

WORKING BETTER WITH WHITLEY

Exploring the everyday transport needs and experiences
of local communities in South Reading



This report is by the Whitley Big Local Transport Research Team:

Sally Lloyd-Evans, Lorna Zischka, Daniel Mitchell, Danielle Dorn,
Elizabeth Kingdom, Emma Lacy, Ellie Bowerman-Wyatt, Mo McSevney,
Sonia Duval, Nicky Bennett, Richard Bradbury, Fatoumata Saidykhan,
the Northumberland Training Academy and John Ord.

WORKING BETTER WITH WHITLEY:

EXPLORING THE EVERYDAY TRANSPORT NEEDS AND EXPERIENCES OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH READING

Sally Lloyd-Evans, Lorna Zischka, Daniel Mitchell, Danielle Dorn, Elizabeth Kingdom, Emma Lacy, Ellie Bowerman-Wyatt, Mo McSevney, Sonia Duval, Nicky Bennett, Richard Bradbury, Fatoumata Saidykhan, the Northumberland Training Academy and John Ord.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to say a big thank you to all the respondents who participated in our questionnaire survey, interviews and focus groups. We've also had a huge amount of support from particular individuals and organisations and this research would not have happened without their efforts:

- Peter Absolon, Readibus, for his considerable help with the research design and writing the report, particularly with the conclusions and recommendations. Thank you for your support and enthusiasm.
- Rachel Goater and colleagues at Reading Voluntary Action for helping us organise the project, employ the resident researchers and provide feedback on this report. We could not have employed local residents without your help.
- Peter Gallagher, James Downing and students at NTA for their fantastic participation in all our events, helping us with social media, Google training and the final report.
- Nicola Toomey, Trisha Bennett and Whitley Community Development for support and advice.
- Hexham Community Centre for providing us with a home for our meetings and office space.
- Claire Muir, Stephen Wise, Tom Woolmer and colleagues from Reading Borough Council for helping to facilitate the research.
- Sophie Bowlby, Steve Musson, and Geoff Griffiths from the Department of Geography, University of Reading for helping with the maps and final report.
- The Headteachers and staff from the Whitley Excellence Cluster who gave up their time to talk to us and particularly to Ridgeway Primary School, Geoffrey Field Primary School and Blagdon Nursery for helping us administer the questionnaires and focus groups.
- Vernon Orre (St Agnes Church) and Keith Dolding (Well Church) for participating in the interviews and letting us attend events.
- James Freeman and Martijn Gilbert at Reading Buses; Sarah Smith and colleagues at Home-Start Reading; Karen Brown at Reading Job Centre; Karen Stanbridge from UoR Travel Team; Kim Seymour (Community Police) for sharing their knowledge and supporting the research.
- The University of Reading for funding the student internships, particularly John Bainbridge (CPEC), the Dean of Science and the SAGES Research Fund.
- Sue Beasley and Louise Jones (SAGES) for their considerable help in producing the final report.
- Lorna Zischka (UoR) for analysing the questionnaire data and Daniel Mitchell (UoR) for helping with the final report and launch event.
- Our Steering Group for their time, advice and encouragement throughout the project. Particular thanks to Peter Absolon (Readibus), Sophie Bowlby and Steve Musson (UoR), Rachel Goater (RVA), Claire Muir (RBC), Peter Gallagher and James Downing (NTA) for their valuable comments on the draft report.

We are also grateful to the following organisations that helped us to administer the questionnaire survey:

Morrisons//Broad Street Mall//The Oracle//Home-Start//Hexham Community Centre
Toddler Group//Whitley Wood Community Centre's Youth Services//Sure
Start//Academy Sports Centre/Nepali Women's Yoga Group

Last, but not least, thanks to all the Whitley Researchers for their tireless commitment, enthusiasm and hard work in every stage of the project from the research design, data collection and analysis, to the report writing and recommendations: Nicky Bennett, Ellie Bowerman-Wyatt, Richard Bradbury, Danni Dorn, James Downing, Sonia Duval, Peter Gallagher, Beth Kingdom, Emma Lacy, Samantha Mayne, Mo McSevney, Daniel Mitchell, John Ord, Fatoumata Saidykhan and Lorna Zischka.

We would all like to extend a massive thank you to Dr Sally Lloyd-Evans at the University of Reading for her boundless energy, commitment and leadership. Sally made it all possible.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	3
Contents.....	5
Executive Summary:.....	7
Research Context.....	7
Everyday journeys in Whitley:.....	7
Transport Barriers:.....	7
A Better Connected Whitley:	7
Recommendations: 'Ease, Enable and Empower'	8
1. Introduction: Why transport?	9
2. The research methodology	13
2.1 'The Whitley Researchers'	13
2.2 Research Methods.....	15
2.2.1. The Geography of 'Whitley'	16
2.2.2 The Questionnaire Survey – 500 respondents	20
2.3 Focus Groups and Interviews	22
3. The research context: living in Whitley.....	25
3.1. Whitley in 2014	25
3.2. Transport in Whitley.....	27
4. Everyday journeys in Whitley: An overview	33
4.1. 'Getting around': Transport usage in Whitley	33
4.1.a. 'Supermarkets, stores and shops'	36
4.1.b. 'Getting out of Whitley for services and socialising.....	38
4.1.c. 'Care in the Community'	39
4.1.d. 'Working Lives and Learning'	42
4.1.e. Summary: 'everyday journeys are shaped by transport availability rather than choice'.....	46
4.2. Transport Barriers in Whitley: who, where and when?.....	47
4.2.a. Being carless can make you vulnerable to socio-economic pressures	47
4.2.b. Women, and families with dependents, are more likely to be affected by transport barriers	48
4.2.c. The geography of Whitley': where you live	50
4.3. What transport barriers do people face?.....	52
4.3.a. Cost.....	53
4.3.b. Buses and lack of direct and cross-Whitley routes	54
4.3.c. People with mobility impairments	55

4.3.d. Fear of walking and safety	57
To summarise:	57
5. Transport and Mobility in Whitley: connecting families and communities.....	59
5.1. Everyday journeys, time pressures & modern family lives.....	60
5.2. Transport, Mobility and Insularity: Connecting people to places enhances lives	63
To summarise	68
6. Conclusions and Recommendations: 'Ease, Enable and Empower'	69
References	73
Appendices	75
Appendix 1	75
Appendix 2: The Questionnaire Survey	76
Appendix 3: Questionnaire survey locations:.....	77
Appendix 4: Focus Group Questions.....	78
Appendix 5: Interview Questions (Stakeholders/ Schools/Community Organisations).	79
Appendix 6:Northumberland Training Academy	80

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Research Context

This report presents the findings of a 12-month action research project that aimed to explore the everyday travel needs and experiences of communities in Whitley, identify transport barriers and suggest ways of addressing unmet needs that could be targeted by the *Whitley Big Local* initiative. It focuses on the central role that **mobility** plays in connecting people to the places they **need**, and equally importantly, they **aspire** or **want** to go to.

The research consisted of a questionnaire survey with 500 local residents, 30 interviews with public and voluntary sector organisation, and 5 community focus groups undertaken by a new participatory research partnership called the "*Whitley Researchers*."

Everyday journeys in Whitley:

- **Bus and car:** Nearly half of the residents surveyed did not have access to a car and this restricts access to shopping, socialising, employment and healthcare. The bus is the most frequently used mode of transport in Whitley (58% of people surveyed regularly travel by bus).
- **Food shopping:** was the most frequently cited destination - 69% shop in Whitley due to a lack of transport options.
- **Socialising:** 80% of people with a car socialise regularly compared to 61% without a car and activities often take place outside Whitley. Women are less likely to socialise.
- **Healthcare:** 1 in 4 people needed to travel to the Royal Berkshire hospital at least monthly but there is no direct bus service from most streets in Whitley. Getting lifts was especially important for people with mobility impairments.
- **Work and Education:** Around half of the respondents had regular employment and of these, 72% worked outside Whitley and 45% use public transport, cycle or walk. Getting to Reading College was seen as problematic for young people and work-returners.

Transport Barriers:

- 72% of people had experienced a problem with local transport and 55% of carless residents were unable to find the transport they need. Being carless can make you more vulnerable to socio-economic pressures, insularity and social exclusion; **families with up to three children, women and households with a disabled family member are more likely to be affected.**
- The greatest barriers are the **cost of transport** (31%) and the **lack of direct bus routes** (26%) but other barriers includes perceptions of safety, limited internet access and information, low levels of travel experience and the geography of Whitley.
- Only 29% of people with a mobility impairment can find the transport they need.

A Better Connected Whitley:

Data from the interviews and focus groups tell a story about the **importance of being connected and mobile for many local families**, and the report argues that mobility itself is at the heart of tackling the issues of deprivation, isolation and social exclusion that are frequently associated with Whitley, South Reading:

- "not being able to get everyone in your family where they need to go with the time and money you have" - the complex daily journeys of modern families, and caring roles of many women, place significant time pressures and financial stress on carless households. Financial exclusion and time poverty are major issues for families with children.
- "Whitley is an isolated community without a car" – connecting people, particularly school children and families, to new places and experiences enhances lives and reduces insularity.

Recommendations: ‘Ease, Enable and Empower’

Section 6 offers a series of options for initiatives that will **ease** solutions by working with existing transport providers to develop services that address the needs of carless families with children and other households with restricted mobility, **enable** people to help themselves using Big Local funding and **empower** community organisations and agencies to target support to those most in need.

Whitley Community Mobility Initiatives for Addressing the ‘3 E’s’

Ease Cost and Affordability: • A fare reduction on the 5/6/9 or 5/6 bus routes, local job-seekers and under 19s. • "Bringing London to Whitley" - free travel for children up to a particular age • Free travel for targeted families via local agencies (eg via issue of passes, smart cards etc.) • A local Whitley 'taxi-card' to support some targeted families for essential journeys. • Present evidence of a potential commercial opportunity to Asda to provide transport to their store.
Ease Cross-Whitley Bus Routes, particularly to RBH: • A re-routing of the 9 bus service so that alternate buses turn left from Whitley Wood Road to re-join Shinfield Road via Cressingham Road to re-introduce a 'cross-Whitley' route. • Transport to and from Ridgeway School from Kennet Island for those in identified need
Empower and Enable Households Access to Employment, Shopping and other Services: • Initiatives to explore collective use of on-line grocery shopping with local drop points • Initiatives to increase access to credit facilities to facilitate on-line shopping • Work with organisations/local employers to look at feasibility of car share/moped schemes
Enable Local Schools: • A fund for schools to apply for school trips and outings. • Promote walking buses and safe routes to school to reduce time pressure on parents. • Work with Reading Buses to offer each WEC primary schools local bus trips in Spring 2016
Enable and Empower Families and other Households to Get out and About: • A virtual community transport scheme to increase knowledge of and confidence in the use of existing transport using volunteers or bus buddies; information hub in the community café and free trips. • A programme of outings using a local coach firm to provide the transport, with local pick up points around Whitley, advertised locally such as in the community newspaper. Fares supported by Big Local. • Shared Minibus: e.g. funds towards the replacement of Reading Girls School bus, on condition that it can be used by other local groups in partnership with the Big Local • Promote cycling and bike schemes • Initiatives to increase Internet access and access to a computer • Work with community groups and public sector stakeholders to promote safer streets
Empower Families and Residents with Restricted Mobility: • An increase in the availability of the Readibus service for Whitley residents with restricted mobility • An increase in the availability of days out with Readibus for Whitley residents unable to travel on mainstream coaches • An extension of the Readibus service to include transport to hospital for Whitley residents with restricted mobility

1. INTRODUCTION: WHY TRANSPORT?

"It's about connecting people to the right places"

This report focuses on the mobility needs and experiences of communities in Whitley, South Reading, in order to highlight the central role that access to (or lack of access to) particular forms of transport (walking, cycling, bus use, car driving) play in the everyday lives of local families. Access to transport is more than an issue of getting from one place to another; it's essential for building community connections, widening access to education and work opportunities, and is vital to the everyday well-being of households. The demand for transport is a derived demand; transport is not an end in itself but rather a component of the demand for other things such as education, work or shopping. Car drivers and more affluent groups in society can easily overlook the complex problems associated with 'not being able to get where you need to go'. Recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2013) found that people who cannot connect to what is going on within their communities become quickly isolated, and community cohesion, with its mutually beneficial and supportive structures, is compromised. Being unable to connect to opportunities for life-enhancement outside a community also hinders the development of people within a community and limits its members' potential for accessing services and building the linkages that will bring jobs, social activities and better opportunities for children and youth. Being able to **get to places** is therefore essential for a strong and thriving community.

This report presents the findings of a 12-month participatory action research project that aimed to:

- (i) explore the everyday travel needs and experiences of communities in Whitley, and identify transport barriers
- (ii) suggest ways of addressing unmet needs that could be targeted by the *Whitley Big Local* initiative¹.

The Big Local aims to help communities identify local needs and take actions in response to the priorities that **they choose** and create lasting partnerships that will help them make a 'massive and lasting' difference to the area. The decision to focus on transport stems from pilot research in 2013 that asked local residents to identify significant issues that should be investigated as part of the Big Local funding initiative. In 2014, the Big Local Representative, John Ord, approached Sally Lloyd-Evans in the Department of Geography and Environmental Science, University of Reading², to discuss ways of facilitating a community-led research project to explore the transport and mobility needs of Whitley residents by training and employing local residents to do the research. The initial project aimed to conduct research into the feasibility of setting up a community transport scheme in Whitley but during the design phase it became clear that we needed to identify the specific nature of the 'transport problems' facing local people before making decisions about possible solutions. Indeed, it is widely recognised by transport specialists that the solutions to 'transport problems' do not always lie in changes to transport provision. Changes in the timing and location of activities, in information or in the resources available to individuals may be more effective ways of meeting mobility needs. As a result, the project developed into an in-depth assessment of the transport needs and experiences of local residents that we hope will have wider policy relevance beyond transport.

¹ www.whitleybiglocal.com

² Dr Sally Lloyd-Evans, Department of Geography and Environmental Science, School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science, University of Reading

As will be discussed in Section 2, the research consisted of a questionnaire survey with 500 local residents, 30 interviews with public and voluntary sector organisations, and 5 community focus groups undertaken by a new action research partnership called the "*Whitley Researchers*". This included Whitley residents, staff and students from the University of Reading and Northumberland Training Academy (NTA) and Big Local representative, John Ord. Drawing on the principles of participatory action research (Mohan, 2007), which aims to empower and equip local communities with the skills needed to undertake their own research, the Whitley Researchers engaged with a wide range of community groups, schools and colleges, statutory service providers and voluntary organisations to understand multiple viewpoints and perspectives.

Through this approach, we have gleaned a vast amount of knowledge on the issues and views of local communities and families in Whitley, not just on transport but on people's everyday experiences, hopes and fears about living in Whitley. As a result, this report aims to tell a story about the **importance of being connected and mobile**, and it will argue that mobility itself is at the heart of tackling the issues of deprivation, isolation and social exclusion that are frequently associated with Whitley. It summarises the visions and aspirations of local residents, community organisations, transport providers, schools and other stakeholders for improving transport and mobility in South Reading and provides a set of recommendations for consideration by the Big Local community team for inclusion in their funding initiative. The 'Whitley Researchers' have also embarked on their own learning journey and we have been grateful for the incredible support and enthusiasm from individuals, families and businesses and organisations that have participated in this research. The project has created new partnerships, links and networks that we hope will lead to exciting future ventures.

At the start of the project, the initial response from many local public sector stakeholders and service providers we interviewed was "why did we want to focus on transport given Reading's reputation for an efficient and comprehensive public transport system?" Isn't Whitley well served by frequent local buses? The view from key stakeholders was that Whitley, like other areas in Reading, is well connected by public transport but as we will discuss in Section 3, although Reading has a well-managed public bus system, our research revealed the hidden, everyday transport barriers and financial difficulties facing families in Whitley that have consequences for how they access essential services such as healthcare, food and work, but are also linked to longer-term issues of isolation and social mobility. The report will also discuss the importance of 'mobility' in its broadest sense – social, economic and educational mobility and the fundamental role that transport plays in connecting people to the places they **need**, and equally importantly, they **aspire or want** to go to.

This appears to be the first in-depth multi-methods research into a community's transport needs in Reading and there is little comparative data for us to build upon. Whilst many of the transport issues presented in this report are not exclusive to Whitley residents, and will be experienced by some individuals and families elsewhere in Reading, we will argue that Whitley's socio-economic profile shown through the 2011 census and other reports makes transport and mobility key targets for improving community well-being.

The report is organised into 6 sections:

1. Introduction
2. Research Methodology
3. Research Context
4. Everyday Journeys and Transport Needs in Whitley
5. Connecting People and Places
6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The next section of the report will discuss the development of the Whitley Researchers network and the research methods.

2. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate the feasibility of a new community transport service in Whitley, the research aimed to explore the following:

- The everyday travel practices and needs of residents in Whitley, South Reading
- Whether local residents, community organisations and local institutions faced any transport or mobility barriers?
- Institutional and stakeholder attitudes to transport and mobility in Whitley
- Ideas for tackling unmet transport needs that could be funded by the Big Local initiative, including a community transport scheme

We adopted a multi-method approach that included both quantitative and qualitative techniques (see 2.2 for further details) including:

- a questionnaire survey of 500 Whitley residents
- 5 focus groups with different groups of residents
- 30 interviews with key stakeholder and local organisations

The project adopted a participatory action research framework (Kindon, Kesby and Pain, 2007; Kindon and Elwood, 2009). Participatory research recognises the importance of actively engaging local communities in the research process so that projects are run with communities rather than about them. We also aimed to build new collaborations between residents, researchers and institutions that would help facilitate a community transport service in the future. A core part of this agenda was the development of a new community-based research team to design and carry out the research that we called 'The Whitley Researchers'.

2.1 'The Whitley Researchers'

"Working together breaks down barriers and shows how we can help each other" (Resident Researcher)

The project developed a new community research network called the 'Whitley Researchers' in April 2014. Details of the team are provided in Box 2.1.1.

The research was funded by the Whitley Big Local (£7,500) and the University of Reading (UoR). The UoR contribution included three undergraduate student internships (£4000), a small grant to Sally Lloyd-Evans from the School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science Research Fund (£1500) and Sally's involvement in the project. Five community residents were employed on a living wage funded by the Whitley Big Local to undertake the data collection, assist with the data analysis and contribute to the final report. Training events were held on the Whiteknights Campus, at Northumberland Training Academy (NTA)³ and Hexham Community Centre.

³ Northumberland Training Academy is a post-16 College linked to Reading Girls School

Box 2.1.1 'Whitley Researchers' Team Members

- John Ord, Big Local Representative
- Local Whitley resident researchers, that included 5 paid community staff:
 - Mo McSevney (Community Research Coordinator)
 - Sonia Duval (Data and Administrative Assistant)
 - Fatoumata Saidykhan (Community researcher)
 - Nicky Bennett (Community researcher)
 - Samantha Mayne (Community Researcher)
 - Richard Bradbury (Volunteer Researcher)
- Dr. Sally Lloyd-Evans from the Department of Geography and Environmental Science at the University of Reading; Lorna Zischka, a PhD student from the Department of Economics and 5 University undergraduate placement students:
 - Daniel Mitchell
 - Beth Kingdom
 - Danni Dorn
 - Emma Lacey
 - Ellie Bowerman-Wyatt
- Peter Gallagher and James Downing from Northumberland Training Academy, and 5 sixth form students

Sixth form students and staff from the Northumberland Training Academy (see Appendix 6) played a key role in designing the research and offering digital training to UoR students on how to engage young people in the research via social media. Sixth formers worked alongside the UoR placement students to set up social media accounts, including a website, Facebook and Twitter accounts and a blog (<https://whitleybiglocal.wordpress.com/>).

Whitley Big Local Community Project

HELPING LOCAL RESIDENTS VOICE THEIR OPINIONS

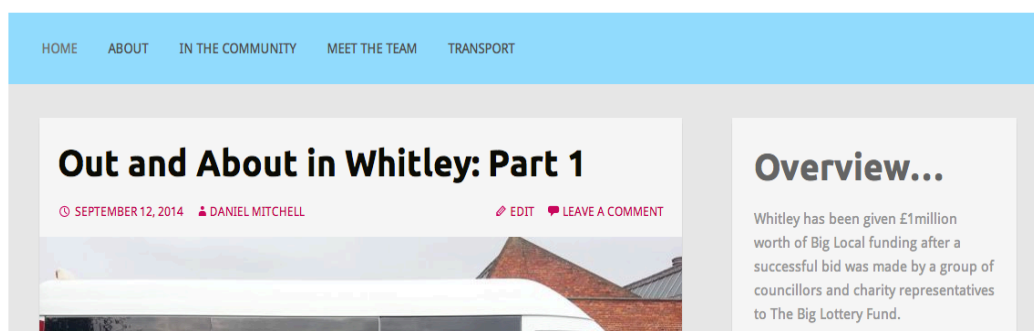


Figure 2.1.1a Whitley Big Local Community Project blog screenshot

The team met every week from May to November 2014 (see Figure 2.1.1b) to develop a questionnaire survey, gather secondary data on transport, conduct interviews and focus groups, set up social media account, input and data analysis.

The Hexham Community Centre generously provided office space. The project was also supported by a Steering Group (see Appendix 1) and we held 3 formal meetings in 2014.



Figure 2.1.1b the Whitley Researchers Weekly Meeting

It is hoped that the partnership will bring multiple benefits in terms of enhancing the skills and career aspirations of all involved, and there are plans to extend this to other research projects in 2015. As one of the team commented, *"I will be so proud of the whole team if we can make a difference to people's lives"*. The next section outlines the research methods we used.

2.2 Research Methods

As shown in Box 2.2.1, the research design consisted of three phases from March 2014:

Whitley Community Transport Research Design	
<i>Phase One – Scoping Study (March to July 2014)</i>	
• Convene Steering Group • Community engagement and awareness meetings with residents, local voluntary and public sector organisations • Secondary data and mapping of current statutory transport provision in Whitley • Recruitment and training of local residents/students to conduct research • Design and agree research methods for study	
<i>Phase Two – Community Travel Needs Research (July to December 2014)</i>	
Community transport questionnaire: 500 questionnaires across different demographic groups. Questionnaires were conducted in community spaces around Whitley, including schools; shopping areas; community and voluntary organisations; outreach; youth groups; sports clubs, faith centres and doorstep interviews.	

Focus Groups with residents and local organisations: The objective is to identify everyday mobility needs and understand informal transport provision. Focus groups include community-mapping activities
Stakeholder/Institutional engagement. Interviews with public/voluntary sector transport providers and local organisations. Visits to the University, NTA and Readibus
Community transport mapping, census profiling, data entry and analysis
Whitley Researchers were also invited to the Internship Celebration Event on Nov 3 rd at UoR
<i>Phase Three - Analysis and Report Preparation (January to March 2015)</i>
• Discussions and feedback with community groups and stakeholders
• Identification of priority areas (building evidence base)
• Develop recommendations
• Draft Report Feedback and Final Preparation

Box 2.2.1 The Research Design

Before we outline the methods in greater detail, it's important to discuss the geographical location of 'Whitley'.

