

**Can Money Buy Access? Intersectional Analysis of Income and Disability in London Transport**

**Group 8**

Contributors:

Tom Breheny

Selin Esen

Nathan Gu

Mahnoor Mir

Tong Li

Szabolcs Perniczki

Yash Salunkhe

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**Abstract**

Mobility impaired individuals typically face lower incomes and restricted access options, hindering socio-economic engagement. Previous studies mainly focused on the contrast between the travel experience of the abled and disabled community. This paper aims to examine whether income divergence results in intra-group differences in travel experiences of the mobility-impaired community in London. Both qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted employing in-depth interviews, surveys and focus groups to explore the travel experiences of individuals with mobility impairments. This paper incorporates the views of the mobility impaired population and experts. The findings demonstrated that high income cannot in of itself enable individuals to mitigate transport access issues. It should be noted that the extent to which the mobility impaired community within London is constrained in their transport access depends on a variety of factors, the biggest of these being accessibility to public transport which is independent of income. This paper complements existing research by assessing the impact of household income on the transport experiences of the mobility-impaired community in London.

**Acknowledgement**

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**Introduction**

In the UK there are over 10 million people living with a disability, of these over half (57%) suffer from mobility impairing conditions.[[1]](#footnote-1) London is home to over 1 million people with disabilities and while London has been claimed to be one of the most accessible cities in the world, significant obstacles still remain.[[2]](#footnote-2) There exist multiple schemes that seek to address the needs of the physically disabled community such as the Freedom Pass, which provides free travel on public transport. However, with the recent cuts in disability benefits, the situation for those people with disabilities, especially those on lower incomes, is becoming ever more difficult. In terms of research, despite the diversity within the disabled community, most research has been conducted on the differences between the general disabled and non-disabled population.

This paper aims to assess whether differences in income within the physically disabled community lead to a difference in experiences with transport. Our hypothesis is that the transport experience of disabled persons with lower incomes are substantially worse than their wealthier counterparts.

Transport experience is a relatively vague term. Based on responses from the disabled community, it emerged that transport experience most commonly referred to the ease of travel, comfort, cost, accessibility and interactions with others during the journey.

The research utilizes qualitative and quantitative research methods. Interviews with experts, focus groups and explanatory studies revealed that the disabled community faces significant problems with regards to travel in London. Quantitative studies confirm three hypothesis, namely that (i) income correlates negatively with the use of private transport (ii) income correlates negatively with transport experience (iii) public transport satisfaction is constant across income groups. Difficulties are remedied somewhat with higher income. Nevertheless, money cannot buy access, that is higher income does not resolve all challenged mobility impaired individuals face with transport.

**Literature Review**

1. **Background**

Evidence from the OPCS Surveys of Disability (1985-88) and the The Family Expenditure Survey (1986-7) revealed that “people with disabilities have lower incomes than their able-bodied peers and this difference is mainly due to lower employment levels: benefit payments help to reduce the difference, but do not completely bridge the gap.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Amartya Sen pointed out during a discussion that the poverty line for disabled people might be higher than for their abled peers despite the benefits they receive, due to relatively lower ‘capabilities’ owing to their disadvantaged status. Moreover, studies in the UK have revealed that due to diminished physical access, mobility impaired people are socially excluded because they find it more challenging to engage in everyday activities.[[4]](#footnote-4) According to the social model of disability, developed by The Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), “it is the society which disables physically impaired people”. Disability is imposed on top of impairments which makes the disabled unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation form the society”. [[5]](#footnote-5) Transport accessibility is therefore a social concern that has to be targeted by policies.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Previous studies define accessibility as a measure of the freedom an individual has to participate in activities in the environment.[[7]](#footnote-7) The current research project adopts holistic definition of accessibility. The current research projects examines access to information, access to buses and stations and access to facilities that enable social inclusion. The research utilizes accessibility as a tool to identify disadvantaged groups.[[8]](#footnote-8) On the other hand, the elimination of physical barriers to access may only address part of the issue.[[9]](#footnote-9) Unless appropriate enabling environments are facilitated and the individual is empowered to take advantage of these environments, people may still not have access to transport.[[10]](#footnote-10) The current research project utilizes qualitative methods similarly to research conducted in China and Hong Kong which revealed that disabled individuals are often less assertive may be partly due to their self-concept of not being a ‘‘whole person’’, leading to the belief that they do not deserve others’ [[11]](#footnote-11) Lastly, literature indicates that mobility impaired individuals tend to be loyal to businesses such as particular taxi companies due to their diminished capability to adjust to changing environment. [[12]](#footnote-12)

**b) Past studies’ methodology**

There is no nationally recognized universal indicator of transport accessibility.[[13]](#footnote-13) Rather, there is a combination of localized indicators such as ‘proportion of buses which are fully accessible to less able to members of society’ and ‘proportion of rail stations which are fully accessible to wheelchair users’.[[14]](#footnote-14) Church, A., M. Frost, and K. Sullivan note that “research on the relations between transport and exclusion in the UK broadly tended to fall into one of two approaches, which we have termed the `category approach' and the `spatial approach'.”[[15]](#footnote-15) The current research paper adopts both approaches. In relation to spatial approach the research focuses on London exclusively. Secondly, the category approach is utilised as the mobility impaired community is the subject of the current research. However, there are numerous challenges with this approach. For example, particular social groups may not be homogenous in terms of their material affluence, or activity patterns.[[16]](#footnote-16) Previous studies have pointed out that the reasons why individuals may be disadvantaged in relation to transport are often multi-dimensional.[[17]](#footnote-17) Our research project was conducted understanding that mobility impaired individuals are situated in a complex net of social and economic relations.

**c) Hypotheses**

The current research project aims to test the following hypotheses:

H1. Income correlates negatively (positively) with use of private (public) transport.

H2.Income correlates negatively with general transport experience.

H3. Public transport satisfaction is constant across income groups.

**Methodology**

1. **Ethical considerations:**

In the ethnographic studies, focus groups and individual interview with disabled individuals researchers refrained from using language that disabled individuals might find offensive. Moreover, research units travelled to the research sites in order ensure that mobility impaired individuals do not have to travel themselves. The anonymity was preserved of respondents to our survey. Individual interviewees were informed of the research project and were given the option to withdraw from the project at any time.

**b) Survey Design (see Appendix)**

Data collection in this study included a survey targeting those with a mobility impairing disability. The key correlation this research analysed is *income level* and *transport experience*.

1. Estimate of per capita household income (dependent variable) = (Annual household income )/(Number of dependents in the household)

Drawing on the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) report from the Department of Work and Pensions Medium , we define 60% of £27,531 median income in London[[18]](#footnote-18)as the poverty line[[19]](#footnote-19). Thus, in the survey, 15K is used the threshold for differentiating the lower/higher income groups.

