



Building more inclusive digital mobility services

Phase 3 event: building on the findings from the Making Connections audit workshops

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Project overview

Go Upstream's Making Connections project brought a number of project partners and disabled people together to explore travel connections. The methodology that we developed and refined included **Discovery Workshops** that identified real-life challenges by travelling with disabled people, working with service providers on **key design challenges** and a **Review Event** to share our work, take a broader view of the findings and celebrate our collaboration.

In 2021, we applied a similar methodology, but working remotely, to explore the barriers and opportunities for Enable to support disabled people to travel more independently and sustainably. The project took a three phase approach.

In Phase 1 Go Upstream shared work to date and some thoughts on the possibilities for improving the accessibility of Mobility as a Service products and services. This helped us to shape the questions that we wanted to ask participants about Enable in Phase 2 workshops.

In Phase 2 we worked with 24 people over the course of 5 workshops, exploring the challenges of journey planning with people with a range of impairments including dementia, sight impairment and Deaf people. I also worked with students in various health disciplines. We considered the ways in which Enable can support them now and how it could provide further support in the future. The findings were detailed in the Phase 2 report and are summarised in the following section.

We identified two key design challenges - improving digital accessibility and developing the Step-by-Step Guide - that prompted further Phase 2 workshops.

In Phase 3 we planned and delivered a review event that took a broader view of our findings and celebrated our work together. This is described later in this report.

Phase 2: discovery workshop findings

Participants in our Phase 2 discovery workshops told us that Enable **helps to reduce the complexity of journey planning**. By bringing the huge range of journey planning information into one place, it 'does the work for you'. People imagined using it to take a virtual practice journey to an appointment. People also welcomed the suggestion of new and alternative travel options as well as planning journeys home.

Good information can **provide reassurance along a journey** and we learned that Enable's step-by-step guide could be a real help. Exporting the results to other apps or printing the Guide could be helpful on a journey and we wondered about others who might support passengers to plan a journey - such as library staff or support workers. How do we reach them and activate their interest?

A key concern is **navigating the destination** or finding our way to 'the last yard'. Enable can get us to the front door but how will we reach the reception desk? Is it possible to integrate with other navigation services to ensure that we can confidently take an entire journey?

Enable can help with planning ahead, trying out different options with time to spare weeks or days before travel - or **'far' planning**. But what about **'Near' planning**, making decisions in the moment when the road is closed, the bus is late or the queue is too long? Journeys often contain unexpected situations and adjusting our plans in the moment is really important if we are to support people to **travel independently**. Enable is possibly seen as a far planning tool but there are opportunities for it to support along a journey too.

People saw value in features such as the **Step-by-Step Guide** but discovered **barriers** to some people reaching those features. We therefore organised two further workshops focussing on these two areas. The Fuse Mobility team joined us and learned some further ideas about how to design for better accessibility and to further improve the Step-by-Step guide. Whilst there were examples where we could change the font size or colours or layout it was during the general conversation that we learned how easy it is to get lost in a process when there are too many pages - or how confusing a question can be.

The key overarching principles that arose from these sessions were:

- Simplify things - consider when someone might need information and when best to ask for them to input information
- Be clear about the benefits for the user in providing information
- Keep users on the same page when possible.
- Use fewer words where possible and make better/more use of visual cues such as transport icons.
- Pay close attention to language.

Phase 3 Review Event - building more inclusive digital mobility services

The original Making Connections project culminated in a review event to consider and build on our findings, share them with project partners and celebrate our collaboration.

We organised a similar event for Enable in March 2022 to bring people together, share the findings and develop ideas arising from our workshops. This half-day event attracted ca. 20 people including representatives from local authorities, the three pilot services (NHS Tayside, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, Dundee and Angus College) and SEStran along with five of our workshop participants.

We started by presenting the Phase 2 workshop findings and then asked attendees to briefly discuss them. We ensured that each group had a mixture of workshop participants and decision makers.

Discussion 1 - reflecting on the findings

We asked if any important messages stood out for them and if there were any surprises?

