

national transition support team

working together to improve transition
for disabled young people

Case Study: Travel Training in the South West Region

Introduction

This case study looks at how a number of local areas within a region have developed travel training schemes to support disabled young people to access transport where they live.

Overview

Access to travel is essential for disabled young people to have access to their community and beyond. This case study looks at how 3 local areas in the South West Region have developed travel training initiatives to support independent travel. The 3 areas are:

- Gloucestershire
- South Gloucestershire
- Somerset

Main transferable learning points

- Providing opportunities for young people to learn to travel independently can increase their confidence and help them to feel part of their community
- Supporting young people to learn to travel independently from an early age (secondary school) can help a local area to save on school to home transport
- Young people who travel independently are more likely to consider local post 16 options
- Having parents and carers onboard from the start is more likely to lead to successful independent travel for young people

- Consider using adults with learning difficulties as “travel buddies” to support young people when learning to travel. This can broaden a young person’s social network too.
- Consider developing a “safe haven” scheme in your local community so that independent travelers know where to go for help and support. (see page 4)
- When setting up an independent travel scheme use successful stories to promote it to young people and their families

Background

Being able to get around is critical to accessing employment, education and social activities, and being able to do this as independently as possible is a key aspiration for many young people. Experience and confidence in travelling independently broadens young people’s horizons at transition as they are able to consider a wider range of options for college and work, particularly those that involve local travel.

A number of local areas have developed schemes to enable and support independent travel by young people, using public transport. This case study features three in the South West region:

- Gloucestershire

- South Gloucestershire
- Somerset.

1. Gloucestershire LIFT – Learning Independence for Travel

The scheme

The LIFT project started in 2007, and is contracted from the National Star College by Gloucestershire County Council. Its primary aim is to improve access to education, work and social settings through the provision of travel training to people with a physical and/or learning disability.

Since 2009, the emphasis of the service has shifted to cost benefit: the savings that could be made to the home to school transport budget. Whereas previously around half the users were children and young people, this balance has moved to 90% children and young people to achieve savings.

Users are aged 10-24, mainly teenagers with learning and / or physical disability, using home to school transport. If they take part, the family's contribution is waived for the first year, and after that they contribute to a bus pass on the same basis as other students.

Once referred, LIFT assesses whether the scheme is likely to benefit the student. LIFT employs 4.5 full time equivalent travel mentors who provide 1:1 support. All travel training is personalised to meet individual needs. Service is all individual to cater for anything from walking in country lanes to busy crossings in the centre of Gloucester – depending on the particular school journey each person does. Once a transition has been made to college or work, people can return to LIFT to learn their new route.

The scheme is term based, with ten weekly sessions each term, and a mentor working a day a week on a 1:1 basis with each young person. Mentors arrive at the student's home in the morning and accompany them to school, gradually enabling them to take more control over the journey as their confidence grows.

They also encourage the development of individual safety strategies. Work proceeds at an individual pace, with the mentor continuing

as long as is needed before the student is ready to travel independently.

There are also weekly group sessions: one hour in the classroom covering issues such as road safety, personal safety, using mobile phones, “what if” scenarios, followed by one hour “out and about”, e.g. visiting the bus station, tourist information and other public facilities. There is an opportunity to gain a qualification in personal and road safety, journey planning and how to use a bus timetable, what to do in an emergency, as well as money and time management.

LIFT also liaises regularly with main bus companies, with drivers “looking out” for individuals on their routes and buses being made available for training in wheelchair manoeuvring.

Other LIFT work includes sessions in primary schools to raise awareness of getting around using public transport, helping to raise expectations so that young people consider a broader range of opportunities as they grow up, and at transition.

Results

Over four years, the scheme has worked with around 150 students, with a “success” rate of around 85%, and follow up after 6 months shows 70% continue to travel independently. The remaining young people do not complete or continue training, or continue post training with independent travel due to factors such as inconsistent road safety awareness, anxiety and behaviour issues or leaving college. The option is open for them to re-apply later.

Net savings to the Council of around £250K per year have been achieved on home to school taxis since 2009.

For more information about LIFT:

<http://truepal.co.uk/drupal/content/lift-independent-travel-training>

or to discuss this case study in more detail, please contact Ian Clark, LIFT Programme Leader iclark@natstar.ac.uk

2. South Gloucestershire

The scheme for adults

In March 2008, South Gloucestershire Council Adult Learning Disability Services established a travel training scheme for people known to or using their services. People referred to the service have an initial assessment of their confidence, memory skills, danger awareness, sometimes including a “taster” journey. The scheme consists of bespoke 1:1 training to undertake a particular journey the user needs to do to get to college, work or a social activity. The training includes walking, crossing roads, use of buses and is at the time of day the journey normally takes place to take account of rush hour, travelling in the dark and so on. College start and finish times are understandably key times for journeys.

