National Centre for Social Research

RSM

Tackling Loneliness with Transport Evaluation Appendix A

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Appendix A
Technical Methodology

As elaborated in the evaluation plan agreed in December 2022, which was informed by a scoping phase, NatCen and RSM agreed with the Department for Transport (DfT) to conduct three evaluation activities: process evaluation, theory-based impact evaluation, and Value for Money (VfM) assessment. This appendix builds on section 2 to provide a detailed description of the methodology for each of these evaluation activities.

A.1 Process evaluation

This section provides a description of the process evaluation methodology, which aimed to answer the following questions:

- What is the grantee/DfT experience of the application and funding process, and what are their lessons learned?
- How were pilot activities implemented, and what worked well/not so well? e.g., Impact of funding, timelines and objectives, and role of partnerships in delivery.
- How were target beneficiaries reached? i.e., Barriers, facilitators, adaptations.
- Which types of beneficiaries were reached by the pilots and to what extent?
- How did external factors influence the implementation and delivery of pilot interventions?
- What learnings can be drawn for delivery of similar projects?
- What learnings can be drawn for future monitoring and evaluation activities for similar projects? i.e., transport projects focused on measuring impact on loneliness and/or social isolation.

A Fund-wide approach was taken to address the research questions, drawing on data from interviews with DfT staff and pilots, pilot workshops, and the Common Minimum Dataset (CMD). Please see table A.1 for which sources of data that informed answers to each evaluation question:

Table A.1: Data collection and evaluation questions

Evaluation question	DfT interviews	Pilot interviews	Pilot workshops	Common Minimum Dataset
What is the grantee/DfT experience of the application and funding process, and what are their lessons learned?		✓		
How were pilot activities implemented, and what worked well/not so well? e.g., Impact of funding, timelines and objectives, and role of partnerships in delivery.		✓	✓	
How were target beneficiaries reached? i.e., Barriers, facilitators, adaptations.		✓	✓	
Which types of beneficiaries were reached by the pilots and to what extent?		✓		✓
How did external factors influence the delivery of pilot interventions?		✓		
What learnings can be drawn for delivery of similar projects?		✓	✓	✓
What learnings can be drawn for future monitoring and evaluation activities for similar projects? i.e., transport projects focused on measuring impact on loneliness.		✓	✓	✓

A.2 Theory-based impact evaluation

The Fund commissioned a vast and diverse programme of work. The scoping phase established that within the 12 pilot projects a minimum of 49 different activities were offered, and that these activities were delivered by at least 38 sub-pilots and 85 delivery partners (see Appendix C for the evaluation team's understanding of the Fund's structure). The evaluation aimed to capture as much as possible of this vast and diverse programme, while ensuring that it remained methodologically rigorous, that it did not claim beyond what was possible, could be completed within the time and budget available, and met DfT's data and policy priorities and requirements. To do so, the theory-based impact evaluation applied contribution analysis to a sub-set of pilots, these being:

- Age UK: Travelling Companions;
- Community Transport Association: Nidderdale;
- Community Transport Association: Swan Transport;
- Devon County Council: Travel Trainers;
- Living Streets: Walking Connects, Stoke-on-Trent;
- Living Streets: Walking Connects, Wigan;
- Community Transport Group (led by TfWM): Let's Chat;
- Shencare (led by TfWM): Let's Chat; and
- Devon County Council: Tarka Line Creatives

The selected pilots and specific activities for the impact evaluation were identified in collaboration with DfT applying two criteria: the pilot quantitative data collection plan (NatCen understood that including quantitative data was a requirement of the Shared Outcomes Fund); and DfT's key strategic priorities. As a result, the

specific activities initially selected for the theory-based impact evaluation were the seven pilots shown in table A.2; however, as illustrated in table A.2 changes to pilot selection were required.

Table A.2: Pilots selected for impact evaluation

Pilot organisation	Projects or sub-projects originally selected for the impact evaluation	Projects finally selected for the case studies – where this differs
Age UK	• North, South & West Dorset Travelling Companions • Calderdale and Kirklees Travelling Companions	Age UK was unable to provide two case studies from the local Age UK activities originally envisaged, in part due to beneficiary availability and concurrent evaluation activities. Instead, it was agreed to conduct a single larger case study drawing participants from these five local Age UK partners: • Calderdale and Kirklees; • Norfolk; • Richmond upon Thames; • Stockport; • Wiltshire.
Bikeworks: Ride Side-by-Side	• Bikeworks: Ride Side-by-Side	Bikeworks was originally selected as a case study, however it transpired that it did not conduct a survey as originally expected. On this basis, it was agreed with DfT to exclude Bikeworks from the impact evaluation and therefore the case study.
Community Action Hampshire	• Good Neighbours Network • Methodist Homes Association • Age Concern Hampshire	Community Action Hampshire was not selected for case studies.
Community Transport Association	• Tackling Loneliness through Community Transport: Mojatu • Tackling Loneliness through Community Transport: Nidderale Community Transport	Due to participant availability, the Mojatu project was replaced as a case study by Swan Transport (part of Swan Advice Network): Young Volunteers.
Devon County Council	• Devon Communities Together – Chatty Bus • One Northern Devon – Tarka Line Creatives	The Devon Communities Together project Chatty Bus was replaced as a case study by Travel Training, due to the Chatty Bus being static and not expected to lead to transport-related beneficiary outcomes.
Living Streets	• Walking Connects: Bolton and Lancashire • Walking Connects: Stoke-on-Trent	
Transport for West Midlands	• Let's Chat: Community Transport Group • Let's Chat: Shencare Community Transport	

The logic map (see Appendix B) provides the theoretical basis for the evaluation, informing the contribution statements (see below). The logic map reflects how pilots were expected to contribute to beneficiary outcomes,

as well as any wider societal, economic, or environmental outcomes. The logic map is reflective of the portfolio of pilots as a whole and informs the overall fund hypothesis, this being:

Pilot projects will help people who are lonely, or at risk of feeling lonely, by undertaking activities that increase peoples' opportunities for social connections/interactions. As a result, their feelings of loneliness will reduce in the longer term.