Important messages from the findings that resonated with attendees were:

- The importance of information to navigate ‘the last yard’. The need to plan the whole journey.
- The importance of service providers not only hearing these stories but discussing them first hand with disabled people. The context of hearing about peoples’ lives is powerful.
- We rely on a visual approach - using maps and icons - that can be inaccessible to many. Consider audio and other formats.
- “Far” planning is welcome but “near” planning (in real time) is also key to independent travel
- Be careful to use clear language and fewer words - perhaps offer an option to “request more information” for deeper information.
- Don’t overload people with too much information!
- Having a place for all information you need along a journey is very helpful
- Being able to print journey details is important for some

Findings that **surprised** people:

- The near and far planning that we all do and the trial journeys that people make
- The importance of the last/first yards of a journey

Discussion 2 - Activating new users

We invited pilot area service providers to briefly describe their experience of integrating Enable into their service and then asked each group to consider a specific sector and the question: **How do we encourage other people to use Enable in health, tourism and education settings?**

Health

- Develop or tap into existing Buddy programmes - build confidence by peers showing others what the benefits are.
- Integrate with other apps such as BeMyEyes
- Use the endorsements of peers to encourage usage and share the benefits
- Share stories through new channels rather than existing methods such as posters and leaflets
- Tap into existing networks such as digital inclusion groups
- Explore how to build information and journey support into appointment letters

Education

- Make an early point of contact – before joining college
- Create a Fresher's week presence, partnerships with student unions particularly along with financial support discussion.
- International students will look at accommodation so travel information will be crucial at that point.
- Equalities issue – some students can't afford accommodation and travel could help to decide whether they go to college or not.
- Help students to understand the free travel scheme for under 22 - help answer the question "Can I use my travel pass"?
- Make use of social media
- Open days and promotion with high schools before students consider uni/college
- Presence on the funding section of uni/college websites – students will seek that out so the travel related info would be relevant there.
- Schools in Glasgow work in partnership (day release) so they have good links.

- “Acceptance letters” which goes to all students could be a good opportunity to raise awareness.

Tourism

- Use endorsements from people who have used Enable already – someone whose stories resonate with the groups we’re trying to attract...
- Use networks (such as clubs, membership groups) to connect with potential users and as a channel for collecting/sharing endorsements.
- Discover and tap into networks of networks (eg DEEP, Deaf Blind Association)
- Allow groups to design their own itineraries and then endorse them!
- Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park have data that tells us the areas where people are travelling from. If there are ‘hotspots’, engage with local Community Planning Partnerships there....

Who is missing from this discussion?

- Parents and carers
- Transport operators
- Schools communication channels

Discussion 3 - What should we ‘always’ and ‘never’ do when developing digital services?

We then asked groups to think more broadly - what have we learned that we could apply in general to the design of more inclusive digital mobility services?

What should we **always aim to do** and what should we **always avoid** when we develop new digital travel services?

Always:

- Consider what’s already available and integrate if possible - don’t reinvent the wheel.
- Engage with other people as this will consider from all perspectives and ensure it’s accessible to all
- Recognise where the value is for different people - everyone will need different support
- Get transport operators involved as early as possible

- Test versions “to destruction” - it’s the only way to learn!
- Check our assumptions - we all have them but try to recognise them and ask instead
- Iterate and involve people throughout - co-designing is a process not an event
- Give disabled people a role in the design process and even a formal role in governance?
- Aim to personalise - we’ll all need something slightly different to make the same journey
- Collect and use stories in the design process
- Research well
- Consider more than just the journey – think about the journey context, its purpose not just the journey itself
- Focus on the solution that works for people, not the technology
- Go back to basics every time: what do users actually want?

Avoid

- Launching without testing
- Creating a ‘finished product’ - it’s forever changing. This will ensure an evolving product which goes back to basics every time.
- Anything cumbersome or time consuming - this will ensure good sign up.

Guiding principles for building inclusive digital mobility services

Based on the overall outcomes from the project and the discussions from our Phase 3 event, here are some guiding principles for building more inclusive digital mobility services:

Design for simplicity

- Keep things simple - consider when someone might need information and when is the best time to ask for them to input information.
- Be clear about the benefits for the user in providing information
- Keep users in the same place or on the same page when possible.
- Use fewer words where possible and better/more use of visual cues such as transport icons.

- Pay close attention to language. Words such as journey 'stage' and 'steps' may not mean much to some people.
- Research well - don't reinvent the wheel

Think beyond the transport - consider the journey

- Consider the journey context, its purpose not just the journey itself
- Discover what type of information will support people to take the journey
- Aim to personalise - we'll all need something slightly different to make the same journey

Don't hold consultations, build relationships

- Co-designing is a process not an event. Plan to involve people early and throughout.
- Check our assumptions by involving disabled people as early as possible.
- Involve service providers and decision makers in conversations too.
- Discover how people would like to help, don't make assumptions about the skills and experience that they bring.
- Learn how to host inclusive conversations and recognise the value that everyone contributes and takes from them.

