

PROLONGING SAFE MOBILITY IN LATER LIFE FOR INDEPENDENCE AND WELLBEING

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Briefing Sheet: December 2013

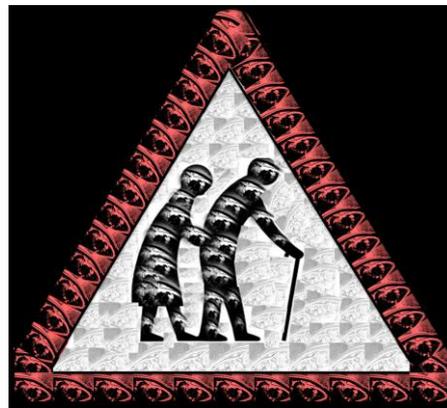
Background

Getting out and about in later life is important for maintaining health and wellbeing. It allows older people to stay in contact with family and friends, to have access to services, shops and facilities, to engage in sports and leisure and to enhance connectivity and inclusion while remaining actively engaged with society (WHO, 1999). Natural changes in the ageing process affecting physiology and cognition mean older people can find mobility challenging across all modes, whether it be walking, catching a bus or driving. 18% of adults aged 60-69 have a mobility difficulty, and 38% of adults aged 70+ do (NTS, 2010; gen population 12%). Older people are the age group most likely not to be drivers, often through having had to give-up driving, and as such are often at a disadvantage in terms of being able to access shops, services, leisure and cultural activities.



Alternatives to driving in later life need therefore need greater attention. Walking is a particular problem, in the UK; older people represent around 22.8% of the population, cover 19% of all trips and miles walked, yet account for around 43.6% of all pedestrians killed (DfT, 2013). Older people in particular note issues with crossing the road, poor quality paths, lack of amenities (especially benches and toilets), and unattractive, unwelcoming and inapproachable spaces (see Alves et al., 2008; IDGO, 2007, Musselwhite, 2011). There is very

little research on cycling in later life and it is a very much neglected area in policy in the UK; it is often assumed older people lack the capacity to cycle, something that needs to change. A new project CycleBoom (see <http://www.cycleboom.org/> is set to change this).



Research suggests the free bus pass for older people is important in maintaining mobility and can increase social interaction, counter against loneliness (Andrews et al., 2011) and has a protective effect against developing long-term health conditions (Webb et al., 2012). Currently around 79% over age 65 have taken up the concessionary fare scheme, but only 40% use a bus weekly (NTS, 2012).

Rural areas deserve special attention since distances to services are likely to be further away and in addition they lack bus services and have poor pedestrian environments (for example they are more likely to have roads with no pavement, roads may be narrow and of poor quality). Yet, in Wales, as in England, there is a tendency for older people to live in areas of lower population density, which makes them more car dependent, a potential problem waiting to happen when they can no longer drive.

Similarly, community transport can reduce social isolation and help with access to essential services,



but again with threatened and imposed cuts in service, especially without evidence of what it contributes to health and wellbeing gains, the future of such mobility solution remains in the balance.



Recent research suggests the value of looking at how far virtual mobility (use of computers) can replace the literal need for travel (Parkhurst et al., forthcoming).

We intend to develop a proposal for a UK Research council with the aim:-To critically examine the importance of mobility in later life and identify the nature of the links between mobility (in all its forms) and quality of life, with the aim of improving knowledge of the

different solutions and interventions to improve the quality of mobility for older people.

In particular the bid will look at

- Interrogating existing datasets to examine more closely links between travel behaviour, health and safety in later life
- How to establish more confident pedestrians and associated conducive environment
- Door to door journey barriers and enablers
- The affective side of transport

- Capturing the importance of discretionary journeys
- Improving public transport
- Rural and suburban transport issues
- Virtual mobility

In order to develop

- Potential transport solutions for the future
- Manual for transport planners and service providers highlighting age-friendly issues and advice.

Further Details

If you'd like to be involved or kept in communication with developments then contact:-

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Useful further information

- Thinkpiece of giving-up driving in later life: Musselwhite, C. (2011) [Successfully giving up driving for older people](#). Discussion Paper. International Longevity Centre - UK. See <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/16246/>
- AGE UK's excellent transport page. See <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/professional-resources-home/policy/transport/>
- GEM Motor Assist Still Safe to Drive? Set of resources to help make the decision <http://www.stillsafetodrive.org.uk/>
- Inclusive Design for Going Outdoors. Useful resources at http://www.idgo.ac.uk/useful_resources/publications.htm