Contribution analysis provides a pragmatic framework for evaluators to make credible causal claims where the logic map, or theory of change, is complex. This enables inferences to be made whether the pilot made a difference and contributed to the impacts observed. The approach revises theories about how particular outcomes arose, with evidence collected to confirm or discount any alternative explanations. This assessment was framed by three 'contribution statements' which were based on the logic model and developed by the evaluation team in collaboration with DfT. Please see the contribution statements below:

- **Contribution statement one:** The Fund enabled pilots to provide people at risk of and/or experiencing loneliness with transport services (such as community transport, travel companionship, and active travel) which, in turn, contributed to **increased social connections and reduced feelings of loneliness among primary beneficiaries.**
- **Contribution statement two:** The Fund enabled pilots to provide people at risk of and/or experiencing loneliness with transport services (such as community transport, travel companionship, and active travel) which, in turn, contributed to **increased travel confidence and reduced reported travel anxiety among primary beneficiaries.**
- **Contribution statement three:** The Fund enabled pilots to provide people at risk of and/or experiencing loneliness with transport services (such as community transport, travel companionship, and active travel) which, in turn, contributed to **increased travel awareness and autonomy among primary beneficiaries.**

Through qualitative interviews, beneficiaries often linked or expressed interchangeably two closely related, but somewhat different, phenomena (i.e., social connection and loneliness; travel confidence and travel anxiety; travel awareness and travel autonomy). For the purpose of analysis and the clear presentation of findings, these phenomena were combined in each statement (e.g., social connections and reduced feelings of loneliness), enabling perceived overlap, nuance, and separation to be accounted for. Relevant evidence that supported or conflicted with each statement was identified. This enabled an assessment of whether the assumptions behind the Fund's effectiveness were plausible, whether it was implemented as per the logic model and whether the chain of expected results occurred.

Data from the CMD, staff and volunteer interviews, beneficiary interviews, pilot evaluation findings (where available), and pilot survey data were triangulated to inform the contribution narrative and its assessment.

Contribution analysis draws on a range of quantitative and qualitative data to assess all contribution statements and answer all evaluation questions. These datasets are then triangulated to inform the assessment.[1] For this evaluation, the evidence included:

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[1] Data triangulation is the use of a variety of data sources, e.g., survey data and qualitative interview data, to draw conclusions. Findings can be corroborated and any weaknesses in the data can be compensated for by the strengths of other data, thereby increasing the validity and reliability of any inferences made.

- Qualitative evidence:

  - **Case studies**: consisting of up to three staff/volunteer and eight beneficiary interviews per case.
  - **Pilot-led evaluation case studies and reports**: in many cases, pilots conducted their own evaluations and case studies. At the time of analysis, these were available for Devon County Council, Community Transport Association, and Living Streets.

- Quantitative evidence:

  - **Common Minimum Dataset (CMD)**: project and beneficiary-level data on demographics and frequency of activity use.
  - **Pre and post survey data:** the loneliness measure data collected from beneficiaries by pilots.
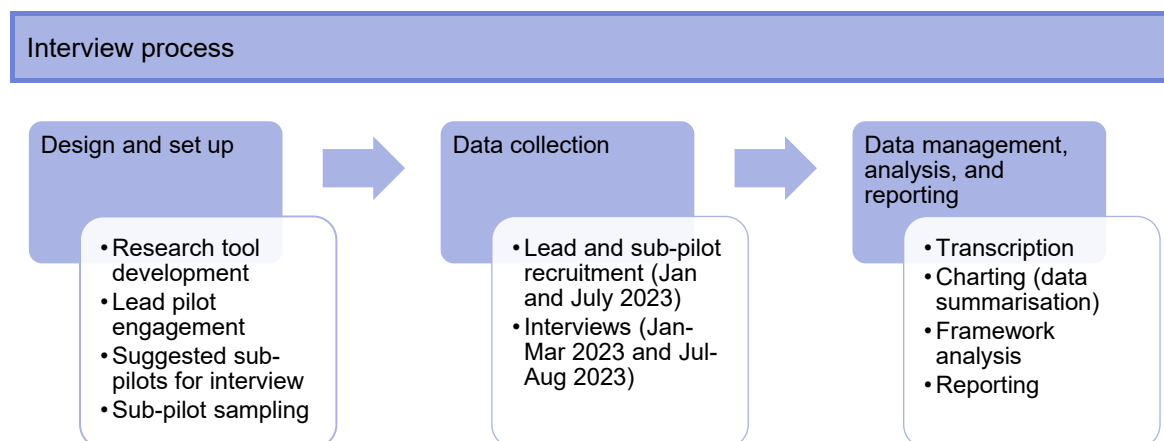
The data collection activities that informed the process and theory-based impact evaluation are outlined in further detail below, which were collected between January 2023 and July 2023.