2.2.1. The Geography of 'Whitley'

Whitley as a geographical area can be defined in a number of ways. Firstly, Whitley Ward is an area classification used in the Census 2011 and by statutory authorities, shown in Figure 2.2.1. The census data used in this report refer to this geographical area, as it was easy for the researchers to obtain and map. However, local perceptions of Whitley boundaries vary and they extend beyond the Whitley Ward area into Church and Redlands Wards around the areas of Hexham, Staverton and the Tree Estate (these are also RG2 7 postcodes). Secondly, the Whitley Big Local has a more focused geographical area shown in Figure 2.2.2, that excludes Whitley Wood and other neighbourhoods on the eastern outskirts (Whitley Big Local Community Plan 2015). However, the Whitley Researchers decided to focus on households that use Whitley everyday for local services so we included a wider area that comprised of RG2 0, 7 and 8 postcodes shown in Figure 2.2.3. This broadly includes the area between the main transport routes of the Basingstoke and Shinfield Roads, and covers neighbourhoods like Kennet Island as families here use Whitley for schools, shopping and healthcare. The numbers of survey respondents who lived in each postcode is shown in Figure 2.2.4, and shows that a majority of respondents resided in RG2 7 areas. As this report will show, Whitley comprises of a number of distinct communities and neighbourhoods, some of which experience greater transport needs and barriers than others.

Reading Ward Map, 2011 Census



Legend
 New Ward Boundaries

Title: **Reading Borough Council Wards 2004**

Scale : Diagrammatic

Date: 15/01/2003

Produced by GIS & Mapping Services



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Reading Borough Council. Licence no LA 079049. 2002. Ref: 31417/Wards 2004 with poll districts A4.wor

Figure 2.2.1 Reading Ward Map

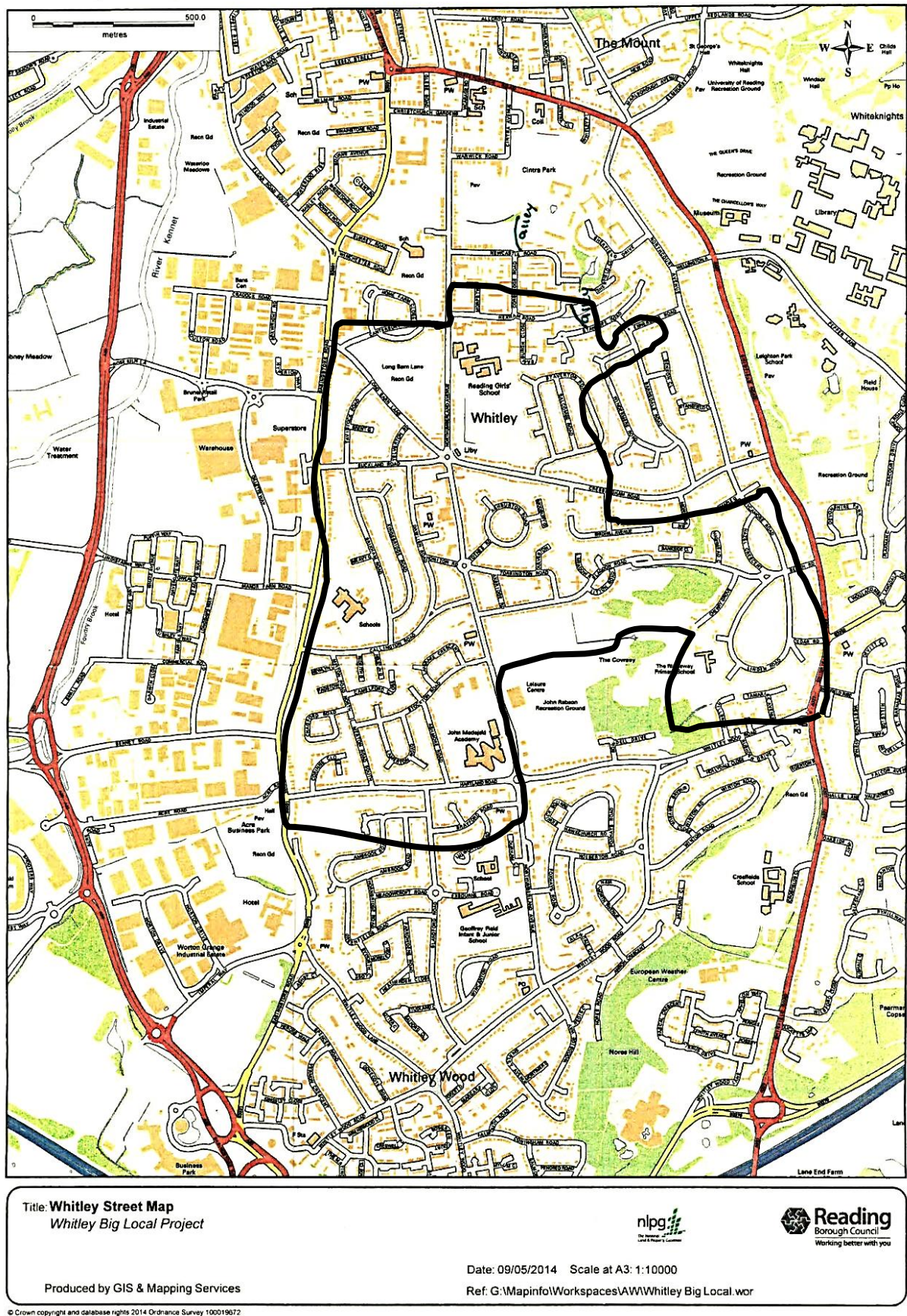


Figure 2.2.2 Whitley Street Map

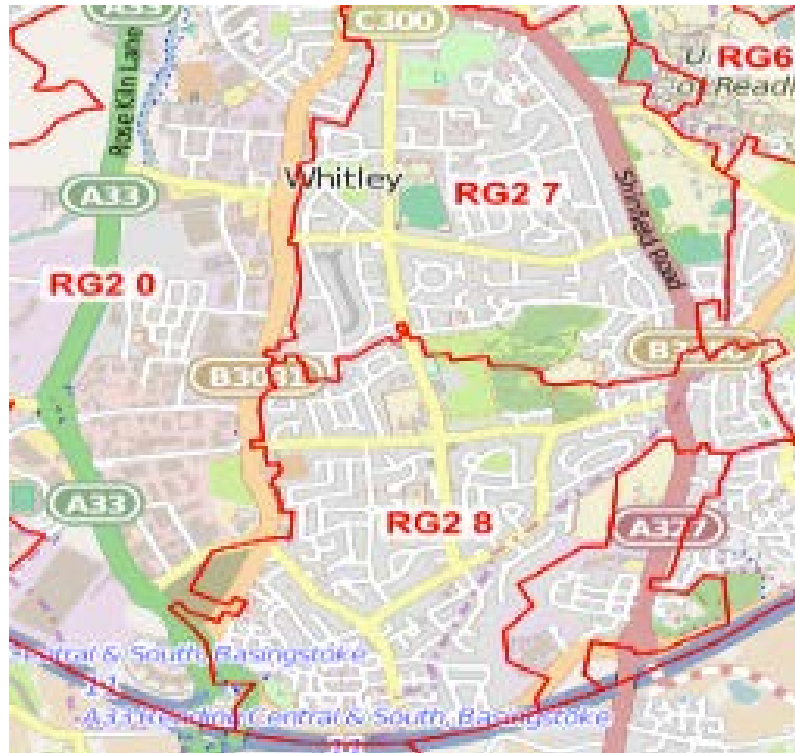


Figure 2.2.3 RG2 Postcodes: Whitley, Reading (2km by 3.5km approx)

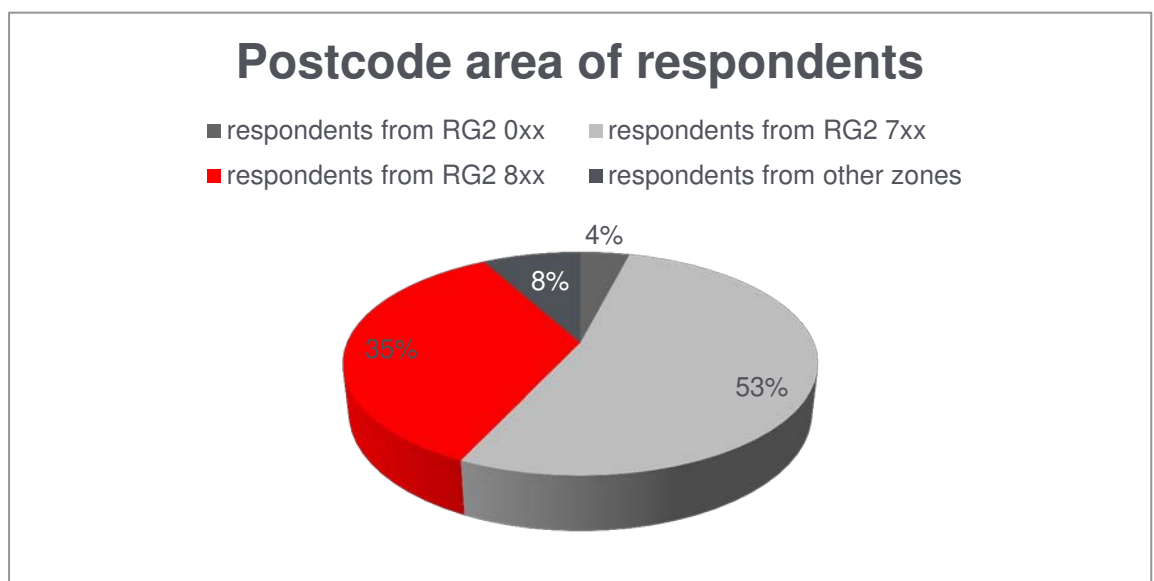


Figure 2.2.4 Postcode areas of Survey Respondents

2.2.2 The Questionnaire Survey – 500 respondents

A 5-minute questionnaire survey was designed to explore people's travel practices, identify transport barriers and provide an opportunity to raise positive and negative aspects associated with their travel needs. Whilst a few questionnaires were self-completed, the majority was undertaken face to face with the research team⁴ - we believe that this approach encouraged participants to share their experiences, both good and bad, and highlight areas of personal concern.

The questionnaire was subject to several revisions by the researchers, and this explains the reasons why some of the data presented in Section 4 does not include all 500 participants:

- A pilot questionnaire of 40 participants was undertaken at several primary schools in June 2014 - this version was a great source of information but too time-consuming and over-complicated
- A revised questionnaire was used with around 50 respondents in July 2014 and a slightly modified version agreed upon in August 2014 (see Appendix 2).

Given our mixed methodology, we did not seek to undertake a statistically representative sample of Whitley's population but instead we invited a diverse range of individuals and social groups to participate in this research through extensive outreach work by our team. The main questionnaire survey was undertaken from July to October 2014 and participants were recruited via a number of community and outreach activities and clubs, shopping centres, schools, the Sports Academy, church events and fun days; on-line facilities with help from NTA; and a household based strategy, whereby the research team visited households in different parts of Whitley (see Appendix 3). Surveys were undertaken on different days and times, including evenings and weekends, in order to gain a diverse sample of residents.

In total, 500 respondents answered the survey – **65.3 female and 34.7% male**⁵. The higher proportion of female respondents reflects the fact that women were more likely to be at home during the household recruitment phase and also participate in community events and clubs. The recruitment of male respondents was more challenging due to work commitments. Given the research focus on families and women's central role in organising travel, we are happy that this gender representation doesn't undermine the overall validity of the research.

According to the 2011 census data there are 11,460 people living in the Whitley Ward and 4403 households. The population is relatively youthful:

- 49.1% male and 50.1% female.
- 28% under 18
- 18% aged 18 – 30
- 24% aged 30 – 44
- 17% aged 45 – 60
- 13% aged 60+

Our questionnaire sample (shown in Table 2.2.1) broadly fits the demographic profile of the Whitley except for the **lack of participants under 18**. We also recruited greater numbers of older residents, as they were more likely to be available during the daytime. With the exception of some questionnaires undertaken via NTA, we decided to focus on the adult population due to ethical and safety concerns about working with children. This was one of the limitations of this

⁴ Researchers always worked in pairs due to health and safety issues

⁵ The 2011 census figures show a more equal gender balance in Whitley Ward (female 50.1% and male 49.1%)

study but there is still scope for further qualitative research with younger age groups in the summer of 2015⁶.

Age of Respondents	% of Questionnaire Respondents (n=500)
Under 18	2.61
18-30	21.84
31-40	28.26
41-50	16.43
51-60	11.22
61-70	10.62
71+	9.02

Table 2.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of Questionnaire Sample

Ethnicity – The Whitley Researchers are an ethnically diverse group but they decided not to include data on ethnicity in the questionnaire. Instead, we tried to engage with BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) communities in Whitley, including the Nepali and Punjabi communities, using translated questionnaires when needed.

Disability – 16% of respondents also stated that someone in their household had a mobility impairment.

⁶ See also Fusion's (2015) report on Youth and Community in Whitley

2.3 Focus Groups and Interviews

In order to explore the issues raised in the questionnaire, we also undertook 5 focus groups with different groups of residents outlined in Table 2.3.1. Participants were asked to discuss their everyday journeys and transport needs in great depth, invited to contribute to mapping exercises (this wasn't always possible if the groups were conducted as part of an activity or club), examine the need for a community transport scheme and explore wider issues relating to their aspirations and concerns over living in Whitley (see Appendix 4).

Focus Group	Details of Group
1	Parents with young children, weekly meeting run by local community organisation
2	Parents with pre-school age children, local nursery
3	Lunch club with residents aged 50+
4	Teachers and teaching assistants (residents) at local primary school
5	Students at NTA

Table 2.3.1 List of Focus Groups

We also wanted to understand the views of local stakeholders on current transport services and household mobility in Whitley, so we conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with representatives from local transport providers, public and voluntary sector institutions, schools, colleges and the University, and local community organisations (see Appendix 5). The organisations we interviewed are listed in Table 2.3.2 and the research team also attended several meetings, gave presentations to community events and participated in community activities. Interviewees were incredibly generous with their time and support, and the research has opened up new partnerships between local institutions and the community.

As well as information on transport, interview respondents also provided us with secondary data and anecdotal evidence on broader socio-economic trends in Whitley that we will discuss in the next section.

Stakeholder Interviews

- James Freeman, Reading Buses
- Peter Absolon, ReadiBus
- Mark Clapson, University of Westminster
- Vernon Orr, St Agnes Church
- Keith Dolding, The Well Church
- Stephen Wise, RBC Transport Planner
- RBC Community Team (Elevate)
- RBC School Transport team
- Homestart Manager
- Homestart Volunteer
- Whitley Community Police Officers
- Horseman's Coaches
- Karen Brown, Reading Job Centre
- Sue Brackley, Reading CIC UK
- Punjabi Community Association
- Nepali Community
- David Sutton (Chair of the Board of Reading Buses)

Schools and Colleges

- Northumberland Training Academy
- Blagdon Day Nursery
- Christ the King Primary School
- Geoffrey Field School
- Ridgeway School
- Palmer Academy
- Whitley Park Primary School
- Reading Girls School
- John Madejski Academy (JMA)

University of Reading

- Community Officer
- Travel Team Manager
- Internship Manager
- Widening Participation Officer

Table 2.3.2 List of Stakeholder Interviews

3. THE RESEARCH CONTEXT: LIVING IN WHITLEY

3.1. Whitley in 2014

In order to explore the everyday transport needs of local residents, the research team sought to develop a snapshot of their neighbourhood as a place to live in 2014, highlighting key assets and advantages of its different neighbourhoods, as well as identifying any issues or problems facing local families in the current era of welfare change and austerity. It also draws upon the interviews with local transport providers, and other public sector stakeholders such as Reading Borough Council (RBC), community police and church leaders, as well as local families.

As discussed previously, Whitley is a geographical community located in the area of the RG2 postcode north of the M4 and east of the A33. The area is mainly residential but has some light industrial areas situated on its western side between Basingstoke Road and the A33 that historically provided the main source of employment for the community. It is well connected by major roads, although one in four families in Whitley do not own a car or a van (ONS, 2011). In 2014, there appear to be a number of significant challenges facing local families in Whitley.

Firstly, the **national economic crisis** and changes to the welfare system have reduced weekly incomes and tightened the everyday budgets of families for spending on essential items such as housing, food and transport. Whilst this might be a similar story for many neighbourhoods in Reading, analysis of key socio-economic indicators from the 2011 census data shows that Whitley residents are more likely to experience multiple levels of hardship that are more extreme. Reading Borough Council recognise the very stark contrast between the socio-economic conditions experienced in the most deprived and most affluent communities in Reading. Whitley is the most deprived ward in Reading (out of 16) and home to some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in the South-East, with key indicators presented in Box 3.1.1. Whitley's socio-economic context is well known and many residents feel that this further stigmatises its communities as poor, disadvantaged and marginalised (JSNA, 2011). Recent socio-economic reports on Whitley focus on issues related to insularity and isolation that we will return to in Section 5 (Fusion, 2015; Reading Borough Council (RBC) JSNA, 2011a; Indigo Planning, 2011). As we will explore, local people still have concerns over safety and crime, environmental factors, and the lack of activities for children and youth but we aim to show that taking small steps towards improving the mobility of households could help alleviate some of these issues.

Whitley has the highest number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) of the 16 wards in Reading – 14% of the population aged 16 to 18.

32% of Whitley residents are from BME communities, lower than the Reading average of 35%.

Whitley is one of the wards in Reading where general health is not good (RBC, 2012) and the JSNA (2014) estimates that only 20% of adults in Whitley eat healthily.

60% of people are living in areas classed amongst the 5% most deprived in Berkshire and 28% of people are living in areas classed as the most deprived in Reading.

Nearly one-third of children are at risk of living in poverty compared to the Reading average of one-fifth (JSNA, 2014) and around 25% of children living in Whitley are eligible for free school meals.

Whitley has a high concentration of lone parents (17%) compared to Reading average of 10% and they form 33% of households (91% of these are female).

Whitley has the highest levels of benefit dependency of Reading wards - nearly 20% of working age population claim benefits (11.6% Reading).

Fewer adults aged 16 – 74 are in employment than the Reading average (63.4% compared to 73%) and of these, the majority are employed in manual occupations.

47.5 % of the working age population have no qualifications.

Box 3.1.1: Whitley Ward Profile in 2011 (Office of National Statistics (ONS), 2011; RBC JSNA 2011b; 2014; RBC et al 2013)

Secondly, Whitley has suffered from years of **stigmatisation** and a 'bad reputation' that many residents and stakeholders believe stems from the post-war era, when Whitley provided homes for workers in the town's industrial firms (Clapsom, 2012). Interviews with community organisations and local stakeholders revealed that Whitley's reputation continues to suffer from a long-term association with social deprivation, social exclusion and crime. During the survey, many people commented on *"the way people with a Whitley address are viewed and treated"* (M, 41-50).

The Whitley Researchers had a stall in the Broad Street Mall advertising the travel questionnaire and a common response was *"do I look like I'm from Whitley!"* or *"I wouldn't bother doing anything there"*. Our research wanted to challenge some of the stigmas attached to Whitley whilst still appreciating that many local residents and their families do experience issues relating to social exclusion and deprivation. During the survey, some people answering the doors were very negative about the project and felt that nothing could be changed.

Thirdly, Whitley is one of the largest suburbs in Reading and spans approximately 3.5km (2.2 miles) North to South and 1.5km (0.9 miles) East to West but many of its local services and infrastructure appears to be in decline, not least due to the economic recession since 2008. One of the striking features mentioned by local residents, stakeholders and community organisations is the **lack of a 'central place', 'hub' or a 'heart'** in Whitley. A comment from a key stakeholder sums up the importance of building community cohesion through the Big Local investment: *"there's division in Whitley; there are zones, no community identity, which needs improving and could be improved through investing in community centres and activities"*. (Stakeholder Interview)

The area is served by three community centres (Hexham, South Reading & Whitley Wood) and a vibrant Sports Centre, but lacks other social focal points, such as pubs. There are 10 schools, some of which offer after-school clubs and activities, and active churches and youth services provision, but our research will highlight the importance of linking people of all ages to social activities outside of the community as well as within. The planned refurbishment of the South Reading Community Centre and new Community Café funded by the Big Local (www.localtrust.org.uk) are much welcome additions to the community in 2015.

Finally, and despite the challenges facing local communities in an era of economic change, there is optimism in the area about the increase in local employment opportunities and a shared sense of resilience between neighbours and families. Many families have lived in Whitley for generations, they are proud of their area and positive about the benefits of living there, but there is a common concern over the difficulties of getting in and out of, and around the area, that is shared by people of different ages, ethnicities, and locations.

3.2. Transport in Whitley

"Public transport in Whitley is radial, rather than lateral" (Stakeholder Interview)

As one in four families in Whitley do not have a car (ONS, 2011), public transport is the main method of getting out and about. The main bus routes serving Whitley are the 5 and 6, and they link the community on South to North routes to Reading Town Centre. Bus no. 9 also travels around the Shinfield Road, shown below.

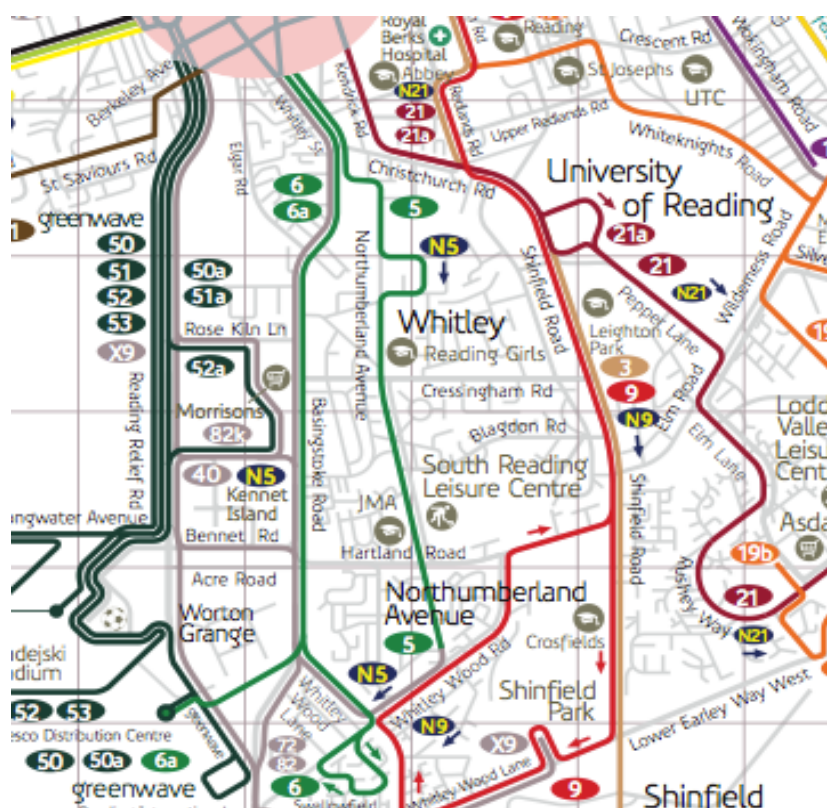


Figure 3.2.1 – Bus Routes in Whitley (Reading Buses, 2014) (3km by 4km approx)

Reading Buses have provided the bulk of bus services in the area for over 100 years, and unlike many local UK bus transport operators, the local authority owns them. Reading Borough Council is the sole shareholder of Reading Buses, which results in surplus profits reinvested into

improvements and allows some guidance from Reading Borough Council over service provision. According to Reading Buses (Stakeholder Interview), Reading has the fourth highest bus-use in the UK. Bus routes are determined according to need and passenger volume and there have been various changes to the Reading system in order to meet customer demand. Examples in Whitley include the 6a, which provides an additional service to the Tesco Distribution Centre, a service that was developed due to the demand by Whitley residents working there (Stakeholder Interview).

