

# Mental Health & Public Transport

A Report by the  
Mental Health Action Group



*“If we were in a wheelchair they can see we have troubles with our mobility but you cannot see the crutches we use for our minds and how easy they are knocked from under ourselves.” [sic]*

[Survey Respondent](#)

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Afiya Trust  
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MDF – Bi-Polar Organisation  
Mental Health Matters  
Mind  
National Survivor & User Network (NSUN)  
Sane  
Shaping Our Lives (SOLNET)  
Together – Working for Wellbeing  
Transport for All

We would also like to acknowledge our thanks and appreciation to all the mental health organisations in Derbyshire who have provided enthusiastic support locally to enable as many people as possible to participate in this survey. Finally, and most importantly, we express our sincere gratitude to everyone up and down the country who has taken the time to complete our survey and share their personal and often heartfelt experiences in such a thorough and honest way. Thank you so much for your time and support, we hope we have done justice to the evidence you have shared so willingly.

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## Forewords

It is hard to understate the importance of transport.

If we cannot travel around our communities we cannot be a part of them. We cannot work or seek work, study, visit friends and family, be a part of faith communities, engage in sport, culture and leisure pursuits. Neither can we attend to the basics of everyday life like shopping for food, attending medical appointments, and gain other support we need. All the things that every citizen has a right to expect are denied us. The pages of this report are replete with examples of the devastating impact of being unable to travel and the isolation that results. Access to all facets of economic, social and community life depend on travel.

The prejudice and discrimination associated with mental health conditions ensure that we are already among the most excluded in our society. Being denied the opportunity to travel exacerbates this isolation. It not only prevents us from participating as equal citizens, it also worsens our mental health condition in a negative spiral of exclusion. Too many of us remain prisoners in our own homes or in supported accommodation. The loneliness and loss of self-worth that result lead us to give up on ourselves and our possibilities. We live without hope for the future or, too often, choose to end our lives. Any efforts to reduce this cycle of despair – enable us to access work and other opportunities in our communities – cannot be successful if we are denied access to the transport necessary to access the opportunities we value.

Access to transport might be described as the ‘missing link’. Despite its importance to our lives, access to transport for those of us living with mental health conditions is rarely considered. On the one hand, deliberations around accessible transport tend to focus on those with mobility and sensory impairments. On the other hand, mental health policy typically pays scant attention to mobility and transport. One of the six core objectives of the cross government national mental health strategy - *‘No Health Without Mental Health’* (February 2011) – states that: “More people who develop mental health problems will have a good quality of life – greater ability to manage their own lives, stronger social relationships, a greater sense of purpose, the skills they need for living and working, improved chances in education, better employment rates and a suitable and stable place to live.”

While there are 57 references to employment in the strategy, the access to transport that is so central to improved life chances and a good quality of life, is notably absent. There is only one mention of transport/travel tucked away in an appendix. It is critical that mental health policy starts to address the hitherto ‘missing link’ of access to transport and that both disability and transport policy address the barriers to mobility faced by people with mental health conditions.

To the best of my knowledge this is the first report that systematically addresses the importance of access to transport in the lives of people with mental health conditions. The first survey that explores the barriers faced by people with such conditions and the ways in which these might be overcome. If transport policy makers and operating companies involve people with mental health conditions, we could move towards a transport system that truly enables us to meet our aspirations as citizens, in everything from employment to leisure and family life.

It is an important report and should be essential reading for all involved in mental health, disability access and transport policy at national and local levels.



**Rachel E. Perkins BA, MPhil (Clinical Psychology), PhD, OBE**  
**Member of Implementing Recovery - Organisational Change Project Team**  
**Chair of Equality 2025 UK Cross Government Advisory Group on Disability Issues**  
**Mind Champion of the Year 2010**

Passenger Focus welcomes this report. It is drawn from the direct experiences of the travelling public and shows the vital contribution that public transport, across all modes, plays in making society function. This report highlights the concerns and issues of a special group within society, one with some specific requirements, but Passenger Focus recognises that many of the recommendations identified, if implemented, would benefit all passengers equally.

Passengers expect that information is readily available when planning a journey and, perhaps more importantly, that at times when travel plans are disrupted, accurate and timely information is available to provide reassurance to passengers enabling them to make alternative arrangements with confidence. When passengers do make journeys, the least that they can expect is that staff are adequately trained and provide good customer service. Our research has shown that passengers' satisfaction with the value for money that many fares offer remains low. Added to the continued withdrawal of subsidised bus services, many passengers will find journey opportunities for work, for leisure and simply for reasons of social inclusion, have been lost.

Passenger Focus commends the initiative shown by the Mental Health Action Group in carrying out this report and wishes them success in taking it forward.

**Paul Fullwood**  
**Passenger Focus**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

**‘Mental illness is the largest single cause of disability in the UK. The economic and social costs in England are estimated at around £105 billion a year’<sup>1</sup>**

Mental health is beyond doubt one of the most important issues of our times and successive governments have made clear statements of commitment to tackling the problems that poor mental health engenders both in individuals’ lives and in society as a whole. There has been an increased drive to improve social inclusion for those whose illness can so easily create barriers between them and their community. Given that public transport plays such a significant role in social inclusion it is surprising to find very little research about the relationship between good access to public transport and good mental health. Public transport is not, for example, generally recognised as being an integral part of a person’s ability to recover from a mental health crisis. But have we overlooked its importance for too long? Just how vital a part does it play and what barriers do those with less visible disabilities such as a mental illness experience? This report seeks to address that deficit and examine both the importance of public transport and its accessibility. Drawn from the direct experience of sufferers from across the country it provides a compelling insight into this important subject.

### **Importance of Public Transport**

The evidence produced from this survey speaks loud and clear. It tells us that access to public transport is a key determinant in a person’s chances of achieving maximum recovery and being part of their community. 83% of respondents said it was ‘*very important*’ to their mental health. It has the potential to ‘liberate’ a person from the downward spiral of poor mental health, social isolation, poor life opportunities and to engage them with education, cultural opportunities, voluntary employment and paid employment. Respondents tell us that such opportunities are crucial to their ultimate recovery and without being able to access public transport they simply cannot achieve it.

### **Experience of Public Transport**

Sadly respondents to our survey confirm that there are still extensive barriers to them accessing public transport. On top of their own difficulties they are also faced with – cost-prohibitive prices, overcrowding, unreliability, transport staff who are poorly trained in mental health and a continued level of ignorance and discrimination from their fellow passengers. The impact that each of these factors has on a person’s access to public transport is thoroughly explored in the main report. Evidence from these experiences is unequivocal in confirming a direct link between good access to public transport and good mental health.

Public transport represents a particular challenge for many who live with a mental health condition which is perhaps best summarised by this quote:

*‘Having a mental health issue can be like an army moving base. They would plan every part of that trip making sure that there was support from land, sea and air to make it to their destination. This is the same for us’.*

<sup>1</sup> DoH website Mental health section,  
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Mentalhealth/MentalHealthStrategy/index.htm>

And yet sadly that support is so seldom there. A combination of factors means that support is often not proactively offered and when help is sought either before or during a journey the response is not always as desired. In our conclusion we recommend a number of measures which could make a significant improvement to this situation.

### **Impact of Concessionary Fares**

Under this section we explore the impact of having or not having concessionary travel for road based public transport. We also examine just how aware people are of their potential right to concessions. Interestingly we discover that having a concession brings not only the obvious financial benefit but it also helps to significantly reduce other barriers such as anxiety and low motivation levels. Not having to worry about having the right money at the right time to afford the journey, having the flexibility to go out spontaneously on a good day and being able to try again at no extra cost after a bad day; this gives people the motivation to work on recovery and aspire towards greater independence. All of these benefits enable and support self management which in turn of course reduces very significantly the health care costs for each person.

The impact of not having a concession is equally emphatic. Respondents who are unable to qualify for concessions under current legislation speak of being trapped in a negative spiral (see page 13) unable to access much needed mental health support, unable to afford to visit family and friends, unable to participate in community facilities, becoming very socially isolated and even housebound. 59% of respondents did not have a bus concession and 80% of respondents did not have a train concession! A significant percentage of these were unclear whether they might be eligible for concessions or not.

### **Conclusion**

The Government has made an emphatic commitment to improving the mental health of the nation in its strategy '*No Health without Mental Health*'. This is to be thoroughly applauded but if it is to achieve maximum success then it clearly needs to pay serious attention to the importance of public transport. We cannot afford to underestimate its importance if we wish to see more people returning to a meaningful life in their community, able to contribute their skills and enjoy the benefits of occupation and employment.

There is much to be done to improve access to public transport for those who live with a mental health condition. Cost is the biggest single deterrent which highlights the urgent need to review the mental health eligibility for the national bus concession. It is also vital to protect mobility payments for all disability benefits. The potential financial savings to be made in terms of reduced health cost and reduction in benefits by increasing mental health eligibility for travel concessions is vast. Other key issues include mental health awareness training for transport staff, better transport reliability and reduced overcrowding on both buses and trains.

### **Recommendations**

There are 28 recommendations listed at the end of this Report which, if acted upon we believe would support the Government's mental health strategy and help deliver vastly better outcomes for so many people.

## **1. Introduction to Survey**

The Mental Health Action Group is an independent user-led campaign group based in Derbyshire. Our membership is open to anyone who is suffering or has suffered from a mental health condition and our aim is always to achieve improvements in the lives of those affected by mental illness.

Our specific interest in transport issues was triggered in 2008 when the National Concessionary Bus Fares Act was introduced bringing with it a much welcomed free bus concession for many disabled people as well as people over the age of 60. In Derbyshire up until that point we had enjoyed the benefit of a discretionary concession from our local councils for people living with a mental health condition. After April 2008 this was withdrawn because of the strain on the Council's finances in meeting the demands of the national bus concession.

It was at this point, as our members began to apply for the National Bus Concession that we discovered mental health had not been accorded the same level of recognition as other sectors of disability. It does not exist as a category in its own right in the way that physical disabilities, sensory disabilities and learning disabilities do but simply in the final qualifying category (g) which lists a number of extra eligibilities including if you would be refused a driving licence because of mental illness.

This led us to wonder about the need for greater awareness within the Department for Transport and the wider transport industry of the needs and difficulties experienced by those whose disability is less visible and probably less understood. Visits to DPTAC (Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee) revealed that mental health expertise was not clearly evident and discussions with the Department for Transport indicated that greater understanding would be very beneficial.

In Autumn 2010 we met with Adam Simmons from the Department for Transport (at that time Deputy Director Travel Concessions) to discuss the merit of a specific survey around public transport and mental health. He was keen for the survey to encompass far more than concessionary fare issues but to look at the wider needs and experiences of those with mental health conditions including anything which presents a potential barrier to individuals accessing public transport.

We subsequently drafted up our Mental Health & Public Transport Survey which we forwarded to the Department for Transport for comment. No comments were received but we were given to understand that any evidence we could provide would be welcomed and given due consideration.

## **2. Aims of Survey**

### **2.1 Explanation of Aims**

One of the core aims for this survey was to investigate how important access to public transport is in the maintaining of good mental health and in recovery from an episode of poor mental health. Our hypothesis was that actually public transport plays a far more important role than is widely recognised and that lack of good access has a costly affect on the individual's life, delaying and, possibly at times, even preventing recovery.

By asking people to tell us about their experiences of public transport we were able to explore what factors are affecting it's accessibility for them. Are there common themes to this experience and if so what can we learn from it about the changes required?

Finally, just how big a factor is concessionary travel in accessibility and even more fundamentally how aware are people of their potential right to concessionary travel? We felt this warranted particular attention because of the fairly recent introduction of the national bus concession and the way the legislation has been framed for those with a mental health condition.

## **2.2 Aims as stated on the survey:-**

1. To identify the role played by public transport in relation to peoples' mental health.
2. To gather anecdotal evidence about peoples' experiences of public transport and any positive or negative impact it has on their mental health.
3. To gather peoples' views about what needs to be done to reduce any barriers to accessing public transport.
4. To gather evidence about the particular impact of transport concessions or lack of them.
5. To establish how aware people are of their potential rights to transport concessions.
6. To provide some comparisons across the country about the experience of mental health service users.
7. To share the results of our survey with relevant transport and mental health organisations and by doing so raise awareness and encourage positive change.

## **3. Methods**

### **3.1. Survey Design & Measures**

It was our wish to design the survey in such a way that made it as accessible as possible bearing in mind that concentration can be difficult at times of poor mental health. We endeavoured to make sure that it was neither too arduous nor too superficial, to keep it concise and yet allow for a richness of experience to come through. It was a fine balancing act to achieve but an important one if we were going to obtain a good response and completion rate to our survey.

The final survey consisted of 16 questions split into 3 different sections:-

*Section A - Your Need for Public Transport*

*Section B - Your Experience of Public Transport*

*Section C - Concessionary fares for Public Transport*

In each section we asked for both written and graded responses so, for example, under Section B we asked people to describe in words their own experience of public transport but then also asked them to grade that experience on a sliding scale from ‘*Very Easy*’ to ‘*Very Difficult*’. In this way we hoped to achieve both a measure of current accessibility but also an understanding of the main factors affecting it.