1. Estimate of travel experience was adopted from London Travel Demand Survey[[20]](#footnote-20) . Two positive and one normative questions were selected for use in the survey according to their relevance to experience of the disabled community. The questions on difficulties of using private and public transport were presented on three-frequency scale, and the normative question on the overall experience was on five-point Likert scale.
2. Control Variables of socioeconomic and demographic factors were chosen based on existing literature[[21]](#footnote-21) as well as their intuitive relevance:

* Age
* Gender
* Travel Distance
* Mode of transportation
* Accessibility travel benefits program

The survey was administered by snowball sampling through three channels: disabled organisations, forum and Facebook groups of London. In particular, One organisation (Name) was sent out to over 10000 members. Nevertheless, 54 completed responses were recorded. The survey was conducted in an attempt to confirm test the hypotheses listed above.

**c) Visiting the Blossom House :**

**i) Focus Group**

Four researchers conducted a Focus Group at Blossom House, which is a private residential care home in Forest Gate, London. The care home accommodates approximately 12-15 residents who suffer from learning and physical difficulties. The reason for arranging a Focus Group was to contrast responses from individual interviews with the opinions gathered collectively in the group. The interactive dynamic generated from group discussions enabled correspondents to stimulate one another with different perspectives from different participants, thereby enriching the opinions voiced by each individual.

**ii) Ethnographic study**

An ethnographic study was carried out to enable researchers to place themselves in the predicament of research subjects.

**d) Semi-structured Interview**

A qualitative research approach was utilised in order to provide a variety of narratives. Semi-structured interviews lend the flexibility to the research method because respondents are able express their opinions in greater length[[22]](#footnote-22). A framework of pre-designed questions was implemented to guide the conversation without retrieving any specific piece of information.

Our respondents ranged from different stakeholders including activist group representatives, disabled individuals, care-home service managers and engineers. To increase the number of correspondents under time constraint, interviews were conducted via face-to-face conversations and phone interviews.

To analyse the interview transcripts, we adopted a simple Coding method whereby the body of each interview was dissected according to three categories of *Accessibility*, *Support Services* and *Information*, each one bifurcated into *Private* and *Public* transport. The results were then tabulated according to each category/code. The coding process was performed independently by two different members of the group in order to ensure inter-coder reliability.

**Results and Discussion**

1. **Statistical Findings and Interpretation**

The results from 43 valid survey responses were analysed to test the hypotheses, using cross tabulation and linear regression. “Income difference” is defined by the threshold of the poverty line (15K).

H1. Income Level and Mode of Transport

It was found that “ income level affects use of public transportation. ”, shown by Graph 1.

**Graph 1-2. Lower income group is associated with less use of private transportation**

The lower income group consistently use less of the private transportation (car or taxi). The difference in car is 10% more significant, potentially due to accessibility benefit given to taxi in London.

**Graph 3-5. Lower income group is associated with more use of public transportation**

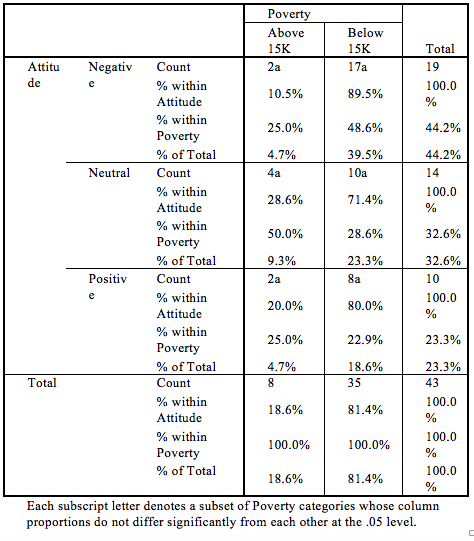
Although use of bus was less significant difference, for tube and train, the lower income group indicate that they have taken more train/tube than the other group. One possible explanation is that longer train (proportional to travel cost) has higher income elasticity, leading to a considerable diversity among the disabled community.

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H2.Income & Transport Experience

The “attitude” denotes satisfaction towards public transport on a five-point scale, “negative” denotes a score of 1 or 2, ‘neutral” denotes the score of 3 and “positive” denotes a score of 4 or 5. From SPSS, the cross tabulation results indicates that 75% of participants with average household annual income below 15K selected either neutral or negative experience. 77.2% of correspondents with income above that level selected the same two options (i.e. scoring below or same as 3 out of 5).

**Graph 6. General dissatisfaction towards public transport despite income differences**

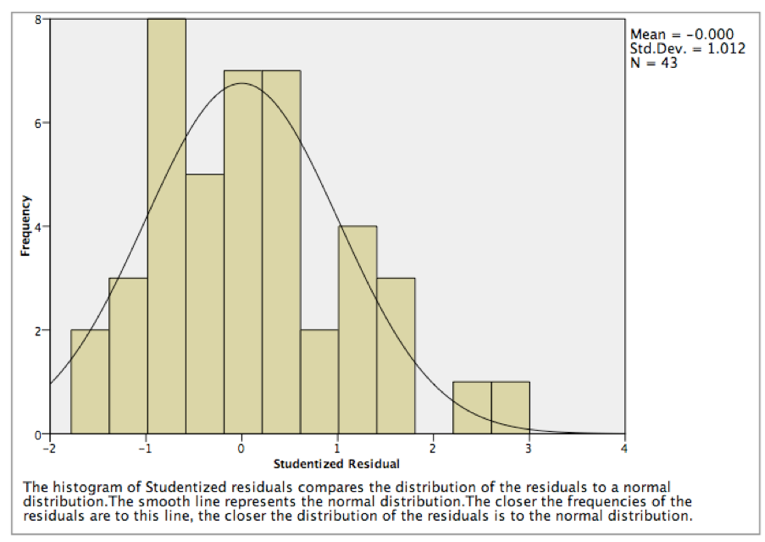


Within the lower-income correspondent population nearly 50% scored 1 to 2. Consequently, there is general dissatisfaction towards the public transport regardless of whether the disabled member is above or below the poverty line.

H3. Public transport satisfaction constant across income groups

To test H3, we use a regression of travel difficulties using public transportation on dummy variables “threshold income”, controlling for the variation in socio-economic factors.

**Graph 7 .No correlation between being under poverty line and difficulties faced when travelling on public transport**



The frequency graph of the level of difficulty faced by participants with average annual household income below 15K. If lower-income correspondents face higher difficulties, the chart should skew towards the right end because “zero” on the scale represents the average amount of difficulties faced, hence a skewed trend towards the right would mean that “above-average difficulties” are faced by the lower-income correspondents. However, the data resembles a normal distribution, which implies randomness rather than an obvious skew towards greater difficulties above the average amount as denoted by “zero”. Therefore, the data shows that lower-income correspondents do not experience greater-than-average difficulties.

While the survey results confirmed our hypotheses, sampling size, potential bias from distributional channels and insufficient consideration towards confounding factors limits our results to any external validity. Thus, the study was complemented by interviews and focus group, and detailed reliability and limitation are discussed in the next section.

