

London Assembly Transport Committee

Submissions to Door-to-Door transport investigation – from organisations

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From: [McDonald, Alan](#)
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Subject: RE: Call for evidence: London Assembly - door to door investigation
Date: 09 January 2017 16:56:20
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[Door to door - call for views and information.pdf](#)

Good afternoon

Thank you for inviting us to contribute towards your investigation into the idea of introducing personal budgets on door-to-door services, as the longstanding contracted Taxicard supplier we believe that there would certainly be a benefit to service users if personal budgets were to be introduced, however, we also believe that there are many risks and there would be a lot of work required in order for it to work across all door-to-door services. Here are the key areas that we believe there are to consider:

- There would need to be a centrally managed system which stored the balance of the service user's personal budget
- Each use of a service would need to be priced up front with the cost of each use decremented from the service's user's personal budget
- A key service type currently available to door-to-door service users is the ability to street hail wheelchair accessible Taxis, however, without an advance booking being made it would not be possible to calculate the price of the journey to ensure the service user had enough remaining in their personal budget to pay for the journey. Would this mean the street hailing of Taxis would need to be excluded? Would this be considered discrimination against service users who can only use wheelchair accessible Taxis? It also would not be an improvement to any service user who wanted to street hail a Taxi. Street hails are also important for service users who do not have a mobile phone to book with while they are out and about
- There also needs to be good Call Centre support for service users who are unable to use the internet or an App to make bookings. There are a great number of service users (the majority in the case of Taxicard) who do not use web or smartphones and it is vital that they are still able to book their transport themselves, to give them independence, instead of relying on a carer/family/friend to make bookings for them
- It is important to clarify that personal budgets are not currently a feature of Taxicard (as suggested on page 2, paragraph 1 of the attached doc, Taxicard service users receive a number of trips (rather than money) which are decremented after each use and the cost of each trip is determined by the distance travelled (PHV) or the time taken and distance travelled (Taxi)
- Requiring service users to pay an element of the journey cost in cash fosters responsibility and greater control of what they spend whereas giving service users a "virtual budget" makes it easier for service users to lose control and exceed the budget they have been given
- How to ensure service users only use their personal budget on door-to-door services and not on other things needs to be carefully considered
- Disability awareness training. The current standard of customer assistance/service varies significantly across ground transport services, Dial-a-Ride bus drivers and ComCab Taxi drivers both receive mandatory practical training as part of their induction. The same however cannot be said for all Taxi and PHV drivers and it would be a risk to consider if personal budgets enabling service users access to any ground transport service were introduced

There are no doubt many other things to consider regarding personal budgets however these are the key areas we believe need to be taken into account.

Thank you again for allowing us to take part in this process, we would be very happy to be part of any further consultation relating to this investigation so please do not hesitate to get in touch if you believe this would be of use.

Best regards

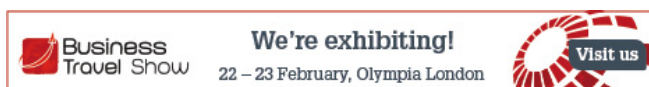
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**Community
Transport
Association**

Door to Door Call for Evidence

CTA Response

Executive Summary

The Community Transport Association (CTA) is a national charity that leads and supports thousands of other local charities and community groups across the UK that all provide transport services that fulfil a social purpose and community benefit.

We are the UK's leading authority on the practice and performance of community transport, enhancing the development of public policy where community-led transport solutions can improve access and inclusion.

We are for, and about, accessible and inclusive transport.

Community transport is one of the most popular forms of transport in the Capital, and providers more passenger trips than Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard or Capital Call Services.

Although our response looks particularly at community transport we have used our expertise in working with people excluded from the mainstream transport network to look at some of the broader issues and opportunities in introducing personal budgets, in line with the terms of reference of this inquiry.

Ultimately, we believe that the investigation will be successful if it delivers a resolution that allows more people to access transport services, ensures the sustainability of current services, and makes efficiency savings to the public purse.

In responding to this investigation we have arrived at a number of conclusions and principles for the transport committee to consider.

- The success of a new funding regime should be judged on whether those who rely on London's door to door services are able to continue living the lives they choose to lead, supported by a financial arrangement that is accessible, supported, and balances risks. The success of any changes to door to door services that are developed as a result of this investigation should ultimately be measured based on the feedback of service users about its impact on their lives.
- The investigation toward personalised budgets should look at wider social benefits beyond opportunities for monetary savings. In particular, looking at how personal budgets can facilitate access to other transport modes such as train services. The investigation should therefore be framed in terms of allowing individuals a greater range of travel options rather than reducing the current service availability based on cost saving.

- Caution needs to be taken to ensure a move toward personal budgets does not have a negative impact on the financial viability of communal transport. The financial structure of community transport in particular means it can provide services where it would be unprofitable for commercial services to do so. There is a risk that personal budgets could cause a disparate funding system that limits the travel options of some of London's least mobile citizens.

This response covers the questions raised in the investigation, with a particular emphasis on the impact of proposals on those who use community transport.