Reframe 'Accessibility'

- Consider what accessibility really means to others.
- Good information often lies at the heart of this. Poor information made accessible will still be poor information.
- When we design with people we understand what their journey really looks like and what information will support someone to travel confidently - then we can worry about the 'nuts and bolts' of accessibility (font size, colours, navigation etc)

A methodology for building more inclusive digital mobility services with disabled people

We always learn new ideas to make our products and services more inclusive when we work directly with disabled people. We also learn **how** to work with people and it's important to reflect on this and share it so that we build our collective capacity to work more inclusively in the future.

Here are some ideas for developing digital products and services in the future, based on what we've learned from previous work and also from experiences during the Enable project.

Be clear about our aim from the outset

The research undertaken and conversations with the Enable team in Phase 1 helped us to frame the purpose of the Phase 2 workshops. This helped us to be clear about our aim and to describe this to workshop participants - we wanted to learn about the accessibility of Enable but, as importantly, we wanted to learn broader principles of inclusive digital services to guide the development of other future Mobility as a Service products. It would have been easy to focus on specific accessibility issues from the start but, while these are important, it could have prevented us from exploring the types of information needed and the process of planning a journey.

Participants appreciated the opportunity to comment on specifics where they were 'game changers' but take a broader exploration of how digital journey planners fit with real journeys.

Build a diverse research team and ensure that project partners take part

Enabling project partners and disabled people to be involved as early as possible can bring benefits for all. Consider "who hasn't been invited?" throughout the process and attempt to bring hidden voices into the process as soon as possible. In our recruitment process we tried to involve carers, for example, but the timing wasn't right for this to happen.

It was unfortunate that project partners were not able to join our early workshops as they may have learned first hand some specific challenges that people experience reaching their services.

Create as diverse a team as possible and explore what skills everyone brings. Our participants offered to dive deeper into technical accessibility with the Fuse team and brought a lot of experience and expertise to the discussion.

Design and host good workshops

Remote workshops worked well for this particular project. While some people have been excluded by the move to remote events, many disabled people have found them to be more accessible (less travel, more time efficient) as long as the right support is put in place. Take particular care to ensure that participants have what they need in place to take part:

- Provide as much information beforehand as possible - including links to materials that will be discussed in the workshop
- Send out a reminder email the day before the workshop
- Some platforms can make it difficult for Deaf colleagues to consistently see BSL interpreters. Ensure that the tools you use will work for participants.
- If screen sharing, describe images for people who are sight-impaired.
- Build in regular comfort breaks for participants to take a rest from the screen. BSL interpreters also appreciate regular breaks (or hire two interpreters so that they can share the work).
- We worked with around 6 participants in each workshop. More than 10 people can make it difficult for everyone to regularly contribute to the conversation.
- Each of our workshops brought people with similar challenges together but there is also value in people sharing their ideas and experiences with others with different impairments.

Rather than trying to cover too much in each workshop, aim to run several rounds of events so that emerging themes can be explored in more depth in separate discussions.

Share the findings

One of the most common complaints in participatory processes is that people don't hear what happened after taking part in a project. Did their time, energy and input make a difference?

Consider writing openly about the project process and reporting back publicly about what you have found. Participants get to see what they have contributed to and project partners can point others to the work.

Our Phase 3 review event was a good example of sharing findings with project partners, encouraging conversations between participants and decision makers and also helping participants to see how their contributions will make a difference.

Writing articles and sharing on social media and through conferences and partner networks can all contribute to the wider distribution of findings and a collective feeling of contribution.

Thank Participants

People generously share their time, experience and expertise with us and it's important that we recognise this and build it into project costs at the outset. In this project, each participant was offered a £25 retail voucher for each event that they attended.

Take the time to reflect on the learning

Projects often have to focus on the outputs but we should also recognise the importance of wider outcomes - the learning and the longer term ripple effects. Take the time to look back, ask How did things go? What went well? How did it feel?

Reflections on our Phase 3 event

This report attempts to record the outputs from the discussions that were held during our Phase 3 online event. However, it's important to reflect on the fact that we can't capture everything. You had to be there.

Our event didn't just relay facts and figures, it enabled us all to tell stories, share experiences and shape each other's thinking. It was an opportunity to connect with people, listen to and value their stories.

This is key to relational work - having honest and open conversations can build relationships, foster trust and encourage people to continue to be involved.

The transparent and open way in which Tactran and Fuse Mobility have approached the Making Connections Audit has ensured that we created a constructive process and built the beginning of a community that can help Enable to continue to become more inclusive.

Reporting back to participants that improvements will be made as a result of their work and inviting them to continue to be involved were two powerful messages and important steps towards fostering and building that community.

To reiterate one of the comments from our discussions, 'co-designing is a process not an event'. I believe that the Enable team has put some solid foundations in place that can lead to more inclusive digital mobility services by building them with, not for, disabled people.