Accessibility Planning Policy: Evaluation and Future Directions
Final Report

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June 2012

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Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In 2004, the Department for Transport (DfT) introduced policy to help promote social inclusion by tackling accessibility problems experienced by those more disadvantaged in society. This Accessibility Planning Policy involved the provision of guidance and support to local transport authorities and a requirement that accessibility plans should be published as part of local authorities' Local Transport Plans.

The Department's current vision *'for a transport system that is an engine for economic growth, but one that is also greener, safer and improves quality of life in our communities'* endorses the value and importance of policies promoting accessibility and mobility. However, the Department is also committed to ensuring policies remain effective in delivering their objectives against an ever changing environment, and with this in mind commissioned an evaluation of Accessibility Planning Policy.

Since the start of the evaluation there have been significant changes in the UK economy and the relationship between central and local government which carry implications for Accessibility Planning Policy. For this reason, the focus of the evaluation has moved from providing a holistic view of the processes by which accessibility planning is operationalised and the impacts it has on individuals and communities towards considering how the research findings inform the Department's approach towards the delivery of accessibility planning in the future.

1.2. Objectives

The evaluation had a number of objectives as follows:

- to assess whether the guidance developed by DfT was effective in enabling delivery of accessibility planning as it was intended;
- to examine the sorts of processes that lead to good outcomes for accessibility planning strategies and individual initiatives and to examine the lessons learnt with regard to accessibility planning implementation;
- to assess what types of local initiatives have been most successful in improving accessibility to different types of services and opportunities (including jobs);
- to consider 'what works' and why in terms of improving accessibility for different social groups, to different services, or for different types of accessibility 'problems'; and
- to identify lessons learnt about how to develop and implement accessibility planning strategies and individual initiatives.

In light of reform associated with the *Open Public Services* White Paper[1] its subsequent update[2] and recent reductions in public spending, an additional objective of this report is to consider how

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[1] Open Public Services White Paper. July 2011.HM Government.
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/open-public-services-white-paper.pdf

[2] Open Public Services 2012. March 2012. HM Government

http://files.openpublicservices.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/HMG_OpenPublicServices_web.pdf

research findings inform proposals for the purpose and possible future direction of Accessibility Planning Policy. The report is informed in this regard by findings of a knowledge exchange workshop involving academics and practitioners in the field of accessibility planning.

1.3. Structure of Report

Following this introduction, the report is structured into six chapters.

- Chapter Two provides the background to accessibility planning and the changing context for the policy;

- Chapter Three describes the approach to the evaluation and to how the case studies and accessibility initiatives examined in the research were selected;

- Chapters Four and Five discuss the research findings. Chapter Four focuses on the impact of Accessibility Planning Policy on how accessibility planning was approached and undertaken by local authorities;

- Chapter Five considers how findings from the research can inform the design of accessibility strategies initiatives. This chapter is offered to inform the thinking of local authorities and other organisations when considering options for addressing accessibility problems; and

- Chapter Six presents' suggestions on the role DfT can play in the continued delivery of accessibility planning in the new economic climate and localism agenda.

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2. Concept of Accessibility

2.1. Introduction

The broader policy context and economic environment of Accessibility Planning Policy has changed substantially since its inception. This raises important questions for the future of the Policy and for the Department's involvement in local accessibility planning. To understand this context and identify the issues facing DfT, this chapter reviews the background to Accessibility Planning Policy and considers the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Localism Act (2011), and the development of the Department's wider policy agenda.

2.2. Making the Connections

Being able to access employment, educational opportunities and essential services is key to people's well-being, life chances and social inclusion. Accessibility planning involves identifying and assessing the barriers to access faced by certain social groups in particular areas, and developing strategies to improve accessibility for those most at risk.

While local authorities and transport planners have always undertaken forms of accessibility planning, a more systematic and standardised approach was proposed in the influential report '*Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion'* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003[3]), published by the forerunner to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The report identified five key barriers to access: the availability and physical accessibility of transport; the cost of transport; the location of services and opportunities in inaccessible places; people's concerns about safety and security when travelling; and limited travel horizons (people's unwillingness or lack of confidence about travelling beyond a certain distance from home). The report also described how these barriers can have a disproportionate impact on access to employment, education, healthcare, shops and services among disadvantaged groups and can contribute to social exclusion. Inequality of accessibility, it suggests, has been acerbated by the increased costs of and decreased coverage of public transport, against growing car ownership levels. This has led to the planning of services being influenced by assumptions of car ownership and to a widening disparity of access to services between those with and without access to a car.

Making the Connections also argued that *responsibility* for accessibility had been left with local transport planners, with barriers treated as localised issues with variable results. Accessibility issues are often viewed only in terms of transport with limited recognition of their wider social consequences. The report proposed a new approach to accessibility planning in which DfT would have overall responsibility for providing a more systematic approach through the development of Guidance and developing long-term policy. Emphasising that policy development was to be founded on an understanding of accessibility as something wider than a transport issue, requiring instead a multi-agency approach, the report proposed that DfT would take a lead in working closely on the strategy with other government departments. At the local level, accessibility planning was to be led by local transport authorities, working with Local Strategic Partnerships to ensure a joined up strategy across agencies.

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[3] http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/accessibility/making-the-connections.pdf

2.3. Accessibility Planning Policy

This new approach underpinned the DfT's Accessibility Planning Policy and in 2004 the Department asked local authorities to include accessibility strategies in their Local Transport Plans (LTP) for 2006-2011. The Department provided detailed Guidance[4], tools and support to local authorities in the development of these strategies. The Guidance recommended a five staged process involving auditing accessibility needs and resources (including analysis of data on journey-time distances to services and consultation with local communities), the development of action plans, and monitoring progress and procedures.

In 2005, reflecting the emphasis on multi-agency working, DfT published a series of papers providing Guidance on accessibility planning for a range of other government departments, including Jobcentre Plus, education and health.

In 2008, Local Area Agreements (LAAs) were introduced. These were three year long delivery plans negotiated between central government and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). Similar to LTP practice future funding was to be dependent on the achievement of agreed targets in the plans. A number of LSPs agreed targets related to improving accessibility through the National Indicators - *NI 175 'Access to services and facilities by public transport walking and cycling'* and *NI 176 'Working age people with access to employment by public transport (and other specified modes)'*. However, following the change in Government in 2010, LAAs were abolished.

Whilst the current LTPs (from 2011) are encouraged to consider and include accessibility planning priorities, the Guidance issued by the DfT has not changed since the original document. Furthermore, LTPs are no longer formally assessed by DfT and there is no requirement to submit formal monitoring reports to measure delivery. Thus responsibility for development and delivery of local transport and accessibility schemes is firmly placed with individual authorities.

2.4. The Impact of Accessibility Planning

This report presents findings from the evaluation of Accessibility Planning Policy. As we discuss in detail in the following chapters, the research suggests that the DfT's policy was one of a number of drivers of local accessibility strategies. However, it was not the exclusive driver – for example, many accessibility initiatives (developed ad hoc in relation to local social and transport concerns) were in operation before the Department's policy and many other initiatives planned as part of the LTPs were not put into practice. Nevertheless, it had an influence in developing understanding about, and the 'identity' of accessibility as a local policy objective, encouraging and supporting the assessment of accessibility needs, the development of accessibility action plans, and expanding the range of service provision.

The evaluation also demonstrates the potential impact of various accessibility initiatives on individuals. Initiatives such as 'Scooter Commuter'/'Wheels to Work' schemes, personalised travel training and community transport have a significant impact on individual users, enabling them to make life changing decisions. Impacts were significant in terms of, for example, providing a level of reasonable access to employment opportunities or services essential for well-being which would not have been available to users without the initiatives.

