Transport, the environment and social exclusion

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Executive summary

Through a process of desktop and fieldwork research, this study has examined the role and importance of transport in the lives of economically and socially disadvantaged groups and communities. It identifies that transport often acts as an enabler of greater social inclusion, in that increased mobility can stimulate a virtuous cycle of enhanced accessibility and social and economic engagement. However, it also demonstrates that the overall effect of travel activities and transport policies in the UK can have both direct and indirect negative impacts on some people's lives.

Over the last 20 years, significant increases in car ownership and use in this country have meant that the car is now a virtual necessity in the daily lives of most people. Even those households that do not own a car undertake much of their travel by this mode of transport, suggesting that public transport is not really adequate for meeting the transport and accessibility needs of people most of the time. Of course, non-car ownership per se does not necessarily determine disadvantage; the key element in this is choice, e.g. a wealthy person living in Central London might choose not to own a car. This choice is possible both because the public transport system is good and because he/she can afford to hire a car for the trips that require one.

Until quite recently, the transport and accessibility needs and concerns of disadvantaged groups have been largely unrecognised within the policy context. However, the Government's new agenda for transport notes differential access to cars in a car-dominant society as potentially contributing to the social exclusion of certain groups and communities. To this end, it recommends that local authorities must evaluate the social equity implications of their transport policies and design their programmes to address shortfalls in provision. However, little is known about the transport and accessibility needs and aspirations of the individuals, groups and communities who are to be targeted by this new policy agenda.

Rising car ownership has resulted in rapid rises in the average distances people travel, and are often 'forced' to travel, in order to carry out their basic activities. Yet there are huge differences in annual distances travelled on the basis of income. On average, those in the lowest income quintile travel just over a third of the distance in a year of those in the highest quintile. However, both car drivers and public transport users in low-income groups spend proportionately more of their income on travel than those in the higher-income groups. They are also far more reliant on taxis, with a similar implication in terms of the cost burden. This would suggest that economically and socially disadvantaged people do not travel less because they do not need to travel, but because they are often constrained from travelling in some way.

Ever-rising car ownership has also led to increasing concerns locally, nationally and globally about the harmful effects of transport on the natural environment. In very general terms, key environmental concerns about transport tend to fall into three main categories, namely: energy consumption and global warming; pollution and its effect on local air quality; and land take and its associated effects. Successive UK Governments since the early 1990s have developed policies to reduce car use and encourage modal shift towards public

transport and walking and cycling. Both the latest Transport White Paper and the draft revision of PPG (Planning Policy Guidance) 13 place environmental concerns at the heart of the UK's transport policy. The emphasis is to 'extend choice in transport and secure mobility in a way that supports sustainable development'.

This study suggests that some of the measures that are being introduced to reduce the environmental impacts of the transport system may also address some of its negative social impacts. However, it also argues that other of these measures may have the effect of further excluding certain groups and/or communities. It notes that very little is actually known about the opinions and perspectives of low-income and other disadvantaged groups themselves in this respect, and there is currently no social exclusion/inclusion audit of Local Transport Plans.

Focus group discussions with different groups and communities in areas of low income raised a range of concerns in relation to their transport and accessibility needs, most notably:

- the problem of poor availability and affordability of local services, amenities and activities in many of the areas we visited

- the low mobility aspirations of some of the people we spoke to, i.e. they were not prepared to have to travel very far to access employment, services, etc.

- the cost of public transport fares and disparity in fare structures and concessionary fares between different areas

- the inadequacy of public transport services, in terms of providing reliable, frequent and well-routed services to key destinations, e.g. hospitals, supermarkets, employment locations and to serve new flexible working patterns

- poor public transport vehicular access and supporting infrastructure

- the problem of personal safety in the local area spilling onto public transport encouraged by inadequate staffing and, in particular, the absence of conductors on buses

- policy ignorance of the car as a basic need for some low-income groups (e.g. women shift-workers) and in some areas (e.g. rural/isolated)

- the knock-on policy effect of inadequate transport and/or access to activities, e.g. youth disaffection, failed hospital appointments.

The study also found that many of these concerns are already recognised by local policy officers, but they experience a number of constraints to their successful resolution at the local level. The difficulties they experience in addressing these issues are largely associated with limited resources and a lack of power to effect change, in the light of wider socio-economic trends. This study argues that, because of such barriers to delivery, in the main, the transport policies put forward by the Government in PPG 13 and the 1998 Transport White Paper are unlikely to improve the transport provision and accessibility of low-income and other disadvantaged groups. It also

finds that in some instances the policies that are currently being promoted may even serve to perpetuate inequality and undermine social inclusion.

The study concludes that almost anyone living in all but the very centre of our major cities needs to own a car in order to fully participate in all the activities that are considered necessary for achieving a reasonable standard of living in the twenty-first century.

Consequently, policies that make car ownership and use unaffordable for low-income groups without *first* significantly improving their local service provision are, by their very nature, inequitable and unjust. Such an approach not only represents a policy conflict with the social inclusion agenda but is also the least effective method for reducing environmentally damaging travel behaviour.

Scope of the research

Background to the study

Early in 1999, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) Housing and Neighbourhood Committee initiated a new programme of research. This was identified under the general heading, 'Reconciling environmental and social concerns'. As part of this programme, the JRF commissioned a study of transport and accessibility from the perspectives of disadvantaged groups and communities, in recognition that policies to mitigate the environmental impact of transport may not always be in the best interests of the social and economic well-being of some people.

Study aims and objectives

One of the main aims of the study has, therefore, been to locate the role of transport in the lives of those who are generally viewed as either socially and/or economically disadvantaged and to evaluate the extent to which the present system of transport and transport policies in the UK meets, fails to meet or conflicts with their basic needs. In this context, the study has addressed three broad objectives as follows:

- to identify the current travel behaviour and views of disadvantaged communities regarding the provision of transport and access to other services, and the extent to which their daily needs are being met

- to explore their perceptions of broader transport-related issues and of current government transport policies

- to examine the extent to which current transport policies address or conflict with the needs of disadvantaged groups and communities.

Methodological approach

The study began with a literature review. This served to establish definitions of disadvantage and social exclusion, and identified a broad range of research that theorised and exemplified the role of transport in the lives of disadvantaged groups and communities. The review also revealed a number of relevant ongoing fieldwork studies. Researchers from these projects were invited to participate in an 'expert' seminar to share their preliminary findings and fieldwork experiences with us. This seminar was used to supplement our literature review findings and was useful in helping us to refine our fieldwork methodology.

The second stage of the research involved analysis of a series of national and local-area-based datasets pertaining to travel behaviour, travel expenditure and attitudes to transport. This helped to clarify our understanding of the distribution of travel patterns and travel spending for different income groups, settlement types and across the different lifecycle stages. The main findings of these two desktop exercises were used to define the selection criteria and fieldwork methodology for the case studies.

Five case study areas were identified, each representing a different settlement type (e.g. inner city, suburban, rural, etc.) and with groups experiencing different aspects of disadvantage

in that area (e.g. unemployed males, young people, older people on low incomes, minority ethnic groups, etc.). Having acquired further information on the selected areas via interviews with local authority officers and other key informants, researchers carried out a series of focus group discussions with local residents representing the identified groups in each area.

Definitions of 'disadvantaged'

Our literature review (a full bibliography is available at the end of this report) established that defining 'disadvantage' is the subject of a whole area of research in itself. As such, we do not attempt to enter into a debate of the merits and/or shortfalls of various definitions in the context of this report. In general, throughout the study, we have taken the term 'disadvantaged' primarily to refer to those on low income, but we also recognise other identifiers such as age, disability, ethnicity and/or gender. It is our observation that these groups are anyway disproportionately represented within low-income households (see Appendix 1).

We note that, in recent years, the term 'social exclusion' has moved centre stage in definitions of disadvantage and now dominates the Government's policy agenda (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). The term is generally used to move the debate beyond a poverty focus (in the sense of lack of material resources) and to consider the ways in which whole groups are effectively 'locked out' of the social, economic and political mainstream (Parkinson, 1998). Concomitantly, there is an emerging emphasis within the policy framework on the systems, agencies and individuals who 'do the excluding'. The policy literature recommends that groups who are

already considered 'excluded' should not be further disadvantaged by policy delivery but, rather, where possible, should be advanced by this in some way. This approach is highly pertinent to our study and wherever possible we attempt to make visible the effects of transport policy delivery on the lives of the people we talked to.

We also note that the Government's approach to tackling social exclusion places a strong emphasis on areas with concentrations of 'deprived' households and individuals and is, as such, a primarily urban agenda. While this may be pertinent in many policy contexts, this interpretation of problems and needs is not suited to a discussion of transport and accessibility, as it tends to ignore hidden or dispersed disadvantage within the population. For instance, the transport problems of people living on low incomes in rural areas or the plight of disadvantaged individuals living in areas with low concentrations of deprivation are quite different from those living in areas of more concentrated deprivation in an inner city. As such, whilst our study takes on board the wider implications of the social exclusion agenda, it also focuses on people living in settlement types that may not feature as part of this policy framework.

Report outline

The main body of this report is set out in three parts. Part 1 sets the scene and offers a wider context for the empirical research. It identifies the key environmental and social concerns for transport in order to provide anyone unfamiliar with the subject with a basic grounding in the debates that inform the research. Part 2 presents

the main findings of our discussions with different groups of people living on low incomes in a variety of settlement types, e.g. rural, suburban, inner city. Each section draws out the main concerns of each group and locates the importance of transport in the wider context of their basic needs. To conclude, Part 3 draws together the common themes that emerged from these discussions across the various groups and examines the potential to address these in the present policy context. Finally, it offers conclusions and identifies the implications of the research findings for future policy.

Part 1: Identifying key environmental and social concerns about transport

In many ways, as this part of the report will show, environmental and social concerns about transport are interrelated and are certainly not mutually exclusive. Much of the research into the environmental effects of transport also includes consideration of its wider economic and social effects. Similarly, many of those concerned about the social costs of the transport system will point to the effect of its environmental impacts on particular social groups or geographical areas. Nevertheless, it is sometimes important to look beneath the surface of a narrative in order to identify hidden or masked tensions between different policy agendas. Such an exploration is particularly timely in the light of recent suggestions that some of the measures to mitigate the worst environmental effects of transport may be having an uneven effect on certain social groups and communities.

Environmental concerns

In recent years, there has been dramatic growth in both vehicle numbers and the distances driven in all industrialised societies, so much so, that car ownership is now the norm for most households. Ever-rising car ownership has led to increasing concerns locally, nationally and globally about the harmful effects of transport on the natural environment (Whitelegg, 1993). In very general terms, key environmental concerns about transport tend to fall into three main categories, namely: energy consumption and global warming; pollution and its effect on local air quality; and land take and its associate effects (ECMT, 1995).

Energy consumption and global warming

Fossil fuel consumption from the operation of transport constitutes the most evident source of non-renewable resource use in the transport sector, although the manufacture of vehicles and infrastructure provision also place high demands on this. Despite improvements in vehicle energy efficiency, increases in the total distances travelled by motor vehicles mean that energy consumption is still rising. A study by the World Energy Council (ECMT, 1995) concluded that there is probably about 40 years' supply of oil at the current rate of consumption. Continued consumption at this level will inevitably undermine the ability for future generations to provide for their own needs and does not, therefore, constitute sustainable development.

When any fossil fuel is burned it produces CO_2, which contributes to global warming. CO_2 is the principal pollutant from motor vehicle emissions, contributing over half of the global warming effect of regulated pollutants. In 1988, at the World Climate Conference in Toronto, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change set global targets for CO_2 emission reductions of approximately 20 per cent over the following 15 years and, in the longer term, reductions of 50 per cent, in order to stabilise the global climate. Although these agreements have yet to be ratified, there is a general recognition by most nation states that drastic reductions in CO_2 emissions are necessary if widespread environmental disasters are to be avoided.