We are happy to provide oral evidence to the committee if required. Further questions should be directed to:

James Coe

Policy and Public Affairs Executive CTA



Risk and Opportunities in Introducing Personal Budgets

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation in their report, *Whose risk is it anyway? Risk and regulation in the era of personalisation* describe the move toward personal budgets as

‘Seek[ing] to recast users of state welfare away from being passive recipients of pre-purchased services towards a situation where they are active citizens with a right to control and shape their own support¹’

In turn they describe the recipients of personal budgets as ‘micro-commissioners.’ It is therefore necessary to consider whether the introduction of personal budgets will enable citizens to access a greater range of transport services, and how this new commissioning relationship will impact individual economic agency.

Inherent in introducing this economic freedom is an element of risk. Community transport provides 1.9m journeys across London, more than Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard or Capital Call Services. It is often those who would be otherwise unable to access commercial services that are reliant on this provision.

If there is a transition to personal budgets it should be mindful of its impact on communal services that rely on a unique regulatory system. For example, the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action highlight reports where personal budgets have been misappropriated moving spending away from the services they are intended².

It is important the committee consider how change in demand could disproportionately affect services such as community transport where they would be unable to change their business model to provide services without or with less up—front subsidy.

As has also been noted elsewhere³ the introduction of personal budgets brings in risks for individuals dealing with a new system. We address this further below but it is worth noting here that the unique funding arrangements for community transport could add an additional layer of complexity compared to other services, depending on brokerage arrangements.

In particular, we would encourage the committee to consider where personal travel budgets have been introduced for SEN in schools. Bournemouth Borough Council

¹ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/personalisation-service-users-risk-full.pdf>

² https://www.navca.org.uk/assets/000/000/192/Personal_Health_Budgets_original.pdf?1470312092

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/feb/12/are-social-care-personal-budgets-working>

provided a particularly detailed document outlining a range of options flexible budgets can be used for⁴

⁴ <http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/childreducation/LocalOffer/AdviceSupport/Leaflets/Personal-Budgets-Direct-Payments.pdf>

Administering Personal Budget to Enhance Opportunities

Personal budgets will present new administrative challenges to TfL. In particular, as the Social Care Institute for Excellence stated in a 2009 briefing:

‘Older people and people with complex needs may need greater time and support to help them get the most from individual budget schemes, particularly the cash direct payment issue.’⁵

This reflects a sentiment shared with us by one a CTA member working outside of London who told us that the allocation for personal budgets often:

‘does not recognise the complexities of transport in terms of getting those passengers with large wheelchairs on and off buses as opposed to ambulance passengers. This incurs extra cost due to time and space on board the bus, plus the cost of escorts’

In order for personal budgets to be administered and managed effectively in a way that fosters the sustainability of community transport it is therefore necessary to consider the administration of funds, and the process by which personal payments are brokered.

Some have argued⁶ that it is vital that passengers who are elderly and/or with disabilities are provided with a higher level of support in administering personal budgets.

This is a particular issue for the providers of community transport who provide services to predominantly older service users⁷. Therefore, to ease the transition to a new regime it will be necessary to ensure there is an effective administration system in place to reduce the potential impact on community transport operators.

In spite of these challenges we believe that the way personal budgets are administered can give opportunity to improve the quality of life of London’s residents. In particular, in providing new opportunities access London Underground and Overground services.

In CTA’s response to the Transport Select Committee’s, Improving the Rail Passenger Experience Inquiry⁸, we noted that community transport can provide a key link to rail

⁵ <http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/briefing20/>

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/feb/12/are-social-care-personal-budgets-working>

⁷ <http://www.ctauk.org/UserFiles/Documents/In%20Your%20Area/England/State%20of%20the%20Sector%20or%20inhouse%20print.pdf>

⁸ <http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Transport/Improving%20rail%20passenger%20experience/written/33758.html>

services as it is generally more flexible than mainstream services. We further stated that this is possible where there is a good provision of information, joined up ticketing and feedback mechanisms in place that looked specifically at service accessibility.

We believe that there is an opportunity to use brokerage as a means of achieving some of these aims. In particular, where there is proper support brokerage systems can potentially be used to manage the purchase of integrated tickets. The development of any new funding system should centre the experience of service users, and as such feedback should be sought on how any new arrangements have furthered the mobility of London's residents.

One way of achieving this could also be through allowing multiple contributions to personal budgets. Providing individuals are able to choose how they are given personal budgets (whether through brokerage, direct payment, or other supported services) it should be possible to allow family members and other agencies to pay into personal transport budgets.

In spite of these positives it has been brought to our attention that in one case outside of London the use of personal budgets to pay for transport has created an additional administrative burden through managing payments. This could present an issue to smaller community transport providers and these should be supported to manage any changes.

Community Transport, Personal Budgets and Changing Needs

One of the issues that personal budgets will present to community transport operators from a business point of view is that they have the potential to disrupt demand. One of the pioneers of personal budgets, Simon Duffy, noted that, in Control's experience of personal budgets, individuals used them to 'build community not to shop'⁹.

The allocation of personal budgets is complex with the potential for misapplication which could cause great harm. Duffy further notes that:

'At best, a person's plan is just one way of getting some rather limited evidence that the person, or their representative, is able to manage their own budget and can be trusted to get on with living their life.'¹⁰

We believe it is therefore important that individuals should have flexibility in deciding the way their own budget is spent. This presents a risk for community transport providers in that they may choose to spend this money on another service. To reduce this risk we believe that any new system should enable individuals to continue spending this fund as before, should they choose to do so.

