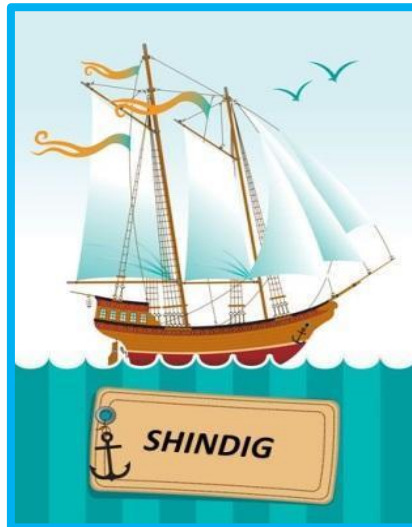


Sheffield Dementia Involvement Group



SHINDIG

Thursday 5th December 2019

Report:

Transport Services in Sheffield:

Experiences of people living with dementia

and their family carers / supporters

Background

This Sheffield Dementia Involvement Group (SHINDIG) topic was requested by Sheffield dementia Action Alliance who are doing some work around transport services and people living with dementia. The topic and the questions were tested out with Tea and Talk (SHINDIG planning group).

This SHINDIG was attended by 20 people living with dementia, 13 family carers / supporters and was supported by 11 staff facilitators or visitors. People opted to discuss the topic either in one of two groups with just people living with dementia; in a mixed group with people living with dementia and their family carer / supporter or in a family carer / supporter only group.

Questions and prompts were used to guide the discussions and responses were recorded on flip charts. These were typed up and this report reflects the key responses to the questions asked about different types of transport.

Summary

- People had experiences of a wide range of public and private transport in Sheffield.
- When transport worked well for people it enabled them to continue an active and social life which was something that people thought essential for their wellbeing.
- There was a general agreement that all transport providers needed some level of dementia awareness in order to offer a more thoughtful and safe service.
- Transport generally was valued when it was: on time; accessible by foot or wheelchair; transport drivers were thoughtful and had some understanding of dementia; went to the places they needed to visit or attend; the information needed to access and use the transport was clear and helpful and if it felt safe.
- Transport was less helpful when it was: unreliable; not easily accessible; if drivers were rude or not understanding; if signage or information was incomplete or confusing; if it did not serve the area that people lived or needed to travel to.
- There was wide variation in understanding the range of travel cards, permits that were available and how to get them. The variation in equipment used to 'read' travel passes when on the buses or trams could cause confusion.

Main Report

Questions and prompts were used to help stimulate discussions across the four groups. The first 2 questions served to help people relax and orientate them to the topic. Subsequent questions focussed on different forms of transport

How did people get here today?

People talked about using the bus, getting a taxi, accessing Sheffield Community Transport, arriving by care or by 'following the wife'.

What do you use public transport for?

People talked about using public transport to get around the city, to make use of the bus pass they owned, or because they were no longer able to drive. People said used the bus to meet friends or family, to visit town, go shopping or attend carer or peer support groups. Some people spoke of using the bus to meet for the start of the walking group, for example travelling to Fox House or Rivelin Valley.

People said that it was '*important to get out*'. '*Transport keeps me busy and helps my wellbeing*'.

Experiences of using the bus

People spoke about the positive aspects of using the bus, for example:

- *On Saturday I went to Derby on the bus.*
- *Public transport in Sheffield is good.*
- *Enjoy the bus journey.*
- *My bus turns up on time.*
- *Good bus service – number 120.*
- *It's a pleasure – the bus to Bakewell / Derbyshire / Castleton.*
- *Most bus drivers wait while we sit down and wait when we get off.*

However people also identified a number of challenges in using buses; these were categorised in terms of:

Reliability and time keeping

- *Buses are on the road but 'Not in Service'.*
- *Bus 58 and 97/8 – OK timing but sometimes busy. More needed at 4.00 pm*
- *SH11 88/83 – good but varies randomly. Frequently affected by traffic, should be every 10 minutes.*
- *120 to Halfway – 1 hour journey.*
- *97 bus – I waited an hour and a half.*
- *Circle Bus Routes have been replaced, therefore we have to catch multiple buses – becomes complicated and uses more fuel.*
- *Bus / tram unreliable – waiting times.*

- 97 – never turns up.
- 97/98 – Telegraph article about the poor service.
- Buses used to be what I would class as a service but not sure about privatisation and de-regulation.
- Buses are on time on Sundays, in the week buses have to rush in order to keep to time.
- Buses are late or missing then several turn up at same time.