There is one full time paid worker who is out with individuals almost full time. They do the first journey with the trainee, and then introduce a matched local **Travel Buddy**, who goes on to repeat the journey with the trainee, either to achieve independent travel or to buddy on an ongoing basis, according to need.

Travel Buddies are volunteers, many of whom have learning disabilities, and who are trained to accompany trainees. Initially an aim of the scheme was that it would provide employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities, but issues with reliability, and irregular earnings conflicting with benefits resulted in a move to a volunteer scheme, and for some a casual contract as paid employees of South Gloucestershire Council.

Other components of the scheme are:

- **Orange wallets:** all users have an orange wallet, containing whatever is relevant for the journey, such as a bus pass, individual laminated cards with bus numbers and times to enable number matching when a bus comes and checking time with mobile phone clocks, messages for a Safe Haven about what to do if the user has communication difficulties
- **Safe Havens:** there are now 60 Safe Havens, mainly in South Gloucestershire but also a few in Bath and Bristol along routes that users travel. Safe Havens are shops and other community facilities who have agreed to take part in the scheme. They display a sign outside, and have a pack

containing phone numbers to ring if a scheme member comes in, and will offer to make a call. If the orange wallet has been lost, the Safe Haven will have a central number to ring. Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) have helped set up Safe Havens, and if called to one are then aware they will be communicating with someone who has a learning disability. This lack of awareness has caused problems in past, and helps PCSOs relate well to users.

- **Bus drivers are aware** of the scheme and trained to recognise the Orange wallet as a signal that they may need to give users extra time and listen well.

Young people's scheme

Within a year of the scheme starting, a need was identified to extend it to younger people – both through clear demand, and the apparent lack of awareness of some parents that independent travel might ever be an option.

In particular, there was a wish to include young people with ASD or Asperger's, who might not be eligible for social care support from adult services but who with support could learn to travel independently.

In 2009, talks began with the Children and Young People's Directorate to seek funding to run a pilot to extend travel training to young people under 18 living in South Gloucestershire. The following year, a six week travel training course was piloted with six 6th formers at a day special school. The course was held on one day a week, and was both practical and theoretical, with a ratio of 1 tutor to 2 students.

Students on the course experienced:

- Safe walking in the community, and safety strategies
- Safe road crossing skills
- Personal safety
- Travel walking and travelling on buses
- Planning a route
- Looking at bus time tables

- Appropriate behaviour when travelling
- Role play of difficult situations such as theft of money and stranger danger

A report was produced following the pilot, and initially the experiences from young people's project will be used promotionally, to get both other schools and parents on board.

Experience from the school's involvement in selecting students to take part showed that they often underestimated young peoples' to travel independently.

There are also plans to develop a scheme as part of school curriculum to prepare sixth formers for independent travel to attend college or work on leaving school. It will not train them to travel to and from school each day – a decision taken due to limited resource; however, it will aim to encourage young people to consider a broader range of options, including local ones, on leaving school as they will not see local independent travel as a barrier. A second full time worker will be appointed to work with young people in this way.

Results

In the three years the scheme for adults has been operating, 56 people have used the scheme, 32 of whom have become independent travellers, and five have gone on to become Travel Buddies themselves.

More generally, the scheme reports that users' overall confidence is raised through participating in the scheme, not solely in relation to travel.

There have also been some positive benefits even for some not actually using the scheme: in one case the worker spent two hours addressing the concerns of a young man's parents about independent travel on public transport, leading to them accompanying their son on the bus themselves, and he now travels independently every day.

It is also reported that particularly through the development of Safe Havens, this model is proving successful in raising wider awareness and acceptance of disabled people as full members of local communities.

Students taking part in the pilot school programme demonstrated greater confidence

with decision making, crossing the roads and bus travel, with several showing the capability and desire to travel independently in the future, and two are already travelling independently to school as a result.

"I am excited and proud to have travelled, I feel that everyone should have travel training, it is part of our future"

For further details of the scheme in South Gloucestershire, please contact Teresa Derrick, Travel Training Coordinator
Teresa.Derrick@southglos.gov.uk>

3. Somerset

The scheme

A Bus Buddy scheme in Somerset has provided travel training to young people (14 – 25) seeking to develop their employment skills. In South Somerset funding was secured for 2010/11 to commission Next Steps Volunteer Bureau to identify, train and match volunteers to support independent travel with participants in the Getting a Life (GAL) programme.