A.3 Process and theory-based impact data collection
Pilot interviews
Overview
In-depth interviews (n=48) with lead and sub-pilots were conducted across two time points during the evaluation: 24 interviews in January, February, and March 2023 and 24 interviews in July and August 2023. All the twelve lead delivery partners were interviewed at both time points, aside from Community Rail Network who were only interviewed at the first time point. The remaining interviews were conducted with sub-pilots, five of which were interviewed at both time points. All interviews were conducted via MS Teams or telephone. The interviews lasted up to 60 minutes and were audio recorded (with the consent of the participant) to allow for an accurate account of the discussion. Please see below for our approach to qualitative data management, analysis, and interpretation.

Interview process

Design and set up	Data collection	Data management, analysis, and reporting
• Research tool development • Lead pilot engagement • Suggested sub-pilots for interview • Sub-pilot sampling	• Lead and sub-pilot recruitment (Jan and July 2023) • Interviews (Jan-Mar 2023 and Jul-Aug 2023)	• Transcription • Charting (data summarisation) • Framework analysis • Reporting

Recruitment and sampling
Fieldwork was originally due to complete in June 2023; however, this was extended to September 2023 to accommodate the two-month extension to the pilot delivery period. RSM contacted lead pilots via email in January 2023, with the intention of conducting interviews between January and March 2023. RSM requested that lead pilots provided their own availability for interview, as well as contact information for sub-pilots who were sufficiently advanced in the delivery stage to offer substantial feedback during interviews. This information included a brief description of the sub-pilots' activities and their stage in delivery, which informed the assessment for selecting sub-pilots to interview.

For the second round of interviews, conducted in July 2023, RSM contacted lead and sub-pilots with the aim of conducting interviews during July and August 2023. In some instances, RSM specifically requested details of sub-pilots for this round that had been identified as suitable for interviews. The lead pilots provided the contact information for these sub-pilots. The intention was to conduct two interviews per pilot were at each time point, one lead pilot and one sub-pilot, with the option to reallocate interviews to larger pilots should one interview be sufficient for smaller pilots. For example, Bikeworks did not work with a sub-pilot, therefore only one lead pilot interview was required.

All twelve lead delivery partners were interviewed twice, once at each time point, apart from one lead delivery partner (Community Rail Network) which was interviewed only at the first time point. This was because the main contact at this organisation had moved roles and was no longer available to be interviewed.

At the first interview time point, it was evident that further data was required for some sub pilots due to their complexity, which informed the sample for the second interview time point.

Please see table A.3 below for an outline of the interviews conducted with pilots and sub-pilots.

Table A.3: Interviews conducted with pilots and sub-pilots

Pilot organisation	Jan-Mar 2023 interviews Lead pilot	Jan-Mar 2023 interviews Sub-pilot	Jul-Aug 2023 interviews Lead pilot	Jul-Aug 2023 interviews Sub-pilot	Total Lead and sub-pilots
Age UK	1	0	2	0	3
Bikeworks	1	0	1	0	2
Community Action Hampshire	1	2	1	1	5
Community Rail Network	1	2	0	1	4
Community Transport Association	1	4	1	4	10
Devon County Council	1	1	1	1	4
Leeds Older People's Forum	1	1	1	4	7
Living Streets	1	1	1	0	3
National Autistic Society	1	0	1	0	2
Vista Blind	1	0	1	0	2
Volunteering Matters	1	0	1	0	2

Pilot organisation	Jan-Mar 2023 interviews Lead pilot	Jan-Mar 2023 interviews Sub-pilot	Jul-Aug 2023 interviews Lead pilot	Jul-Aug 2023 interviews Sub-pilot	Total Lead and sub-pilots
Transport for West Midlands	1	1	1	1	4
Total	12	12	12	12	48

The approach to sampling, agreed with DfT, aimed to achieve diversity across pilots. Some sub-pilots were interviewed on both occasions, while others were only interviewed once or not at all. A number of factors informed the sampling approach when selecting sub-pilots for interviews including the number of sub-pilots within each pilot, sub-pilot funding size, geographical location, and target beneficiary groups. Two interviews were conducted with several sub-pilots to assess delivery progress between the time points.

Research tools

Two semi-structured interview topic guides were developed in collaboration with DfT, one for each interview timepoint. A topic guide is a tool used for interviews which sets out key discussion topics. This ensures a consistent approach across interviews while allowing the discussion to remain participant-led. The topic guides were informed by the logic map developed during the Evaluation Plan.

The first topic guide covered the following themes:

- Experience of the application process
- Experience of the set-up process
- Initial experience working with DfT
- Pilot implementation
- Initial facilitators and barriers
- Lessons learned

The second topic guide covered the following themes:

- Progress on objectives
- Reflections on implementation
- Understanding partnerships and support
- Influence of external factors
- Facilitators and barriers
- Lessons learned

Pilot workshops

Overview

Two pilot workshops were conducted with lead and sub-pilots: one in May 2023 and another in September 2023. The workshops provided an opportunity for lead and sub-pilots to share learnings on what works and does not work, highlighting key successes and failures, to reflect on process evaluation questions.

Recruitment and sampling

The first workshop focused on community transport organisations, as this was a priority policy area for DfT. Findings from the first round of pilot interviews informed the sampling approach. Lead and sub-pilots were contacted to further understand and identify relevant contacts. The eleven sampled sub-pilots were invited to the workshop via email, of which seven were available to attend at the proposed date and time. The first workshop included seven participants: five representatives from CTA sub-pilots, one Leeds Older People's Forum sub-pilot and one Transport for West Midlands sub-pilot.

For the second workshop strict sampling criteria was not employed due to time constraints and availability of lead and sub-pilots. It therefore involved any participants who were available for participation. The second workshops included 15 participants from the following pilots: Community Action Hampshire (n=2), Living Streets (n=2), Volunteering Matters (n=1), Bikeworks (n=1), Community Transport Association (n=4), Devon County Council (n=3), Vista Blind (n=1) and Transport for West Midlands (n=1).

