

Older Better: Improving transport – practical options for Leeds

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Presentation

- Project aims & methods
- Focus group findings – key themes
- The pedestrian environment
- Public transport
- Other forms of transport
- Key issues

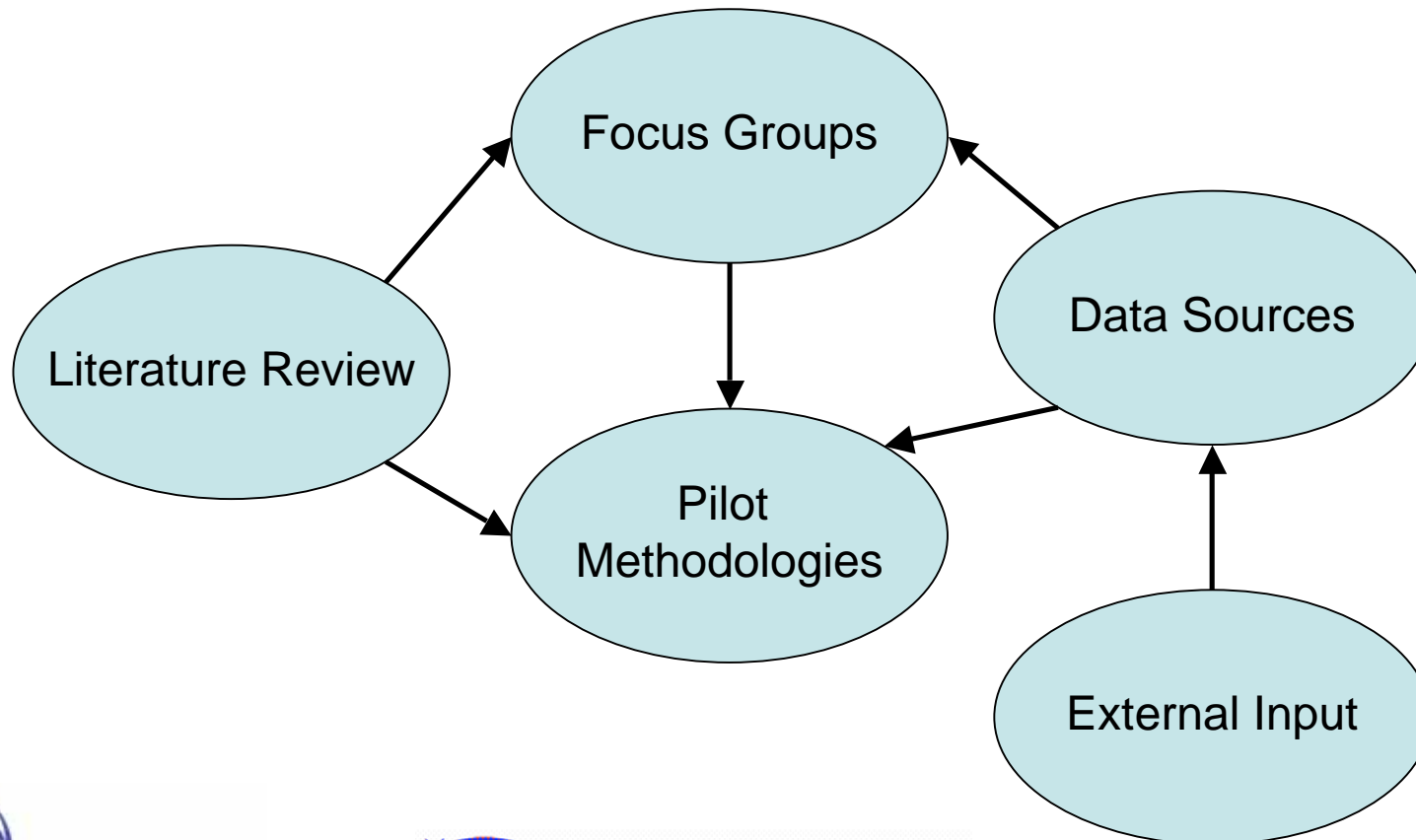


Project Aims

- To investigate how accessibility problems ***impact on older people's independence***
- To determine the extent to which currently available ***data sources and modelling tools reflect older people's*** stated accessibility ***needs***
- To understand how the gap between ***actual and perceived accessibility problems*** varies across ***different categories*** of older people