2.5. Changing Context of Accessibility Planning

The impact of the 2007 global financial crisis on the UK economy and the Government's reform of public services has had a significant impact on the context of accessibility planning. It is likely that the reductions in public service funding following the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review have increased accessibility needs. In particular, unemployment has increased – to 8.3 per cent

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[4] Guidance on Accessibility Planning in Local Transport Plans. DfT. December 2004

by the end of 2011, the highest rate since 1994, and includes over one million young people aged under 25.

Making the Connections highlighted accessibility as a key barrier to employment, reporting evidence suggesting that the lack of transport represents a barrier to employment for 40% of jobseekers and that 25% of young people had, on at least one occasion within a twelve month period, been put off from applying for a job because of transport difficulties. Recent research by the Department for Work and Pensions[5] found that the combination of limited transport options and childcare responsibilities was the key constraint on employment opportunities for parents seeking employment.

The Comprehensive Spending Review (2010) targets represent a reduction in the Department's annual budget of £1.5 billion. A consequence of this is, for example, greater pressure on the bus network, with cuts to non-commercial routes especially those operating in rural areas and during the evening and weekend. These service reductions are likely to impact on the ability of people to participate in employment and education and limit access to essential services such as healthcare. A review of England's bus services (outside London) by the cross-party Transport Committee warned of even deeper cuts to bus services in 2012–13 and stated that:

"We know that over 70% of local authorities have moved rapidly to reduce funding for supported bus services, forcing most operators to withdraw services or push up fares, or both, as the English bus industry adjusts to the greatest financial challenge it has faced for a generation."

Changes in public spending are likely to have a range of impacts. For example, funding has been cut or reduced for a number of community transport and dial-a-ride schemes. It has been reported[6] that almost three quarters of local authorities are considering or making cuts to optional school transport.

Another key aspect of the changing context of Accessibility Planning Policy is the Government's Localism Act (2010). Outlined in the 2011 White Paper *Open Public Services*[7], this represents a radical reform of public services based on decentralising decision-making about and responsibility for services to local areas (the 'lowest appropriate level'), and promoting the diversity of service providers in terms of decreasing public services and increasing delivery by the private sector and, particularly, the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

The abolition of Local Area Agreements marked an early stage in the development of this policy, reflecting the objective to reduce the authority of central government over local governance and increase the power of local government to tailor services and strategies to meet local needs. Similarly, the fact that the DfT no longer monitors and assesses LTPs also clearly reflects localism policy. Looking forward, reform has implications for Accessibility Planning Policy. It would seem to follow that decentralisation and the associated changing relationship between the DfT and local authorities would have a bearing on the Department's role in long-term development of national Accessibility Planning Policy. It would also seem to follow that such reform creates new challenges for local, multi-sector partnerships and accessibility services delivered by a range of providers, and new models of funding including social finance. In turn, the Department will need to engage with and support a wider range of local service providers and respond to the new needs of service delivery and partnerships.

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[5] Families and work: revisiting barriers to employment http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2011-2012/rrep729.pdf

[6] BBC 02/12/11 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-15991254

[7] http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/open-public-services-white-paper.pdf

This is suggested in the DfT's 2011 White Paper, *Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon: Making Sustainable Local Transport Happen*[8], which emphasises the need for local transport solutions and states that the Department will work to encourage partnership working and the inclusion of the community, voluntary and social enterprise sector in planning processes. As an indicator of the Government's key priorities for transport, the White Paper is significant in terms of locating Accessibility Planning Policy within the broader transport agenda. Accessibility is clearly associated with the Government's commitment to increasing fairness and mobility. The Paper states the Department's on-going support for accessibility planning in LTPs in terms of data about barriers to access, particularly for disadvantaged groups or areas with poor access to key services.

Furthermore, the White paper also points to the interdependence between accessibility and other transport priorities. For example, it highlights the potential for initiatives promoting sustainable travel, such as new, safe walking and cycling routes to also increase local accessibility. Accessibility is viewed as particularly important to economic growth. The paper echoes the Government's 2006 Eddington study[9] which claims that one of the main drivers of growth is labour market efficiency, and that this in turn depends on businesses having access to an ample suitable qualified labour supply, and workers and jobseekers having access to wide employment opportunities.

2.6. Key issues arising for Accessibility Planning Policy

The changing context discussed in the previous section highlights the importance of re-assessing the purpose of Accessibility Planning Policy. In terms of the policy it is helpful to distinguish between, on the one hand, the *requirement* to identify and address instances where people are most at risk of social exclusion as a result of limited access to services and opportunities and, on the other, *who* has the ability and responsibility to fulfil this requirement. Economic change and reductions in public spending are likely to increase accessibility problems, suggesting that the requirement for accessibility planning is unchanged, if not more pronounced. The Localism Act means that the strategies and services required to address accessibility problems are likely to face new challenges and opportunities in terms of funding, planning and organisation, and that organisations responsible for these services and strategies will need support to respond effectively.

The changing context also has particular implications for the DfT's role and responsibility in relation to Accessibility Planning Policy. This role is articulated in the *Making the Connections* report as follows:

At the national level, DfT will have overall responsibility for implementation, monitoring the progress of the strategy, and long-term policy development. DfT will work closely with other departments and report to a ministerial steering group on social exclusion and transport, and the Cabinet Committee on social exclusion and regeneration. (SEU, 2003, p.123)

The redrawn relationship between central and local government at the heart of the Localism Act and *Open Public Services* means that it is problematic to charge DfT with a 'responsibility' for the implementation of its policy at the local level. Nevertheless, Accessibility Planning Policy is well suited to the localism agenda. In the design of the policy, responsibility for accessibility planning was intended to be *shared* between the DfT, local transport authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund holders. As *Making the Connections* made

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[8] http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/making-sustainable-local-transport-happen/making-sustainable-local-transport-happen-whitepaper.pdf

[9] The Eddington Transport Study
http://www.thepep.org/ClearingHouse/docfiles/Eddington.Transport.Study%20-%20Rod.pdf

clear, the nature of accessibility planning means that it must be driven at a local level, and that it is *'up to local areas to decide priorities for taking this forward that are sensitive to local circumstances'* (SEU, 2003, p.123).

Reductions in public spending and the closure of certain funding streams means the DfT no longer has the same capacity to fund accessibility initiatives and undertake detailed monitoring of accessibility delivery. However, as the knowledge exchange exercise demonstrated, demand remains for a co-ordinating role in long-term policy development. This role can be broadly defined to include the provision of, for example, guidance to organisations responding and adapting to decentralisation, and oversight of developments in this area as required by government departments and ministers (as will be the case in the forthcoming Environmental Audit Select Committee enquiry on the social impacts of transport).

This report returns in the final chapter to discuss these issues further, following discussion of the key findings of the evaluation.

3. Approach to Evaluation

3.1. Overview

The evaluation focused on the processes and impacts of Accessibility Planning Policy in relation to the development and delivery of local authorities Accessibility Planning Strategies, submitted as part of the 2006-2011 Local Transport Plans. Preliminary research included a review of all Strategies submitted to the Department, before identifying suitable case studies and initiatives to review. The evaluation used a case study approach to enable in-depth examination and inform generaliseability of findings. This chapter provides a summary of the evaluation approach.

3.2. Case Study Identification

The case study selection was based upon the need to include particular types of initiatives required to evaluate the impact of accessibility planning and provide a balanced mix of case study types. Moreover, they needed to include, as far as possible, planned initiatives which would be implemented within the evaluation timescales.

The project team reviewed all Accessibility Strategies and identified those initiatives of relevance to accessibility planning, focussing upon five types as listed below:

- personalised travel planning/training,
- 'Wheels to Work' schemes,
- demand responsive transport,
- community transport, and
- mobilised services.

