

# **GETTING THERE – Older people telling their stories of the role of community transport in their lives**

by  
**Community Transport Association**

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## **About this research**

The Community Transport Association (CTA) conducted this assignment on behalf of Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) to provide evidence of community transport's role in older people's lives as part of ESS's "Stitch in Time" project. The work was conducted between December 2013 and March 2014. CTA interviewed users of community transport during February and March 2014 to gather information about the role community transport plays in their lives.

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## Community Transport in practice – older people telling their stories

### 1. Context

There is far more to community transport than simply getting people from A to B. Access to places and services is clearly important but older people derive many additional benefits from using community transport. Getting out and about, meeting other people and socialising either on the bus or at the destination are highlights of many older people's week. With a rapidly ageing population and limitations in our public transport system the part which transport plays in older people's is deserving of detailed scrutiny. Commissioners of services for older people need to understand that lack of transport can be a tipping point for older people – if they cannot access basic services such as shops or health facilities because they have no transport then some people will be forced to consider expensive residential care. High quality services for older people are of no use if they can't get to them.

To provide evidence of the positive impacts made by community transport and why community transport is often a better fit for the transport needs of older people, CTA collected stories from older people using community transport in six different projects across Scotland. These were:

- The Bradbury Centre, Bonar Bridge
- Badenoch and Strathspey Community Transport Company, Aviemore
- Lochaber Action on Disability, Fort William
- South West Community Transport, Glasgow
- Order of Malta Dial a Journey, Stirling
- The Bridge, Jedburgh

CTA spoke with over 100 older people in the centres to which they had been taken, usually lunch clubs or day facilities where they met with other people. In all instances the conversations took place in buildings where the older people met with each other socially, usually on a regular basis, once or more a week and had lunch together. They tended to know each other well and to be in good spirits as these events were often a highlight of their week.

Though gathering older people's stories was the main purpose of this research it was also evident from speaking with the people who ran the centres that without community transport provision the centres themselves were not viable as most of the people who used the centres had no other way of getting to the centres. As Lorraine Askew of the Bradbury Centre said

*“As you know, we would have had to close down when the Council refused to continue funding for transport unless we had bought our own bus.”*

This statement illustrates the fact that transport is crucial for many older people's services and that service commissioners must include this in their planning otherwise the services which they do support can collapse. The Bradbury Centre experience correlates with funding bids made to a recent Scottish Government Fund for vehicles for community transport services where 14 of the 130 bids were specifically from older people's day centres seeking funds for the replacement of their ageing vehicles which are used to take clients to and from the day centres. All the bids made clear that without transport their services could not function. Sadly the Fund could not

support them as it was 4 times oversubscribed and it favoured bids from operators who had wider community impacts than serving individual day centres. Aside from the bids from the day centres the majority of the other bids had a particular focus on the transport needs of older people which is by far the biggest category of user of community transport.

### 2. Methodology

The CTA researchers recorded the conversations using a combination of digital voice recordings and notes. Most of the people we spoke to were over 80 years of age and although generally in reasonable health some had conditions such as poor vision and tremors. We therefore decided to engage with people on a simple one to one basis without any physical aids which could be used as prompts to get conversations flowing. All the people we spoke to had been taken to the centres by community transport but it was easier to conduct conversations within the centres than on the community transport services themselves.

The aims in the conversations were to find out about how the older people lived their lives, whether they were able to get out and about, what they liked or disliked about the services they had and to probe how they felt about the transport services available to them. The researchers used open ended questions to draw out information and used the principles of caring conversation to engage with people.

The conversations took place in an environment where the older people felt comfortable – day centres, social clubs, and lunch clubs where they tended to meet friends of a similar age. The researchers were introduced to them by the co-ordinators at the centres and the interviews were conducted informally, usually one to one, but sometimes two or three people conversing at the same time.

### 3. Key themes arising from the conversations

- It affirmed that the majority of community transport users have difficulty in using buses - their main public transport alternative - even in areas where bus services are readily available such as Glasgow. Typical issues were that they had too far to walk to bus stops and they found it difficult to settle comfortably since vehicles often moved off before they could get to their seats; this reduced their confidence in using buses.
- It is what might appear to be relatively small aspects of community transport which are actually the most significant factors in making community transport a better fit for older people. Physical assistance onto the vehicle is enormously important for some. Assistance with bags is a relatively easy task for an able bodied person but for a frail elderly person makes the experience of weekly shopping much more manageable.
- It was significant that the quality of the people involved in providing community transport is very important to older people. Most were effusive in their praise of drivers and passenger assistants. Assistance onto and off vehicles is important, as well as patience and the manner in which staff or

volunteers deal with older people. It became clear that the driver is an important factor in the overall experience of using transport. Several were critical of the attitude they experienced in drivers of mainstream bus services and taxis.