The genuine voice of experience is so valuable in explaining the importance of transport, the impact of barriers and in prompting possible solutions that we allowed plenty of scope for this experience to be expressed in every section. Analysing this experience is far lengthier than graded responses but there is no substitute for the understanding that this brings.

### **3.2. Survey Materials**

In order to reach a national audience, and therefore be able to compare experiences around the country, we chose to design our survey on Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.net](http://www.surveymonkey.net)). However, being aware that many of our own members cannot easily access the internet we also made a paper version widely available across Derbyshire. This was not something we were able to do pro-actively across the country because resources would not permit. However we did provide paper copies whenever we received specific requests from mental health organisations.

### **3.3. Survey Participants and Mechanisms**

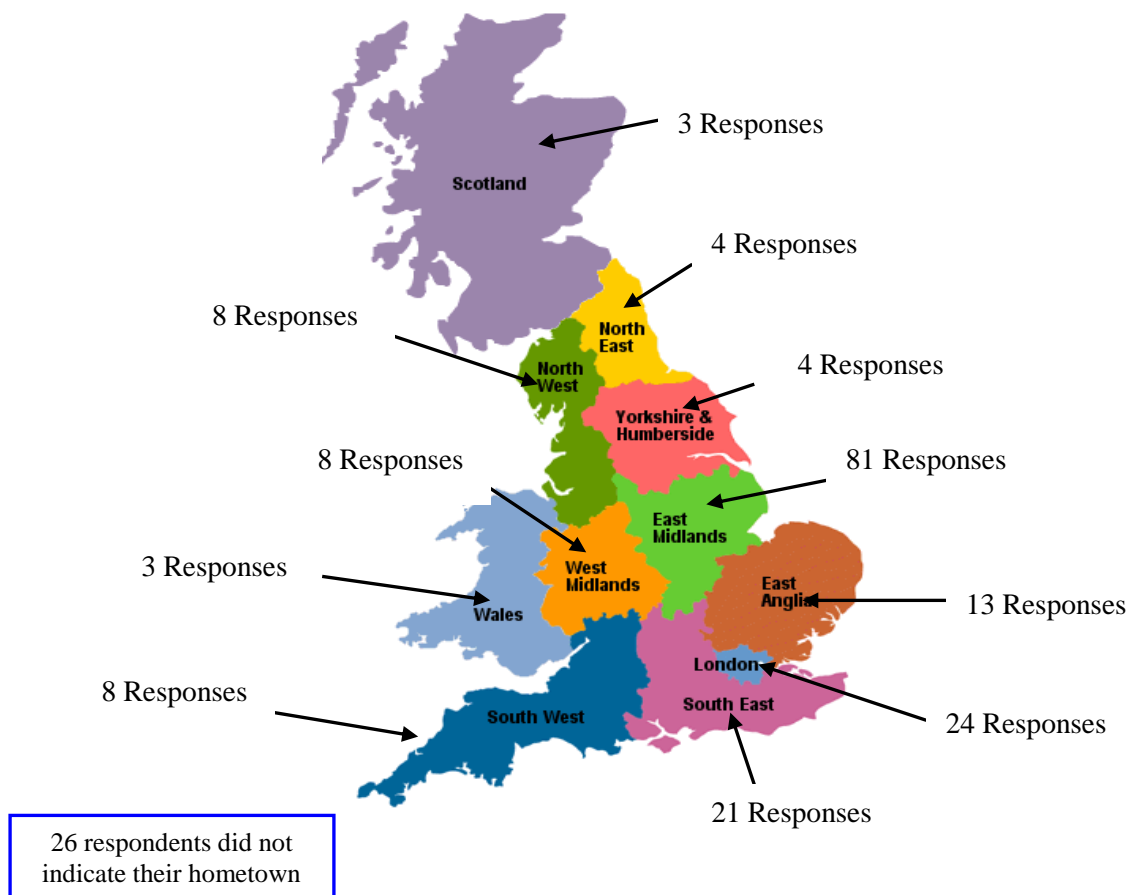
The survey was aimed at adults of any age who have experienced significant mental health difficulties. We have not asked respondents to tell us if they have a particular diagnosis although some have offered that information in the survey. We have simply made it clear in the introduction that this survey is for individuals who consider themselves to have ‘*a mental health condition*’. The fact that the survey was advertised by mental health organisations to their own members makes it fairly safe to assume that the respondents were indeed from our target audience.

Many national mental health organisations advertised our survey on their websites, Facebook pages, via blogs and bulletins etc for which we are very grateful. These organisations are all listed at the beginning of the Report. In Derbyshire members of our Transport Working Group volunteered to go out to local mental health associations and offer assistance to people who would otherwise not have responded to the survey. This assistance was purely in the form of explaining questions and writing in responses when requested to do so. This certainly enabled us to gather some responses from those whose voice is so seldom heard. We also offered a prize draw locally to our members as an incentive particularly for those whose motivation levels are often low.

### **3.4. Scope & Limitations of Survey**

We have chosen to limit our public transport survey to train, bus and coach travel and have not included aviation or sea going transport. This is because we wished to concentrate on types of transport which the majority of people need to access most frequently and is therefore likely to have the greatest impact on their day to day lives.

Whilst it has not been possible for us to cross relate specific responses to respondent's home town/city we have been able to gain a general picture of trends which are discussed under demographics.



## 4. Results of Survey

We received 203 responses in total to our survey which whilst not a huge sample did show a great deal of similarity in their responses and have therefore produced some very clear themes and messages. Indeed these trends did not change greatly between the first 100 responses and the second 100 responses which suggest that a higher response rate would not necessarily have changed the outcomes. Both the quality of the responses and the completion rate (90%) indicate that the level of interest from respondents was very high which gives us a good level of confidence in our survey results.

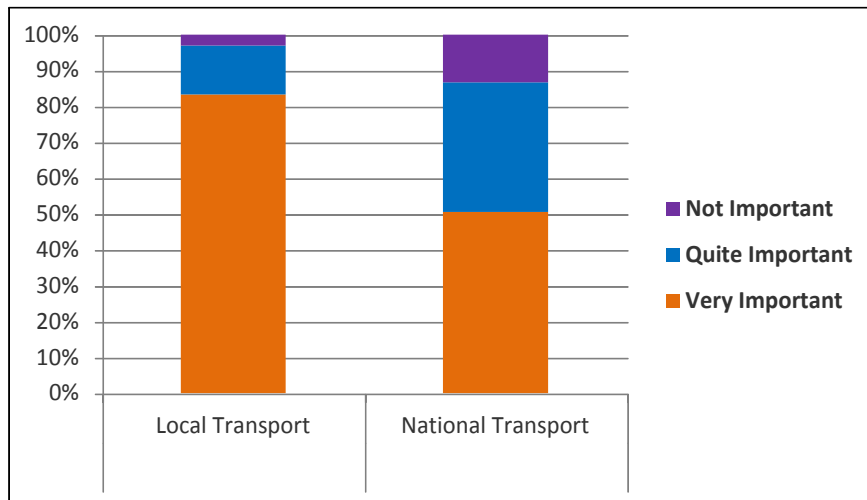
### 4.1. Section 1: 'Your Need for Public Transport'

#### 4.1.2 How important is good public transport to your mental health?

In this first section we began by asking respondents to grade the importance that they attribute to good public transport in regard to their own mental health. Respondents were able to choose between 'very important', 'quite important' or 'not important'. They were invited to respond in relation to both local and national transport.

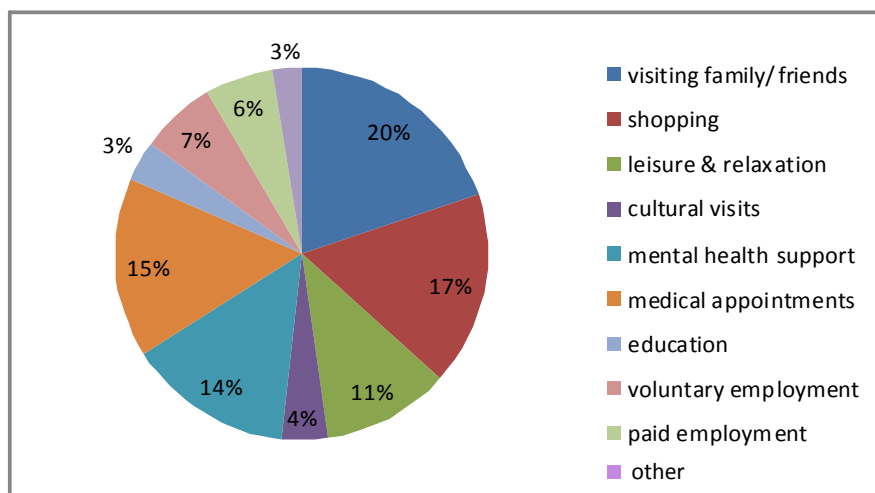
The graph below shows that in relation to Local Transport a resounding 83% of respondents stated that good public transport was 'Very

*Important*’ to their mental health. This percentage is very interesting when you consider how little profile mental health receives in the world of transport particularly in relation to accessibility. As we mentioned at the beginning of this report we found very little evidence that mental health was well understood by disability advisory bodies such as DPTAC. If you add to that a further 14% of respondents who graded it as ‘Quite Important’ that leaves just 3% who felt it was ‘Not Important’ to their mental health.



In relation to National Transport 51% of respondents considered it to be ‘Very Important’ to their mental health and a further 36% as ‘Quite Important’ leaving 13% having indicated that it is ‘Not Important’ to them. It did not surprise us that the first two percentages were lower than for local transport which we would have expected but it is interesting that such a significant percentage (87%) of respondents did consider good access to national transport as being either very important or quite important to their mental health. This is particularly relevant of course in the consideration of national transport concessions.

#### 4.1.2 What are the most important journeys you need to make?



Perhaps not surprisingly 'Visiting Family & Friends' features as the journey most frequently mentioned.

*'Being able to visit friends and loved ones is very important to maintaining my mental health and so I greatly value being able to afford to make these journeys.'*

The need to do 'shopping' also featured very high with people often having to use public transport to get to cheaper shops

*'If I could not get to a supermarket using public transport my quality of living would depreciate as I would not eat properly.'*

This is closely followed by 'medical appointments' and 'mental health support'

*'I need to attend medical appointments in order to ensure that my mental health condition is adequately monitored - without attending these appointments I am likely to relapse'*

*'I have diurnal clinical depression and I find that getting out of the house and on a bus, meeting friends for coffee and support groups keeps me from sinking into something irreversible.'*

What is interesting about these results is that it gives a clear picture of public transport being used and needed above all for the basic necessities of people's lives. There is not a lot of time nor, in some cases money, left it would seem for things such as cultural visits, education or leisure & relaxation. It seems rather sad that they feature so low on the list of journeys and some respondents did indeed lament this fact and the impact that it has on their mental health.

The second thing which struck us was that paid employment and voluntary employment together account for 13% of journeys. The importance of occupation is highlighted clearly in later responses.

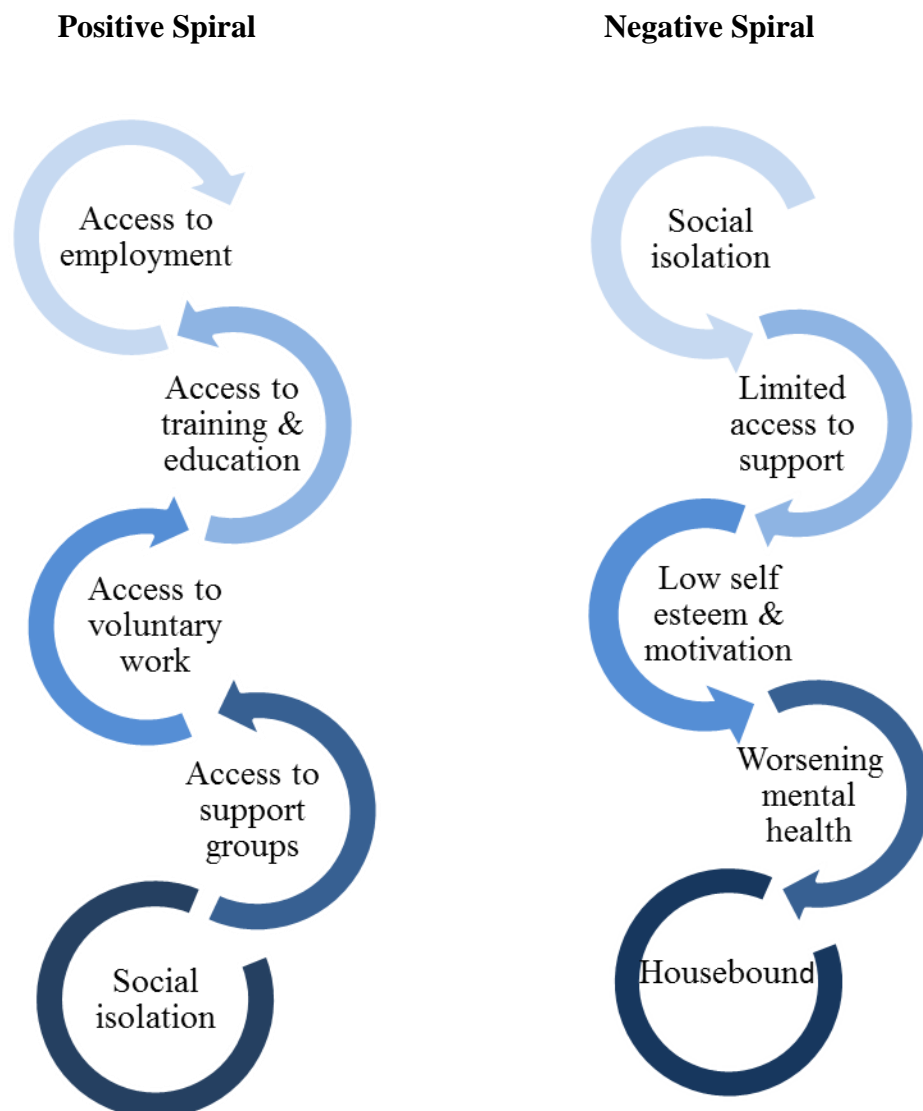
Some 58% of all these important journeys are being made on a very regular basis (once a week or more than once a week) a further 11% on a fortnightly basis and the remaining 31% are monthly or less often than that. In terms of distance being travelled we find that 86% are of shorter distances (up to 25 miles) and the remaining 14% are the longer journeys which would not be deemed to be local travel. Although these longer journeys are not so frequent, they are often very important, enabling valued contact with close family members:-