Criteria were developed for case study selection to ensure that a balanced range of authorities were evaluated. The criteria included:

- local authority urban/rural classification;
- type of authority;
- Department's LTP and Accessibility Strategy assessment scores (Dec 2006);
- Beacon and Excellence status;
- use of Accession; and
- selection of National Indicator NI175 or NI176.

The evaluation identified nine suitable case study authorities, with each having at least two suitable initiatives. The evaluation undertook a 'process evaluation' and 'impact evaluation' which was integrated and mutually dependent. The process evaluation was based on a series of interviews with Accessibility Planning Officers, Chief Executives of local authorities, delivery agencies and statutory agencies. Sixty in-depth interviews were undertaken, as follows:

- 18 interviews with Accessibility Planning Officers;
- 18 interviews with Chief Executive representatives;
- 11 interviews with delivery agencies; and

- 14 interviews with statutory agencies.

The impact evaluation was based on a total of 96 interviews with users of the 15 accessibility initiatives, equally spread across the five initiative types.

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of initiative types across the case study authorities.

Table 1.   Case Study - Accessibility Initiatives

Case study authority	Accessibility Initiatives				
	Personalised Travel Training	'Wheels to Work' schemes	Demand Responsive Transport	Community Transport	Mobilised Services
Metropolitan (ITA) 1	✔		✔		
Metropolitan (ITA) 2	✔	✔			
Rural County 1	✔				
Rural County 2			✔		✔
Rural County 3				✔	✔
Large Urban 1				✔	
Large Urban 2					✔
Unitary 1	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Unitary 2	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

3.3. Evaluation Amendments

The evaluation was originally designed and commissioned to be a longitudinal assessment covering two waves of research to allow an investigation of the dynamics of planning, the factors which mediate change in accessibility conditions, and the sustainability of initiatives and their impacts. However, due to a number of factors linked to the reduction in public spending the second wave of research did not proceed and the evaluation was bought to a close.

The rationale for not undertaking the second wave of research was driven by a reduction in funding for local authorities and hence accessibility initiatives to research. Of the 15 initiatives researched in the first wave of research only ten have continued in one form or another.

The changing context of accessibility planning (as discussed in Chapter Two) and the implications this has for DfT's future role and responsibility in relation to Accessibility Planning Policy is an important consideration, which the Project Team felt worthy of reflection. With this in mind the evaluation undertook a 'knowledge exchange' event with case study officers and a leading academic responsible for the original *Making the Connections* report. The purpose of the event was to consider the key findings of the evaluation. In particular, the event aimed to facilitate discussions on the next steps for accessibility planning and the role DfT has to play in the future delivery of improved accessibility. Learning from this event feed into the recommendations presented in Chapter Six.

4. Planning, Policy and Strategy

4.1. Introduction

This and the next chapter discuss findings from the process and impact evaluation of Accessibility Planning Policy. This chapter focuses on the use and impact of the Policy and how local strategy and the planning of accessibility was approached and undertaken. The evaluation found that the Policy was instrumental in disseminating and embedding the concept of accessibility within local authorities and transport partners, and this concept was clearly articulated in the Accessibility Planning Guidance published by the Department.

However, as a strategy, accessibility planning has not achieved the degree of cross-departmental engagement the Policy intended, with Guidance issued to other Central Government Departments not cascading to the right officer levels for effective engagement. In addition the research identified that many Accessibility Strategies were not fully implemented and delivered in practice, evident during the identification of case study authorities. Furthermore, there are a small number of examples where networks and local resources have not been effectively employed in accessibility planning and delivery of strategies.

The Policy has been most successful where it has been championed by particularly dedicated Accessibility Planning Officers (APOs). More generally, however, accessibility strategies exemplify the type of locally-tailored partnerships between public, community, voluntary and social enterprise sectors to which the localism agenda aspires.

4.2. Understanding 'Accessibility'

The evaluation examined the understanding of the concept of accessibility among accessibility planning officers, chief executives of local transport authorities or their representatives, and staff in services delivering accessibility initiatives. In mainstream usage, the term 'accessibility' has a number of different current meanings – referring variously to the physical accessibility of services for people with disabilities, or the user-friendliness of internet services. In the context of local authority strategy however, the research found that Accessibility Planning Policy has promoted a clear and consistent general understanding of 'accessibility' as referring to people's ability to access services, where problems with access impede social inclusion or equality of opportunity.

In all but one case study, APOs recognised that some form of accessibility planning was in place before the introduction of Accessibility Planning Policy, even if it was not referred to in these terms. As one APO put it:

> "I think we always had accessibility planning in the council, we just never called it accessibility planning"

However, before the Policy, the overall approach taken could be labelled as 'reactive' and 'ad-hoc' in the sense that solutions to specific issues were developed once they had been brought to the attention of the authority by, for example, politicians lobbying for their area. There was evidence that the introduction of Accessibility Planning Policy had been instrumental in creating a coherent focus for local strategy. In the words of one APO:

> "Internally there is not much doubt about what accessibility means – all singing from the same hymn sheet and corporately we are all clued up"

This shared overarching focus, the DfT's promotion of the Policy and Guidance on the recommended process of accessibility planning led to a more formally recognised and structured process. In doing so, it also helped 'legitimise' and empower the work of those with a standing interest in addressing accessibility problems.

> *"[Accessibility planning] has always just gone on, this is just something we've always done and Accessibility Planning Policy has kind of formalised that, or crystallised that in many respects"* (Authority A, APO)

> *"'There was less structure [prior Accessibility Planning Policy], I suppose, and it was more difficult to really have a solid evidence base to really back up why you were doing those schemes, whereas I think the introduction of the policy and guidance allowed us to be more structured*' (Authority B, APO).

Within the shared, overarching or general understanding of 'accessibility', there was some significant variation in understanding at a more nuanced level. The research highlighted that 'accessibility' is understood in different ways within and between local authorities and agencies. Understanding varies in relation to:

- the **meaning of accessibility**: the extent to which the policy needs to target the needs of those most at risk of accessibility-related social exclusion, and the extent to which it is concerned with a more universal sense of accessibility (such as 'equality for all');
- the **focus of accessibility**: the extent to which policy should address the accessibility of services or should focus on transport to services; and
- the **responsibility of accessibility**: the extent to which accessibility strategy is a shared inter-agency responsibility or the more exclusive responsibility of transport authorities'.

The APOs' understanding was very much shaped by the Accessibility Planning Guidance in terms of being about providing services for disadvantaged groups and areas. References were made to the *Making the Connections* report and specifically to those areas in their authorities affected by multiple forms of deprivation. APOs' understanding of accessibility planning was the direct result of being heavily engaged in the frontline translation of putting accessibility planning concepts/principles into practice. Many agreed that accessibility planning is about combating social exclusion by way of improving people's accessibility to key services.

> *"You've got the sort of areas where there's significant social exclusion, that really is providing the focus for our community transport strategy (…) because we want to make sure that people can access key services"* (Authority E, APO).

However, among the APOs interviewed there was a range of opinions as to the extent to which accessibility planning should pursue 'accessibility for all' or focus on the most disadvantaged. Some felt that more universal strategies, such as initiatives to cut congestion and promote public transport, cycling and walking would increase the accessibility of services for the local population generally, including socially excluded groups. Others argued that more targeted interventions were required, because the benefits of general transport policies would not 'trickle down' to those at risk of social inclusion.