At the Kyoto Conference on climate change in 1997, developed countries, including the UK, agreed to cut emissions of greenhouse gases by

an average of 5.2 per cent in the period 2008 to 2012. The previous Conservative Government had already made a commitment to increase duty on fuel by at least 5 per cent in real terms every year over the foreseeable future. This was raised to 6 per cent by the Labour Government in the 1998 budget but was frozen until at least 2002 in the 2000 budget announcement. The aim of such a tax is threefold, i.e. to encourage:

- reductions in the number of vehicle miles travelled

- manufacturers to improve the fuel efficiency of vehicles

- drivers to trade down to smaller and less powerful cars.

Pollution and local air quality

Air pollution from other pollutants present in vehicle emissions includes carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen, sulphur dioxide, hydrocarbons and airborne particulates. Sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen contribute to acid rain, which damages forests and, together with water run-off from roads, causes a build up of poisonous substances in the soil. Particulates are responsible for the soiling of buildings and are also linked with asthma and lung cancer in human beings. Oxides of nitrogen and hydrocarbons form together to produce photochemical smog. This reacts to create ozone, an oxidiser, which damages not only vegetation but also the lining of people's lungs.

The links between pollution from road traffic and health are increasingly recognised in both health and transport policy in the UK. The Transport White Paper (DETR, 1998a) requires that transport decisions are assessed in terms of their effects on public health and spells out the health risks associated with transport, including air pollution and direct exhaust fumes (Hamer, 1999). The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the European Commission (EC) (Whitelegg, 1993) both also now list air pollution from motor vehicle exhaust emissions as a major health hazard and set air quality standards for health reasons. The UK Health White Paper (Department of Health, 1999a) also identifies the links between improved public health and the need for a more environmentally friendly transport system.

Land take and its associate effects

Inevitably, the provision of transport infrastructure to provide for continual increases in traffic growth requires the use of land; the more intense the increase in travel activity, the more available land is compromised. In the second half of the 1980s, in England alone, road building took up an area equivalent to the size of Bristol (Hathway, 2000). The late 1980s and early 1990s saw environmentalists and local people in the UK gathering together to protest against this proliferation of road-building schemes in an attempt to protect woodlands, farmland and sites of special scientific interest and/or natural beauty.

Less directly, rising car ownership has had the effect of dispersing economic and social activities away from the centre of cities to edge-of-town or out-of-town developments. This places a greater demand on greenfield sites for both housing and commercial development and threatens to seriously undermine the 'green-belt' areas around major cities, diminishing access to the countryside for those living in

urban areas. Out-of-town development often comes into conflict with the protection of the natural environment and rare species.

Dispersed development patterns also exacerbate the problem of car dependency for those with cars (thus perpetuating the problem of pollution) and inaccessibility for those without them, as it is virtually impossible to operate efficient public transport services in areas of low density. In urban and suburban areas, the combination of road and junction design, traffic speeds, congestion and inappropriately parked vehicles can cause severance of communities and severely limit pedestrian activity. In rural areas, where there are often inadequate or non-existent footways, walking and cycling are virtually ruled out altogether in the interest of personal safety.

Social concerns

There have also been concerns about the negative impacts of rising car ownership on the lives of some people from a social perspective. Social commentators stress that nearly a third of households in the UK still do not have a car and that non-car-owning households are concentrated amongst the lowest income groups (see Table 1). As the table demonstrates, 63 per

cent of households in the lowest income quintile and 50 per cent in the second lowest do not have access to a car.

Those concerned with the problems of social exclusion argue that, in a society where car ownership is the norm, people who do not have access to a car experience both economic and social disadvantages. In this way, many of the social concerns about transport mirror and indeed sometimes predate environmental concerns, as they also centre on mitigating the effects of mass car ownership.

Social concerns tend to fall into four main categories as follows.

The negative effects of road traffic

Low-income groups are more likely to live on or near a main road, and to walk and cycle, while a lack of gardens on social housing estates means that children are more likely to play on streets or near busy main roads. Children and pensioners are shown to be at greater risk from road traffic accidents, with the fatality rate for those over 75 years of age many times higher than the national average, while the pedestrian fatality rate for children is the highest in Europe (DETR, 1998a). Accident statistics also demonstrate that higher numbers of people in lower socio-economic groups are killed or

Table 1 Car ownership by real household equivalent income quintiles

	% **without a car**	% **with 1 car**	% **with 2 or more cars**
Lowest income quintile	63	29	7
Second income quintile	50	44	7
Third income quintile	22	54	24
Fourth income quintile	12	53	35
Highest income quintile	6	44	50

Source: National Travel Survey, 1998/99.

injured on the road, probably also as a consequence of their greater exposure to risk.

Inadequate public transport services

The car accounts for the vast majority of the travel of *all* income groups (see Table 2). This high dependency on car use even amongst low-income households suggests that public transport is generally inadequate to the mobility and accessibility requirements of a modern society and that even those on low income will go out of the way to own or gain access to a car.

This is because, as car ownership has grown, there has been a related decline in public transport patronage accompanied by deterioration in the frequency, reliability and quality of services. In many areas, deregulation has resulted in monopolies as the bigger operators have swallowed up the smaller companies that won first-round tenders. In the absence of competition, services are run to meet minimum standards and non-commercial routes are often abandoned altogether or at certain times of the day.

Some neighbourhoods become effective 'no go' areas for public transport services. Drivers refuse to operate routes because of fear for their personal safety and they are withdrawn. In many parts of the country, even in urban areas, bus services stop at 6.00 p.m. and there are no Sunday services. Many public transport vehicles are old, badly designed and poorly maintained. As a result, elderly, mobility-impaired people and those with pushchairs or carrying heavy luggage find them difficult to access. Women and other vulnerable users fear for their safety in the absence of conductors on buses and because of inadequate staffing at stations, and will either not use public transport at all or avoid it at night (Hamilton *et al.*, 1999).

Table 2 Average distance travelled (in miles) per person per annum by mode of transport and level of household income

| | Real household income equivalent quintiles | | | | | |
Mode of transport	Lowest income level	Second level	Third level	Fourth level	Highest income level	All bands
Walk	201	178	177	151	133	168
Car/van driver	1,405	1,587	2,967	4,598	6,672	3,489
Car/van passenger	1,290	1,464	2,065	2,582	2,651	2,034
Other private	136	232	199	224	246	207
Stage bus	344	330	255	205	141	253
Underground (London)	27	15	27	41	139	49
Surface rail	182	112	185	313	816	321
Taxi/minicab	45	43	38	44	60	46
Other public	77	142	109	158	326	161
All modes	**3,707**	**4,103**	**6,023**	**8,316**	**11,184**	**6,728**

Source: National Travel Survey, 1998/99.

Reduced accessibility to basic facilities

While social concerns do not tend to include the problem of land take, they do focus on the effect of rising car ownership on land-use patterns. Dispersed land use has encouraged travel-intensive lifestyles to such an extent that participation in an increasing proportion of education, employment, commercial and other activities is now virtually impossible without a car (Hay and Trinder, 1991). It also tends to weaken the economy of city centres, encouraging urban decay and its associated socio-economic problems.

Changes in food retailing practices have resulted in the number of shops falling by about 50 per cent in the last 20 years; the growth of large hypermarkets allows the benefits of cheaper food and the convenience of car-borne shopping to the relatively privileged, while resulting in less choice in price and quality to the already disadvantaged (Elkins *et al.*, 1991). Similarly, health service reorganisation in hospital provision has led to large but fewer in number facilities, which many people without cars now find very difficult to access (Murray, 1998). Furthermore, the flexible working practices and out-of-town locations, which are a feature of much of the new employment in regeneration areas, make them inaccessible to those without a car.

Since 1991, there have been significant increases in the proportion of people living in both rural and urban areas who have to walk more than 27 minutes (approximately 1.5 miles for a fit adult) in order to access basic facilities, as demonstrated by Figure 1. In rural areas and

Figure 1 Increase in the percentage of households living more than 27 minutes from facilities, 1989/91 and 1998/99
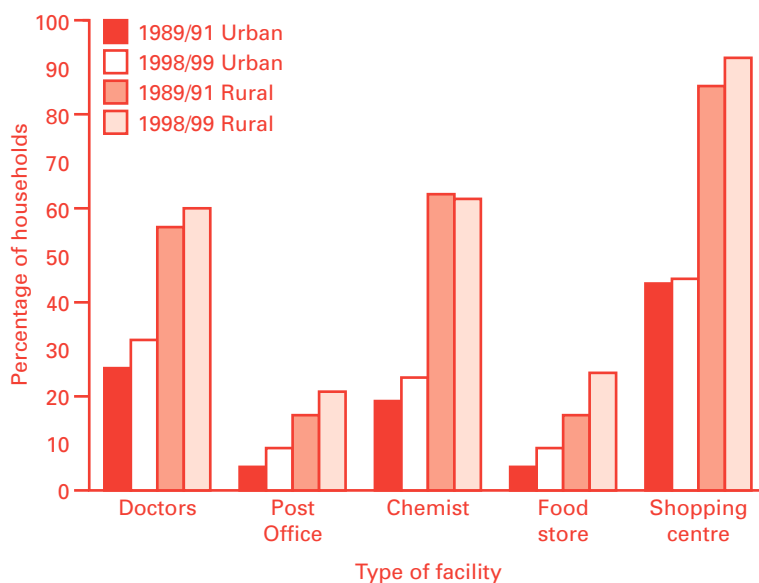
Source: National Travel Survey, 1989/91 and 1998/99.

on peripheral housing estates, the loss of a local Post Office or shop often has an even more serious effect, as there may be literally no transport available for those without a car to access alternative facilities further afield. This 'accessibility deficit' also affects many of Britain's poorest neighbourhoods (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998).

Transport poverty

Analysis of travel data along socio-economic lines demonstrates a huge difference in the overall distances travelled by those in the lowest income group and those in the highest (refer to Table 2 above). Recently, a number of studies (Focas, 2000; Huby and Burkitt, 2000; Shucksmith, 2000; TRaC, 2000) have suggested that some low-income groups may be experiencing 'travel poverty' to the extent that a lack of mobility may be exacerbating their social exclusion. They argue that an inability to access transport can lead to people missing out on jobs, education and other social opportunities.

Reconciled or opposing views?

As can be seen from this brief overview, environmental and social concerns often overlap, although they may arise from different root causes. Indeed, from the perspective of many transport professionals, any division between social and environmental concerns would be identified as artificial, as they tend to put both forward together to argue for greater restrictions on car use, better public transport provision, improved facilities for walking and cycling, and to encourage land-use planning that reduces the need to travel by car. Outside of

the transport profession, however, while environmentalists have continuously concerned themselves with issues of transport and accessibility, this has been largely absent from the concerns of the anti-poverty / welfare rights lobby, and the availability of 'adequate' transport provision rarely, if ever, features as a poverty indicator.

This point is particularly demonstrated by the failure of the Social Exclusion Unit to appoint a Policy Action Team to look at issues relating to transport and accessibility. This, despite noting in its initial report that many of Britain's poorest neighbourhoods have become 'increasingly isolated over the last two decades and that this trend is exacerbated by poor transport links' (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). When the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) finally commissioned such a study to look at the role of public transport in social exclusion, the report concluded that inadequate transport provision is often a fundamental, if not causal, factor in the exclusion of many disadvantaged groups and communities (TRaC, 2000).

It is largely in response to *environmental* concerns, therefore, that successive UK governments since the early 1990s have gradually shifted from the 'predict and provide' approach to transport policy towards greater demand management. Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) have increasingly recommended policies to reduce car use and encourage modal shift towards public transport and walking and cycling. Both the Transport White Paper (DETR, 1998a) and the draft revision of PPG 13 (DETR, 1999a) place environmental concerns at the heart of the UK's

transport policy. The emphasis is to 'extend choice in transport and secure mobility in a way that supports sustainable development'.

Clearly, such an approach may also address some of the social concerns that have been identified above. For example, the recommendation for local authorities to work with public transport operators to improve their services will be of most benefit to those people who already use these services, largely older and younger people and those on low incomes. Similarly, improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists will have the greatest benefit for non-car owners and the disproportionate number of lower socio-economic groups, children and older people who are currently the main victims of road accidents.

However, some of the measures being proposed may have the effect of further excluding certain groups and/or communities. For example, 'green' taxation measures on fuel and town centre parking charges may be detrimental to those living in rural areas where even those on low incomes must own and use cars in order to access essential services. Similarly, many shift-workers, although usually in receipt of little more than the minimum wage, may be car reliant for the journey to work, as this often falls outside of normal public transport operating hours.

