

Dumfries & Galloway “Road to Health”¹

Summary report on public consultation

1 Executive Summary

For older people, travel to and from hospital or clinic appointments is often difficult, time consuming and stressful.

- It is almost impossible to attend these appointments using public transport outside the main centres in Dumfries and Galloway.
- Older people are forced to rely on their own transport or the goodwill of others.
- Journeys arranged by NHS patient transport are often stressful, at inconvenient times or arranged in an inflexible manner.
- It can take a whole day to attend a half hour appointment.
- More than a third of appointments before 10am involve more than one hour's travel.
- Families and carers are often excluded from travel arranged by NHS patient transport. Escorts were excluded from over a fifth of such journeys.
- Anecdotal evidence exists of gaps in organisation and coordination of NHS patient transport.

Transport is vital for the wellbeing of older people.

- Over a third of our sample are unable to do their own shopping
- Two thirds of those that can do their own shopping live more than a mile from shops and nearly 10% live more than 10 miles from shops.
- Over 40% of older people have difficulty in getting out and nearly half of these find it almost impossible to get out.
- A quarter of older people don't get out every month.

Extrapolating these figures across the whole of Dumfries and Galloway, where there are approximately 45,000 people over the age of 60, implies:

- **15,000 older people are unable to do their own shopping,**
- **3,000 older people live more than 10 miles from shops,**
- **18,000 older people have difficulty getting out and,**
- **more than 10,000 older people get out less frequently than once per month.**

¹ In March 2011, a small team of volunteers got together under the auspices of the Scottish Parliament's Community Partnerships Project to campaign to improve the provision of rural transport in Dumfries and Galloway for older people and their carers and so maintain and improve their health and well being. We are seeking to influence the Scottish Government and Local Authorities by making them aware of the transport issues faced by older people and by presenting compelling arguments for changing practices in Dumfries and Galloway.

2 Public Consultation

As part of our project, a questionnaire was compiled and distributed through associated organisations: The Food Train, Day Centre Network, Seniors Forum, Building Healthy Communities, other stakeholders and at public meetings.

The Bridge Dumfries and Galloway, undertook the data input and analysis.

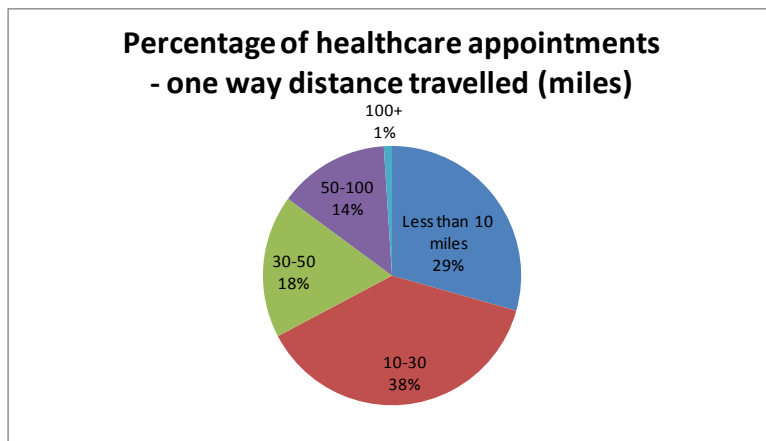
Approximately 1000 questionnaires were distributed and 324 were returned.

The returns were spread more or less evenly across the region's post codes.

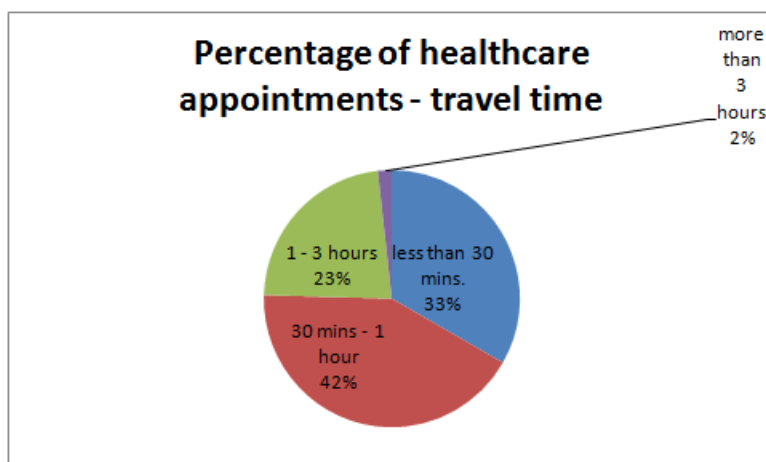
The following sections contain extracts from a more detailed report "A Road to Health" which has been produced by the Community Partnerships Project volunteers.

2.1 Travel related to Healthcare

- 91% of our respondents reported having health care appointments of whom 70% found their own way while 30% used arranged transport.
- 69% travel more than 10 miles, with 14% travelling between 50 and 100 miles to take up the appointment.



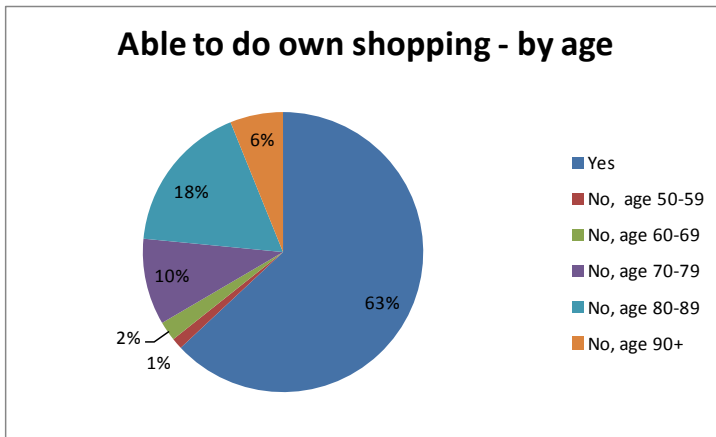
- 16% of people reported appointments before 10.00am of whom a third had a 1-3 hour journey.