Reading Buses provides an efficient and frequent service from Whitley to Reading town centre via 2 main routes: the No. 5 bus that travels along Northumberland Avenue and the No. 6 along Basingstoke Road. From 7-13 July 2014, 27,000 people travelled on buses 5 and 6, and 3000 on the 6a service that integrates with the 6 to provide a service to the Tesco Distribution depot for local workers (Stakeholder Interview). Route 9 also connects parts of Whitley Wood and East Whitley along Shinfield Road to the town centre but this route will undergo changes from September 2015 due to declining passenger numbers. Ticket costs for Reading and Whitley in 2014 and 2015 are displayed in Table 3.2.1.

	Single Trip	Day Return	All-day ticket	7-day ticket
Adult	£1.90	£3.70	£4.30	£16
Job Seeker ID	£1.40	All-day ticket	£2.40	Unavailable
Solo (Under 19)	£1.40	All-day ticket	£2.40	£12
Whitley Emerald Green Buses 5, 6 &6a	£1.60			
Cheap Group Ticket ⁷ (4people)			£5.00	

Table 3.2.1 Reading Buses 'On the bus fares' 2015

A day return ticket will get you to your 'destination area' and back again on the same day. Passengers are allowed to travel on a different bus, as long as it goes back to a common area. The all-day ticket gives unlimited travel on all the buses within the specified area on that day (i.e. Simply Reading area, Simply Newbury area etc.). Up to two children under-5 travel free with a fare-paying passenger but additional children will be charged at the appropriate Solo rate. Alternative fares are offered if bought in advance online, in the bus shop or on a smartcard but some people will not have time or access to these fares. It should be noted that these tickets are for the Reading area only.

Reading Buses and Reading Borough Council are aware that ticket cost is an issue for many families. Reading's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) granted money towards a project to reduce bus fares in Whitley to £1.40 on the No. 5 and No. 6, creating a noticeable increase in bus use. The project was supported through this fund for a year, and the use of the buses grew, but revenue decreased so the cost gradually returned to the current rate of £1.60 which is still £0.30 below the standard Reading fare of £1.90⁸. According to Reading Buses, £1.50 does not cover the revenue costs of this route and the No. 5 'barely makes ends meet'. The No. 6 is more popular and profitable. The LSTF example clearly illustrates the fact that a small reduction in

⁷ Available for travel on weekends, evenings after 5.30 and school holidays

⁸ Reading Buses fund the shortfall in the £0.30 ticket price as they understand the importance of maintaining cheaper fares in this area

ticket prices has an impact on increasing bus usage. As we will show in Section 4, the cost of buses is the most significant barrier facing local families in Whitley and it is an issue that we will return to in the conclusions.

Bus routes 5 and 6 are not currently linked, as this would cause delays to both routes, as Northumberland Avenue has a higher volume of traffic and is subject to congestion (Stakeholder Interview). As a result, there are no direct routes to the Royal Berkshire Hospital and retailers such as Morrisons and Reading College that we will discuss in Section 4.

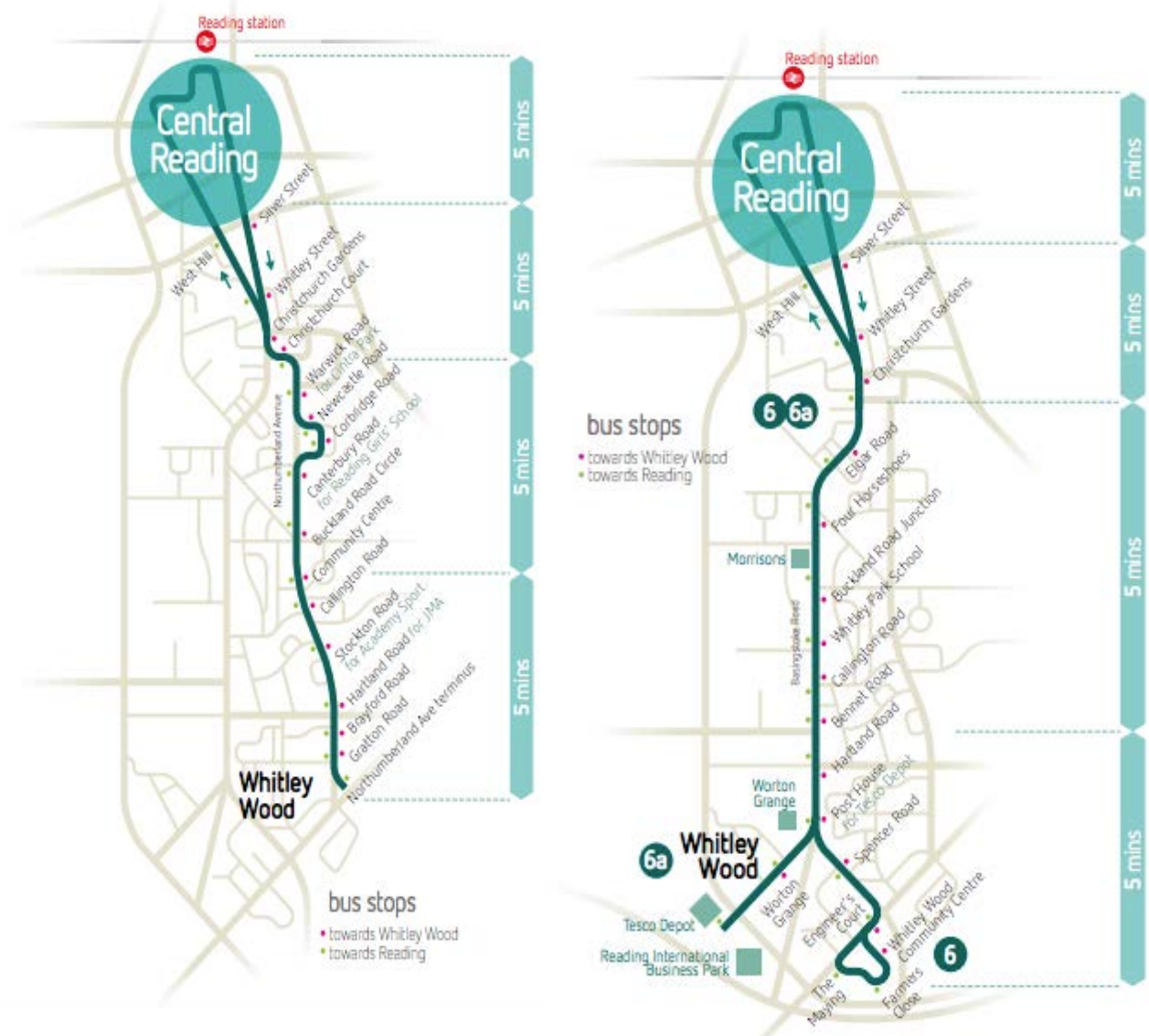


Figure 3.2.2 No.5 and 6 Bus Routes (Reading Buses) (1km by 2.5km approx. [5]) (1.5km by 3km approx. [6])

Interviews and focus groups with residents and stakeholders discussed the positive and negative features of current local transport provision in Whitley and these are highlighted to Table 3.2.2.

Key Transport Assets in Whitley	Positive Features	Negative Features
Reading Buses	Integrated travel; reliable and frequent; good connections to town centre; discounted tickets; bus passes for elderly	Whitley routes are arterial - no intra-Whitley routes from West-East 5 and 9 buses not linked Many routes require 2 buses Geography makes some routes inaccessible for large buses Expensive for families with children over 5, despite discounted tickets
ReadiBus	Well established; community based; familiar and friendly; excellent specialist support	Specific needs-based criteria that limits use
Local taxis	Reliable and immediate; good for a crisis e.g. to RBH	Expensive
Neighbourhood collaboration in some areas	Lifts with neighbours; potential for car sharing; extended family networks provide support	Place specific; some areas excluded.
Horseman's Coaches	Local trusted firm; flexible and reliable service; used by many schools/community outings	Commercial costs
Community Organisations	Provide additional transport support and outings	Pressure on individual staff for lifts; declining resources to fund travel
Community School/Church Transport	Mini-buses owned by JMA, Reading Girls School and Churches already shared by a few schools/organisations	High levels of demand already; high running costs; Reading Girls bus needs replacing; organisational and access challenges

Table 3.2.2 – Transport Assets in Whitley: Positive and Negative Features (Interviews and Focus Groups, 2014)

As part of the research, we also mapped local community centres, places of worship, shops and leisure facilities within Whitley that people wanted to travel to in 2014. Figure 3.2.3 shows the ribbon development of services in Whitley along the main roads such as Northumberland Avenue and a lack of a central place within the area, although the recent addition of the Community Café in the South Reading Community Centre (no. 8 on the map) is a much welcomed community asset. In summary, respondents were positive about bus connections into the town centre but rely on other means to travel across Whitley and to important locations, such as the hospital, and we explore this in great detail in Section 4.

Community Places/Places of Worship (Red)

1. Reading Hindu Temple
2. Christ Church
3. The Potter's House Christian Fellowship Church
4. Hexham Road Community Centre
5. Whitley Library
6. Tyndale Baptist Church
7. Buddhist Priory
8. South Reading Youth and Community Centre
9. The Well Church
10. St. Barnabus Church
11. St. Agnes Church
12. Academy Sport
13. Christ the King
14. St. Paul's Church
15. Whitley Wood Community Centre

Shops (Blue)

1. Today's Local
2. Newsmaster
3. Morrisons
4. Costcutter
5. Aldi (Coming Soon)
6. Tesco Express
7. Lidl
8. Co-Op

Parks/Pubs (Yellow)

1. Wellington Arms (Closed)
2. Cintra Park
3. Four Horseshoes (Closed)
4. Park
5. Hexham Road Park
6. Long Barn Lane Recreation Ground
7. Whitley Tavern (Closed)
8. Northumberland (Closed)
9. Carousel (Closed)
10. John Rabson Recreation Ground
11. Whitley Wood Recreation Ground
12. Engineer Arms (Closed)
13. Park

Schools (Green)

1. New Christ Church Primary School
2. Abbey Junior School
3. The Palmer Academy
4. Reading Girls School/ NTA
5. Leighton Park School
6. Whitley Park Primary School
7. The Ridgeway Primary School
8. John Madejski Academy
9. Christ the King RC Primary School
10. Geoffrey Field Infant & Junior School
11. Crossfields School

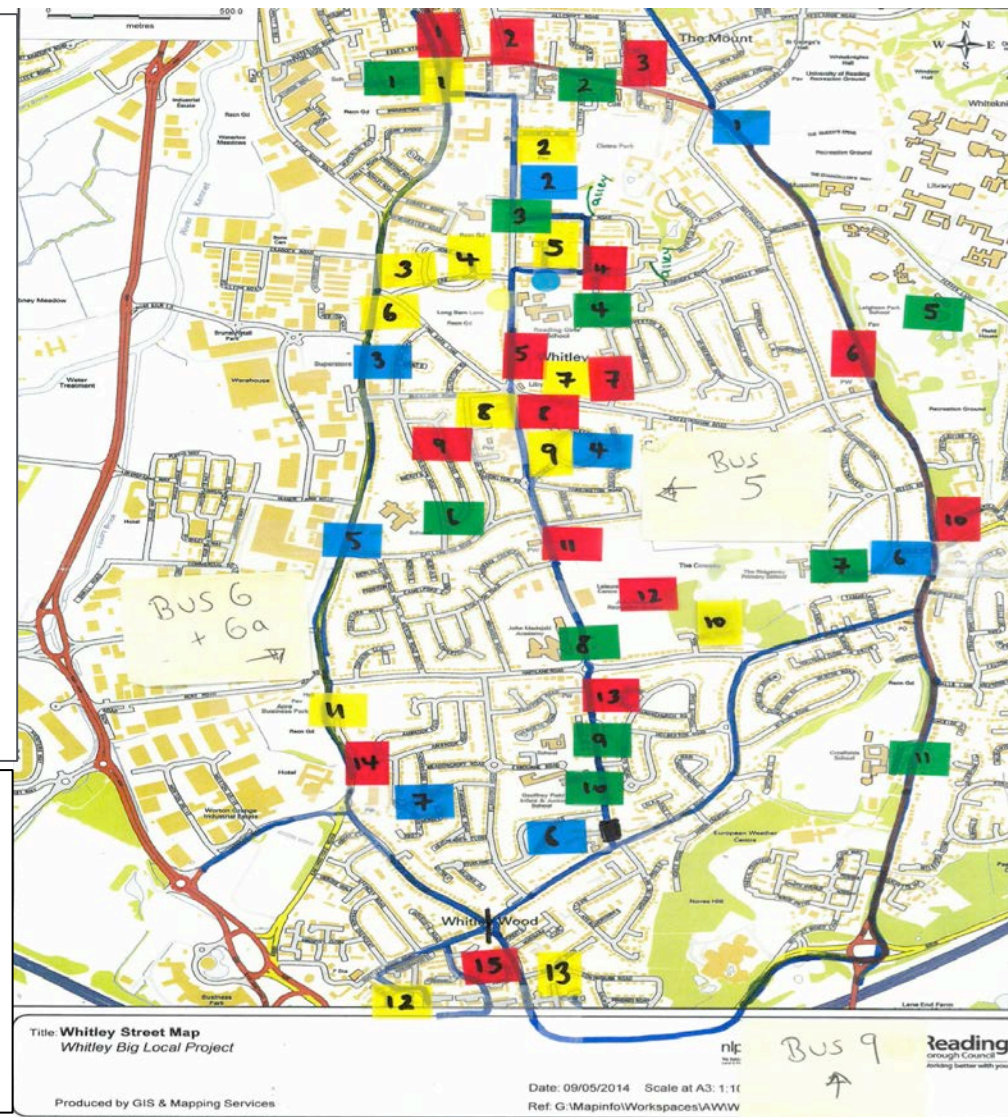


Figure 3.2.3 Everyday Journeys

4. EVERYDAY JOURNEYS IN WHITLEY: AN OVERVIEW

As discussed in Section 2, the questionnaire to 500 residents sought to explore how local people get around Whitley and Reading, and identify where they needed to travel to on a regular basis. We also wanted to find out what worked well and what did not; where they could go and where they could not; which group of persons were the most vulnerable to transport difficulties and in what ways? This section provides an overview of the questionnaire data, highlighting everyday travel journeys, and we focus on 5 key themes:

- Getting around: transport usage in Whitley
- Supermarkets, stores and shops
- Out and about
- Life and learning
- Care and the community

4.1. 'Getting around': Transport usage in Whitley

45% of people surveyed have no use of a car and 58% frequently travel by bus

Nearly half of the residents surveyed **did not have access to a car**. This figure is considerably higher than the 2011 census data figure of 28% outlined in Figure 4.1.1, and could be related to the fact that the questionnaire included more women than men, and more non-workers due to the methodology discussed in the previous section. However, there was anecdotal evidence from the focus groups that some families had been forced to sell cars in the last two years due to the rising costs of fuel, insurance and maintenance.

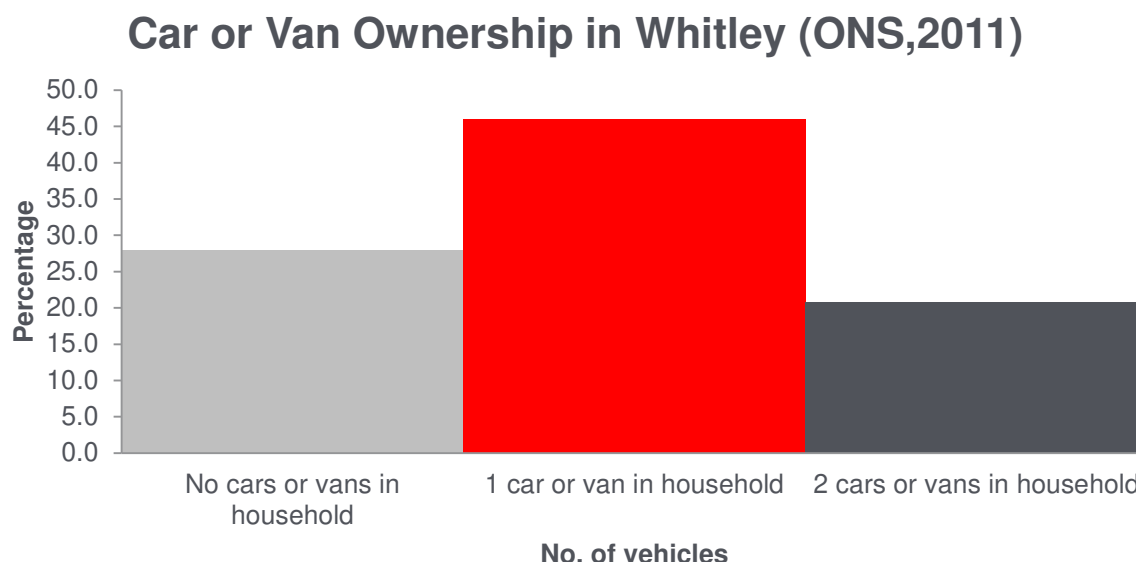


Figure 4.1.1 – Car Ownership in Whitley according to the 2011 census (ONS, 2011)

According to the 2011 census, 1228 households in Reading do not have a car or van – **27.89%**. More households had access to a car in the 2001 census (see Figure 4.1.2), which may suggest that real incomes have declined over the last 10 years as a result of economic recession and austerity.

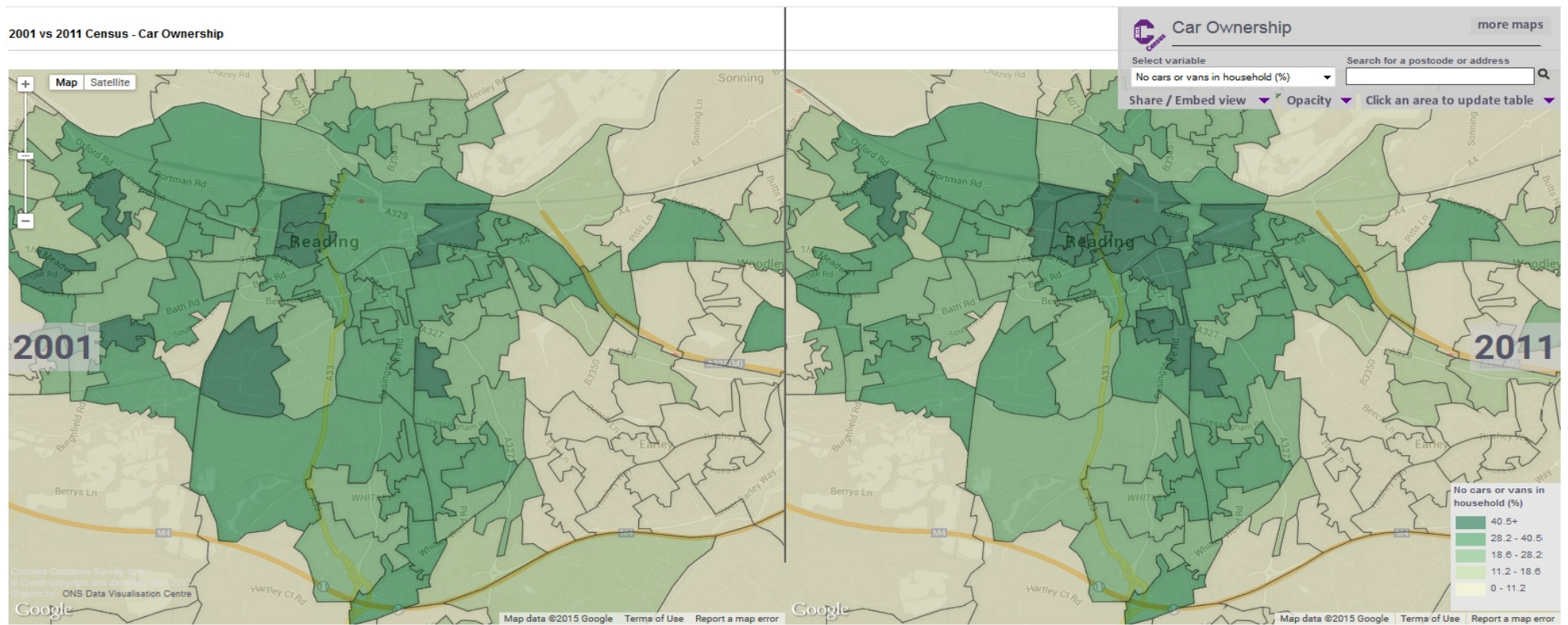


Figure 4.1.2 – Car and Van Ownership in Whitley in 2001 and 2011 (ONS, 2011)

The bus is the most frequently used mode of transport in Whitley, closely followed by driving one's own car and then walking (Fig.4.1.3):

- 58% of persons surveyed travel at least sometimes by bus
- 55% of the respondents travel in their own car
- 53% walk
- 45% of those who have their own car also use the bus sometimes.
- Nearly 20% of people also rely on lifts
- Cycling, using taxis and trains were the least used way of getting around:
 - Taxis – predominantly used by people with a mobility impairment to get to hospital
 - Cycling - only 5% of those surveyed cycled, mainly for work, college and social activities (although this is still higher than the Reading average of 1%)
- 52% of people with access to cars complained of a lack of local transport, often because of not having access to a car all the time.

The pilot survey also found that 25% of those who drove their own car said that their access to that car was limited to certain times of the day, and 63% of those who had access to a car as a passenger did not have continuous access. Therefore, public transport is an important part of the way people get around in Whitley, so its quality matters.

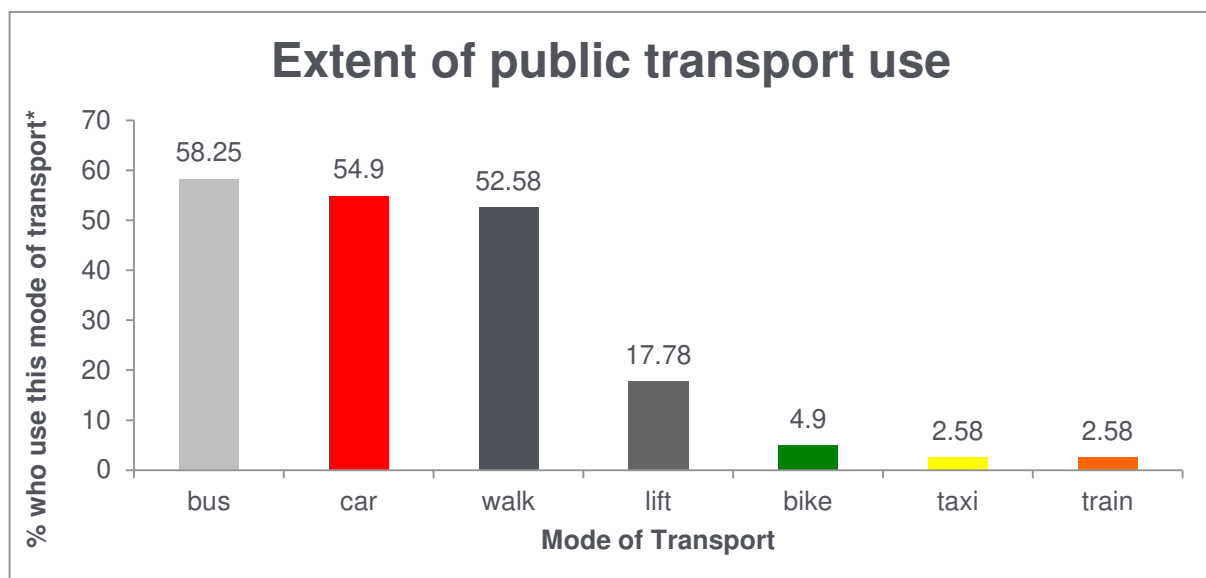


Fig.4.1.3 Extent of public transport use ⁹

Figure 4.1.4 shows where people travel to on a monthly basis and whether their destination is within or outside Whitley. Interesting results include the proportions of residents shopping within Whitley and the fact that more people socialise outside of the area than within it. We now explore these findings in great depth.