Those arguing for pricing measures have often stated that they will have a minimal effect on low-income households because the majority of these do not own cars. Even those who do own cars travel relatively short distances and so spend less as a proportion of their household income than higher-income households (Skinner and Ferguson, 1998). Nevertheless, over 30 per cent of households in the lowest

income band *do* own and drive cars. Indeed, disaggregate analysis of the Family Expenditure Survey to consider only those who spend on travel, undertaken as part of this study, demonstrated that those lowest-income households who *actually* spend on motoring commit a far greater proportion of their household expenditure to motoring than any other income group, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

Average figures of spending mask this distortion, as low-income households demonstrate a far greater propensity to record *zero* expenditure in this spending category than those in the higher-income bands. This has the effect of lowering the average figure recorded when all low-income households are included in the calculation; whereas *most* of the sample living in high-income households record spending in this category, so that the proportion of their spending stays the same when non-spenders are removed from the calculation. This suggests that those low-income households who are car reliant may experience *far greater hardship* from these pricing measures than has been previously supposed.

Another problem, as identified by Banister (1993), is that current policies to improve public transport services primarily do so with the aim of encouraging car drivers to replace at least some of their journeys with less environmentally damaging mass transit modes. In order to achieve this aim, public transport services need to be of extremely high quality and operate at maximum levels of efficiency and reliability. Meeting this level of provision is expensive and often necessitates concentrating services along high demand corridors, reducing the number of stops and diversions along a route and increasing fares to cover the

Figure 2 Weekly travel expenditure, comparing averages for the total sample with averages for only those who spend on travel
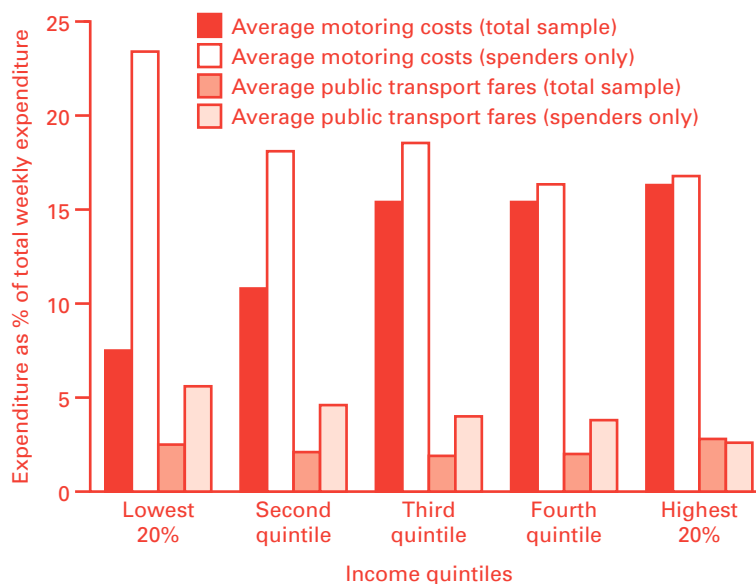
Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1998/99.

additional cost. This may have the effect of either pricing the more traditional 'captive' public transport market off these services and/or producing services that fail to meet their requirements for shorter trips and more dispersed destinations.

Other concerns relate to the disproportionate impact that policies aimed at reducing the need to travel may have on people with low personal mobility. It has been argued that, for groups currently experiencing 'travel poverty', encouraging a reduction in travel cannot automatically be assumed to be a good thing and that some socially excluded groups may need to be encouraged to travel more (TRaC,

2000). Therefore, while from an *environmental standpoint reduced mobility* is the desired goal, from a *social perspective enhanced mobility* may be seen as contributing to social and economic vitality and thus social inclusion (Troy, 1996).

Aside from the suppositions of academics, however, very little is actually known about the opinions and perspectives of low-income and other disadvantaged groups themselves in this respect. To help address this knowledge gap, we undertook a series of discussions with groups of people living in different types of areas of low income to find out their views and concerns. These are reported in the following part of this report.

Part 2: The transport concerns of disadvantaged groups and communities

The aim of the empirical research was to recruit people who could be considered to be disadvantaged in terms of their socio-economic position and to find out what role transport plays in their lives. We also wanted to identify whether they were concerned about the environmental effect of their own travel behaviour and/or the effects of other people's travel behaviour on their environment.

In recognition that travel behaviour and experiences differ with age, gender and lifestyle circumstances, separate focus groups were held with:

- children
- young people
- the unemployed
- people in low-paid work
- minority ethnic groups
- disabled and mobility impaired people
- older people.

It was also felt important to ensure that adequate consideration was given to spatial considerations, in that people living in different settlement types may have different transport needs. The main area types were identified as:

- rural settlements
- small towns (20–50,000)
- post-industrial communities (e.g. ex-mining, steel manufacturing)
- suburbs
- inner city metropolitan areas.

It was not the intention of the case studies to describe the specific transport and accessibility problems of the areas that were selected, but rather to explore the more generalised

experiences of such groups in relation to transport and transport-related issues. Specific locations were chosen on the basis that they could act as a *proxy* for the lifestyle conditions of deprived groups living in different types of settlements (see Appendix 2).

The focus groups were designed to be flexible enough to explore the particular issues and concerns of each group, but consistent enough to allow comparisons between the various groups and case study areas. They were in no way intended to be representative of the attitudes, experiences and/or perceptions of all residents living in the area, but rather aimed to offer a barometer of opinion in relation to the identified groups and area types.

It has not been possible to present everything discussed in the focus groups in the context of this report and so we have drawn out only the main issues arising from each of the identified groups in the sections that follow.

Primary school children, Liverpool

Researchers spent the morning in the classroom with Years 5 and 6 children and their teacher at Holy Cross and St Mary's School, Liverpool 3. The school was specifically selected because it is located in a low-income area, alongside a busy main road near the city centre and because a higher than average number of children at the school suffer from asthma and/or have been involved in road traffic accidents. Most of the children attending the school live in neighbouring council estates, although some do travel from outside the area.

Of the 20 children in attendance on the day we visited, 12 regularly walk to school while eight are regularly driven there by car; 15 of the children lived in households with at least one car. More generally, the children told us they used a variety of modes to get about, including cars, buses, taxis, walking, cycling and rail. Even those children from households without cars often travelled by car with other relatives and friends. The majority of their travel was in the local area but some of the children had travelled longer distances by rail, car and air.

Seven children in the class told us during the course of their discussions that they suffered from asthma, which they attributed to poor air quality as a result of the high level of traffic in the area. Four of the children had been knocked over by a car when walking in the local neighbourhood and several others had been witnesses to such accidents, one on the road outside the school. The class had also recently visited an Environment Fair, which included an exhibition of alternative transport. They were therefore well informed about environmental and social concerns in relation to travel behaviour in the UK.

Travel aspirations

Nevertheless, when the class was asked how they would like to travel when they grew up, the car still came out top. There were practical reasons given for this choice, in that the car was seen as being 'comfy', 'quicker', 'warm' and 'safer'. The children thought that cars were particularly necessary for getting to work, taking days out of Liverpool and for 'showing off'.

This illustrates that, even at this young age amongst a group who clearly had strong

environmental concerns and low car ownership in the households in which they lived, the car is seen as something to which one aspires. To some degree, it was seen to symbolise freedom, status and adulthood. This aspiration has significant implications for future transport policy because, as one of the children pointed out:

> *What's the use of taking a bus when you have already got a car? Only if someone else was using the car or the bus was free* [of charge] *then you might think of using it.*

The cost of travel

It was interesting to observe that, even at this young age, the children were quite concerned about the cost of transport:

> *The car is dead dear, there's the tax and the insurance and the MOT.*

> *Taxis are expensive round here and you have to give them tips.*

> *My sisters have a* [bus] *pass and it's £35 each, and when I go* [to Secondary School] *that will be four of us, and that is a lot of money for my mum to pay.*

Attitudes to public transport

The children expressed a wide range of attitudes to public transport and its strengths and weaknesses. Buses were seen as a good form of transport because they could carry many more people and so are more environmentally friendly:

> *If you take a bus, 20 people can fit on a bus and there are four people per car, then one bus is the same as five cars. So, even though buses might make more pollution, there is less per person.*

But bad because they often get delayed and are slow:

The buses go all round the world and take too long when you're waiting and on most of the bus stops it doesn't tell you what time the bus is going to come so you are waiting for ages.

It was felt that buses were unreliable and at times dirty and vandalised:

If you didn't have to wait and they came about every two minutes I wouldn't mind.

You get a load of people putting their bags and shoes on the seats and the seats get all wet and everything.

Personal safety

There were also concerns about safety and security on buses. The children commented that buses did not have seat belts and sometimes they felt scared on a double-decker when they went fast around corners. Some children thought cars were clearly safer than public transport, largely from the point of view of the threat from other passengers:

The buses aren't very safe because if you sit upstairs anyone could grab you.

I don't like being on a bus. I saw one fight with two men fighting.

Thus, the children described public transport as a relatively hostile, unsafe environment, whilst their perception of the car was a safe environment – at least for themselves as passengers. Nevertheless, they also recognised the dangers of the car for themselves as pedestrians:

A little kid got knocked over outside the school. The road is busy when kids are coming to school because there are two lanes only and it's dead skinny. It's as skinny as a one-way road, and it's a two-lane and there is a blind spot at the corner of it.

The children felt that many of traffic accidents happen because drivers don't care enough about pedestrians:

It's not them walking in the road, they don't consider the public.

Walking and cycling

Nevertheless, walking was seen as a good transport option because it is free and provides a good form of exercise:

Walking doesn't cost anything.

Most of the things the children wanted to do, such as go to the cinema or into town for shopping, were generally perceived as within walking distance:

You can walk everywhere from here, though – the shops and into town and to school. Everything is near.

It was also noted that you don't get the exercise you need if you drive everywhere and that their grandparents were very fit because they tended to walk more:

My Grandad is dead fit. He walks everywhere.

Transport improvements

Although the children stated that when they grew up they wanted to own cars, they were also very keen on ideas to reduce traffic congestion, and to encourage the use of public

transport and environmentally friendly modes such as cycling. In particular, they wanted to see more trams, cycle and bus lanes, zebra crossings and car sharing, and cheaper taxis and buses.

All the class said that they enjoyed cycling, and ten of the children owned bikes and regularly cycled around the area. However, many of the children commented that they didn't feel safe from cars on their bikes; cars often drive or park on bicycle lanes and the children thought a priority should be to make cycling safer for them.

Youth group, Hastings

We spent an afternoon at a youth centre in Hastings talking to the various young people using it. Between ten and 15 young people were engaged in the discussion, although not all of them were present for the whole visit. To this extent, the meeting was less formal than in some of the other case studies and this approach yielded lively and candid discussion. All the people we spoke to were living independently from their parents and some had young children themselves.

Youth provision

We first asked the group what life is like for young people living in Hastings. One young woman immediately told us:

> *I can tell you in one word … pants, it's pants!* [For those unfamiliar with the jargon, 'pants' means absolute rubbish]

There was a feeling that young people were not catered for at all in the town and there is therefore nothing for them to do, especially if

they cannot afford to drink in the numerous pubs. It transpired that the centre provided the only financially viable place for many young people on low incomes to go.

Crime and disorder

We were told that a lack of money and of things to do often meant that young people were hanging around the town centre causing trouble. Drugs were discussed at some length and many of the respondents quite openly told us that they themselves took a variety of drugs, but made a major distinction between 'soft' drugs and 'hard' drugs and between those who can 'handle their drugs' and those who can't. A further distinction was made between those who could 'fund' their habit legally as against those who turned to crime.

Car theft and joy riding were said to be very common in the area and once again this was attributed to the lack of anything else to do:

> *I hear the police chasing the joy riders all night. If they want to go to the garage in Warrior Square and can't be arsed to walk in the middle of the night they'll nick a car.*

> *I used to nick cars because there's nothing else to do. You're just walking around at two in the morning and there's a car and why not? It's better than just walking around.*

Cost of living

The respondents talked at some length about how they managed to live off either benefits, part-time work or both. There was a strong feeling that their way of life was very much a question of basic survival:

I get 37 quid. I have to pay my water out of that and to pay for my food which is about 15 quid. I pay about four quid on water and about a fiver on the electric. That's 25 quid gone.