Community transport is unique in the way it based in local communities and operates on a not-for-profit basis. The relationships between individuals and community transport operators makes these services vital to many people's social wellbeing. We are confident that even with personal budgets people would choose to keep using community transport, but it is necessary that administrative systems makes this as simple as possible.

Age UK highlight that in personal budgets for social care older people tend to, 'understate their needs and overstate their abilities.'¹¹ It seems likely this would also be the case in assessing transport needs. We believe that it is necessary to properly assess the potential uptake of personal budgets with a criteria that improves access to communal transport. The results of the investigation should improve access to transport and in turn support individuals to overcome current travel barriers.

A CTA member provided feedback to CTA that one of the risks of personal budgets is that the disperse payment methods could lead to an underfunding of communal services. As London's population grows and its average life expectancy increases it is

⁹ <https://www.sochealth.co.uk/2015/09/02/will-personal-health-budgets-destroy-the-nhs/>

¹⁰ <http://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/library/authors/Simon-duffy/an-apology.html>

¹¹ http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Care/Personalisation_in_practice-lessons_from_experience.pdf?dtrk=true

likely services such as community transport will become increasingly necessary. The introduction of personal budget should be developed with long-term needs in mind, with a framework that still provides central support to services such as community transport.

Conclusion

We believe that the introduction of personal budgets has the potential to improve the opportunities to access travel for London's residents. This has to be carefully balanced against the often difficult administrative burdens that can have an adverse effect, overly onerous assessments that discourage take up, and a need to maintain communal funding in an individual funding system.

For community transport, personal budgets present a mixture of risks and rewards. On the one hand, research from AGE UK and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggest that those most likely to be negatively impacted by poor administration of personal budgets are those most likely to use community transport. In addition, the unique relationship between community transport users and providers may often mean they want their services to remain the same, without an additional layer of bureaucracy. On the other hand, the new system could enable new funding for the sector, greater flexibility for service users, and for unfulfilled transport needs to be met by community transport operators.

The success of the move toward personal budgets will be dependent on the fundamental question of whether more people can access the transport they need, and whether that transport is of quality to meet their needs.

The move toward personal budgets should empower support a greater range of travel options through connecting services, supporting new people to use these services, and increasing patronage. It should not discourage use through overly burdensome administration, lack of support, or a reduction in central funding.

James Coe

Policy and Public Affairs Executive CTA



Response to Call for evidence: London Assembly - door to door investigation and personnel Travel Budgets

Response by Croydon Mobility Forum

1. What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

In theory a personal budget should allow for greater service user control of which transport provider they would and wish to use. However, our experience of personal budgets in social care leads us to suspect this may not happen. The overall service could be worse, lead to less provision and a more complex and expensive service to administer.

The benefit of the current system is that at least in theory providers have some idea of what kind of income they are likely to receive. If service users are getting budgets to use whatever service they wish people will be using different firms in different parts of the capital. This may mean less income to individual providers and hence decline in the overall number of transport providers and so less choice for users.

How will users be assessed to determine the budget they will receive? The current system for social services mean that some users who are assessed as having a lesser need get little, if any support. Someone who is blind may be able to make some of their journeys using public transport. They may therefore be assessed as not needing a personal budget for transport at all. However, experience by our members is that on occasion a taxi card has proved to be invaluable when traveling to unfamiliar locations, during inclement weather especially rain or ice.

What system will be used to assess need ? Will it be a London Council, or an outside agency ? Will be consistent across London. What will the criteria be? What will the qualification requirement be for the persons and the organisation undertaking the assessment? What will the appeal process if the user does not agree with the assessment? How long will this take ? Our experience is that appeals against welfare benefit cuts including mobility allowance and personal assessments can take many months during this time an individual could lose their mobility.

What kind of monitoring will be undertaken to ensure that money is used for transport purposes? Under the current system door to door services are subsidised and so monitoring does not involve the service user at all. If a personal budget was introduced this would presumably have to change and service users may have to keep receipts placing a burden on service users and particularly those who are blind.

2. How would introducing personal budgets affect the financial efficiency of door-to-door services?

The ability to spend the money across arrange of different service provider is a good thing in principle. However, transport for people with mobility difficulties often have to be specially adapted at a substantial cost. A loss of use and income for a small company making specialist provision with

trained staff may make this economically unviable and thus result in less choice rather than more choice.

3. How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?

At present there are a number of companies providing these services across London. Introducing more competition, instead of improving the number of service operators may result in the services being provided only by larger specialist companies which can demand a higher price for the service as the number of operators diminish.

This decline in service providers could result in it being harder to find accessible taxis at the time users need them. Existing best practice and local knowledge could also be lost.

4. To what extent do door-to-door service users want to be able to use a personal budget for these services?

We are of the view that the majority of users prefer the existing system as this creates fewer problems for them in managing their lives and transport needs. What they do want is for the existing system to work better.

At present there are too many difficulties in making bookings, reliability of service, poorly trained drivers, accessibility of vehicles etc. All these issues will not be resolved by a move to Personal Budgets in fact they could be made worse.

5. What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment, and how could these be overcome?

Many of the people we represent fall into this category. Managing money and a budget can present difficulties for many of these service users. Another Personal Budget will only add to this. If a person budget option was adopted. What safeguarding measures will be brought in to ensure their budget is used adequately and ? What Social Care will have to be adopted ? Will it include a nominated person/guardian to manage the money, advocacy etc.? Will this place a further administrative burden on Social Services ?