⁹ This data is based on 388 observations out of the full 500. This is because one set of questionnaires used at the beginning of the research did not distinguish 'lifts' from driving one's own car, although the rest of the data is in keeping with the results shown here. The percentages add up to more than 100% because most people used more than one form of transport.

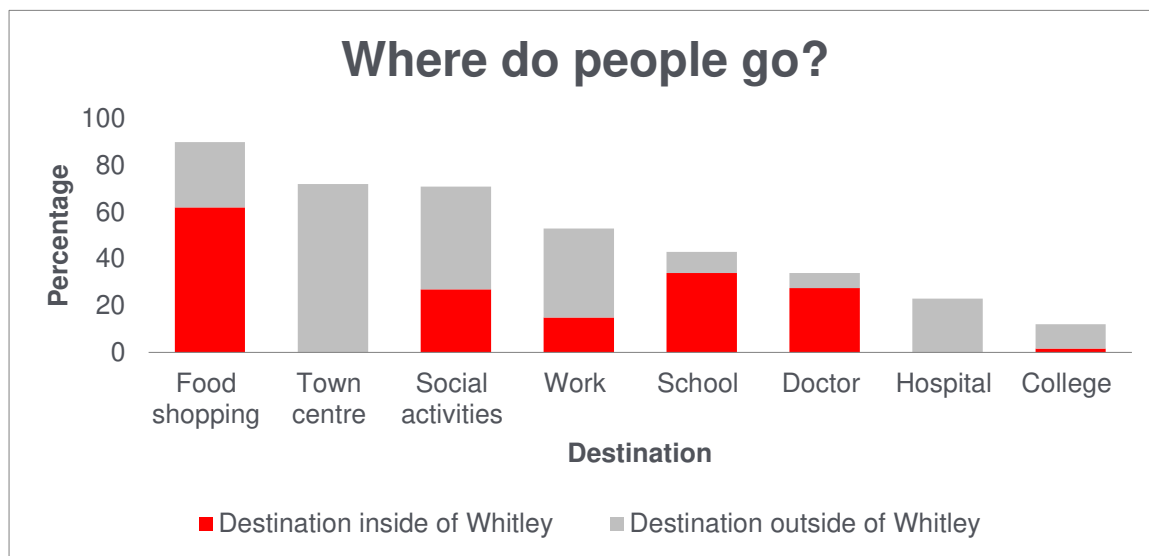


Figure 4.1.4 Destinations where respondents travel

4.1.a. 'Supermarkets, stores and shops'

90% of people shop for food at least once a month

69% currently do their food shop in Whitley (but not always by choice...)

Grocery shopping was the most frequently cited destination in the survey, as 90% respondents shop for food at least once a month and over 75% shop at least once a week (see Figure 4.1.5). For this reason we looked at where people shop in more detail (Figure 4.1.6).



Figure 4.1.5 – How often do you go food shopping?

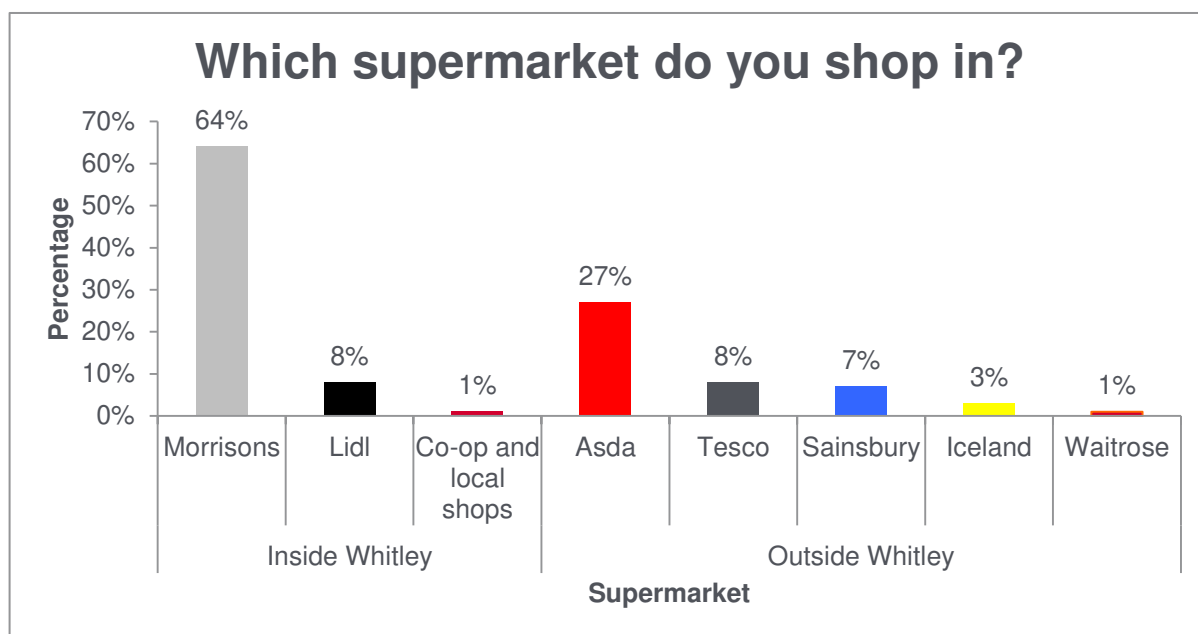


Figure 4.1.6 – Which supermarkets do you regularly shop in?

Whitley is seen as underserved in terms of access to food stores that offer a range of affordable healthy foods (Worton Grange Shoppers Survey, 2011¹⁰) and reports estimate that only 20 % of adults in Whitley eat a healthy diet (RBC JSNA, 2014¹¹). Therefore, cheap and convenient access to supermarkets is important. Morrisons is the main supermarket in Whitley and their high market share reflects the fact that many families are unable to travel outside the neighbourhood. There is a Lidl located near to the A33 but this is inaccessible for many Whitley residents. Evidence from the focus groups and interviews identified shopping as the 'biggest struggle' both in terms of rising food costs and transport, and people often depended on lifts or taxis (£7 each way to Morrisons) to get the food they need:

"We (sisters) club together every week for a taxi home from Morrisons, we've both got small kids so we have to buy heavy stuff like nappies but it's £15 and we'd rather take the kids out every week instead". (Questionnaires, Academy Sport Centre)

In our questionnaire, 69% of the people did at least part of their shopping within Whitley, with Morrisons being the most frequent destination (64%) as it's the only supermarket many families can get to. Even so, Morrisons is over a mile from many parts of Whitley which makes food shopping difficult for households that do not have access to a car because it:

- limits the quantity of shopping that can be carried and excludes bulk buying
- is particularly stressful for time-pressured parents with young children
- requires 2 buses from many streets in Whitley

Over half the respondents (58%) said that they would actually prefer to shop elsewhere, but could not because **"taking shopping over two buses is prohibitive"** for reasons stated above:

"I have to take Mum shopping to Morrison's, I have to walk to hers, then get a bus to the top, then change buses, we can't carry much and I'm exhausted by the time I get home...I have go again by myself as I have to carry Mum's bags". (Focus Group 1)

Asda was by far the most dominant alternative destination preference; 53% of these (30% of the total sample) said that they would like to get to ASDA if it were possible:

¹⁰ Research undertaken by Indigo Planning Ltd.(2010) as part of the Worton Grange Report on socio-economic conditions in Whitley

¹¹ Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2014 (see www.jsna.reading.gov.uk)

"By the time you get into town to get the next bus, if you miss it, you then have to wait half an hour. I only have a two hour window to get to Asda and do a food shop, and get back to pick up from nursery."
(Focus Group 2)

Online shopping was mentioned, but many families are also experiencing financial exclusion, lack of access to a desktop computer and believe that they won't get the best cost deals or freshest food (Focus Group 1). There is potential here for initiatives that help people shop on-line through the provision of internet access, credit facilities and collective drop-offs. It was also clear that for many people **getting out in person** was socially important and that the shopping experience sought was more than one of basic functionality. The weekly shop is often one of the only 'going out' experiences for many people we spoke to and families often visited Morrisons together. In fact, Morrison's may well act as an important neighbourhood centre for many families and the proposed development of a new Aldi/Leisure facilities opposite could lead to greater development of this location.

In summary, those **without a car** were particularly vulnerable to experiencing restricted access to food and other shopping needs:

- 66% of people without a car complained of a lack of transport to take them to alternative shops

4.1.b. 'Getting out of Whitley for services and socialising'

58% of people who need to travel to the town centre go by bus

80% of people with a car socialise regularly compared to 61% of those without a car

Getting to town was the second most common destination after food shopping.

As discussed previously, public transport links to town are direct and frequent on bus services 5 and 6. This and the inconvenience/expense of parking may explain why 58% persons going into town go by bus – the town centre was the most frequently visited destination by bus. People go to town for shopping, but also for work, for social events, for connecting on to other places in and outside Reading, and for consulting advice services and Reading Borough Council. For example, 10% of the survey participants reported travelling to seek advice and council services at least once a month, and these travellers used the bus in similar proportions as those going to town generally (though they were more likely to walk and less likely to go by car).

Social activities¹² proved to be the next most widespread destination for people; 71% of respondents travelled for this at least once a month but we also found other interesting patterns:

- **Socialising often takes place outside Whitley** - going to social or community activities is predominantly a weekly activity with diverse destinations - **62% of which were outside of Whitley**. Activities within the area are mostly walked to, but those outside are mostly driven to in one's own car. This certainly suggests a restriction on those without car access. As will be mentioned in Section 5.2, restrictions on getting to places that improve quality of life are identified as a significant problem by Whitley residents. This factor is also a key focus of the Big Local Community Plan.
- **Connecting with people often requires a car** - social and community activities are dominated by car drivers - 80% of those with a car socialise, compared to 61% of those without a car: a statistically significant difference¹³. This shows that people without a car are less likely to engage in important social and community events that connect people.

¹² Social activities were defined as going to social or community activities including going to sporting activities or other recreational clubs, attending community groups and meetings and also visiting family and friends.

- **People without a car rely on buses** (43%), secondly on walking (32%) and thirdly on lifts (18%). 76% of people with a car travel by car to their social activities, though 14% walk and 8% travel by bus. Taking lifts was also associated with getting to social activities. This makes sense, as getting lifts involves direct social linkages with people.

4.1.c. ‘Care in the community’

1 in 4 people needed to travel to the Royal Berkshire Hospital at least monthly

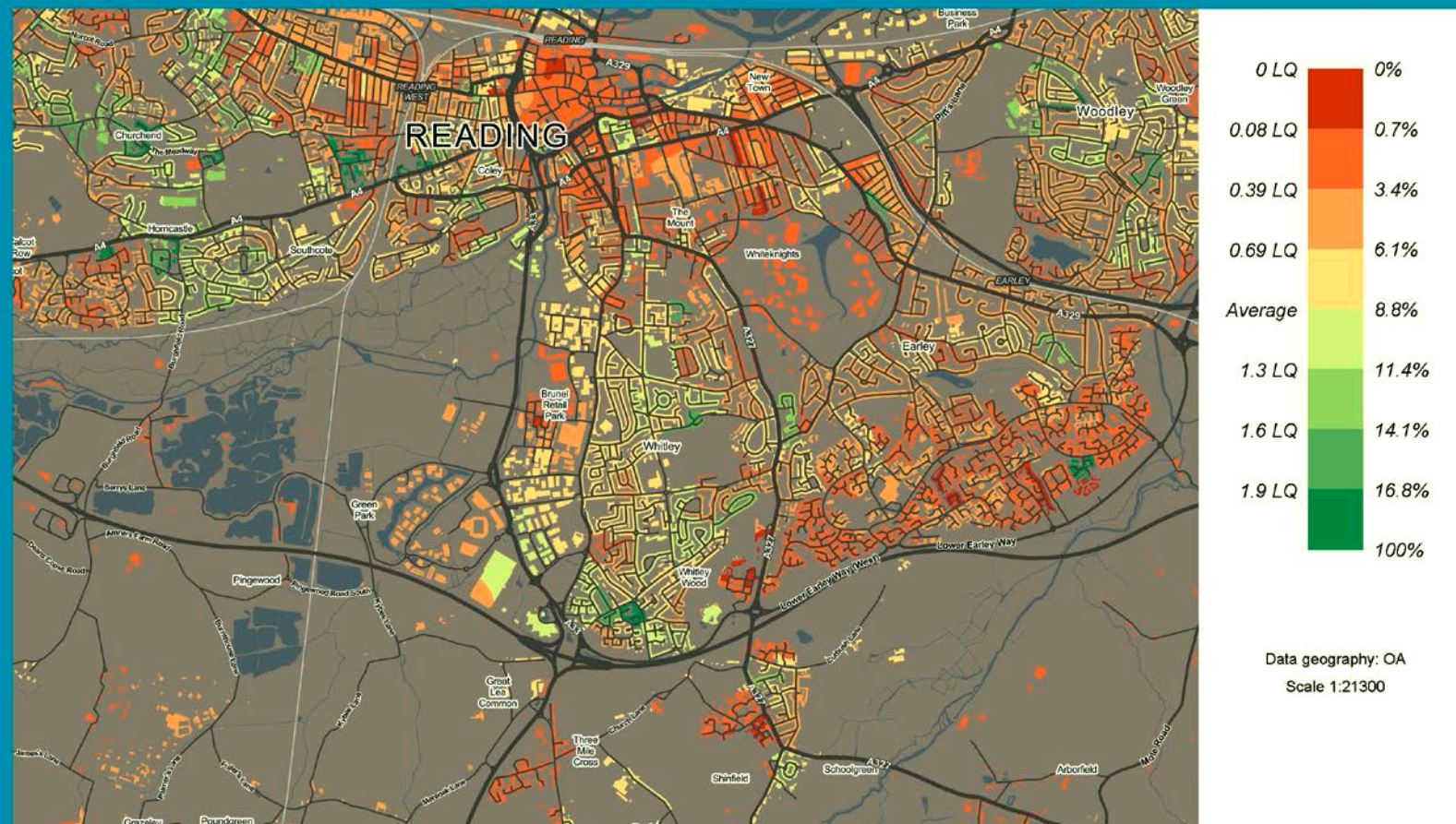
Getting to the doctors is dominated by drivers – people tend to get lifts

Travel to the Royal Berkshire Hospital was cited by 23% of respondents as a monthly or more frequent journey but current bus services require a two-bus journey or a reasonable walk to catch a direct service. For example, a resident from Staverton Road could walk a mile to the Cressingham Road Junction on Shinfield Road where there is a direct bus to the RBH. Although this walk may not present a problem for able-bodied residents, the walk along Shinfield Road is uphill and poses greater difficulties for people with some degree of mobility difficulties, particularly for a journey to a hospital. As a result, there were very high levels of complaints about the lack of direct buses that we address further in Section 4.2.

The 2011 census data also tells us that Whitley Ward has high proportions of people with a long-term health problem or disability, shown in Figure 4.1.7. Furthermore, Whitley also has the highest levels of household with illness or disability and dependent children in Reading (Figure 4.1.8). This may explain why getting to the hospital is a regular and often difficult journey. Very few respondents had used hospital transport. As we explore in the next section, there is a lack of understanding about these services and how to access them.

¹³ Note, ‘significance’ wherever mentioned in this report is determined by setting up a probit model or an ordinary least squared regression by which the existence of a relationship between two variables may be tested for statistical significance. It assures us that an affirmation about the existence of a relationship between two variables is being made with at least a 90% probability that that relationship really exists. The averages give us an indication of how much difference a change might actually make, although the exact difference will vary person to person and will depend also on other complicating factors.

Long-term health problem or disability Day-to-day activities limited a lot



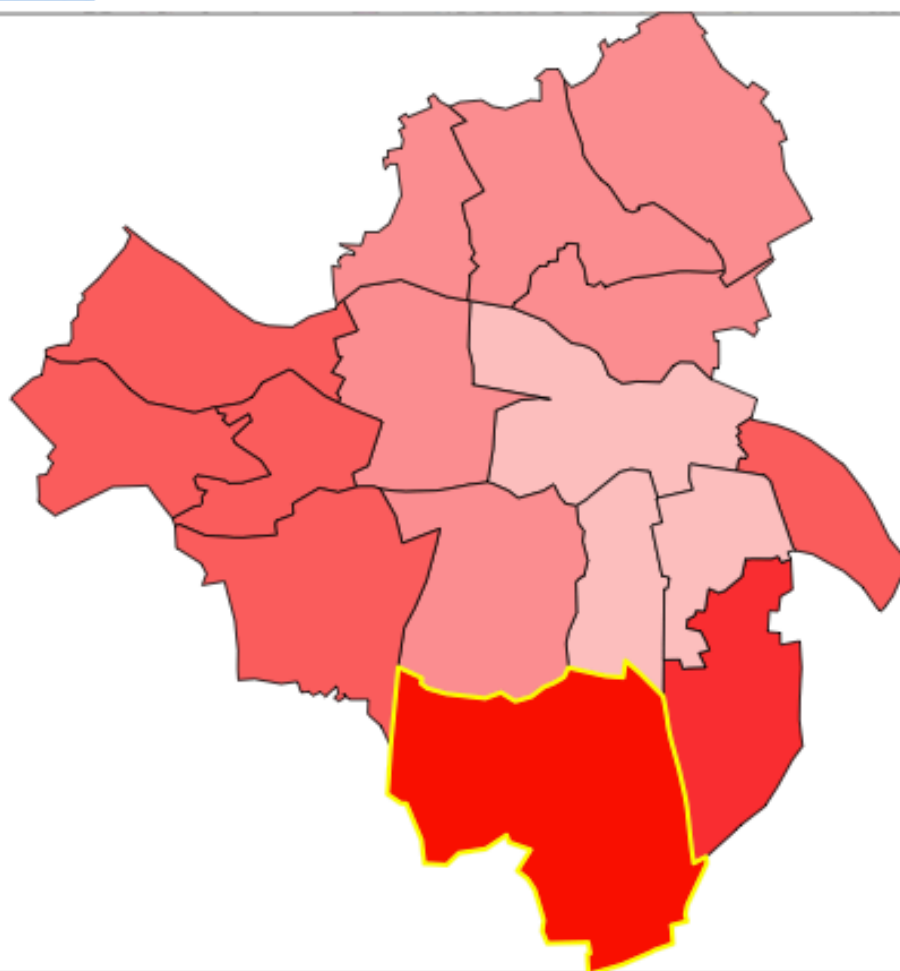
Map shows % of All usual residents.
Census data (c) Crown Copyright Office of National Statistics.
Contains Ordnance Survey data (c) Crown copyright & database right 2014.

DataShine Census is produced by the BODMAS project at UCL.
Visit <http://www.datashine.org.uk/> for an interactive version.

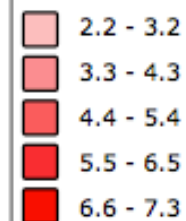
Figure 4.1.7 Households where day to day activities are limited a lot (Datashine, 2015)

One Person in Household with a Long-Term Health Problem or Disability; With Dependent Children (Percentage, Households, Mar11)

[change variable](#) ▼



Legend - percentage



No. of Divisions ◀ 5 ▶

Colour

Reading (Unitary Authority)

4.2

Caution! Check the legend to understand the shading. Ideally use rates and percentages instead of counts.

[More advice](#)

[Footnotes](#)

Show background map ☐

Figure 4.1.8 Households with children where someone has a long-term health problem or disability (ONS, 2011)

Getting lifts was especially important for people with **mobility impairments** (there is a statistically significant link), and also relates to the difficulties surrounding bus travel involving indirect routes. Perhaps this helps to explain why the biggest destination for those taking lifts was to the hospital (8% hospital goers travelled there by lifts). Furthermore, 8 out of 10 people that use taxis had mobility impairments, and their prime taxi destination was the hospital.

Just over a third of participants also visit their GP at least once a month and for this, people tend to drive, get lifts or walk (36%). As schools and doctors surgeries are locally available, these were the highest destinations for walkers. Although parents mentioned a lack of appropriate transport as a limiting factor on school choice, no-one mentioned a wish to be in a doctor's surgery elsewhere, which is a positive reflection on local surgeries. However, a local charity that supports families commented:

"the GP in Whitley is not always accessible. Often families are sent to different GPs outside Whitley because they are too full, but these GPs are difficult to access and it takes families a lot longer to get there... it's really inconvenient and they're often late for appointments" (Stakeholder Interview).

Elderly residents also discussed their concerns with travelling to visit family and friends in residential care homes, struggles with getting from home to the bus and anxieties over loneliness that we revisit in Section 5.

4.1.d. 'Working lives and learning'

Around half of the respondents had regular employment and of these, 72% worked outside Whitley and 45% use public transport, cycle or walk

We also wanted to understand how people travelled to work, school or college, and whether they worked in or outside Whitley:

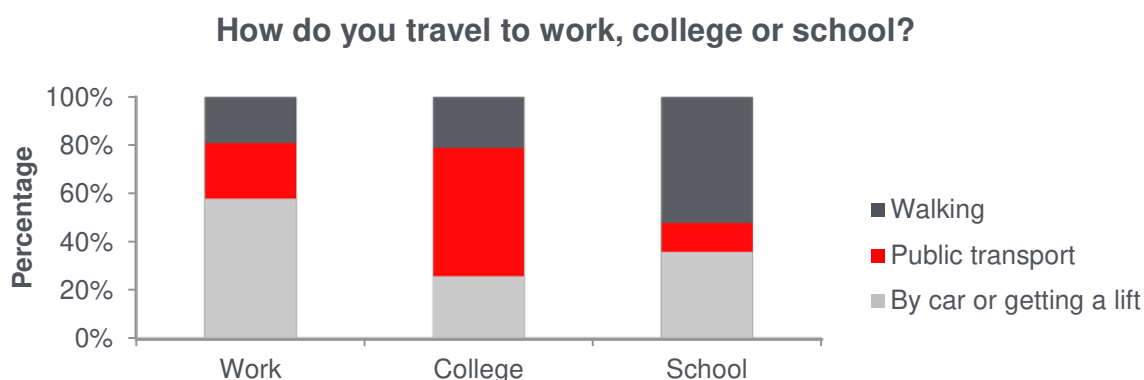


Figure 4.1.9 Mode of travel by survey respondents

We found that **people tend to work outside Whitley** - around half of the people we surveyed were working regularly (53%), and nearly three-quarters (72%) worked outside Whitley. Nearly half of all workers (45%) used public transport, walked or cycled to work. Figures 4.1.10a and 4.1.11 derived from the 2011 census also show the extent to which Whitley residents work in or outside Reading, and highlights the concentration of workers in the town (travelling less than 5km to work), which may be linked to the high proportion of people in elementary occupations (jobs that usually require a minimum level of education).