*'It may only be once a year, maybe less, but a few days with my daughter and grandson at her home, or with my sister, or with my friends, serves as my holiday, and an opportunity to be with the people I miss and hold dear, and who know and care for me'*

#### 4.2.2 Please explain why these journeys are important to your mental health

The volume of written response received to this question was quite unexpected and overwhelming. The heartfelt nature of the responses was also very striking presenting as it does a picture of many people trying very hard to make the best of their life despite debilitating mental health conditions. Respondents explained at great length how essential their journeys are to them and the impact, even despair, that they feel when these journeys are not possible for various reasons.

What is revealed in this section is that access to public transport is a vital determinant in an individual's ability to become mentally healthy again and all the possibilities for positive change that brings. Respondents present to us two very clear scenarios – firstly the positive spiral of recovery and reintegration which is enabled by public transport that is easily accessible and affordable. The second is the negative spiral of enforced isolation leading to a worsening mental health condition and all the disabling restrictions that brings on a person's life. Below is a diagrammatic of these two spirals. The journey and extent of recovery will of course vary for each person but it does illustrate the trends reported.



In the words of our respondents it looks like this:-

*'When initially diagnosed with mental illness, I was essentially housebound. Taking up voluntary employment was an essential step in my reintegration not only away from the home but also into simple social situations that generated such anxiety for me. Public transport was an absolute necessity in this process without which my recovery would not have been possible.'*

*'My evolution from this initial progress then stemmed into higher education and paid employment, both of which were again only possible via public transport (I have neither the means nor the incentive to drive) and both of which were vital to continued recovery and re-integration.'*

*'To this day I still have periods of intense anxiety in which case I find it most beneficial to face my anxiety and place myself in the midst of vast numbers of people, generally in a museum or some other such place which again is only accessible by public transport'.*

And like this:-

*'Without the support I would not be able to attend my medical appointments, without my medical appointments I would not be able to control and review my mental and physical conditions, this would lead to a downwards spiral and I would end up being more ill. Most likely to be spending more time in hospital or having to have more support in the community'.*

And like this:-

*'The independence that I gain from bus travel allows me to do the things necessary for my recovery; such as attending treatment appointments, socializing and volunteering. Being stuck at home in the house is a sure fire route to me getting more and more ill and needing more treatment'.*

It is worth drawing particular attention to the level of importance that respondents attach to their ability to get to places of voluntary or paid employment. The boost to self esteem and confidence that is provided by being able to contribute to society is repeatedly mentioned. Attached to that is a direct beneficial effect to their mental health.

Even when paid work is not possible (and may never be possible for some) the need to contribute to the greater good of society, to feel significant within society through voluntary work is fundamental for many people. Being able to do voluntary work is not usually a first step on the positive spiral but it is clearly a very important milestone in recovery. It is only made possible in many cases when good access to public transport is available.

Here are just a few of the many comments we received on this issue:-

*'I volunteer as a governor for a local NHS Foundation Trust. I have to use public transport to attend some of the meetings. I would feel more depressed if I couldn't contribute in this way'.*

*'My voluntary work is key in my mental health as it gives me purpose and makes me feel worthwhile'*

*'Volunteer work and mental health support are important to improving my mental health issues.....I am due to start a three days a week college course, public transport is essential for me for this'.*

## **4.2. Your Experience of Public Transport**

In this section we invited respondents to tell us about their experiences in order to get a picture of the level of satisfaction and any barriers/difficulties that exist in the day to day running of transport. Respondents were specifically asked to comment on the following aspects:-

### **4.2.1. Availability of Transport**

On the whole there were a lot of positive comments about the availability of necessary public transport which is good to hear. However amongst those who experience problems with availability there were some very common trends which it is important to highlight:-

1. Not frequent enough buses in some areas, particularly villages, which leads to overcrowding and this in turn makes travelling very difficult for many with mental health problems (see appendix)
2. Some journeys (even less than 5 miles) require several changes of bus which mean long, arduous and stressful journeys. This is often sufficient deterrent to prevent the person travelling.
3. Easy to get a bus into the centre of town but much harder to get a bus to outlying areas. Such journeys are much valued for the scenery and relaxation they afford, a vital escape from the stresses of urban life.<sup>2</sup>
4. Not enough or no buses in the evenings (after 6 or 7pm) or at weekends in some areas which is increasing social isolation. This was surprisingly the case even for some respondents coming from medium sized towns.

<sup>2</sup> 'In the UK, more than 80% of people live in urban areas .... Urban settings by definition have less nature than rural ones. And less green nature means reduced mental well-being, or at least less opportunity to recover from mental stress' (A Countryside for Health and Wellbeing: The Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Green Exercise)

### 4.2.2 Reliability of Transport

People's experiences of reliability are far more varied with approx 50% complaining that reliability is not good enough and has an adverse effect on their ability to travel. Respondents were clear that being able to plan a journey and trust that the transport will turn up as expected is vital.

*'Reliability is key to planning a journey. Without reliability stressful situations occur which have a negative impact on my mental health.'*

The impact of having to wait lengthy periods of time or even worse when the transport doesn't turn up at all can not only spoil that day's travel but also deter the person from future journeys. For those who find public transport difficult due to mental health problems the unreliability can have a much greater impact than imagined. The effort that it takes at some stages during recovery to get yourself to the bus stop can be huge and quite exhausting. It may have taken several days to build up to it and then you find that the transport doesn't arrive.

*'There is nothing worse than working yourself up to be able to reach the bus stop only to find that it has been cancelled or ran early meaning that if your lucky you have to wait for the next bus or if your unlucky you end up going home so worked up that you spend the next day or two in bed ill after the wasted mental energy getting to the bus stop in the first place'.*

This is made even more upsetting and demoralising when there is no apology and no explanation, an experience mentioned by quite a lot of our respondents. Reliability is often connected with feeling safe and that in turn makes people feel that life can be reliable and worth making the effort. When you cannot fully rely on your ability to successfully make journeys you certainly need to feel that the transport itself is reliable.

### 4.2.3 Cost of Transport

Responses to this question were absolutely polarised between two positions. On the one hand there are those who have a travel concession (mostly bus) who say it makes all the difference in the world to their ability to travel and therefore their recovery.

*'There are so many barriers to leaving the house in terms of my own anxiety and psychosis, the fact that I no longer have to stress about costs means that I am finally attending appointments and schemes that are proving to help me in my recovery'*

There is a sincere gratitude expressed by many of those who have access to travel concessions and an appreciation of the difference it makes. The main exception to the positive praise of travel concessions is that the price of trains even with a Disabled Persons Railcard is still cost prohibitive for most people. Many people who live with a mental health condition find it very difficult to commit to a journey and book a ticket well in advance

which means that they cannot take advantage of the extra savings to be made in this way.

Then on the other hand there are those who have no travel concession who say with an almost unanimous voice that transport costs are far too high and are having a negative impact on their life.

*'High bus fares mean that I will not be able to achieve my Medical and Support need's. This can and has led to a downward trend in my condition.'*

*'I ration my social trips so that I can afford them, so some weeks I see and speak to no one, apart from a few checkout ladies, a situation which is obviously not good for someone trying to overcome a social phobia'.*

*'It is very expensive, and I am on benefits. I don't want to be trapped in the house!'*

There is an overwhelming feeling amongst those who have to pay for transport that both buses and trains are cost prohibitive and not value for money. The fact that people speak of having to choose between transport and food is a telling statement about the burden on people's small incomes. A high proportion of our respondents are managing on benefits and they speak with distress of potential cutbacks to benefits and the devastating effect that will have on their ability to travel.

*'With cutbacks in benefits, fewer and fewer people with mental health conditions will be able to afford to catch a bus when they want to'.*

Train travel in particular was felt to be extortionate which would be the transport of choice for many when going on longer journeys to visit family and friends.

*'Once the charity I volunteer for had to pay £300 to get me a standard day return ticket to from Preston to London! Not to mention, you are not guaranteed a seat... The government wants to encourage people to ditch there cars and travel on public transport, to do this they need to make public transport affordable.'*

#### **4.2.4 Availability of Travel Information & Support**

When asked about travel information it was noticeable that in areas where bus companies provide live electronic displays about upcoming buses people were extremely happy with the service. They find that it really helps with any anxiety they are feeling about their journey, constantly reassuring them that the next bus will be along in so many minutes. Many people felt that train stations had been equipped with electronic displays for far longer and as a result are generally thought to be better at providing travel information although they were felt to be less informative about travel disruptions. People were also appreciative of audio announcements

on both trains and buses because it can be difficult to concentrate on written information if you are not feeling well. This was not thought to be widely available and people would appreciate more audio information.

There were a significant number of complaints about bus stops not having up-to-date legible timetables on them. This was found to be very confusing and therefore anxiety provoking. Some said that the print was too small, others that the information was confusing or simply not there at all! This is of course particularly important for those who do not access on-line information.

However, many do rely on website information and in this case it was felt to be important that information on travel times and fares is up to date and reliable. Many people find it important to go armed with all the correct information and be reassured that they have the right money in advance. They will not have the confidence to set out on a journey without it. Some people also find it difficult to ask for information over the phone or in person so for them on-line information is vital.

*'Having a mental health issue can be like an army moving base. They would plan every part of that trip making sure that there was support from land, sea and air to make it to their destination. This is the same for us.'*

As regards travelling assistance and support because of disabilities, when this was commented on there seemed to be a general ignorance about what if anything is available.

*'....difficult to plan bus journeys, I am unaware of any support'*

*'I don't feel that any-one offers support for those with Mental Health difficulties'*

This is a real shame because so many people who are experiencing mental health problems might benefit from travelling assistance. There is great room for improvement here in the way that such assistance is advertised and where it is advertised. It is certainly not made abundantly clear that travelling assistance is not just available for those with physical disabilities; this is clearly borne out by our survey respondents. It would be very helpful if all booklets advertising such assistance were to include examples of customers with mental health difficulties.

Only one person mentioned having specifically used travelling assistance booked in advance at a train station. Her experience was not good!

*'Tried to use disabled assistance at train station, I booked explaining that I needed help in getting to the right platform and on the right train. The man looked at me, said you're not disabled and walked off and left me - not at all good for my mental health!'*

So not only is there a need for better advertising of travelling assistance, there also needs to be better training for the staff providing that assistance especially in being able to recognise that not all disabilities are visible!

#### **4.2.5 Attitude of Transport Staff and Public**

One of the things that is most noticeable about our responses to this question is how varied they are in people's experiences, particularly of transport staff. There is a significant proportion of responses which speak of the helpfulness and friendliness of bus drivers, some going out of their way to help their customers.

*'Positive - lady bus driver did give me a free ride back home on one occasion after going to my GP - when I didn't have enough money'.*

But then there is an equal proportion whose experience of transport staff is less than good, finding them unfriendly and uninterested in their customers. Respondents are also aware that the quality of the training received by transport staff appears, not surprisingly, to make a big difference.