6. What lessons can be learned about personal budgets from their use in other sectors, particularly social care?

Sufficient funding has to be put in place to ensure that all those who need support receive it. Sufficient capacity has to be in place so that service users can actually find transport providers when they want to use them.

A number of lessons can be learned from Social Care and personal budgets. These include : A system that is simple and clear to users, providers and administrators. A fair system that can be challenged by the user, if they feel they have been unfairly treated. The ability to deal with appeals and changes of circumstances quickly. Suitably qualified staff to administer the system. The regulations have to be flexible enough so that people can qualify for something even if their need is defined as not being extreme.

Our experience of attempting to get a Personal Budget from Social Services has shown that they are not flexible enough and due to lack of funds frequently only support those deemed to have the most need. If Personal Budgets are not implemented properly the risk is that fewer people will be able to leave their homes risking social isolation.

7. Are there any other cities that have introduced personal budgets for door-to-door services? What lessons have been learned from implementation?

We are not aware of any places where it has been implemented

8. What would be the main challenges of implementing personal budgets in door-to-door services, and how could these be addressed?

The main challenge would be to design a system that caters for the full range of disabilities and the transport needs of users and potential users. That is fair, easily understood and simple to administer with suitably qualified staff. That encourage the range of provider to provide suitably adapted vehicles and trained staff to provide an adequate service at a fair price.

9. To what extent would implementing personal budgets rely on greater integration of service provision than currently exists?

Personal Budgets are likely to need either greater integration of services or a body that can oversee the full range of services ensuring that the service provided meets the standard of vehicle, staff and training that is required by the governing and funding body.

10. To what extent would providing all service users with a personal budget increase demand for services, including from those who currently use services infrequently?

This is the unknown as we don't know how things would develop. It could lead to increased demand that could not be fore filled at the present budget levels and require greater funding, It could lead to a reduction of use as the service proves to be more expensive due to the hire participation rate.

It could also lead to reduction in the number of service providers if their income falls.

11. To what extent would the introduction of personal budgets affect usage of bus-based services like Dial-a-Ride and community transport?

There is a danger that many users may prefer to have personal budgets and be more inclined to use individual taxis and specialist transport rather than bus based transport. The result of this may be that bus based transport become less efficient and more costly. As a result the service to both the majority of people who still use bus based transport and those on personal budgets is reduced so everybody loses.



Submission by Gett
Door-to-Door Transport Services

1. About Gett

- 1.1 Gett is an on-demand mobility company available in more than 100 cities worldwide. In London alone, more than half of all black cabs run on Gett. Our technology enables consumers and businesses to instantly book on-demand transportation, delivery and logistics. Our consumers enjoy transparent and predictable pricing with a 'no surge' guarantee, unlike some of our competitors.
- 1.2 In April 2016, Gett made a successful offer to buy the Mountview House Group, which includes Radio Taxis, One Transport and Xeta taxis. Mountview is now fully owned by Gett. Former Radio Taxis/One Transport personnel have either been involved in the provision of or in tendering for Taxicard services over the last 25 years or so. Consequently, there is an immense amount of expertise in this field. One Transport is the framework provider for Special Needs transport for the "Tri-Borough," (Kensington and Chelsea; City of Westminster; Hammersmith and Fulham.)
- 1.3. By clustering transport services whether for special needs or for disability services, extensive savings are available.

2. Personal travel Budgets

- 2.1 By affording personal budgets to the elderly and to those with disabilities, and by allowing them to choose which methodology of transport they might require – there will also be significant savings to be made as well as delivering much greater flexibility and thus far more user satisfaction.
- 2.2 For the last thirty years or more, subsidized disability transport services (run by local authorities) have cost vastly more than, for example, Taxicard. Indeed, over the period it has been strongly suggested that Dial a Ride costs twice as much to run as does Taxicard and if the committee were to undertake some financial analysis this would be proven. A similar rationale can be said to apply to non-urgent patient (or ambulant) transport.
- 2.3 Non-urgent ambulance services (along with dial a ride) consume immense chunks of local taxpayer's money, in huge inefficiencies, vehicle depreciations, premises costs, inefficient route optimization software, holiday pay, sick pay and absenteeism. Whereas a non-urgent ambulance might cost for example, upwards of £100 for a local journey, it would not be unrealistic to expect that the same taxi journey would cost significantly less than this.
- 2.4 One understands the political difficulty of convincing local authorities that some of the current services are inefficient and not cost effective.



3. Overcoming some of the challenges of personal budgets

- 3.1 Part of the challenge, going forward will be to get more users to apply online for a “door to door” card (much like an Oyster card). The personal budget is likely to be stored in the card. There would need to be a way to go online to check how much budget one has left. Also a phone number needs to be available to be able to do this. One might also for example, allow passengers to load up their own credits on the card, which translate into discounted fares. So that even when the user has consumed their allotted monthly budget, they can still get a discounted journey by uploading credits.
- 3.2 One of the possible solutions is the use of the Gett account systems. For individuals, credit can be uploaded and delivered through existing infrastructure and technology.
 - 3.2.1 Similarly, at a B-2-B level (for example with hospitals), Gett already has a system where large organisations can order vehicles on demand.