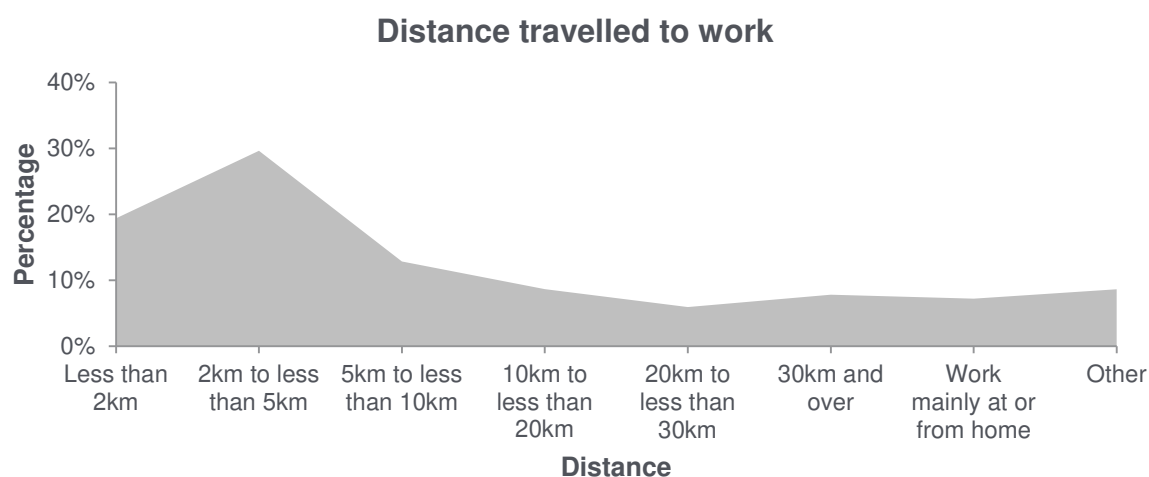


Figure 4.1.10a: Distance travelled to work by Whitley Ward residents (ONS, 2011)

If we look more closely at the census data, we can see that the percentage of people who use a car or van to travel to work in Whitley and Church wards is extremely low in areas around Cressingham, Staverton and Blagdon Roads (see Figure 4.1.10b).

Nearly half of the respondents travel to school¹⁴ on a regular basis, with far fewer travelling to college. Of these, the majority of families travel to local primary schools in Whitley on foot or by car, as we'd expect. School bus travel is less common within Whitley but there are particular problems for families living in Kennet Island that have to send their children to Ridgeway Primary School, as the journey is seen as hazardous and too long for younger children. We will return to school transport in the next section.

¹⁴ 'School' refers mostly to persons taking children to school, or to persons working at the school. Only 13 teenagers under the age of 18 were interviewed, and only six of these reported travelling to school as pupils.

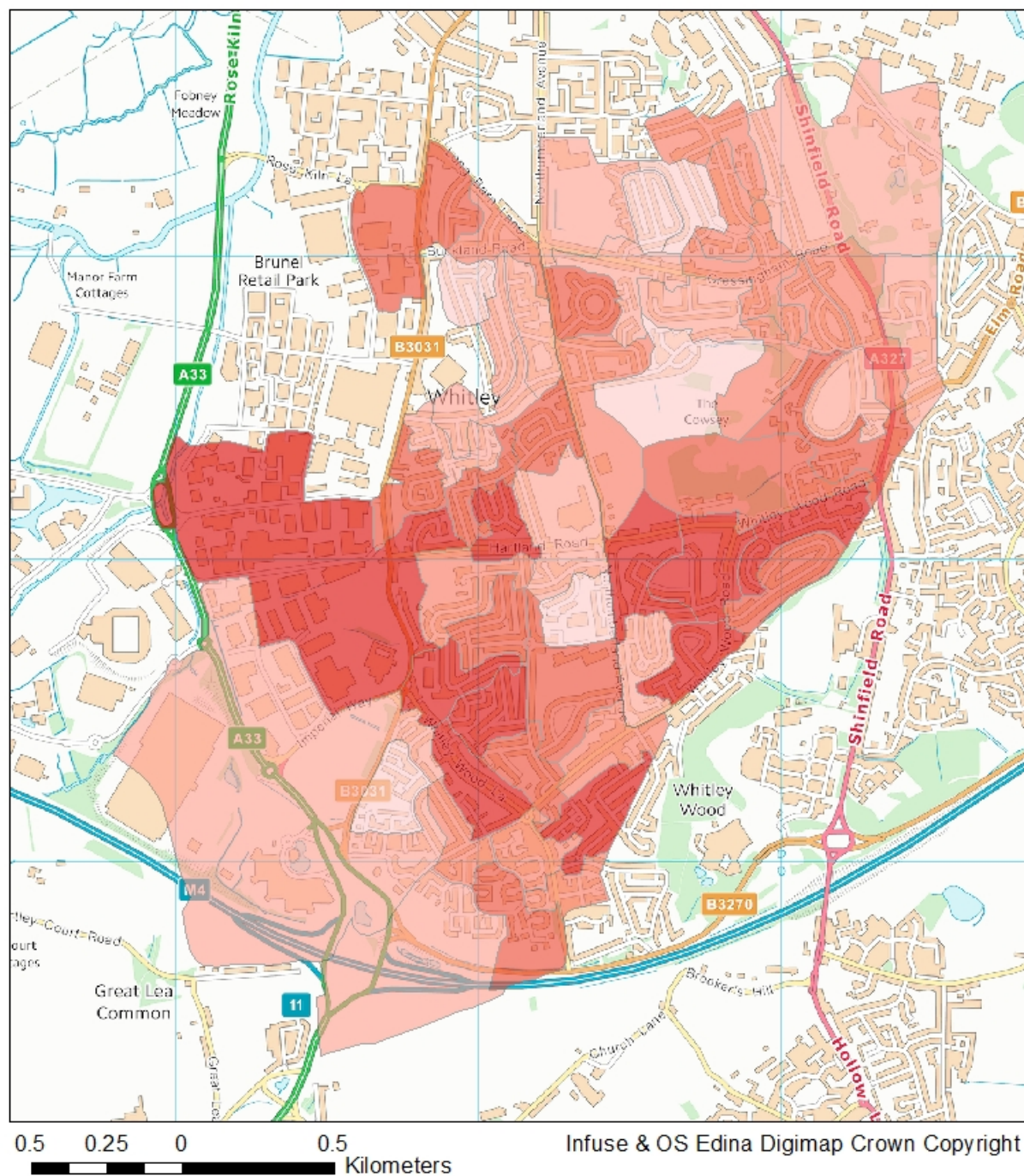


Figure 4.1.10b: Working age population who travel to work by car/van in Whitley and Church Wards (Infuse, 2015)

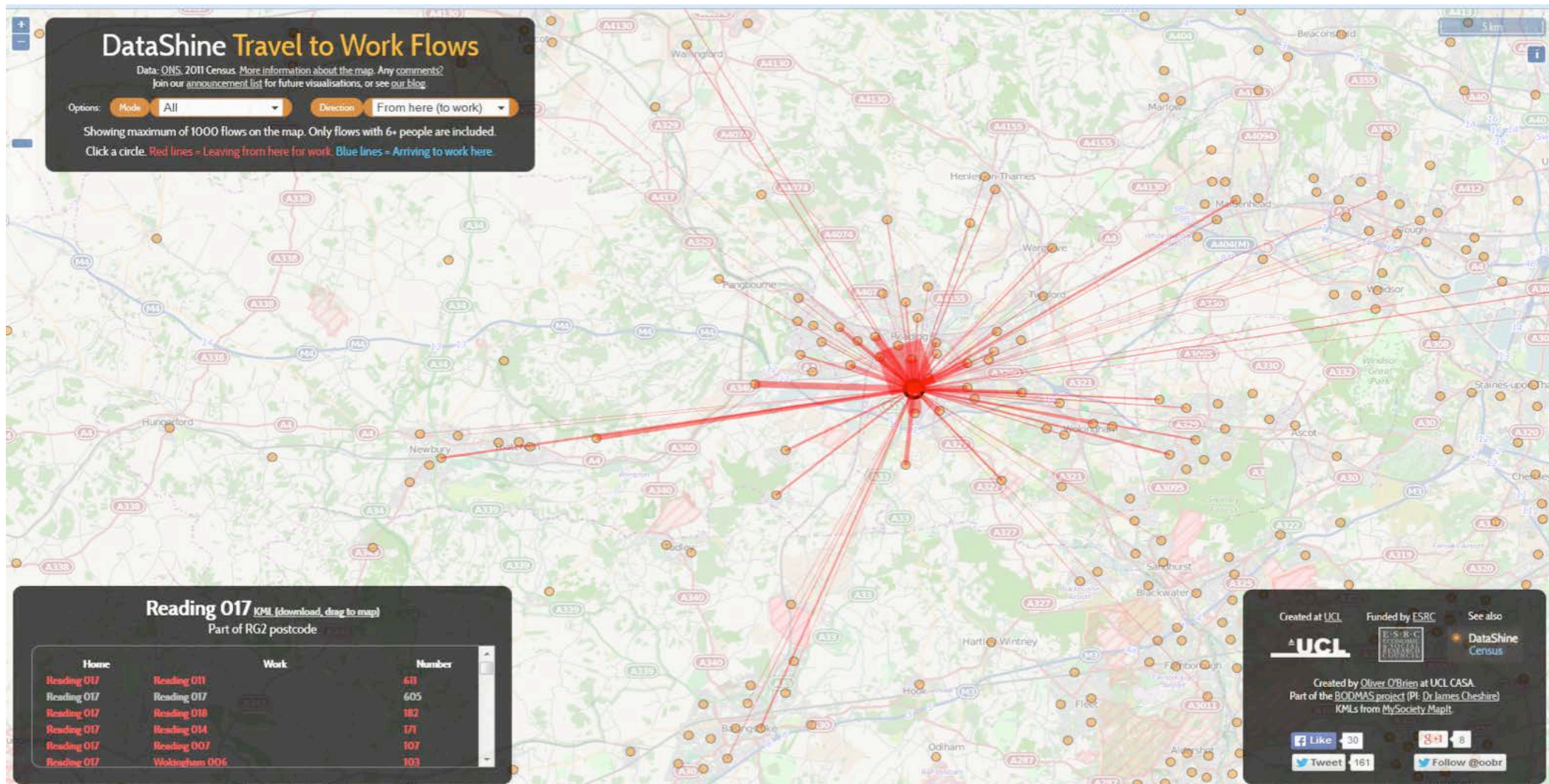


Figure 4.1.11 Travel to Work Destinations for Whitley Residents from 2011 Census Data (Datashine, 2015)

Getting to school is dominated by walkers (52%), though 35% travel by car. Some parents mentioned that the lack of appropriate transport limits the school options that Whitley children have in accessing schools elsewhere in Reading.

Getting to college. The majority of respondents attended college outside Whitley (87%) and getting to college was identified as a problem for young people and work-returners that need training:

"There's no direct service to Reading College. I've just started a course and I can't afford it – there's no funding for travel as Whitley is within 3 miles". (Survey, Female, 31-40)

Helping Whitley residents travel to work and education was seen as a significant issue by many local organisations and stakeholders. This was of particular concern regarding mothers having to return to work in order to meet new welfare reforms when children reached 5 years old and their associated problems of juggling the school run and other caring responsibilities with the daily commute by bus that we explore further in Section 5.1.

4.1.e. Summary: 'everyday journeys are shaped by transport availability rather than choice'

Overall, **people go more to the places they can go to easily**. There is evidence that this is not always by **choice**, especially for shopping and secondary schools, but because of a lack of direct transport alternatives. Similarly people go into the town centre **because they can**; they cannot necessarily get to other towns or to entertainments suitable for children (swimming pools, bowling, ice-skating, the seaside and London museums all got multiple mentions) and we explore this further in the next section. So having looked at where people **do go**, we now go on to look at the problems people mentioned regarding transport in more detail.

4.2. Transport Barriers in Whitley: who, where and when?

72% of people had experienced a problem with local transport

55% of carless respondents were unable to find the transport they need

When we asked people whether they faced any transport barriers, 72% of the total respondents mentioned problems of one kind or another to do with transport. Although, 45% reported being able to find the transport that they need, the fact that 55% reported being unable to find the transport they need suggests that Whitley transport system has room for improvement.

This section will argue that the Whitley residents facing transport barriers are more likely to be:

- carless
- women and families with dependents, particularly with those with up to 3 young children
- living in certain areas of Whitley, particularly RG2 7 postcodes, such as Hexham, Cressingham, Staverton, Tree Estates (shown in Figure 2.2.2)

4.2.a. Being carless can make you vulnerable to socio-economic pressures

Unsurprisingly, transport problems are significantly more acute for those without car access (Fig 4.2.1). Lack of car ownership is a significant factor in determining whether people are able to access school, work, shopping and social activities. The survey revealed that 57% of people who drive their own car find the local transport they want, whilst only 45% of people who do not drive themselves find the transport they want. This relationship between car ownership and finding the transport one needs is **statistically significant** – *having a car relieves transport difficulties*.

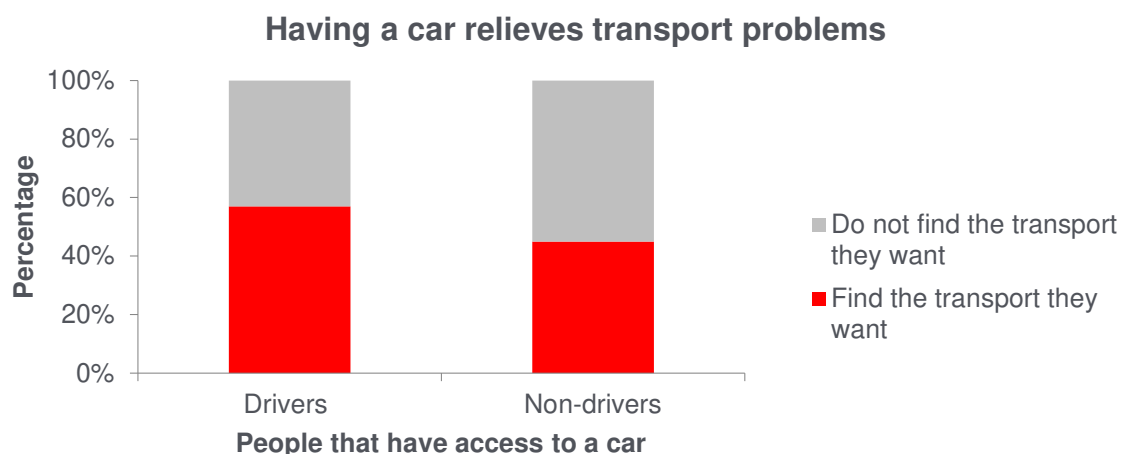


Figure 4.2.1 Finding the Transport they want: drivers vs. non-drivers

Although car drivers in Whitley are more likely to find the transport they need, over 40% still cited problems as many also rely on public transport as their car access is shared. Even people with cars face transport issues however, and 45% of those who drove also used a bus.

4.2.b. Women, and families with dependents, are more likely to be affected by transport barriers

Men are more likely to have access to a car than women – only 40% of women could find the transport they needed

Women are significantly more likely to face transport difficulties than men. In fact, 53% of men reported that they could get the transport they needed, compared to only 40% of women; a statistically significant difference. One major reason for this is that **men are more likely to have access to a car** than women - 63% of men surveyed have access to a car, and only 50% of women, which again is a statistically significant difference in car access. This means that women are subject to more of the problems associated with getting around in Whitley, as highlighted in Figure 4.2.2, and this is frequently linked to their role as mothers and carers.

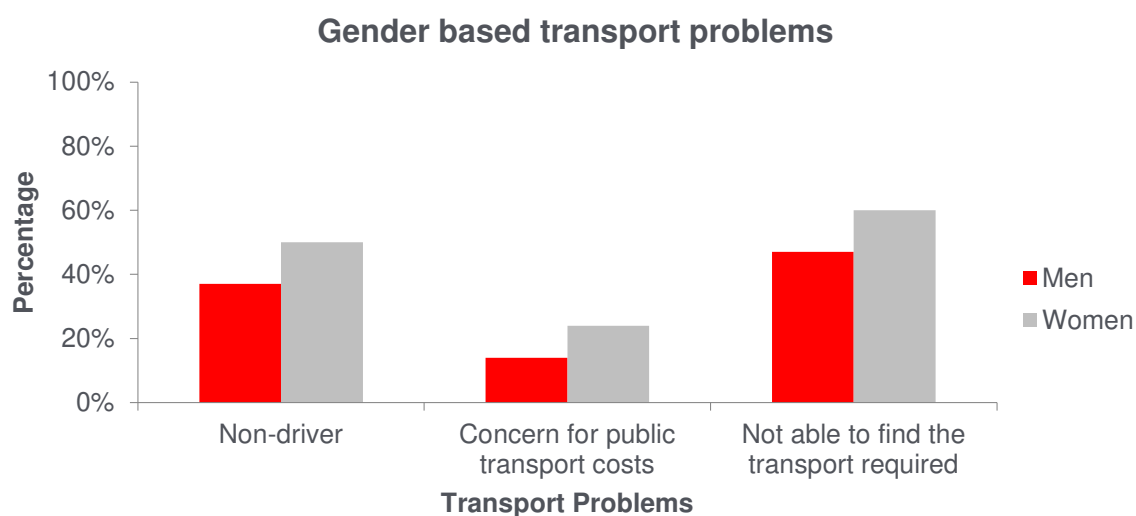


Figure 4.2.2 Transport problems experienced by women and men

Whitley is home to many families on low-incomes, lone-parents with dependent children; unemployed households with dependent children and families that include at least one member with a long term illness or disability (see Figure 4.1.8 in page 41). During the research, many carless families talked to us about their struggles in 'making do', the challenges of everyday travelling to do the weekly food shop, school run or caring for relatives, and having less money for outings with children. These pressures were particularly acute for some BME communities, such as the Nepali community residing in the Hexham neighbourhood. According to the census, the average total weekly household income for Whitey is in the lowest division for all wards in Reading, under £564 (ONS, 2011).

'A woman in the group spoke about the problems of being a single mother with three young children aged 8 and below. She couldn't afford childcare for three so she can't work and relies on benefits. She can't afford the bus fares so she has to walk everywhere. She feels isolated, worn out and upset that her children don't go out very much. Her only day out last year was to the seaside with Hexham Community Centre' (Extract from field notes, Whitley Researcher, Focus Group 1)

Sarah

Sarah's in her mid-20s and has recently moved back from London to be nearer her Mum who's unwell. She has 2 children at primary school, no car and is looking for work. She talked about being lonely and confined to Whitley, as she finds it expensive to take the children out and about. She frequently commented that in London buses were free for children and she hadn't realised how important this was for her family life.

Of the 500 people we surveyed, 65% had dependents and of these just under half (42%) had no car. Figure 4.2.3 shows the relationship between differing numbers of dependents and the ease of finding the transport they need.

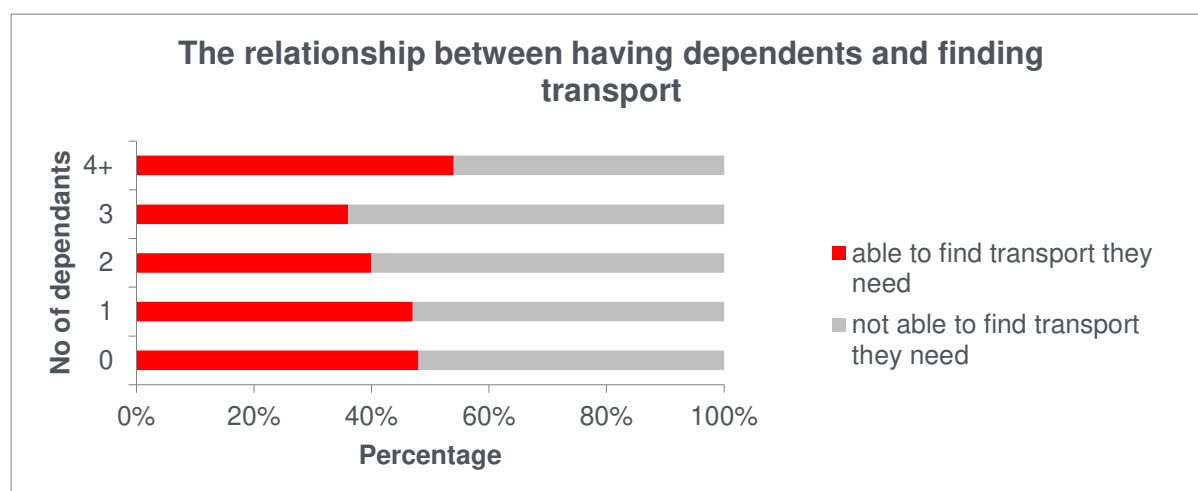


Figure 4.2.3 The relationships between having dependents and finding transport

It would seem that having more dependent children is associated with increasing barriers to transport up to the point of having 3 children, after which things appear to get better. This relationship is statistically significant.

This is nothing to do with having access to a car – people with more dependents are not more likely to have a car. Focus group evidence would suggest that people with greater numbers of children tend to be targeted by charities and by the government for extra help, which may explain this easing of the situation. In larger families, older children are often available to look after younger ones, so it is not so necessary to take small children everywhere by public transport:

"I used to have more of a problem when the kids were all small but my daughter's just left school and watches them if I need to go shopping or the doctors". (Focus Group 2)

"We often support many larger families that have what we refer to as 'complex needs' by giving them lifts and taking them places, but this isn't part of our job....we just do it but there's no one else to help them". (Community Organisation, Interview)

Women appear to be especially hit by cost concerns in connection with public transport, a problem that is statistically significant with respect to gender. This is often linked to women's roles as the main carers for their families and their everyday journeys for food shopping, the school run, looking after elderly relatives and health-care (Murray, 2008), which we will discuss in Section 5.

Figure 4.2.4 shows that there is also a statistically significant relationship between having dependents and citing cost as a transport barrier; thus families are more likely to face transport difficulties associated with the cost of public transport.

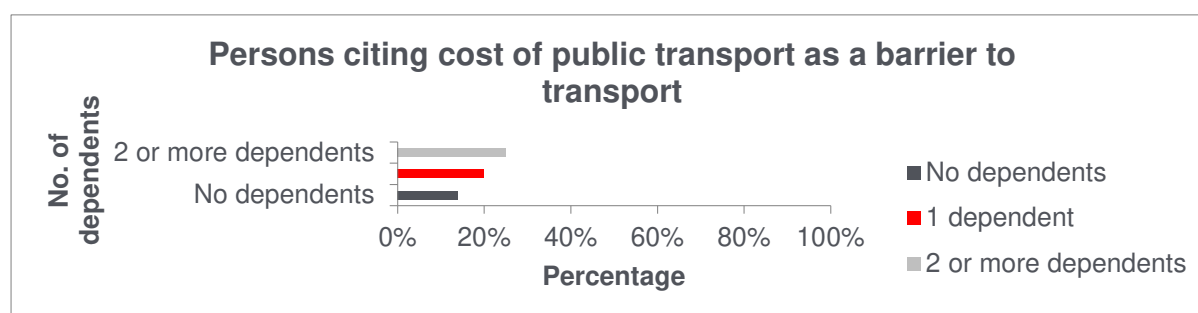


Figure 4.2.4 Families with dependents and cost concerns

Respondents with children were also more likely to mention:

- Problems associated with taking children on buses as being a problem, both in terms of convenience as well as cost (8% of the total sample) which restricted their everyday journeys
- Women with multiple children and buggies were particularly vulnerable, and the problem of handling buggies on buses was frequently raised in the survey and focus groups.

4.2.c. 'The geography of Whitley': where you live

"Location prejudice" – the bus dictates where you can go". (Focus Group)

"We are segregated because there's no cheap transport". (Female, 41-50, RG2 7)

Within our survey area, there are geographical differences in car ownership with low levels around Stockton Road, Blagdon Road, Staverton Road and Hexham, as shown in Figure 4.2.5a.