Research tools

For each workshop a semi-structured topic guide was developed alongside a slide deck to facilitate discussion, in collaboration with DfT.

The first workshop covered the following themes:

- Experience identifying and reaching beneficiaries
- Barriers and facilitators to delivery
- Observed impacts to date

The second workshop focused on the following themes:

- Role of partnerships in delivery
- Process of recruiting and targeting beneficiaries
- Exploring the extent to which projects employed new approaches or used existing models to reach beneficiaries
- Lessons learned, recommendations and suggestions on how transport can improve social connections, including reaching people who are lonely

Data collection

The workshops were conducted via MS Teams and lasted approximately 90 minutes. They were audio recorded (with the consent of the participants) to allow for an accurate account of the discussion.

DfT staff interviews

Overview

Four interviews (one paired) were conducted with DfT staff in September 2023. These interviews gathered insights around lessons learned for future funding processes, and learnings for delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of similar projects.

Recruitment and sampling

RSM and NatCen were already in contact with key DfT staff through evaluation process. These DfT contacts introduced the team to further relevant DfT staff.

The sample included DfT staff responsible for both policy and programme management to ensure involvement of those who would be knowledgeable on the various aspects of the research questions.

Research tools

A semi-structured interview topic guide was developed in collaboration with DfT. The topic guide covered the following themes:

- Reasons specific design and delivery models were chosen to reach target beneficiary groups
- Eligibility criteria applied used and why
- Oversight and management processes used and how well they worked
- How risks were identified and managed across the programme
- Planning, incorporation, and implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities
- Lessons learned

Data collection

Interviews were conducted via MS Teams or telephone. The interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes and were audio recorded (with the consent of the participant) to allow for an accurate account of the discussion.
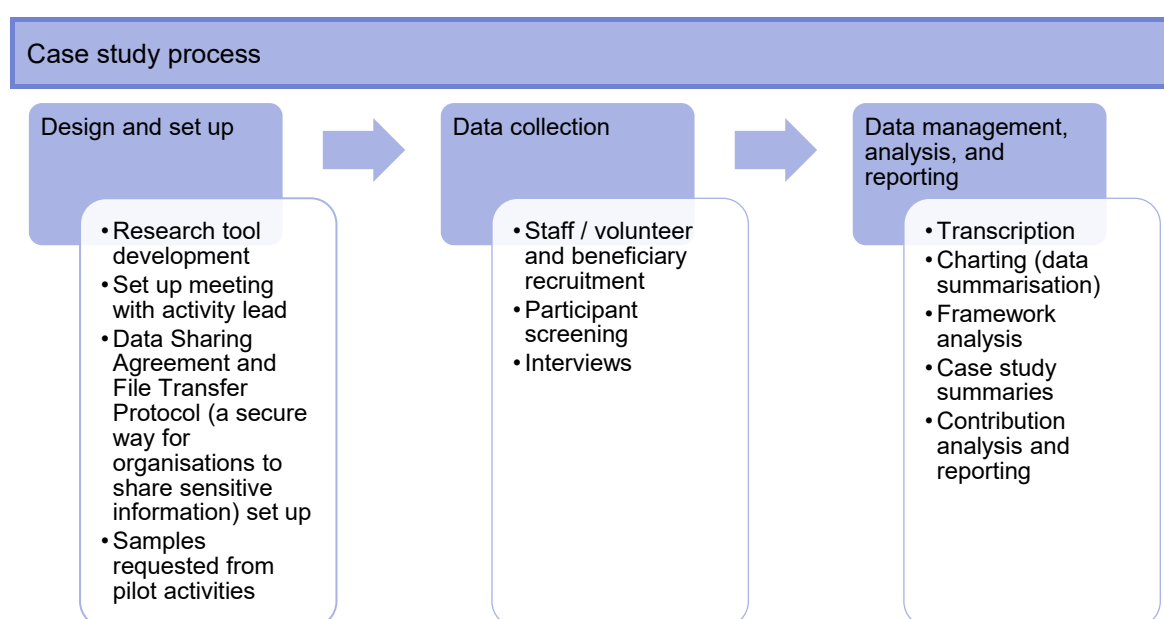
Case studies

Overview

Case studies were conducted with the sub-set of nine sub-pilots across five pilots, which were chosen for impact evaluation (see section 4). These consisted of 72 interviews conducted with staff and volunteers (n=29) and beneficiaries (n=43). These aimed to qualitatively evidence the impact on beneficiaries to support the corroboration of evidence from other sources, particularly to provide context for the quantitative survey findings and bolster pilot's own evaluation findings.

Case study process

The process for conducting the case studies involved a design stage, data collection stage, and data management and data analysis stage and is illustrated below:

Case study process

Design and set up	Data collection	Data management, analysis, and reporting
• Research tool development • Set up meeting with activity lead • Data Sharing Agreement and File Transfer Protocol (a secure way for organisations to share sensitive information) set up • Samples requested from pilot activities	• Staff / volunteer and beneficiary recruitment • Participant screening • Interviews	• Transcription • Charting (data summarisation) • Framework analysis • Case study summaries • Contribution analysis and reporting

Design and set up

NatCen contacted each of the nine leads for the six selected sub-pilots via email in February 2023, with a view to conducting interviews during March-May 2023. This timeline was impacted by the halt on policy-related activity during the pre-election period, as a result of the local elections in May 2023. A new timeline was proposed for fieldwork between May to July 2023 and sub-pilots were recontacted in April and May 23. The fieldwork period was later extended until early September 2023, to account for the two-month project extension to the delivery period granted by DfT. Activities were contacted throughout the summer up until August 2023, with follow up contacts focusing on requests for additional sample.