4. Multi fleets acting in concert

- 4.1 The benefit of One Transport, which is a consolidation platform, is that as many suppliers as is required could be included in the scheme. One Transport operates the Virtual Fleet, which is multiple fleets operating as one through integrated connectivity to the One Transport platform hub.
- 4.2 This enables, not only, all of the state of the art Gett UK global app technology to be employed, but to use local vendors, of every description, at contracted cost saving prices, right across London. This will facilitate users to receive flexible and sustainable service, while making considerable savings to budgets. The key is multiple fleets operating as one. It would make significant savings over services, which employ capital investments, which depreciate in buses, buildings, in systems and in staff/drivers, which are solely for single use.
- 4.3 This is wholly inefficient and why the use of Taxis and for hire vehicles and systems in general will deliver enhanced services together with large swathes of savings of local taxpayers money.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 This is an important issue to review, when budgets are being squeezed, efficiencies can be made. Gett would welcome the opportunity to share more of their expertise to contribute to future reviews of the service. If you require more information please contact geoffrey.riesel@gett.com.

12 January 2017

Response to London Assembly Door-to-door transport services

21st December 2016

Introducing Personal Budgets

General questions and responses:

1. What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

Advantages:

- (a) It could give the customer / client the control to use their preferred service, rather than being led by TfL based on criteria.
- (b) This would empower individuals to make decisions based on their personal preference and makes their journey a much more pleasant one, as they will be travelling in a way that they have requested.
- (c) Accessible transport services are very expensive and the potential users of these services generally have limited incomes, so there has always been a mismatch between need and the ability to pay. Traditionally this problem has been solved with supply side subsidies, 100% in the case of Dial a Ride, which creates more demand than the service can manage, thereby leading to the need for some kind of rationing. There is no “transport” problem, just a financial problem. In principle therefore, giving individuals personal budgets could solve this problem, since there will be a market where the consumers can afford the true cost of the service, however what we do not know at this stage is whether the budgets would be sufficient.

Disadvantages:

- (d) The customer may only ever choose the service that they are familiar with, resulting in a high demand for a particular service
- (e) The customer may not have the confidence or understanding of other services which could result in them paying for a service that is less cost effective, through lack of knowledge
- (f) They will be paying for services that are currently free, such as Dial-A-Ride, which could be deemed as unfair; (however, for TfL, where cuts need to be made, this would be beneficial).
- (g) There might not be enough services to respond to the demand

2. How would introducing personal budgets affect the financial efficiency of door-to-door services?

This would remain the same on the assumption that the pricing of the journeys are the same, if the journey prices were to drop for personal budget users then this may have financial implications of the service provider, or the individual may chose a cheaper provider which is not as experienced when it comes to providing quality transport for vulnerable people

3. How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?

The quality of service would be the same regardless of who is paying for the transport, however if personal budgets are more restrictive this could result in resorting to organisations less experienced in transporting vulnerable people and potentially a drop in quality.

Service user views:

4. To what extent do door-to-door service users want to be able to use a personal budget for these services?

We do not have any information on this.

5. What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment, and how could these be overcome?

(a) They may not understand the service that is being offered by each door-to-door service and may choose a service that is not appropriate for them based on their needs / difficulties.

(b) This could in turn prevent them from accessing door-to-door services again, if they lose their confidence or feel uncomfortable travelling alone

Good practice:

6. What lessons can be learned about personal budgets from their use in other sectors, particularly social care?

We do not have any information on this.

7. Are there any other cities that have introduced personal budgets for door-to-door services? What lessons have been learned?

8. We do not have any information on this.

Implementation:

9. What would be the main challenges of implementing personal budgets in door-to-door services, and how could these be addressed?

Individuals may not understand how to use their personal budgets for door-to-door services – they would need support from their care workers, or the organisations who are offering these services

10. To what extent would implementing personal budgets rely on greater integration of service provision than currently exists?

We do not have any information on this.

Demand for services:

11. To what extent would providing all service users with a personal budget increase demand for services, including from those who currently use services infrequently?

- It depends on the scale of the budget. It would also depend on whether the budget was ring-fenced for transport. A person might choose to spend it on heating, or food, or drink perhaps!

12. To what extent would the introduction of personal budgets affect usage of bus-based services like Dial-A-Ride and community transport?
- It depends entirely on the scale and extent of the personal budgets.

General questions

1. What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

Advantages	Disadvantages
More choice of providers	Reduced funds
Managed by carers	Users with lack of capacity to manage own budgets
Tailored to user needs	One size does not fit all – how do you account for all needs
Greater flexibility	Risk of exploitation
Reaching more groups of people	Too many providers
Reduce the stigma of door to door transport	One mode becomes uneconomical
Freedom of choice and access i.e. timing	Lack of clarity of ownership and management

2. How would introducing personal budgets affect the financial efficiency of door-to-door services?

- Increased demand could potentially reduce budgets
- Reduction in service providers due to using other means (i.e. friends and family?)
- Cost to boroughs could increase
- Unknown subject to user behaviour
- Dial-a-Ride could shrink to meet demand. Potential value for money as it will meet real usage
- Could supplement local government service providers - bring in money
- Potential growth in community transport. Better utilisation of boroughs vehicle downtime
- Supplement adult social care transport provision

3. How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?

- If quality reduces then quantity reduces
- Demand impacts reliability
- Social isolation if bus transport can no longer be provided
- May have to pay more for a better quality service
- Availability of transport varies across London

Service user views

4. To what extent do door-to-door service users want to be able to use a personal budget for these services?

Some service users, typically younger, will be more capable and find it a more convenient way to manage their independence whereas elderly may find it more difficult.