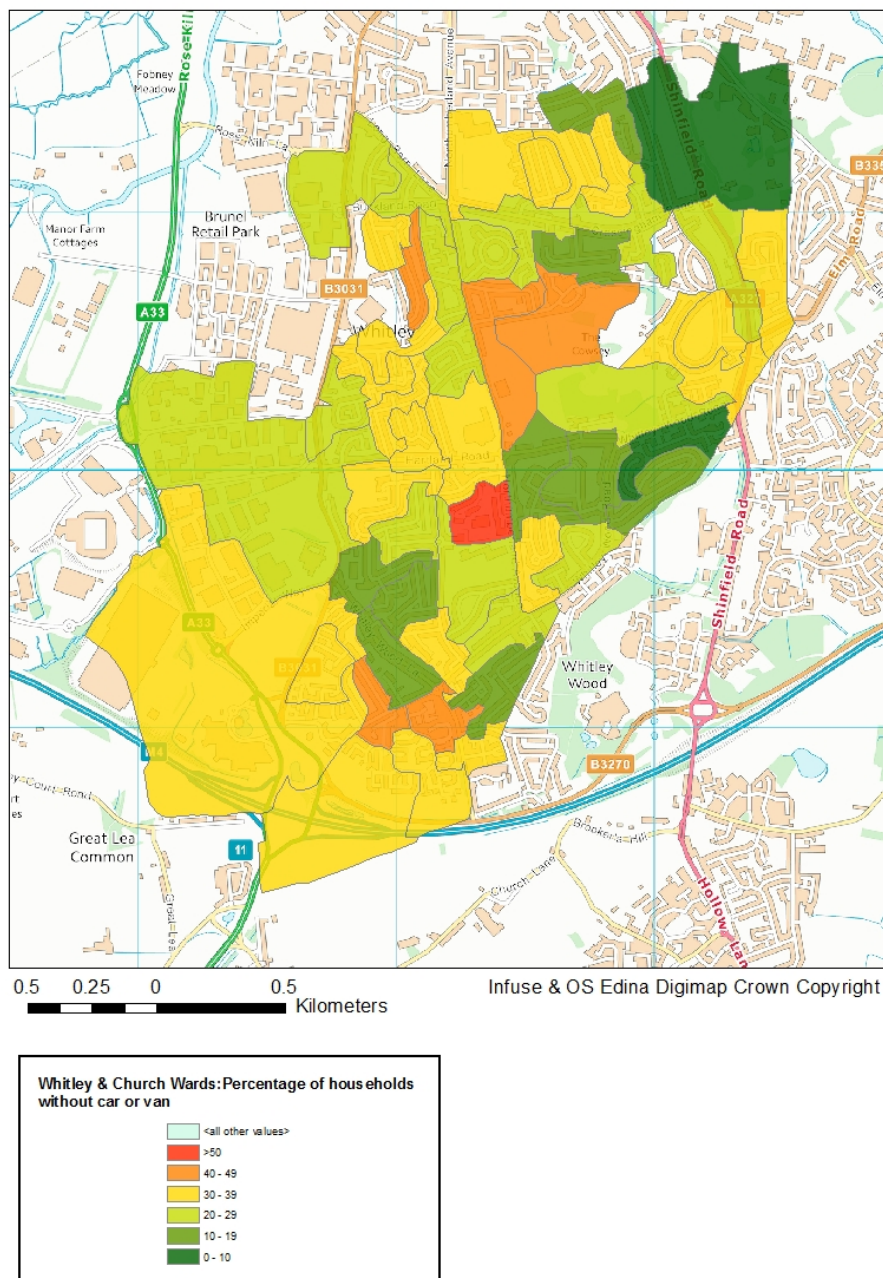


Figure 4.2.5a Households (%) without a car/van in Whitley and Church Wards (Infuse, 2015)

If we look at our questionnaire data, we see that respondents living in these RG2 7 postcode areas (see page 19) had a lower level of car ownership than RG2 8 households:

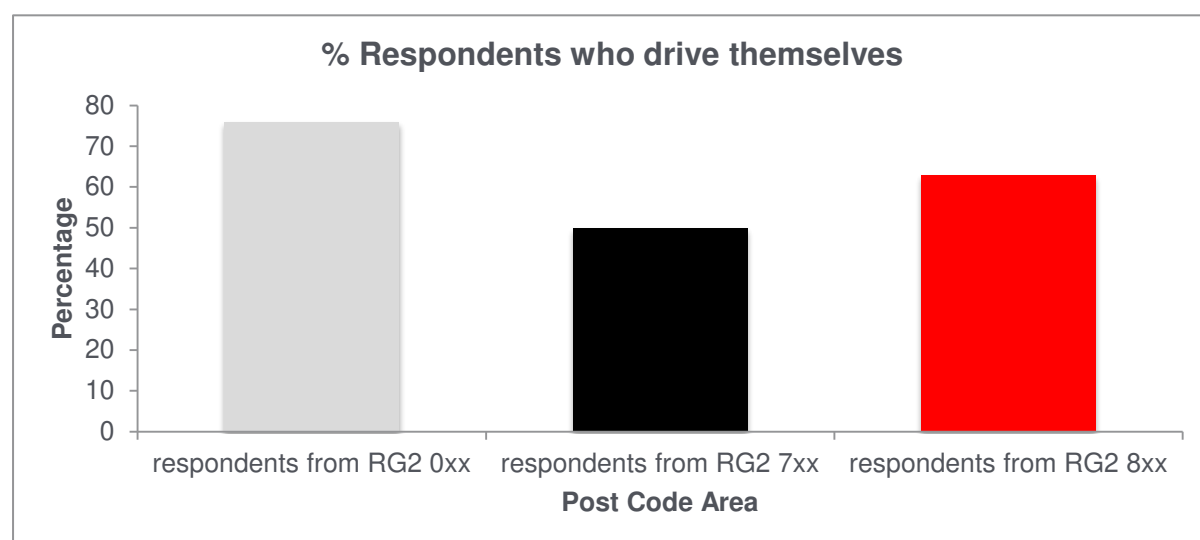


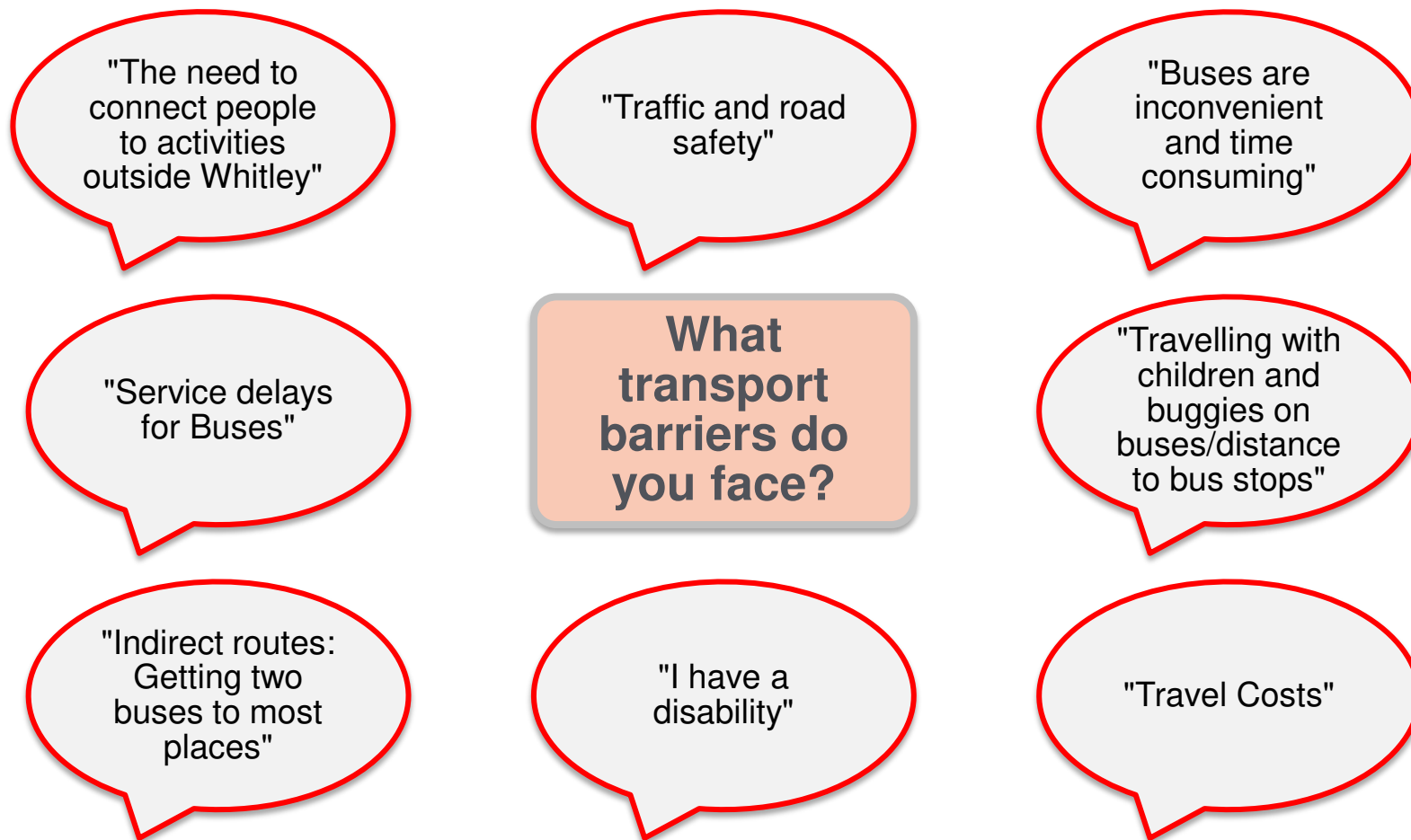
Figure 4.2.5b

Other parts of our study area, such as Kennet Island, experienced poor bus (and other) services, but the area is still in development and these problems may be solved over time. But there are other spots closer to the heart of Whitley in which people feel particularly isolated. Some of these also have a poor reputation within Reading and the residents often feel stigmatised and isolated. They are characterised by people with large families and little car or home ownership. Areas highlighted in the research were Staverton Road, the Tree Estates (previously Shinfield Estates in the 1950s), Hexham and Stockton Road.

In the next section, we look at the types of barriers experienced by these vulnerable groups and draw on the focus groups and interviews to argue why this is important for the Whitley Big Local to address.

4.3. What transport barriers do people face?

The survey highlighted a wide range of barriers to finding the transport that people needed, some of which were highly individualised. There were no boxes to tick; people could raise any issue they liked or no issue at all. Specific problems that people mentioned could be put into the broad categories shown below:



Box 4.3.1 Transport barriers that respondents face

The most commonly cited problems were **cost** (31%), the **lack of direct buses** (26%) including East to West routes across Whitley and the **waiting times/inconvenience** of taking the bus (15%).

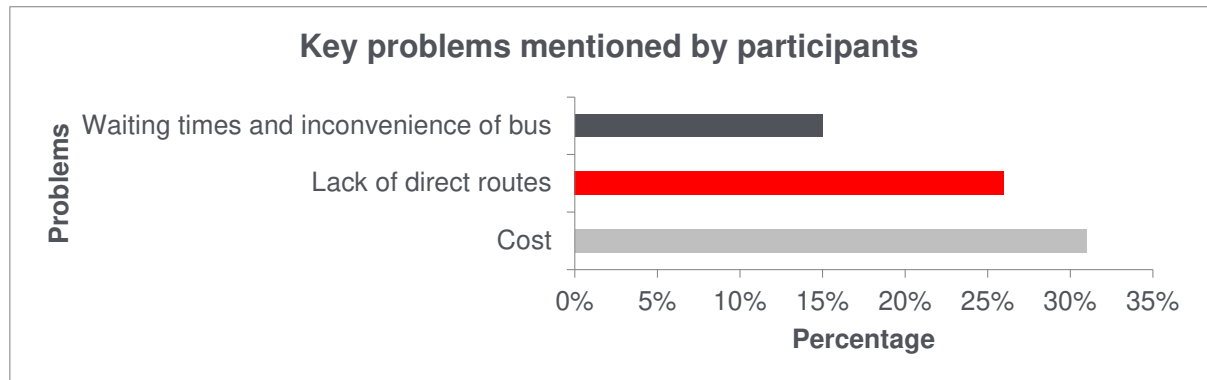


Figure 4.3.1 Key transport problems mentioned by participants

Besides the above-mentioned problems, a further major issue that spontaneously emerged was that of getting people, especially young people and children, linked to life and events outside of Whitley. This gets to the heart of the 'connections' issue people in Whitley face, explored in Section 5.

We will now consider each of these issues in turn:

4.3.a. Cost

Cost is a barrier to transport for one-third of everyone we surveyed

The most commonly mentioned barrier to transport was **cost**, mentioned by nearly a third (31%) of the total population sampled. As discussed in Section 2, many households experiencing financial strain and the impacts of welfare reform such as benefit cuts, penalties and welfare reforms. The biggest cost issues are:

- **Bus costs** - 20% mentioned Reading travel as a problem and 11% mentioned the costs of bus travel outside of Reading and its sub-districts as being a concern. The issue is often value for money.
- **Parking** - only 6% mentioned costs connected with driving as being a problem, and much of this was associated with parking costs. People clearly see having a car as more cost effective than public transport (twice as many car owners complained about the cost of public transport than complained about the cost of using their own car).
- **For the over 60s** - people over the age of 60 who are entitled to bus passes were significantly less likely to cite cost as a barrier to transport.
- **Travelling with dependents/children** - having dependents on the other hand was statistically significantly more likely to raise an issue of cost, an issue that will be returned to in Section 5.

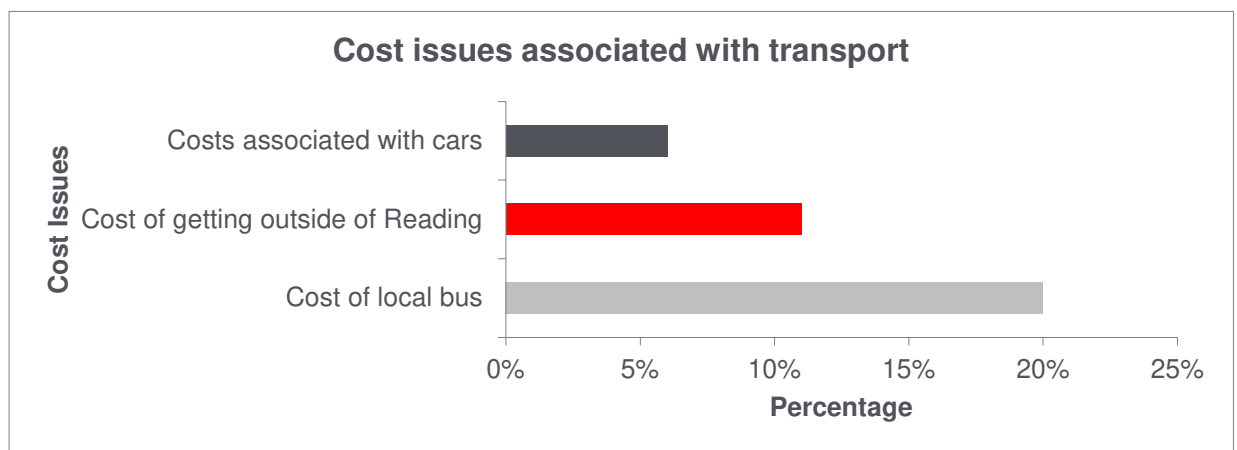


Figure 4.3.2 Cost issues associated with transport

As part of the research, we asked a smaller sample of 41 people to tell us about the average weekly cost of travel for their household in Whitley.

As the figure below shows, expenditure ranged from 0 to £60, with the average being £22 (Figure 4.3.3).

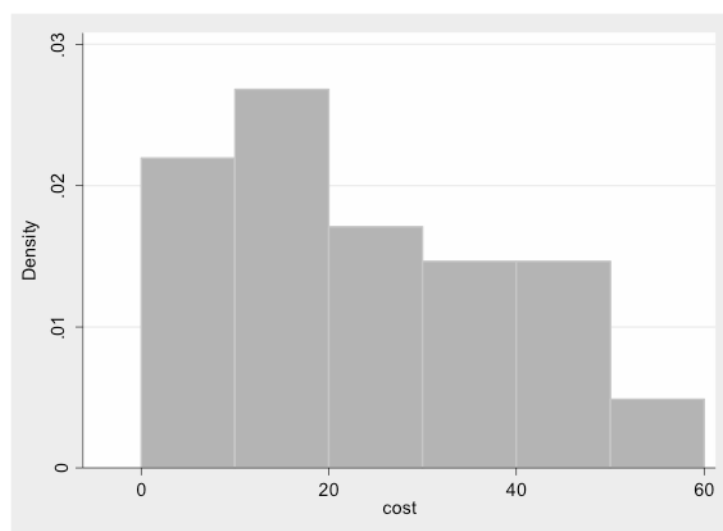


Figure 4.3.3 Average weekly costs of travelling

4.3.b. Buses and lack of direct and cross-Whitley routes

"2 buses everywhere I need to go!" (Survey, Female, 71+, RG2 7)

"no direct service across the community!" (Survey, Male, 41-50, RG2 7)

The second most frequently mentioned problem was a lack of direct and cross-town routes; 26% of survey respondents mentioned this. There were relatively few complaints about the buses into town, but the lack of direct routes anywhere else proves to be a barrier to people getting to where they need to go.

Most daily activities required a bus a trip into town and changing to come back out to get to important destinations. Not only is this inconvenient, especially for grocery shopping, but extremely difficult and time-consuming.

As discussed earlier, buses go North-South through Whitley to and from town, but none travel East-West. The most important factors include:

"the bus service is terrible, it's too far to walk to a bus stop, we needs a bus service across Whitley like Cressingham Road". (F, 41-50)

"There's no longer a bus along Cressingham Road now, it's stopped, it's difficult, no car and you're stuck". (M, 71+)

"bring back the bus on Cressingham Road". (M, 41-50)

"the buses only go to the town centre – you have to make 2 journeys everywhere, transport across Whitley would help". (F, 51-60)

Interestingly, 81% of everyone who cited indirect routes as a problem could tell us exactly where they needed to go:

- Royal Berkshire Hospital (29%)
- Green Park
- ASDA, and other shopping centres
- Schools and Colleges outside of Whitley, especially Bulmershe Secondary School
- A wide variety of other specific destinations

Inconvenience was compounded by having to walk a fair distance to a bus stop; 2% persons mentioned this as an additional problem, and it was most commonly cited by people complaining of the route along Cressingham Road, which was withdrawn in 2013 for lack of commercial viability.

The problems of getting 'two buses' and East-West travel across Whitley were also significant topics of discussion in interviews and focus groups, with participants in one group talking about "location prejudice".

Less frequently mentioned issues included waiting times, bus delays and weekend services but Reading Buses have indicated that these issues are currently being addressed.

Families who have to manage multiple events in one morning (e.g. dropping off children to different schools or nurseries, then an appointment of their own) find it very difficult to manage everything in time if they rely on public transport, and we return to this in Section 5.

4.3.c. People with mobility impairments

Only 29% of people with a mobility impairment can find the transport they need

There is a statistically significant association between mobility impairment and the ability to find the transport one needs – 48% persons without a mobility impairment report they can find the transport they need, whilst only 29% of those *with* a mobility impairment can find what they need (Figure 4.3.4). Disability was significantly correlated with old age, making the elderly slightly more vulnerable to transport difficulties, but the real problem was found to be the mobility impairment, not age in itself. A number of people can't walk to their nearest bus stop due to health and mobility issues, not just the elderly.

Part of the problem is that mobility impaired persons are significantly less likely to be driving their own car than people without an impairment (44% persons drive rather than 57% non-impaired persons). This exposes them more to the problems generally associated with the use of public transport. Taxis and lifts are relied on a lot more heavily by those with a transport impairment compared to those without (Lifts: 25% vs 16%; Taxi use: 13% vs 1%). Overall, 49% mobility impaired people use buses, which is *not* significantly less than the 60% non-impaired people who use the bus. Bus passes help the elderly and are appreciated.

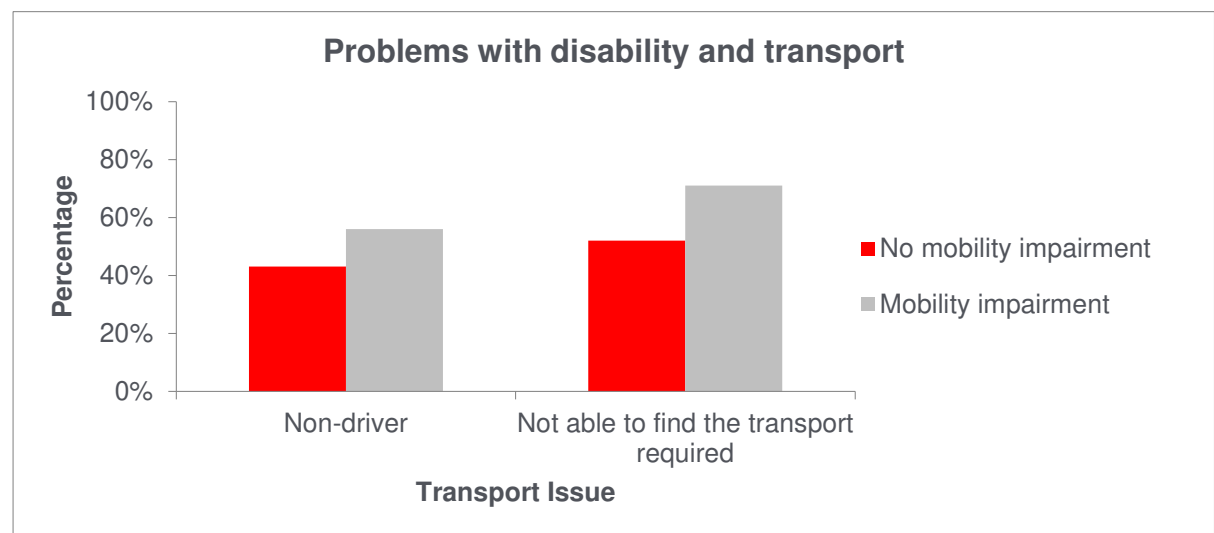


Figure 4.3.4 Disability and transport problems

The Whitley Researchers worked closely with Readibus to implement this research. Readibus does a great job for those with mobility impairments: it's flexible, reliable, and delivers door-to-door (even within door to within door, which is necessary for some impairments).

Their services are often perceived as only for the 'elderly' and many charities didn't know exactly what they could offer. Readibus are keen to advertise its services more widely in Whitley and establish links with local charities to help families with mobility and health issues e.g. Homestart's ideas for a door-to-door buddy system for postnatal support groups.

Readibus connects people with places, and the friendly and personal service also helps to connect people to the community itself. Indeed, amongst the disabled themselves, 16% of persons declared themselves as having mobility impairment whilst only 6% mentioned disability as being a specific barrier to their travel, which suggests that some progress is being made in meeting the transport needs of the disabled. Although the needs of the disabled and their carers are not perfectly met, an effective transport service that is working in the right direction is in place. Readibus was highly praised by the local residents and organisations that use its services but there are a number of people that are still unaware of the services they provide, including a number of organisations that work with families. It might be that isolated families are the people whose unmet needs should be the target of a new transport initiative.