Some seem to treat all their customers respectfully and have a good attitude towards those with disabilities whereas others display a great deal of ignorance and lack of sympathy. The latter is particularly noticeable when it comes to concessionary travel passes. Many respondents reported that when they have shown their disabled travel pass they have received rude and ignorant responses from staff:-

*'On a number of occasions they have even questioned why I have got a disabled bus pass because I 'don't look disabled'. Obviously this causes me to feel very self conscious, panicky and annoyed. All bus drivers should be reminded that 'disability' can mean different things and especially in relation to bus passes is not always a physical impairment'.*

*'Staff are uneducated about the problems and needs of people with mental illnesses. I have faced discrimination because I don't have a 'visible' disability. This makes me so sad as well as angry'*

*'There is little mental health awareness eg I was asked in front of lots of people what my disability was once when a train worker saw I had a disability card (probably as I was mentally not physically disabled, I didn't look disabled to him).'*

The experiences above, of which there are plenty more from around the country, again highlight the need for better mental health awareness training for frontline transport staff. The issuing of travel concessions clearly reveals a level of ignorance which can easily impact on the quality of service which is offered to that person. If there isn't even a recognition of mental illness as a legitimate disability in relation to travel passes then

how much more ignorance lies beneath? It has to be said that much of this may well be ignorance rather than intentional discrimination but none the less it is damaging and needs addressing. Respondents are clear that the attitudes of staff (and public) do have an impact for good or bad on their journeys and their likelihood to travel on public transport.

*'The attitudes of the staff and public are very important to my mental health. I have had situations in which I have been extremely uncomfortable on public transport due to this. I have also experienced a panic attack on a public train due to this.'*

The need to feel safe on public transport is also clearly important and there are a number of comments about the fact that unacceptable behaviour is not always challenged. This leads people to feel nervous and unsafe and less likely to travel.

*'...someone will be bullied if they don't "fit in" meaning a person with a disability. Staff don't always stop this attitude and can affect myself and others I know on the transport who have mental health problems.'*

It is appreciated that these can be difficult situations for transport staff to handle but good training should improve their confidence to do so. Some respondents have witnessed more serious incidents and comment that there does not appear to be as much recourse to the police as perhaps there should be. There are also of course times when transport staff may need to intervene because a person is very unwell mentally and is unwittingly causing a disturbance. In such cases again it is so important that staff have an understanding of mental health issues.

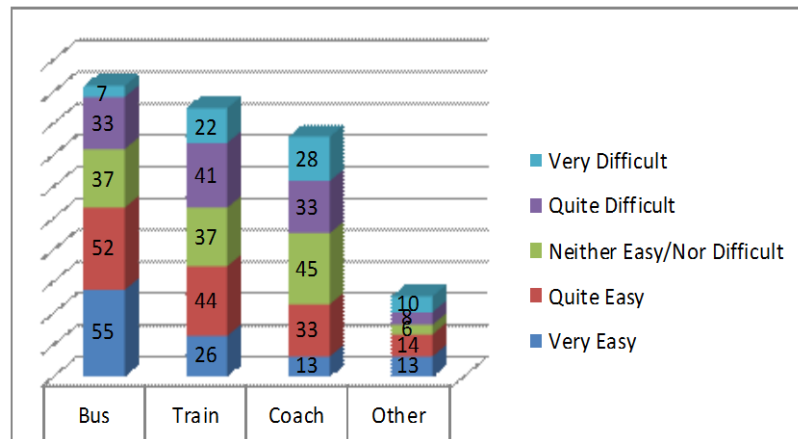
*'The understanding and support of staff is vital as we cannot expect the general public to understand all of the time. But good well trained staff can then help and advise the public of what is happening and waylay any fears that they may have.'*

Given that public transport is such a relatively confined public space where people cannot get away from each other and where attitudes have such an impact it is important that mental health receives as much publicity as possible combating stigma and prejudice. Recent initiatives by the Government-sponsored *'Time for Change'* are beginning to have an impact and public transport may well be an excellent place for such publicity!

#### **4.2.6 Overall how easy/difficult do you find it to use public transport?**

Responses to this question indicate clearly that buses are generally perceived to be the easiest option for travel. Judging from comments elsewhere in the survey about the high cost of rail travel it is probably reasonable to assume that cost has played a part in this result. Travelling by train seems also to be perceived as being more complicated and

therefore more daunting than by bus. 30% of respondents to this question found it 'very easy' to use buses as opposed to only 15% for trains and just 4% found buses 'very difficult' to use as opposed to 13% for trains.

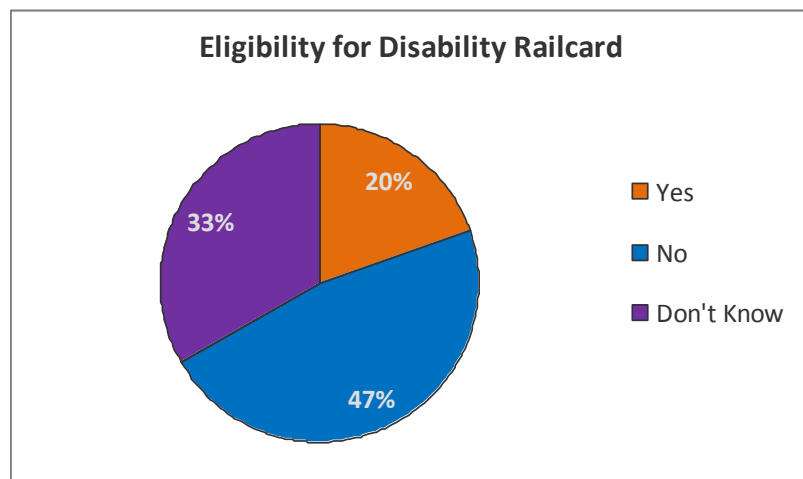


### 4.3. Concessionary Fares for Public Transport

#### 4.3.1. Are you currently eligible for any transport concessions?

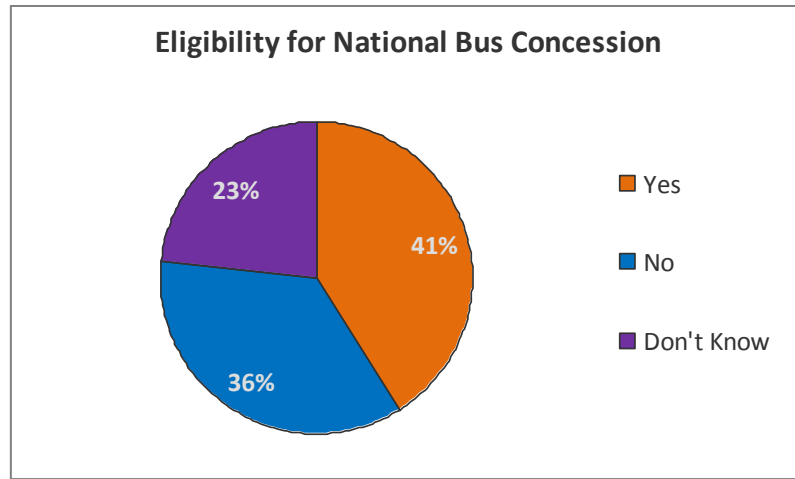
##### 1. Rail Travel

The results, shown in the table below, reveal that 47% of our respondents did not have a Disabled Persons Railcard, a further 33% did not know whether they might be eligible which leaves an extremely low 20% who are actually receiving the benefit of a Railcard. This is a sad state of affairs given that so many of them have commented on the 'cost prohibitive' nature of train travel.



##### 2. Bus Travel

When it comes to bus concessions the picture is better with 41% currently holding a national bus pass but that still leaves a total of **59% either without a bus concession or unaware whether they should have one.**



It is of course impossible to know exactly why so many people with mental health conditions are still without travel concessions. It is probably fair to attribute the ‘*don't knows*’ mainly to a lack of effective advertising in relation to mental health sufferers. But the reason why 36% of them are without a bus concession may be either they do not fit the current criteria in relation to mental health or that their perception is they would not be eligible. Either way the result is the same.

Given that earlier in the survey our respondents have talked about the cost prohibitive nature of transport, having to choose between food and transport, and yet its vital importance to their recovery it is ironic that relatively low numbers of them are enjoying the benefit of concessionary travel. Neither are there a significant number of our respondents receiving the benefit of a Dial-A-Ride type service provided for those who cannot get to the shops any other way. Just 3% of them said that they can use such a service because they also have physical health problems. Surely this service should be available for those whose mental health condition prevents them from getting out any other way?

**4.3.2. If you are eligible for a particular transport concession please explain any beneficial effects that has on your mental health**

It seems clear from the response we received to this question that the benefit of a travel pass is first and foremost about cost which has already been spoken about at some length earlier in the survey. There were plenty more testimonies in this section from people who said they simply would not be able to get out and about and stay well without a bus concession. This emphasises again the direct link between access to public transport and mental health.

But there are also other less obvious benefits which some of our respondents explain very clearly. They speak of how a travel concession relieves some of the stress and worry of travelling. Quite a number of our respondents spoke about the relief of not having to worry about having the right money at the right time to afford the journey. The flexibility that it offers someone who cannot predict how they are going to be feeling from

day to day seems to be liberating enabling journeys to be made that could not otherwise be made.

*'It is better for me (being agoraphobic) to be able to suddenly say "I would be able to go out today" and go and visit my mother. To be able to just hop on a bus and not have to worry about the fare is so "freeing". It enables my mind to relax and not panic, I can go where I want, when I want and it gives me much more confidence and keeps me going out thus helping my debilitating condition.'*

*'If I were not able to discontinue and then re-continue journeys, I would not have the confidence to embark on them. My concessionary pass enables this approach'.*

*'Being able to travel when one feels able is so stimulating on a good day and literally a tonic to the soul!*

It also helps other respondents when motivation is low during periods of depression. At such times the barrier of cost could easily be sufficient to prevent someone making the effort required for the journey. So access to travel concessions is a great source of help and in fact removes or reduces several barriers not just one.

*'Sometimes because of the depression, there is excessive lethargy and so the freedom of free public transport is a great relief.'*

#### **4.3.3. If you are not eligible for a travel concession please explain how that affects your mental health**

In response to this question we get a glimpse into the experience of those who have to manage their lives and their recovery without the benefit of travel concessions. Some respondents are clearly unable to qualify for concessions under current legislation. Others may well be unaware of their eligibility (33% for example did not know whether they were eligible for a Disability Railcard).

The way in which legislation is currently framed around the national bus concession means that **you are assessed according to whether you are fit to drive a car rather than whether you have a debilitating mental health condition.** This leaves then a whole category of people whose lives are impaired and restricted by their condition but who are not able to qualify for a bus concession. We asked them what impact that and the lack of other transport concessions has on their quality of life. Is it a major factor in relation to their mental health?

The results from this question were not surprising but they were helpful in so much as they confirmed the place of public transport in the positive and negative spirals of recovery explored earlier in this report. Here we have the voice of those who are stuck on the negative spiral with limited access

to family/friends, mental health support, leisure & relaxation and voluntary employment.

*'... can't afford to travel out of village to support groups and official appointments - I've had to cancel or I have got myself into debt which has had a negative impact on mental health.'*

*'I would love to go to visit museums and art galleries and churches in central London but it's too expensive to go up there. I can only spend about £10 a week on travel and that is usually taken up on going food shopping and to attend medical appointments, not for leisure activities which are so important for mental health.'*

*'I would like to be involved with regular voluntary work but am failing to do so because of the expense and other problems with local transport. Hopefully voluntary work would help me be more mentally resilient and thus get back into full-time employment'*

Some respondents describe the dilemma of having to choose between travel and other essentials such as food.

*'Everybody has to budget for transport, of course. But I'm often forced to make choices about how I spend my money, which CAN and HAS been: food or transport? In the past I've missed appointments, cancelled visits, and slowly shrunk back into my flat becoming increasingly reclusive and, then, increasingly ill.'*

They also describe how lack of travel concessions holds them back from working on their own recovery by making familiar journeys as often as possible.

*'I really need to work on this damn agoraphobia. A shopping trip to the weekly flea market would be just the ticket, if I could go. The irony is my dad has a free bus pass but will never get on a bus.'*

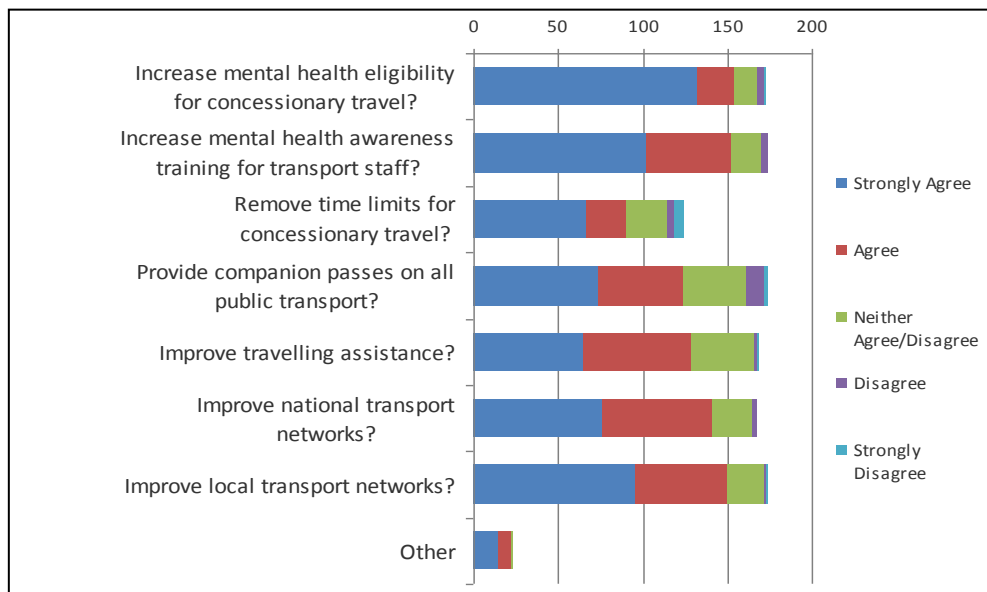
Such is the impact on the quality of life of those fortunate enough to have travel concessions that they express their absolute dread of losing it.