5. What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment, and how could these be overcome?

Capacity to manage own budget and handling choices – scheme would need advocates and support staff to assist for users who are unable.

Good practice

6. What lessons can be learned about personal budgets from their use in other sectors, particularly social care?

Clear methodology of calculating allocation - is it based on time, needs, access to other schemes/benefits e.g. is the user a car driver [Central London impact of congestion], do they have a freedom pass, entitled to PIP/DLA?

7. Are there any other cities that have introduced personal budgets for door-to-door services? What lessons have been learned? N/A

Implementation

8. What would be the main challenges of implementing personal budgets in door-to-door services, and how could these be addressed?

It will need close monitoring and model it on existing personal budget data, our experience is that they are inextricably linked.

9. To what extent would implementing personal budgets rely on greater integration of service provision than currently exists?

Demand for services

10. To what extent would providing all service users with a personal budget increase demand for services, including from those who currently use services infrequently?

- Provision of Camden PlusBus vs. Taxicard - a lot less used
- Time constraints - increasing time window for d2d service would make it more expensive
- Reduction would decrease viability of bus based services

11. To what extent would the introduction of personal budgets affect usage of bus-based services like Dial-a-Ride and community transport?

Growth in PHV market

Charging for ASC could be priced out and undermined by provision of personal budgets

Further comments

Impacts on green agenda - more journeys, more vehicles due to more modes

Could better utilise bus journeys

Impacts on congestion, emissions and air quality

London Assembly Transport Committee: Personal budgets in door-to-door transport services

London Councils' Submission

1. Introduction

London Councils welcomes this investigation into the feasibility of introducing personal travel budgets for door-to-door service users. We manage the Taxicard scheme on behalf of the London boroughs and Transport for London (TfL), and the boroughs manage adult social care and special educational needs door-to-door services.

2. Background

Taxicard

Transport for London provides a fixed budget for Taxicard each year, which is apportioned amongst the boroughs by London Councils according to an agreed formula. Each borough then sets a budget to fund the balance of their projected spends for the financial year.

Taxicard journeys are currently allocated by each borough offering a maximum number of trips per year, or month in some cases, to each member. Trip limits vary borough to borough but many offer 104 trips a year.

Taxicard also offers a maximum subsidy per trip (usually £8.30 for daytime journeys). When added to the minimum fare the member has to pay (usually £2.50) it means a member pays £2.50 up to a maximum of £10.80 on the meter and any balance above this for longer trips. Twenty-five boroughs allow members to make a second swipe during a trip, which allows for cheaper longer trips, but a return journey uses four trips instead of two.

Capital Call

Capital Call operates in 10 boroughs and is funded and managed by TfL. The scheme was originally introduced to provide private hire vehicle coverage in some boroughs where taxi supply was patchy in the Taxicard scheme. In recent years Taxicard has introduced private hire in all London boroughs and Capital Call usage has decreased considerably.

Capital Call is closed to new members. The scheme offers a cash budget of £200. However, as all Capital Call members are also Taxicard members, this budget is offered in addition to their Taxicard trip allocation. This means that although it is a personal budget it cannot be seen as an example of a pure door to door personal budget as members' door to door journeys are only partially provided by it.

Capital Call has been popular as a means to take longer journeys and is often used for this purpose, with Taxicard being used for shorter trips by the same users.

3. London Councils' Response

London Councils shared the investigation with the boroughs and invited them to make a submission to us to incorporate into our response. Three boroughs (Hammersmith & Fulham, Kingston and Merton) responded and their views have been taken into account in this submission. It is likely that some boroughs have decided to make submissions directly to the Assembly.

4. Advantages and disadvantages of personal travel budgets

Advantages

- Personal budgets would be popular with some door to door users, offering more independence, choice, freedom and flexibility to spend their budgets how they wish.
- Door to door users would have a more personalised service, whereby they can make a greater number of shorter journeys or a lower number of longer journeys. This would allow them potentially to make journeys they currently may not be able to afford to do under the Taxicard system of a maximum subsidy per trip, even where double-swiping is allowed. It would also address the current Dial a Ride limitation of not usually providing journeys outside of the local area.

Disadvantages

- If travel budgets were introduced it would be difficult to estimate the overall budget required and to predict the impact on demand. It could encourage higher usage, which would need to be funded.
- Travel budgets would not necessarily lead to administrative or operational savings compared to the current trip based system for Taxicard.
- Travel budgets would require complex administrative and fraud prevention and detection procedures in place, particularly if the budgets were offered as cash amounts. If users could choose any transport providers it would be very difficult to manage from administrative and audit viewpoints.
- If all Taxicard members were offered an equal budget it would lead to underuse from many users who use the scheme infrequently, and a reduction in budget for many others who are currently heavy users and rely on Taxicard as one of their only means of transport.
- If budgets were more personalised according to individual needs it would require considerable additional bureaucracy. Who would make the initial assessments and subsequent re-assessments? What would the criteria be? Reallocating unused budgets to other users who need more would be administratively complex and labour intensive.

- At least one borough expressed concerns regarding the lack of resources to undertake additional administration.
- If a card had an actual, as opposed to virtual, budget on it, and it was lost or stolen, it could potentially provide greater opportunities for fraud, particularly if the budget was for more than one service. It would also mean the user would lose access to all services until the card is replaced.
- Although many door to door users would be able to manage a personal budget, others would not, and could potentially use too much of the budget early in the financial year or it could be open to abuse by others.