**b) Explanatory study**

Survey and interview results revealed the transport experience to be composed of two components; (i) accessibility (ii) support services. These two components determine the overall transport experience of the mobility impaired individuals. Higher income groups tend to resort to use of private transport more frequently. On the other hand, lower income groups resort to the use of public transport due to the high cost of private transport. The current research reveals that public transport is subject to structural problems. In contrast, private transport has proved more convenient and flexible with regards to accessibility.

In terms of accessibility, our research suggests that those disabled people with higher incomes generally have a somewhat better transport experience than those on lower incomes. Data indicates that lower income individuals use public transport more often. A common theme in the interviews was that access to public transport was a major constraint on the freedom of movement of the mobility impaired. In particular step free access, space constraints and the need to pre-book assistance on trains and extended travel times were the most common complaints. It should be noted that these complaints were consistent across income groups. Improvements to accessibility infrastructure are more common in outer London due to cost and ease of construction. It is interesting to note that one of the richest boroughs in London (Kensington and Chelsea) contains very few step-free access tube stations whereas many boroughs with lower incomes on average (Islington for instance) contains more accessible Tube stations. Access to public transport for those living in outer London, regardless of the average income of the area was said to be much more limited than those living in Central London.

Respondents overwhelmingly commented that buses were far more accessible than tube services. Although there remained significant problems with bus services. Far more than comparable private modes of travel such as taxis or privately owned cars. A major complaint for public transport users was that other public transport users, particularly those with prams would not give space to those with disabilities. Competition for space was particularly stressed in peak time services and compounded by a lack of support staff. Staff were generally said to be helpful on public transport services however the need to pre-book assistance on national rail services and make oneself known to station staff on tube and overground services was said to be a problem and a limitation to one’s spontaneity of movement.

Data collected also suggests that those on higher incomes used private transport more often. Interviews and surveys indicated a higher level of satisfaction of private transport over public. The most common benefits emerged to be the flexibility, accessibility and general ease of using private transport. The possibility of “door to door” travel was stressed as a particular benefit. However, one interviewee commented that taxi service availability in outer London was far more limited than in Central London, in particular the black cab services which are uniformly equipped for wheelchair and other mobility impaired access. Most private hire firms however do operate many wheelchair friendly vehicles. One respondent commented that their privately owned mini-bus was far more cost-effective in monetary and time terms than public transport, however they were still constrained by parking access.

There are various transport support services available for disabled people. These services generally offer subsidized transport for the different means of transport and could thus potentially mitigate the disadvantages which disabled people with lower income face in terms of their transport experience. For public transport, the main service is the Freedom Pass which is offered by the councils and facilitates free travel on buses, tubes and overground services across London. Our respondents agreed that the Freedom Pass does make disabled people more mobile and is especially beneficial for people with a low income because it prevents them from having to spend a substantial part of their income on transport. One respondent pointed out that if the Freedom Pass scheme did not exist, many people with limited financial resources would be home-bound. However, its potential to make the transport experience within the disabled community more equal is limited because its impact is undermined by the address general access issues, such as lack of step-free access and limited reach of public transport. While the Freedom Pass could make public transport available to disabled people of all income levels, there remains a difference in transport experience because people with higher incomes have a choice, whereas for people from lower income it might be the only option.

For private transport, the main service is the Taxicard by the London councils which offers subsidized travel on black cabs across London to people with serious mobility impairments or who are severely sight impaired. When using a taxi, a Taxicard owner benefits from a trip subsidy offered and determined by the borough of residence, which can range from £ 8.30 to £ 12.80 depending on borough and time of the day. This way the user only pays a minimum amount of £2.50 and the difference between the maximum trip subsidy of the borough and the actual cost of the taxi. As a result, transport via taxi is substantially cheaper for users. Most of our respondents agreed that for its user the support scheme is very effective, mainly because it facilitates the use of taxis which are generally more accessible to disabled people than public transport. Nevertheless, some of our respondents also pointed out weaknesses. Firstly, there is a limit on the times the Taxicard can be used which ,depending on the distance, is at about one or two journeys per week. Secondly, there is a practical limit on the distance which can be travelled as a result of the maximum trip subsidy. For longer journeys, the cost of the journey may be prohibitively expensive for those on lower incomes. Also, one respondent emphasized that while costs are decreased they are not fully eliminated, so that access cannot be guaranteed for the lowest income level. These limitations mean that this support scheme does not fully compensate for the differences in transport experience of the different income groups.

Regardless of income, the study found that a lack of spontaneity in regards to travel was a consistent complaint for disabled people regardless of income. While private transport could mitigate this more than public transport, the need to book and arrange transport remained.

**Reliability**

The main strengths of this study are that it was conducted in an open ended manner and so the responses and findings collected were generated naturally and directly from the participants. A combination of methods was also used including interviews, focus groups and a survey. This multi-faceted approach allowed for a greater scope of focus and provided for a more comprehensive analysis of the different issues at hand.

**Limitations**

While researchers were able to collect much valuable data, there were some major limitations to the study. Due to time constraints, the research used an umbrella definition of mobility impairment and did not sufficiently account for differing levels of severity in terms of disability. Moreover, due to the mobility restrictions of our target demographic researchers were forced to rely on third parties to gain access to this group. While the study was able to contact a wide range of disabled people and other relevant experts, this is mitigated somewhat by the somewhat low number of contacts and survey responses, potentially making the the survey less representative.

**Conclusion and Policy recommendations**

To conclude, this data collected by this study suggests the following:

1. Income does improve transport experience
2. In terms of accessibility, private transport is more convenient.
3. Support services compensate somewhat for financial constraints to transport.

Despite the numerous advantages afforded by higher incomes, higher incomes in of themselves cannot fully compensate for structural access issues to transport. Complaints about public and private transport were consistent across all income groups and the lack of spontaneity of travel was a notable theme.  Improvements to transport infrastructure that enhance accessibility would result in more social inclusion for disabled individuals.

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations are put forward to improve the transport experience of the mobility impaired community in London.

1. Raising awareness about existing accessibility options in London using campaigns, ads and local forums. Particularly, the ongoing discussion between the disabled community and TFL should be promoted.
2. Raising awareness among the abled population of the daily travel experience of the disabled community. More awareness could potentially improve the attitude of commuters towards people with mobility impairment. Consequently, disabled people would be more willing to use public transport which would enable them to participate in society to a greater extent.
3. Changes to existing infrastructure of public transport, particularly the central areas in London, to accommodate needs of the disabled so far as budget constraints allow.
4. Ensure that information on disabled access is accurate and up to date.
5. Communication between TFL employees and the public should be promoted as often TFL employees are unaware of problems relating to disabled access due to lack of communication between the travelling public and TFL employees. For example, bus drivers should be trained to engage with bus users more so that information is effectively transmitted from the public to TFL employees relating to disabled access.
6. Future studies should account for differences within the disabled community rather than treating this group as one homogenous entity.