*'When my freedom pass is not valid i will not be able to cope, or wish to live.'*

*'when my freedom pass becomes invalid, (i fear it everyday as of course no info from the council) I will be back to being totally isolated again. Anyone got any cyanide?'*

#### 4.3.4. Finally, what would you like to be done, if anything, to make it easier for you to use public transport?

For this final question we asked respondents to indicate the relative importance they would attach to a number of possible changes. We tried to cover the main transport issues discussed in this survey eg cost, availability, assistance etc in order to see how respondents would prioritise actions to address the difficulties they experience. However we were very aware that respondents might have other suggestions so we also allowed space for these to be described and rated in importance. Against each proposed change respondents were invited to tell us whether they would ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’, ‘disagree’, or ‘strongly disagree’.



The response levels to each proposal remained constant throughout the survey and they indicate that all proposals were well supported by the majority of respondents. However if we look at the percentage of strongest support for each proposal we have a clear indication of priority areas:-

- 1) ‘Increase mental health eligibility for concessionary travel’ **(77% strongly agreed)**
- 2) ‘Increase mental health awareness training for staff’ **(60% strongly agreed)**
- 3) ‘Improve local transport networks’ **(56% strongly agreed)**
- 4) ‘Remove time limits on concessionary passes’ **(54% strongly agreed)**
- 5) ‘Improve national transport networks’ **(45% strongly agreed)**
- 6) ‘Provide companion pass on all public transport’ **(43% strongly agreed)**
- 7) ‘Improve advertising of concessions and travelling assistance’ **(38% strongly agreed)**

When asked to weigh up how strongly they agree with each potential improvement the issue of cost has emphatically won the day. This is not really surprising given the strong emphasis throughout the survey on the 'prohibitive cost' of public transport and the fact that so many spoke of transport as being crucial to journeys which are vital to their recovery and inclusion in their community. If you cannot afford to get on a bus or train in the first place then the other improvements would be immaterial. We also noted earlier how a concessionary pass is seen as instrumental in reducing other mental health barriers such as anxiety and low motivation.

The proposal of mental health awareness training for staff received a very strong response. Interestingly the proposal for provision of companion passes and formal travelling assistance on all public transport was not nearly so strongly supported as training for transport staff. The implication being potentially that if staff were better trained in mental health there would be far less need for a companion or formal assistance and therefore greater independence. A flexible and helpful response from staff as and when needed is obviously the better option for most people.

Local transport networks also received a strong vote for improvement. The impact on people of not being able to travel relatively short distances without many changes of bus and the isolation caused by inadequate transport particularly in the evenings and weekends has made its mark here. Satisfaction levels were slightly better for national transport networks but there was still a significant percentage who felt strongly that this should be improved.

Other priority proposals listed by respondents were for a more joined up transport system which puts ease of accessibility above the needs of individual transport providers:-

*'the need for more 'joined up' services things like different companies not co-operating with each other, not seeming to adhere to the same guidelines (especially train companies - if they don't understand it, what chance do we have!) different price structures when your journey crosses certain 'boundary' lines..'*

*'Local and national travel should be linked. Different local transport networks should be linked eg local transport in Staffordshire should show all links with local transport in Derbyshire and all local transport in Cheshire and Yorkshire should show all links with local transport in Derbyshire.'*

And also for more efforts to be made to improve the public's understanding of mental health:-

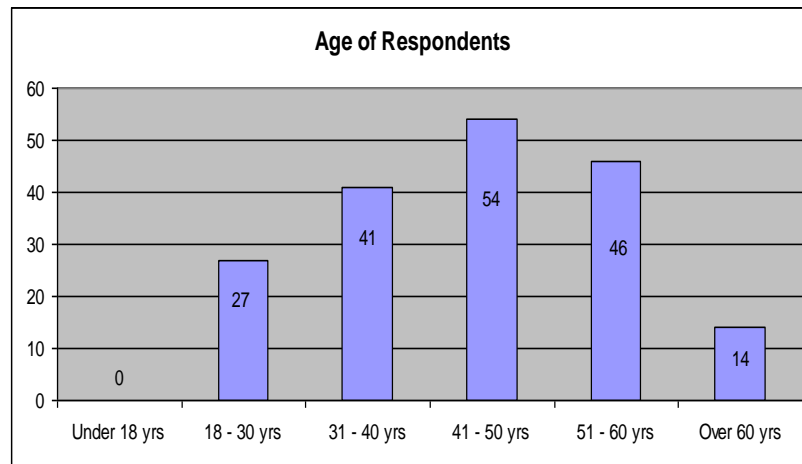
*'Improving mental health awareness in the general public might make some passengers more tolerant.'*

*'Help mental health charities and individual sufferers in our efforts to destigmatize mental health.'*

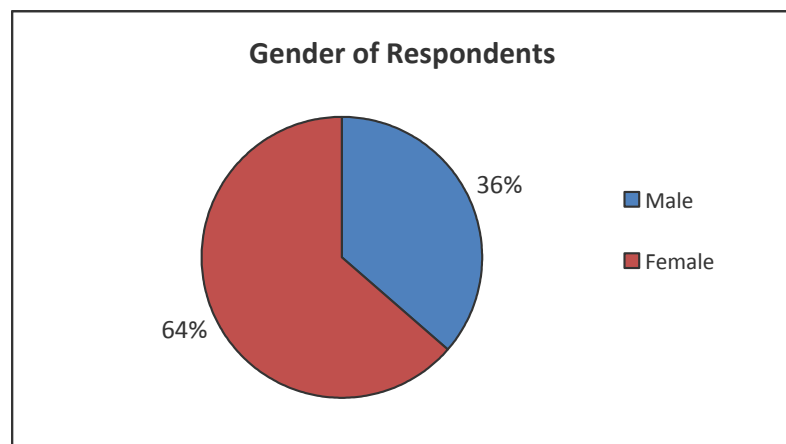
#### 4.4. Demographics of Respondents

It was very pleasing to receive survey responses from every region of England (see page 9 for details) and even a few from Wales and Scotland. We did not pro-actively advertise it via Scottish mental health organisations because the legislation governing concessionary fares is different and independently governed. Although our on-line survey package did not enable us to easily compare responses from different regions the similarity in responses was so strong that this did not seem particularly necessary or productive in the end.

The chart below shows a good coverage of all age ranges from respondents peaking in the 41-50yrs range and diminishing in the over 60 yrs range. We did not exclude under 18s but did not proactively advertise via young peoples' organisations.



The following chart shows the gender breakdown of respondents which broadly speaking reflects the percentage differences of men and women reported to be receiving mental health treatment.



Ethnicity of respondents was 86% British White, 4% British Other, 2% British Indian, 2% Mixed Asian White, 2% Other, 1% British White Irish, 1% British African Caribbean, 0.5% British Pakistani, 0.5% British African, 0.5% British Black Other, 0.5% Mixed Other.

## **5. Conclusions**

This section of our report has been made relatively easy because there is such strong agreement between our survey responses on most issues. These are the important conclusions we can draw from our findings:-

### **5.1. Good access to public transport is vital to mental health recovery**

The relationship between good access to public transport and good mental health was at the very heart of what we set out to explore in our survey. The evidence of our respondents has decisively confirmed our original hypothesis that the two are fundamentally linked. Poor access to public transport leads to social isolation, worsening of mental health conditions and poor opportunities. Good access to public transport on the other hand enables recovery, reintegration into society and far better prospects for quality of life and employment (voluntary or paid).

The impact of transport on recovery has been underestimated for too long. It is time for it to be brought very firmly onto the agenda of all Government Departments which have an interest in mental health recovery, social inclusion and equal access to opportunities. We cannot afford to ignore it or underestimate it any longer if we wish to see more people returning to a meaningful life in their community, able to contribute their skills and enjoy the benefits of occupation and employment.

### **5.2. Experience identifies significant barriers to access**

1. Cost of transport is experienced as prohibitive on both bus and train travel for those living on benefits and without a concessionary pass. Respondents speak of having to choose between travel and essential needs such as food, heat, rent etc. This enforces isolation and slows down or even prevents recovery. Without the ability to visit mental health centres, attend medical appointments, visit friends and family people find themselves trapped in a negative spiral (see diagram on page 12).
2. Lack of understanding and support from transport staff which makes people far less likely to attempt a journey on a good day and much less likely to re-attempt it after a bad day. Our survey points to a widespread lack of mental health awareness within transport services as a whole and a serious lack of training for front line transport staff.
3. Lack of appreciation by both transport staff and the general public that disabilities are not always visible! This leads to situations where people living with a mental health condition have their concessionary passes challenged, where members of the public chastise them for using disabled seating, where people are refused travelling assistance because they don't 'look disabled'.

4. Overcrowding on both buses and trains which greatly increases anxiety and stress levels. This is repeatedly identified as a significant deterrent to accessing public transport.
5. Lack of available buses in more rural areas particularly at evenings and weekends leading to an unnecessary increase in social isolation.
6. Lack of reliability particularly on bus travel and lack of reassuring information when things go wrong on both trains and buses. This deters people from making the effort in the first place and has a significant impact on motivation levels.
7. Impact of mental health stigma and discrimination leading to lack of tolerance and even outright abuse from the travelling public. Having to cope with adverse public reactions makes people feel more anxious and uncomfortable about using public transport. Over-crowding on buses and trains intensifies this even further.

### **5.3. Impact of Concessionary Travel**

Responses indicate that significant numbers of people living with an on-going mental health condition are failing to qualify for concessionary travel. The fact that concessionary criteria in relation to mental health is based on whether you would qualify for a driving licence rather than on diagnosis is clearly excluding this sector of respondents. This leads to a great deal of hardship financially but also in terms of their health and prospects of recovery.

For those who are managing to qualify for the national bus concession the impact is immense and has a pivotal affect on their quality of life and potential opportunities. With the freedom that this brings people are able to attend mental health recovery programmes, to access training, education and voluntary employment; all vital steps to a good recovery and potential return to employment. Saving money on the issuing of concessionary fares is effectively preventing some people from recovery and consigning them to a life on benefits with poor opportunities. A cost benefit analysis would surely show that to increase travel concessions for mental health has the potential in the long term to seriously reduce health care and benefit costs. When you consider that in Derbyshire for example a bus concession is estimated at costing just £73 per person per year it is a relatively small price to pay for such potential gain.

It has been very worrying to see that recent reviews of disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance are threatening to significantly raise the qualifying bar for mobility payments. Ironically a benefit that is intended to enhance quality of life will instead decrease the potential for recovery for a further sector of mental health sufferers.

It is also clear from our responses that another sector of people are still unaware that they might even be eligible for concessionary travel. This is a crying shame since so many of our respondents' lives are restricted and impeded by the '*prohibitive cost*' of public transport.

## **6. Recommendations**

The following actions are strongly recommended in order to address the main conclusions arising from this survey:-

### **6.1. Importance of Public Transport to Mental Health**

#### **Cross Government Working**

1. Ensure that public transport is a regular agenda item for the Ministerial Advisory Group for Mental Health Strategy in order to maximise recovery opportunities.
2. Ensure that connections between the Department of Health, Department for Work & Pensions and Department for Transport enable appropriate consideration of mobility implications for mental health sufferers in any future policy or legislative changes.

#### **Department for Transport**

3. Ensure robust representation of mental health issues on all transport stakeholder committees and relevant advisory bodies such as DPTAC (Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee) or its future successor.
4. Provide mental health awareness training for staff within the Department for Transport holding responsibility for access/inclusion/disability issues.
5. Ensure good mental health awareness within transport industry as a whole particularly Office for Rail Regulation which regulates passenger service, training and equal access issues and bodies such as ATOC (Association of Train Operating Companies) and CPT (Confederation for Passenger Transport) which set and maintain the standards.

### **6.2. Barriers to Accessing Transport**

#### **Department for Work & Pensions**

1. Ensure that mobility components of disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment fully support the transport needs of claimants with mental health conditions to enable maximum recovery. This must include travelling to less familiar destinations in order to promote confidence and recovery.

#### **Department for Transport**

2. Promote investment to reduce over-crowding on both buses and trains.
3. Provide public subsidy to improve local networks in more rural areas including evenings and weekends.
4. Improve both local and national transport networks to enable more efficient and more convenient journeys.
5. Promote joined up working between transport providers to maximise continuity and improve passenger journeys.

6. Mandate the provision of mental health awareness training by all transport services subsidised by local Councils.

#### **Transport Regulatory Bodies**

7. Champion the cause of mental health sufferers to the same level as those with physical, sensory and learning disabilities.
8. Ensure accessibility and disability training is adequately resourced in relation to mental health.
9. Ensure that travelling assistance is effectively advertised and promoted for those with non-visible disabilities such as mental illness. Assisted Persons Reservation System (APRS) for rail travel is currently the only statutory system in place. A bus travel alternative needs to be investigated by CPT.
10. Audit compliance of transport providers with recommendations 11, 12 and 13 below by appropriate methods e.g. mystery shopper schemes and surveys.

