



Understanding the travel aspirations, needs and behaviour of young adults

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Publication details

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Executive Summary

Chapter 1: Introduction

- This report presents findings from a qualitative study conducted for the Department for Transport by NatCen. The objectives were to explore young people's transport decision-making, the factors influencing their views and attitudes towards transport, the role of transport in key transitions in their lives, the significance of transport to their aspirations and future plans, and suggestions for how to meet their needs better.
- The study involved 12 focus groups and 36 in-depth interviews among people aged 16-25. Qualitative research was used to explore young people's perspectives in depth, to understand how transport fits into their changing lives, and to generate suggestions for improvements.
- Participants in the focus groups were selected through a household screening process; those who took part in interviews were selected from participants in the National Travel Survey. Full details of the recruitment process are available in the appendix, page 74. The samples were managed to ensure diversity in age, sex, geographic area, social grade, economic activity, living circumstances, educational attainment, expenditure on travel, use of public transport, and access to cars.

Chapter 2: Young people's travel and mobility

- Data from the National Travel Survey shows that young people aged 16- 25 make fewer trips overall than older age groups. Young people make fewer trips than people aged 26- 54 for all purposes apart from trips to education, trips to see friends at private homes or elsewhere, and for sports or entertainment. The majority of their journeys are made by driving a car, followed by walking and then being a car passenger.
- The qualitative data highlights five groups: those who mainly use cars, with limited use of other modes; those who mainly use cars but with more use of other modes; those who mainly use a limited range of public transport; those who use more diverse public transport; and those who mainly walk.
- There are important differences among young people in how much autonomy they have regarding when, where and how they travel. Some enjoy a great deal of autonomy, either as drivers or as active users of good public transport. Others are reliant on lifts from family and friends, including for regular and essential journeys, or on limited public transport. Some young people have other people who are dependent on them, particularly other family members if they are the only driver in the household.
- Young people did not generally have a clear sense of how much they spent on transport, but some were particularly financially constrained in their travel.
- There were also differences between young people in the distance and range of journeys they did, or aspired to do. This was shaped by personal circumstances and responsibilities, social and family relationships, daily activities and confidence. However, the relationship between the degree of mobility and satisfaction with mobility is not linear. More mobile people could be both more and less satisfied with their travel, and similarly among less mobile people there were both more and less satisfied groups.

Chapter 3: Views of public and private transport

- Views about public transport were influenced by what young people saw as the inherent characteristics of different modes, the quality of local transport provision, feelings about contact with officials and feelings about travelling with other members of the public. Safety was also a key factor in young people's views about public transport, particularly the fear of harassment or attack.
- Young people's underlying views about cars varied from those who were 'enthusiasts' to those who were 'sceptics'. Individuals along all points of this spectrum identified benefits and disadvantages of cars, and their orientation was not determined by their attitude to public transport, the extent of their local public transport provision, or by their gender. There were enthusiasts who were active users of public transport and sceptics who used cars and limited public transport.
- The main benefits and attractions associated with cars were practical advantages, independence, the ability to help others and the fact that driving was a leisure activity in itself. Fewer disadvantages were identified, but those that were centred around concerns over cost and safety.
- The advantages associated with bicycles were related to health and fitness benefits; personal space and freedom; reducing large scale environmental impacts of transport use and harmful effect of emissions at a local level through improved air quality. Negative concerns were expressed over safety and exposure to the weather.
- In forming their views of transport, young people were affected by their direct experience, the views and experiences of others, media reports, comparisons of one mode with another, expectations regarding service levels, the behaviour of significant others and personal and social identity.

- Young people's recommendations regarding transport centred around improving the quality and extent of local provision, enforcing rules regarding payment of fares, road tax and insurance, and improving access for diverse groups.

Chapter 4: Transport decision-making

- The transport choices of young people reflected three sets of factors, which were: the costs and benefits associated with particular services; young people's individual circumstances (such as the purpose of the journey and what they were taking with them); and underlying preferences. Active choices about transport modes also reflected the options young people perceived to be available to them and which they perceived to be acceptable.
- Health and the environment did not seem to play a significant role in the choices young people made about transport. Where it was relevant, it reflected concerns about the local, rather than global environment. The impact of a particular mode on the environment seemed less important than other concerns, such as personal convenience. Environmental protection was also seen as a collective rather than an individual responsibility, or as involving too great a lifestyle change to act upon. Health was predominantly seen as belonging to a different sphere of activity and therefore was not taken into account in making choices about transport, even in the case of some individuals who were health-conscious.
- The mode young people used for a regular journey could vary due to factors such as mood and the amount of time and money an individual had. In some cases temporary variations led individuals to change the mode they normally used for a particular journey.
- The process by which young people made decisions about transport varied from being considered and planned to being automatic or involving little conscious thought. The kind of process used reflected whether young people perceived themselves as having a range of options to choose from, how clear the benefits of a particular option were and whether the choice of destination depended in part on the means of getting there.
- Learning to drive seemed natural and automatic for some young people, but for others involved a conscious choice. Having decided to learn to drive in principle, there were a range of factors that 'pulled' or 'pushed' individuals to actually take driving lessons, as well as a range of barriers that stood in the way, particularly the cost of lessons.
- Cost was a major barrier to car ownership for young people, though some had a limited sense of the full costs associated with owning or running a car. Nevertheless, there were strong feelings about the kinds of car young people desired, and these reflected practical considerations and social and cultural ones.

Chapter 5: Transport and transitions to adulthood

- The key trigger events which affect young people's travel are moving to new education institutions, starting work or changing jobs, becoming unemployed, leaving the family home, moving house, becoming a driver and getting a car. They also experience more gradual changes in social relationships, social lives, and confidence and independence.
- These transitions could lead to people making journeys for new reasons, to new localities, and of longer distance. They could also result in people having more transport options, both cars and public transport. However, not everyone experienced these changes.
- Transitions also led to changes in people's transport needs, choices, and the criteria by which they

judged transport. Speed, reliability and cost became more important, and people who became drivers were more aware of the disparity in convenience and comfort between cars and public transport.

- Changes in travel led to further change. As people travelled more and with more variety, their independence and confidence grew further. Becoming a driver could influence identities, roles and personal status.
- Travel and transport also shaped the choices that young people made at these transitional points. How far or for how long they were willing to travel, cost, and the availability of public transport and cars could both widen and constrain choice. The groups whose choices were most constrained by transport were those living in rural areas, young parents and those who were out of work. Those whose choices were most enabled by transport were car users and users of good public transport.
- In terms of their future plans, some young people anticipated using cars more, for work, as parents, or simply because they could. Others planned to use cars less, because they anticipated moving to cities or going to university.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Implications for Policy

- The study highlights some important implications for policies aimed at encouraging the use of public transport rather than cars. The practical benefits associated with cars suggest significant improvements to public transport are required. Some of the broader benefits of cars identified by young people, such as the use of cars as a leisure activity in itself or the status of driving as a marker of adulthood, may become less important as young people move to the next stages of adulthood. Others, such as a sense of control and independence, are likely to become more entrenched as developments such as having a family add to the utility of car use.
- There are a range of factors which contributed to negative views of public transport. These suggest that improvements to public transport should be targeted at: reducing cost; increasing frequency of services; reducing overcrowding; improving reliability and predictability; improving the internal environment and transport officials' customer service skills; and addressing young people's safety concerns.
- Whilst it is likely to be harder to persuade car enthusiasts to stop using cars than those who were neutral or sceptical about cars, young people's choices are influenced by practical considerations as well as by underlying preferences for cars. This implies increasing the practical benefit of public transport use could be an effective way of encouraging people away from cars irrespective of their orientation.
- There are a number of 'trigger points' at which young people's travel changes, particularly moving to a new educational institution, into training or work, and starting to use new sports and leisure venues. Targeted information on transport options through these routes might influence young people's travel behaviour.
- This study identified challenges to increasing the prominence of environmental issues in young people's transport decisions: a lack of conviction in the value of individual action; a perception of limited realistic alternatives to the car; and a failure to translate concerns into action. This points towards reflecting the environmental cost of transport in its monetary cost in the short term, and longer term to embedding environmental concerns in the culture more generally. Similarly, health is not currently a key influence on travel behaviour and this suggests a role for both education and persuasion.
- A key policy priority is to ensure that transport facilitates access to key services. Transport is both an enabler and a barrier to young people's access to employment, education and leisure. The study

suggests that widening access to key services will require the improvement of local transport provision, especially in rural areas; reduction in costs for low income groups; decisions about the location of key services which reflect transport infrastructures; and, potentially, support for access to motorised vehicles (e.g. 'wheels to work' type schemes which lease out mopeds) in areas with few alternatives.

- The transition to adulthood has significant implications for young people's requirements of transport provision and these need to be taken into account in local and regional planning. This is particularly important as the availability of good transport can affect young people's ability to make transitions, and the success of the transitions they make.
- Previous research has shown that there is a trend of declining mobility among young people. However, this study shows that young people become more mobile through changes such as leaving home, widening social and leisure networks, travelling further to work and growing confidence. Other research suggests that some of these transitions - for example leaving home and the movement into employment - are happening later, which may help to explain decreasing mobility.
- Overall, although they have much in common with other age groups and there is much diversity among them, the study suggests that young people raise some particular issues for transport policy and are an important group in policy terms. This is perhaps particularly so since they are significant users of transport, and because this period in people's lives offers a window of opportunity in which their views and behaviours can be influenced.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a qualitative study exploring the travel needs, behaviour and aspirations of young people as they make the transition into adulthood. The study was commissioned by the Department for Transport (DfT) and is the second of three qualitative studies following up participants from the National Travel Survey with a view to providing a better understanding of the transport needs of particular groups within the population [1]. The study is intended to inform policies which reflect the Department's commitment to ensure 'transport that works for everyone', as set out in the Future of Transport 2004 White Paper (DfT, 2004).

Background to the research

Transitions to adulthood

The transition into adulthood is generally associated with a number of key changes and events. Young people may leave school and enter work or higher education, leave the parental home to move into their own independent households, become involved in sexual relationships, and become parents themselves. These changes are accompanied by developments in young people's social status. For example, they become adult consumers of goods and services, an important contemporary sign of adult status (Morrow and Richards, 1996).

However transitions to adulthood and independence may not necessarily occur at the same points as previously. As Jones (2002) notes, the period of dependent youth has been extended for many young people, because they remain in education and training for longer and delay entry into full time employment. Conversely, for other young people independence is accelerated, for example where they leave school early or become a parent at a relatively early age.

Nor will the various transitions associated with adulthood necessarily occur in parallel with each other or in a linear fashion. As Morrow and Richards (ibid) suggest 'the boundaries between childhood and different aspects of adulthood are increasingly blurred', due to a range of legal, political, financial and social factors. So young people may move into work, but still find it difficult to leave the parental home because of the cost of housing, for example. Individual young people will not all experience transitions in the same way. Young people's experiences will vary not only in relation to the choices and opportunities available to them, but also because of any specific needs that they may have.

Despite the considerable variation in how young people currently make transitions, and the reduced prominence of traditional milestones, the term 'adulthood' still means something to young people. However, the focus has shifted from age markers or events to aspects of competence (Jones, 2005). Thompson et al (2004) describe two ways in which young people conceptualise adulthood: 'individualised' understanding which is associated with the development of competencies, increased choice and autonomy; and 'relational' understanding which is associated with caring and domestic responsibilities, and social relationships.

Transitions into adulthood are accompanied by some obvious changes in travel and transport use. Learning to drive, in particular, is widely perceived as being a key rite of passage for (and by) young people, and appears to have a significant impact on how they travel. However, relatively little is known about the broader impact that transitions into adulthood have on travel.

The role of transport in transitions

In 'Making the Connections' (SEU, 2003) the Social Exclusion Unit emphasised the important role of transport in helping people of all ages to access jobs, education, health services, leisure activities and good quality food shopping.

There are a wide range of factors which can deter people from using transport to access these facilities, thus reinforcing or creating social exclusion. Research has identified a number of personal, financial and structural barriers which appear to constrain young people's travel in particular (McWhannel and Braunoltz, 2002; Stafford et al, 2004; Storey and Brannen, 2000; MVA 2003; Legard and Snape, 2002; Jones et al, 2000; SEU, 2003). The main barriers identified through this research were:

- **Cost:** this includes difficulties in meeting the cost of travel - especially amongst older teenagers and young adults who pay for travel themselves, and problems relating to the availability, consistency in eligibility criteria and recognition of concessionary passes for young people.
- **Availability, reliability and timetables:** young people in rural areas reported having to rely on irregular bus schedules, with limited or no transport late at night. For young people in urban areas, issues such as congestion, unreliability and infrequency of public transport were barriers to transport use.
- **Safety:** personal safety concerns and perceptions of risk are taken into account by young people (and particularly by young women and their parents) in their choice of transport.
- **Travel horizons:** a limited willingness to travel for longer distances or outside familiar areas can also present a barrier to young people confidently using transport to travel outside their home areas [2].

The significant role that transport can play in influencing young people's choices and decisions is evident in a range of other studies. Availability of transport can be an influential factor in young people's choice of education or training institution, the employment and leisure activities available to them and their access to key services including housing (Legard and Snape, 2000; Cartmel and Furlong, 2000; McWhannell and Brauholtz 2002; Storey & Brannen, 2000; Dibben, 2003). The choices and opportunities available to young people in rural areas are particularly constrained, with access to a car playing a critical role in opening up choices in relation to education, training, leisure and employment (Storey and Brannen, 2000; Titheridge, 2004).

There is also some evidence to suggest availability of transport can also play a role in influencing young people's transition to independence. Storey and Brannen (2000), found for example that the housing stock available to young people in rural areas was often remotely situated or badly connected, making it difficult for them to leave the parental home. Young people in rural areas who leave home sometimes continue to be reliant on a parent for transport to key services (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000).

Finally, in terms of future travel and transport, car ownership features very prominently in young people's future aspirations (DETR, 1999). However there has been relatively little other exploration of young people's future travel and transport aspirations.

The role of transport in shaping young people's choices and opportunities at key transition points is therefore diverse and depends on a range of factors including the type of area where they live and their specific needs. The impact of transport on young people's lives - particularly in rural areas - is well documented. However, a broader map of the role of transport in young people's lives is lacking. For transport policy to meet the needs of these users now and in the future, further research is required to map the full range of factors which influence young people's decision making about travel, the role of transport in their transitions and their aspirations for future travel.

Aims and objectives

The overall objective of this study was therefore to examine travel in the lives of 16-25 year olds, their use of public and private transport, and the role transport plays in their lives during this period.

The key objectives were to explore:

- young people's decision-making with regard to transport
- factors influencing young people's views and attitudes towards transport
- the role of transport in key transitions in young people's lives
- the significance of transport to the aspirations and future plans of young people
- suggestions for how to meet the transport needs of young people

A distinction is drawn throughout the report between travel (the journeys that young people make) and transport (the modes by which they travel and the options available to them).

Methodology

The study was conducted using two qualitative approaches: focus groups and in- depth interviews. A combination of methods was used because it was felt that each would add different things to the data collection. The context provided by focus groups allows participants to present their own views and experiences, but allows them to hear, and reflect on, other people's experiences. Individual responses become more refined in the course of discussion, and new ideas are generated. It was anticipated that the groups would be particularly helpful in exploring young people's views and experiences of using transport, and also generating solutions for meeting the transport needs of this age group. In individual depth interviews, the exploratory and responsive nature of qualitative research allows the individual circumstances and experiences of participants to be explored in depth. This allowed exploration of individual transport behaviours and different roles of transport in individual transitions.

The purpose of qualitative research is to map the range of phenomena and processes (for example, attitudes, circumstances, decision-making processes etc.) found amongst the sample of participants and to provide an understanding of how different factors influence attitudes, choices and behaviours. Given rigorous purposive sampling, the mapping of phenomena and processes and the identification of factors underpinning choices and behaviours can be generalised to the wider population of young people. The study cannot provide findings concerning numerical prevalence. Qualitative research instead provides rich descriptive data about behaviours, views or outcomes, shows the circumstances under which they arise, and highlights the factors that influence them.

Sampling and recruitment

A total of twelve focus groups with young people aged 16 to 25 were undertaken as the first stage of this research. There were approximately 8 people per group. These groups were followed by 36 in-depth interviews with young people aged between 16 and 25.

In both elements, purposive sampling was used to ensure diversity of coverage across certain key variables. Rigorous purposive sampling is important in order to capture and explore the full range of phenomena and processes and to explore the factors underpinning attitudes, choices, behaviours and so on.

Focus group sampling and recruitment

The focus groups were undertaken in three types of geographical areas: inner city areas, urban areas, and rural areas [3]. The participants for these groups were approached at their homes by an external recruitment and fieldwork agency on behalf of NatCen. All participants were given a confirmation letter and a leaflet which explained the research and offered them a contact number should they want further information before attending the group.

Four groups were undertaken in each type of geographical area. Each group was composed of young people of the same broad age group and social grade. These are outlined in Table 1.1, below.

Table 1.1 Focus group composition per area

	Age range	Parental/ individual social grade	Gender
Group 1	16-18	ABC1	Male and female
Group 2	16-18	C2DE	Male and female
Group 3	19-25	ABC1	Male and female
Group 4	19-25	C2DE	Male and female

In agreement with the Department, quotas were set to prescribe the distribution of certain primary criteria across the sample:

Social grade: Given that many of the young people included in this sample were unlikely to be in paid employment, it would not have been appropriate to sample for income. It would be difficult to sample for parental income as the young people might not know parents' or guardians' incomes and it would not necessarily be appropriate to ask them this question. Instead young people were asked about their own occupation (if relevant) and the occupations of their parents or guardians. This was used to assign them to a social grade using the MRS Occupational Groupings [4], based on whichever was higher: their own or their parental social grade.