As a final comment, the observation made by one respondent is perhaps the most apt,

‘If You make things accessible for the disabled, you make things accessible for everyone’

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**Appendix**

**Appendix 1: Survey Design**

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/13uW_88aCFvcxDlJg7408f2KB04xyVL4oO8lZExoqP-U/edit?ts=574ffa7a>

**Appendix 2: Interview Transcripts**

**Focus group: Blossom House**

Q1: What are the main purposes for which you travel?

A:

residents: For hobbies, swimming, football and basketball.

carer: We used to take the bus to swimming and stuff. We try to use public transport as much as we can.

Q2: How far do you usually travel?

A:

carer: It is generally more local business we do. I mean, we have the minibus as well so if we want go far out we will take the minibus. If it is just a couple of them going swimming and it is just to do local activities, then we try to use public transport.

Q3: What would you like to improve in transport, say bus/train?

A: Automatic ramps and trams that would be great. Like usual

Q4; Do any of you study or work?

A:

carer: I do not think any of them work at the moment. Here, we do a range of activities pertaining to adult services, which is like training and college that stuff. So they will come here and do things like yoga, swimming, aerobics, that sort of thing.

Q5: Do you stay here?

A:

carer: We have got some of them that stay. And the other half in other residential areas. They can choose the stay here, overnight or for a week. But this is our day service, where most of them just spend the day time at this s.

Q6: Do they stay nearby?

A:

carer: Some of them in this borough, some of them travel quite far, all over really.

Q7: How do you travel? How do you come here?

A:

carer: We have a home service. So the majority of them, if they do not get budget for transport, then we go to pick them up.

Q8: How can they pay the transport?

A: Not sure, private payment, also a bit of bursaries about that.

Q9: Would you chose taking private over public transport? What does this decision depend on?

A: If we take a big group of them out, we just would be more likely just to use the minibus because it is a big picture, to be honest, to keep everybody together, and it can be managed, especially in the rush hour, at the time of the day when the bus is really busy. That way is just easier. But if it is just one or two of them going to somewhere, then we will try maybe to use public transport.

Q10: How many helpers come along?

A: The ratio depends individuals. Some has one to one, two to one; some has to be three or four to one.

Q11: How is the support in underground stations?

A: Not really in the situation. Only small group use public transport.

Q12: Challenges in private transport i.e. in the minibus?

A: Use the lift for those who need to use a wheelchair. Special-purpose bus, we also have stairs comes down there. Easily access for everyone else

Q13: And you would not get that sort of service on public transport?

A: They (buses) have ramps, but they are not always working. We were in the situation several times where we could not get onto the bus because the ramp was not working. Also the curves. it has to be a particular curve for the ramp to go down properly. Sometimes, the ramp is a bit too high so you can’t get the ramp right.

Q14: What do you do in such cases? Do you wait for the next bus to come?

A: Sometimes, we have to go a bit further up the road. Say the curve at a particular stop is too high. There are some drivers would pull over at a certain place and say you can get on at here. But some of them don’t care.

Q15: Is there tension with the drivers in such cases?

A: I had experience when we met people with large buggies, not that suitable to be on the bus, taking up the wheelchair space. We had bad situation to get confrontations. The priority of course is to wheelchairs.

Say if they have a separate room for each.

To be quite fair, I had four kids and in my days. You need fold the buggies and just get onto the bus. With these types of buggies or strollers, they shouldn’t be on the bus anyways, more of a danger than you know. Yesterday, I had an incidence when the bus was packed and this woman determined to push through, it was, you know, already a wheelchair. The woman was looking at the wheelchair space, so I think that they have to be very firm to use the space. It is for the disabled and they have priority rights to use it.

Q16: Do you feel that people are generally uncooperative?

A: Yes

Q17: Do you find that bus drivers and staff help in such incidents?

A: I put emphasis on the driver, because that drivers know the rules.

The thing is that they say it is disabled priority, but it is not a law, basically it is only common courtesy. Not that they have to move.

It is a shame.

The difference is that you can pick you kids up and fold the buggies, people cannot just stand up from the wheelchairs.

Basically, some drivers just say sorry and ask us to wait for the next bus. They have to ask the person to move, if the person does not move, they cannot force them to do so. But the driver does not ask.

The conductors are also not there and no seat for carers.

I didn’t see the argument. I have seen buggies with wheels too big, they should be on the road.

I have seen one, on Jubilee line I’m not sure. They got the separate space for buggies and wheelchairs. But with bus, no.

Q18: When we spoke to TfL they suggested that London is the only place where all busses are equipped.

A: That they are equipped does not mean you get access, to be honest. Exactly.

Q19: You said that you have to plan your journeys beforehand sometimes. Does it happen that sometimes you check for facilities and it seems like everything is available but once you go there you find that it is not provided?

A: I think the train is a problem, the lift isn’t always working.

We could call way in the advance, to find out if there lift works there. But when actually get there, to find out that they are not.

And there is no assistance to speak to.

There has been a quite a few times. The client, one in particular, was used to go to West End we need to stop miles before, just to get a close station.

Q20: Do you think the staff is appropriately trained?

A: Some do, but some probably has no idea.

Q21: Have you heard anything of the Freedom Pass? Do your residents use it?

A: Yes and some of them use it. We have training so that if they leave there, they can live on independence after that.

Q22: What is the difference between public and private transport?

A: Well, it depends on the person, their needs and disability. Also, private transport is not always available.

Well, I cannot really say it is going to differ according to their financial background.

**Interview: Jackie G.**

Q1: Do you regularly use public or private transport?

A: Public transport more but I do use both

Q2: Ok Brilliant. What types of transport do you use most often would you say

A: Mostly buses

Q3: mostly buses. And what would you say are the main difficulties that you face with transport?

A: because I’ve got a guide dog it’s usually pushchairs in the way, and people not let me to find a seat so I do have to sometimes have to stand but that’s the main problem really.

Q4: Do you find that there’s major difference between your experiences on public and private transport

A: Private transport … basically referring to minicab I don’t use them, it’s either people’s cars or minibuses is when I needed but no I don’t use cabs very often

Q5: Ok brilliant. To what degree would you say that money can affect and help problems with access to transport?

A: I’m not really sure. Can I leave that one cause I’m not sure? I can’t really think of an idea

Q6: It’s ok. What do you think could be improved in terms of government policies towards transport and access?

A: The drivers not stopping where the doors are next to the bus lamp post. You know the post where the sign is, cause they seemingly isn’t stopping you can’t get off. Even in which way they turned round to get on they stopped with the door right by the post and they do that a lot.

Q7: Really that sounds quite awkward. Just one last question, this is the bit of a last one. Do you go on the tube a lot

A: I haven’t used.. the last time I went on tube was last November. I tend to use the overgound train more so than the tube

Q8: And how would you comment on your experience on the overground trains compared to..