#### **Transport Providers**

11. Deliver mental health awareness training for all front-line transport staff as an integral part of regular on-going training provision.
12. Provide travelling assistance for both buses and trains that is accessible and sensitive to travellers with a mental health condition.
13. Implement robust policies for dealing with discriminatory behaviour and abuse from other passengers in relation to mental health.
14. Provide signage for disabled seating in buses and trains that reminds the public that not all disabilities are visible.
15. Provide prompt and helpful information at all times of planned or unplanned disruptions to services in order to minimise distress and maintain confidence in transport services.
16. Ensure that bus drivers adhere to the maximum passenger numbers as advertised. Ensure that train guards include the stress caused by overcrowding as part of passenger safety considerations.
17. Help to educate the public about mental health by displaying anti-stigma information at stations and on transport vehicles.

### **6.3. Issues with Concessionary Travel**

#### **Cross Government Working**

1. Maximise returns on investment by flexible cross-departmental budgeting which would increase funding for mental health travel concessions and thus minimise healthcare and benefits expenditure.
2. Ensure that the impact of concessionary travel on health, employment, occupation etc is adequately considered and addressed at all levels.

### **Department for Transport**

3. Strongly recommend a revision of the mental health criteria for the national bus concession to be based on diagnosis rather than ability to drive (in line with physical, sensory and learning disabilities).
4. Ensure that Local Councils are providing clear information about current concessionary provision for those with a mental health condition.

### **Transport Regulators**

5. Ensure that bus and train concessionary travel is clearly and effectively advertised for people with non-visible disabilities such as mental illness.
6. Ensure that the needs of people living with a mental health condition are safeguarded in any revisions to qualifying criteria for the Disabled Persons Rail Card.

## 7. Appendix

We have only been able to include a very small proportion of respondents' quotes in the body of our report. However we would strongly recommend that interested parties take some time to learn from the experiences conveyed by this larger sample of responses. All responses are quoted directly from the survey.

### **Responses about importance of public transport to recovery**

1. The independence that I gain from bus travel allows me to do the things necessary for my recovery; such as attending treatment appointments, socializing and volunteering. Being stuck at home in the house is a sure fire route to me getting more and more ill and needing more treatment.
2. To be able to get out of the house and live a 'normal' life is crucial to my recovery. To feel trapped in the house or unable to go to routine appointments - or do basic chores, such as grocery shopping - would be unbearable, and make me feel like a social pariah.
3. Keeping active & getting out is fundamental so I do not withdraw. The longer between getting out of the house the harder it can become - sometimes days before being comfortable to leave the house (& of course the cost of travel depends on how many journeys need to be considered).
4. I am agoraphobic and any journey represents a challenge to me. Medical appointments and the voluntary work represent a major component of my recovery program.
5. In addition being able to access more shops allows me to conduct my own therapy exercises and to try to learn to function outside of my comfort zones.
6. Promotes my independence and encouragement to socialise with others. Part of rehab to do 'normal' daily activities.
7. If I don't do these journeys then my mental health becomes unstable.
8. It's pretty easy to evade working on your agoraphobia when you can't afford to get on the bus or train.
9. When initially diagnosed with mental illness, I was essentially housebound. Taking up voluntary employment was an essential step in my reintegration not only away from the home but also into simple social situations that generated such anxiety for me. Public transport was an absolute necessity in this process without which my recovery would not have been possible. My evolution from this initial progress then stemmed into higher education and paid employment, both of which were again only possible via public transport (I have neither the means nor the incentive to drive) and both of which were vital to continued recovery and reintegration. To this day I still have periods of intense anxiety in which

case I find it most beneficial to face my anxiety and place myself in the midst of vast numbers of people, generally in a museum or some other such place which again is only accessible by public transport.

10. Socialisation with others in the community as part of rehabilitation
11. Socialisation - rehab back into the community/low in mood - isolate myself from important family connections.
12. It is important for me to get out and about because I don't want to become agrophobic again!

### **Responses about importance of voluntary and paid employment**

1. To improve my job prospects. To improve my mind/expand knowledge and skills for quality of life.
2. My roles as a student and an employee are very important to me, both psychologically and financially. If I were not able to travel to work or university I would lose these roles and my mental health would suffer because of it.
3. ....the journeys of the biggest importance to me would (be) to/from the voluntary work I do. The work helps me greatly, gives me something to focus on, builds my self confidence and helps other young people with mental health problems
4. voluntary employment helps give you a sense of well being and that you are helping the local community.
5. I volunteer as a governor for a local NHS Foundation Trust. I have to use public transport to attend some of the meetings. I would feel more depressed if I couldn't contribute in this way.
6. Participating in paid employment helps to build my self esteem, confidence and enables me to live a full life due to being paid
7. My voluntary work is key in my mental health as it gives me purpose and makes me feel worthwhile.
8. Because employment and relationships are both important factors in my mental health and well being
9. Paid employment - gives me routine, makes me feel useful
10. The second journey is to see the Employment Specialist who is helping me to try and overcome my negativity with regards to finding a part-time job. This is especially important to me right now as, with the threat of losing my benefit getting increasingly greater due to the cuts in public spending,

I need to find a job to ease me back into full-time employment and financial security.

11. My volunteer job is important to me because it takes my mind off things and helps improve my mental health plus my job is for a good cause
12. Volunteer work and mental health support are important to improving my mental health issues..... I am due to start a three days a week college course, public transport is essential for me for this.
13. My voluntary work helps my self esteem, confidence etc, i would not be able to do it without using the bus.
14. Volunteering gives me a sense of purpose and achievement and also enables me to be with people who have similar interests and concerns as myself. But the driving often means I arrive in quite a stressed state.
15. Because my job is important as it keeps me functioning and gives me a sense of purpose and pays my bills!
16. I am involved with two user-led mental health organisations about 4-5 miles away from me and attending their meetings and group sessions is good for my mental health.
17. My paid employment gives me the opportunity to mix with people and to have a positive outlook on life. It is very important to me.
18. Being able to work is central to my mental health
19. My voluntary work gives me a sense of purpose and stops me from feeling a waste of space, it has helped my self esteem and confidence.
20. Education - I am studying for an MA - this study is part time due to my mental health condition, but is very theraputic as a step back towards work. Thus being able to attend my classes improves my mental health. voluntary employment - ditto education - it is a stepping stone back to work and means that I have something to occupy my time with - which improves my mental health.
21. Paid employment is important as I do not receive any benefits and need the income and I get to do something on a regular basis, without which my mental health deteriorates.
22. Quite frequently I suffer from low motivation levels. By visiting family & friends or by doing my voluntary employment, my energy levels increase, and I get a sense of well-being.

## **Responses about difficulties of accessing public transport**

1. All the things I do are important to me but the ease with which I can do them have a huge impact. Getting around is vital but I find public transport unreliable.
2. A bus full of strangers is sometimes quite scary for me when I'm not very well.
3. I was assaulted on a bus last week and the driver didnt interevene they never do even if it is stooping the bus and calling the police, however if someone has an overdue day pass they take immediate action and call the police where 5 officers will (turn) up, but it is quite acceptable to them if someone has a machete and is attacking someone!
4. Poor quality journeys - overcrowding and heat, people pushing to get on or off, having your personal space invaded etc - can be detrimental to mental state and how you then go about your day.
5. The buses need to be clean and not too crowded because this too increases my levels of anxiety. If I'm anxious when I arrive I find it difficult to communicate effectively with my care co-ordinator and others because it takes me time to settle. Sometimes when buses and trains are too crowded I have to get off, or I need to turn my body away from other passengers because I become anxious about being physically contact or people breathing in my face.
6. It is vital to maintain relationships with family and friends - however many of these live many miles away - I find it very, very difficult to travel down to see my family. I find public transport very, very difficult to use in general. The crowds, noise, complicated journeys - people do not understand my sensory overload problems - I cannot explain to complete strangers that they need to give me more space and not shout or come close..... I hate public transport, it is horrible, but without it I will never see my family ever again - what am I going to do?
7. Being able to travel anywhere easily obviously has a big impact on my mental health. Delays, cancellations and poor service can increase my anxiety and lead to panic attacks and if i have a bad experience it makes it harder for me to repeat the journey in the future.
8. The public transportation between myself and my family - who are only 10 miles away - is virtually non-existent. ....I would like to see them more often but would only be able to do this if there was more than one bus every day (weekdays only).
9. I have to go to university every day. As it's the first thing I do every day, if I have a bad experience on my commute it can really affect my mental wellbeing for the rest of the day.
10. Buses being clean and well maintained also helps. It makes them less scary and people more relaxed. Drivers are also important, I have noticed

a huge improvement locally - they seem much more friendly and helpful the past few years. That all helps.

11. Being unable to drive takes away my independence and in turn affects my mental health as transport is not reliable, it often takes too long to get to places and being on crowded transport or if transport is delayed this affects my ability to function as it has a huge impact on my mental wellbeing as I suffer from acute anxiety when things change.
12. The actual journey is important as it gets me to necessary places, but the quality of the journey (eg no seat on the train for a 50 minute journey, delays that make me so late for work that I feel like giving up and coming back to bed). These things are very undermining when I have screwed up every ounce of my energy and will-power to make the journey in the first place.
13. SOME TIMES YOU HAVE TO WAIT FOR A LONG TIME FOR A BUS IT NOT HELP ME BECAUSE I GET STRESSED OUT ALOT AND PANIC ALOT.
14. i have a bus pass because i am over 60, Transport by public transport is still very tough though and these (activities) are what I would like to do, not what I actually do.
15. There are times that I am not able to drive as my concentration is affected by my mental health illness, however the public transport is so infrequent that it is impossible to use it to meet my needs. When i am unwell it is paramount that I have contact with friends, leisure and appointments but this is not possible.
16. One recent blow has been that, although I have a disabled person's bus pass, I have to pay a 60p per journey charge for the Ring and Ride, and Birmingham City Council have also reduced the service. With 2 disabilities, this is discouraging.
17. Sometimes I need to get a tube even for short journeys because I can forget where I am going. With tubes, because when it stops you can see the name of the station it means I can get out, sit down and then continue when I've remembered where I'm going. With buses, it's harder because not all have visual indicators or with people standing I can't see them.
18. I currently have my pass on grounds of mental health but I know that criteria has been removed but the problem for me is when distressed I can't focus on the machines and I don't want to talk to people, so this means I won't go out. That means I will miss medical/mental health appointments
19. Because I go to work. I get very tired travelling and this impacts upon my mental health. Sometimes I have to stand as the train is overcrowded.
20. .... you might be able to afford to get on the bus, but the bus company's website doesn't give fares. To find out the fares you presumably have either to speak to the bus driver or phone the company. Just thinking about

either brings on a panic attack. The sheer dread of getting on the bus with insufficient fare is overwhelming.

21. .... the trains are so EXPENSIVE. How can it cost less for two people to drive 224 miles than for one person to go on the train? Ridiculous.
22. As the government has already cut back many mental health services, I now have further to travel to get the support I need at the most critical times (eg when it would be irresponsible for me to drive).
23. I struggle sometimes with the distance, particularly if I've had any change to my regular meds. Some of them make me feel lethargic and the effort can be massive.
24. I used to work in the city, but I found the strain of travelling on a packed underground train difficult to cope with. If I was feeling unwell, it was really hard to be stuck in with so many people as I became paranoid that people were looking at me, or were thinking horrible thoughts about me.
25. .... it can be difficult when I am not well as the buses are often very noisy and crowded. Bus drivers are also often very rude and don't even make eye contact with people when they get on the bus. Sometimes, that's fine as I don't want to make eye contact either, but perhaps a smile would help many of us feel more accepted when we are going about our daily lives.
26. I find it difficult sometimes working out where my bus goes from and being at the right stop as sometimes it is so busy the bus can't always stop at the right place. This adds to my panic.
27. Our local buses mostly run an hourly service. This means I often find myself on a school bus if I need to be at our nearest proper town before 10 in the morning or travel back on the 2.30 bus. These buses are very noisy and crowded and I find using them very stressful as well as sometimes having to stand.
28. When travel is very over crowded I can find it difficult when not well as i find my anxiety gets worse
29. The less buses, the more cut off I feel, so I withdraw The less reliable they are I start to feel life is unreliable When you live alone as an adult you really do get these feelings
30. However, the seats of trains and buses are filthy in many cases, meaning I cannot sit down due to my OCD. I find travelling in crowded trains or buses very traumatising as a result and also as i am phobic of being touched by other people's bags and coats etc...
31. ....the buses are ridiculously crowded. I use a walking-stick. Sometimes the aisles are blocked with people and nobody gives up a seat for me - not even the disabled seats. Sometimes I have not been able to bear to be on the bus

and had to get off. But now I have pain when walking, this is a very serious situation to be in, especially in cold, wet or snowy weather.