Living circumstances: Quotas were set for three types of living circumstances to ensure that inclusion of young people at different life stages: living in the parental home or with other family members; living alone or with friends; and living with partner and/or dependent children.

Economic activity: Quotas were set to ensure the sample included young people in a range of daytime activities including work, education or training, unemployment or other activities (including caring responsibilities).

Transport expenditure: Quotas were set across five levels of weekly transport expenditure (under £10; £10-20; £20-30; £30-40 and £40+) [5].

Regularity of public transport use: Quotas were set in relation to three different levels of transport use: using public transport two or more times a week; less than twice a week but more than twice a month; and rarely or never.

Driving status and access to a car: There were three groups here: young people who could drive and had current access to a car; young people with access to lifts; and those with no access to a car.

Ethnicity was also monitored: quotas were set so that in the inner city and urban locations there were at least two members of the largest black and minority ethnic sub-group in the local area [6].

Table 1.2 Profile of the focus group sample achieved

	16-18	19-25	Total
Gender			
Male	25	29	54
Female	22	22	44
Activity			
In work (including work-based learning)	9	32	41
In education or training	30	12	42
Other	8	8	16
Living Circumstances			
Lives in parental home/ with other family members	42	33	75
Lives alone or with friends	3	8	11
Lives alone with partner and/or own dependent children	1	10	11
Driving			
Current car driver with access	5	15	20
Not a driver but access to car	28	15	43
Not a driver and no access	14	20	34
Social grade			
ABC1	24	27	51
C2DE	23	24	47
Regularity of public transport use			
Two or more times a week	32	26	58
Less than twice a week but more than twice a month	6	17	23
Rarely or never	6	11	17
Transport expenditure			
Under Â£10	16	15	30
Â£10-20	20	16	36
Â£20-30	7	10	17
Â£30-Â£40	3	4	7

Â£40+	2	6	6
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Table 1.3 Ethnicity profile of focus group sample

Monitoring Criteria	Achieved
Ethnicity (from screening)	
White	79
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	7
Black African	1
Black Caribbean	2
Other Black Background	4
Other Mixed Background	1

In-depth interview sampling and recruitment

The participants for the in-depth interviews were drawn from people who had taken part in the 2006 National Travel Survey [7], and who had given their consent to be re-contacted about participating in future research. Again, interviews were undertaken across inner city, urban and rural areas of England in a range of locations with the aim of capturing diversity in terms of geographical area and local transport provision [8].

A letter and an information leaflet [9] were sent to a sample of participants in the 2006 National Travel Survey who fell into the 16 to 25 age range. These explained the nature and purpose of the study and gave recipients contact details for the research team in case they had any questions or wanted further information on the study. Those who met the sampling criteria were telephoned and asked if they would be interested in being interviewed as part of the study. If they were, a small number of screening questions were also asked to supplement the data available in their NTS records. A date and time was then agreed for the interview to take place, and a confirmation letter sent with these details and a contact name and telephone number should they have any queries prior to the interview.

The quotas set were:

Age: Respondents were recruited in three age groups: 16-18; 19-21; and 22-25.

Gender: Across each of the age groups, an equal balance of male and female respondents was sought.

Economic activity: As with the focus groups, quotas were set to ensure the sample included young people in a range of daytime activities including education or training, work or other activities (including caring responsibilities or unemployment).

Educational attainment: Quotas were set to ensure that the sample included young people with four different levels of NVQ equivalent educational attainment: NVQ level 1 or below; NVQ level 2; NVQ level 3; NVQ level 4 or above [10].

Living circumstances: As with the focus groups, quotas were set to ensure the inclusion of young people living in the family home; living alone or with friends; and living with partner and/or dependent children.

Driving status and access to a car: As with the focus groups, quotas were set for the number of young people who could drive and had current access to a car, young people with access to lifts and those with no access to a car.

Social grade: Using individuals' or parents' occupations as with the focus groups, quotas were set for three social grade ranges: A and B; C1 and C2; D and E.

Transport expenditure: Quotas were set for four levels of weekly expenditure on transport: under £10; £10-20; £20-30; and £30 or above.

The sample was also balanced so that there was a spread of these variables across the different types of geographical area being covered.

In addition to these primary sampling criteria, it was also agreed that the research team would monitor the composition of the sample in relation to ethnicity. Table 1.4 below illustrates the composition of the achieved sample in relation to the primary sampling criteria. Table 1.5 outlines the different ethnic groups included in the final sample.

Table 1.4 Profile of the interview sample achieved

	16-18	19-21	22-25	Total
Gender				
Male	6	6	7	19
Female	6	5	6	17
Activity				
In work (including work-based learning)	2	4	8	14
In education or training	9	4	5	18
Other	1	2	1	4

Educational attainment				
Highest qualification - NVQ L1 or below	1	4	3	8
Highest qualification - NVQ L2	8	3	2	13
Highest qualification - NVQ L3	3	5	0	8
Highest qualification - NVQ L4	0	0	7	7
Living Circumstances				
Lives in parental home/ with other family members	13	7	2	22
Lives alone or with friends	0	3	4	7
Lives alone with partner and/or own dependent children	0	0	7	7
Driving				
Current car driver with access	2	6	10	18
Not a driver but access to car	8	3	2	13
Not a driver and no access	1	3	1	5
Social grade				
A, B	4	4	3	11
C1, C2	6	5	6	17
D, E	2	3	3	8
Transport expenditure				
Under Â£10	6	4	2	12
Â£10-20	4	6	4	14
Â£20-30	1	2	3	6
Â£30+	0	1	3	4

Table 1.5 Ethnicity profile of interview sample

Monitoring Criteria	Achieved
Ethnicity (from screening):	
White	31
Black Caribbean	2
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	1
Other (British Asian)	1

Fieldwork and analysis

Focus group fieldwork

The focus groups for this study were undertaken in July 2006. The groups generally lasted about an hour and a half, and were carried out in public locations (hotels or community centres) that would be easily accessible for the young people participating in them. Before the groups began, the group moderator explained the aims of the study, how the findings were reported, and how anonymity and confidentiality would be protected. Ground rules were also discussed for participation in the group, such as listening to each other and not talking over each other. Participants were given a £30 incentive payment before the start of the group to thank them for attending.

The groups were carried out using a topic guide developed in consultation with the Department [11]. The topic guide helped to ensure systematic coverage of key areas across interviews, but was used flexibly in order to allow issues of relevance raised in different groups. Local area maps were also used in the early stages of the group to help individual participants to think about the types of destinations they tended to travel to, and how they got there, and to generate discussion about local travel and transport between group participants. The discussions were digitally recorded.

In-depth interview fieldwork

The interviews for the study were carried out between September and December 2006. The interviews generally lasted between an hour and an hour and a half and were carried out at the respondent's home. As in the groups, the researcher explained to the participant how the findings of the study would be reported and how anonymity and confidentiality would be protected, before commencing the interview. The voluntary nature of the research was also emphasised, and the interview only began once the participant had indicated that they were happy to proceed. Participants were given a £20 payment as thanks for taking part in the study.

As with the focus groups, the interviews were carried out using a topic guide [12] and were all digitally recorded.

Focus group and in-depth interview analysis

The recordings from both the focus groups and the in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using 'Framework', a method developed by NatCen. It involves the systematic analysis of verbatim interview data within a thematic matrix. The key topics and issues emerging from the fieldwork were identified through familiarisation with transcripts as well as reference to the original objectives and the topic guides. A series of thematic charts were then drawn up, with a column for each thematic topic and rows for each case or group. The focus groups were charted using whole group analysis, which treats the data produced by the group as a whole rather than looking at individual contributions. Each in-depth interview was charted on an individual basis. This then allowed for the detailed analysis of the charted data, exploring the range of views and experiences in different themes and allowing comparison across cases or groups and sets of cases or groups.

Overview of the report

- **Chapter 2** describes young people's travel patterns and mobility. It explores the role of transport in young people's lives, its importance in supporting their social inclusion and quality of life. This chapter combines qualitative data collected as part of this study with NTS data.
- **Chapter 3** explores young people's views about transport and the influences on their views, including experience, and discusses their suggestions for how transport systems could be improved.
- **Chapter 4** considers young people's transport decision-making processes, and decisions about learning to drive and car ownership. It explores young people's perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of car ownership, their perceptions of the cost of car ownership and the factors influencing their choice of car.
- **Chapter 5** explores how young people's travel changes as they grow older, the key triggers and influences underlying these changes and the role that transport plays in shaping young people's life choices. It also considers young people's travel aspirations at the time of the study and for the future.
- **Chapter 6** draws out the policy implications of the findings.

Throughout the report, verbatim quotes are used from the interviews and group discussions to illustrate analytical points, and examples of individual circumstances are described. A brief description of the young person is given where quotations are used, indicating their gender, age and the type of geographical area they lived in.

[1] The first study concerned the needs, behaviour and aspirations of people as they made the transition into retirement and later life, and its findings are forthcoming. The third study will explore the role that car use plays for different income groups within the population. Findings from this study will be published in 2008.

[2] In response to these identified barriers, a range of pilot projects have been introduced in rural areas to promote accessible travel for children and young people. These are detailed in DEFRA's good practice guide (2004) Transport, Young People and Rural Areas.

[3] The large inner city area was Manchester, the urban centre was Portsmouth and the rural areas were Suffolk and Norfolk.

[4] Occupational Groupings: A Job Dictionary (6th Edition), The Market Research Society.

[5] Young people sometimes found it difficult to estimate their expenditure, but were usually able to choose an estimate category which they felt broadly reflected their expenditure. However, as we discuss in section 2.4.2, more detailed exploration of transport expenditure, particularly in the depth interviews, suggested that the process of estimating expenditure was not straightforward. It required young people to think about money received from different sources and different aspects of transport expenditure, with potential implications for the accuracy of these estimates.

[6] Based on ONS census profile data, 2001.

[7] The National Travel Survey is a continuous survey which collects information on who undertakes different types of travel, where people travel from and to, how often, distance, and trip purpose. It is funded by the Department for Transport.

[8] The large inner city areas were London, Birmingham, Manchester and Nottingham, the urban areas were Bradford, Chesterfield and Barnsley and the rural areas were Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. There were also a number of addresses across Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Cornwall, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Surrey and County Durham.

[9] Copies of the letter and the leaflet are included in the appendices.

[10] NVQ Level 1 is equivalent to no qualifications/ fewer than 5 GCSEs A-C; NVQ Level 2 to 5 GCSEs A-C or more; NVQ Level 3 to two or more A-levels; and NVQ Level 4 to a Higher Education Qualification.

Young people's travel patterns and mobility

This chapter provides an overview of young people's travel and mobility, and a context for later chapters. It draws on two datasets: quantitative data from the National Travel Survey (NTS) and qualitative data from the depth interviews and focus groups. Sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 look at distances travelled, transport modes and journey purposes. The chapter then considers different aspects of young people's overall mobility (section 2.4): the degree to which young people were able to travel autonomously or were reliant on others to get about, how far young people's travel and transport was constrained by their personal finances, and the influences on the scope of journeys or 'travel horizons'. Finally, in section 2.5 it considers young people's overall satisfaction with their mobility.

Journeys made by young people

Young people aged 16 to 25 make fewer trips than older age groups overall. They make fewer trips than people aged 26-54 for all purposes apart from trips to education, trips to friends at private homes or elsewhere, and for sports or entertainment.

Table 2.1 Trips per person per year by purpose and age

Table 2.1 Trips per person per year by purpose and age

Source: NTS, 2005.* This table represents the average number of trips per journey purpose for someone in each age group.

For information, NTS defines 'other escort journeys' as journeys respondents undertake with the specific purpose of accompanying someone else. 'Escort education' refers to trips made with the specific purpose of escorting someone else to education.

Modes of transport used

Young people's modal use differs from other age groups in a number of key ways. This age travels further by foot, buses, rail and taxi than other age groups. The distances travelled by bicycle by this age group are perhaps surprisingly low, with an average distance of 32 miles travelled using this mode compared to 241 by foot, for example, or 727 by bus.

Table 2.2 Distance per person per year by mode and age

Table 2.2: Distance per person per year by mode and age

Source: NTS, 2005.

As discussed in chapter 5, the qualitative data shows that young people are likely to travel further as they become older. This reflects the transition into further education and into employment; leaving the family home and setting up independent households with responsibilities such as household shopping which involve travel; and taking up new leisure activities. Increases in the distances travelled are also attributable to becoming a car driver and increased confidence in using public transport.

In terms of the proportion of journeys accounted for by different modes, as table 2.3 shows, the most common main mode [13] for young people was driving a car (30 per cent), walking (25 per cent) or being a car passenger (22 per cent). Young women were less likely to drive as their main mode than young men, and more likely to be car passengers.

Table 2.3 Proportion of trips by main mode and sex

Table 2.3 Proportion of trips by main mode and sex

Although cars are used for the majority of young people's trips, the proportion of 17- 25 year olds who hold driving licences (48 per cent) is significantly lower than the proportion of 26- 54 year olds (82 per cent). Licence holding amongst young women of this age group is even lower than their male counterparts (44 per cent compared to 52 per cent). Section 4.2 discusses young people's attitudes to learning to drive, including barriers to learning to drive which may help to explain these relatively low levels of licence holding.

Table 2.4 Proportion of people holding full car driving licence

table 2.4: proportion of people holding full car driving licence

Source: NTS, 2005.

Five broad types of modal use were evident in the qualitative sample. These were young people who used:

- a car as their main form of transport, with limited use of other modes;
- a car (or scooter) as their main mode of transport, but with more use of other modes;
- a limited range of public transport modes;
- a more diverse use of public transport modes; or
- walking as their main way of getting around.

These groups are based on how young people do most of their travel, and particularly how they travel to their main daytime activity.

Car as predominant mode

The first group of young people used cars, either as drivers or passengers, for most of their travel. Cars were used to travel to their main daytime activity - particularly for those who were travelling long distances for work, who were given lifts to school or who used cars to complete daytime errands or caring responsibilities. This group tended to have a strong rationale for using cars for these journeys, but they also had a strong attachment to car use in general. Cars were also used for other regular journeys. People said that they would sometimes walk for short journeys, for example a five minute trip to local shops, but that they would drive this distance on other occasions. Public transport was not regarded as being an option for regular trips. They used it infrequently, and sometimes had very limited recent experience of using it.

‘I don’t think I’ve used a train or a bus really since I was 17. Obviously I have done on, like, the odd occasion, but I haven’t used them to rely on getting around since I was 17-ish ... since I had my own car.’ (Female, 23, urban area)

When this group did use public transport it was for irregular trips, for example going to football matches where cars would be inconvenient because of congestion or difficulties in parking. Trains were used for longer journeys, in particular to large cities, because of anticipated problems with parking and because the city’s public transport was perceived to be good.

Drivers in this group made mostly habitual journeys, with limited variation either because they had limited free time outside of education or work or because they had caring responsibilities for children or adults. Where people relied on lifts for the majority of their trips they were restricted by the availability of the person offering lifts.

They lived in areas with different levels of public transport provision. In rural areas, lack of public transport meant they were reliant on cars either as a driver or passenger. However, reliance on car use was also evident in areas with comparatively good public transport. People were sometimes unfamiliar with public transport in their area and reluctant to use it because of a lack of confidence or concerns about convenience, reliability or cost (see chapter 3).

Car plus other modes

A second group of young people also travelled by car (either as a driver or passenger) or by scooter for their main journeys, but were more varied in their use of other modes of transport, particularly in their leisure time. Like the first group, they tended to have a strong rationale for using cars for their main journeys. They (or their parents) had thought about whether it would be possible to use public transport, and concluded it would be difficult to do so for reasons including the price, reliability and availability. However, there was more variation in terms of the other modes used. Buses, trains, or taxis featured more prominently in this group's travel than the previous group. These modes were used where lifts were not available or where using a car might be difficult, particularly for evening leisure trips where the young person wanted to drink alcohol. In their leisure time these young people used bicycles on weekends for exercise and enjoyment. This group tended to live in inner-city or urban areas where a range of transport options were available to them.

There were three reasons for drivers in their group being more flexible about using public transport as well as cars. They enjoyed the convenience afforded by car use and, like the first group, sometimes admitted using cars when it was not perhaps necessary, but they had a stronger orientation towards public transport, and were more confident in using it. Second, leisure trips featured more prominently and they also did more diverse and longer journeys than the previous group. Finally this group tended to have fewer time or practical constraints (like travelling with children).

Limited range of public transport modes

A third group of young people were primarily reliant on buses or trains to undertake the majority of their regular journeys. Use of cars was limited to lifts or taxis for journeys like large domestic shopping trips or where young children were accompanying them so using public transport would be difficult. Young men also walked short distances or used bikes. This group tended to live in urban areas or on the outskirts of inner city areas with a range of transport modes available to them, but tended to use a narrow range of public transport.

Journeys made by this group tended to be limited to the young person's home area, and did not vary significantly. This was related in part to the types of activity these young people were involved in. Work was less prominent for this group; those in employment worked part-time, alongside education. Some young people were solely in education. Others were unemployed or not working because of caring responsibilities. Because the financial resources available to this group were limited, transport costs restricted their choice of transport mode. This group's travel was further characterised by a lack of confidence in using public transport. Their knowledge of local transport appeared to be limited to regular routes, and they expressed a reluctance to extend their travel beyond these.