A: I have found them very … if you get on and off even with a dog, the majority of time either the passengers or station staff are extremely helpful

Q9: It’s brilliant. That’s all the questions we have got there so thank you so much for your time

A: OK. I hope it’s worthwhile

Q10: It ‘s a great help to us. If you have got like any other questions or if you want to withdraw from the studies then it’s completely fine just ring me up on this number or email

A: Is it there likely … be more people to ring in you know…more questions?

Q11: This will be the last you hear from us. if you have any concern or whatever, it’s completely anonymous we are not going to use any names, but just for your own peace of mind.

A: I can’t think of any question actually. The comment I will make and I don’t know if it would be helpful, lots of alterations that have already taken place and I actually found them very helpful. In as much as the numbers on the buses, they are now in yellow and it’s a lot easier to see than what they’re used to be becoz they are white and they are difficult to read. And the fact that they got talking buses is a huge huge huge improvement

I used to find talking buses came in and the window didn’t get washed, although I’ve got some sight but not a lot. It was … to work at where I was, and you say to the driver to you when you got to such such a place at nine towns … at tenth place he forgot , and it ended up way pass where I needed to go, which was not helpful at all, for … the area where I didn’t know

Q12: Would you say that the staff are more considerate now?

A: Even the bus drivers are quite good but on the overground, like the … or the South west train the staff at station is here contacted in advance they are usually there, to meet me off the train and take me to the next … point me to the right direction to where I need to go. And I do find that extremely helpful.

Q13: One more question, do you use that freedom pass quite a lot?

A: I have actually have one since the 70s. It was just known as the free bus pass. The times you can use it has altered, and the fact that you have a photograph now, at one time I could use it on the buses, anytime day or night. … But also in the underground, but now I think you are restricted to certain times

Q14: How much would you say that it has improved or affected your experience with transport?

A: The fact that I’ve got that it’s a “God…”. because The price of buses nowadays has gone a lot more from what they were, they don’t give … . The fact that I’ve go a guide dog I don’t actually need to show the pass because when they say what’s written on it they know already I ‘ve got one, so I just go on and that’s it.

It was a bus driver that told me that actually that you don’t need to, coz I don’t always find the thing where you put your freedom pass, they are not all in the same position, … holding up the queue, you don’t need to use the bus pass just go on and once...

Q15: That’s good of them. I think that’s all the questions we have for you today

**Interview: Youcef B., Advice, Advocacy & Office Support Worker at Transport for All**

Q1: Do you mind if we record this interview for research purposes?

A: Sure, no problem at all.

Q2: What is your work at Transport for All about?

A: Basically what I do, I work on a help monitor. I mainly plan journeys for disabled people, like visually impaired, blind people, people with physical impairment like wheelchair users, scooter users.

Q3: Do you have any experience with disabled people on public transport?

A: Yes, I am a wheelchair user myself. And I use public transport quite a lot.

Q4: Do you find any difficulties using public transport?

A: It depends on what mode of transport you use. So, I will give you an example about wheelchair users. The most accessible, I would say, is the bus network, but it still not is the best option I believe. For example you might still prefer the tube because it is quicker. But there the problem is, that not all stations have step-free access. For example, if you look at the TfL map and it tells you let say Earls Court station has a step-free access. But when you get to the platform there is big step between the train and platform, so it is not really accessible. So there are some issues with the tube.

Q5: When you are facing such difficulties do you get any help, for example from the staff?

A: Again, it depends on what mode of transport. For example, if you use the tube, some stations like Earl’s Court and Westminster, both on the District line, you cannot book assistance. But because there is a step between the train and platform, you can just turn up to the station and a staff member will help you to get on the train, putting the ramp down for you. Some of the stations, when they say they are accessible are only accessible from the street to the platform, but they do not all provide ramps, so some stations you can basically get assistance. So it depends on which station you are travelling from.

Q6: Do you find that disabled people with lower income face more problems with transport?

A: If someone is on a lower income, support services like the Freedom pass and taxi card scheme are vital for them. But if someone is on a lower income and they are not automatically qualified for these services, then yes, there are basically house-bound really. They cannot use public transport as much as they would like to.

Q7: So, does the income level affect the people’s choice between private and public transport? Private transport could be things like minicabs and taxis.

A: Right. The taxi card basically gives people such as wheelchair users or visually impaired people, subsidized services. For example you pay £2.50 for 2 miles and the local councils pay the rest. So, if someone is on a low income and qualifies for a taxi card, they can use this service for example for shopping or visiting friends. But if they do not qualify, that means basically they cannot really this type of transport, as much as they would like to really. And in terms of using local minicabs, it depends on your disability. If you are a wheelchair user, I would say 95% of local minicabs do not really have a suitable vehicle, so they are not really accessible, so disabled cannot use them. Apart from the black cab and they are quite expensive, so that is why I said the taxi card will really help people to get out and about.

Q8: The taxi benefit you just mentioned, does it differ by boroughs where people live?

A: The taxi card only works with the black cabs, so across London, and they are wheelchair accessible. But in terms of the local minicabs, I think it depends on where you live. I think, you will find a lot of wheelchair accessible vehicles around the central London area. It’s a 50%/50% chance that you will find an accessible vehicle. And I think it is an issue across London really. Even if in Central London it is easier to find a wheel chair accessible vehicle it is still not a guaranteed trip. So you can ring and they may say ‘Oh we do not really have a vehicle available at this time’, because they only have like one wheelchair accessible vehicle, or let’s say about four. Additionally, if they have hundreds of basic vehicles, they will only have about two or three wheelchair accessible vehicles. So, that is the problem. Even if they have wheelchair accessible vehicles, there is not really enough. So the problem is still across London really.

Q9: About the travel benefits you mentioned, is it means-tested? Does the income affect the amount of benefits they get from the government?

A: The taxi card is a voluntary scheme. So, it is not really means-tested, because it is a voluntary scheme so it is up to the Council hall. It is up to the Council hall if they want to give it to you or not. It is not really means-tested but I still now a lot of people are having trouble getting a taxi card. The freedom pass and the blue badge, they are definitely not means-tested. Once you meet the automatic eligibility criteria, you should get it. But for the taxi card it is different because it is a voluntary scheme and it is up to the local council to make the decision, set the criteria and so on. And I am aware that people are having trouble getting it. And again, it is not means-tested but I have heard some issues.

Q10: Can you recommend any policy responses to the problems you just mentioned?

A: Yes, of course. There was recently a report on the Equality Act, because sometimes if you turn up to a station and it is not accessible, there is a taxi service. Because of the law they have to provide you with a reasonable adjustment, so what the London Underground does is provide you with a free taxi to the nearest accessible station. So, the law is there but it is taking time for the services to be improved. TfL does have really good policies, they will always find a way to find an alternative for you if they cannot use their service. But local minicabs and private transport, we still have problems in terms of policies.

Q11: How long do your members travel?