Bus information

- The electronic signs are unreliable – not always right – technical and variance issues. Wrong too many times. This is at bus stops I believe.
- Information on buses – signage.
- Changing bus stops and familiar routes and numbers causes difficulties. May result in car use.
- Nodded off and missed stop.

Value for money

- Attending activities but paying bus fares – it's cheaper to drive.

Wheelchair and accessibility issues

- Hit and miss for wheelchair users and what they expect carers to do.
- Policy issues around drivers' attitude, e.g. not lower ramp – tricky and driver should know.
- Struggle with wheelchairs on buses.
- I am accident prone so getting on and off buses is tricky.

Attitude and knowledge of bus driver

- Need to have 'dementia friendly' on buses.
- Journey experience can be dependent upon the driver.
- Bus drivers need dementia training not just dementia awareness.
- Are all drivers aware of the card?
- Ed was a bus driver. He didn't get any training to support people and dementia / disabled people. It is important and would help.

Experience of using Trams

There were many positive experiences expressed of using the tram:

- Tram is fantastic. I can't travel on bus because of all the kids. Too likely to fall. Tram is much smoother ride.
- You don't have to sort it.
- Announcements on trams are very helpful – sometimes it is turned off. Not all routes have announcements.
- Trams always have conductors.

- *Can relax. Proper handles to hold on to.*
- *Tram has more room, easier ride and smoother.*
- *Feel safe.*
- *When on it – very good.*
- *Conductors – to get ticket, to oversee everyone on board and look after everyone.*
- *Less petrol used.*
- *Less traffic on the roads.*

There were also challenges expressed with the tram system

- *Getting there is hard.*
- *Tram v Buses – not everyone lives on a tram route and the tram doesn't always go where you want to go.*
- *The tram needs expanding, especially to go closer to the hospital than the University.*
- *Sometimes announcements are mixed up – “The next stop is ..hold tight please.”*
- *Need more grab rails.*
- *The rings (to hold on to) are not helpful if you are using 2 sticks.*

Experience of using taxis

People described using taxis for a range of purposes

- *Taxi when not going somewhere local, e.g. into Town or to the station.*
- *Shopping.*
- *Holidays.*
- *Evening activities – theatre / films.*
- *Singing at a care home.*
- *It's 'door to door'.*
- *Feel safe as goes where we want to go.*
- *Adds quality to life style.*

However, people also described some of the difficulties with using taxis or raised questions.

- *Don't turn up sometimes.*
- *Happy to pay but want them to turn up.*
- *Some drivers are too quick, not helpful and poor attitude.*
- *These people are working for themselves.*
- *Some drive too quickly.*
- *People can be afraid of using a taxi.*
- *How much training do taxi drivers have?*
- *What criteria do taxi drivers have to meet to pass in order to drive.*
- *Plan your journey before you get in taxi in case they ask you which route you want to take.*
- *Availability of wheelchair accessible taxis and enclosed spaces.*

Experience of using Sheffield Community Transport

There were many positive experiences expressed from people who used Sheffield Community Transport.

- *People here use SCT and drivers are really nice.*
- *Not too expensive.*
- *Booked every week.*
- *Good reliability.*
- *Crew of 2.*
- *Patient, polite, arrive when you expect them.*
- *Aware of seatbelts, etc.*

Some less positive experiences included:

- *They had to start picking people up and drop at Care Home. "The drivers left me at bottom of road". It's important the drivers take the passenger home.*
- *I have had to stop using them.*
- *Poor awareness of people at SHINDIG about SCT?.*

Experience of using Hospital Transport

Experience of using hospital transport raised a number of issues for people at SHINDIG.