Wider range of public transport modes

A fourth group of young people used a wide range of public transport to make their regular journeys, switching between different modes depending on the purpose and destination of their journey. This group also drove or accessed lifts alongside their public transport. Drivers here chose not to use their cars for their main journeys because of problems associated with traffic, the congestion charge or the lack of affordable parking. Cars tended to be used for leisure purposes or trips with family. This group tended to live in large inner city or urban areas where there was a wide range of public transport. As well as making

journeys in their local home area, they made regular trips outside their local area or city. Their travel was characterised by a high degree of confidence and knowledge about how to use public transport.

Walking

A final group of young people did most of their journeys by foot. Their main journeys were limited to a small local area. Walking met their travel needs and helped because they were financially constrained. One person for example walked to their job, their children's school and to the nearest shops, and got lifts from their partner on the evenings and weekends. This group also included university students who walked for most of the journeys they made in the daytime, sometimes used taxis in the evening, and took trains for example to return to their home city.

Journey purposes

As table 2.5 shows, commuting journeys were the most common type of trip made by young people aged 16 to 25, accounting for 23 per cent of all journeys made. This was followed by visits to friends at private homes (16 per cent), shopping (15 per cent) and trips for education (11 per cent). A higher proportion of young people's journeys are made up of education and visits to friends in private homes compared with older people, and a lower proportion made up of shopping and other escort visits.

Table 2.5 Proportion of trips per person per year by purpose

Table 2.5 Proportion of trips per person per year by purpose

Source: NTS, 2005.

The qualitative data provides more detailed information about journey purposes and shows the diversity among young people:

- **Education and training:** Young people travelled to secondary schools, colleges and universities. Journeys to education varied in length from under a five-minute walk to a journey of about an hour. How regularly young people made education related journeys also varied, from daily journeys for full time students to weekly journeys for part time students. The ease with which young people accommodated these journeys into their lives varied significantly. Combining education with work or caring responsibilities was reported by some as being challenging, especially where long journeys were involved.
- **Employment and unemployment:** The young people in our sample had very diverse working patterns. Some described jobs which were short term, temporary or part time alongside study, which tended to be in the local area and involved short journeys. Others described their work in terms of chosen 'careers', with some undertaking work-based training alongside paid work. This group tended to be willing to travel further, and make more complicated journeys to work, when they felt it would benefit their career prospects or entail better pay. Travel could be problematic for those claiming unemployment benefits where their allocated Jobcentre was far from their home or on an inadequate transport route.
- **Visits to private homes:** Social visits to friends' or relations' houses were a significant part of young people's leisure time. These visits were made after school or on the weekends by younger groups, whilst older groups made more visits in the evening. Individuals aged 16 and 17 and those living in rural areas in particular said that they spent time at friends' houses because there was

nowhere else they could go in the local area. Young people with caring responsibilities for adults also made visits to them during the day.

- **Shopping:** Shopping trips consisted of shopping for clothes or other goods, which was also viewed as a leisure activity, and shopping for groceries and household goods. Domestic shopping was challenging for young people with dependent children and without access to a car. The difficulties of juggling shopping bags and buggies on public transport, limited routes and the prohibitive cost of taxis sometimes constrained their access to the most affordable shops and supermarkets.
- **Other escort trips:** These encompassed giving a lift to a friend or family members to go shopping, taking siblings to school, or making visits to doctors. Young people accompanied parents or grandparents on shopping trips both to help and to spend time with them.
- **Sports and entertainment:** People were involved in a range of sports and leisure activities including playing on sports teams, in orchestras or bands, or going to the cinema, pubs or night clubs, and watching sport. The distances and ease with which young people made journeys to these activities varied significantly. Young people in rural areas, or those with more specialist interests, tended to travel longer distances and times, with one young person making a weekly return trip of four hours after school to play for a county hockey team.
- **Other journeys:** Other journeys made by young people, and which are not separately recorded in the NTS data, were visits to mosques or churches, and involvement in voluntary work.

Aspects of young people's travel and mobility

The previous sections illustrate the high degree of diversity in young people's modal use, distances travelled, journey purposes and travel patterns. This section considers other key aspects of young people's mobility.

Autonomy, control and reliance

Autonomy and control

The first aspect of young people's mobility was the degree of autonomy from (or reliance on) others, and the degree to which they were able to control when and how they travelled. Some young people reported being able to travel with a high degree of autonomy, making the journeys they wanted to when they wanted, and without having to rely on others or being constrained by the public transport infrastructure. Drivers featured prominently here: having access to a car was described as giving young people independence and control, and allowed them to make spontaneous decisions about their travel.

‘I just like doing me own thing and not having to rely on anyone else. But it's like ... if I had a phone call tonight from a mate saying ‘Look can you come over?’ I could just jump in my car and go. So that's what I like about it.’ (Female, 21, rural area)

Drivers associated cars with more control than public transport, even when there were problems with their journeys.

‘You're in a car, all being well, you're able to control how and when you get somewhere, you know, depending on traffic here and there On public transport are sort of taken along with everybody else at the speed that everybody else is travelling at and it's somebody else's pace ‘!’. It can get quite frustrating.’ (Male, 23, urban area)

Some users of public transport also described having a lot of autonomy over their travel. Young people living in inner city areas in particular described having a range of transport options from which to choose.

âWeâve got the [light rail service] five minutes away, weâve got the bus five minutes away, weâve got the train five minutes away. So in that sense itâs very good and I would say probably just using these three services you can pretty much go every - anywhere and everywhere.â (Male, 20, urban area)

However, people also described circumstances under which they had felt frustrated by their reliance and lack of control, for example where their bus journey was delayed by traffic congestion, or when routes or services were limited.

Reliance on lifts

Other young people had less autonomy in how and when they travelled and were reliant on lifts or on limited or unsatisfactory public transport. People relied on lifts to get to education or work, for shopping, and for leisure. They received lifts from family members (parents, siblings and grandparents), from friends, or from parents of friends. One young person and their sibling got lifts every day from a friendâs parent to the school they and the friend attended. Another got a lift to work from a friend every day. In addition, groups of friends took turns in driving on joint leisure trips.

There were three sets of circumstances where people relied on lifts:

- young people who were almost wholly reliant on lifts from other people for their main journeys. Some young people living in rural areas who did not drive and had limited public transport option were reliant on lifts for journeys to school. Non-drivers living in towns were also reliant on lifts to education or work where public transport did not meet their needs.
- young people who were reliant on lifts for specific journeys. These tended to be journeys where using public transport would be particularly difficult, for example where they needed to make grocery shopping trips and had heavy loads to carry, or where trips were being made in the evening and public transport was limited or unappealing because of safety concerns or because people wanted to get home more quickly
- young people who were reliant on lifts when public transport let them down. For example, one young person described having to get lifts to school when their bus did not arrive.

Young people also sometimes accepted lifts on an opportunistic basis when they were available, but were not reliant on them because they could use public transport or walk to make the journey in question.

Lifts were offered as a favour or out of a sense of family obligation; as part of a reciprocal relationship; or in return for money for petrol or gifts in kind. The latter occurred where one member of a friendship group did most of the driving when they travelled together, or where a young person received a lift on a regular basis and needed it to get to work or college.

Lifts could thus play a critical role in travel for some people, and some people had no other options and could not make a journey if a lift was not available.

âCause if Iâve got no other way to get out then Iâll be like ok itâs a night in front of the T.V.â
(Female, 17, rural area)

Young peopleâs feelings about their reliance on others for travel varied. Younger age groups did not view relying on others as being a particular problem: their parents were giving lifts to destinations in the direction they were already travelling, did not mind offering lifts, or were flexible about when they could give lifts. They sometimes felt that parents were motivated to give them lifts because they were protective of them and viewed lifts as a safer travel alternative, and so were happy to accept. In rural areas with limited transport, young people felt there were few alternatives to lifts, and in some cases felt that their parents were obliged to give them lifts because they had chosen to live in a remote area.

Other young people felt more negatively about being reliant on lifts. In some cases young people felt badly about relying on others and described not wanting to be âa burdenâ, particularly where they used lifts from people other than family members. For other young people - particularly those in their late teens - reliance on lifts was a source of frustration or irritation for them, and sometimes apparently for their parents. Their reliance on others made it difficult to make spontaneous decisions about their travel, or meant that the times at which they could be picked up or dropped off were restricted.

Reliance on limited public transport

Young people were also restricted in when and where they could travel by limited public transport services. Young people living on the outskirts of towns or in rural areas in particular described limited bus or train services, especially in the evenings and on Sundays. Whilst some were able to use lifts or taxis, others were not able to make trips at all.

Difficulties with public transport also meant young people sometimes felt a lack of control when using public transport. Not knowing when buses or trains would arrive, or not being able to predict how long journeys would take, were key sources of frustration. Where problems like traffic jams arose during the course of a journey, people were exasperated by the lack of control they had.

âI just want to go downstairs and drag the busman âI even though you canât get nowhere but âI no, it makes you feel really stressed. You can see everyone elseâs faces as well theyâre thinking âoh, for goodness sake!â kind of thing. And those times you just wish you could have a car and just drive your own self there âcause you know you have to go by a certain route when it comes to the bus and sometimes that can be really annoying if itâs the longest route in the world or the shortest route when it comes to traffic itâs really stressful.â (Female, 18, urban area)

For other young people the lack of reliability meant that it was difficult to make plans. One young parent who was reliant on buses described how this made it difficult to meet up with friends at lunchtime, so she did not try to make these trips.

âIâve got a lot of friends that work in town, then I could meet them for dinner and stuff like that, but not knowing what time buses come, and I canât have a taxi just to go and meet a friend âI.â (Female, 21, rural area)

Another young person in a rural area described how they stayed at a friendâs house during the week to allow them to get to work as there was no public transport which would have got him to work at the correct time.

Others dependent on young people for travel

Finally, as well as supporting young people's autonomous travel, having a car also meant others including parents, siblings and friends were sometimes reliant on young people for their travel. Young people were in some cases the only driver in the family, and were responsible for taking family members on journeys to access key services such as shopping, or visits to the doctor. In other cases the young person interviewed was not the only driver in a household but gave lifts to other family members because the other driver was not available, or because it was more convenient. One young person living in a rural area, for example, was responsible for taking his siblings to their school (which he also attended) every day. Young people also offered their friends lifts to social activities where they did not mind driving, were the only driver in a friendship group or did not mind not drinking alcohol.

Travel and financial constraints

A second aspect of young people's mobility was the financial resources available for travel. Young people were asked as part of the study how much they spent on transport in an average week. Estimates of expenditure ranged from £2 in an average week by young people with limited mobility or who mainly walked, to £70 where young people drove long distances for work.

People did not always find it easy to estimate their expenditure on transport. Public transport users referred to the cost of daily, weekly or monthly tickets, but were less confident in making a global estimate of their travel costs. Car users tended mainly to think about the cost of their cars in terms of fuel costs. Estimating costs was made complicated by the fact that young people were not always responsible for meeting all their transport costs themselves. Parents tended to pay for some or all of younger people's travel expenditure, for example giving 16 and 17 year olds money for school journeys and for taxi fares in the evening. Drivers who still lived at home also sometimes received support with car related costs, and this could mean they had limited awareness of how expensive these were (further detail, see chapter 4). Young people at the upper end of the age range, and particularly those who had left home and moved into work, were responsible for meeting their own public transport or car related expenses. University students drew on financial support from parents and student loans, and travel expenses came out of this pot.

Young people also did not monitor their expenditure on transport closely because it was regarded as an essential expense, so there was limited attention to managing costs. Public transport users tried to limit travel not covered by concession passes [14], and car users set amounts they wanted to spend on fuel in a given week and curtailed their travel when they reached or neared this limit. More active budgeting was unusual but was evident amongst individuals in their early to mid twenties who ran their own households, who monitored the impact of travel expenses and in particular those related to car use more closely. Young people with dependent children also appeared to be more conscious of how much they spent. They described having to limit journeys made by car or public transport, and other expenses took priority.

Distances travelled and travel horizons

A third aspect of young people's mobility was travel horizons - the distance and range of journeys people are willing to undertake, or aspire to undertake. There was significant variation within the sample, related to personal circumstances; social and family relationships; daily activities; and confidence.

Personal circumstances and responsibilities

Young people's personal circumstances and responsibilities were an important influence on the distances they travelled and wanted to travel. Young people still living in the parental home, and younger age groups, tended to make a more limited range of journeys within the local area. They continued to be at least partly dependent on parents for their travel, and in some cases had limited desire to move away from this dependence. Amongst older age groups, circumstances and responsibilities were more diverse and they made a wider range of trips associated with household errands, DIY, and visits to parents in different areas.

Having caring responsibilities meant journeys including taking babies and children to nursery, school or health appointments, which tended to be local. These responsibilities could also restrict young people's travel because of limited available time and problems associated with taking children on transport, and could make young people more dependent on others.

Social and family relationships

Social and family relationships were also a significant influence on young people's travel. Where young people lived close to the majority of their family and friends, this could limit mobility. Similarly, university students' relationships tended to be with people living close by and their regular travel was limited to this area, although as noted below going to university also widened travel opportunities.

However, relationships could also expand young people's travel horizons. Having family further afield - including siblings, parents, aunts and uncles - meant that young people travelled further distances with their immediate family, and sometimes aspired to undertake these journeys by themselves. For young people in rural areas, making friends from nearby villages prompted them to travel more widely across the local area, in some cases independently of their parents. Establishing virtual relationships over the internet also prompted young people to travel to new places, as did having friends who had moved away.

Daily activities

Young people's participation in education or training, work and leisure activities influenced the distances they travelled and their travel horizons. Going to a college or university could mean travelling to a new area, and visiting new friends in their home areas. Young people who continued to live at home whilst attending university had more limited new experiences of travel. Where young people were undertaking other activities - in particular work or caring - alongside their study, their travel did not necessarily expand in the same way because they had more limited leisure time available. Work was also a catalyst for young people travelling further distances. Whilst some young people worked close to their homes, others travelled long distances as part of their work, or in some cases moved to take up a new job. Involvement in leisure activities such as playing a musical instrument in a band or singing in a choir, playing for a sports team, or having hobbies such as walking were all described as providing impetus for young people's travelling further for longer distances and gaining experience of travelling.

Confidence

The distances travelled by young people, and their travel horizons, also appeared to be related to their confidence about using transport and travelling. This varied considerably amongst young people, particularly in relation to public transport use. Perhaps predictably, it appeared to be higher amongst young people who had travelled by public transport with their families and where young people had been using it for a long time, and lower where people had negative past experiences of using public transport, for example being harassed or the victim of crime.

The way that young people talked about their feelings about travelling suggested that there were also differences in how confident young people were about travel per se. Some talked about enjoying the experience of travelling, for example because it offered them an opportunity to see new things or places; others seemed less inclined to visit new places and talked about the practical difficulties this would raise.

Overall satisfaction with mobility

A final aspect of young people's mobility was how satisfied they were with their travel and mobility. There was not a linear relationship between the amount of young people's mobility and their satisfaction with their travel. Although there were very mobile people who were satisfied with their travel, there were also very mobile people who were not satisfied with their travel. This section explores these different groups. The chapters that follow then explore in more detail people's views and experiences of different forms of transport, and the impact on their life choices and transitions.

In the diagram below, the vertical axis maps satisfaction, and the horizontal axis mobility. The four quadrants are necessarily crude, but they highlight the diversity of relationships between satisfaction and mobility among young people.

Figure 2.1 Mapping mobility and satisfaction

Figure 2.1 Mapping mobility and satisfaction

Group 1: Higher satisfaction, higher mobility

The first group of young people were more mobile, travelling to a wide range of journey destinations, sometimes for longer distances. They were satisfied with their travel and mobility because they felt that they were unconstrained and autonomous in their travel. Young car users and young people using diverse public transport modes featured prominently in this group. This group had few significant financial constraints on their travel either because they received parental support or were in relatively well paid work.

Group 2: Higher satisfaction, lower mobility

The second group were less mobile than young people in the first group, making a smaller range of journeys and travelling shorter distances, but nonetheless satisfied with their travel and mobility. They relied mainly on cars, either as a driver or passenger. They felt they could get to most places they needed to even if this involved reliance on lifts. In some cases this appeared to be related to participants' ages: they tended to be younger and so had a more limited range of journeys for education and leisure. In other cases participants appeared to have more limited mobility because their aspirations both in relation to

travel and more widely were more limited.

Group 3: Lower satisfaction, higher mobility

The third group were not satisfied with their mobility, but were more mobile. These young people tended to be making longer journeys for work or work-based learning, either by public transport or by car, but found this travel unsatisfactory. Public transport users described frustration with aspects of travel like over-crowding, cost and unreliability. Car users described being stuck in traffic, and were unhappy about the amount that they spent on travel. This group were able to access the services or opportunities they wanted to access, but the journeys they had to make were in some cases very difficult and took a great deal of effort and motivation. This group were therefore dissatisfied with their experiences of making their journeys.

Group 4: Lower satisfaction, lower mobility

This final group of young people had limited mobility and were not very satisfied. Their travel tended to be limited in its scope and reach. They were reliant on others, and their travel was financially constrained. This group tended to travel using a limited range of public transport, and felt that their choice was restricted or that they faced a number of barriers to using it. This included young people in rural areas whose transport options were limited; young parents whose mobility was constrained financially and because of the difficulties associated with travelling with children on public transport; and young people whose finances were constrained because they were out of work. This group sometimes described trip suppression - not being able to make journeys when they wanted to, or at all, because of difficulties with transport. As a result these young people felt that the choices available to them in terms of education, training, employment and leisure were more limited.