Engagement with pilots, projects and activities

Case study interviews were conducted with projects identified from each of the pilots selected for theory-based impact evaluation (see table A.3). The exception to this was sub-pilots from Community Action Hampshire, which was excluded at the outset. During the evaluation, Bikeworks was excluded from the impact evaluation, by agreement with DfT, because they did not administer the expected quantitative survey planned for during the scoping phase and therefore did not meet the criteria for quantitative data collection.

In addition to the two pilots excluded from the impact evaluation, two sub-pilots were withdrawn and replaced within the wider pilot. The Chatty Bus project from Westbank and Devon County Council was withdrawn, owing to lack of engagement with the activity by beneficiaries making it unsuitable as a case study. With agreement from DfT this was replaced by Travel Training from Devon Communities Together. The second instance was Mojatu from the Community Transport Association (CTA) pilot, which could not be established practically as a case study due to low beneficiary numbers and needs. By agreement with DfT, Swan Transport – Young Volunteers (from Swan Advice Network) was added as the replacement CTA case study.

Sampling and recruitment

As set out in the Evaluation Plan, the intention was to sample participants purposively. This means that they would be selected because of their characteristics and/or role, which would be necessary to capture experiences from the various and overlapping beneficiary groups across pilots. In practice, projects were unable to provide the necessary number of beneficiary contacts for systematic purposive sampling to take place in all cases. However, during screening calls, appropriate staff and volunteers (where applicable) were identified, with experience of the activity on the ground and contact with beneficiaries, to be invited to participate.

Beneficiaries were to be recruited against demographic quotas to ensure that a diverse range of experiences were included. The selected case studies planned to engage a different and diverse selection of demographic groups, for example the Age UK activities targeted older LGBTQ+ beneficiaries. It was not therefore practical to have a common sample frame across all activities. Instead, a sample frame was designed for each case study once activities had been engaged with and the evaluation team had a greater understanding of their beneficiaries' characteristics. In practice, pilots were only able to provide few beneficiary contacts, meaning that there was not the option to sample against any demographic characteristics. During screening calls any potential participants who had not had sufficient engagement with the activity to be suitable for interview were screened out.

To recruit participants, each pilot was asked to introduce the evaluation team to each sub-pilot activity lead. Each case study was led by a dedicated researcher who remained as the primary point of contact throughout. This researcher set up a call with each pilot to understand how the activity was structured/delivered and talk through the next steps for the evaluation. This included setting up a Data Sharing Agreement and secure File

Transfer Protocol (FTP) folder for the purpose of receiving participant contact data, sharing recruitment materials, and the steps for gaining consent for contact details to be shared. Ordinarily the research team would have sought to overrecruit where possible to help ensure anonymity and mitigate potential bias. However, as noted below, projects and sub-pilots struggled to provide a sufficiently large number of beneficiary contact details.

There was some evidence that project leads sought to protect their beneficiaries from 'research fatigue', as they had participated in the pilots' own, sometimes concurrent, evaluation activities. In other cases, where the activity had ended some time before the fieldwork period, there was less interest in taking part. Incentives of £20 shopping vouchers were available to beneficiaries for a completed interview.

Once contact details were shared with the evaluation team, the primary researcher for each case study contacted names from the sample, either by email or telephone, to arrange a screening call. The screening call forms part of NatCen's staged consent process as well as a mechanism to ensure that participants were suitable to take part in the research. For this evaluation, suitability was defined as a minimum level of engagement with the pilot activity. The screening call also provided an opportunity for potential participants to ask any questions about the research answered, collect sampling information, and arrange an interview if the participant wished to proceed.

The research team made up to three contacts with each potential case study participant (by email or phone), when there was not an immediate positive or negative response. Overall, 207 recruitment contacts were made (not including screener calls or the research interview). The research team also made multiple contacts to pilots and projects, by email, and in several cases, calls or online meetings in an attempt to obtain sufficient samples of staff, volunteers and beneficiaries both for the case studies, and for the focus groups which were being run by RSM. A variety of pragmatic approaches were discussed including extending the invitation to participate in interviews as beneficiaries to volunteers who were really additional beneficiaries of the activity (e.g., on a project whose primary aim was tackling loneliness among the young volunteers), considering how NatCen could include beneficiaries who were hard of hearing (e.g., offering close caption features on a videocall or visiting the project for in-person interviews). The research team also encouraged pilot and project coordinators to re-contact their staff and volunteer networks, beneficiaries lists and so on to try to obtain additional samples of potential participants.

Research tools
All research tools were developed in collaboration with DfT. Tailored information sheets were developed for each participant group (staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries) and further tailored to refer to each sub-pilot. These information sheets explained what the research was about, why the person was being asked to take part, what taking part would involve, how to take part, and explanations around consent and their right to withdraw, as well as signposting them to the privacy notice.

Two semi-structured interview topic guides were developed, one for staff/volunteers and one for beneficiaries, which were informed by the logic map and contribution statements. Questions included prompts that related to loneliness and transport outcomes.

Please see below for the themes covered in the **staff and volunteers' topic guide:**

- Introductions and background

– Learning about the participant and their situation, role and responsibilities, building rapport.

- The needs of beneficiaries

  – Types of groups of beneficiaries that the activity supports/provides services to; needs that the activity aims to address (for transport and travel and for social connection); demand from beneficiaries once the activity was established; changing needs of beneficiaries during the activity.