Living on state benefits was felt to be particularly arduous for those with young children. Even the help with the milk was not felt to be adequate:

I get through more than seven pints of milk a week. The children get through more than a pint of milk a day. One week we went through 18 pints of milk in one week.

Employment opportunities

Most of the people we spoke to weren't working, although many of them had been on numerous training schemes. Lack of qualifications was cited as one of the main problems in trying to get jobs but others in the room felt that some young people have simply 'lost the will to work':

There's loads of jobs, fucking hundreds of jobs. The trouble is most people are too lazy. They just spend their time popping pills and having a smoke.

There's decent paid jobs out there but you've got to have the mental ability to do it.

Transport and travel

A couple of the young men in the group expressed the opinion that in order to access well-paid employment it would be necessary to get a car:

You got to have a car, man, if you want a job – one that pays. There ain't no decent work round here. I'm going to get me a car and then I'm off to London to look for a proper job.

On the whole, however, the young people we spoke to didn't appear to have great aspirations to travel and, for some, visiting the centre was one of the few trips they made in a week. For the mothers of small children in the group, the issue of access to hospitals and health-care services was of major importance, but to the remaining young people it was less of an issue.

Cost of travel

Travelling by public transport was generally considered unaffordable; most of the group therefore walked to almost everywhere they wanted to go:

It's about a 25-minute walk to here. I haven't got any money and the bus is too expensive.

It costs me two quid return to go up to the hospital. Two quid is a lot of money. It's the only place I go.

The fact that a Young Person's railcard did not cover buses and involved a capital outlay of £20 put it out of the reach of the people we talked to:

You can get a railcard but it costs £20. It saves you money but only on the trains but you've got to find 20 quid for the railcard.

Youth disaffection

All the young people we spoke to were deeply cynical about the role and interest of both national and local government in their plight. They told us that that the Council did occasionally organise some local events, but these were few and far between and they were never consulted:

They should just try it a different way. If they actually went out and asked us what we want, what we would like to see happen.

They also felt that Government was disinterested in the issues facing young people, most of whom, in their experience, were involved in drugs, unemployed or simply working on low wages.

Male unemployed and female shift-workers, Consett

In the Consett case study, our aim was to identify the changing transport and accessibility needs of men and women on low incomes in areas where employment patterns have been fundamentally restructured along gender lines. We held discussions with unemployed men in a local social club and women shift-workers at their place of work.

Local activities

Both groups expressed mixed feelings about living in the area. Certain aspects of life were seen as positive whilst other things were viewed quite negatively. For example, although the town was thought to be well provided for in terms of grocery shopping, it offered little in the way of clothes shopping. The local market was described as 'hardly worth visiting now', whereas once it had apparently been considered quite a local asset. On the other hand, the town was reported to have a good range of pubs and clubs.

Employment opportunities

Inevitably, employment was a central topic of discussion in both the groups. We were told that the closure of the steel works and other industrial locations had had a profound impact on people's lives. Although some employment had returned to the area, this was seen as very low paid and temporary. Respondents felt that wages were lower than in other parts of the country, in fact, so low that for many families they considered it was not worth their while working and they felt they were better off claiming benefits:

I'm married. I've got five children that are dependent on us. If you go to the factory or wherever, enquiring about a job, they'll say we'll give you a job, 120 quid a week. And you think to yourself I'm getting better than that in benefits.

The nature of new employment in the area was something that generated a considerable degree of criticism from the male respondents, because of both the low wages and the type of work on offer:

They'll only employ women to do so many hours, say 16 hours. That way the employers don't have to pay that National Insurance contribution.

There's plenty of work and no money.

It's not good jobs. They are far removed from the steel works. I mean they make food for airlines and that.

We want any type of work that pays. Making the national average … we just laugh. You couldn't get that around here for a month.

There was also very little optimism about the prospects for employment after training or re-training:

It's the same old story. If there's a job advertised in the Job Centre you say, I can do that job. I'll go and get trained up for it. So you go and get trained up … you go and see the employer and they say have you got any experience? … You say how am I going to get the experience if somebody won't employ us?

Transport and accessibility

A definite gender divide emerged between the men and women's travel activities, largely in direct relation to changing work patterns in the area. The majority of participants in the women's group had a car for getting them to and from work and they also used the car for most of their other trips, whereas the men tended to either take public transport or walk.

Even though many of the women's journeys to work were very short distances, they still preferred to use their cars than to take public transport:

I live about 500 yards down the road but I still come by car.

It transpired that part of the reason for this was related to a sense of security when leaving the shop after the late shift. Even the car park at the supermarket was felt to be somewhat threatening late in the evening:

I did a late night last week, coming out of the door at half-past ten. I stuck me head out, had a look and I couldn't see anything. I ran to the car and locked the doors straight away. There was nobody else around.

In other cases, the reason for taking the car was linked to the need to combine other household trips such as dropping the children off at school or dropping their partners off at work with their own work journey:

I drop the bairn off at school before work.

I've got the car but I get up early in the morning and drop my partner off at work. I come to work and when I finish I go and pick him up.

It became clear that public transport is often inadequate for serving these 'chained' and dispersed trips that the working women's lives now demanded.

Attitudes to public transport

Both the female and male groups were quite critical of the public transport system in the area. Once again, cost was an issue, particularly the disparities in fare structures between areas:

Bus fares in Derwentside are quite expensive as compared to down the road at Gateshead. When you get into Gateshead the bus fares are about a third cheaper than what they are here.

The car was considered to be the cheaper option, especially when more than one person was travelling:

If you want to go to Newcastle you are talking of about £6–7 in bus fares just to get me there. I can take my Nan and half a dozen other people in the car for less.

One of the women, who had a very young child and did not drive, made the point that, although there were easy-access buses operating in the area, these did not always run at times that she needed to use them:

I think the bus service is awkward having the pushchair. That's a nightmare. They've got an easy-access bus but these access buses tend to run at night more than during the day, especially to the Metro Centre and the town.

The majority of the female respondents stated that they would be very reluctant to use public transport in the evening. This issue of safety applied to waiting for buses as well as safety on the vehicles themselves.

For those without access to a car, even taxis were seen as a cheaper alternative than public transport:

Half the time, if there's more than two of you, it's cheaper to get a taxi.

Transport policies

Although there was some support for improving public transport services, there was a deep anger in the groups about measures to restrict car usage or to charge motorists in various ways, even among those without cars. Respondents felt that these measures impacted particularly heavily on people on low wages, who have little alternative than to drive:

They are forcing the working man off the road. The price of petrol, how many times has that increased? Road tax, insurance, the cost of the car. Nobody makes a big wage up here.

The point was made that improving public transport in urban areas might be meaningful, but in places like Consett the car is an essential form of transport because they are so isolated.

Minority ethnic groups, Liverpool

In Liverpool, one of the key aims of the focus groups was to explore the transport and accessibility needs of populations living in an inner city environment, where access to transport may be relatively good but other barriers may prevent its use. In particular, people from minority ethnic communities were identified as potentially disadvantaged in this way. To this end, one focus group discussion was held with members of Liverpool's Chinese community and one with non-English-speaking Yemeni women.

Access to employment

Access to employment emerged as a primary concern of the Chinese group. At one level, the problem was seen to be the low aspiration levels of some members of the community because of the historic associations of shop and restaurant work; this was felt to put a particular burden on young people seeking to break the cycle of low-paid service-sector work. Language was cited as another barrier to employment, as was more general discrimination in the workplace. However, a general lack of well-paid employment in the area was also seen as a problem and the point was made that you often had to travel to other major cities in order to find well-paid jobs:

I don't think there are the jobs in Liverpool. You have to look elsewhere. You can earn much more in another city.

Personal safety

Issues of personal safety and the safety of children were both key concerns for the Yemeni women's group:

> *I know I have frightened my children by telling them what could happen if they do not come home straight from school but that's better than finding that they have been attacked by the boys at the top of the street.*

Although, in other ways, the Toxteth area was seen as acting as a refuge from such danger:

> *My children know they can run into any of the Arabic shops. That's the good thing about living in this area.*

Participants who had lived longer in the Toxteth area tended to view the youth gangs on the streets at night as part of its culture and not particularly intimidating, in that the youths have nowhere else to go and street corners are natural 'hang-out' spots:

> *I've walked out at night past gangs. Sometimes I keep myself to myself and other times I say 'hello'. It's the same people we see during the day, it could even be your own next door neighbour, but I do understand why people would feel intimidated.*

Transportation and accessibility

Only one respondent in the Chinese group had the regular use of a car. The remainder of the respondents travelled around the area on a regular basis either by public transport or on foot, but some were more restricted in their mobility because of the nature of their employment. It emerged in discussion that several of the women in the Chinese group came from households with a car, but their husbands used it:

> *He's got the car. It's essential for his work. They* [the men in the household] *need it for their work.*

None of the Yemeni women drove a car and tended to restrict themselves to activities within the local area and, yet, they were unhappy about the level of provision available for them and their children locally. They largely felt constrained in their ability to access service further afield because of the language barrier, which they felt created a large sense of dependency. One participant described it as 'crippling'.

However, the group *did* feel that local shops were good in providing for their food needs, not only because of the types of foods on offer but also because many local shopkeepers speak Arabic. Some respondents travelled to supermarkets by car, but were dependent on others to drive them there.

Attitudes to public transport

Language also played a major role in inhibiting the Yemeni women's use of public transport. None of them had used a bus on their own and all of them felt that it would not be possible for them to do so. All of the participants had at least one member of their family who owned a car and, if this were not available, they would wait until it was, in order to travel, or take a taxi:

> *I don't know how to climb on the bus never mind going to the supermarket.*

The Chinese group also registered language as a barrier in using public transport for some members of their community:

Some people I see on the bus they don't understand exactly what the bus drivers say and the drivers don't understand what they are saying.

The cost of public transport was once again raised as an issue by both groups and, in particular for the Yemeni women, the cost of tickets relative to the cost of driving:

Tickets are very expensive. We once thought we would travel by coach to save money but it was only £2 cheaper and the journey was two hours longer.

Access Forum (disabled people), Liverpool

A discussion group was held with four mobility-impaired members of Merseytravel's Access Forum and one full-time carer. Two of the respondents in the group were wheelchair users, one respondent had an unidentified mobility problem and one member was a representative from Help the Aged. As a result, while there was a wide range of issues covered in relation to wheelchair access, the problems for other physical disabilities such as visual or hearing impairments and for people with learning difficulties were generally not discussed.

Government policies for disabled people

Policies for disabled people emerged as a key topic of discussion. At a macro level, reference was made to the 1995 Disabilities and Discrimination Act and the implications of this (service providers, including transport operators, are now potentially breaking the law

if they do not provide accessible transport). The respondents felt that, although the Act contained some positive initiatives, it also had limitations in relation to transport operators because it applied only to station environments and not to the vehicles themselves:

The transport part of it applies to station platforms. There's got to be access to all the information, there should be accessible timetables, you should be able to buy tickets, but that doesn't mean that you should be able to get on the train.

Travel patterns

Respondents were asked about their own travel practices and whether they considered these to be restricted by the transport system. The group made it clear to us that their travel patterns would be exactly the same as for the rest of the population, if only the transport system allowed it:

People in wheelchairs would, if they could, go to exactly the same places as you go to. The only reason they don't go is because they can't get there.

One respondent felt that there is a general view amongst some policy-makers that those with disabilities are interested only in travel to churches and hospitals, and there is an assumption that disabled people do not work:

The travel is very limited because of the policies that disabled travellers have absolutely no control over.

Removal of travel spontaneity was identified as a particular problem in this respect:

On principle I do not give two days' notice when I want to use the trains because I think that is illegal. Just because I'm in a wheelchair I have to give two days' notice when able-bodied people don't have to.

At a wider level, it was also felt that, no matter how much planning went on prior to making a trip, something would always go wrong:

Even when I have had planned journeys … even if I do phone up ahead of time, often it's not put down in the book. You turn up at the station and they say 'we didn't know you were coming', so there's no point in booking ahead anyway.