Overall, then, people's satisfaction with their travel reflects not only how mobile they are and their experiences of travel, but also how mobile they want to be. Limited mobility does not necessarily mean limited satisfaction. However, there is an important group of young people whose travel is more constrained than they want, because of either their personal circumstances or the availability of public transport, and who see this as limiting their access to services and opportunities. The implications of this limited mobility are discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

Chapter summary

There is significant variation in young people's travel patterns and mobility. Travel patterns including journey purposes, destinations, distances and time travelled, varied considerably depending on young people's ages, personal circumstances, and where they lived. They used a range of modes to get around including car use, public transport use, and walking. Attachment to particular modes varied: whilst some drivers or passengers were almost exclusively reliant on cars, others used cars in combination with public transport. Public transport users also varied in the range of modes used: whilst some relied primarily on one form, others used a range of different modes depending on their journey purpose and destination. There was also diversity in young people's mobility in terms of the degree of autonomy, control or reliance they had and the degree to which their mobility was constrained by financial issues and the scope of their travel horizons. The relationships between mobility and satisfaction with it are not linear: there were groups of young people who were both more and less satisfied with more limited mobility, and similarly groups who were both more and less satisfied with greater mobility.

[11] A copy of the focus group topic guide is included in the appendices.

[12] A copy of the in-depth interview topic guide is included in the appendices.

[13] The main mode of transport is defined in NTS as the mode used in the longest (distance) stage of the journey(s) in question. If two stages had equal length, the mode of the latest stage was taken as the main mode.

[14] Concessions or subsidies made a significant contribution to some young people's travel budgets. These included Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) and access to free or subsidised travel on the basis of their age or still being in education.

Views of public and private transport

In this chapter we look in detail at young people's views of public and private transport. The chapter begins by taking a thematic approach to the issues participants discussed when talking about different modes of public transport (section 3.1). It then goes on to discuss, in section 3.2, young people's views of private transport, with a particular focus on their views of cars. The chapter concludes with a discussion of wider influences on young people's views (section 3.3), highlighting a range of factors from personal experience to issues regarding identity.

Public transport

As might be expected, the views of the young people in this study regarding different modes of transport varied significantly. Some liked buses, others did not; some were keen on trains, while others thought trams were the best form of transport. In part, this reflected the fact that the individuals taking part in the research lived in different parts of the country with different local services, which meant they were not comparing like with like. It was also the case that discussions of public transport were dominated by talk of buses, as it was the mode most commonly used by participants. However, underlying young people's views about public transport were a number of key concerns, and it is these that are the focus of the discussion below. The order in which they are presented does not necessarily reflect their overall importance, but instead moves roughly from 'external' to 'internal' issues. The environment and health are not discussed here because they did not emerge as a significant theme in young people's views on public transport, but are discussed in section 3.2, which discusses views of private transport, and in chapter 4, which focuses on decision-making.

Inherent qualities

Although the distinctions young people made between different modes of transport largely reflected differences in the quality of provision in their local area, what were perceived as the inherent benefits and limitations of different modes affected participants' views. Generally, trains were seen as more reliable than buses and this seemed to be linked to a feeling that train timetables were more rigid than bus timetables. Linked to this was the feeling that it was easier to find out about train times, either by phone or at the station, though this was less true where there were digital information boards at bus stops. On the other hand, one of the attractions of buses compared to tubes was that they enabled travellers to see many different parts of their local area; the corollary of this was that they were perceived by some participants as 'going round the houses' rather than going directly to their destination and therefore slower than they

need be. Buses also differed from trains because the driver was a visible presence, and this had negative and positive implications (see sections 3.1.5 and 3.1.6 below).

The perceived advantage of taxis was that they would pick up and drop off exactly where requested rather than the individual having to make their own way to and from the transport link. However, in some cases taxi drivers were seen as unsafe drivers due to the fact that they were trying to earn as much as possible by completing jobs as quickly as they could. Inherent benefits and limitations of trams did not emerge clearly from young people's accounts.

Service provision

The aspects of local service provision young people felt were important were the cost of journeys, frequency of services, reliability, how crowded the service is, whether it arrives and leaves on time, and how many stops the service makes between an individual's starting point and their destination. Thus common complaints against buses in some locations were that they were irregular, that they did not turn up and that they were often late. In other locations, participants were complimentary about the local bus services, describing them as frequent and reliable, and in contrast felt that trains were very expensive. In some cases evaluations remained specific to a particular service, but in other cases they seemed to be generalised from one particular route or mode to public transport more widely.

Internal environment

Closely related to the basic functions of the service as transport, was the nature of the vehicle's internal environment. There were wide variations in the extent to which different services were perceived to be tidy and clean. Buses in some areas were singled out for the state of their internal environment, with participants complaining that surfaces were soiled, that upholstery was in poor condition, and that there was vandalism. In other areas buses were praised for their cleanliness, which participants linked to the fact that they were new. These factors seemed to have a significant effect on young people's feelings about using the service, as indicated by the use of emotive descriptors such as 'unhygienic'.

Household and family responsibility

Those individuals who had begun to take on household or family responsibilities faced a number of issues in using local transport. Of particular significance was doing food shopping, because it meant having to carry a large number of bags and frozen goods which made using public transport more difficult because of having to walk to and from the transport link. New parents also talked about the challenges of using buses when they had pushchairs or buggies with them. The difficulties centred around physically manoeuvring pushchairs on board (which was alleviated by buses designed for wheelchair access). Parents also had safety concerns about having to collapse a buggy in order to board the bus and so not being able to focus on their child who was waiting by the roadside. There were also problems in finding space on board buses to stow pushchairs, which meant that at busy times a young parent could have to wait for several buses to come and go before there was enough space for them to ride. For these individuals, taxis were seen as a clear alternative.

I don't think I'd use a taxi from town more than twice. It's usually if I'm with my mum and we've both got pushchairs, and we've both got loads of bags and stuff on the pushchairs. 'Cause it's difficult to get on to the bus with pushchair and a load of bags 'at [particularly] at school time, 'cause

everybody else is coming home at same time, and you can't get on bus at all with pushchairs then.
(Female, 21, rural area)

Contact with officials

Young people had mixed experiences of their contact with officials. Some individuals described bus drivers as friendly and helpful, and said drivers would get to know them if they used the route regularly. Other participants had had negative experiences of their contact with transport officials, and for some this had an impact on their perception of public transport more generally.

A bus driver took my bus pass off me, because I'd dyed my hair blonde. I mean, the picture, it was like mousy brown [laughs] and he, he just had this issue with it, and it was like, it's not you. I'm gonna take it, and he took this bus pass off me. And then, like, my, my mum rang up the, the depot garage and then this bus driver had said that I'd been really abusive to him, and that's why he took it. And I was, like [laughs] that's not like me at all. So, yeah, I suppose that didn't really leave me with a good impression of public transport. (Female, 23, urban area)

There was also the belief that some drivers would make up prices on the spot rather than charge the correct fare for the journey.

Safety

Personal safety was a key concern for young people in their evaluations of public transport. Participants identified three kinds of potential risk to their safety. Firstly there were concerns about the safety of particular forms of transport that related either to their basic functioning or reflected special circumstances. For example, some young people expressed worries about using underground services in the light of the attacks on London transport in July 2005. These worries seemed to be particularly associated with using the tubes, rather than buses, and there was a feeling that there was greater danger during peak travel times than during the middle of the day. Other young people expressed concerns about the safety of buses, arguing that drivers drove too fast and braked too violently, meaning they were thrown about inside the buses, their concern heightened by unsteady or 'wobbly' seats. Among some participants who had children, there was a perception that cars were safer than buses, because they could strap the children in and didn't have to rely on bus drivers being sensible and careful.

The second kind of risk identified by young people concerned the possibility of being attacked while waiting for transport or walking to and from transport links. This fear was felt particularly keenly when participants believed that the area in general or the specific location of the transport link was known for attacks or 'trouble'. In some cases, female participants felt they were especially vulnerable, and talked about asking male friends to meet them at a bus stop and accompany them home. The time of day and year had an effect on the perceived threat, with some individuals saying they were happy to walk home when it was light, but wanted to get a lift when it was dark. Perceived risks associated with waiting for transport were alleviated by well-lit stations and the presence of police, as was thought to be the case at some tram stations.

The third area of concern regarding safety was the threat from fellow passengers while travelling, which participants identified as coming from other young people and 'drunks', particularly late at night. These concerns reflected direct experiences of feeling threatened and incidents of being harassed or attacked. One worry was about being 'ganged up' on, and some participants said they felt safer when they were

travelling with friends. Some young people were reassured by the presence of bus drivers, but others felt that drivers would not or could not intervene. The presence of other passengers, along with CCTV on buses, were also seen as important sources of reassurance.

“I just, I personally just feel a bit safer if there’s a few cameras around. I generally know if there’s a camera about, so I normally have a look. But yeah, if there’s no cameras, I wouldn’t, you know, stand in a place where there wasn’t a camera.” (Male, 16, rural area)

Although individuals expressed concerns regarding a range of transport modes, a number of bus routes or bus stops in particular seemed to be associated with a high risk. It was striking how violence or the threat of violence dominated the travel experience of some individuals, as was the case for the young person quoted below:

“Well there’s a lot of robbery, that’s a main issue. Someone will always try and rob you but you’ve got to stand up for yourself at the end of the day because if you don’t you’re either going to get robbed or stabbed or beaten up or ganged up on. There’s a lot of gangs on buses now. So I always sit downstairs just to stay away from it, keep myself to myself and try and avoid any confrontations. But there’s too much violence. Basically they just come up to you and say just give me your phone, and I’m like no, like I’m not gonna let you take my stuff off me. But there’s nothing you can do about it because nobody else on the bus is like gonna get up and help you, because you keep yourself to yourself.” (Male, 19, urban area)

Public space

In some ways, concerns about safety seemed to be an extreme example of a wider issue for young people regarding the use of public transport: the fact that it means sharing a space with other people. This was perceived as having both advantages and disadvantages. Some participants saw the social contact involved in using public transport as an opportunity for making friends or just coming into contact with people from a variety of backgrounds.

“Like there’s people on the bus, you get to meet some people on the bus, you get some right characters on the bus.” (Female, 17, urban area)

Another advantage was the fact that public transport enabled young people to travel in large friendship groups. In some cases participants said they felt uninhibited about talking, joking and “having fun” while travelling, though a number said that as they got older they felt this was less appropriate or were more aware of the potential impact on others.

Sharing transport with other people, particularly strangers, also prompted negative reactions among participants. In some cases this revolved around being disturbed by other people’s activities, for example of the level of noise generated by music players.

“You can get on the bus and there can be a person next to you playing music on the phone, that does my head in like. The other day I had this banging headache and this girl came and played this upbeat music and I felt like turning round and saying, but you can’t really, because she’s paid for the bus as well.” (Female, 17, urban area)

Other young people talked about feeling stressed as a result of conflicts between other passengers and officials over issues such as having or not having a valid ticket. Another concern was the possibility of sitting next to someone considered socially undesirable, including those described as crazy people or hoodies. This was exacerbated when those individuals were engaged in activities the young person felt to be inappropriate, illegal or morally wrong, such as taking drugs. One participant, for example, said that they had previously taken drugs themselves and that they no longer wanted any contact with illegal substances but were forced to because of other people using them on the bus. Some young people also seemed to have a particular issue about travelling with older people, and the nature and tone of their comments indicated that this was related to a lack of understanding and in some cases prejudice.

Male 1: But it's also like when there's a bus full of old people and you want to sit on your own, you don't want someone else in your space and there's some old woman sitting next to [you] and not to sound harsh but they stink [laughter]

Female 1: and they go about some rubbish

Male 2: you don't want to sit somewhere it smells, that's just not nice, sorry Vera [laughter].

(Focus group, 19-25, rural area)

However, even when other people were not considered to be socially undesirable or engaged in activities participants disliked or disapproved of, some individuals felt uncomfortable with the basic premise of sharing space with strangers and preferred travelling by car or bike which they felt allowed them to travel in a private space.

Private transport

In this section we discuss young people's views of private transport modes. As expected, cars dominated views about private transport, but there were also some interesting issues raised about using bicycles, motorbikes and scooters. Views about private transport modes seemed less dependent on local context and much more related to the inherent benefits and disadvantages of each mode than views of public transport, and therefore we discuss each mode separately below.

Cars

Orientation

Young people had many comments to make about cars, and the different dimensions of their views are discussed later in this section. However, underlying their views seemed to be a basic orientation towards cars that ranged from positive to negative. Having a particular orientation did not mean an individual would solely express positive or negative views about cars. However, an individual's basic orientation seemed to act as a reference point when they were discussing the benefits and drawbacks of cars. There seemed to be three basic kinds of orientation:

Enthusiasts: As the label suggests, enthusiasts liked cars in and of themselves, not just because of the benefits they felt they offered in terms of transport. In some cases their orientation seemed to have its roots in early childhood.

It's really fascinating when you're younger, I think, driving and that. I remember seeing my dad driving at a younger age, and really wanting to have a go myself and then obviously not being allowed. (Male, 25, rural area)

Neutrals: There were some young people who seemed to have little emotional engagement with cars and viewed them primarily as a form of transport that had benefits and drawbacks in much the same way as other forms of transport.

I'd still like to go out bike riding, because I see it as a leisure activity. I don't see it as a means of travel in a way. Whereas a car is more like travel. It's not really leisure. (Male, 18, urban area)

Sceptics: Perhaps the most interesting or surprising orientation towards cars was one of scepticism. While being able to see benefits in cars, some individuals were ultimately sceptical of their worth.

We had these lessons from the police and they taught you about drink driving and stuff, and that really put me off because they kept showing car accidents and stuff. I think it's too dangerous and I don't think I'd be a very good driver either. (Male, 16, rural area)

What is particularly interesting about these underlying orientations is that they do not seem related to, or at least are not determined by, attitudes to public transport, opinions of local services or gender. There were both male and female enthusiasts who talked about their long-term love of cars and all things related to cars including car-based computer games. Yet enthusiasts could also be positive about public transport. Sceptics also included both male and female participants, as well as individuals who did not like public transport and who described their local services as extremely limited, and sceptics also identified benefits as well as disadvantages of cars.

Views

As indicated above, views of cars were made up of a large range of dimensions. In some cases these were linked to benefits young people were already experiencing through getting lifts or driving themselves. In other cases, the benefits and drawbacks were ones they anticipated if they were able to drive themselves or had their own car. Each of the main dimensions is discussed below.

Practical benefits and drawbacks: young people identified many practical benefits of cars. Predominant among them was the perceived ability to travel to places more easily and quickly than using public transport. In some cases this was seen as having the knock-on benefit of having more time to do things like get children ready for school in the morning. Other benefits included being able to go to an exact destination, rather than the nearest transport link, being able to come back home at whatever time the young person chose to, rather than having to rely on timetabled services, and being able to easily carry things such as musical instruments, shopping or pushchairs. There were also some practical drawbacks associated with cars, including problems with limited parking, stress associated with congestion, not being able to drink when going out, and of course, the costs of buying and running them.

Independence and control: cars were seen as very important in giving young people a sense of independence and control. In part this was couched in terms of not having to rely on public transport. Participants felt that cars gave them control over their environment, which meant not having to sit with strangers and being able to do things like play music, but also control over the route taken and the speed at which the vehicle was travelling. This was even the case when they recognised being in control of the

vehicle would actually make little practical difference. For example, some participants said they would have a greater feeling of control if they were sitting in a traffic jam in a car than they would if they were sitting in a traffic jam on a bus. Cars were also associated with a sense of independence from parents and others.

‘I hate relying on people, I hate it. ‘Cos it’s ‘I am, don’t know about you, but I am independent, so that’s why I like driving because if I need to get somewhere my car’s there and I go.’ (Female, 21, rural area)

Some participants with young children also felt that having a car meant that in an emergency they would be able to take their child to hospital quickly, or would be able to return home quickly if a problem occurred while they were away.

Occasionally, there were concerns about the potential to become dependent on cars and the impact on young people’s ability to negotiate public transport.

Providing assistance to others: as noted in chapter 2, cars were seen as important in enabling young people to help others, for example helping parents with shopping if their parents did not drive themselves. Some individuals also felt that driving or owning a car would mean they were able to take family members to places that were otherwise inaccessible, due to limited transport options or restricted mobility. Others mentioned the fact that they could give lifts to friends, or that it would mean they would not feel like a burden on their parents as they would not need to ask for lifts so frequently. These benefits seemed linked to the opportunity to exercise a greater sense of responsibility and to gain status, and are perhaps therefore associated with transitions to adulthood as well as being motivated by altruistic feelings (see chapter 5 for further details).

Leisure: as well as a mode of transport, cars and driving were seen as leisure activities in themselves. Participants reported enjoying the physical experience of driving and being around cars, and in some cases the process of modifying them, indicating that cars played a role in defining the identities of these individuals. Participants described going out driving without having any destination in mind, and sometimes with a group of friends all of whom would take their own cars.

‘A lot of us passed the test at the same time, so we always used to get together and just go on drives. Like maybe four of us would go out and we’d all be in separate cars. But thinking about it, it was a bit daft really ‘cos we all could have just gone in one car, but I think everyone wanted to just wanted to get out and drive.’ (Male, 24, urban area)

Social enabler: closely linked to the fact that cars and driving were seen as leisure activities in their own right, they were also seen as social enablers by acting as a focus for social activity and the chance to get away from parents. They could also promote social activity by making it easier for friends to initiate a social activity, enabling them to meet up when transport options were limited.