- Users felt safe and comfortable on community transport. It was clear that the opportunity to meet with other people on vehicles was at least as important as getting to the places they wished to go. For some the journey itself was something which gave them pleasure and we even heard of some instances where individuals were not particularly concerned with where the vehicle was going but liked being driven around their local community or further afield.
- Some operators run day excursions to places of interest, e.g. trips to the Ayrshire coast from Glasgow, and these were highly valued. The vast majority of the older people we spoke to do not go on holidays and excursions were for most the only opportunities in the year when people got to travel away from their local environment. Trips away were something which people looked forward to very much.
- Without community transport, all but a small handful of the people we spoke to would not be able to get to the centres they were visiting and would consequently spend more time in their own homes.
- Some of the people who ran the centres said that without community transport, their day services, lunch clubs, care clubs, etc. would not be viable and would probably have to close. The ability of clients to get to the centres is crucial to the sustainability of the centres.
- Weekly visits to day centres, weekly shopping and other trips from people's homes were clearly important routines in people's lives. Activities conducted away from the home in a safe environment helps to give variety and purpose to what is otherwise a flat week for many older people.
- Older people liked the fact that they themselves could arrange transport which met their needs. This independence was important to many as they did not like to be over-dependent on family and friends to take them to the places they need to go.
- The vast majority of the people using the services with which we engaged were female.

#### 4. New learning from this research

The research provides firm evidence of what most people involved in community transport provision know already and therefore most of the new learning from this exercise is to be gained by people who are not involved in the details of community transport provision. Evidence of key benefits arising from community transport is

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detailed below. However, one strong message to community transport providers is the importance of the quality of the people involved in their service. Whilst operators are generally aware that their employees and volunteers should have empathy with the older people they carry, the importance of this as a factor for success in community transport may be underestimated. Transport planning is a rather dry, technical business and it is easy to lose sight of the importance of the personal interaction between the older passenger and the transport provider. It is often small things such as assistance with bags, familiarity with drivers and not moving off until the passenger is safely strapped which make the biggest difference for older people and which they value most. These small actions build their confidence in using community transport.

In recruiting volunteers, community transport providers are usually thankful to anyone who wishes to work with them and will rarely turn down an offer of volunteer driving. However it is evident that if the driver does not have the appropriate outlook for this work then this could be detrimental to the community transport service. Operators should therefore recognise this when recruiting staff and volunteers. For example, people who perhaps like driving and are skilled in this activity but who do not have the instinct to help older people in small ways would not be good recruits for a community transport organisation. The evidence shows that the impression which people have of a community transport service is often based on the person they see and interact with when they are being transported and those who were most effusive in their praise of community transport were those who talked specifically about their driver.

There is a role for the Community Transport Association to highlight this issue and emphasise the importance of recruiting the right kind of people. Aside from driving ability and the correct licenses community transport operators should look for the following in the people they recruit:

- Empathy with older people
- Compassion
- Patience
- Natural instinct to assist people with small tasks
- Good communication skills
- Positive outlook
- Sense of humour

### 5. Evidence arising from conversations with older people

The following is a brief description of the centres where the interviews took place. There then follows transcripts from some of the conversations which took place linked to the evidence they provide on the benefits of community transport.

#### **The Bradbury Day Centre, Bonar Bridge**

The Centre runs its own minibus to bring older people to daytime activities but also to enable people in the community to shop, socialise or attend medical appointments. The interviews took place within the Centre.

#### **Badenoch and Strathspey Community Transport Company, Aviemore**

BSCTC run a large volunteer car scheme in the central Highlands as well as minibus services for older people. The interviews took place at the Sunshine Club in Rothiemurchus. The trip was organised under the “Where 2 Today” project which BSCTC run.

#### **Lochaber Action on Disability, Fort William**

LAD run transport services for older and disabled people in the Fort William and Lochaber area. The interviews took place at Caol Lunch club which LAD now run. This service was formerly run by Highland Council Social Work Department until 2012 when they decided to stop funding the lunch club and to withdraw transport to it. LAD stepped into the breach in order to continue this service for older people.