Chief Executives or their representatives tended to take a higher level or structural perspective, seeing Accessibility Planning Policy as part of a wider policy agenda to address disadvantage by improving local economic conditions and opportunities. From this perspective, Accessibility Planning Policy does not only pertain to addressing specific problems experienced by a particular population or social group accessing a particular service or opportunity. Instead, transport based

policies focused on promoting economic growth and jobs could be appropriately interpreted as tacking transport-related social exclusion and thus understood to fall within the umbrella of Accessibility Planning Policy. Chief Executive representatives had an understanding of how accessibility reflects both a focus on the most disadvantaged and a broader understanding shaped by their authorities' main economic, environmental and social priorities. For example the main priority could be economic growth or employment for instance, and their understanding will be shaped to reflect this main barrier to access. Put it simply, accessibility is understood as a means to achieve those priorities rather than an end in itself.

> *"Accessibility is a lens through which we look at a whole load of strategic issues rather than an individualised activity."* (Authority B, Chief Executive representative)

To an extent, this dichotomy between the more universal and more focused targeting of accessibility planning mirrors variation whether or not accessibility solutions were defined solely in terms of transport. Developing public transport and promoting modal shift from car usage to other means were viewed as supporting accessibility for all, but less effective at addressing accessibility-related social exclusion, as the following quotes demonstrate:

> *"By providing the alternatives in public transport, or cycling and walking, you're providing a better transport service which is going to have benefits for people trying to access their local education centre or place of employment or health service."* (Authority G, APO)

> *"Modal shift from the car doesn't necessarily tackle social exclusion because a lot of socially excluded people don't have access to a car and the two things are separate."* (Authority C, APO)

The research also included interviews with staff in the health service and JobCentre Plus. It was felt that there was commonly much less familiarity with Accessibility Planning Policy in the wider statutory services, and where there was, less emphasis on the Policy's purpose in addressing social exclusion and more on increasing general access for their respective service users. Again, a focus on general access was associated with a focus on transport-based solutions. There was some suggestion however that statutory services more engaged in the development of the local authorities LTPs accessibility planning process achieved a more comprehensive understanding of accessibility and accessibility strategies. The following quotes provide an overview of these different shades of understanding, from the *'transport focused'* understanding to the *'accessibility planning'* understanding.

> *"In terms of accessibility we think about how people can get into our hospitals from wherever they live, whether that's a staff member, a patient, a visitor, or whether it's public transportation, whether it's coming by cycling, whether they're walking into work "* (Authority G, Statutory agency representative)

"The narrow understanding is more about how people can travel to services, however through the work that I've done with [the APO] and through thinking through from a public health perspective, my understanding of accessibility planning is much broader than that. It's about how people access services. That includes services being taken to people." (Authority B, Statutory agency representative)

Some of the statutory partners participating in the research appreciated that accessibility planning has direct relevance to their agency's responsibility and their ability to fulfil their duties.

"It means people being able to get to work, people being able to get to the services that can support them back to work, really about giving people equal opportunities." (Authority F, Statutory agency representative)

"From our point of view it's making sure that people can access our programmes that we offer, and also they can access employment through training." (Authority A, Statutory agency representative)

4.3. The Guidance

The Accessibility Planning Guidance published by DfT in 2006 set out a comprehensible five step process to produce an Accessibility Planning Strategy as part of the second LTP.

"The guidance describes the framework for a staged process that has been shown, through the experiences of eight pilots, to be effective for identifying and addressing local accessibility issues.

This comprises:

- *Strategic (e.g. LTP wide) accessibility assessment;*
- *Local accessibility assessments, focussed on priority areas, groups & issues;*
- *Option appraisal (including the identification of resources);*
- *Accessibility action plan development and delivery; and*
- *Monitoring"*

The research found that, overall, APOs valued the Guidance as useful both for explaining the purpose and nature of Accessibility Planning Policy and providing a method for implementing it.

"I would say that our accessibility strategy followed as closely as possible what we were encouraged to do within the Guidance. We weren't paying any attention to accessibility before that Guidance came out, and what was useful is the Guidance has given it a very clear process and structure to do things and along with the mapping provide one approach to actually trying to quantify accessibility now". (APO, Authority B)

Limitations of the Guidance were explained to relate to the need to take a more pragmatic approach to developing strategies in response to issues and challenges arising in the course of planning (e.g. time and resource constraints). Emphasis in the Guidance on using Accession as the main tool in measuring and identify accessibility priorities was also questioned. Accession was viewed widely as a useful tool, but one to be used judiciously both because of the resources required for undertaking Accession analyses and because of the value of other evidence for informing strategies.

"To start with we tried to follow the process as much as possible by using the Accession model and then trying to develop local accessibility assessments, but time constraints meant it wasn't a viable process to continually repeat. We found it more useful to look through things like our community strategy and economic development plans, and actually identify where the priorities and the problems were within [Authority A] because they actually drew that information out." (APO, Authority A)

4.4. Inter-agency Working

The Guidance was explicitly intended to be used by a range of service providers and agencies.

"The Guidance has been developed to help local authority officers responsible for developing and producing LTPs or developing and delivering public transport. We also hope that it will be useful to the wider community that is involved in promoting accessibility, social inclusion and regeneration. This includes: professionals involved in land use / spatial planning, health care, education and welfare to work; transport operators and providers; local communities, businesses and interest groups."

In addition to the main Guidance, the Department launched a series of Guidance papers, each tailored for a different statutory service.

Accessibility Planning Policy's emphasis on inter-agency working was a progressive measure, creating a new structured opportunity for dialogue and partnership across services. APOs and the Chief Executives of the local authorities welcomed this as it provided, potentially, a common agenda, new grounds to approach and engage with other agencies, and the prospect of developing a shared, integrated and comprehensive strategy. However, in practice, inter-agency working has proved to be one of the most problematic points in the accessibility planning process. There were few or no examples of significant partnership working on accessibility issues across statutory agencies.

The research suggests that difficulties experienced from the perspective of local authorities related more to the lack of understanding about, and accountability for accessibility issues with other statutory agencies, rather than necessarily any resistance to engagement. It appeared, for example, that Guidance did not penetrate statutory agencies and was not promoted within agencies.

"Our experience suggested that those guidelines did not get very far within key agencies, very often we would find that people in health or education or jobcentre plus simply weren't aware of the guidelines, they simply hadn't filtered down to them, and that was an obvious frustration for us. There's got to be recognition that it's no good just issuing one set of guidelines, it's got to be a continuous process." (Authority D, Chief Executive representative)

This view was supported in interviews with statutory agencies where it was suggested that staff face a stream of guidelines from a number of quarters and in this context, without particular efforts to draw attention to it, the Accessibility Planning Policy Guidance would have been lost. More generally, APOs' efforts to engage with other statutory agencies in planning were hampered where there was not a named person in those agencies with a responsibility for

accessibility, and where there were no apparent mechanisms or forums through which APOs could make appropriate contact with agencies.

At a more fundamental level, APOs and Chief Executives suggested these problems reflected a lack of clarity about 'ownership' of and accountability of accessibility issues at a local level. Some participants in the research asserted that statutory services tend to view the accessibility of their services as either the responsibility of transport providers or as low priority or after thought in their service planning.

> *"This remains the big issue… it's still very much seen as the transport sector's issue …at the moment we're having too many examples of key public sector agencies providing new facilities that are totally inaccessible, with transport then being expected to pick up pieces and provide infrastructure afterwards. So that's the next big challenge I think, and a lot of that is going to have to be led from national level to get those messages across."* (Authority D, Chief Executive representative)

4.5. Champions

A theme throughout the evaluation was the role of key individuals who were particularly active and tenacious in advancing the accessibility planning agenda within their authorities and with wider partners. When explaining why some authorities were more successful than others in implementing Accessibility Planning Policy, APOs and Chief Executives often highlighted the pivotal role that certain individuals had played in driving forward planning, strategies and the implementation of accessibility initiatives. While this usually referred to individuals within transport authorities, 'champions' could also be found in some statutory services.