32. Buses in my city are generally quite frequent, however when overcrowded as they often are I am not able to use them as I find it claustrophobic and causes panic attacks as I have social phobia
33. The train service is for longer distances - and is very overcrowded at times. Over crowding makes it stressful which brings on my mental health illness symptoms.
34. Some bus drivers seem to have a problem with me having a bus pass, they look at me as if to say "there's nothing wrong with you". I've also had problems with bus drivers hearing me and insisting I repeat my destination numerous times which makes me feel stupid.
35. There is little mental health awareness eg I was asked in front of lots of people what my disability was once when a train worker saw I had a disability card (probably as I was mentally not physically disabled, I didn't look disabled to him). Another time I was stopped as I had plastic over my train card due to having OCD and asked why I had plastic over it so I had to talk in public again about my mental health problem. Another time I was late I seem to remember because of my OCD and tried to go through the larger ticket barrier for disabled people and was prevented from doing so.
36. Told that "I don't look ill". Feel the rail staff are much more 'clued up' than bus staff.

### **Responses about the effects of not having concessionary travel**

1. I used to qualify for bus pass & had to make less 'either/or' decisions. Now being not eligible I am at higher risk of social isolation adversely affecting mental health. Self-help options are lessened.
2. Can't afford to travel out of village to support groups and official appointments - I've had to cancel or I have got myself into debt which has had a negative impact on mental health.
3. As I am not eligible for a bus pass I can't afford to use the bus regularly and so have to be careful how often I go on the bus. I would most likely go out more if I had a pass. If I have to go to hospital I have to rely on lifts as I would not be able to go on the bus alone.
4. Everybody has to budget for transport, of course. But I'm often forced to make choices about how I spend my money, which CAN and HAS been: food or transport? In the past I've missed appointments, cancelled visits, and slowly shrunk back into my flat becoming increasingly reclusive and, then, increasingly ill. Wellness and recovery are fragile. It only takes one journey missed to ruin a day, which can ruin a week, then a month, and before you know it you're ill all over again. Just knowing this in itself is a horrible anxiety, which impacts every decision involving money - you know you need to catch a bus at the end of the week, so can you afford to

buy that loaf of bread on Monday? This is no way for anyone to live, least of all those who are struggling to find any level of self-esteem.

5. As my family are so far apart up and down the country. So if no travel concessions were available it would make me so sad.
6. I would be able to do non urgent activities by public transport, as I am keen to help save the environment.
7. Not being able to have one stops me from doing day to day things which makes me feel very low and depressed.
8. Makes transport more expensive which means i can't do as much to help my mental health.
9. Since I lost my bus pass I have been very isolated because I can't afford the fares.
10. Financial pressure increases anxiety on a daily basis.
11. ...difficult to budget as am unable to work
12. I don't know if I'm entitled or not. The only way this really affects me is that I have money worries so I have to save if I want to go anywhere outside of Ilkeston.
13. The cost of travel can be a problem as it means that I have difficulty budgeting for other essential items. I sometimes am not able to make journeys that I would like as I cannot afford to and this makes me feel very anxious.
14. Bus pass taken away. Loss of Gold card two years ago\* was a major blow, it also gave a discount on services which was useful when on a low income. \* due to changes because I have a driving licence. Can't always feel well enough to use car especially for long distances.
15. Bus fares a concern and limit me to number of visits to Touchwood in Long Eaton.
16. I now am not able to go out whenever I have a good day whenever I want. I feel restricted and isolated. There are places I've never been to locally but not having a concessionary card stops me from going as I cannot afford trips for pleasure on top of necessary shopping trips.
17. if i had a concession then i could get out and about more
18. Fares go up constantly, yet it would be impossible to go to work without public transport, therefore there is a constant worry about money and making ends meet.

19. Do not think eligible although on benefit which makes travelling expensive as on limited income. stressful as would like to travel more but can't. depressing too.
20. Costs money and sometimes this gives me anxiety.
21. Find it hard to pay for my travels that's why I walk and and it helps sometimes and other times it dont.
22. Not having bus pass means when i can't use my motorbike because I don't feel well enough is distressing as I don't always have money for fare. Having a disabled railcard would enable me to get better support more often as that is a train journey and over £10 in cost. So negatively affects my mental health.
23. I would love to be in London and eligible for a freedom pass. I will be 60 soon but am sure the bus pass will be withdrawn by then.
24. In Lambeth mental health service users are at risk of having their concession passes taken away from them due to public sector cuts. This will affect their mental health as they are losing something.
25. I can't get out far without a Gold Card (bus pass)
26. It means that the expense of travel limits the nature of what I am able to do. This leads to a sense of being trapped, prevents me sometimes from social or cultural events and can lead to entrenched depression.
27. Of course not being eligible for a concession affects my mental health. I am not fit enough for paid employment so rely on state benefits which do not enable me to visit family or friends. It makes me isolated which is not good. To get out is very good for your morale. It makes you get washed and dressed to start with.
28. Transport is expensive - i have to limit how many journeys i make even though getting out and about by bus and train, whether it's visiting family/old friends or just a day out/exercise really helps lift me or distracts me from things that are troubling me.
29. It makes me ill as I should be eligible. I meet all the criteria for being on an enhanced care plan (I have the severest form of OCD and have been treated at a national unit that is only for those with very severe, treatment resistant OCD in the country) yet cannot even get access to a social care assessment. In other words, as I am not on an enhanced care plan, I am not eligible for a Freedom Pass, even though I am eligible for mental health care that I cannot access. The effect of not being able to get around has on my mental health is immense. I would love to go to visit museums and art galleries and churches in central London but it's too expensive to go up there. I can only spend about £10 a week on travel and that is usually taken up on going food shopping and to attend medical appointments, not for leisure activities which are so important for mental health. Even going to visit friends and relatives is too expensive. It costs me £10 to visit my

brother, £20 if I stay over, that's with a disabled discount. If I visit a friend in London, that costs me £5.20 unless I take the bus, which would take about two hours, so isn't an option as my illness means I can't be that organised. I never go on holiday and rarely leave London as it's too expensive.

30. Makes me very panicky about not having enough money to get to my appointments. And sometimes walking home in unfamiliar places making me very very nervous and scared making me very depressed,
31. I worry a lot about how much it will cost me and it depresses me.
32. A concession giving either reduced price or free transport would give me much more freedom to visit friends. This would be good because it would encourage me to be more independent and give me more self-confidence
33. At the moment I have alternative transport, but given current cuts that may not continue. Given how difficult I find it to use public transport - I think I will be effectively housebound and will never see my parents again - due to their age they are not able to travel the 500 miles to visit me.
34. It means I may be deterred from going to central London to see museums etc due to the cost. A bit of culture improves my mental health.
35. Again, the cost it limits what I can do worrying about the cost adds to the stress
36. I just have to pay loads to get anywhere and then I get worried about money a lot.
37. Just adds another cost burden.
38. I have been told that I may be eligible for a free bus pass due to the medication I'm on but have been unable to find anyone who will support my claim. This has the effect of causing stress over whether I can maintain the ability to travel to all my appointments that I need to keep me as active as I am currently. Should my financial situation, which is already on a knife-edge, change, I may lose my support services entirely and I'll become a shut-in.
39. VERY BAD
40. being economically isolated has a deleterious effect on my health
41. I would like to get a railcard as I have family in the North and I cannot see them because I cannot afford it - because I cannot work due to illness/stigma
42. the cost of public transport is a drain on my finances and a cause of constant anxiety

43. I find it frustrating as sometimes I may not feel up to driving, but cannot afford to take public transport. Also travelling on a bus, people watching and observing is good for my mental health as it gives me 'time out' to tap into the creative side of my mind , which is so important to me as an artist and writer
44. I feel excluded and unable to afford public transport costs.
45. DIAL A RIDE NOT BEING AVAILABLE MEANS THAT I HAVE TO USE OTHER SERVICES WHICH CAN CAUSE DISTRESS WHICH CAN ACTIVATE POOR MENTAL HEALTH TRIGGERS
46. I am very angry that I have to pay for Ring and Ride, given I have a disabled person's bus pass. It makes me feel undervalued and misunderstood.
47. It makes it extremely difficult to afford to get out. Some weeks I cannot see friends or receive support due to not being able to afford it. My local train introduced a new peak time covering 2.30pm until 6pm, which has meant it is almost impossible to avoid going or returning at peak time, so this has put up prices even more. I have been known to live on little food and cut back on other things just so that I can afford to travel to appointments. I don't see why all people on incapacity benefit cannot be given a travel card that allows at least some discount as it would help enormously. It doesn't help that people on means-tested benefits can claim money back for travel to psychotherapy appointments and people on incapacity benefits can't, in the same way that people on incap ben are not eligible for free prescriptions. It makes it very very difficult to make ends meet.
48. If I am on strong medication then I cannot drive, but I'm not eligible for concessions, which can be stressful and affect my mental health.
49. The cost of peak travel is exhorbitant. I wonder why I push myself to work and that affects my motivation and has a knock on affect on my depression. Sometimes when the train is crushed I wish I could go in first class where there is more space. I get claustrophobic when it's overfull and have had panic attacks.
50. I've never actually looked into the concessions. If I knew the bus was free I could get on with no fear of never having the right fare, which might encourage me to work on my agaraphobia. As it is I'm dependent on my husband taking me where I want to go. Going out alone is what I need to work on, but I can't.
51. It is frustrating that I spend so much on public transport to meet my basic medical appointments, which I need to go to for support and to improve my recovery, yet I pay around £15 a week just for these bus journeys - never mind the bus journeys for other trips (shopping, work, social etc). I try to walk as much as possible to avoid the bus costs, but this isn't always possible when it is a longer journey, or it is dark and unsafe, or if I am not feeling mentally well.

52. When my freedom pass is not valid i will not be able to cope, or wish to live.
53. I cant go out as much as i would like so being stuck at home doesn't do my depression/anxiety any good,
54. i become more depressed having to not seeing family
55. I am currently able to work and can afford to pay for my travel. If I became unwell and was no longer able to work, or lost my job as a result of the financial situation, I would struggle to be able to afford the monthly travel card fees. I would want to be able to apply for a concessionary pass to ensure that I could still get around to visit friends and family, seek employment, volunteer for things, do my shopping and attend cultural activities as these are all things that help me maintain my wellbeing. Social contact is a key factor in ensuring that I do not become isolated and unwell. If I couldn't get out and about, I would be very likely to become very unwell and require a greater degree of support from the state, which would, in the long run, be less cost effective than having concessionary travel. The impact of social contact and the freedom to get out and about to live one's life should not be disregarded.
56. As I am working and don't qualify for concessions I'm finding it harder to pay for my travel as the prices keep going up more than my pay.
57. it makes it harder to manage

### **Responses about beneficial effects of having concessionary travel**

1. It make me want to live, share and give a little bit more to myself and others.
2. It has encouraged me to undertake leisure activities which I had ceased because I simply could not afford more that the most basic journeys. For example, I can go the cinema using Orange Wednesday and travel free of cost to the cinema. It helps get me out of the house and get accustomed to crowds again. This helps me to start re-building relationships with people and makes me feel more confident. I have used concessionary travel to go to MIND trips, walking excursions, skating, which I otherwise would not have been able to afford. It gives me a chouce of transport methods so that if I am feeling claustrophobic and don't want to travel on crowded buses, I can go on a near empty tube which gets me there in half the time. I haven't had a panic attack on public transport for a while.
3. Bus pass enables me to access the real world, and have some quality of life. It also enables me to go to places in order to learn to interact with different people.
4. Having a bus pass gives me the freedom to travel as I wish, what with benefits and stuff I wouldn't be able to afford regular travel without the use of my pass
5. Helps me attend appointments eg GP or hospital.

6. Having a bus pass/Gold Card is quite beneficial to me so as to access important places/family. Day centre to talk to members of staff if feeling ill of something.
7. The disability railcard makes it more affordable to go places because my partner can go for the same discount as myself.
8. My free bus pass opens up all avenues, connected to my mental capabilities and, being free, doesn't stretch my income resources.
9. I could not use bus. I could not afford to go where I do if I did not have Gold Card (bus pass) which also gives me discount in shops and discount on eating while out. I could not get to places I do without the Gold card so I would not have contact with others or be able to get my shopping. When I'm out I feel so much better.
10. It enables me to get out of the house and be independent.
11. It enables me to visit friends in hospital and elsewhere, a close relative, otherwise I would be socially isolated and would sink into depression. It enables me to meet up with fellow service users and give each other mutual support. It enables me to carry out my voluntary and paid work which will help to improve health care across Derbyshire and nationally and therefore helps to improve my mental health because of my contribution to the community and feeling of worth. It enables me to continue with my existing dentist who has monitored my dental treatment over many years. It enables me to get to medical appointments at Stepping Hospital at no cost which is beneficial to my mental health as it means there is continuity in the treatment of my physical health. It enables me to participate in leisure activities, which would otherwise be very expensive, and contributes to my feeling of being valuable in the community and encouraging others to overcome their mental distress by participating in leisure activities.
12. I currently have a bus concession but I was very lucky to get it because of a very sympathetic mental health worker who defied management to sign a form. I will not be able to have it renewed as I am no longer in contact with that worker. Strictly speaking I do not meet the strict eligibility conditions so could not get a GP to support my application.
13. I am easily able to get around so I can attend appointments and go places which are important to me. If I had to pay for my travel it would be harder for me to do this, which would definitely affect my mental health. I would find it stressful if I needed to pay for travel.
14. Having a freedom pass is important to me as it means that I can travel free of charge to the activities and locations that I value. If I had to pay for my journeys I may not be able to afford to travel, which would have a negative effect on my mental health.
15. The discount provided means that I can sometimes afford to make journeys e.g. to visit my family who live at the opposite end of the country to me, which would otherwise be prohibitively expensive. Being able to visit friends and loved ones is very important to maintaining my mental health and so I greatly value being able to afford to make these journeys.