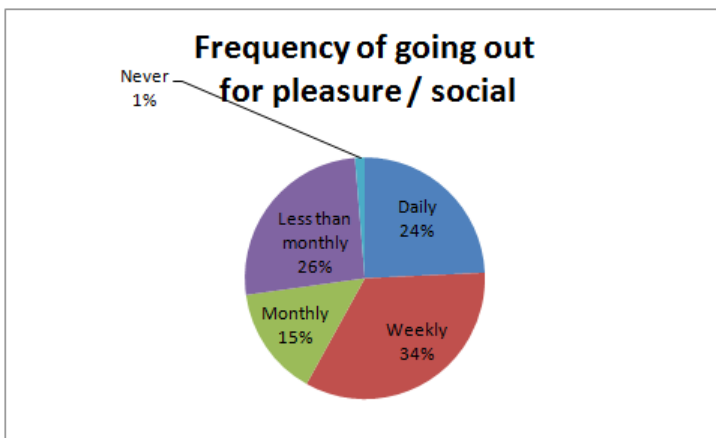
- 29% reported found the travel to and from their medical appointment stressful or very stressful.

2.2 Travel related to Wellbeing

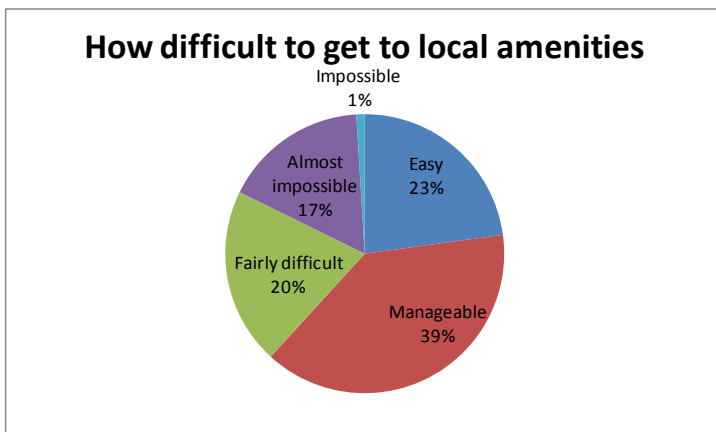
36% of respondents reported they were unable to do their own shopping. The bulk of whom (41%) relied on a friend or relative.



Of the people who did their own shopping, 33% had to travel more than 5 miles to a shop. 14% of our respondents reported only being able to get out monthly with 24% stating that they get out less frequently.



36% of our respondents found it difficult or almost impossible to get to local amenities.



A telling comment was "... *I have not been able to get out for 7 years...*"

3 Case Studies

As part of the project, the survey has produced some case studies. A few of these are set out below.

3.1 Case Study 1

93 year old from Annan, attending Dumfries & Galloway Royal Infirmary (DGRI) for a hip replacement, was instructed to report to the hospital on a Sunday. This lady, who lives on her own, has no car and so requested patient transport. She was advised that although she was entitled to this they did not operate on Sundays so she would have to make her own arrangements. This she did by hiring a taxi.

3.2 Case Study

82 year old from Kirkconnel had an appointment in DGRI, a round trip of some 60 miles. However he was taken via Stranraer which meant a journey to hospital of around 141 miles. He was taken back to Kirkconnel by the direct route. This meant a total journey of 171miles instead of 60. It has been reported that it is not uncommon for patients from Kirkconnel, after attending an appointment in Dumfries, to be taken home via Moffat.

3.3 Case Study 3

A patient from Garlieston, who normally had his condition treated at Belfast, was on one particular occasion unable to be treated there. He was taken to Aberdeen by a volunteer driver for treatment but had to be brought back the same day because there was no provision to pay for the volunteer driver's overnight accommodation.

3.4 Case Study 4

A number of respondents added comments to their questionnaires and one wrote us a letter. We reproduce (with permission) the text of the main part of the letter below.

"...I'm sure you are already hearing about transport problems. It's an absolute health destroying cruelty no accessible affordable buses for people who have wheelchairs and need a bit of help out and about. The horror of being shut in four walls year after year is totally inhumane plus considering mind over matter is a universal law. The Doctors work so hard to keep people healthy only to be pulled down by the stress of facing enclosure for life, when we haven't family members living near (folks have to leave Galloway for work). A few years ago I attended a day centre, it wasn't uplifting though I understand people's stressful conversations; country folks are born to being outdoors, looking and learning, seeing the four seasons, sharing knowledge and arriving home hoping to find a book about things seen and heard. Health is wealth, we can't dwell on aches and pains all the time and sit with negative thoughts. No wonder hospitals, Chemists and Doctors are run off their feet. We should be doing things we're able to do and treated as equal citizens, surely. I have a taxi card but if your family live a long way away it's not affordable. Thank you for listening..."

4 Conclusion

The study has highlighted the lack of coordination and provision of transport for older people in remote and rural areas of Dumfries and Galloway. We call upon the various bodies who control and influence this topic to work together to address these clear failings. Good practices are evident elsewhere in Scotland and these should be adopted nationally.