



“Excuse me I want to get on!”

A Guide to Good Travel

The Peoples' Parliament
Sheffield Town Hall
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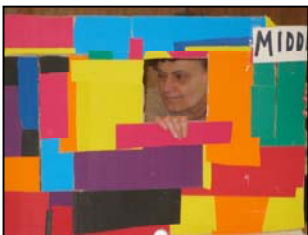
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What was the project about?

- “*Excuse me I want to get on!*” was a six-month research collaboration between **The University of Sheffield** and **Sheffield Mencap** funded by the Knowledge Transfer Opportunities Fund (KTOF).
- The project was run by the learning disability self advocacy group ‘**Voices and Choices**’ at Sheffield Mencap Day Services working in association with University of Sheffield and supported by the Stagecoach Supertram, Sheffield Independent Film (SIF) and the Sheffield self advocacy group Speaking Up For Action (SUFA).
- You can recognise all the organisations/groups involved in “Excuse me I want to get on!” by their **logos** which are shown below:



The University of Sheffield



Sheffield Mencap



Speaking Up For Action (SUFA)



Sheffield Independent Film (SIF)



The Stagecoach Supertram

- Between January and June 2008 the 'Voices and Choices' group at Sheffield Mencap explored their experiences of using the **Stagecoach Supertram** to travel across Sheffield and South Yorkshire. The project explored ways in which to improve the accessibility of the Supertram with the following aims:



1. To **empower** people with learning disabilities to access the Supertram safely and with growing confidence.



2. To make explicit **good practice** for support staff and the families of people with learning disabilities, so that they are able to best support their family member or person with learning disabilities to gain greater independence when travelling across the city.



3. To **generate methods** by which local service providers and policy makers (Sheffield City Council) may make the city and its transport links more **accessible** and **inclusive** for people with learning disabilities.



What did we do?



- **The project fieldwork commenced with an initial meeting** held at Sheffield Mencap on Thursday February 21st. Present were, the 'Voices and Choices' group, Alice Mathers, Dr Kevin Thwaites and Ian Simkins (the research team from The University of Sheffield), Andrew Smith (Sheffield Independent Film) and Dave Skirrow and Julia Shaw from Stagecoach Supertram.



- At the first meeting the group talked about the **good and bad points of travelling by tram**. We also discussed how as a group we wanted to communicate our ideas to others using writing, film, photography and drawings. Some people felt more comfortable using one communication method than another, **we decided to use a range of communication methods** so all group members could have their say.



- In March **we met with SUFA** to find out what people from the wider local learning disability population thought about travelling by public transport. In our meeting with SUFA the group

used **drama** to communicate their experiences of using the Supertram.



- After meeting with Speaking Up For Action, the 'Voices and Choices' group decided to **use drama as another communication method** when telling others their stories of travelling by tram.



- Four members of the 'Voices and Choices' group chose to tell their **individual travel stories through the making of a documentary film**. Each member had a different reason for wanting to use the Supertram to enable them to gain greater independence. In each journey the people face different issues, and overcome these issues in different ways.



- Throughout the project the group used **drawing workshops** to communicate, explore and develop their ideas. During the drawing workshops 'Voices and Choices' members **highlighted current issues** when travelling by the Supertram, but also **ways in which their travel experience could be improved** and how an ideal or **perfect travel experience** might be created.



What did we find out?

Through the previously described project fieldwork, the evolved findings of “Excuse me I want to get on!” identified three important areas for consideration in the experience of people with learning disabilities travelling by Supertram. These were:

- **Current problems** experienced by passengers with learning disabilities.
- **Current successful Stagecoach Supertram features** which facilitate travel by passengers with learning disabilities.
- **Future developments** that would enhance the public transport experience of people with learning disabilities.

Each of these issues is now discussed in detail.

Current problems experienced by passengers with learning disabilities

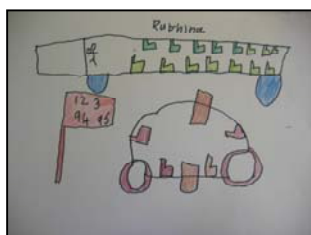
This first issue may be further broken down into three sections, which together make up a passenger’s journey on the Stagecoach Supertram.

1. **Before reaching the tram stop**
2. **At the tram stop**
3. **On the tram**

1. Before reaching the tram stop



- There are **not always tram stops close to where people live**. This discourages some people from using the tram.
- The **tram doesn't currently travel to all the places people want to visit**.



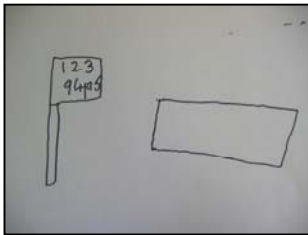
- It is **difficult to get hold of accessible information** on how travelling on the tram works, where it goes and when.

2. At the tram stop



- The **lack of seats** at most tram stops makes waiting an uncomfortable experience for many people.
- The **colour coding system of trams is confusing** to many people. Although squares on the front of trams show the tram route colour, the overall painting of the trams in many colours confuses first time travellers in particular.
- The **tram shelters are not enclosed** and people are exposed to the cold and bad weather.