Accessible transport provision

The two wheelchair users in the group described to us a series of appalling experiences to illustrate the difficulties they faced when travelling by public transport. The following quotation illustrates just one example:

I had an experience at New Strand [Bootle] *where they had spent millions of pounds making the station accessible. I was on a business trip and the coach driver got hijacked and we were stranded in Bootle. Everybody else got a taxi but I can't get this* [his wheelchair] *in a taxi so I had to get a train … but the bloke in his little booth wouldn't come out. He said his radio was broken … I said 'I've got no other way of getting home'. I phoned up Customer Services and they said 'we'll pay for a taxi' but I said 'I can't get this in a taxi' and they said, 'Can't you get to the next station?' and I said, 'No, the next station isn't accessible and anyway it's two and a half miles away'.*

We were told that one major problem faced by people with mobility problems is the lack of staff at railway stations. This compounds many of the other problems arising from the physical layout and design of transport systems:

Because there's only one member of staff on most stations a lot of them are nervous about coming out onto the platform. They are very reluctant to help because they get mugged … two members of staff would be much better.

Even in areas where Public Transport Executives were considered to be proactive in making transport more accessible to disabled users, their efforts were felt, at times, to be undermined by the behaviour of some of the operators. For example, one private bus operator was accused of having developed a route structure that did not provide cross-city services, and of not always considering destinations when planning routes:

Public transport doesn't mean a thing. Okay, Merseytravel may be the governing body but they are powerless to do anything about how these bus companies operate. The only way that they are going to change is if it's financially viable for them to change.

One issue that was discussed at some length by the group was the limitations of the equipment on buses to make access viable for different types of wheelchairs and also the poor maintenance of ramps and other supporting equipment:

They don't seem to have given consideration to the long-term maintenance of ramps. A lot of the ramps are broken which again is very frustrating.

You wait for a bus that is supposed to be accessible, it turns up and the ramp is broken – he says, 'Sorry mate' – off he goes, you've got to wait another half hour for an accessible bus.

Another serious and frustrating problem is buses being unable to pull up at the curb because of parked cars or driver unwillingness to do so. This means that ramps cannot operate effectively. Furthermore, although the vehicles are not meant to move until the wheelchair is clamped in, one respondent had incurred damage to his wheelchair as a consequence of the driver moving forward before the wheelchair was secure:

The problem is that quite often the bus drivers don't pull into the curb anyway.

There's that problem of the driver pulling off before you've got into the wheelchair space. This wheelchair was damaged; it cost £90, because the driver pulled off. It smashed into the seat stanchion and smashed my lights.

It was felt that one problem for the bus drivers was that they were put under considerable pressure to keep to their schedules and consequently any 'delays' were unwelcome. Driver behaviour was described as variable, with some being rather better than others were when it came to the needs of the disabled (or indeed of any passengers). The point was also made that you can't always see people's physical disabilities and so, because drivers can't see it, they expect people to have no problems getting on the bus. The group suggested that one way around this would be to extend the common courtesies necessary to mobility-impaired passengers to all:

What we have always said on the Transport Access Panel, 'if you get it right for disabled people you get it right for everybody'. The whole of the Transport Access Panel says, 'Yes', but the bus companies, are they interested?

Other accessibility issues

Another extremely important issue for those who used wheelchairs was street design and curb ramps. The point was made that, even if the transport system were accessible, the streets were potentially a major obstacle to free movement:

Some of the curbs are lowered, some aren't. It's very difficult to plan.

They put in really rustic paving slabs. It looks really beautiful but try going down there in a wheelchair.

Cost of travel

Once again the cost of travel emerged as an issue, but from a different perspective. It became clear that there are significant costs associated with having to use a wheelchair. It appeared from the discussions that the quality of the NHS-provided wheelchairs was a major problem, and people often have to take out loans to buy better wheelchairs. Costs related not just to the substantial price of purchasing these but also wheelchair maintenance:

Peter's got a National Health wheelchair. It's so heavy. It does a maximum of five miles. That's one and a half hours. They wouldn't pay for the lights, which you need at night. It cost £300 to fit the lights.

All of my mobility allowance goes on these two wheelchairs.

Furthermore, because many wheelchair users cannot use public transport, they often have to use taxis, the cost of which cannot usually be reimbursed unless they are booked days in advance.

Older people, Hastings

The older people's group demonstrated a variety of domestic circumstances, with one couple living in sheltered accommodation with a warden, two of the respondents living with their (adult) children and the rest living alone. There was also a spectrum of mobility within the group with some of the respondents being more physically able than others, although all of the respondents were independent for the majority, if not all, of their needs.

Cost of living

A central topic of discussion was income and the high cost of living, and the restrictions of living on a state pension. The majority felt that it was very difficult to manage and that many activities were restricted by budgetary constraints:

> *Everything is so expensive anyway. If I want to go down to the cinema it's a lot of money and it's not worth it.*

Transport and accessibility

The majority of the respondents used the bus as their main mode of transport, and several also still walked considerable distances for shopping or visiting friends:

> *I'm nearly 80 and I walk everywhere. I can walk for miles and my feet never play me up. I do a lot of shopping on foot. If I do a big shop I come home by taxi.*

Taxis were also an important aspect of their mobility. Some used them for the return leg of the shopping trip or to visit people, and for trips to and from the hospital. There was some concern about the difference in cost of the various taxi firms in the area:

> *I wish they'd get their act together. I've never worked out how they can charge one price for one journey and then another price for the same journey. Some charge £2.10 pence a mile and some £1.80, so you've got to watch which one you take.*

Although there is no local authority scheme for taxi travel for the elderly in Hastings, we were told that one of the taxi firms distributed tokens:

> *Tabar have tokens don't they? It must be a scheme run by them. They send them through the door. We use them a lot.*

Local facilities

A major theme of discussion was how respondents managed their shopping activities. Some walked to the shops whilst others made use of friends or family with cars to help them do some of the major shopping. They felt that St Leonards benefited from quite a number of small shops, which reduced their need to visit the out-of-town or edge-of-town shopping locations, even if these small shops might be a little more expensive than the larger supermarkets. It was also noted that the local shops allowed individuals to purchase smaller amounts of food more suited to their needs – something the supermarkets do not tend to cater for:

Personally, living on my own, I shop in all these shops around here. That's all I do. I go from here because there's only myself. It's only a few pence difference.

Several of the respondents made the point that, if the journey to the supermarket involved having to get a taxi back, the saving made on the prices was lost in the fare for the taxi.

Access to health care

The issue of health and access to health care was, understandably, also of major importance to most members of the group; clearly this was not always adequate. One respondent who had suffered a stroke and had to visit the hospital on a regular basis told us he had a journey of an hour to get there. This is because he cannot walk to the top of the hill to catch the faster bus service and has to use one that goes around the edge of the town:

If I get on the bus to go to the hospital it takes me an hour. I've got to get up the hill to get the other bus and the easy way is to get on the bus and sit there for an hour.

Personal safety

Although most of the respondents felt that they could get around reasonably well during the daylight hours, there was a complete consensus that travel after dark was virtually out of the question, unless someone else took them by car. Their main reason for not travelling after dark was fear of attack and they told us that they were virtually prisoners in their own homes after dark:

I just don't go out at night.

There was a also definite feeling amongst the groups that speeding vehicles constrained even their daytime walking activities:

We know how dangerous it is with cars in our area, tearing down the roads. To cross the road it's horrendous. It's terrifying.

Attitudes to public transport

In relation to public transport, the group talked mostly about the local bus services, as they used these most often. Only one respondent had a Senior Citizen's railcard, as none of the others felt they used the trains often enough to justify this expense. Indeed, some of the respondents were very reluctant to use rail at all because they did not feel safe without the immediate presence of staff and, as such, the coach emerged as the preferred mode even for longer distance travel.

The Senior Citizen bus pass has been provided free of charge for the first time this year in Hastings (previously it had been £7); with the card, all journeys by bus are charged at half fare. All respondents in the group welcomed the card; however, they felt that the area covered by the scheme was quite limiting:

It's not so bad the half fare but we can't go very far with it. It's only just in this area. It's just such short distances. If we could go further with it, it would be good.

A major issue for the group in terms of their use of public transport was the difficulty of using bus services alongside local schoolchildren. Not only were the children seen to be badly behaved, which offended many of the older bus users, but their boisterous

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behaviour also created a hazard for the less mobile older passengers. The group wanted to have separate school bus services or to reintroduce conductors on the buses (or indeed both).

They said that, for them, just getting onto the bus is sometimes extremely difficult and the reintroduction of conductors would help with this problem as well as keeping the children in check:

> *The days of a conductor, who would oversee people getting to their seats or getting up the stairs, they've gone. No conductor, no control. The driver's got to look everywhere. He's got the money and everything to do. He's got too much to do.*

We were told that another problem for older people and the less mobile in accessing even the special low-floor buses is that they often have to park a long way from the curb. This is due to the presence of either other buses or, more often, parked cars at the bus stop and is consistent with what we were told by the Access Forum in Liverpool:

> *It's often a case that the bus can't get into the stop half the time because of the parked cars so they have to stand out in the middle of the road and it destroys the effort of the low step, you've got to step up from the road.*

Infrequent or non-existent Sunday services on some routes were also a problem for the group. It was pointed out that Sunday is the day when people wanted to visit their friends and family:

> *We only have one bus an hour on Sundays.*

> *People want to visit friends on a Sunday.*

The respondents felt that, in the past, when bus services were in public ownership, they were better than they are today. The car was thought to have been the basis of the decline in public transport, and it was recognised that to a great extent the reason for the poorer quality of public transport was that fewer people were using it. Nevertheless, the respondents were also very critical of the local bus operators and their role in the decline of services. They felt the operators did not consider themselves as providers of a public service but were concerned only with profit:

> *Transport is now based on profit and loss, not on people … people don't count. They merge two companies, sack half the staff; that means more profit for the company.*

Rural groups, Lincolnshire

In Lincolnshire we visited two small villages and recruited one group in each. People were selected to ensure a range of ages, household compositions and employment status, in order to try and secure a number of perspectives of transport and accessibility need in rural areas. All the participants were from low-income households.

The people we spoke to were generally very positive about the places in which they lived, describing them as friendly with peaceful environments. We were told that, like any small community, there were particular cliques, but this was seen an inevitable consequence of living in a small rural community.

Local activities

Inevitably, the range of local facilities in the villages was limited. In particular, the Brookenby residents regretted the loss of the local Spar supermarket, which had recently closed down:

I'll tell you a bad thing. We lost our little Spar shop. That is a bad thing that happened to us.

Residents also wished that there were a pub locally. In fact, there was a pub in the adjacent village a mile away, but residents felt that they would not be welcomed there.

In Eastville, the residents most wanted local health-care facilities, even if these could be provided only on a part-time basis. It was felt that if the village were to have such a centre this might act as a catalyst for other community activity and it would provide a meeting place for mothers with small children:

It's a bad thing, there's no medical centre here. It's quite small but it's big enough for a medical centre.

The Eastville residents were particularly appreciative of the services provided by the local Post Office. We were told:

If the Post Office closed down we'd be knackered.

Both villages were served by some mobile services (a mobile library in both villages and a mobile butcher in Eastville) but these were not viewed as being of major significance in terms of meeting people's basic needs. In both groups, mention was made of the delivery services of supermarkets such as Iceland and one or two of the respondents indicated that they had used this service, which was generally thought to be

a good idea but as a supplement to the major shopping trip rather than as a replacement.

Social activities in Eastville were identified as extremely limited and largely oriented towards the older residents and people from neighbouring villages. The respondents referred to the bingo, dog training, car boot sales, an annual country fair, indoor bowls and a Welcome Club for older people.

In Brookenby, there was a wider range of activities on offer at the Community Centre, but these were said to be organised by a certain group of residents on their terms and often to the exclusion of other residents.