- Activity delivery

  – Overview of the activity and how it aimed to tackle loneliness – directly or indirectly; whether new or enhancement of existing services; collaboration with transport providers or other organisations; day-to-day delivery – experience of working/volunteering, facilitators and barriers to delivery; overall reflections and what worked well/less well.

- Perceived impacts on beneficiaries

  – Evidence collected on impacts of the activity; impacts on beneficiaries related to engagement with transport (awareness of transport options, use of transport, ease of planning and accessing travel), feelings about using transport (anxiety, confidence), and wellbeing (health, social connections, feelings of disconnection or loneliness); to what extent the activity met the needs identified; unmet needs; if there were gaps, why was this; situation without the activity; unintended results; any difference in the extent to which the activity met needs across beneficiary group; difference in impact to what was originally intended (e.g., unintended results, external factors).

- Impact on staff and volunteers

  – New skills and knowledge; training (if any); availability of volunteering opportunities; job prospects, satisfaction; reduced loneliness or isolation / increased social connection / companionship; wellbeing.

- Overall reflections

Please see below for the themes covered in the **beneficiary topic guide**:

- Previous experiences of transport

  – E.g., awareness of transport options, autonomy when journey planning, travel confidence, and anxiety around transport use; needs around support.

- Previous experience of loneliness and social connection

  – E.g., exploring indirect feelings of loneliness, as more likely to elicit a meaningful response; needs around support.

- Accessing the service

  – E.g., how they heard about the service, first contact, onboarding experience, communication, understanding of service offered.

- Experience of the service

  – E.g., activities engaged with, barriers and facilitators to accessing/making use of the activities, ongoing communication, other services accessed/signposted, how service met/did not meet needs outlined previously.

- Impact of the service

  – E.g., how the service effected their awareness of transport options, autonomy when journey planning, travel confidence, anxiety around transport use, and feelings around loneliness. Unmet needs. Other contributory factors that led to a change in outcomes e.g., other activities or services engaged with. How would they have felt if they had no access to the service?

Data collection

The case study interviews aimed to reach targets of up to three staff/volunteer interviews and up to eight beneficiary interviews for each activity. The processes for setting up, conducting and analysing case studies are illustrated above and further explained below.

The interviews were conducted by researchers with experience in conducting interviews with varied groups of people. In most cases, each interviewer moderated all the interviews in their assigned case studies, with the only exceptions due to unforeseen circumstances that required prompt adjustments (such as, last minute changes to the participant's availability). This allowed the interviewer to be a single point of contact, develop a holistic understanding of the activity, and recognise any potential gaps and patterns.

All interviews were conducted via MS Teams or telephone. The interviews lasted up to 60 minutes and were audio recorded (with the consent of the participant) to allow for an accurate account of the discussion. The recordings were only accessible to the research team and are stored on NatCen's secure server from which they will be safely deleted after the end of the project. Please see section A.5 for our approach to qualitative data management, analysis, and interpretation.

Common Minimum Dataset (CMD)

The aim of the CMD was to collect consistent data at a programme level to explore what types of beneficiaries were reached and to what extent. A CMD template (see Appendix D), developed in collaboration with DfT, was provided to ten out of the 12 pilots. The CMD template enabled pilots to record beneficiary demographic information (including age, gender, ethnicity, disability) as well as activity level data (including the type of activity engaged with, number of interactions, mode of transport of the activity, and the postcode of the intervention). The remaining two pilots, Vista and the National Autistic Society, did not contribute to the CMD, as their activities did not directly engage with end beneficiaries.

The extent of consistent data collection and reporting was limited by the capacities of main pilot and sub-pilot organisations, the nature of the pilot activities, level of interaction with beneficiaries, and the outcome priorities for each pilot. This inconsistency meant that it was only possible to collect certain data that was common across 10 of the 12 pilots, and were unable to collect data on loneliness through the CMD.

Data cleaning

Within the 10 pilots which provided CMD data, and despite guidance throughout the delivery period, there was inconsistency in what, how and when data was collected. For example, some pilots included age ranges (e.g.,

20-30) rather than specific age as requested. Others edited the CMD (for example, rather than disability being selected from the drop-down menu provided, responses were changed to independent 'yes/no' answers for each disability). Another pilot agreed with DfT to only collect CMD data on beneficiaries under the age of 25 years, meaning that their 'reached' number of beneficiaries is inaccurate, as a proportion of the 'targeted' number of beneficiaries in their business case, which also affected the aggregated findings for age across the Fund. Overall, significant cleaning of the CMD was required.

The CMD data was analysed to answer which types of beneficiaries were reached and to what extent. The data has been used alongside grantee interviews to understand if the extent of the reach matched the ambition articulated in pilot business cases and any reasons for why this was or was not achieved.

Pilot survey data

As part of the evaluation, six pilots planned to conduct beneficiary surveys to understand changes to self-reported levels of loneliness during the delivery period. Beneficiaries were invited to complete one survey before taking part in the project (i.e., a baseline survey) and another on leaving the pilot (i.e., a follow up survey), and a measure of loneliness was collected at each timepoint to observe how far people's loneliness had changed over that period, if at all. Of the six pilots where surveys were conducted, four collected a sufficiently large sample for analysis to be possible: Age UK, Devon County Council, Community Transport Association, and Living Streets.