#### **South West Community Transport, Glasgow**

SWCT run community buses for primarily older people in South West Glasgow, as well as a volunteer car scheme to take older people to health appointments at hospitals and day centres. The interviews took place at a lunch club which SWCT runs in Nitshill.

#### **Order of Malta Dial a Journey, Stirling**

OMDJ are a large community transport provider in the Stirling, Falkirk and Clackmannan area. The interviews were conducted at Grangemouth Community Care, which uses Dial a Journey to transport clients to their lunch club.

#### **Teviot Wheels, Jedburgh**

Teviot Wheels operate in the Borders. The interviews took place at the Evangelical church hall in Kelso where 10 older people go every Tuesday for social activities, games and lunch. This is run by the Royal Voluntary Service and transport is provided by a Teviot Wheels people carrier and RVS volunteers using their own cars.

The key items of evidence which the conversations provided were as follows:

- **Evidence of the benefits of the particular approach taken by community transport**
- **Evidence of the importance of the driver**
- **Evidence of outcomes for volunteers**
- **Evidence that people are more likely to be physically active**
- **Evidence that people are less likely to feel socially isolated**
- **Evidence that community transport gives people independence**

### 6. Evidence of the benefits of the particular approach taken by community transport

The evidence told us that the following approaches to providing community transport are significant:

- Older people like the fact that community transport services wait for them. They do not feel rushed by having to complete tasks such as shopping by a set time. They know that the community transport service will wait for them to get onto the vehicle and to be safely strapped into their seats.
- Older people who use car schemes to get them to NHS appointments particularly like the fact that they get picked up again after their appointment. This is significant as whilst they may be sure about the time of their appointment they are usually less sure about the time that their appointment will finish, whether this be for outpatient treatment or a visit to a consultant. For those who may have received treatment and who may not be feeling well as a result, it is reassuring to know that there is someone waiting to take them home.
- Older people like the patience taken by community transport services in dealing with their needs such as giving physical assistance from their homes and back home again and onto and off vehicles. This can take some time and one operator reported that it takes twenty minutes to assist one of their clients from their home, down a set of tenement steps towards the vehicle and to be strapped into their seat. It is unrealistic to expect this level of patience from taxi and bus operators where income and keeping to timetables are paramount.
- Older people like to get picked up from their homes and taken home again. Many have difficulty in getting to bus stops for a variety of reasons such as limited ability to walk distances and problems with their vision

#### Lady D, Aviemore

*“I’ve had MS for 20 years now. At the start I wasn’t too bad, but now my legs can’t be relied on so I got this electric wheelchair. Its great but I wouldn’t get out if it wasn’t for W2T. The bus has a lift you know and Billy is so good at getting me out of the house. He even locks the doors for me.*”

#### Lady A, Glasgow

*“The trouble with the buses is they don’t give time to get on and off and get seated. I need a hand if I’m using transport. I use the car scheme to get to the doctor and hospital. When I go to hospital for an appointment, the driver waits for me and takes me home. That is fantastic and lifts a great burden from my shoulders as I don’t know what time I might be finished at. When I come away from my treatment it’s nice to know that someone is there to take me home.”*

#### Lady C, Glasgow

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*“I can’t get into a taxi or a bus or many cars on my own so I need someone to give me assistance and I also need assistance if I need to walk any kind of distance. I use two sticks for walking. Sure I can call a taxi but the taxi driver will sit behind a wheel and watch me struggle to get in whereas the volunteer car drivers will give me a hand.”*

### Mr A, Grangemouth

*I like the fact that the bus comes right up to the door and then takes me home directly to my doorstep.”*

*“I haven’t got great sight and so have difficulty in getting to the bus stop, which is a fair distance from my home.”*

### Mrs A, Coldstream

*“I live on my own. I can’t use the buses, my legs have gone and I can’t get up the stairs - I always need a hand. I use Berwickshire Wheels, Teviot Wheels and RVS and these are my main means of getting about.”*

### Lady B, Glasgow

*“I use the car scheme to get to the doctor’s surgery. I don’t use public transport as I have great difficulty in walking. My nearest bus stop is a good distance from my house and I can’t get to the bus stop. On Tuesdays and Thursdays I go to the Care Club and I go shopping on Saturday. I wouldn’t make it out without someone picking me up at home.”*