Methods



Some facts

- There are 20 million people in the UK aged 50+ (33%); 336,000 are aged 90 and over
- Centenarians have the highest growth rate
- Life expectancy for women is 80.5 years; for men 75.9 years
- Three quarters of people aged 90+ live in private households



Focus Group Findings

Ten groups within Leeds,
81 participants



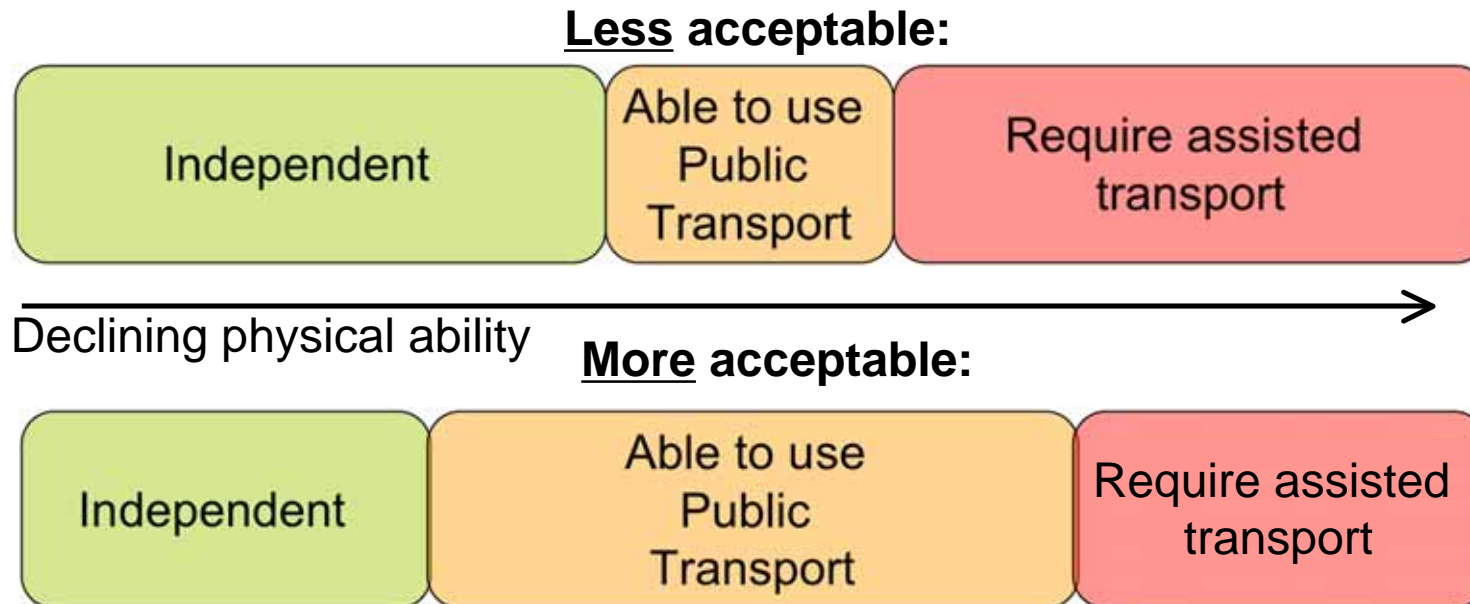
The Participants

- Wide range of mobility:
 - From physically fit to extremely frail
 - Conditions included; visual impairments, mental health problems, osteoarthritis, Parkinson's
- Wide range of activity levels:
 - From travelling “*all over*” to “*the sitting brigade*”
 - The ability to “*just get out of the 4 walls and see people*” more important than specific activities
 - Shopping serves many purposes; functional, gives structure to the week and an activity in itself “*it's a day out, it's a social thing*”



1. Physical Ability

- The accessibility / acceptability of Public Transport affects:
 - How long people wish to remain driving
 - When they start needing assisted transport