In our reporting of these surveys, although some have only small sample sizes, their findings were analysed separately. This is because each pilot's survey data collection was implemented at a local level by the pilot and their delivery partners (or in some cases, by sub-pilots funded through a wider programme). As a result, the data collection methods were inconsistent across pilots, although comparable questions were collected across all funded schemes. Each pilot also had slightly different beneficiary eligibility criteria, and these different groups might have responded differently to the activities. Finally, each pilot was running its own unique activities and so beneficiaries' changes in loneliness as a result the pilots may have differed substantively between the different programmes. Given these differences between pilots each is presented separately.

The methods used for each pilot survey are described alongside their findings (see Appendix F). While some pilots administered the surveys to all participants, others deferred to staff and/or volunteers to select who to invite to participate. In that sense they are convenience samples, which are likely to contain those most willing to take part and easiest to recruit. This, combined with fairly low response rates, limits our confidence regarding the representativeness of the survey data and undermines our ability to make generalisations. Consequently, reported survey findings refer only to what these tell us about the responding sample of beneficiaries, rather than all participants in the pilot as a whole. The most important response rate to consider is the number of beneficiaries who took part in **both** a baseline and a follow up survey. This is due to the main outcome of interest in this evaluation being change in beneficiaries' loneliness over time (i.e., to evaluate whether pilots alleviated loneliness). Please see table A.4 for the response rates achieved for each pilot (the percentage of beneficiaries to both pre and post surveys):

Table A.4: Response rates: the percentage responding to both pre and post surveys

Survey timepoint	Pilot	No. of survey responses	No. of beneficiaries	Response rate
Baseline survey responses	Living Streets	52	350	15%
	Age UK	154	209	74%
	Devon County Council	107	784	14%
Follow up survey responses	Living Streets	44	350	13%
	Age UK	43	209	21%
	Devon County Council	108	784	14%
Baseline & follow up survey responses	Living Streets	25	350	7%
	Age UK	42	209	20%
	Devon County Council	106	784	14%

Note: This **table** excludes the fieldwork conducted by Transport for West Midlands because these surveys could not be linked between baseline and follow up.

Other limitations to the survey data

As outlined in section 3.5 of the evaluation report, counterfactual data from a control group was not collected, meaning that it is not known what would have happened to participants' degree of loneliness in the absence of the pilots. Consequently, it is not possible to demonstrate that pilots had a causal effect on beneficiaries' experience of loneliness.

In addition, there is variation of time between baseline and follow up surveys, both within each pilot's fieldwork where the length of time between baseline and follow was not consistent for all participants and between the pilots. This is another confounding factor, which means it is not possible to be confident in attributing changes, or a lack of change, to the pilot. This is because cases with longer periods between baseline and follow up may show greater change in loneliness, while those that did not exhibit a change may have had their surveys conducted very close together. In most pilots it is not possible to establish what the length of time between baseline and follow up is or judge how far these time differences may be influencing results.

There is also a risk of non-response bias, whereby those who responded are not representative of the whole population of people who took part in the pilots. In particular, it is likely that only those who are either highly satisfied or highly dissatisfied, or who engaged a great deal with the project, will have taken part in the baseline survey, and even more so to have gone on to complete a follow up survey. This has the potential to bias estimates towards the extremes of either positive or negative experiences. In most pilots, the level of response to the survey was fairly low, meaning there is an increased risk of non-response bias.

A.4 Value for Money assessment

The evaluation methodology included a Value for Money (VfM) assessment applying a Social Return on Investment (SROI) approach for four projects. SROI employs qualitative methods to apply an exploratory approach to identifying the costs and benefits of a project. The SROI method was selected over a more

traditional Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) approach to examine the nuance of outcomes between different pilots on metrics wider than monetary value, given the evaluation timeline, social value aims, and data availability.

The section below includes an overview of the data collection processes used for the SROI (stakeholder interviews and service user focus groups), information on the sampling and recruitment (including criteria for selecting projects for the VfM assessment), details on how we developed the research plan and materials, as well as our approach to data management, analysis, and ethics.

Overview
Focus groups with users of the services were the main form of data collection used to inform the Value for Money (VfM) assessment. One focus group was conducted with each of the four selected pilots, with 3 to 5 participants in each. The focus groups lasted 90 minutes and were conducted online. Participants were offered a £20 Love2Shop voucher as an incentive to take part, which could be used in a range of high street shops. The main research question for the VFM work strand was:

- To what extent have pilot activities delivered value for money?

Sampling and recruitment
It was not proportionate to assess VfM for all projects, as additional qualitative data collection was required for the SROI approach. Therefore, five projects were selected for VfM assessment based on two criteria: their priority for evaluation by DfT, which was based on existing priority policy areas and/or new areas of interest; the availability of pre and post survey data.

Based the above criteria, the following projects were selected for VfM assessment:

- Bikeworks: Ride Side-by-Side;
- Community Transport Association (CTA): Tackling Loneliness Through Community Transport;
- Walsall Community Transport (WCT): Let's Chat; and
- Living Streets: Walking Connects.

VfM assessment was also intended to be conducted for the Age UK (Travelling Companions) pilot, but it was not possible to recruit participants for the necessary fieldwork.

To recruit participants, each pilot was asked to introduce the evaluation team to each sub-pilot activity lead, who was then asked to provide interested beneficiary contact details. Beneficiaries and pilot staff were contacted via email to arrange focus groups and interviews.

Participant recruitment was challenging. Each of the selected pilots had collected contact details for few participants, resulting in a small participant sample for focus groups. Achieved samples fell below the intended size for each pilot, which was six to eight participants.

The small sample size resulted in it being impossible to split participants according to frequency of engagement in the pilot. Some beneficiaries declined to participate in the focus groups, citing their infrequent participation in pilot activities, despite clarifications provided during the recruitment process that hearing from them would have been valuable to inform the SROI approach.