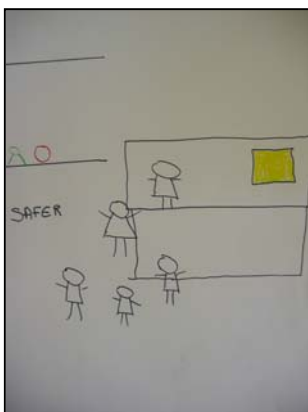
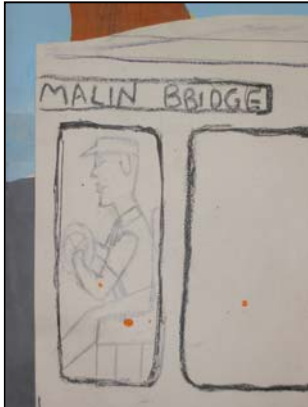


- The **timetables are too high up** for many people (especially those in wheelchairs) and are therefore difficult to read.
- **People felt exposed** at the tram stops to bullying. There was no obvious official protection in the form of staff, support or surveillance.
- The **help points don't always work**.
- **Isolated tram stops are a target for vandalism**. Glass on the floor made waiting a dangerous situation for people.
- The **writing and numbers on maps and timetables is too small** for many people to read.

3. On the tram



- **Confusing buttons**. Many people mistook the red colour of the help button for the stop request. This was a particular problem for people who didn't read.
- Many disabled people have experienced being **pushed and shoved at peak times**.
- The **tram doors close very quickly** (which is particularly difficult for wheelchair users).



- Travelling by **tram is expensive** for those people who don't have a travel pass (such as carers and support workers).
- **Getting the conductor's attention is difficult** particularly at busy times.
- There is **not enough luggage space**.
- When **the disabled seating is occupied** getting up the steps on tram to find another seat is difficult for some passengers.
- The **gap between some platforms and the tram** varies and is too high at some points (especially for wheelchair users).
- Tram **seatbelts** would help disabled passengers feel more secure and steady.
- **Antisocial behaviour** by others (particularly teenagers) is intimidating.
- **Non-disabled passengers who sit in the disabled seating**. Disabled passengers do not always feel confident enough to tell non-disabled passengers to move. Therefore people who need to sit, are left standing.
- When the tram is busy and noisy it is **difficult to hear the announcement or see the screen on the tram ceiling**.

Current successful Stagecoach Supertram features which facilitate travel by passengers with learning disabilities.

“Excuse me I want to get on!” also identified a number of **current design features that worked really well** when using the tram. These features **could be applied to other modes of public transport** (such as buses and trains) to improve their accessibility to all. These features were:



- **Clean** trams.
- **Comfortable seats.**
- **Frequent trams**, travelling the same route.



- Being able to **avoid congestion** and traffic jams.
- Having a **conductor on board**, who travelled up and down the tram.



- Travelling by Suprtram is a **smooth experience** (as one SUFA member commented, “It looks like a train, but moves like a snake!”)

- The **conductors’ uniforms** are very helpful in identifying staff and making passengers feel safe.



- **Accessible platforms.**
- **Rails/bars inside the tram** greatly help and reassure passengers against the swaying motion of the tram.

Future developments that would enhance the public transport experience of people with learning disabilities.

Through a series of drawing workshops, “Excuse me I want to get on!” also identified a number of possible developments to the Supertram service in Sheffield that would greatly improve passenger experience.

These developments would be of benefit not only to people with learning disabilities, but other vulnerable passengers (such as the elderly), those new to the city or those visiting the city for a limited time.



- **Extend tram routes to more residential areas.**
- **Highlight more of the city’s attractions** within a short range (walking distance) of the tram stops.
These could include:



Areas with services, such as post offices, the town hall, churches, banks, health centres, hospitals and libraries.

Areas with amenities, such as shops, restaurants, cafes, pubs, cinemas, museums and theatres.



Areas for healthy living and leisure, such as parks, swimming pools and gyms.

This could be tied into a wider *city legibility scheme (making the city more understandable)* through pictorial/photographic signs and way marking.



- **Announcements at tram stops** to tell you: where you are, when the next tram will arrive, where the tram is travelling to and from.



- **Clearer colour coding on trams** (i.e. if the tram is running on the blue route, the entire tram could be blue).
- **A less confused button system** (stop buttons only at doors, help buttons positioned in another obvious location).
- **Seats at all tram stops**, to make the waiting experience more comfortable and accessible.
- **Bigger print timetables**. Positioned lower (or at different heights at the tram stop).
- **Clearer maps with photographs**, of recognisable landmarks at tram stop destinations and along the route.
- **More staff** to help passengers on and off the tram at tram stops.
- **Subsidised fares for carers/support workers** so they can accompany disabled people.
- **Tram conductors to be more aware** of the needs of disabled passengers, in order to support them more actively.



What will be done, with what we have found out?

Today, you have attended the first public presentation of the “Excuse me I want to get on!” findings.

We also want to know what you think about travelling by public transport, and the places you would like to go but currently cannot (due to a variety of reasons). Therefore we would like you to take the time to complete the **“Excuse me I want to get on!” feedback sheet** either before you leave the Peoples’ Parliament at the Town Hall today, or if you would like more time please post your feedback to the following address:

Alice Mathers

Department of Landscape
Floor 3, Arts Tower
University of Sheffield
Western Bank
Sheffield S10 2TN
United Kingdom

Our aim is to share what we’ve found out with the widest range of people possible. Therefore if you and your organisation are interested in developing part of this project please let us know by emailing Alice Mathers at:

a.mathers@sheffield.ac.uk

Information from this seminar day will also be available soon, from the following websites:

www.elprdu.com and www.sheffieldmencap.org

After this seminar day, work from “Excuse I want to get on!” will be presented at:

The International Association for People-environment Studies (IAPS) conference ‘Urban diversities, biosphere and well-being: designing and managing our common environment’ in Rome (July 2008).



Colours in a Rainbow film and arts festival, which celebrates creative work by people with learning disabilities and autism (Summer 2009).



The findings of “Excuse me I want to get on!” will also form the basis for research beginning in September 2008, funded by the **Leverhulme Trust** looking into people responsive environmental design.