Despite providing an excellent service, Readibus has its limits – the demand for their services is increasing and travel times can be quite long. Readibus focuses only on the disabled, not those who are disconnected from the community for other reasons. According to the problem areas defined by survey participants, there was more concern expressed

about lack of provision for families with children and young people than for the elderly and disabled. Interviews with family support charities and charities revealed significant numbers of local families with complex needs, such as post-natal depression, children with learning or behavioural conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), who find travelling on public transport extremely difficult. Several volunteers in community organisations were also unaware of the services provided by Readibus, and we will return to this in Section 6.

4.3.d. Fear of walking and safety

Questionnaire respondents also commented on problems connected to traffic congestion (5%) and road safety (2%) that makes people feel that walking and cycling around in Whitley is unsafe, particularly for women and children. Community police officers stated that most of their time is spent on dealing with traffic related matters, such as speeding, parking and anti-social use of vehicles (ASV), which are compounded by the lack of traffic wardens in Whitley, rather than crime. These issues were more widely discussed in the focus groups and interviews. Hazardous parking and dangerous driving are interlinked with fears about crime, poor street lighting, children's safety and environmental degradation that actively reduce people's mobility, particularly in the dark, which is a limiting factor for Julie and her friends:

"In the winter I feel trapped at home after school as I don't like walking to the bus stop. There's no street lighting; the parks aren't safe and there's often broken glass and needles on the ground. If I have to go out in an emergency, like the doctors, then I would get a taxi, but that's like really costly". (Julie, young parent of 2 children", Focus Group 2)

"I don't want my son, he's 10, going to sports club after school in the winter as I'm scared to walk near the park to get him. He could go swimming at the sports centre but it's not safe to walk around" (Ellie, young parent of 3 children, Focus Group 1)

"I find it difficult getting everyone to school on time but I don't want my older ones walking to school by themselves as it's really dangerous, driving round here's awful". (Helen parent of 2 children, Focus Group 2)

"Traffic congestion and speeding are significant issues and the safety of children coming to and from school is a real concern". (Headteacher Interview)

"Street lighting is not good and it's also not in the right places. Near the recycling bins and rubbish collection there's lots of glass and bottles, near the playground in Hexham, and is really dangerous for the children". (Focus Group 3)

To summarise:

This section has explored the links between mobility, insularity and social exclusion. Public transport is an important part of how Whitley residents get around. Almost half of those sampled had no access to a car and depended on bus transport, although even car owners frequently use buses. The transport system is important, and yet more than half of the respondents declared it inadequate to meet their everyday needs:

- Families, particularly those with up to three young children, on restricted incomes find bus travel expensive. Value for money is also an issue – the cost of public transport in view of the time loss involved in being forced to take indirect routes and putting up with the inconvenience of bus timetables.

- Women, particularly those with children, from some BME communities or in households where a family member has a mobility impairment are especially vulnerable if they don't have access to a car.
- A lack of cross-Whitley routes and direct access to some essential services combined with the complex daily journeys of modern families place significant time pressures on carless households. Women, in particular, often lack the time needed to travel to school, nursery, shops, hospital visits, care for elderly family and paid work.

Life-enhancing activities like work and social, recreational and communal activities were predominantly carried out outside Whitley. This cuts off opportunities for those who cannot access time and money efficient transport. Families with children and young people were considered to be especially at risk of disadvantage. Real and perceived ideas about fear, safety, anxiety and lack of travelling experience, can also restrict everyday mobility and travel. We explore these issues in further detail in the next section.

5. TRANSPORT AND MOBILITY IN WHITLEY: CONNECTING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

The previous sections presented data from the questionnaire survey and focus groups that highlighted the everyday transport needs of local residents, identified transport barriers and suggested that the most vulnerable residents are likely to be:

- Carless
- Women and families, particularly those with up to 3 children
- Households with a disabled family member
- From particular neighbourhoods in RG2 7 e.g. Staverton Road, Tree Estates, Stockton Road, Hexham.

Section 5 provides a more in-depth discussion of the importance of accessing cheap and convenient transport in meeting wider socio-economic benefits for individuals and families. Reading's sustainable transport and community plans not only provide a vision for decreasing car use in Reading over the long-term but they highlight the importance of connecting people and places in sustainable community development:

"Our long-term vision for transport in Reading is outlined within the context of the Sustainable Community Strategy and its three strands of People, Place, and Prosperity. At the heart of our vision is the aim of better 'Connecting Reading' and a transport system that enables people to move around – easily, safely, sustainably and in comfort". (Reading's Sustainable Community Strategy, RBC, 2011c)

These plans also recognise the difficulties facing lower-income communities dependent on the existing public transport network for many of the reasons stated in Section 4. The resident and student researchers began to use the term 'location prejudice' as a term to describe how Whitley residents feel about local transport in Whitley, particularly as the "bus dictates where you can go", "always having to shop at Morrison's, never getting to B&Q". Not being able to get around was seen a hidden form of social exclusion that influences everything else – work, leisure, caring for family, health and education. Transport routes provided the local foundations for everyone's daily lives and the transport barriers such as cost and indirect routes were seen by many as a major reason why local families experience social exclusion in Whitley.

Our qualitative research from the interviews and focus groups also highlighted a series of important issues related to the importance of 'being connected' to people and places inside and outside Whitley. In this section we explore the relationships between everyday transport barriers, insularity and social exclusion and connections to life-enhancing experiences mentioned earlier. In particular, we argue that two significant issues require particular attention:

- i. The complex daily journeys of modern families, and caring roles of many women, place significant time pressures and financial stress on carless households. Financial exclusion and time poverty are major issues for families with children.
- ii. Isolation and insularity resulting from restricted access to social events and other life-enhancing opportunities such as days out and school trips

5.1. Everyday journeys, time pressures & modern family lives

"How can you possibly get 3 kids to different schools and then get to work or take Dad to hospital and back for pre-school pick up?" (Local volunteer worker, Interview)

The previous section highlighted the difficulties in making every-day journeys to school, work, social activities, health-care and shopping for many carless people and their families.

As stated in Section 4.2, women with dependents and people with mobility restrictions were particularly vulnerable to travel-related barriers, such as cost and getting two buses to most locations. A significant issue to emerge from the focus groups and interviews was the time pressure associated with modern family lives and the stresses linked with "not being able to get everyone in your family where they need to go with the time and money you have" (Focus Group 5). Furthermore, the complex **informal caring** responsibilities facing many low-income and carless women caring for two generations is time-consuming and exacerbated by transport difficulties. The concept of 'time poverty' is widely recognised as a problem facing families in low-income and socially excluded communities in the UK (Standing 2011), whereby women in particular spend large proportion of their days getting children to schools, caring for elderly family members, shopping and health-care services (Turner and Grieco, 2000; Jain et al, 2011). These activities are often hidden and insufficiently discussed within policy debates (Atkinson and Kintrea 2001; Hanson, 2008). Decreasing real incomes, limited connections and perceptions over travel safety also compound time pressures facing modern families. This also has implications for the time available for parents to take their children for leisure and other community activities, particularly if they can't travel to these facilities easily. A survey in 2012 of 576 residents highlighted the fact that the Whitley library, South Reading and Whitley Wood Community Centres and Academy Sport were hardly ever used (RBC, 2012).

Although, the daily juggling of caring responsibilities is familiar to many women in Reading, the difficulties experienced by families managing on a low-income with no car aren't sufficiently appreciated by policymakers. Many everyday journeys are local and often appear 'easy' to some stakeholders, but recent changes to welfare services, reduction in formal social care provision, declining incomes and school catchments have exacerbated travel problems for many residents, as shown in Table 5.1.1.

Everyday Family Lives	Local Mobility Pressures
Lengthy School runs	Insecure housing; school catchments issues; fear of letting children walk to school unattended due to safety
Complex families (extended households; long-term health problems and disability; mental health) with no support	No direct transport between households or to health services; welfare cuts; local charities closed; reduced incomes; few trained care workers
Care practices impact on paid work	Mothers return to work when children are 5yrs; lack of local and affordable child-care; flexible training and local jobs; lack of school clubs or after-school activities
Weekly shopping is time consuming and difficult	Lack of direct transport; reduced incomes; little choice; concerns over poor diets and health

Table 5.1.1 Socio-economic impacts on family travel practices (Focus Groups and Interviews)

As discussed earlier, Whitley is home to many households on low-incomes, lone-parents with dependent children and families that include at least one member with a long - term illness or disability. Figure 5.1.1 highlights the connections between everyday caring and health needs of local households and time poverty.

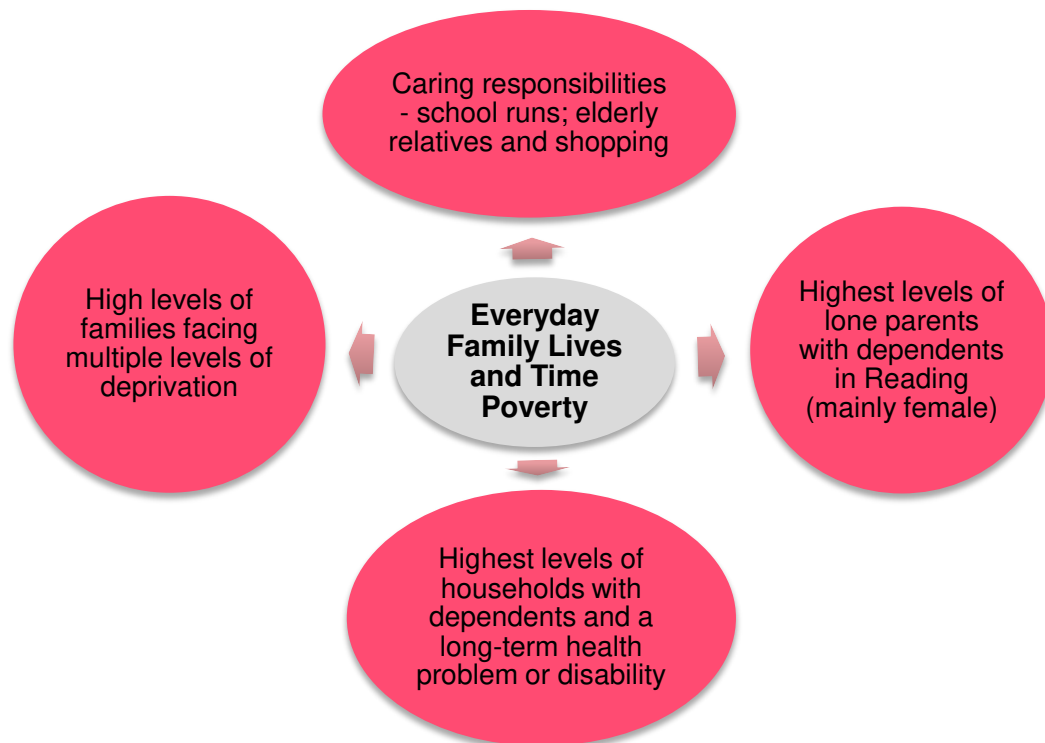


Figure 5.1.1 Everyday family lives and time poverty connections

During the research, many carless families talked to us about their struggles in 'making do', the challenges of everyday travelling to do the weekly food shop, school run or caring for relatives, and having no time and money for outings with children. Families told us that public transport can be expensive, time-consuming, stressful and almost impossible for those whose children have special needs.

In the focus groups we asked participants to talk about their everyday travel experiences and time pressures associated with public transport was a major feature:

"It takes me all morning to get my 3 children to school; I get back to feed the little one and I start all over again. If my Mum needs me, she has problems getting out, then something has to give". (Focus Group 2)

Although in reality it does not take 'all morning' for Caroline to get her children to school, many children are frequently late for school as a result of complex family arrangements:

"One of the biggest reasons for school truancy in this area is because families can't get their children to school on time due to the lack of bus service or caring for family members". (Primary Head Teacher, Interview)

"Under the new rules I have to keep going to the job centre— it's always gam and I keep saying that 'I can't take my daughter to school' and get into the centre of town. If you're late or don't turn up, they stop your benefits for 2 weeks. They won't listen – it's 2 buses into the centre and it takes an hour with a buggy and 2 kids". (Focus Group 1)

Furthermore, the financial and mental stresses associated with travelling with small children on public buses place significant burdens on the well being of many mothers and result in a reluctance to undertake all but the most essential journeys.

School allocation and choice is also influenced by transport provision and mentioned in several interviews:

"School allocation and choice is a big issue for Whitley right now. Kennet island residents are allocated spaces at Ridgeway but there's no transport". (Interview with RBC)

"There is huge pressure on school places but the school does not have much say in the logistics of it. Transport is an issue". (Primary School Head Teacher, Interview)

"Some parents take public transport into consideration when considering schools...they may want to go to a certain schools but can't get there. There's no enough time to get from Christ Church School to Blagdon Nursery to pick up different age children. Having to pay for the over 5s on buses doesn't help". (Nursery Teacher, Interview)

As discussed in Section 4.1, most children walk to primary school in Whitley although there are increasing problems experienced by families in Kennet Island regarding the lack of school spaces and safe journeys. Increasing concerns over traffic safety, such as crossing main roads and parking, means that parents are worried about children getting to school safely as many schools are on busy main roads. Parents of older children are still likely to want to accompany children to school because of traffic and personal safety, when they could travel independently.

These time-mobility pressures were also faced by some of the 'Whitley Research' team and are well recognised by many local organisations and charities:

"One of the most important issues facing local families, mainly mothers, is that they live in extended family networks with huge caring responsibilities and there's not enough support. They constantly juggle the needs of one family member over another. How can you possibly get 3 kids to different schools and then get to work or take your Dad to the hospital and back for pre-school pick up at 11.45 – all by bus?" (Stakeholder Interview)

Sue's Story

Jane and her partner have 5 children and live in private rented accommodation in Whitley. Her partner does shift work in a local retailer. Their youngest child has complex learning needs.

In 2014, they were evicted by their landlord and placed in emergency housing 3 miles away from their home. Finances are extremely limited and the weekly bus fare cost is £60, which they can't afford.

Jane ends up traveling four times a day to drop off and collect children from various schools, she's also working part-time. It's a struggle to get everyone to school on time and the youngest child needs one on one attention on a bus.

"We're been personally picking them up in the car to get to school but we shouldn't and can't continue to do this. The authorities say there's nothing they can do until they are rehoused...people in power don't realise the struggles facing many families here. This is not an uncommon story". (Sue, Charity Support Worker, Interview)

Sue's story highlights a problem frequently raised in the interviews with charities, schools and stakeholders:

"Many local families have complex medical needs and there are great health inequalities between places like Whitley and other wards in Reading. Children with complex medical needs, such as aqua therapy, need special transport systems, which aren't easily accessible. Children with learning disabilities make travelling on public transport challenging so families don't go anywhere. There are too many problems like this and no-one recognises this need".
(Stakeholder Interview)

Reading Borough Council does provide taxis for children with disabilities and special educational needs but there is a lack of understanding over entitlements. Sue's charity was unaware of the excellent services provided by Readibus.

An interview with Reading Job Centre also highlighted the lack of formal care services available in Whitley that was partly attributed to the difficulty in recruiting local care workers. Care workers need access to vehicles to get to clients and carlessness was seen as preventing the recruitment of local residents into these jobs. Whitley Researchers are meeting with local care agencies to look at ways of providing individual or pooled transport (cars, mopeds, etc.) to enable them to take job opportunities. Lack of transport is a barrier to accessing jobs, from interviews to in-work mobility.

The complex caring roles performed by many women, and some men, are often invisible and not being able to get around easily impacts on family well-being; the ability for women to engage in education, training and paid-work; access to the health-care services their families need; and it also restricts time available for the social activities and the connections that make communities strong. Limited travel options often means that families 'don't go anywhere' and many residents and stakeholders highlighted this as a core reason why Whitley is often perceived to be an insular and isolated community.

5.2. Transport, Mobility and Insularity: Connecting people to places enhances lives

"Only people with cars can get out of Whitley" (Female, 18-30)

"Everything in Whitley is split up" (Male, under 18)

As discussed in Section 4.1, life-enhancing activities like work and social, recreational and communal activities were predominantly based outside Whitley and people with cars were more likely to work and socialise. One of questions asked by the Whitley research team in a weekly meeting was 'do people choose not to travel far from Whitley because they are isolated and disadvantaged or because they like it here?' While there is a feeling of belonging in some areas, the data supports the fact that many residents would like more social activities, days out and connections to other parts of Reading and the South-East but cost is a major barrier. Stakeholders, community organisations, churches and schools agreed that it was challenge for (i) local families and (ii) schools to get children out of Reading and that these should be a priority for Big Local funding.

(i) Families: A surprising 10% of the questionnaire survey respondents volunteered the insight, without prompting, that people in Whitley need connections to the outside world and new experiences. As mentioned in the previous section, there is a **statistically significant linkage between car ownership and getting out to social and recreational activities, particularly for women**; those relying on public transport are not getting the

same access, although whether this is for lack of opportunity or self-selection due to other factors such as fear and anxiety, can be discussed. Most of the people who mentioned this problem referred to families, young people and children, not to the disabled and elderly. Analysis of the survey and interview/focus group data suggests that there are two interrelated processes that could explain the current situation.

Firstly, many Whitley residents feel under a certain social stigma as a result of limited educational and work opportunities, and they suggested that the whole life experience and positive engagement of young people with the world is restricted by a lack of ability to get out to see what is on offer. Information may be part of the problem – some do not even know what is on offer, and there was also the suggestion that psychological barriers such as fear of grasping opportunities on one's own, travelling alone, getting lost and not knowing how to get to places, which compound the physical and economic barriers like costs and indirect routes to restrict families' social activities and children's knowledge of the wider world, as shown in Figure 5.2.1.

Isolation & anxieties that limit mobility		
<i>"I don't like travelling alone"</i> (Female: 41-50)	<i>"People only know what is going on in Whitley through social connections"</i> (Focus Group 4)	<i>"Whitley is a vast place, it has no central place, no heart...but it also has a stigma and huge perception issue... we need to break down barriers and work together"</i> (Stakeholder Interview)
<i>"I would like to be able to get out to social activities, I want to make friends"</i> (Male: 51-60)	<i>"Fear of crowds"</i> (Female, 18 -30)	
<i>"People need to get out of their homes"</i> (Focus Group 4)	<i>"I don't know which bus to get/where to go"</i> (Female: 31-40)	<i>"I don't like going to places on my own"</i> (Female: 71+)

Figure 5.2.1: Isolation and anxieties that limit mobility

Stakeholder and school interviewees also talked about low morale, low confidence self-esteem and "a loss of hope and ambition in the community" that provided additional barriers to getting out and about, access to work and life-long learning:

"There's a need to improve people's confidence to go out of Whitley and Reading as many feel isolated or are isolating themselves. Therefore, providing a bus for day trips out would be great. Many children do not go out of Reading and are overwhelmed when they do, especially if they are given too much choice. Many children want to go to the seaside; one family went and they were in awe". (Stakeholder Interview)

Other interviewees described this process as a '**learned helplessness**' that stems from parents own lack of travel and educational experiences that is compounded by financial and barriers:

"Many parents don't have the confidence, as well as the money, to go out with their children, they don't have any holidays". (Primary School Headteacher, Interview)

Secondly, and in addition to the above, weekend and vacation trips are extremely rare due to the lack of accessible and affordable transport, and information on where to go and how to organise this. We did speak to parents who would like to be able to take their children out

of Reading but either can't afford it or there is not convenient transport as shown by Julie's recent experience:

"I took my 3 kids to Beale Park last summer on the bus – it was our only day out. It took ages and the bus dropped us in some country lane, what seemed like miles from the entrance, a really narrow lane, it was raining and the kids were nearly run over by cars, and it wasn't long before we had to get the last bus back. The whole day costs about £80 and it was exhausting, more than that, it was stressful – never again." (Focus Group 2)

As already mentioned, 26% of those participating in the survey felt restricted in getting to places within Reading district by lack of direct and cost effective transport links and 30% mentioned that they would like to get to places right outside of Reading, but faced similar constraints. Of these, 51% specifically mentioned the seaside and 16% mentioned London, although places of recreation like Coral Reef in Bracknell, Beale Park and Dinton Pastures, Rusher Farm, were also common, as were other towns like Basingstoke. This was highlighted by the focus groups and interviews (see Figure 5.2.2). One community leader talked about how a project that helped residents to book holidays online 'changed people's worlds'.

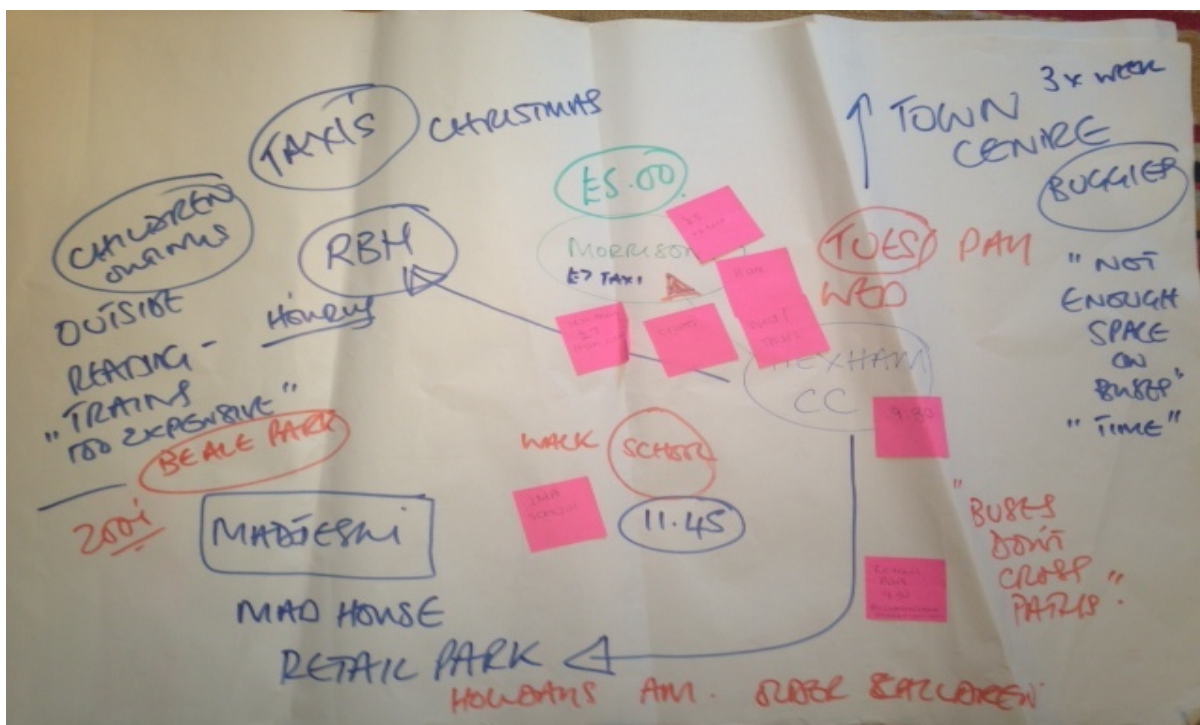


Figure 5.2.2 Parents mapping 'where we want to go' (Focus Group 1)

"I don't go out of Whitley much" Male: 18-30 "Whitley doesn't have much of a sense of community" Female: 71+ "It's hard to take buses to different parts of Reading, you need at least 2 buses." Female: 31-40 "Buses hard to get on to with buggies" Female 18-30	"There is nowhere to go" Male:18-30 "I've given up trying to get help to go out." Female: 71+ "Families with children have a great expense to travel about in Reading" Male: 51-60 "Going to town is a treat, we hardly ever go out of Reading" Female: 31-40	"More transport services for pensioners, lots of them locally but no services" Male: 41-50 "It's more expensive as a family going to town than using a car" Female: 31-40 "Hassle and cost of travelling with all my children" Female: 18-30 "Buses don't go across town" Female: 31-40
--	---	---

Figure 5.2.3 'Getting out of Reading': Survey responses

Therefore, getting children and parents 'out and about' from Whitley to fun, life-enhancing experiences is seen an essential part of what's missing in their lives (Figure 5.2.3). Hexham Community Centre and Aspire 2 have organised successful day-trips but the consensus was that the current demand exceeds supply.