A: The problem is with the difference of transport time between people with and without disability. During rush hour for example there is no guarantee that I will get on the bus, that is a problem. The journey could take me like four, five times longer than it would for a person without a disability. Sometimes you might not be able to get to work on time.

Q12: Can you tell us about your view on the PIP (personal independence payment)?

A: Before there was the DLA (disability living allowance), so anyone who had the higher rate on the mobility allowance, automatically got the taxi card, the freedom pass, the blue badge, Mobility card and so on. But, because of the new benefit, PIP, and the new assessment criteria, a lot of people will be moved from the higher rate to the standard rate. This means that they will not automatically qualify for the support services anymore. They will then have to be reassessed by the council, it is up to them if you get it again. So, people can still apply for the services, but whether they get them will depend on the council’s assessment which includes e.g. a medical assessment. This way many people lose these support services.

**Interview: Allison H., Service manager of Athol House**

Q1: Since we are focusing on the travel experience of the disabled community, the first question we would like to ask is where do your clients usually travel to? Do they have a specific area where they travel to or are their destinations very diverse?

A: Our care home provide service to 21 people with physical disability and complex needs. The majority of people use specialist wheelchairs so they don’t use the average size wheelchair. Unfortunately everyone getting bigger and wider, they are not getting smaller and neater. So we have to use… we have two vehicles and that’s to get people to hospital appointments health appointments, but also the transport is used so that people can access the community. The deal break here for our residents is because of their extra wide or extra long wheelchairs, it's not safe for them to travel on a bus, because there isn’t adequate turning space. There’s often the competition over other people in wheelchairs and pushchairs on London buses. Because of our location, we can also take our residents to the local tram service so the tram is of course from Buckingham or almazen. Of course it’s level access, it’s very smooth and so our residents can enjoy that public transport to croydon. They got nice wide doors, and obviously we don’t travel in busy commuted time so we don’t have to get to anywhere by 9 o'clock, that’s a big help. (We have couple of residents who have had to travel to Birmingham for conferences. And obviously we’re using British rail from Euston, it’s been a mixed experience. We’ve had times when you have to book special assistance when you book your train journey and sometimes the escort has been asked to arrive very vey early. Normally, we (are) at Euston half an hour before the train is due to leave, and they have been advised to arrive 2 or 3 hours before the train leaves. So even though there is special assistance and when it works it’s very very good there are a number of restrictions that don’t offer you any flexibility. So say for someone who stayed on a wheelchair for 3 hours before a 3 hour train journey , (missing )they can’t access toilets , they can’t change position, all of those factors have to be taken into consideration. And sometimes the length of time sitting in the wheelchair have resulted in pressure (missing).

Q2: That’s a very detailed (description) and brought us to a new perspective of how people actually face difficulties when they’re trying to take on national rail. To our thought, all this special services and maybe the vehicles that your care home provides, there has to be a certain income level that you have to be at in order to access all those services. Can I ask where does the majority of funding of the care home comes from and would you think additional government benefits would actually help in any way?

A: To be in residential care, the placement is usually funded by the local authority and each individual person has access to benefits and that’s assistance to pay a contribution towards their weekly fee. So usually someone that lives in residential care will have about twenty-odd pounds a week to spend on what they want. Their income is actually extremely limited, because all of their funding goes towards the physical care. It wouldn’t help anyone in residential care to access transport, the things that are helpful are the transport for London Dial-a-ride, when people have access to that that can work pretty well. If people have access to more London taxis. Taxicard journey, because especially London station the taxis have greater access to the platform area and so can actually get you nearer and into the station quicker than our vehicle could cause they would have to comply with normal parking regulations regulations. So access to taxis would be a great benefit because then you are straight in and you are straight out.

Q3: And you think the design of London taxis actually accommodate the needs of um..

A: They do accommodate most chairs and they are usually very very helpful they “got ramps on board, the doors actually open in the right way, so you’ve got the whole door opening, not like a normal car door that would only open half the way, so only if it’s a bariatric wheelchair that you would have a problem getting into a cab. Anything to do with bariatric you have access to hospital transport it’s very limited because they have only got a few bariatric or doors wide enough for heavy wheelchair, so you normally have to wait a long time, but the things that I think would be really helpful

Q4: is access to taxi right?

A: access to taxi definitely.

Q5: Just to clarify one more thing – the vehicle service that care home usually operates would be to hospitals services whereas the if individually your clients want to move around then access to taxis would then be one alternative that would be really helpful. Is that what you mean?

A: Well we would always have to have our service vehicles attached to the house. Because we have got 21 residents that want to do different things at different times. So the thing that limits our residents’ journey is having to go with the number of staff. That’s the only limit so if someone is able to travel with a company, they would have a full range of options.

Q6: Just one last question from me, can you just elaborate more on one particular experience that you have heard of or you have seen that really illustrates the point of the limitations that your clients face. Maybe on tube or maybe on buses since you have mentioned that your clients also take tubes but what kind of difficulties they actually face when they are taking tube?

A: When taking the tube, they are obviously limited by the lift access, obviously the tube network is installing lifts in certain stations, and you would have to plan the route very carefully, one of our residents it was one of the Olympics one in London she got her freedom pass and the first thing she did was to get on a number of buses to go to the Olympic Park to go and see the Olympic, to be in the Olympic village. She was able to do that by tube but she was able to get there through buses so obviously depended on the case, we are in South London, our first tube is Brixton. So if you live in central London, your access for the network is extremely restricted So we either have to go to Sydenham or Crystal Palace to get train to the London Bridge or obviously use it we can get them free buses to Trafalgar Square, so but if you go from one end to another, so it sometimes needs to be a 2 hour journey just to get you to Central London. So there are swings-around about really in terms of it is always gonna be if you got a disability, that just affects the life. And if you got a buggy, or if you have got mobility impairments and you are not in a wheelchair, we all struggle of getting around London.

Q7: Thank you very much Allison. One of my colleagues just reminds me that because income level is one of the very focus of our research, so can I just ask because you have mentioned that most of the income of your clients come from the local authority and they are allowed for around 20 plus pounds per week for their own expenditure and that’s the average income level of your clients is that right?

A: Well some people may have… that’s (20 pounds) from benefits. Some people may have personal pensions if they are under 65 and they have works they might have a work pension and everyone’s income is assessed by the local authority and there is a threshold of savings that any one person have so if you have more savings, then that threshold you will pay more for your care. Some residents really have difficulties to achieve 24 pounds a week and other residents may have a hundred pounds a week, but made up of different fundings.

Q8: Do you have that actually affects their access to transport like the income difference, perhaps the hundred pounds client would be more readily available for taxis for instance?

A: No. The Taxicard scheme is based on one person and they don’t take that into account So you get a number of assisted journey so I think you have to travel within eight miles you pay your reduced amount of money and anything over eight miles you pay the full charge and it’s a standard scheme so no variances to that and once you have used in your journey, you can call a cab, but you have to pay full price.

