

ATW11 Age Connects Morgannwg

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus a Gweinyddiaeth Gyhoeddus | Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

Teithio Llesol yng Nghymru | Active Travel in Wales

Ymateb gan: Age Connects Morgannwg | Evidence from: Age Connects Morgannwg



Active Travel in Wales

Inquiry Response from Age Connects Morgannwg

March 2025

1. Overview of Age Connects Morgannwg

Age Connects Morgannwg is a charity for older people living in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil. Since 1977, we've been working to get older people the help they want, when they want it. We offer a wide range of information, advice and services to help older people stay living independently for as long as possible. Our work is designed to put older people first and make life easier. Our dedicated staff and volunteer team offer independent and confidential information, advice and support on a variety of issues such as care, legal, health, housing, income and benefits, transport, consumer, leisure, learning and work.

In the last year Age Connects Morgannwg has identified it has received 420 requests for transport support. Further to this, we have provided 737 home visits for our services where the person is not able to leave their home to travel to us – either due to transport issues, or other issues such as being housebound. We have also supported 184 Blue Badge applications in the last year.

2. Previous Research

In 2023, with a grant from the THINK Transport Issues in the Community Award, we looked deeper into understanding why so many older people ask Age Connects Morgannwg for support with their travel needs. In the 5 years leading up to the research project, Age Connects Morgannwg identified it had supported 1,609 people with transport support. Key themes from the survey:

People have trouble getting out and about or getting to medical appointments due to transport accessibility, times and cost.

For those who told us they don't use public transport regularly, they told us this was because:

- they needed assistance to travel;
- bus/train stops were too far away from their home;
- times weren't convenient, and
- the service was too unreliable.

In these instances, people told us they relied on a lift from friends or family members, but they often felt guilty for asking or a burden, and they did not like to feel this way.

People want to get out, and sometimes want to use public transport more than they do, but they experience barriers to be able to achieve this.

Respondents told us very loudly that getting out and about is important to them – not just to get to a medical appointment, but to get out of the house and connect with their communities. We asked them “What benefits does it bring to your life to use the transport in this way [a transport service provided by Age Connects Morgannwg using staff trained in supporting older people]?”.

In a multiple-choice option for answers:

- 55% answered ‘To get me out of the house’;
- 47% answered ‘To lift my spirits’;
- 47% answered ‘To socialise’ and
- 43% answered ‘To feel part of a community.’

Barriers to public transport include times (either not meeting need or changing due to delays) and lack of accessible provision for those with mobility issues or a disability.

People told us that public transport doesn't often meet their needs due to a variety of reasons, but often these centred on public transport, and private transport such as taxis, not meeting the needs of people with mobility issues or disability.

- For some people they struggle to stand outside in the cold waiting for a bus;
- some people cannot walk up a hill with shopping from the train/bus stop;
- we heard stories of taxi's refusing to take assistance dogs;
- people told us that often they experience difficulty with wheelchair access;
- we were told that often people can't rely on public transport to get to appointments as so frequently they are delayed or buses and trains don't turn up at all – sadly this can be the same with hospital provided transport.

Sometimes people would like and need a trained volunteer or support worker to join them on their outing, evidencing that transport often isn't the only thing that person needs support with

- 45 people told us they would be happy to pay for a transport service but importantly one with ACM trained staff or volunteers, and on average they said they would be happy to spend £9 an hour for this service.
- We also met with Rail Future Wales who highlighted with the upcoming South Wales Metro that some of the trains on the valleys train lines will be swapped to trams in the upcoming future. We believe this will cause barriers for lots of people, including older people, as trams do not have toilets on board.

3. Common barriers to active travel for older people: what older people have continued to tell us in the last year

Health

We are often told by those we support that their health is a barrier to accessing active travel such as walking or cycling. Common illnesses include physical disability, arthritis, respiratory conditions and dementia. Older people tell us, with regards to public transport such as buses and trains, these conditions mean they are unable to walk too far to bus stop or train station, or they have a fear of falling, or for some the busy-ness of public transport would exasperate their (or their loved ones) condition – this is particularly pertinent for those living with dementia, especially when they need to go on 2 or more separate buses or trains to complete their full journey. This is also the case for those who cannot stand on a bus or train, and their fear of public transport being full and needing to stand prevents them from trying to access it, as does their concern that the bus or train might be late (which they tell us is a common issue) and they are forced to stand at the bus stop or train station for a long time. Lastly older people also tell us about their concern with the gaps between the train and station being too large, and that often they cannot get on or off the train.

Distance to bus stop or train station

Older people also tell us that bus stops and train stations are too far from their homes. Sometimes, even though the bus stop or train station is close to their home, due to the landscape of the Valleys, they are unable to walk down or up the hill. Older people tell us this is made worse when they are needing to carry shopping with them.

Lack of transport at weekends

Older people often tell us that even if they can use public transport, they experience issues on the weekends when less services run. They tell us this is a particular issue in the Valleys.

4. Final comments

Age Connects Morgannwg would be delighted to be involved in the conversations around how to drive behaviour change in support of active travel; what the current barriers are for older people; and how to ensure active travel is accessible and inclusive, including around scheme design.

The Third Sector is a key partner in service care provision, often providing supplementary and preventative support, however we operate in a short-term funding culture with annual funding agreements. Short term funding results in services being decommissioned, despite them evidencing impact and positive change for both the service recipients and delivery partners.

5. Appendix

The full report can be accessed online here: <https://think.aber.ac.uk/why-do-people-use-age-connects-morgannwg-for-transport/>
