sex and disability.
- Under the Act, a person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities including travelling.

Impairments included in the Life Opportunities Survey (LOS)

Types of impairment	% of all adults aged 16+
Sight	3
Hearing	3
Speaking	1
Mobility	8
Dexterity	6
Long term pain	18
Breathing	3
Learning	2
Intellectual	-
Behavioural	1
Memory	3
Mental health condition	4
Chronic health conditions	13
Other impairment or health condition	1

Mental impairments

Type of impairment	Examples	Nature of the condition	Areas where there may be difficulties
Learning	Dyslexia Learning disability	Usually acquired at birth	Interpreting and/or processing information
Intellectual	Dementia Traumatic brain injury	Acquired during lifetime, gradually or suddenly	Processing information Taking decisions Planning
Behavioural	Autism ADHD	Usually lifelong	Social communication Controlling behaviour
Memory	Dementia Learning disability	Associated with other conditions	Recalling information
Mental health condition	Anxiety Agoraphobia Depression	An illness which can fluctuate over time in its effect	Interacting with others Being confident

Effects of mental impairments on the cognitive skills used in making a journey

Type of impairment	Ability to remember	Comprehension	Decision making	Interpersonal communication	Confidence to travel alone	Ability to behave appropriately
Learning	●	●	●	●	●	●
Intellectual	●	●	●	●	●	●
Behavioural		●		●	●	●
Memory	●	●		●	●	
Mental health			●	●	●	●

Note: not all conditions in a type of impairment will affect a particular skill

Top 5 reasons for not using the bus according to LOS (beyond having an impairment)

	Type of impairment					
	None	Learning	Intellectual	Behavioural	Memory	Mental health
1	Transport unavailable	Cost	Anxiety / lack of confidence	Anxiety / lack of confidence	Anxiety / lack of confidence	Anxiety / lack of confidence
2	Cost	Transport unavailable	Cost	Cost	Difficulty getting on or off the bus	Cost
3	Other reasons	Anxiety / lack of confidence	Overcrowding	Overcrowding	Cost	Transport unavailable
4	Delay and disruption to service	Other reasons	Transport unavailable	Delay and disruption to service	Difficulty getting to stop	Difficulty getting on or off the bus
5	Too busy / not enough time	Delay and disruption to service	Attitudes of passengers	Fear of crime	Difficulty getting from stop to destination	Difficulty getting from stop to destination

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Top 5 reasons for not using the bus according to LOS (beyond having an impairment)

		Type of impairment				
None	Learning	Intellectual	Behavioural	Memory	Mental health	
1	Transport unavailable	Cost (16%)	Anxiety / lack of confidence	Anxiety / lack of confidence	Anxiety / lack of confidence	Anxiety / lack of confidence
2	Cost (7%)	Transport unavailable	Cost (5%)	Cost (15%)	Difficulty getting on or off the bus	Cost (15%)
3	Other reasons	Anxiety / lack of confidence	Overcrowding	Overcrowding	Cost (15%)	Transport unavailable
4	Delay and disruption to service	Other reasons	Transport unavailable	Delay and disruption to service	Difficulty getting to stop	Difficulty getting on or off the bus
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Interventions

Interventions are policies and actions to make travelling easier. For people with mental impairments they can:

- Enhance the skills of the traveller
- Simplify the journey reducing the need for travel skills
- Provide clear information when required
- Provide support during the journey
- Make travel cheaper

Interventions to enhance travel skills

- Travel training
- Providing experience in travelling

Interventions to simplify the journey

- Special transport services e.g. dial-a-ride
- Making the local environment more legible
- Parking provision

Interventions to provide clear information

- Inclusive travel guides
- Clear pre-journey information
- Clear signs
- Audio Visual Information (AVI) on buses and trains
- Mobile phone apps: real time information during walk and bus journeys

Interventions to provide support on the journey

- Staff training
- Presence of staff
- Passenger assistance schemes
- Travel assistance cards
- Safe places
- Better understanding from the public

Comprehensive packages of interventions

- Personalised travel planning
- Dementia friendly communities
- Local packages

Summing up

- People with mental impairments need to be able to travel with confidence by being offered clear information in suitable formats, and by being able to talk to people who can offer them assistance in an appropriate way.
- They need to be offered affordable travel in the same way as people with physical and sensory disabilities.
- There are various interventions that can be used to increase their confidence in travelling, providing clear information and offering a presence of empathetic people.
- Many of these are inexpensive and just need to be made more widely known.

Further information

- The material in this presentation is based on a review of the literature on travel by people with mental impairments being produced for DPTAC (The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee) which advises the Department for Transport on accessibility issues relating to disabled people.
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