Q9: So there isn’t any obvious divergence of travelling experience due to the income differences?

A: No

**Interview: Vicky, Manager of Blossom House**

Q1: Is there any person with an intersection of physical and mental disability here?

A: We haven’t got mental. We have learning difficulties.

Q2: We are focusing more on mobility impairment.

A: Yes, yes. We’ve got those.

Q3: Do you take them out on trips? What modes of transport do you use? Are they public or private? If public, what sorts of issues do you encounter?

A: We do both. For private, we’ve got mini bus which we use for wheelchairs which are normally no problem at all, we’ve got enough space. With regards to public transport, we do take them on there and we’ve had, I think it depends on if you’ve got a big wheelchair, it’s difficult to get that on and off the bus. It’s heavy and when there’s only one member of staff that can be quite difficult. It obviously depends on if the bus is packed, if they fit on. Sometimes, we have to wait for a couple of buses to go by so that they can use the bus.

Q4: And do you not take the tube at all?

A: We have actually used the tube with one of our wheelchairs. As long as the lift is there and it’s working, it’s fine. If not, they can’t get to the platform.

Q5: We have spoken to TFL pertaining to disabled access. Turns out that because the Central Line Tubes were built quite early, it’s too hard to cover the underground with elevators so it’s a common problem that they can’t always accommodate the disabled. Suppose you have to travel to places where tubes do not provide disabled access. How do you do that?

A: Yeah. We would have to go around it. You’d have to research first before going and check if they have disabled access. If not, then you’d have to get off or find another route. Another way is to get a cab which is going to cost money.

Q6: Do your residents have access to Freedom Passes?

A: Some of them do. Not all of them. I think some of them have got Freedom Passes.

Q7: Do you find the Freedom Pass helpful in any way?

A: Yeah. I think so. Because it gives them a chance to get around. And we do a lot of live skills with our clients. Which is good for public transport; getting on the bus, having their pass so I think they say that it is helpful.

Q8: Do you get concessions on taxi travel below a specified threshold of distance?

A: I don’t think so. But with regard to the taxis, sometimes, we’ve had one with a taxi-card. The others haven’t got a taxicard? But you know they put so much on the card sort of thing on the black cab for the wheelchairs - it was quite good in picking them up but I am not quite sure on the cost because the parents normally do that.

Q9: So the funding is completely private?

A: Yeah.

Q10: Are all needs of residents privately funded?

A: Not everything because we’ve got a full-time residential. So, some of them.. (Everyday needs are taken care of by the care home?

Q11: In addition to that, does the cost of private transport work as a hindrance to or prevent travel if public transport does not provide access to those places?

A: Yeah it would. And obviously if we didn’t have a mini-bus, we would be stuck. So, it’s lucky enough that we have a mini bus since some companies haven’t got one. But obviously, we’ve got two or three wheelchairs, and its limited space because obviously, we’ve got ones that want to sit on the chairs as well.

Q12: Is your residents’ everyday travel private or public?

A: Private, normally. We provide transport where we pick them up. I think if we didn’t give them transport, a lot of them wouldn’t be able to come.

Q13: But why private transport? Don’t you think they would have used public transport in any way? Could you tell us about any kind of hindrance they could have faced using Public Transport?

A: It’s time consuming and obviously you’d have to send an individual to assist. If it’s a heavy wheelchair, sometimes, we have to send two people which costs more money and they only get a certain amount of funds that they’re allowed. So, it kind of makes it cost-effective to use Private Transport.

Q14: Do you think there could be any way in which private transport could be improved? A certain lane in specific areas for wheelchair users?

A: You do get some in bus lanes so if you’ve got a disabled badge, you’re allowed to use one lane but everyone not everyone’s got a blue badge and you have to register.

Q15: Are there eligibility restrictions on a Blue Badge?

A: Oh there are restrictions. There’s one person who’ll get it and another person who won’t.

Staff A : The thing is that there are some places where loading and unloading can be difficult. Because you have the disabled space but it’s not that big. That’s the only problem we found.

Q16: Do you think the TFL staff is trained sufficiently?

Staff A : We mostly do it on our own. We don’t have anyone helping us so I can’t really say.

A: For instance, at Olympic Park, there’s no parking out there so there’s no way to off-load.

Staff A : Basically, there’s a place where we pull in but I think it’s for coaches but we can stop there. But obviously there are places where the area they’ve given for off-loading isn’t practical really. Like if we have a wheelchair, there are obviously certain safety precautions that we need so in some places, the space is just too small.

Manager : There’s always a risk assessment in advance, just to know where we’re going. So that you know you’re not going to get there and not be able to off-load because obviously then the clients will get frustrated etc. We have to do a risk assessment and assess it for going, really.

Q17: And there’s not a single person from TFL to assist? Or other organizations like Transport for All?

Staff B : No. The thing is that if you wanted to get on trains and stuff like that, you’d have to phone ahead 24 hours. TFL isn’t so bad, they assist you. But these other services, over-ground services, you have to generally phone 24 hours in prior to be able to use their services.

Staff A : And find out if their lifts are working etc.

Q18: Do they require you to come ahead of time?

Staff B : Generally, if we phone up and give them a rough time, they’d be okay with it. Because on most platforms, they generally have the equipment. The only problem is that 90% of the stations in London don’t have wheelchair access. In the whole region of London, there’s only like six or seven out of fifty stations that there is that allow you disabled access.

Q19: Do you think a disabled person who can not afford Private Hire would be hindered to go to particular places?

A: Yes, of course. If they can not get to the tube station, yeah.

Staff A : There have been times in the past when someone is going somewhere on the tube but that station doesn’t have a lift, we have had to go five stations back and get a bus. So, I do think that every station should be accessible.

Staff B : In the current climate, you can not make it accessible due to the fact that the buildings and the structures of the underground network, you can not put lifts in certain parts. That’s what makes it extremely difficult.

Q20: Do your residents come from different financial backgrounds? And what are the implications of that for transport access for each individual?

Staff B : Transport access is variable for every single individual plan. Because every single different plan has different ways of catering to transport.

A: A lot of them get budget/support and most of those do not include transport benefits a lot of the time. Some of the boroughs wouldn’t give you money for transport. It depends what borough you’re from.

Q21: I know you have limited numbers here. Is there a criteria that clients have to meet to be able to come here?

A: No. We just have to be able to support their needs. And as long as they’ve got the funds to come.

Q22: You said that particular boroughs give different allowances for mobility. Isn’t that determined uniformly by the government or is that each individual borough’s prerogative?

A: I am not sure. Every has different care needs. All boroughs don’t have the same budget from the local council. One council overspent and they had to cut the support that was being given.

**Interview: Jamie R., Chief Executive of Action Disability Kensington & Chelsea**

Q1: Tell us about the work you’ve been doing. Especially on Transport Access.