Respondents from both villages expressed the opinion that there was not a lot on offer for young children and one of the main problems of living in a rural area for teenagers included the lack of evening entertainment. Travelling into nearby towns for pubs and clubs meant that one person had to drive and not drink, they had to get taxis (at significant cost), or would have to stay overnight with friends:

It's remote, which is a good thing but it's also a bad thing. You can't go out at night 'cause it's a bit of a trek into Grimsby if you want to go there. [Brookenby]

A taxi back at night would cost you 20 to 25 quid from Skegness to here and back so you're caught going out. They could have a bus. [Eastville]

Both groups described a trade-off between the positive aspect of overall quality of life in a rural area, poor accessibility and the cost of living:

If you're spending 160 quid a month out of your wages [on travel] *plus your mortgage you've got to like the place you're living in.*

I ran out of sugar and had to pay 85p so you're paying double. I don't like spending more. A couple of pence wouldn't be too bad.

I use 20 quid in petrol just going to school and back even if I don't go anywhere else.

Transport and accessibility

Inevitably, both groups demonstrated a large degree of dependence on locations outside of the villages for shopping, health services and entertainment. Not surprisingly, therefore, virtually all the respondents used their cars as the main mode of transport and for all types of trips. However, in many cases they tried to combine journeys so they could reduce the number and frequency of trips:

Living here you tend to do lots of things at the same time. You don't just go to do your shopping; you do that and something else there. You try and set your dentist appointment on the same day.

It was also very evident that in households with only one car (the majority), household members would go to considerable lengths to 'juggle' access to it so that they could derive the maximum benefit from it:

I work my hours around my husband because he does two days, two night shifts and four shifts off so it's like an eight-day cycle and it changes each week and I said to them it's got to work around his hours otherwise I can't do the job. They worked around it and everyone in the shop changed their hours.

In both groups, there was a consensus that life in the villages was completely dependent on access to a car and was thought to be particularly important for families with young children in terms of access to health services:

I'd be lost without a car. I don't use the car every day but you never know when you are going to need that car, especially with young kids. Like the other week mine had an accident at school and if I hadn't had a car … How would I get to the hospital in Boston?

Just as the car was seen to be of major importance to families with young children, the point was made that parents of teenage children also needed one:

Every Saturday my eldest wants to be up in town and we've got to take him and sit up there for four hours.

The degree of importance of the car in terms of the quality of life ranged from those who said that their quality of life would be diminished significantly if they could not use their car as much as they currently do (if it became more expensive to use the car), through to those who felt that they would have to reconsider where they lived if they did not have access to a car. The point was made that people who could not drive before moving to the area quickly recognised that they needed to learn:

Before I bought the house up here I couldn't drive. I learnt to drive because we were moving out here. I had to because I wouldn't have got to work.

The respondents in both groups agreed that a car was a virtual necessity if you wanted to have a job but the point was made that a car was essential even for signing on to claim state benefits:

If you've got to go and sign on you have to make sure you've got the money and the petrol to get there … You have to have a car to sign on.

Attitudes to public transport

The main attitude to public transport was that, although it was not a realistic alternative for the vast majority of residents, it represents an *essential service* for those without access to a car, even given the paucity of services in both the villages:

> *A lot of the elderly people in the village without a car can't do without the bus.*

Attitudes to transport policy

Almost without exception, the respondents in both groups expressed the unprompted opinion that the Government's current transport policy is based on 'attacking the motorist' and a desire to 'get the cars off the roads'. There was considerable concern about the impact this has on rural dwellers, particularly those living on low incomes. We were told that if the policy continued they would have no option but to pay the additional cost even at the expense of other household needs:

> *There would be less money for the kids' shoes.*

> *Something else would have to suffer. The amount of times you would go out socially, taking the kids out.*

> *I'd have to think about moving or get a really well paid job.*

There was little confidence that additional support for public transport services could provide an effective solution in rural areas.

Personal safety

Both villages were described to us as generally very safe places to live and relatively crime free;

however, there were some concerns about speeding vehicles and the risk to children:

> *Nobody slows down for the village speed limits. You've got dead straight roads and sometimes you're through the speed limit before you realise they are there.*

Hidden deprivation, Bristol

In most of the case study areas, focus groups were held in areas housing predominantly low-income groups. In Bristol, however, the intention was to recruit people living in 'hidden pockets' of deprivation in a relatively affluent area of the suburbs. The aim was to directly compare the experience and attitudes of this group to those of their more affluent neighbours. It was thought that the needs and problems of disadvantaged individuals in such situations are often entirely bypassed by policy intervention and any exclusion may therefore be experienced more acutely. To this end, we recruited a group of residents living in Westbury-on-Trym village and a group of residents from the adjacent Southmead council estate.

Lifestyle experiences

It became immediately apparent that the Southmead residents were very angry and bitter about a whole range of issues to an extent that we had not experienced in the other case study areas. They were also deeply sceptical about national and local government policies to address the needs of low-income families and areas of social deprivation, and felt that modern life was increasing social exclusion.

Furthermore, there was a deep feeling of mistrust in institutions and the policy-makers:

The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. The Government don't seem to realise that they're the ones making the areas poorer and they are making people turn against them because they're not helping.

The residents in the Southmead group told us that they were never consulted about anything and even canvassers would not enter the estate:

Every week I go up to Filton and there they've got canvassers going round saying 'Do you like tea bags? Yes, right, there's 40 tea bags' … and yet you never get them in Southmead.

The respondents felt that they were unjustly stigmatised by people from Westbury-on-Trym (the neighbouring area) and other parts of Bristol. Based on the discussion with the residents of Westbury-on-Trym, this observation did appear to be true. The Westbury residents seemed to feel the need to protect themselves from the council residents:

I think we are a bit of an island, I think we ought to put up a fence actually.

Electrified … We are only joking.

It was also clear that some of the respondents in the higher-income group felt that much of the crime in the area was probably a consequence of being close to what were considered to be 'undesirable' areas of the city:

It might be prejudiced and a generalisation to say so but you would imagine it's probably the kids from that sort of area [poor council estates] *who come in. There are countless numbers of*

burglaries in the area – shed burglaries, all sorts of things, minor thefts in this area.

However, the lower-income group also registered deep concerns about crime in the area and expressed fears about walking around the estate after dark.

Access to services

The respondents in the lower-income group felt that there were many problems associated with youth unemployment, the poor career prospects for young people living in their area and a general lack of facilities for young people. This was seen to contribute to youth disaffection and crime and disorder:

At the end of the day the kids do want something to do. They want parks they can go to and feel safe in. A lot of the parks have been closed basically because they are unsafe.

Access to health care was a concern of both groups. As was the situation in some of the other case study areas, local health-care provision was praised in terms of the quality of the doctors and the treatment, but it was felt that facilities were overstretched in terms of the number of patients.

Access to education also emerged as a key issue in the area. It emerged that one primary school acted as a draw to the area for higher income groups:

The school, Elm Lea, the junior and infants' school has a very good reputation and all the estate agents market that. [Westbury]

However, secondary education provision seemed to be a problem and brought to the surface a number of complex and controversial social issues. It transpired in discussion that

there *is* a local secondary school in the local
area, but the majority of the respondents in the
Westbury group felt that this school would not
be 'suitable' for their children, not only in terms
of the quality of the education but also because
of where the school is located:

> *Let's face it, in general, Henbury is not a nice
> area. The old Henbury village is nice but most of it
> is not a place you would want to live.*

The Southmead residents were also very
angry about the quality of local education,
which they felt had been exacerbated by
closures of schools:

> *There are too many in a classroom. There's 47
> children to one teacher. How do you control that?*

The main difference between the two groups
in terms of access to education was that the
Westbury residents felt they had other options
available to them, in that they could drive their
children to schools outside the area, move to
another area or pay for private education.
Conversely, the Southmead residents felt they
had none of these choices available to them and
were thus 'stuck' with the local schools.

In terms of shopping, although both groups
felt that there are quite adequate local shopping
facilities, the Southmead residents were more
likely to carry out their shopping activities
locally than the Westbury group.

Attitudes to transport

Not surprisingly, the respondents from the
Westbury group made the vast majority of their
journeys by car. Essentially, they felt that the car
provided them with the quality of life they
wanted and that living in the area without a car
would substantially reduce this:

> *To me it's absolutely essential unless you want to
> do all of your business, all of your entertaining,
> live your entire life in Westbury-on-Trym, then as
> far as I'm concerned you need a car.*

It was interesting to contrast this view of the
car with that expressed by the Southmead
residents:

> *People do drive totally uneconomically. They use
> their cars, you shouldn't even need to own a car
> [living in Bristol].*

> *People think it's their right though don't they?*

In the case of the lower-income group, all of
the respondents either used public transport or
walked for the majority of their trips. One
respondent who walked felt that many car
owners used their vehicles unnecessarily:

> *I walk of course. I know some people with a car
> and they jump into it to go down the road – it's
> lazy. People do it to save a five-minute walk.*

Not surprisingly, concerns about public
transport were quite different between the two
groups. The Westbury respondents were
generally infrequent users of public transport
and tended to emphasise the poor frequency
and unreliability of the bus services as the main
reason for not using them:

> *The routes are excellent but the buses just don't
> run. I waited for a bus that's meant to run every
> 12 minutes in the village the other day and I
> waited for 45 minutes, which is ridiculous.*

Although the adequacy of the public
transport system during the day was also cited
as a problem for the low-income respondents,
who rely on these services much more heavily,
there was also evidence to suggest that the high

cost of fares was more of a problem, as well as the absence of late night and early morning services to employment locations:

Buses are pretty good around here except they're too pricey.

The fact that it was not possible to obtain a return ticket (at reduced cost) before nine o'clock was another criticism of the bus service in the area. This was felt to be a particular disadvantage for those who are employed on low incomes or for people just starting work:

So those that are unemployed or who've just started work have to pay more.

Right, like you start a job and you've got to wait say a month [to get paid] *… so money is short. So say you've got to start work at half past seven in the morning, they won't let you* [buy a return ticket]. *After nine o'clock you can get returns … You've got to buy a single which makes it double the price.*

Personal safety

The issue of personal safety on public transport was a concern for the low-income group, who said problems of social order and public behaviour were spilling over onto the public transport system making it undesirable to use:

The people that go on the buses, some of them are completely disgusting.

The only way is to make it safer and nicer to go on a bus. You've got to stop some people getting on.

The Southmead respondents felt that, for many older people on the estate, fear for their personal safety on public transport meant they did not get out as often as they would like:

There's a lot of them [older people] *that are too scared to go out. When they get on a bus they don't get any help anyway. It's like one who lost his car recently; to go on a bus frightens him to death.*

Road safety was more of an issue for the Westbury residents:

This road is a nightmare. They come round this corner really fast.

But what was particularly interesting was that they were often a part of this problem:

I don't want my children near people speeding. It drives me mad and I speed as well in the car but when I see people speeding along Stoke Lane I think for God's sake it's about time we had some sleeping policemen, put in some traffic calming measures.

Government policies and local government initiatives

In both groups, there was considerable criticism levelled at both national and local government policies. Respondents felt that Bristol City Council is failing to address local issues, particularly with regard to education. Respondents in the Southmead group felt that the area was almost totally ignored by the local council and that, more generally, central government is ignoring the problems of low-income families in such areas:

I think the Government should do something about it to be honest. I recall one of the MPs was asked 'why don't you live on the same money as we do and see how you survive?' and he said no, he refused to live for a week on the money we do.

There was some discussion in both groups about the Government's transport policy and local transport initiatives. Even the respondents in the lower-income group were very negative about the concept of congestion charging in Bristol, even though they did not drive there themselves. They could not see these charges as being separate from local taxation, which they felt was already too high. Furthermore, one respondent could not understand why additional charges should be made to drivers when they were already paying road tax:

If you say that they might have to pay, charged to go into town, with your own car, why do they pay road tax now?

Although investment in public transport and, particularly lower-cost public transport, was an important issue for the Southmead residents, this was not felt to be the highest priority for the area:

Quite obviously education comes over transport.

Part 3: Cross-cutting themes and the potential to address key concerns

Clearly, within the scope of this study, we were unable to examine the full complexity of issues for each life stage in each of the case study areas. For example, we did not speak to anyone under the age of 18 or over the age of 60 living in rural areas, although it is recognised that there would clearly be some particular issues for these groups. Similarly, we did not meet with representatives from all the minority ethnic populations living in Liverpool or, indeed, consider the experiences of these populations in other cities or settlement types.

