

‘How public funds can be used to support the mobility needs of disabled people’ - consultation response

About us

Wheels for Wellbeing is an inclusive cycling charity based in south London. We are a grassroots disability organisation, running five sessions a week at our three inclusive cycling hubs. Using any of our fleet of over 200 cycles (handcycles, tandems, tricycles, recumbents, wheelchair cycles, side-by-sides and bicycles) Disabled people of all ages can discover or rediscover cycling, whilst enjoying its health and wellbeing benefits. Every year around 1,200 Disabled people, aged from 18 months to 99 years-old, cycle at our hubs. We are also increasingly recognised as the voice of Disabled cyclists in the UK.

Motability, physical activity and cycling

The Motability Scheme has provided a valuable service to Disabled people and their families for many years, and should continue to do so. For those unable to walk or cycle, a scooter or powered wheelchair can provide a vital lifeline and form of independence. For others still, a car or wheelchair accessible vehicle may provide the right solution to enable them to travel independently. As a disability charity led by Disabled people, we are also aware of the many challenges that Disabled people face when accessing and using public transport, and acknowledge that this is not always an easy or viable option for many, especially those who live in remote or rural areas. We also recognise that the scheme is accessible only to those in receipt of the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or the enhanced rate of the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

However, as our [research](#) has shown, it remains the case that in transport policy Disabled people are overwhelmingly likely to be seen as a pedestrian, car driver, bus or taxi user. Very seldom is any thought given to the idea that a Disabled person might also be a *cyclist*. The result is that many Disabled people will not consider themselves as cyclists, or potential cyclists, simply because the language used around travel and disability focuses on all modes of transport except cycling.

This lack of recognition of Disabled cyclists is problematic, not least because Disabled people are half as likely as non-Disabled people to be physically active and more likely to be socially isolated; and therefore have the most to gain from being physically and socially active. What’s more, the lack of awareness around inclusive

cycling only reinforces the misconception that Disabled people can't or don't cycle. Many Disabled people continue to rely on driving or being driven for day-to-day travel - either by door-to-door services, such as community transport services, or by taxis and private car hire - even when cycling might be a realistic (or even desirable) option for them.

By encouraging and supporting more Disabled people to cycle and lead physically active lifestyles, the Government would be better placed to meet its current policy commitments to:

- Reduce levels of physical inactivity
- Reduce air pollution and tackle climate change (given that Disabled people are more likely to rely on private car hire and taxis to get around)

Such a shift in focus would also support UN Sustainable Development Goal 3: "Good Health and Wellbeing".

Recommendations

Though the mobility needs of some Disabled people might only be met through the provision of a scooter, powered wheelchair, car, wheelchair accessible vehicle or other vehicle type, there are undoubtedly many for whom cycling would offer a more desirable solution. Indeed, we know of many Disabled cyclists who receive DLA or PIP (and would be eligible for the Motability Scheme), but who have had to access cycling through alternative means because the scheme does not currently include cycles. For some Disabled cyclists, cycling also forms part of a longer journey or commute involving multiple modes of transport, such as rail.

Furthermore, it is important to consider that cycling, in contrast to private car use, provides a physically active, non-polluting, sustainable form of transport. Cycles, in contrast to scooters, powered wheelchairs, cars and wheelchair accessible vehicles, may also provide a significantly cheaper and more cost-effective form of transport in many cases.

We therefore strongly recommend that the Government explore options that enable the Motability Scheme to expand its offer to include non-standard cycles. For many Disabled people it could be that cycling, over any other form of transport, best meets their mobility needs.

Wheels for Wellbeing would be happy to assist in the development of any such project.