A: ADKC is for disabled people in Kensington and Chelsea. And for a number of years now we’ve had an access group which came out of a couple of access courses we did with a ---------- disabled local people, supporting them to understand the basics of access…In the last meeting we had about twenty local disabled people attending and we had a representative from Kensington and Chelsea’s planning department to attend the meeting as well. We’ve been involved in a number of initiatives around transport because that relates quite a lot to access but most recently, we were involved in a petition which was sent to the council around the fact that none of the tube stations in Kensington and Chelsea are accessible to disabled people. None of them have step free access. That petition got 1500 signatures which meant that the council had to respond and also that it had to be presented and debated at a council meeting and I was asked to present the petition or sort of make the introductory speech. It went very well. The idea of making all the stations step-free got support in theory. In some instances, there was concern about how the money was to be found and sort of getting Transport for London to put in money and local planners and developers to put in money but in general, it was sort of agreed. As a result of that, I was asked to comment on the currently planning stages of the cross-rail, some of the stations of which will be in Kensington and Chelsea. There was a press release. I was quoted in newspapers like the Evening Standard.

Q2: You’ve mentioned tube access. What do you think are the main problems faced by mobility impaired people.

A: Most of the tube generally isn’t accessible. But a few years ago, the TFL had a deadline by which they were sort of going to make everything accessible. And they kept moving that back and the deadline doesn’t exist now.

‘The point is that if things aren’t completely accessible, they’re not accessible. And as a disabled person, I have to know that I can go to a station. And in my case, I am visually impaired so I’ve got to know that there will be an announcement that tells me where to go. If there isn’t or if there isn’t always, then I can’t know that.

Similarly, for somebody with a mobility impairment, if there’s a flight of stairs, then it’s inaccessible. It’s as simple as that. So, lack of physical access is the big thing!’

Some tube stations are accessible but most of them aren’t. With buses- more access- Accessible buses with ramps and wheelchair spaces. Now obviously, there’s two things there. The drivers have to be prepared to stop for a wheelchair user. Also, you have to know that spaces for wheelchair should not be taken by someone else. Similarly, for the priority seats, If you have a mobility impairment, you have to know that someone isn’t going to be sitting there already or that you will get priority and that isn’t always the case. We get lots of examples of the seats being taken, of the spaces being unavailable.

Q3: What about the staff in the London Underground? Are they trained to assist people with mobility impairment?

A: Now there isn’t always someone at the station that you can approach for help or for information.

Q4: Can higher income reduce or mitigate these problems of access?

A: Well of course if you’ve got money to pay for a private taxi then you can pay for an accessible taxi.

Had discussions where we use the analogy of there being a ‘tax’ on people being disabled, a tax on impairment. Someone without a disability doesn’t have to use higher proportion of their income to hire a taxi. It doesn’t come to that choice for them. However, the reality is that disabled people are lower down on the economic ladder and that isn’t an option anyway?

Q5: Freedom Pass and Taxicard sufficient to solve the problems?

A: Certainly better than nothing but they cant replace the full access of transport. (It’s very hard unless you can use mainstream public transport and buses. You can’t have the same spontaneity that non-disabled person would have.)

Q6: You mentioned a community transport service. How does that work?

A: Yeah there’s a community transport service. You can hire community transport and buses. There’s a charge and there’s a community car scheme as well. But again there’s a charge and you have to book in advance.

Q7: Do you believe the transport access in Kensington and Chelsea to be substantially different from other boroughs given the relatively high average income?

A: I wouldn’t say high income. I would say there’s a lot of wealth in the borough and there’s incredible contrast within the borough. We are in the north of the borough, some of the biggest poverty at one point in the whole of Europe was in the north of the borough. Obviously the people who live in the wealthier parts of the borough and are wealthy, they can get around. I would say that I don’t believe that the disabled should have to pay for the things that others take for granted. You can pay for taxi because you cant take the tube or the bus but I actually, I would rather be on the tubes and buses.

Big challenge are the old buldings which cant be made accessible. None of the tube stations are accessible either.

All disabled people are asking for is the same rights that everybody else takes for granted. We just want to be able to get on the tube.

If you make things accessible for the people with the most need, you make things accessible for everyone.

We talk about access because as often as not, access affects everybody. As a father of…….Everyone prefers a ramp to a flat surface.

You make things accessible for disabled people, you make things accessible for everyone.

**Interview: Neil S., former Principal Access Advisor at Department of Transport**

Q1: Could you talk about the work that you’ve been doing especially on transport access?

A: London underground is one of the oldest and most complicated public transport infrastructures in terms of accessibility. Particularly step free access is a very complicated undertaking. If you are a Londoner, theoretically it’s free if you’re over 65 or disabled because you’ve got a freedom Pass. In that regard money is not in the equation. Next factor is if you’re unable to use private transport. Transport is not available at the click of a finger. Then you’re relying on private taxis. Some of it is subsidised but that doesn’t eliminate all the cost.

Q2: What particular aspects of the projects you’ve been working on actually enhances Tube accessibility

A: The work we were doing, which was many years ago now, was we were looking at where works were being carried out to what changes could be integrated. Eg. Improved lighting, steps, signage, handrails, making sure seating was provided. Improving access in general. Not step free but making access easier, the other issues that still are a significant issue. What we recommended depended on whether the works done were major overhauls of stations or just refurbishment.

Q3: What were the major difficulties you faced in this project. Funding?

A: Knowledge. Making people understand what the issues were. Helping them to understand what they need to be considering. What they should be looking for. We need to identify the barriers that people are facing and how to address those barriers. One of the things we did was training sessions with London underground and private firms to help them understand the problems and whose responsibility it was to implement the changes.

Q4: What is your opinion on disability support services (eg. Freedom Pass, Dial A Ride). Do you think they are sufficient to improve access?

A: It is a helping factor. The buses are accessible to a point. Some Tube stations have step free access. Putting a lift in costs millions, it’s not just one lift you have to put in, you’ve got to keep tube stations operational. It’s not a quick process. As a result many become reliant on the car. The access to the underground is just not there. I personally haven’t used Dial A Ride. There is a level of frustration.

Q5: What would you say that other parties (eg. Gov) can contribute to make London more accessible in general

A: The policies are there. London has very good policies in terms of accessibility. The Olympics had a great impact in access. Led to a significant improvement in the transport environment. Some of the legacies continue. In terms of national rail, the main problem is that you’ve got to book in advance. There’s no spontaneity. For the over ground you don’t have to book it anymore. You still have to rely on people, identify yourself but it is a recognition of the needs of people to travel spontaneously. The biggest barrier is around money. It’s not cheap to take existing infra and make it work. You’d need new rolling stock. It needs to comply with accessibility regulation but if the station isn’t designed for it then it all falls down. It’s easy to do it in the outer London network but trying to get somewhere like Angel step free costs tens of millions of pounds. Within London you have some very vocal disability groups who campaign so I think there is a strong vocal contingent but it is a more monetary and political thing. TFL have very good policy but implementation is another matter.

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