The project has the following aims:

- To develop mobility skills so that young people can access the employment / work experience on offer to them
- To working across services (Children and Young People Directorate, colleges and Adult Learning Disability services) to ensure consistency in both approach and commitment
- To raise the profile of mobility within the 14-19 curriculum for young people with a learning disability
- To raise expectations of greater independence in mobility and monitor this through the Annual Review
- To begin work in South Somerset, and extend

it across the authority.

From 2011, the scheme will be expanded to include any young person across the county who has a specific employment or training opportunity identified through their annual review that has travel implications. The local authority provides Next Steps with names of young people who have expressed an interest in the Bus Buddy scheme at their annual review. Next Steps then matches individuals with volunteers who live locally, and who may themselves have a learning disability and have had similar training themselves. The move to extend the programme across the county is expected to assist greatly with the matching process.

The Adult Learning Disability service in Somerset has also funded links with the Safe Places scheme running in Devon and Cornwall (similar to South Gloucestershire's Safe Havens) so that Somerset young people 14+ can benefit.

The scheme has encountered a number of challenges; in particular, the Recruitment and training of volunteers to trainees has taken longer than expected. In the first phase covering only a small geographical area, matching volunteers with trainees has also proved difficult as they needed to live locally to the journey being undertaken by the trainee.

Results

This scheme is still in its early stages, but positive results are beginning to emerge.

For further details of the scheme in Somerset, please contact Keith Brelstaff, SEN Statutory Services Manager KBrelstaff@somerset.gov.uk

Challenges, solutions and “top tips”.

This case study has presented three different schemes, each with a different approach to supporting young people to travel independently. This final section sets out some of the challenges encountered in each area, how they were overcome, and some of the lessons learned along the way, which will be useful to local areas considering setting up similar schemes.

Securing commitment

A key challenge identified by all schemes was that of securing commitment from young people, and their parent carers. Getting parents on board from the start was identified as a critical success factor.

Parents often need much reassurance both about perceived dangers of independent travel, and also about young peoples' capabilities. For some young people too, there was a challenge to secure their motivation to develop travel independence as a part of their transition plan. Some ways that were found to work well in tackling this:

- Promotion of the success of the scheme to date (or similar schemes if this is a new one), and sharing examples of positive experiences, e.g. in South Gloucestershire, the fact that the service for adults had already run for three years without problems helped to “sell” it, and in particular, specific safety features of the scheme helped to allay fears about danger and built parental confidence
- Promotion of the scheme to other agencies such as schools, colleges, internal staff, police, bus companies, as well as the community, was also important in getting people on board and making the schemes run smoothly. Promotional material and resources are also helpful here

Commissioning arrangements

- Where the service is commissioned from the local authority from an external provider, a formal contract or service level agreement needs to be in place
- Ensure the contract clarifies responsibilities for referring into the scheme, including an agreement about any mismatch between the number of LA referrals into the scheme and the number of students the provider is contracted to deliver a service to
- Service providers need to be clear about the outcomes commissioners are seeking (e.g. cost saving, % of users achieving independent travel)
- Performance monitoring is critical both for commissioners and providers, agreed

measures need to be in place from the start, along with agreed reporting arrangements

Operational

- A consistent approach by all staff is important during the assessment and review process
- Ensure there is thorough record keeping, e.g. assessment forms, risk assessments, consent forms, information sharing forms. Document content and evidence progress against targets after every session
- Collect data on referrals to identify where people live to match students to staff / volunteers

Other

- Be aware of possible safeguarding issues when working with users under 18, especially regarding volunteers and Safe Havens

Working 1:1 with users was seen by all schemes as essential in enable progress at an individual pace, practice with a journey that user needed to undertake, and informal problem solving according to need.

Acknowledgements

The National Transition Support Team would like to thank everyone who assisted with this case study.

National Transition Support Team (NTST)

NTST is working alongside the National Strategies and the Child Health and Maternity Partnership to coordinate the delivery of the Transition Support Programme.

NTST is based at the Council for Disabled Children (CDC), the umbrella body for the disabled children's sector in England. CDC is hosted by NCB. www.ncb.org.uk/cdc

National Transition Support Team
Information line: 020 7843 6348
Email: tsp@ncb.org.uk
www.transitionsupportprogramme.org.uk