As such, this report does not claim to present a full picture of the transport and accessibility perspectives of all disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities living in the UK. It has, however, been possible to identify some common concerns in relation to transport and accessibility, which cut across a number of the groups we spoke to. These issues, together with an analysis of the potential to address them in the present policy climate, form the subject of this chapter.

Is transport a primary concern?

It became clear through the course of the study that transport is not a primary preoccupation of many low-income groups and that the role of transport in facilitating or eroding their quality of life often goes unrecognised. Nevertheless, poor transport provision was often seen to have an implicit or knock-on effect in terms of the disadvantages and exclusion the groups experienced. In particular, it was noted to act as a barrier to:

- access to high quality education

- public order, particularly in relation to youth disaffection

- the social integration of older people

- access to adequate health care facilities

- the take-up of employment.

In common with Burningham and Thrush (2001), we found that non-localised environmental concerns, such as global warming, were almost entirely absent from our discussions and the people we spoke to generally took 'the environment' to refer to their immediate surroundings. People living in the rural and post-industrial areas we visited considered themselves to have a very good environment and felt that air pollution was not really a relevant issue for them, although a general lack of transport was of far more immediate concern to these groups.

Air quality and road accidents did emerge as a particular issue for the schoolchildren we spoke to, as many of them suffered from asthma and/or had been witnesses to accidents. Both groups in Bristol were also concerned about road safety, particularly in relation to children. It emerged from their own admission that the high-income group was also part of the problem, feeling that speeding was their right because of the busy lifestyles they led. Nevertheless, neither group favoured the local authority's attempts to reduce car dependency in Bristol and they both felt that the money would be better spent on improving education. In general, we found that, if air quality and/or

other environmental impacts from transport were not immediately apparent in an area, they were not of concern to the people we spoke to. Where there was a noticeable environmental problem arising from transport, people did not feel that they could do anything about it and so accepted it as a 'fact of life'.

In many ways, these responses are a reflection on the failure of both transport and environmental policy to raise awareness at the local level. Many people are unclear about the environmental and social issues surrounding transport and rarely make the link between policies that attempt to mitigate these impacts and their own travel behaviour. It could be argued that local authorities need to make the environmental and social imperatives more explicit when introducing measures to reduce car dependency. However, there is no evidence to suggest that a more direct or educative approach will work in this respect and measures to reduce car use are often regarded as 'political suicide' by local authorities and so their introduction is seldom shouted from the rooftops of city halls.

Does local accessibility lie at the heart of the problem?

Evidently, transport cannot be properly explored in isolation from its accessibility function or as divorced from the context of people's daily lives and lifestyle circumstances. It is often, therefore, easier to discuss the problem of transport in terms of poor access to services and this was indeed the case with this study. It was clear that a significant number of the people we spoke to did not want to travel outside their local area if at all possible and thus

their primary concerns did centre on the quality and availability of local services in their area. In this respect, all but the group of older people felt local provision in their areas to be inadequate to their basic needs.

The youth group in Hastings, the unemployed group in Consett, both the rural groups and the Chinese group in Liverpool all cited a lack of suitable local employment as a primary area of concern, in a hierarchy of basic needs. Many of the unemployed people we spoke to felt that it was unreasonable to be expected to travel long distances (more than 20 miles) outside of their local area just to take up poorly paid employment elsewhere. Neither did many want to move from the places where they had been brought up to take up work elsewhere. They wanted more and better paid jobs provided locally, usually to replace those that had been lost through the changing structure of employment in their areas. This did not seem an unreasonable demand, particularly as both the employment and housing markets are overheated in many other parts of the country.

There was a strong sense in some of the groups that each local area should have a minimum level of essential services, although it was not clear what this should be. In many instances, it seemed to constitute the very thing considered most lacking in the area. For example, in one village a shop and a pub were seen as essential, in another a local health centre or a secondary school. A lack of facilities and activities for young people ran as a common theme across several of the groups and was seen to be a significant factor in the rise in youth disaffection in many areas. It was pointed out to us on several occasions that, if activities are not

provided locally, the additional cost of transport to travel to places outside the local area effectively puts them out of the price range of low-income groups, particularly young people.

Clearly, from the perspective of both the environmental and transport lobby, a desire to carry out the majority of activities within your own local area is to be applauded and encouraged. From a social perspective, however, there may be a need to problematise these low-mobility aspirations. Those promoting the social inclusion of people living in low-income areas find that an unwillingness to travel outside of the local area may be exacerbating their social isolation and encouraging the pursuit of limited horizons. We agree with this view to a certain extent, as in some cases we observed that a person's unwillingness to travel was clearly linked to a more general fear of the unknown and often manifested itself in parochial attitudes. This fear was often accompanied by a lack of knowledge about the transport system or the availability of facilities in other areas and sometimes led to reduced social and economic horizons, and lower aspirations. In this respect, simply improving local services per se will be insufficient to ensure the greater inclusion of such people and may also prove an expensive and difficult way to deliver a solution to the problems they are experiencing.

We would therefore argue that, while the promotion of local activities should be encouraged and supported to a certain extent, it is unreasonable to expect that every local neighbourhood could support a full range of local services and amenities. A more realistic approach is to:

- provide facilities for a collection of neighbouring areas within local centres or hub and ensure adequate and affordable public transport links to them from surrounding areas; or

- develop a network of services in different locations and link these by a comprehensive public transport network; and/or

- provide mobile or peripatetic services to provide for the needs of a number of outlying communities.

Whilst all this approach is consistent with current government land-use and transport policies, we could see little evidence of its application in the areas we visited. On the contrary, most were experiencing the loss of local services and cutbacks in public transport to neighbouring areas in favour of centralised routes.

Can public transport get you there or is the car now a basic need?

All of the groups were very damning of public transport services in their areas, although these ranged from a virtually non-existent bus service in the rural areas to quite frequent and comprehensive multi-modal networks in the more urban areas. Our respondents identified a number of barriers to their use or to greater use of public transport, most importantly:

- the high cost of fares relative to their incomes and inappropriate fare structuring at certain times of the day

- the inadequacy of routes accessing essential services such as hospitals, colleges and shops

- poor vehicular access and supporting infrastructure

- poor staff training and inadequate staffing (in particular the absence of conductors)

- the problem of personal safety and security for vulnerable groups.

The study has identified that public transport is never likely to be a viable option for some people, however low their income. In our groups, this was identified as particularly the case for:

- people living in isolated rural communities

- those working late-night shifts and/or at isolated locations on the edge of town

- many women undertaking multi-purpose trips under time constraints.

The focus groups established that some households would forgo other basic amenities in order to maintain their car ownership and use.

There is obviously a point at which the rising cost of car ownership and use would become unaffordable for these marginal car-owning households and policy needs to consider the impact of this on their lives, should they find themselves priced out of the market. For some, particularly rural dwellers, it would become impossible for them to maintain an existence living where they do; for others it could mean

giving up their employment and resorting to claiming benefits; and for many older car drivers it would be a considerable blow to their independence. Furthermore, our research suggests that the car owners in many low-income groups often act as an informal community transport service for those without cars. The loss of a car in these instances would impact not only on the driver and their household but also on all those he/she takes to work, to the supermarket and to the hospital or school as a part of their routine travel.

More fundamentally, the focus group evidence suggests that, unless the issue of inadequate and over-costly public transport is addressed, even those on very constrained incomes will seek to own cars. Clearly, this is of considerable significance to local authorities in their delivery of the Government's policies to reduce the number of cars on the road. Furthermore, increases in current traffic levels are not in the interest of the national economy, the global environment or the public health of the nation. Nevertheless, our study suggests that, for as long as there is a shortfall in the availability of adequate and affordable public transport, many of today's non-car owning households *will* strive to own cars, and car ownership and use will escalate rather than decrease or stabilise. 'Forcing' car ownership on low-income households in this way is not only a problem for environmentalists but should also be of concern to the poverty lobby. We feel that affording the basic essentials such as food, warmth and clothes is enough of a demand to place on those in receipt of minimum incomes, without requiring they own a car in order to claim their social security benefits!

Do measures to control the environmental impact of car use conflict with social inclusion?

We were honestly surprised at the level of animosity expressed by a number of the groups towards pricing policies to restrict car use. It should be noted that the focus groups were held prior to recent increases to the price of fuel and the protests so that, at the time, such debates were unrehearsed amongst the general public. Nevertheless, even those participants without cars appeared to be strongly against policies that would make their ownership and use more expensive should they ever have the opportunity to own one.

In Bristol, the local authority has been actively promoting the introduction of a limited £1 pricing policy for cars entering the square mile of the town centre and proposes to use the money that it collects to fund a light rapid transit route. Both car owners and non-car owners in these groups were furious about this proposal, expressing the opinion that the Council gets enough money from tax already and that they should do more about education before worrying about transport.

Perhaps we should not have been so surprised at these reactions; after all, everyone we spoke to in the course of our research who owned a car said that they would not be able to meet their basic needs without one. Furthermore, nearly all those people participating in the study who did not have a car relied on lifts from friends and family who did own cars, for at least some of their trips; they would obviously be sensitive to any anxieties about its continued affordability. In the more car-dependent case study areas where cars were seen as a necessity we were told that, if

driving became more expensive than it already is, quality of life would be seriously compromised.

Some felt that they would not be able to continue living in rural areas and expressed the view that the Government is punishing them for trying to maintain their rural lifestyles. Finally, a significant number of participants from the very young to the not so young said that they would like to own a car one day if they could afford it. These findings suggest that policies to 'cost the environment' into car use are essentially inequitable in that they effectively 'pull the ladder up from the bottom', have a disproportionate negative impact on low-income car-owning households and increase the travel poverty of non-car-owning households who rely on lifts from others to meet some of their travel needs.

What can local authorities do to resolve these issues?

During the course of this study, we undertook a series of interviews with key local professionals acting in various capacities within the local council in each of the case study areas. The aim was to explore the extent to which the identified needs and problems are already recognised by local authorities, and whether policy solutions are being formulated and administered. We consider it pertinent to offer some of their observations in relation to the issues that have been identified above.

On the whole, we found that officers were highly aware of the problems identified in the group discussions. Furthermore, many of the local authorities that participated in the study were actively promoting programmes to tackle

social exclusion in their areas, some of which included projects to improve the accessibility of disadvantaged groups. In most instances, these projects were targeted at improving access to employment. In some instances, they were able to talk about particular projects they had initiated to try to tackle some of the identified problems, and sometimes they identified specific barriers to such intervention. Only occasionally were they found to be totally unaware of the problems we have identified.

Improving local service provision

Officers in the rural authorities noted the disproportionate impact on low-income groups of the closure/relocation of services (e.g. banks, post offices, hospitals, etc.). They also pointed to the potential negative knock-on effects of this, such as failed appointment rates and the long-term implications of such closures for an ageing and thereby increasingly less mobile population. A number were attempting to provide enhanced local service provision, particularly in the more rural or isolated areas. They identified that limited resources and heterogeneity of needs in these areas restricted both the quality and quantity of provision. Officers referred to the 'territorial' or 'parochial' nature of some communities, which manifested itself as an unwillingness to use facilities in neighbouring areas. This prevented effective sharing of provision and acted as a drain on scarce resources.

The problems of retaining and/or providing basic local services in low-income areas in the wider economic climate of competition was also noted, as were the conflicting intentions and competing priorities of central government

policies within and between departments, for example the centralisation of hospital services.

Some officers, particularly in the more remote and rural areas, brought up the potential role of information technology in reducing exclusion, by providing access to goods and services electronically. In the focus groups, however, few of the respondents considered this important and most did not own and had not even used a computer, suggesting a possible lack of awareness amongst officers of the 'digital divide'.

Improving public transport provision

The main issue for officers in relation to public transport was that of limited resources, the constraints placed on them by regulations surrounding the allocation of available funding and its short-term nature, together with their insufficient powers to effect the necessary changes. Some officers also discussed the negative impact of deregulation on bus services and the difficulty of dealing with numerous operators working within tight profit margins.