> "*This is common across all aspects of accessibility planning… a lot of it is dependent on local champions. One of the difficulties we've found is that because areas like health and employment services have been so subject to reorganisation that partnerships that we thought we had in place would lose their champions, and we would have to start again. At the moment in [City A], for example, there are some people who are clued into the process and supportive of it, you know, it's much to do with personalities and leadership"* (Authority D, Chief Executive representative)

As this suggests, an implication of relying on the commitment, enthusiasm and expertise of champions was the risk that accessibility strategies could lose momentum and focus when these key people move on or their roles change. There was some recognition among Chief Executives that unless accessibility planning processes are embedded within everyday council activities and decision making processes they remained vulnerable to change.

4.6. Working in Partnership

Although inter-agency working with statutory service providers was limited, accessibility strategies often exemplified partnership working with a range of community, voluntary, social enterprise and private sector organisations which delivered accessibility initiatives. These initiatives are discussed in Chapter Five and include, for example, community based dial-a-ride schemes, volunteer hospital taxi schemes, social enterprises delivering Wheels-to-Work schemes, and new subsidised bus routes provided by commercial operators.

Many initiatives included in accessibility strategies pre-dated Accessibility Planning Policy and were not created as a consequence of the Policy. In many cases, new initiatives and services

agreed in accessibility plans never came to fruition, usually either because anticipated funding fell through, or no funding had been identified and plans were more aspirational than realistic. In other cases, funding for new initiatives was identified after plans had been developed, and these new initiatives were then 'adopted' in accessibility strategies. Of the 15 initiatives examined in the research, ten had been identified through the accessibility strategy development. Eight of these predated the Policy. Of the remaining five initiatives, two were new ventures which were adopted in accessibility initiatives and the other three initiatives had not been identified within local accessibility strategies.

The different process by which initiatives came about raises the question that if many successful initiatives were developed before the introduction of the Policy, then what impact can be associated with the Policy? If this is the case then arguably improvements to local accessibility are a 'natural' consequence of established practices rather than a product of the Policy. While the research suggests that some form of accessibility planning pre-dated the introduction of the Policy and would no doubt have continued without the Policy, the view from research participants was that it had improved the quality and scope of planning. Despite limitations in inter-agency working, one dimension of this development was improving partnership working.

"*I think Accessibility Planning Policy helped to make us look at things like our customer base, consultation, engagement with partners to see what support they can offer… and to kind of broaden the appeal of schemes. Without the Guidance, yes we may have introduced those schemes anyway, but it might have been on a more closed approach, we may have just done it ourselves and not chosen to kind of involve other agencies"* (APO, Authority A).

In the case of at least one of the new ventures developed after the accessibility planning process and adopted in the strategy, the Policy had enabled the local transport authority to convince another agency of their mutual responsibility for accessibility. In turn, this led to the agency funding the new initiative.

"The accessibility partnership is important because we can say that this is all of our agenda, this is not just a transport matter, this is an employment matter as well." (APO, Authority A)

The three initiatives which had not been identified within local accessibility strategies are also noteworthy. The fact that the research was able to identify a number of independent initiatives operating outside of strategies suggests that authorities are not always inclusive and do not always efficiently exploit all local provision in the process of developing integrated, comprehensive strategies.

It is noted that the five planning stages recommended in the Guidance do not include a formal audit of existing local programmes and initiatives. All three initiatives in question were mobilised services, addressing accessibility by bringing services to users, rather than focused on transport to services – this included a mobile post office, rural-based further education facility, and a food project providing access to fresh fruit and vegetables in a disadvantaged area. The absence of these initiatives within the accessibility process reflects the research findings that inclusion of such existing initiatives within the strategies is dependent upon whether APOs were aware of them (or, if aware, considered them relevant). Mobile post offices, though mentioned in the

Guidance as potentially contributing to accessibility planning were not identified in practice as potential accessibility initiatives, even in areas where they were operating.

For example, in one case study area, the APO was aware that a successful mobile post office scheme had worked locally in the past before being closed down, but was unaware that other mobile post office schemes currently operated. In another example, the APO was not aware of mobilised healthy food initiatives operating in the area, despite the fact that one of the objectives of the local accessibility strategy was to improve access to healthy affordable food outlets. These examples underline the importance of systematic local audits of relevant services in order to effective exploit available local resources, broaden partnerships, and develop more efficient and comprehensive strategies.

5. Accessibility Initiatives and Practice

5.1. Introduction

Chapter Four focused on the impact of Accessibility Planning Policy on the development and organisation of local strategies. This chapter considers how findings from the research can inform the design of accessibility strategies and initiatives. It is intended that these findings will assist local authorities and other organisations when considering options for addressing accessibility problems. For this purpose, the chapter provides a typology of accessibility initiatives and consideration of how different initiatives work and their potential impacts.

It must be remembered that the research was designed as an evaluation of the policy and not an evaluation of initiatives. In order to consider the impact of the Policy, the evaluation examined the role the Policy played in accessibility planning and, through this planning process, how it influenced the provision of services 'on the ground'. The research did this by considering the *potential* of particular service designs: it examined what *types* of initiative are suitable for addressing particular accessibility issues, what contexts and factors are likely to mediate the efficacy of initiatives in addressing those issues, and what are the potential impacts of different initiatives. This contrasts with an impact evaluation of initiatives which would have attempted to measure the actual impact of particular interventions. Such service evaluations are valuable and the lack of evidence about the impact of accessibility initiatives - and the problem this poses for accessibility planning - is well recognised (e.g. Smith et al, 2007[10]).

The findings from our research do not serve as a substitute for this type of evidence. Nevertheless, our findings may be useful for informing the design process of accessibility initiatives. In terms of DfT's Accessibility Planning Guidance, this process can be understood to comprise five steps:

- strategic (e.g. LTP wide) accessibility assessment;
- local accessibility assessments, focussed on priority areas, groups & issues;
- option appraisal (including the identification of resources);
- accessibility action plan development and delivery; and
- monitoring.

Our findings inform 'option appraisal' by providing an overview of possible initiatives and their suitability for addressing different accessibility issues. They also go further, to support a 'Theory of Change' approach to intervention design. This approach makes explicit the rationale for how and why a proposed initiative is meant to meet its objectives, and the risks and obstacles it might face in doing so. It helps to brings clarity to the design and implementation of an intervention, and enables any ungrounded assumptions underpinning the design to be identified and challenged. A 'Theory of Change' approach also provides a basis for efficient monitoring, evaluation and service improvement by helping to show not just whether or not the service is having an impact, but how and why it is and, if not, what elements of the design need to be revised. It is intended then that the findings will be useful in practice by showing what type of

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[10] http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/scienceresearch/social/evidence_base_review_on_mobility

interventions are possible, and how and why some initiatives may be more effective than others in addressing particular accessibility issues.

Fifteen accessibility initiatives were selected for the evaluation:

- personalised travel training schemes: one neighbourhood based and two serving adults with learning disabilities; the three schemes provided one-to-one training and route planning and 'travel buddying';

- 'Wheels to Work' schemes: three initiatives offering low-cost rental of scooters to help users access employment or training;

- demand responsive transport: three schemes offering demand-responsive bus services in areas not served by public transport;

- community transport: three schemes offering a specialist bus service for fixed routes for older people and people with disabilities; and

- mobilised services: including a rural-based training centre, an initiative offering low-cost fruit and vegetables in an area not served by retailers, and a mobile post office.

The mix of initiatives was varied in terms urban/rural setting, funding and development. Findings are based on 160 interviews with local authority staff, staff running the initiatives, and service users of the initiatives. The potential impact of initiatives on service users was assessed using an 'informed, hypothetical counterfactual' technique. That is, interviews with service users would be informed by details about available local services and information about interviewees' personal circumstances and resources (access to personal transport, income, family support, etc). This information enabled informed discussion about the level of impact on the service user if the initiative did not exist: whether they would still be able to achieve reasonable access to essential services and what implications this would have on their well-being and equality of opportunity. This method provides a qualitative rather than quantitative impression of impacts.