Recruitment challenges resulted in biased samples towards the most frequent and engaged beneficiaries, whom pilots were most likely to have kept in touch with. A limitation of the qualitative focus group approach taken is that it's not possible to ensure samples are representative of all beneficiaries. However, the bias in samples towards more frequent and engaged users is likely to have meant participants tended towards providing high valuations of the pilots.

To allow for a wider group of beneficiaries to participate in the research, one focus group was supplemented with an additional qualitative depth interview with a beneficiary based on a shortened topic guide and adding this to the overall analysis. Please see table A.5 for the achieved sample:

Table A.5: achieved samples for each pilot intended to be covered by VfM analysis

Pilot	Achieved sample
Age UK, Travelling Companions	• Unable to recruit participants for a focus group or interviews.
Bikeworks (Ride Side-by-Side)	• Focus group (5 participants)
CTA (Tackling Loneliness Through Community Transport)	• 1 stakeholder interview • Focus group (5 participants)
WCT (Let's Chat)	• 5 stakeholder interviews • Focus group (4 participants)
Living Streets (Walking Connects)	• Focus group with the Wigan group (4 participants) • 1 beneficiary interview

Development of SROI research plan and materials
While the projects differed, the aim was to capture the value of three main types of outcomes when assessing VfM for each pilot:

- Reductions in social isolation and/or loneliness;
- The value of additional transport usage or modal shift in transport use (valued for reasons other than its impact on loneliness e.g., enjoyment of traveling, reaching destinations otherwise unavailable);
- Health and other wellbeing benefits.

Focus group discussions focused on identifying and valuing outcomes in these three areas where it was possible.

Focus groups
Focus group design was based on the Social Value Map[2], which provides a framework for conducting focus groups to identify and value programme impacts. Focus groups were structured discussion on three areas:

- **Identifying outcomes.** Focus group participants were asked to identify the key outcomes the policy had on them.

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[2] Social Value UK (2022), Value Map. Available at: https://socialvalueuk.org/resources/sroi-value-map/

- **Establishing impacts**. Focus group participants were then asked to identify how much of the outcomes identified can be attributed to the policy. This discussion was guided using questions aiming to identify:

  - **Deadweight** – What will happen/what would have happened without the activity?
  - **Displacement** – What activity would/did you displace?
  - **Attribution** – Who else contributed to the change?

- **Valuing outcomes**. Focus group participants were then guided through conversations to attribute a value that the project benefits are worth to service users for each of the identified project outcomes.

Stakeholder interviews

The focus groups were supplemented with qualitative depth interviews with service providers for two of the pilots (WCT and CTA). Due to recruitment challenges and lack of engagement, interviews could not be conducted with service providers for the other two pilots (Bikeworks and Living Streets). Interviews lasted for a maximum of 45 minutes, and included people with different involvement in administering and delivering the services for each project. Interviews were conducted via MS Teams and were audio recorded (with the consent of the participant) to allow for an accurate account of the discussion.

Interviews were semi-structured, allowing conversations to delve into particular areas of projects that participants were most familiar with. They followed the same structure as the focus groups, covering:

- Identifying outcomes;
- Establishing impacts (including deadweight, displacement, and attribution);
- Valuing outcomes.

Please see below for our approach to qualitative data management, analysis, and interpretation, and Appendix G for the result of the SROI analysis.

A.5 Qualitative data management, analysis, and interpretation

Interviews were conducted via telephone or Microsoft Teams. Interviews were then transcribed and analysed using the Framework approach[3], whereby each row represented one interview or focus group and each column represented a topic of relevance. Relevant information from each interview was written into the corresponding cell. This grouped information around each evaluation question/contribution statement, enabling the evaluation team to assess the relevant evidence.

The aim of qualitative research is to access the breadth and diversity of participants' experiences and views. The evaluation team made sure to obtain views from a range of participants, but these may not be representative of all potential participants. The qualitative data in this report does not provide numerical findings, since qualitative research cannot support numerical analysis unless a larger sample size is achieved. Instead, the qualitative findings provide in-depth insights into the diverse range of views and experiences of participants and verbatim quotes are used to illustrate these. Experiences of interviewees were informed by a range of factors, including demographics and life circumstances, which culminated in unique experiences for each individual. While the evaluation report comments on the impact of demographics and wider factors (e.g., age and disability), this

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[3] Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C.M. and Ormston, R. eds., (2013). Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers. Sage.

focuses on qualitative insights (i.e., how and why demographics impact experiences) rather than making quantitative claims that certain experiences are more or less common in different groups.

A.6 Ethics

This evaluation was approved by NatCen's Research Ethics Committee. The research team sought to reduce any risk of psychological harm for those participating in interviews and focus groups. All participants received information that set out the purpose of the research and explained what would happen to participant data. A staged approach to informed consent was taken, whereby participants were asked for their consent and reminded of their right to withdraw during recruitment, and before, during and after the interviews. For the beneficiary interviews, participants were also signposted to a list of organisations they could contact if the subject matter of the interview prompted any upset or distress. The core members of the research team were selected based on their track records of conducting qualitative research on a broad range of sensitive topics, including speaking to people about their experiences of loneliness. A fieldwork briefing was conducted with interviewers to 'walk though' the topic guide, which was then piloted in the field prior to finalisation. NatCen is a leading provider of social research training and interviewers had undergone training on in-depth interviewing, which included managing the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, as well as difficult interviews. NatCen also has a disclosure policy and process in place, which participants are informed of, whereby the relative authorities may be informed should participants indicate that themselves or others are at risk of immediate harm.