

Transport and access to services

Headlines

Traffic is increasing. Traffic flows in Huddersfield rose by more than 8% between 1999 and 2009. People remain very reliant on their car – nearly 1 in 3 journeys are by private car, and while rail use is increasing, bus use is decreasing.

This over reliance on the car led to significant concerns about air quality in two areas in Kirklees. Over-reliance on motorised transport significantly contributes to physical inactivity.

Lack of affordable and appropriate transport is a barrier to education and work – nearly half of young people have difficulty with the cost of transport to access education and 2 in 5 job seekers say lack of transport is a barrier to getting a job.

People without a car find it more difficult to access healthcare and social, cultural and sporting activities. Children living in more deprived communities are much more likely to be casualties of a road accident.

Why is this issue important?

The transport system allows goods to be transported around the country and enables people to get to work, school and the shops, access healthcare and other facilities, as well as visit friends and family. An effective and efficient transport system is essential to the economic prosperity of the area and to the everyday lives of the people who use it. This includes bus and rail journeys, cycling, walking and car travel.

Impact on health

People's transport choices have a significant impact on the environment, accidents and levels of physical activity and their own health in a variety of ways (see physical activity section)^{1 (p81)}.

In addition to improving active travel and the quality and access to cycling and pedestrian routes, better public transport significantly changes in travel patterns and improving health¹. Impact on local health is being overwhelmed by the effects of today's 'obesogenic' environment, with its abundance of energy dense food and increasingly sedentary lifestyles – only 1 in 4 (28%) of adults did the recommended levels of moderate activity³. Over reliance on motorised transport significantly contributes to physical inactivity⁴.

The impact of transport on health inequalities is most significant when looking at deaths from road traffic injuries^{1(p81)}.

The dominance of outward commuting and increasing traffic

Traffic flows across the Huddersfield cordon have increased by 8.2% (24 hour two ways) between 1999 and 2009. Peak traffic flows have increased by 2.4% in the morning peak hour (two way) and by 3.3% (afternoon peak hour two way) over the same period. Congestion on key routes including the A62 and A629, has not risen as expected².

Addressing the continued reliance on the private car particularly for short journeys

Nationally, there are six million more vehicles on our roads now than in 1997 and more two car households than no car households. Traffic will keep rising, much of it on roads and motorways that are currently operating at or near full capacity during busy periods.

Of vehicles entering Huddersfield town centre 59% were cars. In 2009 rail usage around Huddersfield had grown in the last 10 years. In contrast bus use continued to fall across West Yorkshire².

Air quality is also a key impact of transport. Levels of key transport related pollutants which impact on health led to the identification of two air quality management areas in Kirklees, one at the Cooper Bridge area of the A62 the other at Scout Hill on the A644³.

People, especially children and young people living in deprived communities, are more likely to be pedestrians or cyclists and more likely to be involved in traffic accidents⁶.

Access to transport

Poor transport and connectivity affects people's access to employment, healthcare, education, shopping, recreation and social networks.

In 2008, 82% of residents reached employment within 30 minutes by public transport, similar to comparable local authorities in the region. For services, 72% of residents could reach a hospital within 30 minutes by public transport⁵.

Other inequalities are caused by access to the transport system itself or to the level of service provided by the system. Transport facilities need to be accessible for key services at a reasonable cost, in a reasonable time and with reasonable ease and safety.

What significant factors are affecting this issue?

The local patterns of housing, employment, education and other services can either increase or decrease the need for people to travel, and the greater the distances involved the more likely people are to rely on motorised transport and have complicated, expensive and time consuming journeys.

Which groups are affected most by this issue?

Accidents and deprivation or ethnicity

Children from the lowest social classes are five times more likely to die in road accidents than those from the highest social class. More than 1 in 4 of child pedestrian casualties happen in the 10% most deprived wards⁶.

Road deaths, especially among pedestrians and cyclists, are particularly high among children of parents classified as never having worked or as long term unemployed¹.

Particular groups face further inequalities. Black ethnic minority groups in London were 1.3 times more likely to be injured as pedestrians and car occupants on the city's roads than those in white ethnic groups¹.

Access to work

Nationally, 2 in 5 job seekers said lack of transport was a barrier to getting a job. One in 4 said that the cost of transport is a problem and 1 in 4 young people had not applied for a particular job because of transport problems⁶.

Access to learning

Those aged 16-18 years spend around £400 per year on education related transport and nearly half of them have trouble with the cost. Of all 16-24 year olds, 6% turn down training or further education opportunities because of problems with transport⁶.

Access to healthcare

One in 3 (31%) people without a car have difficulties travelling to their local hospital compared to 1 in 5 (17%) who own a car³. Nationally, nearly 1.5 million people have missed, turned down or chosen not to seek medical help in a year because of transport problems⁶.

Access to social, cultural and sporting activities

One in 5 (18%) people without a car find seeing friends and family difficult because of transport problems, compared with 1 in 12 (8%) of car owners. People without cars are also twice as likely to find it difficult to get to leisure centres and libraries⁶.

Protecting motorcyclists

Motorcyclists are 1 in 5 of road deaths but just 1% of traffic⁶.

Where is this causing greatest concern?

An inefficient transport network affects various places across Kirklees. However, in the long term it is those areas where there is most pressure for new homes and jobs or areas that require regeneration which need most attention in terms of improved transport infrastructure namely:

- Dewsbury and Batley.
- South Dewsbury (urban eco settlement).

In addition, there will be a need to seek investment in and around Huddersfield town centre and some of the key corridors which link up to key areas of employment such as the A62, A644 and A638/A652.

Views of local people

Residents from all localities felt traffic issues were very important, i.e. parking, speeding traffic, unreliable buses, with the key issue being too many cars and not enough road space.

What could commissioners and service planners consider?

- Accessibility planning for particular groups including children, young people, parents and older people is essential to address specific transport barriers.
- Better and more widely distributed information regarding public transport and other non-car transport modes can widen and improve people's perceptions and awareness of travel options, through travel advice, personalised travel planning and better travel information.
- More education and publicity campaigns around people's travel behaviour to help individuals understand the impact of their choices on themselves and others.
- Develop more travel training schemes, for example to help people with a disability travel independently on public transport.

References

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