### Lady G, Glasgow

*“I’m finding it difficult to get about on buses now because they don’t stop right at the bus stop. If it’s too far from the kerb, I can’t get on with my walker – I had an accident recently and broke my hip. I’ll be 90 in six weeks’ time. The (public service) bus drivers have not been particularly helpful – they’ll sit behind the wheel and watch you struggling. The community transport guys are great, they do help you. We’re collected for the day service. If there are two prams on a bus then I can’t get on, but you don’t know until you’re on the bus if there are prams on it. The driver doesn’t tell you. Help with getting on and off buses makes a big difference.”*

### Mrs E, Kelso

*“I use “shanks’ pony”. I’m fine for walking, always been a walker all my life but my problem is my vision. It’s getting off buses that I don’t like so I don’t use them. I have a white stick. It’s amazing the amount of drivers who don’t seem to know what a white stick is for. They’ll shout at you as you cross the road and I’m not just talking about young pups but older ones too. Teviot Wheels have a great service. I feel comfortable and safe on it. I have friends who take me to places if I need them. The thing I like about Teviot Wheels is they give you a hand onto the vehicle and with your bags if you have them. I really enjoy coming here, it’s the company, putting the world to rights instead of sitting at home staring at the cat.”*

### 7. Evidence of the importance of the driver

There was very strong evidence that the driver of the vehicle was important to the users of the service. The driver is usually the human face of a community transport service and he/she will have a stronger relationship with the older people than anyone else in a community transport operation. There was clear evidence that older people liked the fact that they tended to get the same drivers. This enabled them to build up a relationship with the driver and in many instances there was affection for drivers and that people trusted them. The driver was an important factor in enabling them to feel safe on their journey. Drivers with good rapport and a sense of humour made a great impression on the people they carried. Where passengers suffer from dementia they find transport much less stressful when they are with people they know.

#### Mrs C, Bradbury Centre

*“I love the bus, I get to go everywhere. He’s a very good driver; he’s very safe so I don’t feel at risk. I wouldn’t go on the bus with just anyone.”*

#### Mrs D, Aviemore

*“Billy (the driver) is great, he makes us all laugh. Never stops smiling and nothing is too difficult for him. We wouldn’t get that from the taxi.”*

#### Mrs B, Kelso

*“It’s nice to get out, meet other people and have a blether. If I have to go to the medical centre it’s nice to have the same person taking me – use the car scheme for that. You get to know the driver, though I don’t mind who takes me. I used to love going for walks but I can’t any more. I get angry and frustrated about that. Now wherever I want to go I have to be transported door to door. I can’t use the big bus and I don’t go out in the evenings. I love the company here, but I’m also happy with my own company at home – like a quiet time to do what I need to do.”*

#### Lady F, Glasgow

*“I live on my own. Getting out is more difficult at present because I had a fall. I get my shopping done for me by my brother and a friend. I like taking the minibus to go down the coast. The driver is wonderful and treats me well – he is very patient. The journey is comfortable and safe. I like meeting other people on the bus. The trips away are great – don’t go on holiday.”*

#### Lady D, Glasgow

*“I’m 91 and take care of my sister Irene, who is in her late 80s. Irene has been badly handicapped since birth but we live together at home. Billy the community transport driver takes us out now and again to the coast – Ayr or Largs. He also takes us on Tuesday to the care club in Pollock every Tuesday for bingo and socialising – picks us up at 6.15 and home at 9.15. That’s the only day in the week when we now get out in the evening. I used to drive until four years ago when I took ill and had to stop driving.”*

*“We use taxis as well as the community transport. Transport is crucial otherwise we’d be stuck at home all the time. We never use buses. Buses could never manage with Irene, even when she was a lot younger. Billy is an angel. When we go on trips, he takes Irene off my hands completely. Billy will push Irene all day in her wheelchair and leave me to potter about the town, which is great.”*

Lady A, Grangemouth

*“The drivers and people at Dial a Journey are all very nice and helpful. We play dominos and bingo on Tuesday and have our lunch. This is a big part of my week. The drivers are fantastic – you can ask them to do anything. They can’t do enough for you.”*

### 8. Evidence of outcomes for volunteers

Though the impact of community transport on the lives of users was the prime purpose of this research there was also evidence that volunteers derive significant benefits from being involved in community transport. Often the volunteers are older people themselves but benefit from being active, feeling useful in their communities and meeting others. They like to build new routines into their lives and derive satisfaction from giving of their time.