(ii) **Schools:** The lack of mobility experienced by children and youth was also identified as a major barrier to learning, social development, educational aspirations and well-being by the majority of head teachers and community organisations we spoke to. The need to connect local school children, both primary and secondary, to motivating and life-enhancing experiences was seen as one of the key benefits that a community transport service could bring to Whitley. Teachers are particularly concerned that many local children rarely leave Whitley, or Reading, in holidays or weekends:

"30% of our children haven't seen the sea". (Primary School Headteacher, Interview)

"Many children are unable to get out of Whitley... I frequently visit the town centre with my own children and very rarely come across children from this school – very rare in my experience...only 2 in a few years". (Primary School Headteacher, Interview)

"Children's education suffers due to transport issues. Parents can't do activities because of transport costs, we were given tickets to the circus last year but families can't go because they have no transport access". (Stakeholder Interview)

"We want to take the children out and get them engaged with learning as it makes such a difference to the children and their aspirations". (Secondary School Headteacher)

School trips were described as 'life changing' with direct academic as well as social benefits in terms of raising literacy, numeracy and creativity. Teachers talked about the need for 'high impact' activities for parents and children that 'broaden horizons', events that 'make

people proud of where they live' and 'give parents a sense of ownership and opportunity as well as their children'.

The cost of transport, usually coach hire for trips outside Reading, prohibits outings for most schools and this has been exacerbated by economic austerity cuts for extra-curriculum and sports events in recent years. Most schools can't rely on voluntary contributions from parents to fund trips and so these are extremely limited in most primary schools. Many schools would also like to collaborate on projects and interschool competitions.

Currently, only JMA and Reading Girls School have their own mini-buses, although the Reading Girls bus needs replacing. Some primary schools, such as the Palmer Academy, have arrangements with JMA to share buses for events but there are issues over timetabling, administration and availability that could benefit from greater coordination. Horseman's is the main local coach company used by local schools, and although it's well regarded, the average cost of £200 - £300 for an outing limits provision. For smaller events, staff may transport children in private cars but there are issues related to liability insurance and safety so trips are often cancelled.

All the primary schools would like more affordable transport to pursue more schools trips but their priorities include:

- Outdoor adventure pursuits, particularly for Years 5 and 6 in helping the transition to secondary school
- Children with special educational needs such as autism.
- Primary schools participation in cross Reading and Berks Sports initiatives that has been curtailed due to lack of transport funds
- Transport for holiday clubs (such as Blagdon Nursery's) and shared after-school clubs.
- The provision of arts, creative and expressive activities
- Activities for children aged 6-12 and pre-teens, particular girls.
- Visits to University of Reading for parents and children to build partnerships and widen access to higher education

Many schools would be willing to organise and staff more weekend and afterschool activities if cheaper transport was available. One teacher also commented that she found parents increasing keen to participate in school events and outings, *"the will is there but we need help with funds and logistics"*. There is also a feeling that the Whitley Excellence Cluster (WEC) should have a common policy on transport. However, the logistical difficulties in organising inter-school transport and activities shouldn't be underestimated and concerns were also raised over the administration resources required.

Many teachers also talked about the importance of addressing '**emotional accessibility**' alongside other barriers, particularly in relation to parental fears associated with being separated from their children. Community mobility initiatives could be important for increasing travel confidence:

"It's an insular community; parents do not take children out because of a lack of confidence and money. A community transport scheme should be low cost and take families and schools for day trips and give them the confidence to go out. It will teach them how to organise days trips and give them the confidence to go out and to it themselves." (Primary School Headteacher)

Teachers at one primary school also spoke of the difficulties in taking Year 6 children for an overnight trip, as parents were concerned about safety:

"Many children have never been away from their parents overnight...parents are frightened because they don't know the world themselves. We need to talk about measured risks and teach resilience to show that going out can be safe". (Focus Group 4)

Focus groups with parents also highlighted their reluctance of letting children out of their sight as they believed they might not be adequately cared for by anyone else. Many young parents have limited experiences themselves and joint child-parent outings were seen as important for building travel confidence and independence:

"The key to sustainable programmes is developing and teaching people to allow them to go out independently. We need to slowly build the confidence of parents and help them grow. Many of the parents have not had many life experiences and are worried about letting their children out and don't know how or where to take them out". (Stakeholder Interview)

Overall, schools and community organisations were enthusiastic about the need for a community transport service that helped them take families out and about in Reading, and beyond. They were keen to work together to develop new initiatives and we make tentative recommendations in the following section as to how this might be developed.

To summarise

Section 5 has highlighted the important roles that transport and mobility play to helping individuals and families access and connect to education, work, social and life-enhancing activities (Figure 5.2.4). Too many families are facing transport barriers that have widespread impacts on their everyday lives and in Section 6 we suggest a range of initiatives that could lead to a 'better connected Whitley'.



Figure 5.2.4 Mobility barriers and social exclusion

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: ‘EASE, ENABLE AND EMPOWER’

As stated in Section 1, the aims of this research were to (i) explore the everyday travel needs and experiences of communities in Whitley and identify transport barriers and (ii) suggest ways of addressing unmet needs that could be targeted by the *Whitley Big Local* initiative. We now focus on each of these in turn.

(i) The everyday travel needs and experiences of communities in Whitley and the identification of transport barriers

The everyday travel needs of communities in Whitley are similar to those of any community, with needs of getting to work, school, college, shops, medical practices and another facilities featuring prominently. The community is served by comprehensive mainstream and alternative bus services, as well as having good access by bus to the mainline railway station with fast connections to London and beyond and close proximity to Junction 11 of the M4 motorway. However, Whitley is home to relatively high numbers of low-income families with young children (28% of the population are under 18), lone-parent households and households with family members experiencing limited mobility or long-term ill health - factors that shape access to the transport network for many local residents.

The research has identified those with the greatest mobility needs to be families with up to three young children with limited income and no access to a car. Households living in Hexham, Cressingham and Staverton Road areas and those with family members experiencing restricted mobility or long-term ill-health are also vulnerable, particularly women with care responsibilities.

Cost and indirect bus routes are the most significant mobility barriers facing residents, both of which can cause social exclusion but the research also identifies a number of socio-economic, physical and emotional barriers to transport that restricts the mobility individuals and families in South Reading:

- perceptions of safety
- internet access and credit facilities for making use of the Internet
- travel experience, life skills and confidence
- opportunities for social interaction and support
- facilities, such as walking buses to school
- lack of information
- time poverty due to complex caring roles
- geography - Whitley is akin to a ribbon development in shape with many services spread along main roads

A summary of the key mobility needs and barriers identified is provided in Table 6.1

Mobility Needs and Barriers: Transport	Mobility Needs and Barriers: Shopping and Food	Mobility Needs and Barriers: Social and Leisure	Mobility Needs and Barriers: Education, Employment and Health	Mobility Needs and Barriers: Real and Perceived Fears about Safety and Lack of Travelling Experience
• Public transport for families on restricted income is expensive, time-consuming, stressful and not value for money • Affordability of public transport for families with up to 3 children: need buses to be free for children as in London • Lack of cross-Whitley bus routes e.g. Cressingham Road (especially to get to RBH) • Need for information on, and experiences, of travelling; fear of travelling alone; not knowing how to get to places; psychological barriers and perceptions • Women especially hit by cost concerns • Problem of handling buggies on buses for families with multiple children • People with a mobility impairment need more transport (e.g. more Readibus) • Lack of Internet access for buying cheaper bus fares and smart cards • Bus travel increased with lower fares indicating price elasticity • Elderly have free bus pass, cost not a barrier so other issues like indirect buses more important for them	• Shopping is difficult for those without access to a car • 69% respondents shop in Morrison's – limited choice • Cost of taxi to Morrison's restricts income for family outings • 30% respondents would rather shop at Asda • Financial and digital exclusion prevent on-line grocery shopping • Shopping is also an important social activity – 'getting out' • A reported 80% don't eat a healthy diet	• Getting to social activities outside Whitley is problematic for the carless, particularly women • Families don't go anywhere: Need for days out; cost of transport prevents days out for families, young people and children (seaside, parks) • Parents can't do local activities because of transport costs • Transport costs restrict school provision of sports and after school activities	• Cost of school trips need to be supported as parents can't fund these • Getting to Ridgeway Primary from Kennet Island • Cost of transport to Reading College • Difficulty of getting to RBH without changing buses • High numbers of disabled people • High taxi use by people with mobility impairments to access RBH • Many extended families have complex needs where primary carer has multiple caring responsibilities and time poverty • Need for 'pooled transport' to increase access to employment e.g. mopeds for paid carers	• Better safety, street lighting, fear of crime, dangerous driving • Clean up parks for families (broken glass, needles) • Lack of parent's travelling experience restricts children's mobility • Fear of travelling alone, getting lost, not knowing how to get to places – psychological barriers, fear and anxiety • Need for organised low cost trips out especially to the seaside and London, or help in booking • 'Learned helplessness' – low confidence, lack of experience compounded by financial barriers; need for generational change • Isolation and loneliness of elderly people

Table 6.1 Key mobility needs and barriers

(ii) Recommendations for addressing mobility needs and barriers that 'ease, enable and empower'

The research also aimed to look at ways of using Big Local funds for addressing unmet needs and tackling the mobility barriers facing many residents. At the start of the project there was considerable enthusiasm for setting up a community transport service based on the purchase of a minibus. Many of the residents, schools/educational institutions, and community based organisations we spoke to believed that a community transport scheme could be beneficial in increasing resident mobility but existing transport providers and other stakeholders were concerned about the long-term sustainability of purchasing a mini-bus due to the high start-up and operating costs. Mini-bus schemes in places like Wokingham have failed due to costs and logistical difficulties.

"A community mini bus would need to meet the needs of so many different groups - schools, sports, health care. It would increase community engagement but organising it would be difficult - costs, timetables, taxes, bookings and sustainability of the project would need considerable management." (Stakeholder Interview)

As the data collection developed, the research revealed a diverse and complex set of mobility barriers that would require a more innovative set of initiatives that focused on targeting those in greatest need, working with existing provision and taking a multi-faceted approach. We suggest that solving transport and mobility barriers in South Reading will require a holistic community programme that focuses on enhancing travel information, confidence and experience, *as well as* practical solutions that work together to **'ease, enable and empower'**:

- **Ease** solutions by working with existing provision and providing the information needed to develop these services to address needs identified in the research.
- **Enable** people to help themselves more by using the opportunity of Big Local funding to alleviate transport barriers.
- **Empower** community organisations and local agencies to target support to where it is needed most.

Table 6.2 highlights a number of initiatives that might have potential for addressing these '3E's'.

Whitley Community Mobility Initiatives for Addressing the '3 E's'

Ease Cost and Affordability: • A fare reduction on the 5/6/9 or 5/6 bus routes, local job-seekers and under 19s. • "Bringing London to Whitley" - free travel for children up to a particular age • Free travel for targeted families via local agencies (eg via issue of passes, smart cards etc.) • A local Whitley 'taxi-card' to support some targeted families with taxi fares for journeys that cannot be made by bus and reduce time poverty • Present evidence of a potential commercial opportunity to Asda to increase their market share if they provide transport to their store from Whitley as a supplement to their home delivery service
Ease Cross-Whitley Bus Routes, particularly to RBH: • A re-routing of the 9 bus service so that alternate buses turn left from Whitley Wood Road to re-join Shinfield Road via Cressingham Road to re-introduce a 'cross-Whitley' route. • Transport to and from Ridgeway School from Kennet Island for those in identified need
Empower and Enable Households Access to Employment, Shopping and other Services: • Initiatives to explore collective use of on-line grocery shopping with local drop points • Initiatives to increase access to credit facilities to facilitate on-line shopping • Work with organisations/local employers to look at feasibility of car share/moped schemes
Enable Local Schools: • A fund for schools to pay for trips; to include paying the cost of local bus fares as well as coach based days out, to increase the knowledge and understanding of local bus routes and travel amongst pupils. • Promote walking buses and safe routes to school to reduce time pressure on parents. • Work with Reading Buses to offer each WEC primary schools local bus trips in Spring 2016

Enable and Empower Families and other Households to Get out and About:

- A virtual community transport scheme to increase knowledge of and confidence in the use of existing transport using volunteers or bus buddies; information hub in the community café and some free smart cards.
- A programme of outings using a local coach firm to provide the transport, with local pick up points around Whitley, advertised locally such as in the community newspaper. Fares supported by Big Local.
- Shared Minibus: e.g. funds towards the replacement of Reading Girls School bus, on condition that it can be used by other local groups in partnership with the Big Local
- Promote cycling and bike schemes
- Initiatives to increase Internet access and access to a computer
- Work with community groups and public sector stakeholders to promote safer streets

Empower Families and Residents with Restricted Mobility:

- An increase in the availability of the Readibus service for Whitley residents with restricted mobility
- An increase in the availability of days out with Readibus for Whitley residents unable to travel on mainstream coaches
- An extension of the Readibus service to include transport to hospital for Whitley residents with restricted mobility

The next step is to discuss our findings and recommendations with local residents and organisations in order to develop initiatives that could be funded by the Whitley Big Local and other partners. Initial discussions with community organisations and key stakeholders around these initiatives have been extremely positive and we recommend that the Whitley Community Development Association establish a working party to consider and provide costing for the most popular suggestions. As the Whitley Big Local fund runs until 2022, there is scope for a phased programme that alleviates the most severe mobility barriers in the immediate future whilst building community cohesion and collaboration in the long-term. It is essential, however, that the residents and local community groups remain at the heart of this project and continue to feel empowered to make key decisions over future funding allocation.

Conclusions: Working Better with Whitley

Focusing on issues such as cost, radial transport routes, the time consuming and complex daily journeys of modern families and the wider impacts of limited mobility on children and young people, our research concludes that transport is essential for building community connections, widening access to education and reducing insularity and isolation. We suggest that a community-based response to tackling existing mobility barriers by the Whitley Big Local and other stakeholders could have widespread positive impacts on local individuals and families in South Reading.

Finally, we hope that our research will also be a testimony to the power of participatory research to make positive action happen through working better with Whitley residents. With support from the University of Reading and the Big Local, the Whitley Researchers also hope to continue working as a community research group to undertake new projects and ventures in the future.

REFERENCES

- Atkinson, R. and Kintrea, K. (2001) Disentangling area effects: evidence from deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods, *Urban Studies* 38 (12), 2277-2298.
- Clapsom, M. (2012) *Working Class Suburbs; Social Change on an English Council Estate*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Delbosc, A. and Currie, G. (2011) Transport problems that matter: social and psychological links to transport disadvantage, *Journal of Transport Geography* 19 (1), 170-178.
- Fusion (2015) *Research Report into the needs of the Youth and Community in Whitley*, Fusion
- Hanson, S., 2010. Gender and Mobility: New approaches for informing sustainability. *Gender, Place, and Culture* 17, 1, 5-23.
- Indigo Planning (2011) for Worton Grange Industrial Ltd. Worton Grange, *Reading: Socio-economic conditions in Whitley Ward*. (www.reading.gov.uk)
- Jain, J., Line, T. and Lyons, G. (2011) A troublesome transport challenge? Working round the school run, *Journal of Transport Geography*, 19 (6). pp. 1608-1615. ISSN 0966-6923
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2013) *Making the links: Poverty, Ethnicity and Social Networks*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Available from www.jrf.org.uk
- Kindon, S., Kesby, M. & Pain, R. (eds.) 2007. *Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods: Connecting people, participation and place*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Kindon, S. and Elwood, S. (2009) Introduction: more than methods-reflections on participatory action research in geographic teaching, learning and research, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 33:1, 19-32.
- Mohan, G. (2007) Participatory development: from epistemological reversals to active citizenship, *Geography Compass* 1 (4), 779-796.
- Murray, L., 2008. Motherhood, risk and everyday mobilities. In: Uteng, T. P., and Cresswell, T., (eds.), *Gendered Mobilities*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp 47-63.
- Office of National Statistics (2011) *Census Data 2011*. Available at <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-data/index.html>
- Reading Borough Council (2011a) *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment* <http://jsna.reading.gov.uk> <http://jsna.reading.gov.uk/borough-profile-overview/ward-profiles/>
- Reading Borough Council JSNA (2011b) *People and Community Deprivation*. Available at <http://jsna.reading.gov.uk>
- Reading Borough Council (2011c) *A Sustainable Community Strategy for Reading: Reading 2020 Vision and Partnership*
<http://reading2020.org.uk/GetAsset.aspx?id=fAAyADIANwB8AHwARgBhAGwAcwBIAHwAFAAwAHwAo>
- Reading Borough Council (2012) *Residents Survey 2012*. Available at www.reading.gov.uk/.../24577/Resident-Survey-2012.pdf

Reading Borough Council, Lisa Moran and the University of Reading (2013) A Snapshot of Whitley Ward, bayeuxtapstry.org.uk/documents%5CCouncil.../Whitleysnapshot-1-.pdf

Reading Borough Council JSNA (2014) *Whitley Ward Profile*. Report by Berkshire Public Health Shared Team. <http://jsna.reading.gov.uk>

Standing, G. (2011) *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury.

Turner, J. and Grieco, M. (2000) Gender and time poverty: The neglected social policy implications of gendered time, transport and travel, *Time and Society* 9 (1), 129-136

Whitley Community Development Association (2014) Community Plan (www.whitleybiglocal.co.uk)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Whitley Community Transport Steering Group 2014

Peter Absolon (Readibus)
Sophie Bowlby and Steve Musson (University of Reading)
James Downing (Northumberland Training Academy)
Rachel Goater (Reading Voluntary Action)
Peter Gallagher (Northumberland Training Academy)
Clare Muir (Reading Borough Council)
John Ord (Big Local Representative)
Martin Salter (Aspire 2)

Appendix 2: The Questionnaire Survey

Community Transport Questionnaire

All the information you provide is, and will remain, confidential. We do not ask for your name or date of birth, but do ask for your house number to map responses.

Demographic Questions

House Number _____ Postcode _____ Gender **M** **F**

Age Bracket U 18 18 - 30 31 - 40 41 - 50 51 - 60 61 - 70 71 +

Number of Dependents in your Household 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 6+

Transport and Mobility Questions

Does anyone in your household have a mobility impairment affecting your travel choices? **Yes** **No**

If **YES**, please explain how this affects your transport needs _____

Which supermarket do you usually shop at? _____

Is there a different supermarket you would shop at if transport links were available? **Yes** **No**

If **YES**, where? _____

Please fill in the table below

	Frequency				Where		Mode of Transport
	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Less Often	Within Whitley	Outside Whitley	Own car/ lifts/ bus/ cycle/ taxi/ walk
Hospital/ Health Services							
Doctors							
School							
College							
Work							
Town Centre							
Council or Advice Services							
Sports/ groups/ meetings/ recreation/ seeing family and friends							
Out of town stores and supermarkets							

Do you face any transport barriers? (e.g. cost, waiting times, no direct service, etc.) **Yes** **No**

If **YES**, please explain: _____

Are there any places you would like to travel to, but are unable to? **Yes** **No**

If **YES**, please explain: _____

Any Additional Comments:

Appendix 3: Questionnaire survey locations:

Whitley Primary Schools
Northumberland Training Academy
Morrisons, Whitley
Hexham Community Centre, AGM and weekly clubs
Whitley Wood Community Centre Summer Children's Activities
Churches Fun Day 2014
Academy Sports Centre
South Reading Community Centre and SureStart
Door to door survey in September – all roads
Local parks and children's play areas

Appendix 4: Focus Group Questions

Explain the aims of our research and issues around data recording and confidentiality.

1. General introduction to the group and warm-up question (family, hobbies, living in Reading)
2. We'd like to talk with you about how you travel around (where, when, how)? Could you take us through a normal day? What about weekends and holidays
3. What's good about local transport in Whitley and what could be improved? (Prompt: ask groups to share travel experiences and how problems might be solved)
4. Have you experienced any problems in getting where you need to go? Are there places you would like to visit but can't get to – how does this impact on you and your family? (mapping exercise if appropriate).
5. We're researching the feasibility of setting up a community transport scheme in the Whitley area using funding from the Big Local, what are your initial thoughts on this? What services might a community transport service provide and how should it work? (Prompt: cost, location, services)
6. Do you think improving community transport should be a priority in Whitley? If not, what do you think is a priority for Big Local funding? If you had a £1 million to invest locally, how would you spend it?
7. Is there anything else that you'd like to tell us about transport or other local issues that we've not talked about?

Appendix 5: Interview Questions (Stakeholders/ Schools/ Community Organisations).

Background on Transport

1. Please tell us a little bit about the organisation/institution you are representing and your role?
2. Please could you tell us about the transports needs of your organisation – where do need to travel to, what means of transport do you currently use and do you have access to your own vehicles? (Prompts: how do they travel in and outside Reading; do they have their own vehicles; costs etc.?)
3. What are the most common transport issues facing your organisation clients/students/staff in the Whitley area? Do they face any barriers and how might these be solved?
4. Does your organisation have a travel plan? What key issues have you identified in this document?

Community Transport

5. Introduce our research study and what we're trying to achieve
6. We're researching the feasibility of setting up a community transport scheme in the Whitley area using funding from the Big Local, what are your initial thoughts on this? (Prompt: do you think there's a need for a community transport scheme in Whitley?)
7. We're also talking to local organisations and institutions about whether they would be willing to participate in any future scheme, is this something that your organisation might consider? How might you envisage your role and what would you like to gain from this initiative?
8. From your perspective do you think improving community transport should be a priority in Whitley? If not, what do you think is a priority for Big Local funding?
9. Is there anything else that you can tell us about local transport in Whitley from the perspective of your organisation that we've not talked about?
10. Is there anyone else you think we could be contacting? Do you have any other information that you think would be relevant to this research and would be willing to share?
11. Would you like to be involved with the study and participate in any future events?

Appendix 6:Northumberland Training Academy

Northumberland Training Academy's mission is to raise participation and opportunities for the progression of learners from in and around the community. The Academy promotes a further education environment which offers a focus on developing employability prospects of its students by improving their core English and maths skills. The Academy through its partnership from within the local community and with providers also offers a wide range of community resources and vocational courses for learners. Such as Self-Employment, Childcare, Travel and Tourism and which includes pre-apprenticeships, work experience and takes advantage of its onsite hair and beauty salons and courses to bring students up to industry standards and ready for employment.

This is our web address www.northumberlandta.co.uk

This is our general email address info@northumberlandta.co.uk

Twitter: @NTAFuture

Facebook search: Northumberland Training Academy

'This partnership is a gateway
to an exciting project and I cannot
wait to see what comes of it.'

James Downing

Northumberland Training Academy

WORKING BETTER WITH WHITLEY

i For more information, please contact:

Dr Sally Lloyd-Evans

Russell Building,
Whiteknights Campus,
Reading, RG6 6DW

s.lloyd-evans@reading.ac.uk
Tel (0118) 3787293

www.whitleybiglocal.co.uk