The overarching finding of the research was that the impacts of different types of initiative varied in terms of their significance for users' well-being and equality of opportunity. As well as having more direct impact on alleviating accessibility problems, initiatives also had additional, indirect impacts on wider aspects of users' personal and economic well-being and community development. Some initiatives clearly had a profound impact on users and their absence would have been detrimental to users' quality of life and wellbeing.

Before discussing these overarching findings in more detail, it is important to highlight the striking degree of commitment and personal drive observed among staff delivering accessibility initiatives. Among staff in these agencies, Accessibility Planning Policy was understood clearly in terms of addressing social exclusion, and it was common to find a vocational dedication among staff to use their services to help disadvantaged groups. Staff providing these services also tended to have specialist skills and knowledge relating to accessibility issues and the user groups they served. Such commitment and skills must be recognised as a valuable and tangible resource, and these observations highlight the substantial human capital available for the on-going development of accessibility strategies and services.

5.2. A Typology of Accessibility Initiatives

Accessibility initiatives include any intervention designed to address a barrier to accessibility for people at risk of social exclusion. As such, accessibility initiatives encompass a diverse range of services and activities. During the scoping phase of the evaluation, a typology of initiatives was constructed based on a review of accessibility strategies submitted in the second round of LTPs and discussion with experts in the field. The typology as detailed in Table 2 presents the purpose

of providing a comprehensive overview of possible interventions to those involved in reviewing current accessibility strategies or developing new ones.

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Table 2.   Typology of Accessibility Initiatives

Type	Examples	Target group/purpose	Locality	Intensity of provision	Potential intensity of impact
Generic localised type	- New and improved public transport - Walking and cycle routes - Marketing campaigns	Generic: maybe intended to help at-risk groups in an area, or to improve access to a particular service, but available for use by all in locality.	Initiatives serve a discreet geographical area	Initiatives provided on a sustained, continuous basis	Likely to have a mild felt impact on a wide population. Will be more significant for some rather than others.
Trigger interventions	- Scooter schemes - neighbourhood travel teams (personalised travel plans/ training)	Specialised: often focused on helping jobseekers to overcome accessibility problems so that they can access work or training. (Initiative 'triggers' job entry). Travel training often focused on people with disabilities ('triggering' independent travel).	Initiatives serve a widely dispersed population	Initiatives provided on a one-off or time-limited basis	Face-to-face intervention likely to have a strong felt impact (in immediate terms at least) on a limited number of individuals.
Specialist transport solutions	- Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) - Community transport and taxi-buses - Other specialist services	Different initiatives designed to meet different purposes but all specialised. Mainly focused on general access for older and disabled people, or for rural residents; can also, for example, include initiatives focused on addressing specific accessibility barriers for jobseekers in a particular locality.	Initiatives serve a widely dispersed population	Initiatives generally provided on a sustained, continuous basis. (Access to employment may be short-term, e.g. to demonstrate commercial viability of routes)	Targeted interventions likely to have a medium-strong felt impact on limited number of individuals.
Mobilised services	- Mobile clinics - Mobile grocery vans	Generic/variable: depends on initiative but likely to be offered to all residents in locality. For example, clinic s may be intended to help those with barriers to healthcare but might be used by all in locality.	Initiatives serve a series of discreet geographical areas	Initiatives provided on a sustained, continuous basis	Likely to have a medium-strong felt impact on limited number of individuals.

The research examined three of the four types of initiative:

- 'trigger interventions', including personalised travel training and 'wheels to work' schemes;
- 'specialist transport solutions', including demand responsive transport and community transport; and
- mobilised services.

The research was originally designed to include a 'generic, localised' type of intervention (new bus services) but, for the reasons explained in Chapter Three, this was not possible.

5.3. Describing the Impact of Initiatives

Assessing the practical outcome of accessibility planning is challenging for a range of methodological reasons, including the sheer diversity of initiatives. Initiatives cannot simply be compared with each other to ascertain which 'works best' overall. Instead, it is recognised that some types of initiatives are, by design, better suited than others to addressing certain accessibility issues. At the same time, it is important to understand the factors which mediate the efficacy of initiatives to reach their potential. Taking account of these issues, the research approached the question of 'what works best' in relation to the following formula: "*[This type of initiative] addresses the needs of [this user group] by overcoming [these barriers] to access [these services] and works best in [these contexts] and under [these conditions]".* The value of initiatives is also dependent on whether they deliver a short-term or long-lasting effect on service users. Taking all these issues together, the project identified five general fields that provide a basis for describing and assessing the impact of accessibility initiatives. These criteria are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3.   Initiative Assessment Criteria

Users:	The degree to which individual initiatives have been targeted at those most at risk of accessibility-related social exclusion.
Barriers:	The extent to which individual initiatives are addressing barriers to access for those most at risk of exclusion ie what barriers to accessing services are tackled through individual initiatives.
Services:	The degree to which initiatives are increasing accessibility to key services; ie the impact on access to employment, education and training, healthcare, healthy food and access to meet social and cultural needs.
Contexts and mediating factors:	The extent to which individual initiatives are operating effectively in local contexts; this relates to the effectiveness of initiatives in addressing local accessibility needs.
Sustainability:	The extent to which the impact of initiatives is sustained beyond the point-in-time, direct impact on users.

These fields were investigated during interviews with service providers and service users. A qualitative approach was used to give a descriptive account of the *relative* impacts of particular initiatives. This involved a systematic approach using biographical and mapping techniques to assess impacts by comparing participants' current circumstances with their likely situation in the

absence of the initiative. Where interviews found evidence that without the initiative participants would not have been able to access the relevant service, the impact of the initiative could be considered 'higher'. On the other hand, for example, if there was evidence that participants would have accessed an alternative service or the same service even without the accessibility scheme, the impact could be considered 'lower'.

While the primary focus of the research was the impact of Policy and initiatives on local accessibility issues, it is increasingly important to recognise that initiatives often have a broader effect. As such, impacts can further be understood in terms of:

- direct impact, where initiatives serve to overcome barriers to accessibility; and

- indirect impact, where initiatives have other, unintended impacts, such as for wellbeing or serving to improve community networks.

5.4. Initiative Impacts: General Observations

Most of the initiatives seemed to have a positive direct impact for users, in the sense of providing a degree of access to services which users would not have experienced without the initiative. Some initiatives clearly had a profound and sometime 'life changing' impact on users. The personalised travel training initiatives for adults with learning difficulties not only provided users with access to further education but also the skills to access a range of other services and opportunities, and associated benefits of independence and self-confidence. Dial-a-ride and community transport schemes had significant direct benefits in providing essential access (e.g. food shopping) and were also valued for supporting older people's independence and enabling them to avoid social isolation. Some users of scooter rental schemes described how the initiatives had provided new access to employment opportunities and, in so doing, represented a 'second chance' at entering the labour market. The mobilised services examined tended to have a lesser direct impact mainly because users had access to other means to reach services. In the case of the mobile post office, the potential direct benefit was less marked than its indirect benefit in maintaining community networks among older people in a rural village.