- *In theory it should be useful.*
- *Ambulance transport can leave you waiting 3-4 hours.*
- *Getting transport home became my problem. The hospital transport not helpful.*
- *Problems with getting to appointments.*
- *We are caught in the middle – who is responsible – GP or hospital.*
- *No-one offered service.*
- *Some GP have access to a Community Bus.*
- *Stopped if not disabled.*

However, one person had a more positive experience and said: *It was brilliant service.*

Experiences of driving

Challenges with parking were experienced:

- *Problems parking and 1 hour in/out for 20 minutes.*
- *Travelling to hospitals – poor parking.*

Also the amount of traffic on the road was an issue:

- *Lots of traffic on roads – private cars and big vans.*

Some person described having to stop driving:

- *I had to give up my driving licence. I wasn't OK to drive. I wasn't 100% at driving.*
- *I used to drive but when stripped away I started to walk more.*
- *It's a big thing not being able to drive.*
- *People in hospital gave me no help with my diagnosis.*
- *Family members take us anywhere.*

Experience of using Trains

Very little was said about the use of trains, a few challenges were identified;

- *Staff in this country not as helpful as abroad.*
- *Difficulty with steps – need to think beforehand what to do.*
- *Problems with Sheffield Station and Car Assist. Can't take over right up to station. Only taxis can go near station.*

Experience of using travel cards and passes

There was some confusion over eligibility for disabled bus passes and blue badges and applying for them was perceived as difficult by some.

- *Criteria for Disabled Bus Passes – where is the line drawn and who can get these?*
- *Blue Badge criteria – includes 'invisible illnesses and disabilities, e.g. Dementia.*
- *Problematic forms. Help from AGE UK, CPN, Howden House and AS.*

People described cards they used to alert others to their disability.

- *Alzheimer's Society 'Memory Problems' cards re hidden disability.*
- *Sunflower lanyards. – (Post group note: Following this SHINDIG a family carer reported that she obtained a lanyard for her husband whilst going on holiday. It was recognised at Manchester Airport and staff proactively approached them to see if they required any support; this continued on the flight and even in the overseas resort. She reported the lanyard made their trip much comfortable and she would no hesitation in recommending to others. They were made to feel like VIPs.*

General experience of the use of bus passes

- *Bus pass – any bus, any tram.*
- *The equipment they use (to scan the cards / take the money) can be confusing. They should have one consistent system.*
- *Because they had a bus pass, although it was noted these were not available for younger people with dementia.*
- *Also bus passes limit people to certain hours (led to discussion re taking hospital appointment letters to show driver and then get free travel before restriction times).*
- *Companies – First, Stagecoach (combined bus service Barnsley to Hospitals Tidewell Route), Powells, SCT, TM (expanding re early use / passes / medical appointments).*

Recommendations

Some key recommendations can be made from this report:

- Key findings from the report should be shared with transport commissioners and providers in Sheffield.
- There is a need for transport providers to ensure that their staff all receive some basic awareness training about dementia and how it impacts on people.
- There should ideally be standardisation of the equipment used to register bus passes and pay on board different transport systems. The lack of consistence is confusing for people with dementia and also those without dementia.
- Signage and information needs improving from timetables, to the location of transport stops along with on board notifications of stops.
- It would be helpful to have a City wide resource on all the available transport options available to people in Sheffield and any special help people might receive to use transport.
- There needs to be much more understandable information about the range of transport passes and benefits available to people living with dementia, current information is not clear and consistent. It needs to be publicised more widely who in the City can help people to apply for and complete the necessary forms to get the right help for their needs.
- The benefits of using the 'hidden disability' lanyards need sharing more widely.
- There needs to be some equity in that passes and benefits available to older people with dementia are also available to younger people with dementia.

Conclusion

This SHINDIG provided people with dementia and their family carers the opportunity to share their experiences of using public and private transport.

The findings from this SHINDIG will be shared with Sheffield Dementia Action Alliance, who are currently undertaking some work in Sheffield about transport and the needs of people living with dementia. The report will also be shared with Sheffield City Council commissioners.

For more information contact SHINDIG co-ordinators: jo.wallace@alzheimers.org.uk or claire.jepson@shsc.nhs.uk