

Transport and Health

Why is transport a Public Health issue?

Access to Goods and Services

- Good transport provides options and facilitates a range of opportunities to access employment, education, healthcare, shopping or simply visiting families and friends.

Levels of Physical Activity

- Encouraging residents and visitors to use modes of transport which can benefit their health through more active travel such as walking and cycling helps address obesity issues by increasing physical activity and reducing air pollution.

Accidents and injuries

- Children and young people are over represented in casualty statistics along with motorcyclists and young drivers due to the number of road deaths and serious injuries, especially in the urban deprived communities
- Poor road user behaviour such as inappropriate speed, drink driving and use of mobile phones whilst driving leads to accidents and injury.

Pollution

- Air pollution from motor vehicles causes respiratory irritation, inflammation and disease can affect both mental and physical health such as sleep disturbance, CVD, elevated hormone levels, psychological problems, premature death, poor behaviour in children and diminished quality of life.
- Light pollution from vehicles and street lighting can disrupt sleep patterns, whilst traffic causes noise and vibration which adversely affects the quality of life of residents living near busy roads

Community Severance

- The dispersed nature of settlements in rural Northumberland can lead to long journey times. Where transport options are few, the inability to get out and about easily can cause mental health problems such as isolation and depression.
- Poor transport planning can create busy roads which disrupt social networks, sever communities and create traffic rat runs

Social Exclusion

- Health problems associated with transport, or the lack of it, are frequently more evident among those from disadvantaged groups. Social exclusion is closely linked to an inability to access these services.
- 40% of jobseekers cited transport as a barrier to accessing work whilst almost half of 16-18 year olds find the cost of travel to school or further education hard to meet
- The majority of people failing to attend GP or outpatient appointments were due to transport issues.
- Families without a car find access to supermarkets more difficult than those with a car.

- Young people, the sick, disabled and the elderly are less likely to have access to a car and so as a result are more dependent on public transport.

What can the County Council do about it?

Improve access to goods and services

- A good transport policy can reduce the need to travel in some cases. Where travel is necessary good transport options can encourage a modal shift to public transport.
- Better integration of transport planning and development;
- Improved access to Dial-a-Ride and other demand responsive transport
- Raised bus access kerbs
- Improve rail crossings and rail stations;
- Provide free school transport for eligible children;
- Resolve unmet transport needs through partnerships between the VCS sector, Parish/Town Councils and the community transport sector.

Increase Physical Activity

- Develop and maintain a core cycle route network across the County.
- Identify and maintain a core network of convenient, accessible and safe walking routes that connect into facilities and link communities.
- Ensure footways are accessible to people with disabilities and those with young children through the provision of dropped kerbs, tactile paving and safe crossings.
- Encourage walking by ensuring that safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle routes are included as part of new developments, including links to existing networks and public rights of way.
- Promote active transport as a healthy and sustainable alternative to the private car through the development of workplace and school travel plans, including promotional events such as Walk to School Week and Bike Week.
- Ensure adequate cycle parking at key destinations, rail stations, schools and as part of new developments.
- Work in partnership with Northumberland Sport to develop and implement the Northumberland Physical Activity Plan.

Reducing accidents and injuries

- Highways infrastructure improvements improve safety by the introduction of pedestrian crossings, traffic calming, parking restrictions and cycle routes.
- Reducing the speed of traffic by the use of mobile speed activated signs and the introduction of 20mph speed limits.
- Deliver road safety education through the Road Safety Unit, providing training and publicity to schools across Northumberland.
- Provide primary school children with practical road safety training and for older pupils, Bikeability cycle training.
- Make the existing transport network as safe as possible by maintaining the highway to a safe standard as well as identifying and treating accident problem sites.
- Work in partnership with Northumbria Police, Fire and Rescue, and the Highways Agency to deliver schemes to protect road users.

- Deliver the ExpertRider scheme which offers experienced motorcyclists the chance to undertake practical on-road training.
- Deliver national and regional road safety campaigns.

Reduce air pollution and greenhouse emissions:

- Pollution prevention and control through use of environmental permits
- Workplace and residential travel plans developed through the planning process to promote sustainable forms of transport.
- Ensure every school in Northumberland has a School Travel Plan.
- Support Northumberlandcarshare.com to reduce the number of single occupancy car journeys.
- The council has supported the development of car clubs within Northumberland.
- Developing a network of electric vehicle charging posts and promoting the use of electric vehicles.
- Deliver smarter travel awareness measures.

Quality of Life

- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure transport schemes positively enhance the surroundings, protecting the environment and improving quality of life.
- Enabling residents to access the countryside for recreation purposes and delivering Rights of Way improvements.
- Reducing polluting emissions through the support and promotion of more sustainable forms of transportation.

How will it make a difference?

- Good transport links are essential to enable residents to access work, leisure, shopping, education and healthcare. The inability to access services can lead to social exclusion.
- Transport choices can both benefit health through the choice of more active forms of travel and present a risk to health through pollution or road traffic accidents.
- The support and promotion of sustainable forms of transport are key to meeting carbon and health priorities.