De-stressor: some young people talked about using cars as a means of reducing or relieving stress. They described how, when they got into arguments at home or became stressed by an ongoing situation, they would go out driving to help them calm down. For young people who were parents, driving was seen as a way of relieving the boredom of being ‘stuck’ at home and as a way of calming a distressed child.

Safety and responsibility: cars were seen as a safer alternative to public transport in some circumstances. This was linked to the dangers perceived to be associated with using public transport at night and the fact that a car would take the individual from where they started right to the doorstep. It was also felt by some that buses were not safe because of the way they were driven and that driving oneself was safer. Conversely, some participants recognised the dangers associated with driving and the risk of causing injury to themselves and to other road users, and this led them to appreciate the responsibility involved in being a driver. One individual, for example, said that when he passed his driving test his father had congratulated him by saying 'well done, now you've got a licence to kill', and that these words had stayed with him ever since.

Environment and health: there seemed to be limited awareness or concern about the environmental or health implications of using cars. Some participants noted the negative impact cars had on the environment, both in terms of things such as local air quality and congestion, and wider impacts such as global warming. In some cases these concerns were related to the specific characteristics of an individual's local area. For example, one young person referred to the fact that he lived in a low lying area and was concerned about the possibility of flooding. Similarly, health was not a strong feature of young people's views about cars, but the negative impact on fitness was mentioned on occasion.

Bicycles

Cycling was seen as helping individuals to become fitter and stronger, but also carried overtones of more general well-being with some participants using terms like 'doing good to yourself' to describe the benefits of cycling. The advantage of combining physical activity with transport or 'killing two birds with one stone' was also mentioned. The environmental benefits of cycling were seen both in terms of contributing to a reduction in large scale environmental impacts of transport use, but also in terms of reducing the harmful effect of emissions on individuals at a local level through improved air quality. Other advantages associated with using bikes were the potential to avoid congestion and get to places more quickly, and the fact that cycling was associated with having a private physical and mental space in contrast to the shared space of public transport with its accompanying noise and disturbances.

Bicycles were also seen as having a number of disadvantages. Exposure to the elements, particularly when an individual was wearing expensive clothes, was regarded as a significant drawback. The physical effort needed to cycle was also raised as an issue, especially when the journey came at the end of the day when individuals felt they would already be tired. Some individuals lacked confidence in their basic competence and felt they simply could not ride well enough to use a bike as a form of transport. This was linked, in some cases, to a strong belief that roads were not safe for cyclists, a view in part informed by observations of potentially dangerous incidents.

'I used to bike a lot to sixth form and to school when I was doing my GCSEs and that but I don't think I'd have a bike in Manchester. I don't know, it's like the bus drivers don't pay much attention to them, you know, when you see so many near crashes.' (Female, 19, urban area)

For some individuals these disadvantages seemed to be genuine reasons for not wanting to use bikes as transport, as evidenced by the fact that they had used bikes in other places. However, for others bikes did not seem to be thought of as a form of transport. In part this seemed to be a result of the fact that bikes were placed in the mental categories of 'leisure' and 'childhood' rather than 'transport'.

âI donât cycle much. Like, my [younger] brotherâs got one. Whenever the weatherâs nice heâd probably ride round. But ever since I was little, I never really done much cycling, to be honest. It just used to be in the back garden, just going round in the summer. But thatâs when I was little, but now, probably no, never really considered it, no.â (Female, 18, urban area)

This led some participants to comment that they would feel âsillyâ riding on a bike because they would look âtoo bigâ on it, language and images indicating an association of bikes with childhood.

Motorbikes and scooters

Motorbikes and scooters did not feature strongly in participantsâ views about transport. In some cases, individuals were using them to overcome transport difficulties, such as limited local services, while others used them because of their association with excitement or because they were relatively inexpensive to use and run. However, non-users and some users had negative feelings about motorbikes and scooters. A central concern was safety, with a number of participants saying they had either heard about a lot of injuries or had friends or knew people who had been injured riding motorbikes and scooters, though there was a feeling that scooters were less dangerous than motorbikes due to their smaller size. Nevertheless, some participants seemed subconsciously to make a causal link between using a scooter and driving dangerously. They would explain that the reason they would not get a scooter was because they saw people driving them dangerously, implying that it was driving a scooter or motorbike that made people drive dangerously rather than the individuals who drove them not being careful. Closely related to this were issues of identity, with some participants feeling that scooters were associated with sub-cultures they did not want to be part of.

âScooters at the minute are [part of] a yob culture I think, itâs an easier getaway and what-not.â (Male, 19, urban area)

Similarly, a number of female participants felt that motorbikes were not suitable for women. In addition, there were practical difficulties associated with scooters and motorbikes, such as carrying shopping or children.

Influences on young peopleâs views

This section discusses the influences on young peopleâs views of transport, some of which have been referred to earlier in the chapter, along with others that have not been mentioned specifically. As was the case when discussing the themes related to views of public transport, the order in which these influences appear is not intended to reflect their relative importance, but instead move in a roughly logical sequence from direct experience to less concrete or immediate influences.

Direct experience

As would be expected, participants commonly referred to their own experiences of using transport when expressing views about different modes. As was indicated earlier, in some cases this experience led to views being formed about particular services, while in other cases it led to generalised attitudes or assumptions about a mode or public transport. It was also the case that some of the experiences individuals drew upon when discussing their views had occurred a number of years previously. Nevertheless these experiences seemed to have had a lasting effect on the individuals. For example, one

participant now aged 24 based his view of buses on his experiences when he was at school almost a decade earlier.

“The last time I actually did go on a bus was a long time ago, I was in ‘ well when I was in school, about nine years ago .” I used the bus every day to get to school and get back again. I was late for school a lot as well. I think that was [put] into my report.” (Male, 24, urban area)

This participant then went on to say in detail what he felt was negative about buses.

The experiences of others

Participants also based their views on other people’s experiences, particularly those of family and friends. One individual, for example, talked about the effect his cousin being chased and attacked on a train had had on his own approach to safety on transport. As with individuals’ own experiences, the experiences of others could have happened some time ago and on a particular service, but were still significant current influences and could be generalised to the transport mode more generally.

Media reports and stories

In some cases participants would explicitly refer to media stories when discussing their views of transport, while in other cases they talked about hearing “stories”, and it was not always clear where these stories had come from. However, particularly in the case of the risk of attack, reports and stories could affect young people’s views, and this could persist even when the report was not confirmed by their own experiences or observation.

Comparison and expectations

Participants often referred to other modes when discussing particular forms of transport. Though it is not possible to say whether their comparisons directly affected their judgements, it certainly seemed to inform their views. Linked to this was the fact that expectations of service levels seemed to play a part in evaluations. This seemed to emerge in two ways. Firstly, participants with what appeared to be very limited local transport provision nevertheless described them as “good” or “adequate”, whereas other participants with access to far more extensive services described them less positively. Secondly, participants from lower socio-economic backgrounds seemed to be more positive about the service levels of local transport than participants from higher socio-economic backgrounds who lived in the same or similar areas.

Modelling

An important influence on participants’ views seemed to be the behaviour of significant others around them. They would talk about family or friends using certain kinds of transport and also of its use being “natural”, indicating that they had been influenced on a semi-conscious or sub-conscious level. However, in some cases they were able to identify and comment on this process:

“My mum doesn’t drive ” so I was always influenced by her to take public transport “cause that’s what she used. And obviously as I grew older as well with my friends always using public transport I thought oh obviously it’s the only way to get around.” (Female, 18, urban area)

Assumptions about causes

The views of some individuals seemed to be affected by their assumptions regarding the causes of difficulties they had experienced while using transport. There appeared to be a tendency among some individuals to regard bus service levels as within the control of the individual driver and to downplay contextual factors that might have influenced the efficiency of services. Participants would use phrases such as 'if the bus decides not to turn up', implying that the driver has made a wilful and almost malicious decision not to run a particular service. On the other hand, some participants seemed inclined to assume that if trains were late it was outside the control of the individual driver or even the rail operator.

'I'm always quite tolerant when delays do happen [on the trains] because there's obviously a reason for it and I mean they wouldn't delay us unnecessarily, you know.' (Male, 23, urban area)

Identity

Finally, the views of some individuals were affected by how well a particular mode fitted in with their identity or formed part of it. This applied across a range of different transport modes. Some individuals felt that cars were part of their identities, one describing himself as a 'petrol head', while others, for example, felt that buses rather than tubes fitted their identities. There were also indications that cycling was an element in the identity of some participants, through being bound up with ideas about the environment and nature. For some participants an ethos which valued public transport was an important part of their approach to life and their sense of their place in the world. Identity could also work negatively in the sense of particular modes being seen as incompatible with an individual's personal or social identity. As indicated above, some individuals felt scooters were associated with a social identity they did not want to be linked with, while some young people saw trams as being a 'posh' form of transport that did not reflect their own identity.

Young people's recommendations for transport

Improving existing services

The recommendations made by young people, as one might expect, closely reflected their assessments of their local transport provision. As such, a major theme running across many of the recommendations was to improve or extend existing services. Participants particularly stressed the importance of improving the reliability and predictability of services. Introducing a wider variety of routes and more frequent services was also seen as important, especially for those living in rural areas who were reliant on a single mode and who found it more difficult to travel between outlying villages than to the local transport hub. Some individuals said they would like services to run earlier in the morning and later at night, in one case the preference being for services to run 24 hours a day.

Recommendations also included increasing the number of bus stops with digital displays and the number with bus shelters, making sure buses were cleaner and improving the safety and facilities available at bus and train stations. Participants who were parents were keen for there to be increased space on buses for those who were travelling with buggies. Some participants recognised that improvements would require extra investment, but others seemed to see improving public transport system as a governmental responsibility and did not link it specifically to the amount of money the government needs to raise to pay for the service or the level of fares.

Introducing new facilities

As well as recommendations for improving or extending existing services, there were a number of suggestions for the introduction of new facilities or schemes. One participant suggested introducing dedicated buses for children, for the mutual benefit of the children and other passengers who wanted to travel in a quieter environment. Another suggestion was to introduce seat belts to buses to make them safer, while one individual recommended that there should be a way of contacting the service operator at bus stops so that those waiting could find out when the next bus was due to arrive.

Extending concessions

There was strong support for the extension of concessions to those over 16 and under 65, including to those who were unemployed, students and parents of young children. This support often reflected the personal circumstances of the individual making the recommendation and was commonly motivated by a sense of unfairness about existing schemes. This sense of unfairness stemmed from the perception that the groups that currently benefit from concessions do not have greater needs than other groups.

âI donât think this is fair about old women getting free [travel]. I think we should have something, [the] mums âI cos I think weâre just exactly the same as old age pensioners. I think weâve got more responsibilities than them âI [and] use the buses more often than them. So I think we should get the free thing until the bairns are say the age where they have to pay.â (Female, 21, rural area)

Extending the principle of fairness, there was a recommendation that the cost of using public transport should be linked to the income level of each passenger. Suggestions about extending concessions schemes were also supported by the argument that if government policy is to increase the use of public transport then the most effective way of doing so was to introduce concessions for all travellers.

Tightening the policing of rules and regulations

A number of individuals felt that there should be stricter enforcement of rules and regulations related to transport, particularly in terms of people using public transport without paying and people driving on the roads without the correct tax or insurance. This was motivated in part by ethical or moral concerns and in part by the impact of other peopleâs behaviour on those obeying the rules.

âI think there should be more [parking attendants] really, because there is a lot of people out there without road tax, and theyâre driving their cars and getting away with it. And they should really have a lot more police or road checks because thatâs what makes my insurance higher. Because thereâs other people out there really, which are driving illegally and theyâre crashing, and then it makes everyoneâs insurance higher really.â (Male, 18, urban area)

Improving social inclusion and reducing environmental impact

Though not a repeated theme, there were some suggestions that related to improving access to transport for disadvantaged groups. One participant from a minority ethnic background suggested that services for non-English speakers needed to be improved through having information available in a wider range of languages and by having staff available at stations who were able to help those who were having difficulty interpreting or navigating the transport system. There were also suggestions that the government could help with the cost of driving lessons and that transport information should be available through teletext for

those who did not have access to the internet. A number of recommendations related to reducing the impact of transport on the environment. On a micro-level, these included increasing the incentives to use bicycles by introducing payments to people who used them, the idea for which came from a similar scheme in another country according to the participant who made it. On a macro-level, there was a belief that the government needed to tackle what the participant saw as the undue influence of car manufacturers and drivers on transport policy.

Improving transport environment for cyclists

Finally, there were a number of recommendations specifically aimed at improving the transport environment for cyclists. These included extending the number of places where cyclists could leave their bikes and increasing the security of them. There were also recommendations to increase the number of cycle paths, improve their layout and improving their safety by lighting them better.

Chapter summary

Views about public transport were influenced by a wide variety of factors including, what young people saw as the inherent characteristics of different modes, the quality of local provision, feelings about contact with officials and feelings about travelling with other members of the public. Safety was also a key factor in young people's views about public transport, particularly the fear of harassment or attack.

Young people's underlying views about cars varied from those who were 'enthusiasts' to those who were 'sceptics'. Individuals from both ends of this spectrum identified many benefits associated with cars, including practical advantages, independence, the ability to help others and the fact that driving was a leisure activity in itself. Fewer disadvantages were identified, but these centred round concerns over cost, safety and responsibility, the environment and health. The advantages associated with bicycles were related to health, personal space and freedom, but on the negative side concerns were expressed over safety and exposure to the weather.

Along with direct experience, views about transport were affected by the views and experiences of others, media reports, comparisons of one mode with another, expectations regarding service levels, the behaviour of significant others and personal and social identity. Young people's recommendations regarding transport included improving the quality and extent of local provision, enforcing rules regarding payment of fares and road tax and insurance, and improving access for diverse groups.

Transport decision-making

In chapter 3 we looked at the factors that affected young people's views of different modes of transport. In this chapter we look at how those evaluations translate into choices. The first half of the chapter, section 4.1, discusses the factors that young people take into account in making decisions about what mode to use for a particular journey. The second half of the chapter, section 4.2, focuses on the decisions young people make regarding learning to drive and car ownership.

Modal decision-making

There are two key elements to young people's decisions about what transport mode to use for a particular journey. One element is the range of factors they take into account in making their choice, the second is the process by which they reach their decision, and each of these are discussed in turn below.

Factors affecting decision-making

The factors that affected young people's decisions regarding transport choices can be broadly grouped into service factors, circumstantial factors and modal preference. These factors operate within the context of the transport options, or perceived options, available within the local area.

Service factors

Chapter 3 discussed the importance of service provision in participants' evaluations of different modes of transport, and it is no surprise that these also had a very significant influence over their transport choice. Young people talked about assessing the key aspects of the services available to them, which were cost, speed, waiting time, predictability, not having to change mode or service during a journey, reliability, comfort, how far they were from the transport link when they started their journey and how far their destination was from the transport link at the end of the journey. In some cases individuals compared different modes of transport, for example deciding whether to use a bus or train for a particular journey, while in other cases they would be comparing different routes or services, for example whether to take one bus or another. These factors reflected both perceptions of the inherent characteristics of particular modes and the quality of local provision (see chapter 3). In some cases these assessments were based on limited knowledge or on assumptions, for example assumptions about the relative cost of using a car and using public transport.

Circumstantial factors

In addition to the relatively fixed nature of the services that were available in their local area, young people's decisions were also affected by their particular circumstances or the nature and purpose of their journey. On a very simple level, this included considerations such as the kind of items an individual was taking with them, for example musicians who wanted to travel by car so that they could put their instrument in the boot. On a more complex level, some participants said that their choice of mode would vary depending on whether they needed to be somewhere on time, or were happy to be more spontaneous. One individual, for example, said they used the train to go to school rather than the bus because they knew exactly when the train would come. The nature of the area where people were beginning or completing their journeys could also affect their decisions, particularly for cyclists who would take into account the risk of their bike being stolen or vandalised at their destination. Finally, whether an individual was travelling alone or with others affected their decision. As described in chapter 3, travelling with others could, for example, make a bus journey feel less daunting. When individuals were planning to travel with others, the choice of mode also reflected the balance of power and relative influence of the different individuals travelling together.

Modal preference and aversion

In chapter 3 we discussed a wide range of factors that affected young people's evaluations of different transport modes, including such things as their feelings about contact with other people and about safety. The effect of these evaluations was that some individuals expressed underlying preferences and aversions to particular transport modes that guided their choice in circumstances where all other things were equal. A number of young people, for example described how they would always prefer to use their car if they could, even if it did not mean their journey was quicker or cheaper, because it meant they did not have to travel with other people. In contrast, some participants said that in general they preferred to use the bus, though whether they actually used the bus or tube would depend on a variety of factors such as the cost and the relative time each mode took. Along with the factors identified in chapter 3, young people's familiarity and knowledge of particular modes also affected their underlying preferences. Familiarity, based on having used a mode or service frequently, seemed to give young people confidence in using it for a new journey, in part because it meant they were more certain of things such as departure times or where to board or alight in the case of public transport, or which route to take in the case of travelling by car. One participant, for example, said they would use buses for local journeys as they knew the routes and times well but that they used trains for journeys to destinations further away because they would not know where to get on or off if they used the bus. In contrast, a lack of familiarity could result in an aversion to a particular mode.