2. Individual Characteristics

- Feeling of a lack of control over transport provision
- “Ill thought out” decisions particularly irritating
- Three typographies:
 1. The Resigned Acceptors
“we can’t change the bus route, we can’t change the fact we can’t walk as well as we did, we just have to accept it as best we can”
 2. The Frustrated Acceptors
Frustrated but aren’t aware of how / feel unable to influence
 3. The involved. “Fighters!”
Actively trying to influence decisions at a local or city level



3. The Transport Environment

- Feeling of being “pushed out” or “out of step” with the environment
- Comprises 3 main elements:
 - Transport - often described in very harsh / aggressive terms “rough”, “flung” “jerked”. Desire comfort / security.
 - Built environment
 - People - can soften the environment or make it harsher
- Familiarity or a common culture can make the environment more conducive
 - Discomfort when disturbed



The Pedestrian Environment



Overview of Issues

- Difficulties **CROSSING ROADS** is the dominant issue
 - Everybody said something about this
- Issues with other people's use of pavement space
- Issues with condition of pavements



Focus Group Findings: Pedestrians

- Walking – vital for quality of life
- Many walk very slowly, suffer balance problems and pain
- Less able to deal with hazards

Specifically:

- Carrying becomes a problem
- Steps and contorted journeys act as barriers
- Lack places to rest
- Anxious about being knocked or falling over



Crossing Roads: informal crossing

Lines of sight (angle of junction)



Number of roads joining a junction



Crossing width



Uses for a Pavement

- A car park
- A bicycle park
- A bicycle lane
- A place to keep your rubbish bin
- A garden extension – overgrown hedges
- A compost heap – hedge clippings
- A speed track – mobility scooter



Positives

- Amenities within walking distance
- Smooth pavements and up to date maintenance
- Ginnels and courtyards – pedestrian only routes and areas
- Benches
- Markets / attractive places to walk



Public Transport



Bus safety

- Many examples of bad falls - many “*don’t dare*” to use
- Caused by:
 - Drivers setting off before older people are seated
 - Having to get up before the bus stop
 - No grab rail and front tipping seats
 - General rough driving
- Getting on and off significant problem – “kneeling” inconsistent
- Great variability of drivers



Public buses cont

- For the more mobile:
 - Extensive use
 - Concessionary fare popular
- Issues for the less mobile / more frail:
 - Unreliability meaning long waits
 - Buses not entering estates
 - Bus stops in city centre a long way from desired locations
- Re-scheduling unsettling
- Security at bus stops problem for all



Information provision

- Often rely on previous experience, word of mouth or the drivers
- Miss out on new communication methods:
 - Very limited internet access
 - Text messaging disliked
- Preferred information:
 - Real-times displayed at bus stops
 - Information on buses



Access Bus

- Necessary for the less mobile and concept liked:
 - Door to door, help with shopping, “comfortable”
- But operational difficulties:
 - Under capacity – “regulars” occupy spaces
 - Inflexible – leave activities early / once week
 - Unreliability – being left standing
 - Confusion over eligibility