5. How would introducing personal budgets affect the financial efficiency of door-to-door services?

A lot would depend on the type of travel budget offered, for instance if it was for one service or a combination of services. It would also depend on the nature of the budget - from a virtual budget that is administered centrally with fixed suppliers at one end of the scale, to a fixed sum given to each individual to spend how they wished. The former example would be very labour intensive administratively and would no doubt cost considerably more, whereas the latter could be cheaper, but would be open to misuse and potentially lead to users who cannot manage budgets well requesting more money if they spend their budget too quickly.

Travel budgets do not necessarily offer any administrative or operational cost savings when compared to the current arrangement for door-to-door services. More complex administration could lead to less funding available for the trips themselves.

The Newham door to door pilot, which ran from 2001 to 2015, showed that when given a choice between a cheaper Dial a Ride option and a more expensive taxi option that users often chose the taxi option, which was also more expensive for funders. TfL and Newham had to introduce a sequence of cost-saving measures during the life of the pilot as the scheme became too expensive. As well as additional cost, it could lead to more individual vehicle journeys, with its implications for pollution and congestion.

6. How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?

This would depend on the type of travel budget offered. If trips could only be made with approved companies with auditable customer service and complaint procedures and standards then the service to customers should not be adversely affected.

If, however, journeys could be undertaken by any provider chosen by the user, quality assurance of services would be more challenging and would require greater resources. This type of personal budget may improve choice for those able to use different types of vehicles and who can make considered choices about the companies they use. However, this would be likely to lead to their using fewer specialised vehicles and less well trained drivers. The downside to this is that a reduction in demand for specialised services is likely to lead to a reduced supply of specialised, high quality services in the longer term for those users who need them.

Personal budgets could lead to members using some providers whose driver training/awareness (of disability/health needs etc.) and standards of vehicle condition / adaptation are inconsistent or substandard. This could have a detrimental effect on service users, and would particularly affect those who are most vulnerable or have higher levels of need, and who may find it more difficult to complain.

Personal budget choice could also lead to a reduction in demand for shared services such as Dial a Ride if users choose more individual taxi and PHV travel, thereby reducing the cost effectiveness of shared services, making them less viable.

7. To what extent do door-to-door service users want to be able to use a personal budget for these services?

While this subject is raised occasionally at mobility forums, it is not one of the main concerns mentioned. It is also rarely raised by callers to our Taxicard helpline as a suggestion. The boroughs that responded also said this was not an issue that they had come across in relation to Taxicard.

It is clear that many Capital Call users appreciate the flexibility of being able use this budget to take longer journeys but, as previously mentioned, this service is in addition to Taxicard.

It is difficult to judge to what extent this is an important issue for Taxicard holders, but the evidence suggests it is not a major concern.

8. What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment, and how could these be overcome?

Many Taxicard members will have cognitive as well as mobility impairments and would find it difficult or impossible to manage a personal budget. One of the main concerns is that the budgets may be spent well before the end of the financial year. This would result in users not being able to travel in some cases and would put more pressure on funders to make difficult decisions as to whether they can find additional budget or leave vulnerable people unable to travel.

Personal budgets may be a difficult concept for some members to understand even if they don't have cognitive problems. Boroughs are concerned that administering additional queries would produce an extra burden on already stretched resources. If service users were unable to manage the budget themselves and didn't have friends or family to help them, the additional resource would have to come from the boroughs or London Councils. The Taxicard service provider would also be likely to have to deal with questions about managing budgets, which they would not be equipped to do.

There is a concern that some vulnerable users may be open to abuse if they have a personal budget, with other people making journeys that they wish to make rather than the journeys the users themselves wish to take.

It is difficult to see in the short term how these difficulties would be overcome in relation to users who do not have friends or family to help them.

9. What lessons can be learned about personal budgets from their use in other sectors, particularly social care?

The boroughs that responded provided the responses below in relation to personal budget use in social care.

Personal budgets have been used within adult and children's social care specifically for transport, this has been easy to administer. In these instances the clients are making regular trips to school, college or day centres, therefore the number of trips are known and the distance being travelled. This enables an accurate calculation of mileage rates, taxi or public transport costs.

Personal budgets can lead to improved service user experience, increased autonomy, improved flexibility and improved choice and personalisation of support. However, they can also make it challenging to get best value for money due to the difficulties involved in achieving economies of scale (such as by trying to pool budgets for shared activities/provision). Also in some instances reduce the opportunities for meaningful social interaction with peers. They can also be demanding for service users and their families to manage and administer.

After discussions with the borough's Adult Social Care, the following methods of hosting personal budgets were suggested:

1. Money to be paid into service user's current bank account – disadvantages include the fact that they could spend it elsewhere, even quite innocently.
 2. Setting up a secondary bank account – unnecessary and inefficient, plus it would be the service user who would have to open up a secondary account. This may lead to difficulties for them.
 3. Payment card – the best alternative
- Whilst they considered the proposal "interesting", they questioned the necessity of such a change, especially in relation to increased workloads for LA's, further bureaucracy and cost.

10. Are there any other cities that have introduced personal budgets for door-to-door services? What lessons have been learned?

Neither London Councils nor the boroughs that responded are aware of any cities where personal budgets are used for door to door services.