“The tram? I've only ever used it once, so I'm not that comfortable on it. Because I don't know the timings or where it stops. Cause to be honest, I don't have no idea where it stops in Birmingham.” (Female, 18, urban area)

Influence of environment and health

Concerns about the environment affected the modal preference of some participants and therefore their choice of transport. For these individuals the impact of transport on their local environment, particularly when it affected them or their family directly, seemed to be more salient than the impact of transport at a global level. One young person, for example, was concerned about local air pollution because several members of his family had asthma. Another participant was concerned about the effect of car use on the risk of flooding because their local area was particularly vulnerable to flooding.

For other young people awareness of the potential impact their choice could have on the environment did not affect the modal preference. A number of reasons were given for this. The first was that the environment was seen as unimportant or less important than other considerations. In some cases this was accompanied by a sense of guilt or embarrassment that personal convenience was valued more than the environment, particularly when the costs of changing behaviour were relatively minor.

“I'm probably burning quite a bit of energy away in some shape or form with me car when I do that one journey every day. I mean it's there in the morning and back at night most times. I'm embarrassed now, two minutes, five minutes, it's literally just at the bottom of the road and across.” (Female, 22, urban area)

A second reason was that the environment was seen as a collective rather than individual responsibility, allied with the belief that individuals are unable to make a difference on their own. This sense of a diffusion of responsibility and limited self efficacy was, in some cases, bolstered by the belief that within an international context the UK was polluting the environment less than other countries, and therefore

other countries had more responsibility to address the issue. A third reason why concerns over the environment failed to translate into action was because of a perceived lack of choices. Some participants felt that, despite being concerned about the environment, the only way they could use a different mode of transport would be to make a very significant lifestyle change, such as getting a different job or a job in a different area, and believed that this was not a feasible option.

Young people's concerns regarding the impact of their transport choices on the environment in part reflected their knowledge and understanding of the issues involved. Some participants, for example, believed that buses damaged the environment more than using cars because the exhaust fumes of buses were more visible than those of cars. At the other extreme, there were participants who appeared to have a very good grasp of the impact different forms of transport had on the environment. Some individuals were so well informed that they were able to critically assess the arguments involved in the debate over the impact of humans on the environment, for example regarding the robustness of the evidence linking the use of fossil fuels and global warming.

Concerns about health also affected the modal preference of some individuals, particularly those who chose to cycle. For other young people, health did not have an impact on their modal preference. As with the environment there could be a sense of guilt associated with their choice, and participants would commonly use the term 'lazy' when explaining why they did not walk or use a bike. However, for some participants there seemed to be a sense of dissonance between their description of themselves as 'lazy' and the active and health-conscious lifestyle they actually led. In these cases, the fact that health concerns did not affect their choice of transport seemed instead to be related to the fact that 'health' and 'transport' were seen as belonging to different domains of activity and therefore health did not enter into their thinking process when it came to transport.

Transport options

Decisions about transport choices were made within the context of the availability of local services, and in general, those in large urban areas had a greater range of options available to them than those in rural areas. Young people's knowledge of the services available also seemed to vary, and there were indications that some participants' knowledge was limited or partial, for example some individuals seemed unaware of the existence of particular bus routes. This clearly restricted the range of options from which they made their choice.

The range of options available to young people also varied because, as discussed in chapter 2, the availability of lifts varied between individual to individual and over time. Some parents and friends were described as having a very positive attitude towards giving lifts, and would give lifts almost whenever requested. Others gave lifts more reluctantly, which led to a significant degree of negotiation. The availability of lifts was also affected by whether those providing them worked or not or were involved in other activities which meant they were not around.

Some participants also appeared to make a distinction between acceptable and non-acceptable options. This differed from simply having an aversion to a particular mode because in the case of options categorised as unacceptable, the mode was not considered at all, whereas an individual who had an aversion to a particular option might nevertheless still consider using it. The phenomenon of acceptable and unacceptable options could be observed when participants were asked about the range of options available to them and would respond by giving a list of modes but when this was probed, would augment their original list with additional modes, such as taxis or bikes. In other words, their initial list suggested

that they had not considered some modes that were in fact available to them. In some cases young people would also indicate explicitly that they did not consider a particular mode to be an option, despite implying that they were aware that it might be available.

‘I have no idea where the nearest train station would be to the hospital. It’s something I didn’t look into, so no, I didn’t really consider that as an option.’ (Female, 23, urban area)

Variations in transport choice

In making their choice, young people weighed up the various factors described above and made a decision about the transport mode for a particular journey. This choice remained relatively stable over time and was described as their normal method of travelling for a particular journey. However, there were a range of factors that meant young people would temporarily vary the mode they used, before returning to their original choice. These factors were:

- **Mood:** young people sometimes used a different form of transport because of variations in their mood. For example, they would describe themselves as feeling in a ‘public transport mood’, or ‘feeling’ like cycling instead of taking the train. In some cases participants related their mood to feeling ‘energetic’ or ‘lazy’, though in other cases it was unclear what the variations in mood were related to.
- **Resources available:** both the amount of time and the amount of money young people had affected their choices. For example, when they were cash poor and time rich, some young people would decide to walk instead of taking the bus, while other individuals described getting a more expensive form of transport or getting a lift when they were late.
- **Weather:** the weather particularly affected cyclist in terms of the risk of accidents, comfort levels and the potential effect on their appearance if they arrived with wet clothes and hair. Those young people who drove scooters were wary of using them in weather conditions that increased the risk of accidents, such as when the roads were icy, while some participants said that if the weather was bad they would consider getting a taxi or driving rather than using public transport.
- **Additional activities:** Young people’s decisions were also affected by what they were doing before or after the main activity for which they were travelling. This meant, for example, that in some cases taking the train was more convenient than the bus because the departure times allowed them to leave earlier or return later, in other cases it meant they drove or got a lift rather than using public transport.
- **Group travelling:** there were occasions when participants who normally travelled alone would travel with others. On these occasions, as with their normal choice of mode, there were discussions about the most convenient times, routes and modes to use, and travelling with others could make the use of a particular mode more appealing.

Temporary variations to the mode of transport used for a particular journey could trigger a change to an individual’s stable or ‘normal’ choice for that journey. For example, one participant described catching the bus when they were late one day and finding that it was significantly quicker and easier to use than they imagined and this led them to start using the bus regularly for that journey. Similarly, temporary variations could open up new possibilities in terms of transport use through changes in modal preference. There could also be permanent shifts in the transport mode or route used for a particular journey due to additional information becoming available, such as when individuals were told about different options by new work colleagues.

Decision-making process

While young people were able to discuss many factors that affected their transport choices, this did not mean that the process by which they made their decisions was prolonged. In fact, participants described four kinds of decision-making processes: automatic or semi-automatic; planned; transport-led; and interdependent.

- **Automatic / semi-automatic:** this process was used in cases where there was a perception of a clear benefit in using a particular mode, where there seemed to be only one choice or where there was a strong familiarity with one route or mode. It was characterised by a very brief consideration of the available options or no conscious decision-making process at all.

âI considered it for a few seconds, but then there was just too many positives to using the car, so I considered it in my head, [but] I didnât discuss it with my wife or anything.â (Male, 24, urban area)

âI didnât really think about it I just thought Iâd use the bus and it would be easy.â (Male, 18, rural area)

- Transport decisions were **planned** where there seemed to be a number of viable options, or conversely a lack of viable options. It would sometimes involve testing routes or modes, comparing the cost of different options or researching modes or routes using the internet or other information sources.

âBasically I did a dummy run one day when I wasnât supposed to be workingâ. If I used a ridiculous amount of fuel on the journey then I wouldâve considered other alternatives, such as the train. But then when I looked at how much it would cost on the train â I think it was something like Â£80 something for a fortnight and I just thought, thatâs not worth it, because I donât travel three days of the week.â (Female, 23, rural area)

- **Transport-led** decisions were those where the choice of route or mode was considered before or at the same time as a decision regarding the choice of destination. This was done because the activity could occur in a number of places so the choice of destination was led by how easy it was to travel there.

âI thought that Iâd get [a job] in a shop somewhere in the City âcauseâ I knew that the bus would take me there.â (Female, 17, rural area)

- There were also cases where the activity and the choice of transport were **interdependent**, such as for those whose jobs involved travelling.

âI need the car then, when I am at work. So I got to take the car to workâ. Me car is me job really. Without me car I wouldnât be able to work.â (Male, 25, rural area)

Decisions about cars

While the decision to use public transport could be made immediately before a particular journey, the decision to drive to a destination depended on whether an individual had learnt to drive and on whether there was a car available to use. The factors affecting young people's decisions regarding learning to drive, and their decisions related to car ownership and choice of car are discussed below.

Learning to drive

The decision to learn to drive seemed automatic to some young people. This did not mean that it was inevitable that they would actually learn to drive because, as discussed below, they could face a number of hurdles in doing so. However, these individuals described the decision in principle to learn as something that seemed 'natural' or 'expected'.

'I wouldn't even think about [learning to drive] I just I wanted to do it, probably because my older sister and friends were learning. It was just natural for me to want to do it as well.' (Female, 23, urban area)

For others the decision was a more active one, involving weighing up costs and benefits .

'Probably in the future [I'll learn to drive]. I haven't thought about it that much. Probably not straightaway. But maybe. If transport got more difficult, if I needed to get to more places.' (Female, 16, rural area)

Once participants had decided they did want to learn to drive in principle, there were a range of factors that affected whether they translated that decision into action. Participants discussed a number of specific motivations that might be thought of as 'pulling' them towards learning to drive because they were benefits that were particularly associated with driving. These motivations are closely related to the advantages of cars identified by young people and discussed in chapter 3. However, instead of being generalised associations based on a hypothetical or abstract situation, these motivations were related to a specific set of circumstances or feelings the young people were experiencing at the time. The motivations were:

- **cost-benefit advantage:** the identification a clear financial or practical advantage for themselves or their family.
- **transition to adulthood:** the perception that learning to drive was part of becoming or being an adult, something reflected perhaps in the fact that driving lessons were a common 17th birthday present.
- **group identity:** the feeling of not wanting to be 'left out' as many friends were learning to drive.
- **independence:** the desire for independence from parents and the desire for independence from public transport.

'If I'm running late one day it makes me have to rush more to get there [at] certain times for the buses. Whereas by car if I'm running late or whatever I can still get there with plenty [of time as] it's going to take me a lot less time like with a car.' (Male, 19, urban area)

There were also a number of factors that seemed to be 'pushing' young people to start driving in the sense that there were things they wished to escape from or avoid and learning to drive was seen as an effective way of doing so. One example was the lack of availability of local transport, which in more extreme cases involved feelings of isolation. In addition young people could be pushed by others to learn to drive. Parents, in particular, were described as encouraging or in some cases cajoling participants into learning to drive. There were two explanations for this. The first was that they felt that driving was an important life skill and wanted their children to gain it as early as possible. The second was that having another driver in the family brought practical benefits such as giving siblings lifts.

In opposition to the factors 'pulling' or 'pushing' young people to learn to drive were a number of barriers to implementing their decision. One of the prime barriers was the cost of driving lessons. However driving lessons were also seen by some as stressful and time consuming, which became a difficulty when they were perceived as clashing with school or college work. Some individuals also found the theory test daunting. Parental anxiety regarding their children learning to drive could act as another barrier, and some parents were reluctant to let their children practice using the family car because they felt it was too big for a learner driver to handle. For some female participants, pregnancy became a barrier to learning to drive because their increased size interfered with the mechanical operation of the car. This could lead to a longer-term delay if the costs associated with raising a child meant they were no longer able to afford lessons after giving birth.

While parents could act as a barrier to young people learning to drive, parental support was also a key enabler. Parents helped out by paying for driving lessons and by taking participants out to practice or giving them lessons in place of a professional instructor, though in some cases this had mixed or limited success.

The overall effect the various forces 'pulling' and 'pushing' young people to learn to drive combined with the presence or absence of the barriers and facilitators described above, was that some participants who felt it was 'natural' to learn to drive did not do so. It also meant that some young people who had actively decided to learn to drive did not or could not translate that decision into action. Conversely, there were individuals who wanted to learn to drive and did do so, as the overall effect of the forces 'pushing' and 'pulling' them to drive, along with the factors enabling to learn, was greater than any barriers in their way.

Car ownership

Motivations for car ownership

For young people living independently, learning to drive and owning a car were seen as interlinked because they would only have access to a car if they bought one. In contrast, for young people living at home who had access to their parents' car or cars, the decision to buy a car was seen as distinct from learning to drive. The main reason young people gave for wanting to buy their own car even when they had access to their parents' was to further increase their sense of independence and self-sufficiency.

‘Like my mum’s car, she’s got first dibs on it. If she’s out, then that’s it, she’s out [and] nobody else can borrow the car. If it’s my car, then I’m gonna need it here.’ So I think that’s really the main thing, using it whenever you want to. (Female, 18, urban area)

Despite the desire to become a car owner, the cost involved remained a significant barrier. Often it was not the cost of buying the car itself that was seen as problematic, or the cost of petrol, but rather the cost of the insurance. This meant that, as with learning to drive, parental support was a significant enabler in car ownership. The help parents offered ranged from buying a car outright and paying for insurance, through to giving some financial support or donating or selling an old family car. Some young people were able to buy and run their own cars because they lived at home without paying rent and worked part-time, which gave them a significant amount of disposable income. One participant planned to share ownership and therefore costs with a friend, though the practical implications of this could not be fully explored as the participant and his friend had not yet raised the funds to buy the car.

Estimating the costs of car ownership

The degree to which participants were able to estimate the costs of car ownership seemed to be related to whether they had to pay for the costs of the car themselves, anticipated paying the costs themselves or had contact with siblings or friends who paid the cost themselves. Thus those participants who only used their parents' cars, or who owned a car but whose parents paid the costs of running it, had relatively little awareness of costs. Those who had siblings or friends who had owned and paid for their own cars had a higher level of awareness, while those who fully owned and paid for their own cars, or anticipated doing so, seemed to have the highest level of awareness. In some cases participants described going through these different stages as their car ownership or use became more independent.

âI think I was less aware of [the costs of running a car] when somebody else was paying for the car that I was driving. For example [when] I was driving mum and dadâs car, I didnât really give the cost of the car much thought other than when I had to put the fuel in the car â. I think since owning my own car the cost â has become paramount.â (Male, 23, urban area)

Factors affecting choice of car

In sharp contrast to the somewhat hazy view of the costs of car ownership held by some young people, there were strong and concrete views about the choice of car both by those who already owned cars and those who did not. These views were based on a mixture of practical and social or cultural considerations. Mileage, reliability, and the cost of insurance were all important factors, particularly to those individuals who were having to meet the costs of ownership themselves, or for those who were car âneutralsâ (see section 3.2.1). Some individuals were also influenced in their choice by familiarity, feeling that they were used to driving a certain kind of car and so wanted to carry on driving that kind. Less practically, different types of car were seen as being appropriate for different stages of an individualâs driving career and different life stages. Similarly, different models of car varied in the extent to which they were seen as age and gender appropriate and how well they matched an individualâs character. Roughly speaking smaller cars were seen as being more appropriate for women, younger people and earlier stages of life and driving careers by both male and female participants.

âI have this belief that certain cars go with certain character, certain age, certain way of living and thatâs a strong belief. So with me, my first car was a Golf, I think thatâs something which is very young something that a young guy would buy as a first car. And obviously my next stage will be BMW and I think thatâs a bit more mature, something for like a twenty-four or twenty-three year old. So I think thatâs my second stage. And the third stage is a Porsche which is very much [for when] me, my wife and my kids are kind of grown up, itâs a nice sports car, a bit more expensive. It kind of

shows that okay you've got a bit of earning, you've kind of into your forties maybe. (Male, 20, urban area)

Finally, there seemed to be an 'X' factor in participants' choice of model of car. In some ways the 'X' factor could be categorised as an aesthetic judgement, but the choice seemed more personal and idiosyncratic than the term 'aesthetic' implies. Instead, it seemed to be bound up with a complex set of personal and cultural associations that participants were not consciously aware of or could not easily articulate.

I'm not bothered about cars, I'm not bothered about the special big makes or anything like that. The Peugeot 106, I've always wanted a Peugeot 106. I don't know [why], I just like the cars. There's just something about them I like. (Female, 21, rural area)

Chapter Summary

The transport choices of young people reflected the costs and benefits associated with particular modes, individual circumstances and underlying preferences, as well as the options perceived to be available or acceptable. Their choices could vary over time due to factors such as mood and the resources they had available, and in some cases temporary variations led to longer term changes. The process by which young people made decisions about transport varied from being considered and planned to being automatic or involving little conscious thought.

Learning to drive seemed natural and automatic for some young people, but for others involved a conscious choice. Having decided to learn to drive in principle, there were a range of factors that 'pulled' or 'pushed' individuals to actually take driving lessons, but also a range of barriers that stood in the way, particularly the cost of lessons. Similarly, cost was a major barrier to car ownership, though some young people had a limited sense of the full costs associated with owning or running a car. Nevertheless, there were strong feelings about the kinds of car young people desired, reflecting both practical considerations and social and cultural ones.

Transport and transitions to adulthood

This chapter considers the key transitions into and towards adulthood which young people experience between the ages of 16 and 25 (section 5.1), and the impact of these transitions on travel and transport (section 5.2). In section 5.3 it then goes on to examine what role travel and transport played in the choices young people made, and how far young people were either supported or constrained in these choices by the transport available to them. Finally, in section 5.4 it looks at young people's travel and transport aspirations for the future.