Volunteer A, Rothiemurchus

*“I get the community transport bus to come here to volunteer. I help serve lunches and assist on the bus. It has made such a difference as I feel useful again. Some of the people here wouldn’t get out of their beds if it wasn’t for the club; some have to be persuaded to come but when they do they really enjoy it and keep coming back.”*

*“The people come in from all over the town; some have made new friends, others have re-established friendships with people they haven’t seen for years. We can have up to 40 people having lunch here, especially on a Thursday because the people who go to Room 13 (an arts and crafts project) who have Learning Disabilities come here with their carers. They have their own bus.”*

*“We are thinking about taking the bowls equipment out from under the stage some of the days we are here. We used to do it and everyone enjoys having a game.”*

Volunteer B, Rothiemurchus

*“I like volunteering because it keeps me active and I meet new people.”*

### 9. Evidence that people are more likely to be physically active

Older people are more likely to be physically active as a result of using community transport. It is often the only means they have to get to a range of activities such as shopping, trips away and social activities. Having transport as a means of getting to places gives people purpose to their day. It also helps to build activities into their weekly routine which contributes to both their physical and mental health.

#### Mrs D, Lochaber

*“Well, I come here on the bus and I go on the shopping trip. I have Parkinson’s and getting out keeps me active. It also gives my husband some breathing space because he doesn’t come!”*

*“I do lots of things because the bus is there. We go to the café and have a cuppa and a blether and do a wee bit of shopping then chat all the way back on the bus. It’s great.”*

#### Lady E, Aviemore

*“The bus is my incentive to go with the Walking Group; I wouldn’t go and walk on my own. Everything W2T do is friendly and it really helps when you are alone to know that there are things to do and new people to meet.”*

#### Mr A, Kelso

*“I come here twice a week. I really enjoy it. It’s great to meet the people here but I also meet people in other circles too. Teviot Wheels come and get me whenever I need them. That’s a great service. I can drive, pretty mobile, but only around the town – don’t travel too far, it’s too busy. My wife died and my sister is nearby. I like to get out as much as I can.”*

### 10. Evidence that people are less likely to feel socially isolated

There was very strong evidence that one of the main benefits of community transport to older people is the opportunity to get out and about and to meet other people. For many the social aspect of community transport is the most important factor. This includes meeting people on the vehicles, travelling together with other people in a similar situation to the same destination, taking part with others in activities which they enjoy, and chatting with others. Bonds are formed with new people and acquaintanceships are renewed as a consequence of community transport and it is quite clear that the community transport trip is a significant event and a highlight of the week for many older people.

#### Lady C, Aviemore

*“I could use the public bus to get here you know but I couldn’t use it to get back because it goes off to take the schoolchildren.”*

*“I use the bus (W2T) to get to the music group which is once a month. Yes the bus is good, it gets me out of the house, not that I can’t walk you know but I get to go off to*

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*new places for us to go on walks. It's great to do that; wouldn't do it unless we had the bus to take us to new places."*

### Lady C, Grangemouth

*"The Dial a Journey bus is my lifeline. It's the only means I have of getting out. I use it three times a week. Don't get out much. This is one of the highlights of my week. I wouldn't get here without DAJ. I look forward to getting the bus to come down here – the rest of the time I'm stuck in the house. I'm quite happy on my own in the house most of the time but just a wee jaunt out now and again is great."*

### Mrs D, Kelso

*"I come here for the company. It's one of the main events of my week and I use Teviot Wheels to get here. I've got this tremor but otherwise I manage fine. I live in amenity housing but try to get out of the house every day, even if it's just to get a loaf or a paper. Everyone here is so nice – they'll do anything for you. I'm fit enough to use the bus. I can actually carry my bags but a side effect of my tremors is that I have difficulty with holding delicate things like a cup of tea. I get fed well here. This does me for the day and I've even got a little bit to take home which I'll have for lunch tomorrow. It's really handy being taken from my doorstep and then back to my doorstep later in the afternoon. "*

### Mr A, Bradbury Centre

*"I'm in my 90s; I can walk but I must have the community bus. I used to have a car and I drove along here and parked it but they took my licence away and I don't have a car anymore. The bus is good because I meet other people.*

*"When I am at home I put the TV on in the morning and listen to the news but I don't watch it the rest of the day, I leave it on because it's company, otherwise I would have to talk to myself!*

*"What I want to know is why there is no public transport to take people where they need to go, like the hospital. If I get an appointment for Golspie I have to go to Lairg then change buses. It's a lot longer that way. Because there is no proper bus service I asked for an ambulance to take me to Raigmore (Inverness); it didn't turn up on time, they got lost, they were 3 hours late. When I phoned to tell the person I had booked with she said I would have to wait a fortnight then that was cancelled too. They have no respect for patients.*