Accessibility by public transport

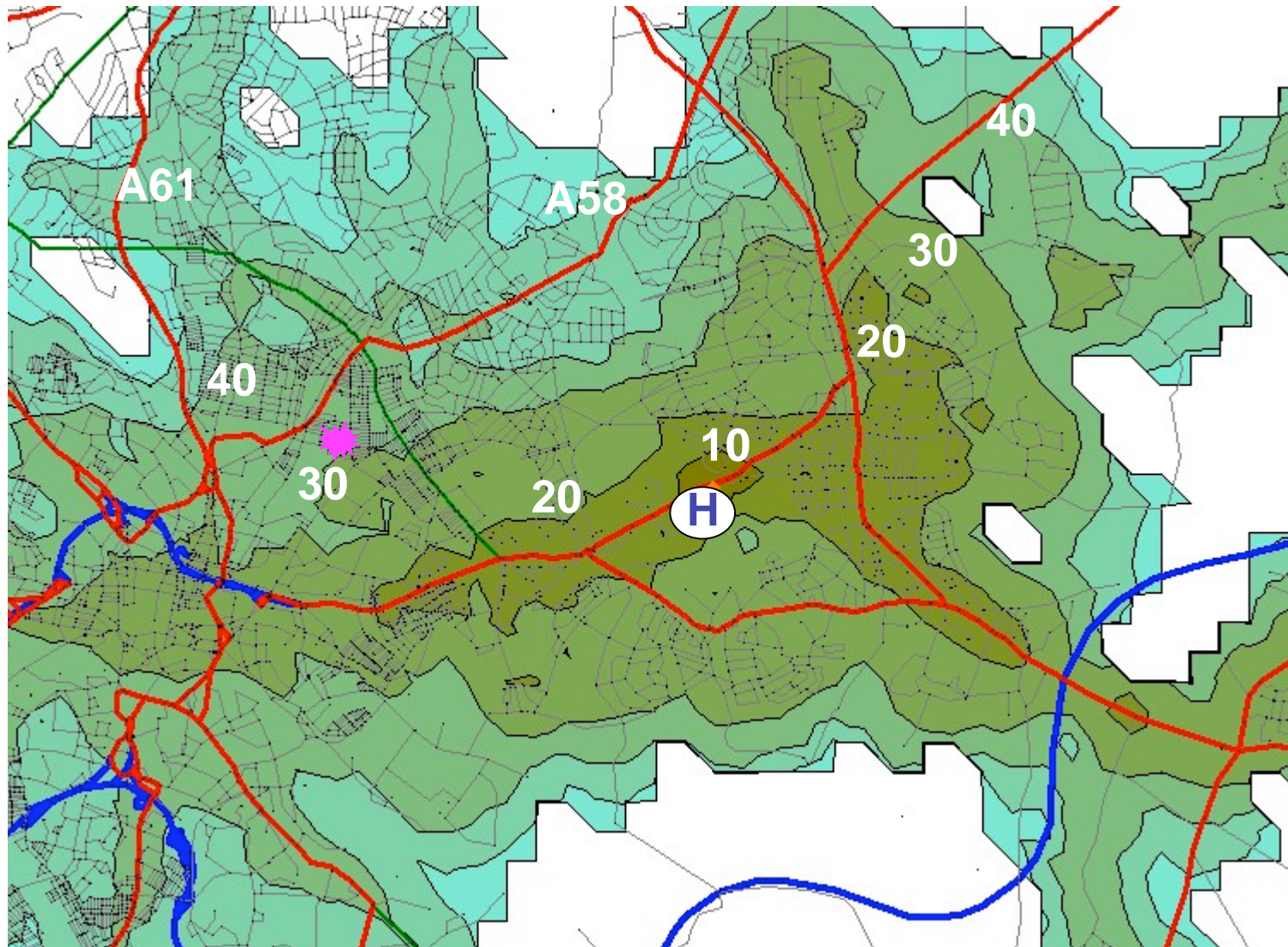
- Access to services is a major barrier to participation
- Department for Transport tasked with developing “Accessibility Planning”
- Identify areas for investigation
- Collect more detailed data
- Work with partners to find solutions



Harehills to Seacroft Hospital



Harehills to Seacroft - slower & walk distance limited



Other Forms of Transport



Taxis

- Critical for some *“I’d be lost without them”*
- Fills gaps in public transport service

But..

- Concerns about driver behaviour
- Security concerns
- Expense / fear of over-charging
 - particularly for rural residents and during holidays



Trains

- Less commonly used by our participants
- Preferable to buses:
 - More comfortable ride
 - Getting on and off easier
- Difficulties accessing stations
 - Bus stops some way from Leeds Train Station
 - Local stations lack accessibility



In summary

- The importance of being connected and of independent travel emphasised
- Bus travel particularly vital – but off-limits to the more frail and less mobile
- Significant hazards in the pedestrian environment
- More supportive services not sufficient to compensate – leads to inequity and social exclusion



Key Issues (1)

- Involvement of older people in processes?
 - Purchasers
 - Transport operators and front line staff
 - Traffic engineers and other decision makers
- Service Quality Standards
 - Hallmark of trust?
 - Driver training
 - Communication of information



Key Issues (2)

- Pedestrian Planning
 - Resources?
 - Training and awareness?
 - Priority setting processes?
- What do you do for people without access or ability to use public transport?
- Who is responsible for “whole journey”