Changes to young people's travel as they grow older

There were a number of key ways in which travel by the older participants in our sample differed from the younger participants, and in which older participants described their travel as having changed. Older participants made longer journeys, travelled to a wider range of destinations, drove more, used a wider range of public transport modes, and were less reliant on others (particularly parents) for their travel, travelling by themselves or with friends. These changes were influenced by specific transitional events and by more gradual aspects of their personal development.

Triggers to changes in young people's travel and transport use

There was considerable diversity within the sample in terms of the age at which young people experienced different key events, and how many they experienced. The triggers experienced were:

- **Moving to new education and training institutions:** some moved to a sixth-form college from secondary school; others to a further education college or university either straight from school or after spending time out of education.
- **Starting work, or beginning new jobs:** some were in their first job after having finished education or training, whilst others had worked in a number of different jobs. Jobs were sometimes located in similar areas to young people's schools or colleges but could also be much further afield.
- **Becoming unemployed:** young people had become unemployed either straight after leaving school or after having worked for some time. Unemployment resulted in a drop in income if people had been earning and reduced young people's need to travel.
- **Leaving the family home:** they did this either on a temporary basis whilst attending university, or on a more permanent basis when setting up a new household by themselves or with friends or a partner.
- **Moving to a new house or area:** young people moved within and between cities and areas. In some cases they moved to areas they had previously been unfamiliar with.

Becoming a driver and getting a car could be prompted by a trigger event such as starting a job or a family, but was also a trigger for change in travel and transport use in its own right.

Other factors underlying changes in travel and transport use

In addition to these specific trigger events, there were more gradual changes:

- **Personal and social relationships or expanded social networks:** people described developing friendships through new schools or colleges, jobs, new leisure activities and in new areas. Older participants developed romantic relationships, moved in with partners and got married.
- **New interests, hobbies and leisure activities:** young people's leisure activity changed as they developed new hobbies, and interests in new leisure activities like going to the gym or to gigs, pubs and night clubs. People made more journeys independently or with friends rather than parents, further afield and in the evening or at night.
- **Independence and confidence:** young people tended to be given more independence as they became older, and as they and their parents became more confident about their ability to travel alone safely. This gave them more freedom about when and where they travelled. Young people described having to learn how to use transport by themselves as they started to travel more independently, and more widely. This was not necessarily straightforward: young people sometimes felt anxious about aspects of transport use such as buying the correct ticket or getting the right bus. They described themselves as having become more confident with experience of travelling by themselves. Increased knowledge about and confidence in using transport had a knock on effect on how much young people felt they got out of transport, and how much they used it.

“There was a certain time when I wasn't confident about going everywhere and then suddenly I knew - it's like I knew everything. [From] knowing almost nothing to knowing about everything. Once I knew how to go certain places, that confidence builds okay, these are the lines that I could use and the places that I can go, and yes, that was a big difference to almost not knowing

nothing and going my parents' way, to having to go myself and exploring all these different ways of going there.' (Male, 20, urban area)

'You get to see different places as you go through on the bus, you get to look at different things you think oh I'm going to go there next time.' (Female, 18, urban area)

Impact of transitions on travel and transport

Young people's transitions affected travel and transport use in three broad ways: journey purposes, destinations and distance; modes; and transport needs and choices. However, impacts on travel were not evenly distributed: some young people did not experience triggers for key transitions, or did not experience those triggers which resulted in increased travel. Some transitions, for example becoming a parent, resulted in decreased travel because it was constrained by practical or financial barriers. This could leave people feeling socially isolated.

Purpose, destination and distance

Young people made journeys to new schools, colleges, universities or jobs. Those without employment started travelling to their local Jobcentre. People who had become parents made visits with their children to health centres, childcare, and school. Young people travelled to new leisure activities.

The range of destinations expanded to include places within the same localities, or new localities – rural areas, towns and cities. For other people, the locality they travelled to did not change, for example where they moved between schools on the same site, or started working in the same area where they were previously at school. For people whose mobility was limited by financial constraints or the difficulties of travelling with young children, the range of destinations sometimes contracted.

The effect of transitions on how far people travelled also varied. Contrary to what might be expected, transitions towards adulthood were not necessarily reflected in young people travelling further. Young people travelled longer distances where their new job, college or university was further away than previous destinations. Taking up new leisure activities like playing in a band or on a sports team, or developing friendships with people who lived further away, also meant that people travelled further. Young people tended to travel less than they had previously when they had experienced transitions like becoming unemployed or becoming a parent. University students described making shorter individual journeys within their university town, but making more journeys overall.

Transport options and infrastructure

Transitions sometimes resulted in young people having a wider range of transport options available to them. Becoming a driver and getting access to a car (or other form of private transport) had a significant impact on young people's travel, with driving sometimes becoming the main way in which they travelled. Increased confidence in using public transport and in travelling more generally also acted as a catalyst to young people travelling further. Younger age groups tended to travel together for leisure trips in particular and so changes in relationships or in a friend's travel had a knock-on effect: people introduced each other to new modes of transport or routes, or offered lifts by car. Young people's confidence in travelling appeared to be augmented when they travelled together.

Moving area meant young people had access to new forms of public transport and transport infrastructures. Young people who moved away for university sometimes left their car at home, because they had access to good public transport in the area where their university was based.

In other instances transitions resulted in young people having fewer transport options or meant that the transport infrastructure available to them was now more limited. This tended to occur either because they had moved from an area with good public transport links to one with more limited public transport, or because they had less money to spend on transport.

Young people's transport needs and criteria for assessing transport

Transitions towards adulthood also had an impact on what young people needed from transport and the criteria used to choose transport modes or assess how well transport met their needs. Some criteria seemed to become more important to participants as they became older:

- **Speed** became more important. People wanted to get to work as quickly as possible to shorten the working day and have more time for leisure. Parents wanted to get home quickly to spend more time with their children. There was a sense of more pressures on time as people became older and were trying to fit more into the day.
- **Reliability** also appeared to be more important than when they were younger. They needed transport that would get them to work, or appointments at children's doctors or the Jobcentre on time.
- **Cost:** An increase in income meant that young people could afford to spend more money on transport, were less reliant on cheaper forms of public transport and could use transport which cost more, for example cars or the London Underground. However, starting university, becoming unemployed or becoming a parent meant young people had more limited budgets and the cost of travel - and car use in particular - became more of a concern. People who were spending more than they wanted to on transport had to explore cheaper options for getting to work.
- **Preference for car use:** becoming a driver tended to result in this being young people's preferred mode of travel, particularly for longer or more complex journeys, and made people aware of the disparity in convenience and comfort between cars and public transport.

Further impacts of changes in transport use

Independence and confidence were outcomes of transport change as well as drivers of it. Becoming a driver had a particularly big impact on young people's sense of independence. They spoke with enthusiasm about their ability to make journeys spontaneously and without having to rely on others. This new sense of independence and confidence contributed to a desire on the part of some young people to travel more. Increased public transport use also appeared to give young people a new sense of independence and confidence. Becoming familiar with different transport modes or routes meant young people had more flexibility about where they could travel by themselves, and the confidence to try more new routes or modes.

Changes in transport use resulting from transitions also appeared to influence young people's sense of their own identity or personal status. Becoming a driver meant that young people started to develop new roles within their families, for example taking siblings to school or taking parents, grandparents and other family members to do household shopping, to health appointments or on days out. These roles were particularly important in families where parents did not drive or there were elderly family members who

had stopped driving. Here, young people described themselves as being helpers, and were pleased to play this role.

“Being able to drive other people as well. Mum and Dad spent their life driving me around [so] it was my turn to sort of drive them somewhere”. The one that sticks in my mind most about driving people was driving my grandma somewhere” because she was sitting there and she said “Eh, son, you’re very good, you know, and it’s very smooth!” and all this sort of thing and you’re thinking “Yeah! Oh that’s nice!” because they’d sort of watched you want to do this for so long that it was nice to be able to put them in the passenger seat and say right, let’s go somewhere, or take them shopping or something like that. You could actually do something for people” and that was nice.” (Male, 23, urban area)

Being a driver also contributed to young people’s status within friendship groups if they were one of the main drivers in the group, able to give lifts to friends or take them on leisure trips.

Impact of travel and transport on the choices young people made

Having looked at how young people’s transitions affected their travel and use of transport, this section now looks at the impact transport and travel considerations had on the choices young people made, focusing on education, employment and social lives. In all three areas, the aspects of travel and transport that were relevant were:

- **distance:** people sometimes had clear ideas of how far they were willing to travel, which had an impact on how broad a set of options they would consider in relation to for example education and employment.
- **the time** that journeys would take was also important: young people had a sense of how much time they were willing to travel each day, or for particular journeys.
- **cost** was a consideration, particularly where they were financially independent and had to meet the cost of travel themselves. The anticipated or actual costs especially of repeat journeys affected young people’s willingness and ability to take up key opportunities.
- **the public transport infrastructure** in terms of the routes, timetables, availability, connections and reliability was also important, influencing decisions about whether they would be able to reach their destination, whether they could be sure of being on time, and how easy the journey would be. Young people’s perception or knowledge of public transport infrastructure seemed sometimes to be patchy or based on hearsay, and so their assessments may not have been accurate.
- **access to private transport**, either cars (as a driver or passenger) or scooters affected people’s choices.

Impact on education and training

The options considered when moving to sixth-form colleges appeared to be quite straightforward: young people generally attended the sixth-form college attached to their school or the one closest to their home and which their friends were likely to attend. Transport became relevant only if they wanted, or their parents wanted them, to attend a school further afield which was viewed as offering a better education or a different curriculum.

Young people tended to consider a wider range of further education colleges, and ruled out options where they were concerned about having to travel for long periods of time. Where young people were leaving home to attend university, travel played a more limited role for those who were happy to go to university some distance away, but some people did not want to be too far from their home area and family. Those who were planning to continue to live at home whilst they attended university needed a university within easy commuting distance.

The availability of transport widened the choice of education and training institution available to some young people. Where transport links were good, this allowed young people to make choices based on criteria other than transport, for example, the courses or the quality of education offered. However, where other criteria were equal, ease or cost of travel sometimes tipped the balance in favour of a specific institution, often the one closest to the young person's home. This was particularly the case where young people anticipated that the transition into education would be challenging, so that the ease with which they could travel to education or training was an important factor.

Case study

A young man in our sample was interested in undertaking a part-time university course in computer-aided design alongside his work as a freelance software designer. The course he wanted to do was not available at either of his local colleges, but they did offer a course that would lead to a higher level qualification. He was reluctant to undertake this course because he felt it was a big commitment alongside his paid job, and worried that it would limit the time he had available to spend with his wife. However, he decided it was probably worth it, and enrolled at the university closest to his home. He did not feel he would be able to make the journey from his home to the university by public transport because the connections were poor. He tested the journey to university by car and was happy with it. This participant said that he would not have gone to university if he did not have access to a car because the journey would make an already challenging commitment even more difficult. (Male, 24, urban area)

Where transport was limited, this could constrain the choices available. Young people in rural areas or who lived in small towns described having limited choice. However, none of the young people in our sample reported travel and transport as being the main factor in deciding their choice of where to study where they felt they had different options to choose from.

The transport available also influenced the ease and success with which young people were able to make transitions in education and training. First, being a driver or having access to lifts allowed young people to make longer journeys with greater ease than if they had been reliant on public transport, particularly in rural areas where a trip would involve a number of connections. Young people who were reliant on public transport or lifts sometimes found their travel to school or college more challenging.

Second, unreliable transport sometimes meant that young people were late arriving at school or college, receiving late marks or having their Education Maintenance Allowance docked. Where public transport timetables did not meet young people's needs and they did not have a car, they also sometimes found it difficult to participate in out of hours activities such as revision sessions, especially if they were also doing paid work.

The cost of travel could be a source of anxiety and make the transition more difficult. People sometimes described having to weigh up the benefits of going to college or university against the cost of travel. Finally, the speed and availability of transport influenced how easy it was for young people to combine education and training with other responsibilities such as paid work and caring for others.

Case study

One young person decided to start an evening course to qualify as a teaching assistant. She was already working as a classroom helper at her son's school, and thought that getting a qualification would help her to get a paid job, providing extra income to support herself, her husband, and two young children. The course was available at three colleges in her local area. She chose to go to the college closest to her home mainly because the travel would be less expensive (either by car or public transport). She got lifts to college from her husband because it was easier and because the local bus would get her to the course either too early or too late. She did not receive any financial support as part of undertaking the course, and worried about the impact of the cost of these journeys on her household budget.

“There are weeks where you are short when you've paid all your bills or whatever and think oh I need petrol for the car or something or the car needs a MOT” then you worry about the costs of getting there. Is it worth it? Well it is worth it in the end because I'll be qualified but is it worth going, using the money that could have been used on something else to get me to college? (Female, 23, rural area)

Impact on employment

The degree to which travel and transport influenced the employment options available to young people depended on the type of area young people lived in, the type of employment sought, and their willingness to travel for work. People living in inner city areas felt that they had easy access to many of the best job opportunities available. In contrast young people living on the outskirts of towns or in rural areas had to travel longer distances to access the best job opportunities.

Young people with more specific skill sets or aspirations had a smaller range of job options. They tended to travel further and made more complicated journeys, and so transport was important in facilitating their choice. Others had moved to new cities to be able to access the type of job they wanted. People were also willing to travel further to access better paid work. Others were less willing or able to travel further and their employment options were therefore restricted.

Drivers were relatively unconstrained by transport considerations in their job choices. Participants with access to a car were able, where necessary, to do journeys to work that would have taken a long time, been complicated, or more expensive if they had to rely on public transport. Young people living in urban and inner city areas were also less constrained by transport because they tended to have a wider range of jobs available to them in the local area, and more public transport options.

In areas that were less well served by public transport, young people's options could be more limited in terms of the areas where they could contemplate working and the hours or shifts they were able to work. Lifts from family and friends sometimes helped young people make journeys when public transport was not available. The cost of transport also limited choices in some instances. This arose where young people were doing part-time work (and therefore earning limited salaries) or where the cost of travel to work was particularly high (especially if wages were particularly low). Here, lack of affordable public transport or

restricted routes and timetables could mean it was not worthwhile for people to take up a particular work option.

Male 1: Especially like I say with a job as well like I couldn't get a job in [nearest city] because it'd cost me what £8 a time (â) from [home village] so I've got to work about two or three hours just to get enough money to get there and back, so if I'm only working an 8 hr day I'm only going paid £5 technically (â)

Male 2: Well some jobs, if I got a job up here and I'll come every day mostly and that'll take most of your wages up you get from work anyway, especially if you're talking about £3.60 for a return ticket a day and sometimes the time might be wrong and you have to get a taxi or whatever and that would take most of your wages up

(Focus group, 16-18, rural area)

Finally, some jobs required a driving licence or access to a car or van. Young people who did not fulfil these criteria were frustrated at not being able to apply for these opportunities.

Transport also influenced the ease or success with which young people made employment transitions. First, transport could influence the financial success with which young people moved into work. Having access to a car allowed young people to make longer journeys to work or to take jobs that required regular and diverse travel, which tended to be better paid and to have career prospects. For one young person, driving meant they could also undertake voluntary work, which they felt, would benefit their career. For parents, having a car could mean having to pay for fewer hours of childcare. In other instances, however, the financial impact of young people's transport use was less positive. Young people reported the cost of transport as putting a strain on their finances, but they continued to make these journeys because travelling further afield gave them access to better paid jobs or jobs with better long-term career prospects. Congestion also caused problems for young people where it made them late for work, and some said their pay was docked as a result.

Second, transport influenced the ease with which young people were able to combine work with other responsibilities and activities. Driving or good public transport meant that journeys were quicker and more predictable, and this was important for people who wanted to spend time with their children, partners or families, people who were combining work with other activities like education, and more generally for more time for leisure.

Impact on social transitions

Access to regular and reliable transport allowed young people to participate in social opportunities spontaneously and with relative ease. Conversely, having limited access to public transport or being reliant on lifts restricted young people's ability to travel for leisure or see friends and family.

The availability of public transport in the evenings was an important influence on whether young people socialised with friends at pubs, gigs and nightclubs, particularly where they could not afford taxis. Young people in rural areas were most constrained in their social transitions by the availability of transport. Here, younger age groups in particular were reliant on lifts, irregular public transport services or taxis, and were limited in how spontaneous they could be, especially in the evening. People reported having to rely on lifts from parents when they would have preferred not to have done especially as they grew older, or not

being able to make trips at all. One young musician described having to stay at friends's houses or sleep rough in order to play at evening gigs, because there were no services back to his village after early in the evening, and he could not afford to pay for a taxi regularly. Young people in inner city and urban areas sometimes felt their choice was limited when the leisure opportunities they wished to access were outside the centre of town, for example in out-of-town retail parks.

The speed of transport and time taken to travel was also an important influence especially where young people were balancing a range of different commitments including work, education or caring responsibilities. Cars allowed young people to make journeys more quickly, which for some participants meant that they could fit more leisure activities into their working days.

Young parents in particular described difficulties with travel and transport as reducing the amount they could travel to see friends and family and this could make them feel socially isolated. One young woman said she would find the journey back to her home town to see her friends difficult and so she did not see them regularly, and described the impact that being able to see them would have.

âIâd be a lot happier. Iâd probably be a lot more relaxed and stuff as well. Everybody needs to see their friends and, you know, have a bit of a social life.â (Female, 21, rural area)

These young people sometimes described making trips to local shops or going on walks so that they could get out of the house and see other people.