16. I touched on this earlier in the survey. I am very grateful for my bus pass though feel guilty at the same time that the rest of society has to pay extortionate bus fares. It doesn't help that I have been judged by both bus drivers and friends/acquaintances for having a bus pass when I don't have a visible disability.
17. Having a Railcard has made a major difference to my mental health as I can't drive long distances and can visit friends and family by train.
18. Enables me to use public transport to visit family and friends which increases my social skills and independence.
19. Help you socialise more and become more socially included. Helps with cost to keep in touch with family and access local shops in the town centre.
20. If I not had pass you mental problems would not get treated as fares too costly and trying to travel helps me to try and trust people. As due to my mental health I don't like people in crowds or more than 2.
21. I had a bus pass before I was 60 due to my agoraphobia. This gave me the opportunity to get out on a bus and build up the number of shops I could travel to. Also if I needed to get off anytime I could do so and continue my journey or return home without the worry of mounting costs of the fares. It also helped to give me courage to try and get on buses.
22. I need to have a Gold Card (bus pass) but they stopped accepting it. This immediately made me feel isolated and cut off from my friends and family. I have been on half benefit while waiting for an appeal and have had to have 7 dental appointments. This has cost me nearly £50 in fares alone. If you have concessionary travel it makes you feel that you can go wherever you need to go, whenever you want and relieves a lot of anxiety. It helps me visit my elderly mother much more often which is good for her. Being able to travel when one feels able is so stimulating on a good day and literally a tonic to the soul! It helps me do my basic day to day shopping. Shopping locally is so much more expensive.
23. Makes a huge difference to my mental health being able to get to support centre 6 days a week. I could not afford to attend without a bus pass.
24. It enables me to get to places that make me feel better about myself.
25. Very essential, freedom to travel. Wish I could use pass before 9.30am.
26. Impacts positively on my mental health due to being able to go out and meet people.
27. More freedom of travel
28. It is a freer life for me. I mean that it gives me a better social life, something which I found difficult in my past. It also helps to have holidays to visit family, and improves my wellbeing a great deal.
29. It has given me back a sense of freedom. I know that whatever happens to my benefit status and my income I can get away from my immediate surroundings (stressfully full of tourists in the summer) and get to hospital appointments, travel to a different area of the lakes to enjoy gentle walks away from the crowds, even if push came to shove I could go by public service bus to Leeds see my parents 80 miles away. At times it has been

quite literally a lifeline. My Railcard means I can just about afford to get to see them by train at the moment. Otherwise it would be prohibitively expensive.

30. As i'm doing alot of volunteering its very benifessaul for me to have a pass, it would be very exspencie, if i had to pay all the time!
31. The railcard is useful because I can take someone with me and they get the discount as well. The Dial a Ride service (Keep Mobile) is not that useful to me because you have to book so far in advance and I don't know how I will be from one day to the next. I used to get tokens from the council which could be used for bus, train or taxi, I mostly used mine for taxis and always kept enough in my bag to get me home if I needed it so I knew I could always get home quickly. They have stopped doing them this year, and given us the equivalent money paid into our bank accounts, although better than not having it, gets swallowed up into paying bills so it's not the same. It will be phased out to everyone having bus passes, I can't use the bus so there is no point in having a bus pass!
32. Complete freedom. Free's up finance for other uses.
33. Yes benefits are easy and cheaper travel
34. It enables me to get out and see friends. That makes me feel better when I feel low. It also saves me money which reduces my stress levels.
35. It gets me out of the house. It allows me to socialise. It allows me to go to the gym and feel good about myself.
36. Makes me mobile. Without it I would not afford to travel.
37. Very good! Prevents isolation.
38. The staff at the Rail stations always help me more with advice when they see my railcard On packed trains the staff give me a seat if they see me sometimes in first class if the priority disabled seats are full or we can't get to them I have some physical problems as well as mental health When my walking is really bad I always get a seat in the waiting room at Euston - if my mental state were poor I know I could wait there as they are friendly people When ill, I don't have to plan too much, just get out of the flat and know I have the pass
39. Enables me to get out instead of being stuck in as I find it difficult to be out for long period so buses are quicker. If I couldn't use public transport I would get very isolated and more depressed.
40. It gives me vastly improved quality of life and stable mental health.
41. Free pass can travel more often. Travelling by bus helps my aches and pains.
42. Have afforded (with bus pass) to visit places out of town which when possible has increased my confidence. Enabled me to socialise with friends in other areas and relations ie in Newcastle upon Tyne.
43. I am not sure whether i would be eligible for a bus pass or not - i have seen there is a category for people that have or would have their driving license revoked. I could explore that as a possibility but haven't done yet because it sounds stressful and don't want to give up my licence just in case my difficulties improve. I really don't know how i would go about this.

Regarding trains, my difficulty is accessing other forms of transport. I would benefit a great deal by having a concession because it means i could afford to get out and about more often. Sometimes i get into a state where i don't want to go out or socialise, but usually a trip out somewhere on a bus or train really helps.

44. Having this concession has helped me financially which has a positive effect on my MH. I also suffer from ME so being able to access the buses is a boon both ways, and my trip to the library I find to be therapeutic - libraries are quiet places and ideal for those who suffer from depression and anxiety.
45. If it wasn't for my Gold card I wouldn't be able to access all the places I do due to living on a limited budget. It allows me to go further afield, experience new places and get away from the day to day routine.
46. I am free of worry of financial restrictions of travel upon the well being of my mental health
47. It would help me financially and make me feel more at ease.
48. Having a bus pass will enable me to travel wherever I want without worrying about the cost. This encourages me to socialise with others and carry out daily activities.
49. This allows me to get to the people that I need to to enable me to survive
50. I am eligible for a disability pass on the buses through West Yorkshire - I can travel fairly easily on off-peak times when it isn't too crowded or noisy. Noise makes me unable to concentrate on the magazine I am reading on the way.
51. My railcard makes it more affordable to visit my sons and attempt to maintain and improve our damaged relationships which would benefit my mental health.
52. yes, freedom pass which gives me free tube and bus travel. This is important as I do not have to worry about being able to afford to travel
53. Able to get away and have a break due to reduced prices which improves my mental health.
54. Makes travel more affordable. Since being "dismissed from my employment" due to a mental health condition - my income has reduced.
55. Good, no money worries.
56. I don't have to worry about which bus service I can get on. I don't have to work out the money. I can be spontaneous. I am less frightened and anxious. I am more confident. I can change my mind and get off the bus when I feel I can't cope.
57. If I were not able to discontinue and then re-continue journeys, I would not have the confidence to embark on them. My concessionary pass enable this approach.

58. This helps me enormously as I can travel around freely on the buses and trains without worrying. Normally if you have to make changes it can be expensive.
59. It is one less thing to worry about - can I afford this journey, have I got change etc.? If I need to get off a bus because of anxiety or because I have forgotten something, I can do this without worrying about the waste of a ticket.
60. As i am on a low income, it makes it easy to travel because i don't have to find the right change. I would not volunteer without my bus pass.
61. when I cannot use my car due to mental ill health then I can still use public transport and this is free. This has a great positive impact on my mental health because without this I would be cut off from work, family, friends, and leisure. I would lose my job and my independence without it.
62. Centre free bus pass, and rail and metro pass. easy financially, liberating in every way.
63. helps relieve financial stress
64. To enable me to go out
65. helped me travel to work when my driving licence was revoked
66. It helps me get out when I get free transport because it is easier for me cost wise.
67. anything that helps me get out of the house can only be a Good Thing
68. My psychiatrist said i could get a freedom pass and it has made such a difference! It meant that when I was in the mental hospital I could get about & go to the library and now that I am out it means I can visit my friends, go on trips out, and when i'm able to work it means i can get to work without worrying about the money.
69. My Freedom Card is immensely beneficial for my mental health. I would not be able to do all the things I have been doing and am planning to do without it for cost reasons. My recovery is dependent on the ability to get around. Travel is important for attending medical appointments and support, doing volunteering work, shopping, attending college courses and visiting friends and family.
70. It allows me to get about more readily
71. Cost, public transport is expensive, going to college 3 times a week would cost me £15 and that is without all the other journeys I make.
72. When I am well enough to use them they are a great help even though I have a good income. Getting out and about is very important.
73. Saves quite a bit of money, but at the moment i have lost a lot of confidence in going to different destinations, so am not really using it to its maximum potential. In the past it has given me the opportunity to visit art exhibitions and galleries in London. I find being on a train quite relaxing
74. As I've mentioned above, the ability to just hop on a bus reduces my stress levels. It enables me to do life's tasks in chunks.

75. Oh goodness! With my free bus pass, I don't have to worry about the cost of getting somewhere e.g. a friend's for coffee, a support group, a walk in the park. Every penny counts when you're on benefits, doesn't it? I'd have more recourse to support workers, respite care etc. if my free bus pass didn't help me so much with my self-management.
76. Having a free pass is vital for my mental health. If I had to pay for my travel I would not be able to make as many journeys and would be stuck at home getting isolated and depressed. Having a disabled railcard makes it possible for me to visit family and friends who all live outside London.
77. I think that I would go out less if I had to pay the full price. I engage more with my community because I can use the bus after 9.00am. for free every day. Whenever I have had to travel by train it is helpful to get a third off and to have the knowledge that I can have someone accompany if necessary at the same price.
78. It means that I don't have to worry about travelling by bus because of the money which I don't have. I am in receipt of Pension Credit. £ 134.39 per week.
79. Allows me a significant increase in disposable income for living costs.
80. Having a national bus concession pass does enable me to afford to access more leisure activities which prevents me from becoming so isolated.
81. The Freedom pass is a very useful part of my car i can access public transport without the need to top up fares in shops although the free times for travel are limited in the mornings and evenings which i think is wrong it should be free for 24 hours.
82. Having the bus pass makes me able to function. It takes a lot of the stress out of travelling because I know I can just catch any bus and if I get the wrong one I don't have to make sure that I have enough change to get back. having the railcard has made me more confident with the railway. I feel that if I get into difficulties I could show someone the card and they would help me. It also enables me to travel with a companion without having to pay double fares - I use this option for most of the journeys I make - because having a companion looking after getting the right train and the right platform reduces the stress.
83. I would have no life, no support, no contact with my family/friends with(out) my Freedom Pass and Railcard
84. It would be very painful and distressing if I couldn't afford it.
85. My disabled bus pass rocks! I can now make a journey without having to plan money out of my benefit, much of which goes on bills and food leaving precious little to travel on. Without a pass, my minimum levels of journeys cost me about £30.00, out of £100.00 a week total benefit. There are so many barriers to leaving the house in terms of my own anxiety and psychosis, the fact that I no longer have to stress about costs means that I am finally attending appointments and schemes that are proving to help me in my recovery. I have forgone treatment and support before because travel was too expensive. My bus pass allows me to live and full and varied life, it means so much more than money in my pocket, it's convenience, it's made

travelling when I am unwell easier, it means I have greater contact with my family and friends, am less isolated and less ill.

86. without bus concession i would not afford to go out...
87. I am able to get to medical appointments without the worry of driving. If I suffer a panic attack on the bus I can get off and catch the next one, without another charge. I have been on medications in the past that has meant that it would of been unsafe for me to drive, for myself and others.
88. My railcard lets me visit family & friends in different parts of the country. This helps maintain my social networks, gives my carer a break, and helps with my paranoia if I'm scared being at home.
89. It would mean i could visit my family more often, i would not be worrying about finding the money for my monthly travel pass, it would easy that burden which is would be much better on my mental health
90. I am able to have a national bus concession but because I live to far away from the bus stop I cannot use it without getting a lift to the bus stop. But at least I know that once I'm there England is my oyster after 9.30 am and before the end of the concession time 11.30 pm. This is good for my mental health on so many levels, like being able to get out to see my children and grandchildren, medical appointments. But it is also a bad thing as I still do not feel like a normal person having the restrictions of time put on us, unlike people able to pay, both able bodied and disabled. I have worked all my life apart from the last 13 years, I still look after my wife even against medical advise not to. Only giving up work to look after my wife as her carer and then having my condition because of the lack of support we had at fist. While I have a DLA payment for my mobility, I find that I'm having to use that on the day to day things like food and utilities that are always higher than able bodied people. This leaves nothing else to help with my mobility need apart from the concession.