In terms of the question of what initiatives 'work best' in what circumstances, a number of overarching themes emerged. These themes are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.   Overarching Themes

Users	Many of the accessibility initiatives have a positive direct and indirect impact on the wellbeing of users. The impacts are inherently more pronounced for those most at risk of accessibility-related social exclusion such as those with users who are socially and geographically isolated, and those helping individuals return to employment. For example, demand responsive and community transport initiatives in rural locations, and the 'Wheels to Work' initiatives. Many accessibility initiatives address financial constraints that position some groups as particularly vulnerable. For example, community transport initiatives provide an affordable means of accessing services for users who find the cost of taxis prohibitive. The impact of initiatives may also be affected by the personal and public resources available to individuals using initiatives. For example, where individuals have access to an alternative means of accessing services (e.g. car), impacts will be lower.
Contexts and mediating factors	The impact of schemes may be mitigated by the local context in which they operate and local context can introduce a range of political, geographical, structural and financial constraints. For example, the impact of the rural training centre examined in the research was limited because of its geographical location and its position relative to Local Education Authority boundaries. This meant that prospective students living close to the training centre but in the adjacent authority were unable to attend.
Barriers	Barriers to accessibility tended to be addressed through initiatives targeted at developing individual personal skills or mobility, rather than addressing more 'structural' barriers. For example, travel training initiatives address individuals' ability to access services rather than altering the location of services.
Services	Initiatives tend to be directed at improving access to a single service type. In many cases, however, initiatives were successful in improving access to *multiple* services, which in turn indirectly impacts on a range of economic, health and wellbeing outcomes.

In the following sections, a descriptive assessment is presented for each initiative type. In each case, impacts are a) described in relation to users, contexts, barriers, and services and b) summarised in terms of potential impacts: direct and indirect impacts, and point-in-time versus sustained impacts. It is hoped that these assessments will be useful as an outline guide to the possible uses and benefits of different types of accessibility initiatives. It is worth reiterating that statements about impact refer to findings about the potential impacts of interventions rather than evidence about actual impacts observed. This is particularly true regarding distinctions between point-in-time and sustained impacts. While the evaluation was originally designed to include a longitudinal analysis of initiatives over time, the changes to the project explained in Chapter Three meant that the research was unable to assess sustained impacts. Hence, reference to sustained impact in what follows refers to the possible long-term effects of initiatives. The purpose of noting these here is to highlight potential impacts which service providers may wish to take into account if and when undertaking cost benefit analysis of initiatives.

5.5. Personalised Travel Training

Table 5.   Assessment Results

Users	Personalised travel training initiatives are targeted at those facing particular barriers to accessing a range of services, including people with disabilities or living in areas of high unemployment and low income. For example, a Travel Buddy scheme for adults with learning disabilities is targeted at individuals as part of a package for supporting independent living provided by adult social care services.
Contexts and mediating factors	Personalised travel training initiatives are inherently tailored for local contexts, taking into account of local people's/users' needs, the location of local services and local public transport services.
Barriers	Personalised travel training addresses 'individual' rather than 'structural' barriers to access; for example, users' lack of confidence about travelling independently using public transport. Barriers to accessibility are addressed through personalising and individually tailoring initiatives.
Services	Personalised travel training addresses barriers to the full range of service.

Table 6.   Potential Impact Summary

	Point-in-time	Sustained
Direct	Increased ability of users to travel independently Increased social and cultural opportunities Increased social inclusion	*Maintained and possibly progressively increasing ability of users to access wide range of services independently*
Indirect	Positive impact on user well-being Financial impact on users through increased access to employment	*Cost-savings for Local Authorities through reduced demand for special education transport services* *Ongoing impact on user well-being through increased opportunities, social and cultural needs*

5.6. Demand Responsive Transport

Table 7.   Assessment Results

Users	Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) initiatives can be targeted at all groups excluded because of lack of accessible public transport. Users may be unable to access public transport for a range of reasons: for example, users may have mobility problems or lack private transport.
Contexts and mediating factors	DRT initiatives are well suited for specific local contexts where there is a lack of accessible public transport. This includes rural areas and selected urban areas.
Barriers	DRT initiatives address social/cultural isolation, financial constraints, and a lack of accessible public transport. 'Structural' barriers to accessing services (e.g. lack of accessible public transport) are often compounded by 'individual' barriers (e.g. mobility problems).
Services	DRT initiatives principally tend to address barriers to shopping, healthcare, and social and cultural needs. The availability of DRT services tends to limit its use for regular access to employment.

Table 8.   Potential Impact Summary

	Point-in-time	**Sustained**
Direct	Increased access to services User independence	*Sustained independence of users*
Indirect	Maintenance of social networks and contacts for users Positive impact on well-being	*Cost savings for public spending associated with sustained independence* *Continued impact on health and well-being*

5.7. Scooter Commuter and Wheels to Work

Table 9.   Assessment Results

Users	'Wheels to Work' initiatives are targeted at those experiencing problems accessing employment and/or training because of a lack of public or private transport.
Contexts and mediating factors	'Wheels to Work' initiatives can be well targeted at people without means of accessing necessary transport because of low income and lack of availability of suitable public transport. A key mediating factor for such schemes is the rental period for scooters: the sustainability of the initiative's impact is likely to be associated with the degree of flexibility allowed for how long users can keep their vehicles
Barriers	'Wheels to Work' initiatives address the financial constraints on users and the lack of available public transport (possible related to the unsociable hours of available employment opportunities, or lack of services in rural locations). Initiatives address specific barriers to employment/training rather than more general accessibility or structural issues. Initiatives can be provided as part of a broader package of helping for people to access employment: accessibility may be just one of a number of barriers faced by the long-term unemployed
Services	'Wheels to Work' initiatives primarily address barriers to employment but, by providing means for private transport, support improved access to all services.

Table 10.   P

otential Impact Summary

	Point-in-time	Sustained
Direct	Users more able to access employment opportunities Financial impact on users through employment Increased financial and 'travel' independence	*Enhanced employment opportunities for users* *Financial security*
Indirect	Positive impact on well-being and quality of life	*Cost savings for public spending associated with sustained employment and reduced social welfare benefit payments* *Continued impact on well-being and quality of life*

5.8. Community Transport

Table 11.   Assessment Results

Users	Community transport initiatives are targeted to meet a defined need for a specific group of people who are unable to access conventional forms of public transport. This tends to include older people, disabled people, or people in areas poorly served by public transport services.
Contexts and mediating factors	Community transport initiatives tend to be developed in response to a discreet local demand.
Barriers	Community transport initiatives address a lack of accessible public transport and the ability of users to use public transport (e.g. because of limited mobility or confidence). Initiatives can be interpreted to address both 'individual' and 'structural' barriers to accessibility; that is, individuals' lack of access to transport and services, and rural exclusion arising from lack of public transport.
Services	Community transport initiatives usually address barriers to shops, social and cultural needs, and healthcare.

Table 12.   Potential Impact Summary

	Point-in-time	Sustained
Direct	Access to services Independence of users Financial benefits	*Sustained independence of users*
Indirect	Maintenance of social networks and contacts for users Positive impact on well-being	*Cost savings for public spending associated with sustained independence* *Continued impact on health and well-being*

Table 13.   Assessment Results

Users	Mobilised services include a diverse range of initiatives. The purpose of such initiatives is to bring a particular service to a population which would otherwise need to travel to access the service. Some mobilised services will be targeted at a specific user groups while others are open to the general population in a targeted locality.
Contexts and mediating factors	By definition, mobilised services are localised and operate in distinct local contexts. By design, they should be responsive and adaptable to local needs and circumstances.
Barriers	Mobilised services can address a wide variety of barriers, including a lack of public transport, lack of local services, and user difficulties accessing alternative services.
Services	Mobilised services initiatives principally address barriers to accessing specific services, for example, healthy food, post office services, and vocational education/training.