Becoming a driver widened the social choices young people had available to them. Young people described being able to drive as allowing them to explore new leisure opportunities in their local areas, and to make journeys to see friends and family. Becoming a driver had a particularly pronounced impact on the opportunities available to young people in rural areas, with young people describing this transition as offering them much more choice and independence in their social lives. Driving was also important to young people in inner city and urban areas because it meant that they were able to explore areas outside their usual public transport routes.

Transport as a constraint or enabler

Looking across these three types of transition, there are three groups of young people who were most constrained by transport in the choices they made:

- **young people living in rural areas:** this group tended to be heavily reliant on lifts from family members before age 17. Becoming a driver was viewed as essential for getting around easily, and young people who were reliant on public transport or lifts tended to be restricted in how easily and spontaneously they could travel. Whilst this group tended to rely on lifts or public transport to get to school, travel to employment and leisure opportunities were constrained by the availability of public transport
- **young parents:** this group's ability to use travel was constrained by the practical difficulties associated with having young children. Access to a car facilitated travel for some, but others had limited access to shared cars or were reliant on lifts. This limited their mobility, and also made transitions into education and work more difficult
- **young people who were out of work** whose travel was constrained by their limited incomes.

There were two main groups of young people whose transitions were least constrained by travel and transport:

- **car users:** drivers reported their cars as allowing them to make longer or more complicated journeys with relative ease and spontaneity. Having a car offered them independence from others, or from reliance on public transport routes and schedules. Whilst there were some constraints on their travel for example car related costs, not being able to use cars after having consumed alcohol, or problems with congestion, this group reported having a car as facilitating the choices they made.
- **users of good public transport:** young people who lived in inner city areas with extensive public transport infrastructures and who were confident in using them were relatively unconstrained in their choices.

Future travel and mode aspirations and plans

Finally, the study also explored young people's aspirations for the future and what role they thought travel and transport would play in their plans. Research participants, particularly at the lower end of the age range, sometimes struggled to project very far into the future. Where young people were able to describe their future aspirations, there was a great deal of diversity in their ambitions. In some cases young people's aspirations related to a move into work in their local areas, and they did not envisage these types of transitions as having a substantial impact on their transport use. Other young people had more extensive aspirations, with more travel involved: they wanted to go to university, travel abroad, or move to different cities so that they could find the best work.

Young people described two main ways in which they thought their transport use would change in the future. The first related to where they thought they would live: young people wanted to move to cities such as London which they felt had good transport infrastructures because they felt this would help them in living active and varied lives. This was particularly important for young people who lived in rural areas with limited public transport, and for young people who envisaged having busy lifestyles where good transport would be important.

The second way in which people wanted their transport to change, or thought it would change, was in relation to modes. Plans for car use featured prominently here. Young people talked about wanting to learn to drive or continuing driving. In some cases they thought their car use would increase because they envisaged themselves commuting to work. Young people with families of their own sometimes envisaged having to buy a second car for when the parent currently caring for children returned to work. However, less car use was also envisaged. People planning to go to university thought they would not need a car, or would not be able to afford one. Young people also sometimes viewed themselves as using transport other than cars in the future. People who planned to live in large cities thought they would rely on public transport or bikes because it would be easy, and because of traffic, parking and London's congestion charge.

Chapter summary

Young people make a range of transitions between the ages of 16 and 25 which affect their travel and transport use. These include specific trigger points at which their personal circumstances change, as well as a more general growth in confidence and independence. These impact on journey purpose, destinations, distance, the transport options available and modes used, what young people need from transport or the

criteria by which they assess options. But transitions are not evenly distributed among young people, and not all lead to an expansion in travel or transport use.

Travel and transport played a range of roles in influencing people's choice. Choices could be constrained where the availability of public transport was limited particularly in rural areas, for young parents who faced more difficulties in using public transport, and where people were out of work or otherwise particularly financially constrained. Conversely, access to cars and good public transport gave young people more choices or opportunities.

Conclusions and Implications for Policy

The aim of this final chapter is to summarise the main findings of the research and to set out the implications for transport policy in order for it to reflect the needs, behaviour and aspirations of young people. The implications of the findings also reflect the emphasis the Future of Transport White Paper (2004) placed on transport meeting the needs of local communities, facilitating access to key services, and balancing economic and social priorities against environmental and financial sustainability.

The conclusions are presented under four main headings: encouraging the use of public transport; improving access to key services and opportunities; facilitating transitions to adulthood; and distinctiveness of young people's travel behaviour and attitudes.

Encouraging the use of public transport

A key element in creating an environmentally and financially sustainable transport infrastructure is to encourage people to use public transport more and use cars less. This has proved difficult to do in the population as a whole, and the evidence from this study indicates that there are significant hurdles in persuading young people to rely less on their cars where they have a choice.

Young people perceived clear practical benefits of using cars some of which, such as comfort, speed and cost, can potentially be matched by public transport. In contrast, the ability to go from and to an exact destination rather than having to travel to a transport link first is not something that, by its nature, public transport is likely to be able to compete with. In addition to the practical benefits associated with car use, there were a wide range of other benefits identified by young people. Some of these, such as seeing cars and driving as leisure activities in themselves, might perhaps become less significant as individuals get older, and indeed there were indications in this research that that was the case. Similarly, the role of cars and driving as a marker of adulthood could be expected to become less relevant as young people gained other markers such as employment status, their own homes and long term partners and families. Other benefits of car use, particularly the sense of control and independence associated with driving, might be expected to remain significant to young people as they move into the next stages of adulthood and indeed become more entrenched as developments such as having a family add to the utility of car use. This certainly seemed to be the case for some participants in this study.

While there are potential difficulties in getting young people out of cars, there are also difficulties in getting them on to public transport. There were a range of factors that contributed to negative views of public transport. The quality of the service provision and the internal environment on those services were clearly important. In addition, young people had negative experiences of contact with officials, fears for their safety and concerns arising from the 'public' nature of public transport in terms of sharing a space

with others. However, counterbalancing these were positive attitudes to the potential for interacting with people on public transport, positive contact with officials and experiences of good quality provision.

Within the context of these positive and negative views of public transport and cars, the findings in this study indicate that it would be easier to persuade some young people to use public transport than others. As discussed in chapter 3, young people's orientations to cars ranged from 'enthusiasts' at one end to 'sceptics' at the other, with 'neutrals' in the middle. Clearly it would be harder to persuade car 'enthusiasts' to stop using their cars than it would those who were neutral or sceptical about cars. However, as indicated in chapter 4, as well as an individual's modal preference, transport choices of all individuals were also based on practical considerations. This implies that increasing the practical benefits of using public transport could be an effective way of encouraging individuals to use public transport more, irrespective of their orientation towards cars.

The evidence indicates that improvements to provision of public transport should be targeted at: reducing the cost of public transport; increasing the frequency of services (particularly in rural areas where a single service could provide the only means of getting to the nearest town or between villages); reducing crowding; and improving the reliability and predictability of services. Coupled with these improvements, the concerns which are most important to young people are safety, particularly in terms of the fear of harassment and attack while using services, and the cleanliness and general up-keep of the internal environment of public transport. The attitude and behaviour of officials also plays an important role in persuading some young people to use or keep using public transport, and ensuring these are positive should be a high priority.

Substantial improvements to public transport along these lines should be successful in getting some young people out of their cars. However, it is likely to take a greater improvement in services to persuade car enthusiasts to use public transport than others. Therefore, in addition to improvements to services, it may also be worth targeting these individuals' underlying preference for cars. It is true that this will be difficult because their preference in part reflects a 'culture' of car use, which is based on deep-seated influences such as the media, friends and family, and issues related to identity. Trying to change this 'culture' would clearly need to form part of a long-term strategy. However, modal preferences are also affected by knowledge and familiarity, and in the short term these could be productive areas to target. The best time to target these areas would be at the trigger points identified in chapter 5 when young people's use of transport can change. Improving young people's knowledge of public transport at these points could initiate a virtuous circle in which increased knowledge leads to greater familiarity through use, which in turn leads to even better knowledge.

The most appropriate trigger points to target are the move in or out of education, training and work, along with when an individual joins a sports or leisure organisation. These transitions offer obvious ways of identifying the point at which they occur (for example the first contact with a sports club, employer or educational institution) and a mechanism for delivering information (the club membership manager, employer or course registration officers). However, the evidence from this study is that in order for any information distributed to be effective in terms of influencing behaviour, it would need to do more than alert young people to the existence of public transport options. The information would need to provide a clear and relatively detailed guide to using the services.

The findings of this study do not suggest an obvious way of increasing the influence of environmental issues in young people's decision-making. Some young people felt justified in ignoring environmental issues because they believed addressing them required collective action or because within an international context the UK as a whole was already doing more than other nations. Other young people felt that environmental issues were important, but convenience or the perception of a lack of realistic choices prevented them from altering their behaviour. Local environmental impacts seemed more salient to young people than global ones, but as indicated above concern did not always translate into action.

Overall, the study indicates that the policy challenge of increasing the influence of environmental concerns in decisions about transport encompasses both educating young people about the impacts of different modes of transport and persuading them to take these impacts into account in their choices. In the short term, the answer may be to reflect the environmental cost of transport in its monetary cost, which this study indicates does affect young people's choices. If the environmental element of the cost was labelled, for example in petrol prices and fare prices, then this might also play a role in educating young people as well as persuading them to take the environment into account. In the longer term, there needs to be a sustained attempt to embed environmental issues within culture more generally. Similar conclusions can be applied to the findings relating to the impact of health on young people's transport choices. The research shows that health is not a major driver of transport decisions, and again the challenges for policy involve both education and persuasion.

Improving access to key services and opportunities

Ensuring that transport enables everyone, including young people, to access key services was an important element of the Department's Future of Transport White Paper (2004). Chapter 5 describes the ways in which transport acts as a barrier to young people's access to services. In terms of education, the cost and availability of local transport affected whether some young people took up education or training opportunities at all, as well as affecting the options they chose. In some cases this resulted in young people taking up less attractive or relevant opportunities because they were closer to home and therefore reduced the cost of getting there or because timetables or routes meant it would be very difficult to access their preferred options. However, the provision of local transport also affected young people's access to education in less obvious ways. The regularity and punctuality of their attendance was affected by the reliability of local transport and their ability to participate in extra curricular activities was also affected by how long it took for them to travel to and from the educational institution. In addition, where cost was an issue, young people reported increased anxiety and strain associated with attending education or training.

Transport also affected young people's access to employment. Not surprisingly, the cost of transport had a critical impact on the financial viability of taking up employment opportunities. In addition, both cost and the availability of transport affected the range of employment options open to young people and their choice of hours, both in terms of their choice of shift and the opportunity to do overtime. Social activities were directly affected by the cost and availability of transport in terms of the viability of travelling to where the activities occurred. Leisure activities were also indirectly affected by the time it took young people to travel to their main daytime activity and back again, and therefore how much spare time they had.

However, not all young people were affected to the same degree by local transport provision. The ability to drive or the availability of lifts played a crucial role in mitigating the effect of limited local transport options and, as discussed in chapter 4, this was a key motivator pushing young people to learn to drive.

A second mediating factor was the financial resources available to the young person, which reflected their own work status, parental work status (for dependent young people) and whether they were required to pay rent. Another obvious, but important, factor affecting the impact of transport provision was the location of services. Relatively limited transport options had far less impact if individuals could walk to the services they wanted to access. This was less likely to be the case when young people had specialist needs or interests, for example if they were interested in getting an unusual job or participating in a minority sport or activity. For these individuals, it was unlikely that the service they wanted to access would be located near to them and therefore transport provision had a greater effect. The impact of transport provision on young people was also affected by their general level of confidence and their confidence in using transport, which in turn affected their willingness to travel. Finally, young parents faced particular difficulties in using public transport and were particularly affected by limited transport provision.

These findings indicate a number of clear ways for improving access to services for young people. Most obvious is to improve local transport provision in those areas, often in rural locations, where it is currently limited. However, to have an effect on those whose access to key facilities is most significantly affected, i.e. those on low incomes, improvements in transport provision would need to be coupled with a reduction in the cost of transport. This could be done either by reducing fares for all passengers or by targeting reductions in fares at those most in need by using concessions. The other ways of addressing the impact of transport on young people's access to services are to ensure that there are sufficient key services in areas that have limited transport provision, and secondly to investigate whether facilitating young people, in areas with limited alternatives, in learning to drive would have any benefits [15].

Facilitating transitions to adulthood

As chapter 5 demonstrates, young people's transition to adulthood had significant effects on their transport use. Some changes, such as starting work or going to college, led to increased mobility and involved young people using new modes of transport. Other changes, such as becoming a parent, tended to have the opposite effect, reducing the distances travelled and making it harder to use a variety of transport modes. Another implication of the changes involved in moving into adulthood was that young people started going to new destinations and, for some, a greater number of destinations, which meant they had to use new routes and spent more time travelling. Combined with a change in the nature of the activities they were engaged in, this meant that young people had different needs from transport. Speed became more important as they felt there were more pressures on their time. This was particularly true of young parents who were also working as they wanted to get home to spend time with their families. Reliability became more important as the pressures to arrive at work, the Jobcentre or children's doctors appointments increased. Those who moved into work and whose income had increased as a result, had more money available to spend on transport, but in some cases were dissatisfied with the amount that they were spending and so explored cheaper options. Those who became unemployed, who started university or who became parents had more limited budgets and therefore the cost of transport became more of a concern.

Chapter 5 also shows that while young people's transitions to adulthood affected their transport use, their transport use also affected their transitions. Transport could both aid transitions and make transitions more problematic. Being able to use transport independently and successfully led to a sense of achievement and increased confidence, reinforcing the effects of moving into adulthood and becoming more engaged with the world outside school and home. The increased sense of independence associated with being able to

drive also helped demarcate the transition into adulthood. Feelings of greater confidence and independence in turn could lead to a desire to exploit new-found freedoms and to travel more. On the other hand, becoming a driver led to young people taking on new roles and responsibilities within families and friendship groups, such as driving siblings or friends around. As a result, family and friends began seeing young people differently, as did the young people themselves, which again reinforced the change in status and identity that forms a core element of moving into adulthood.

The implication of these findings is that the transition to adulthood has significant implications for the demands placed on transport provision and these need to be taken into account in local and regional transport planning. This is particularly important as the availability of good transport services affects how successful or problematic that transition is. For young people, then, transport plays an important role in their journey to adulthood.

We know from the National Travel Survey (NTS) [16] that there has been a decline in the mobility of young adults over the last decade or so. Between 1989/91 and 2002/3, for the 17-25 years age group, there was an overall reduction in the average number of trips per person of 22 per cent, as well as a decline in the number holding a driving licence. Whilst this study cannot explain the reasons for this decline, it has identified a number of different events or circumstances in which young people's mobility increased. These included leaving home to attend university or set up an independent household; having geographically widespread social and family networks; commuting longer distances to work; and being confident about travelling. If the numbers of young people with these different circumstances is decreasing, or if these circumstances are occurring later in young people's lives, then this may help to explain the longitudinal decrease in their mobility. There is some evidence to suggest that the period of dependent youth has been extended and economic independence has been deferred as young people are now encouraged to stay longer in education and training and delay entry into full-time employment (Jones, 2005). As a consequence young people have ended up remaining within the family home for longer, and may not commute because they are not in work. These changes may therefore be part of the explanation for declining mobility amongst young people.

Distinctiveness of young people's travel behaviour and attitudes

Although this study was not designed to compare directly the behaviour and attitudes of young people to those of other groups in the population, there are a number of aspects of young people's relationship with travel and transport that seem distinct from older or younger individuals. However, before going on to discuss these, it is important to underline the extent of intra-group diversity that exists. As chapter 2 demonstrates, young people vary considerably in the degree to which they are independent from their parents in terms of living arrangements, the extent of their family responsibility and how frequently they use public transport. In part, these differences reflect the diversity of circumstances in which they find themselves in terms of whether they live in a rural or urban area and whether they have access to a car.

Despite this diversity, the findings of this study and the National Travel Survey (NTS) indicate that young people as a group may differ from other groups in their use of and attitudes toward transport in a number of important ways. The analysis of the results of the NTS shows that young adults make fewer trips than older adults, but that they rely on public transport to a greater extent. These trends are reflected in the fact that young people's relationship to time and money changes as they get older, with a tendency for them to become more 'time poor' but 'cash rich', though this of course varies significantly from individual to individual. These findings imply that it is particularly important for the views of young people to be taken

into account by policy makers, both because they are significant users of public transport and because this period in people's lives may offer a window of opportunity in which their views and patterns of behaviour can be affected.

Another aspect of young people's relationship to transport that would appear likely to change as they get older is their confidence and familiarity with using transport. This study shows that beginning to use transport independently involves a period of learning and that this is a process that potentially can take a number of years. This can be seen as part of a more general aspect of the transition to adulthood which is the necessity of negotiating the world outside the home independently. Young adulthood is often a period of significant change and uncertainty, and it is therefore perhaps not surprising that confidence in using transport, along with the sensitivity to sharing a public space with strangers, featured so strongly in young people's accounts. Similarly, the extent to which safety dominated the experience of some young people was striking. Although none of these issues are unique to young people, the role which they play is likely to decline as young people become more certain of their identity as adults and more confident in their interactions with others.

[15] E.g. 'Wheels to Work' initiatives providing subsidised mopeds to young people in rural areas - see Countryside Agency (2000) Two wheels work: A good practice guide for developing and implementing Wheels to Work schemes. Please see also websites of local authorities running Wheels to Work schemes.

[16] NTS, 2004.

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