The recent announcement of substantial increases in funding for transport provision was felt to be doing little to address the problems faced by many disadvantaged groups, as it is targeted at capital (e.g. new services) not revenue (e.g. subsidised fares) expenditure. The affordability of fares was heavily emphasised by some of the officers we spoke to as a factor in social exclusion. For example, Merseytravel considered reducing the cost of fares would be *the single most important thing they could do to bring about social and economic regeneration in their area* and would like to extend their concessionary fares to include people on

benefits. This is not currently permissible under central government policy.

However, the relative impact of fares on low-income groups was not *always* appreciated by those setting them. For example, officers in one case study area drew our attention to the low cost of a £5 weekly season ticket. However, focus groups established that this would be considered by local people to be a lot of money for someone on benefit to pay up front and/or would be prohibitive to a family with several children.

Some officers did refer to issues of personal safety on public transport, but their main policy focus was on the introduction of CCTV, whereas the respondents tended to favour improved staffing levels. It is recognised here that officers are essentially powerless to influence the staffing of public transport services in the present policy climate.

Enhancing employment opportunity

The role of transport in both the take-up of employment and increasing employment opportunity was well recognised by officers. Lack of transport was often referred to as the underlying factor in the higher than average unemployment and/or the low wage economy of many of the areas we visited. There was a general recognition of the need to provide public transport links between areas of low income and employment zones, and many authorities were making good progress in developing such routes.

However, the difficulties of providing public transport to serve the needs of much of the new flexible employment on offer (e.g. call centres, food packaging factories, etc.), given its shift-work patterns and remote locations, were seen by officers as virtually insurmountable. Some expressed frustration that employers did not have to take on the responsibility of getting their staff to work. They often therefore chose inappropriate locations for their businesses and/or failed to make any attempt to co-ordinate shift-work patterns with public transport services. It appeared that this was partially true of isolated areas of high unemployment where finding employees is not a problem (e.g. Consett). However, we identified that elsewhere some employers are now providing their own transport services for getting staff to work outside the normal working day (e.g. Gatwick Airport).

Tackling car dependency

Apart from in Liverpool, most officers across all the local authorities we spoke to felt that the car was a necessary requirement for full economic and social participation in their area and/or in order to achieve a reasonable quality of life. This is an interesting observation considering that only one of the case study areas we visited is actually classified as a rural area by the Government.

The potential impact of measures to reduce car use on low-income groups was also brought into question by a number of officers, particularly those in the rural authorities. Officers in Lincolnshire felt that, in conjunction with the closure of local services, many of these measures (e.g. town centre and work-place parking charges) would tend to 'increase economic hardship and encourage the further exclusion of low-income groups in rural areas'. Officers in Liverpool described the resistance of potential developers/businesses to the possible introduction of workplace charging and road-

pricing in the city. They told us they felt unable to introduce such measures whilst trying to promote the regeneration of the city, as it would 'kill regeneration stone dead'.

Bristol City Council was actively promoting Green Transport Plans, in order to reduce the traffic congestion, which they described as having a negative impact on the economic development and stability of the town centre. Here, transport officers told us that they felt that being forced to get a car was an 'unfair burden to place on low-income groups', and that public transport should be of a 'sufficient standard to make this unnecessary'. Nevertheless, the Community Development Officer told us that it was virtually impossible to get to many of the peripheral employment locations in Bristol without a car, and that this is usually one of the first things newly employed people in Bristol purchase.

More generally, officers noted insufficient policy guidance, poor transference of best-practice examples and a lack of robust analysis of the problems, issues and concerns at the local level as barriers to more efficient policy delivery.

What are the wider policy implications of the research?

Until quite recently, the transport and accessibility needs and concerns of disadvantaged groups had been largely unrecognised within the policy context. However, the Government's new agenda for transport now notes differential access to cars in a car-dominant society as potentially contributing to the social exclusion of certain groups and communities. To this end, the policy recommendation is that local authorities

evaluate the social equity implications of their transport policies and design local programmes to address shortfalls in provision. Our study suggests that the problems that local authorities will encounter in such evaluations are likely to be diverse and related to the broader context of people's daily lives and lifestyle circumstances, making their successful resolution a highly complex matter.

More fundamentally, the study suggests that many of the problems associated with poor transport and accessibility are *beyond the capacity of local authorities to resolve* as they relate directly to the broader social and economic climate. Therefore, while the suggestion that social equity evaluation becomes a feature of central and local government transport policy and provision is welcomed, it is unlikely that the problems of disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities will be understood or addressed by the policies put forward by draft PPG 13 or the 1998 Transport White Paper.

Despite the existence for some six years of policies to promote integrated land use and transport planning and to prevent out-of-town development, there is little evidence of a downturn in this trend (Lucas *et al.*, 2000). Neither is there much evidence of an upturn in the provision of adequate and affordable public transport in many parts of the country. As a result, almost anyone living in all but the very centre of our major cities needs to own a car in order to fully participate in all of the activities that are necessary for achieving a reasonable standard of living in the twenty-first century.

There is nothing to suggest that anything will happen to change this situation in the near future and, under such circumstances, policies that make car ownership and use unaffordable

for low-income groups are, by their very nature, inequitable and unjust. Such an approach not only represents a policy conflict with the social inclusion agenda but also is the least effective method of reducing car use. All the evidence suggests that car owners in low-income households already travel far less and use their cars more sparingly than people on high incomes do. Generically applied pricing polices simply remove these marginal users from the equation, whilst allowing those who can afford to pay to carry on unchecked in their environmentally damaging behaviour.

This is not to suggest, however, that no attempt should be made to put an environmental cost on car use, only that environment and equity issues should be considered together. Ultimately, raising fuel taxes to reflect the true environmental cost of car use is probably the only viable way forward (short of rationing travel to ensure that everyone has an equal share – by far the most equitable but a highly impracticable method of distribution). An equitable strategy to reduce car use must *begin* by providing adequate and affordable public transport. Only then should policies to price the car off the road be introduced and even then there needs to be a system for compensating low-income car-dependent households, such as those living in rural areas and/or shift-working.

Furthermore, as determinants of travel are dependent on so many other policy interactions, unless analysis of the transport and accessibility impacts of other areas of decision-making, such as health, education and employment, becomes a feature of the policy formulation and funding considerations of other departments, car dependency will be perpetuated even amongst those on the lowest incomes. To this end, it is essential that future indices of deprivation in the UK go beyond crude measures of accessibility (walk distances to local services) to include evaluation of the availability, adequacy and affordability of transport to key locations.

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Appendix 1: Disadvantaged groups and income

Gender

Although there has been a narrowing of the earnings gap between women and men, men's incomes still outstrip those of women at all ages, with the peak average income being nearly twice as high for men as for women (ONS, 2000). Women tend to be concentrated in lower-level, part-time jobs; women represent 81 per cent of those working part time, and only 33 per cent of all full-time workers, with obvious implications for their income both whilst in work and during retirement. Furthermore, one in five women of working age are lone parents (21 per cent); lone mothers are disadvantaged compared with mothers in couples on all measures of socio-economic status (Hamilton *et al*., 1999).

Age

Children are disproportionately present in low-income families; in 1997/98 there were 3.2 million children living in low-income households in Great Britain. Two out of five of these children were living with one parent only, and more than half were living in households where no one was in paid work (ONS, 2000).

Elderly people are also over-represented among the lower-income groups. The proportion of pensioner families receiving income-related benefits such as income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit also varies according to gender, and whether or not they are in a couple. In 1997/98 nearly one in four single female pensioners received income support compared with one in seven single male pensioners, and one in 20 pensioner couples (ONS, 2000).

Minority ethnic groups

About one person in 15 in Great Britain is from an ethnic minority. Although it is misleading to represent minority ethnic communities as a single, unified group, the labour market disadvantage of all minority ethnic groups relative to white people is evident across a range of labour market indicators as demonstrated by Table A1.1. This labour market disadvantage manifests itself in over-representation amongst low-income households.

Table A1.1 People in households below 60 per cent median income group, by economic status and ethnic group, 1996–98

	White (%)	Black (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani/ Bangladeshi (%)	Other (%)	All (%)
No members in work	47	52	55	75	40	49
At least one member in work	9	n/a	20	56	23	10
All households	**17**	**28**	**27**	**64**	**29**	**18**

Source: Family Resources Survey.

People with disabilities

There is currently only limited information available on the earnings and employment prospects of disabled people compared with those of non-disabled people; however, disability has long been recognised as a barrier to employment. Those of working age who are not disabled are much more likely to be economically active than those who are disabled, and unemployment rates for disabled people are much higher than for non-disabled people, as illustrated in Table A1.2.

Table A1.2 Economic activity status of working-age people according to whether they are disabled, by gender, 1999

| | Men | | Women | | All | |
	Disabled (%)	Not disabled (%)	Disabled (%)	Not disabled (%)	Disabled (%)	Not disabled (%)
Economically active	55	92	49	79	52	85
In employment	49	87	45	75	47	80
Unemployment rate	12	6	8	5	10	6
All people of working age (= 100%) (millions)	**3.5**	**15.3**	**3.2**	**13.9**	**6.7**	**29.3**

Source: Labour Force Survey.

Appendix 2: Descriptions of case study areas

Rural settlements: Brookenby and Eastville

Brookenby is in the West Lindsey District and Eastville in the East Lindsey District of Lincolnshire. Lincolnshire has a very low population density, with East Lindsey in particular being very sparsely populated. Agriculture and related businesses, and leisure and tourism are key sectors for the area. Wages are low in Lincolnshire as a whole, only 81 per cent of the Great Britain average. Unemployment figures for West and East Lindsey were 3.5 per cent and 4.2 per cent respectively in March 2000; however, census figures for car ownership indicate that only 5 per cent of households had no access to a car, significantly lower than the national average of 33 per cent.

Post-industrial: Consett South

Consett South is in Derwentside District in the North East. The economic structure of this region has changed considerably in recent decades, from heavy industry based to the vast majority of employment now accounted for, as nationally, by the service sector. Consett Steel works closed in 1981. The collapse of manufacturing in Derwentside District has resulted in much of the area qualifying for government assistance and Consett South has been targeted as one of 33 Priority Wards under Objective 2 funding. The area has also been included in a Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) bid between 1995 and 2000 for the Consett Southern area. Census figures (1991) for car ownership indicate that 43 per cent of households in Consett had no car. Car ownership in Consett South was even lower, with 56 per cent of households having no car.

Small town: Hastings

Hastings is in East Sussex with a local economy dependent solely on tourism and service sector industries. These are characterised by part-time and low-paid employment; in the New Earnings Survey for 1998, Hastings Travel to Work area (TTWA) was among the very lowest in England and Wales. In March 2000, the unemployment rate in Hastings was 7 per cent, of whom 37.8 per cent had been unemployed for more than six months. Hastings is allocated Enterprise Grant Area Status, and Objective 2 has been awarded to Hastings TTWA. Census figures (1991) for car ownership indicated that 39 per cent of households in Hastings had no car. The St Leonards area of Hastings has a concentration of low-income elderly retired people because of its coastal location. There is also a recognised problem with youth disaffection in the town, which often acts as the 'end-of-the-line' for many young people leaving home.

Suburbs: Westbury-on-Trym and Southmead Estate

Bristol is normally seen as an affluent and desirable city. It has a high proportion of banking, finance and business services employment, and much lower unemployment than the national average (a rate of 2.8 per cent in January 2000, compared to 4.3 per cent for Great Britain as a whole). Despite this overall affluence, Bristol has pockets of extreme

deprivation. The Westbury-on-Trym area of Bristol has the lowest unemployment of any ward in the city at 1.6 per cent (claimant-count data for February 2000); this compares to 5.9 per cent for the adjacent Southmead estate. Car ownership in Westbury-on-Trym is high, with 625 cars owned per 1,000 adults. This compares to only 414 cars owned per 1,000 adults living on the Southmead estate.

Inner city: Liverpool

Liverpool has seen a steady decline in traditional manufacturing industries, a relative lack of compensatory private sector investment and competition from Manchester for regional service functions. There are numerous regeneration programmes covering Liverpool, including Objective 1, URBAN Initiative funding, SRB, City Challenge, and Housing and Employment Action Zones. Census figures (1991) for car ownership indicate that 57 per cent of households in Liverpool had no car, well below the national average. Liverpool has a diverse population, with both well established and more recently settled minority ethnic populations.