Table 14.   Potential Impact Summary

	Point-in-time	Sustained
Direct	Increased access to services Financial benefits Particular benefits dependent on specific initiative, e.g. broader educational opportunities	Sustained access to essential services
Indirect	Community cohesion Positive impact on health and well-being	Community cohesion Possibly cost savings associated with more cost effective service delivery

5.9. Accessibility Strategies and the Evidence Base

As we have been careful to state, evidence developed in the evaluation about initiative impacts is limited. However, the relative value of the findings discussed in this chapter and their usefulness in informing future planning, needs to be set in the context in which there is a weak evidence base. A common concern voiced by planners and service providers during the research, and one highlighted during the knowledge exchange exercise, was that the lack of an accessible evidence base with which to inform accessibility planning undermined the efficacy of the Planning Policy and the development of progressive and efficient strategy.

The Accessibility Planning Policy Guidance recommended that monitoring should be built into the planning process in order to provide evidence to demonstrate the contribution that accessibility initiatives made towards the delivery of accessibility objectives. In practice, monitoring was usually at best an *ad hoc* system put into place for the purpose of producing progress reports rather than being a systematic and fully embedded approach with council activities.

> *"Maybe on individual projects [we have monitored and evaluated] but we probably haven't done a whole plan no, I mean the nearest we've got to formal monitoring and feedback is what is in the delivery report."* (Authority B, APO)

In some cases, monitoring was limited to analyses of public transport availability and journey-time measures using accessibility planning software such as Accession, and this was particularly the case for authorities looking to generate evidence to measure success in meeting Local Area Agreements. In terms of understanding what initiatives work best, it was frequently reported that individual services collated their own monitoring data, but there was not an overarching monitoring strategy to use this data. The evaluation did not come across any authority which used standardised tools to collect data from across accessibility initiatives within its strategies.

> *"We encouraged the schemes to keep records of their passenger numbers and all that sort of thing but we never really had a clear way of they would provide the information* (Authority F, APO)

In this sense, the potential of Accessibility Planning Policy to improve the evidence base has not been realised. The need for reliable evidence about best practice and the cost benefits of initiatives remains a pressing concern, and increasingly so as services are required to demonstrate their impact and value for money in order to justify and compete for funding. As funding for research is restricted as a consequence of reductions in public spending, there is a new urgency to ensure that services build in robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms into service designs.

6. Accessibility Planning Policy: Looking Forward

Chapter Two described the changing policy and economic context of Accessibility Planning Policy, and how this changing context raises questions for the Department's ongoing role in the field of local accessibility planning. Chapter Four described evaluation findings about the accessibility planning process, which suggested that the fundamental aims of the Policy remained clear, and commitment for accessibility planning remained strong among key champions in the field. The Policy is consistent with and converges with other DfT policy and the wider concept of localism, though there is a need for better cross-agency engagement, centrally and locally. Chapter Five noted that accessibility initiatives have a range of impacts on users, but that evidence on best practice is weak. The knowledge exchange event confirmed a number of key issues and recommendations highlighted through the research for the future of Accessibility Planning Policy.

1. The concept of accessibility remains relevant and important, and feeds into a range of policies. In the context of the economic downturn, ensuring access to employment is a key, cross-Government concern. More broadly, accessibility is relevant to all policies focused on economic growth, as access to goods and services is vital in the immediate term, and equality of access to education, work and healthcare is vital for longer term economic sustainability. Accessibility is entwined with sustainability: local planning must ensure that access to employment and services is sustainable both in terms of household income and in terms of cumulative environmental impact. For these reasons, accessibility remains a valid, distinct and important policy focus for the Government.

2. The evaluation found that, with few exceptions, accessibility planning is not yet being embraced as a cross Government concern but tends to be viewed by non-transport agencies, locally and nationally, as a responsibility of transport authorities. As it was originally conceived, effective accessibility planning requires multi-agency partnerships involving shared objectives and responsibility (and, arguably, collaborative use of resources). The research suggests that sustained, proactive and well-targeted activity is required to bring about such partnership working. As it is unlikely that significant change in this regard can be triggered through uncoordinated localised efforts, the DfT is clearly best placed to take this forward.

3. Accessibility planning can and should be recognised as key to localism. The experts to whom we spoke described the Government's localism policy as an unprecedented opportunity for revitalising and furthering accessibility planning. It was noted that Accessibility Planning Policy was originally envisioned to be the responsibility of Local Strategic Partnerships in planning local regeneration. In current practice, accessibility planning already involves collaboration between the public, commercial, and community, voluntary and social enterprise (CVSE) sectors. Moreover, accessibility planning has always been about facilitating tailored solutions to meet locally-identified problems. An explicit 're-visioning' of Accessibility Planning Policy in the context of localism would help the revitalisation of the policy. This would take account of the changing relationship between the DfT, local authorities and the CVSE sector. It would involve clarifying or re-thinking the role of the DfT in terms of, for example: maintaining the coherence of the concept of accessibility; supporting local partnerships; facilitating the flow of information; and providing a central overview of the development of activity in this field. The opportunity here is for the Department to become a leading example of best practice in terms of the role of central government departments in the 'Big Society'.

4. In particular, the DfT could engage successfully with and benefit from the localism agenda by convening a collaborative forum of local agencies and stakeholders to develop a new agenda for accessibility planning in the 'Big Society'. This forum could also be a vehicle to consider and develop new local cross-sector, multi-agency partnerships and to support and expand the network of accessibility champions. It could also be a quick and cost effective means for the DfT to draw insights from successful and innovative accessibility initiatives. This would enable the Department to, for example, identify lessons about best practice for planners, as well as to articulate the importance of this work to ministers and senior policy makers.

5. There is need for greater evidence to inform accessibility planning.

   - Budget constraints are having a significant impact on services and planning, but there is insufficient information to provide an overall national picture of the relative impact of these changes. For example, the recent reduction in the reimbursement rate for bus concessions is likely to trigger a decline in bus services, particularly those on which disadvantaged groups rely. It is not clear if and how local authorities are taking account of these changes, and no mechanisms seem to be in place to monitor and assess the impact of these changes on the national bus network or the population dependent on bus services. Developing an overall picture of change would seem key to the DfT's central role in Accessibility Planning Policy.

   - Evidence is required on the cross-sector significance of accessibility planning. This is needed in order to assess and demonstrate the impact of accessibility issues on the core business of the JobCentre Plus, health authorities, education authorities, higher education institutes and other 'non-transport' agencies.

   - Greater evidence is required about what initiatives work. Initiative evaluation and validation is crucial in order to inform accessibility planning and best practice.

   - A particular issue here is the need for the information required to demonstrate the impact and monetary value of initiatives. This includes data but also information on agreed methods for collecting and analysing this data. Research in this area is important for improving the effectiveness and maximising the impact of interventions. Increasingly, in the emerging context of localism and funding restraint, service providers are required to develop business cases for and demonstrate the cost benefits of their services in order to justify or compete for funding. As such, there is growing demand among service providers for the guidance, support and information required in order to measure and demonstrate impact.

6. The knowledge exchange group confirmed our emphasis on the importance of Guidance. The Guidance serves as tool to outline good practice in planning, to reiterate that accessibility planning should be an element of all strategic and service planning, and emphasise that accessibility planning is broader than transport. The group recommended that the Guidance should be re-issued, and that this should be used as an opportunity to re-engage with a range of public and CSVE services, perhaps by including a narrative of how the Guidance could be used, and by whom (e.g. strategic needs assessment by new Primary Care Trust forums).

7. The research suggests that accessibility planning software is important (although over-reliance on the software can lead to a too narrow focus on journey time measures and so obscure broader analyses of local accessibility). The free software, Accession, issued to all local authorities in 2006 has had limited improvements over the years. Whilst it remains a useful tool for assessing accessibility levels to key destinations (based on public transport journey times) the knowledge exchange group emphasised the importance of enhancing the software's ability to incorporate community and demand responsive transport services. They also confirmed the need to improve how software measures accessibility barriers, such as affordability, an important barrier for many households reliant on public transport.