*"I like the Bradbury bus that goes to Alness on a Tuesday. I'm going tomorrow. I don't really go for shopping, I just like the ride on the bus and the scenery. When I get there, I go in to the supermarket café and I have a big breakfast. I've already had my breakfast at home in the morning but it doesn't matter. I go round the shop for a look; last week I only bought a bar of soap, ha ha ha."*

### Mrs C, Kelso

*I come here every Tuesday, and I go to Gowanlea on Wednesday. My husband died before Christmas. I've been very depressed since then so I go to more places during the week mainly to meet other people. I use the car scheme to get about. I can't walk at all. The car scheme is great. For me it's the only way I get out. It's very much my*

*lifeline. I wouldn't get out at all without it. Though I can't walk much I do like to get out and especially to meet other people. This is my main meal of the day when I come here but it's not really about the meal, it's catching up with everyone – I really need to do that. I don't like being on my own all the time. It's been difficult since my husband passed away. I used to come here anyway so I know everyone."*

Lady A, Aviemore

*"I've been using W2T for a while now, it gets me out of the house. My husband has dementia and it gives me a break. I get to meet other people and it's a sort of respite because my husband is always anxious. Don't know what I'd do without W2T - it gets me out and makes me feel happier and connected to other people who I can talk to."*

### 11. Evidence that community transport gives people independence

Most of the older people CTA spoke to live on their own in their own homes. Though they may have neighbours and family nearby who can help them with transport, many did not like to be too dependent on others and particularly like the independence which community transport gives them. They like to plan and organise the transport themselves and not be beholden to others.

Mrs F, Kelso

*"I come with the Teviot Wheels bus twice a week. I used to drive but had to give up. I'm 90 now. I'm lucky I've got family close to me so my daughter takes me out now and again but I like the independence which Teviot Wheels gives me and it's an option if I need to get some place."*

Lady B, Grangemouth

*"I use the volunteer car scheme. Since my husband died I've been using Dial a Journey on Tuesdays and Thursdays. If I didn't have Dial a Journey then I wouldn't get to the centre as using the bus would be much more difficult. DAJ is the easiest way for me for getting about as they pick me up from the door and take me home again – the service is great and I really appreciate it. I can't depend on family as they're working and have their own things to do."*

Mrs A, Bonar Bridge

*"I use the community bus all the time as I live on my own and it's the only way I can do my shopping. I could do it online but it's not the same and I wouldn't get out to meet people. The bus lets me live independently."*

*"On a Tuesday we all go on the shopping trip to Alness, we are a little gang."*

*"When we get to Alness we all go to the café and have a meal. It's great to get out and do that and have a laugh. Once we are finished, the driver comes and takes X round the shop in her wheelchair. It's great that he does that, otherwise she would never see a shop or get to choose new things."*

*"On other days I come here for lunch but the main thing is getting out and meeting others. We have a great time. I would be so lonely if I didn't get out."*

### Mrs B, Aviemore

*“I used to walk up and down but I can’t manage the brae now. Sometimes he (the driver) takes me to the shop for a few things; it’s great because I don’t have to worry about carrying the shopping, he helps me.*

*“I’m from Aberdeen and I’ve lived all over Scotland but I love it here. If I didn’t have the bus to take me places I would be lost. I have family but they work during the day and I don’t like imposing on them too much. I try only to ask them to take me on a big shopping trip every 3 weeks. I like to be independent, they don’t need to know everything I do, do they?” She winks.*

## CONCLUSION

This paper shows extracts from a selection of the conversations which CTA held with over 100 older people. Throughout the conversations people made it clear that transport is central to their ability to live independent lives. It is evident that getting out and about, meeting other people and access to services such as shops and NHS facilities – things which younger and able bodied people take for granted – become more important factors in people’s lives as they become older, grow more frail and find their abilities diminishing. Despite the inevitable decline in people’s physical condition older people are often determined to remain active and mix with others but usually need some assistance.

## Recommendations

Though there have been gradual improvements in the accessibility of public transport over the years, many people with mobility problems still need transport options which are a better fit for their needs. Community transport operators appear to meet these needs arguably better than any other provider as services are person-centred, they usually take people from the door of their homes to the doors of the places they need to go and home again and if assistance is required then this is provided. Public transport systems will always struggle to provide this kind of service and so more resource should be directed towards developing the community transport model.

Commissioners of older people’s services need to factor transport into their planning as many services simply cannot function if appropriate transport is not available.