



Mobility and wellbeing in later life

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

Mark Bevan^a, Helen Petrie^a, Howard Cambridge^a, Steve Cinderby^a,
Karen Croucher^a, David Swallow^a, Rose Gilroy^b, Katia Attuyer^c

^a University of York
^b Newcastle University
^c University College London

A key aspect of designing a built environment that meets the needs of as wide a range of the population as possible is the demographic context of an ageing society. Considerable research attention has focused on the features and characteristics of neighbourhoods and cities that meet the diverse needs of older people.



THE CO-MOTION PROJECT

Co-Motion explores the mobility and wellbeing of older people going through critical but common life transitions. Our research included a longitudinal study of ninety six older people aged 55 and over in three locations in the north of England.

The project used a mixed methods approach, including: a self-administered questionnaire; followed by a qualitative face to face interview; four short telephone follow ups over the course of the following year; a final self-administered questionnaire and qualitative face to face interview.

The project is led by the University of York with other university partners. It began in 2013 and finishes at the end of 2016.

The project is one of seven Design for Wellbeing projects looking at ageing and mobility in the built environment. It is funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.



RESULTS

Discussions with our research participants drew attention to the social dimensions of being out around neighbourhoods and cities, and how attitudes and behaviours can shape both personal mobility and people's experiences of being out and about.

Older people in our study also highlighted how attitudes and behaviours by service providers and the wider public may compromise physical design. These experiences focused on two themes:

- Negative social encounters
- Attitudes and behaviours that create physical barriers for others.

NEGATIVE SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

- Cyclists on pavements
- Mobility scooter users on pavements
- Being bumped or jostled in busy places
- Feeling unsafe near rowdy behaviour (evenings in city centres)
- People using mobiles and not looking where they are going
- Finding/negotiating a seat on public transport
- Attitudes towards people with impairments - negative verbal exchanges

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS THAT CREATE PHYSICAL BARRIERS FOR OTHERS

- Parking on pavements (or across dropped curbs)
- Parking in bays for disabled people if none of the occupants live with an impairment
- Businesses putting A Boards or other obstructions on public pavements



CONCLUSIONS

These findings can be located in a developing literature that argues for greater attention to be paid to the sensory and emotional experience of movement (Gaete-Reyes, 2015; Miciukiewicz, and Vigar, 2012).

Going forward, one potential avenue is to raise awareness of the needs of key groups amongst the general public and service providers as part of the wider focus on developing age friendly communities.