11. What would be the main challenges of implementing personal budgets in door-to-door services, and how could these be addressed?

Apart from the other issues raised previously, one of the most difficult problems is the criteria for allocating a personal budget, particularly across different services, some of which are currently charged for and Dial a Ride, which is free to users.

A significant challenge would be consistently determining the level of the personal travel budget required to meet an individual's employment, education, social, leisure, and practical needs and drawing together the funding for Taxicard, Dial a Ride and from London Borough own community transport budgets. Currently assessments of need are undertaken by multiple bodies depending upon the concessionary travel option used by the individual e.g. London Borough social workers, TfL assessors etc.

There would be significant costs involved in administering such a service, particularly if a more complicated assessment process was introduced for such things as achieving independent travel.

While the majority of service users who will be eligible for a personal travel budget will not be users of adult social care services, careful consideration will also be required as to how these personal travel budgets can be integrated with social care personal budgets for those who are also in receipt of these (and may be accessing individual London Borough commissioned community transport).

If the current Taxicard budget were to be evenly distributed amongst the 67,000 members each person would receive around £180, or 22 trips at the standard day time subsidy of £8.30. At present 30% of members will not use the scheme at all in any given year, whereas a significant minority will use all their trips. This means that some members would be given budgets they would not use or under use, whereas others who are currently heavily reliant on Taxicard would lose out significantly. If budgets were based on historical use then some people would argue it is unfair as previous lower usage does not mean they don't intend to use the scheme more in future. An individual's travel needs can change significantly over a period of time so unless the budget is reviewed frequently, a significant overhead cost in itself, then the client may be receiving too much or too little.

Administering personal budgets in year would be administratively complex and very labour intensive. If a user asks for a higher budget, what criteria are used to make a decision? Can funders assume that because someone else has not used their budget that they don't intend to use it and can reallocate it to the person who needs more? It would be difficult to justify this without contacting the non user or low user first.

One solution may be to give everyone a higher 'virtual' budget in the hope / knowledge that many wouldn't use it. This could be risky as what would happen if personal budgets led to significantly higher usage? Who would guarantee the additional budget in this scenario?

It will be very challenging to funders to calculate a fair way of apportioning limited budgets, and it would be likely to significantly increase administrative costs at a time when local authorities still have to make budget savings.

12. To what extent would implementing personal budgets rely on greater integration of service provision than currently exists?

London Councils believes the implementation of personal budgets would be extremely difficult prior to a greater integration of door to door services. A more holistic approach could then be taken to assess an individual's overall travel needs.

Many attempts have been made over the years to achieve greater integration without success. However, London Councils is currently working with TfL on the possible joint tendering of the next Taxicard and Dial a Ride taxi and PHV provision contracts. This is a small, but significant development arising from TfL's Social Needs Transport Roadmap, which in turn arose from the London Assembly Transport Committee review of Door to Door services in London.

Greater integration would minimise duplication of admin procedures, thereby freeing up funding for journeys. It should provide better value for money, service quality and ensure that appropriate capacity was available.

There are currently different eligibility criteria for door to door services, which would make a personal budget to be used across services difficult prior to greater integration of the services. Standardisation of criteria would lead to reduced application and assessment costs.

13. To what extent would providing all service users with a personal budget increase demand for services, including from those who use the services infrequently?

As there are few or no similar schemes in operation that we know of, it is difficult to anticipate the effect a personal budget, as opposed to a fixed number of trips, would have. It is possible a sum of money, particularly if there were few restrictions on its use, may lead to currently infrequent users travelling more frequently at the expense of users who rely heavily on the service.

Towards the end of the financial year London Councils receives numerous requests from Taxicard members for additional trips. Generally, boroughs do not offer additional trips when members have used them all except in exceptional circumstances. This would suggest there is demand for travel which cannot currently be satisfied, but extra journeys may be made if there were travel budgets, depending on how generous the budget is.

14. To what extent would the introduction of personal budgets affect usage of bus-based services like Dial-a-Ride and community transport?

There is a risk that personal budgets could lead to a sufficient reduction in the funding of this type of provision, making them unsustainable financially in the longer term due to individuals choosing more personal forms of transport such as taxis. This would lead to higher overall costs and disadvantage those who cannot use taxis or private hire and / or who enjoy group travel with its opportunities for social interaction. This may lead to greater social isolation, with the attendant problems that brings.

15. Conclusion

London Councils believes the investigation is a start with regards to exploring personal travel budgets, but does not think it is a feasible approach prior to the greater service integration of door to door services. The boroughs make large financial contributions to statutory door to door transport, such as adult social care and SEN (far more than is allocated to non-statutory door to door services such as Taxicard and Dial a Ride), and these services need to be taken into account.

The resources used by boroughs and the NHS, which often remain underused for a greater part of the day, need to be taken into account before travel budgets should be considered. This could be achieved through integration of TfL, Community Transport, Borough and NHS transport services. This is obviously a much longer term objective, but would achieve much greater economies of scale with the opportunity to make better use of group forms of transport.

The issue of charging for services needs to be considered carefully, for instance whether Dial a Ride should remain a free service in a shared travel budget scenario.

Personal budgets would also need to work hand in hand with a well resourced approach that fully embraces and promotes travel independence by focusing on the development of these skills in the special school/college settings and educating family and carers of the positive aspects/balanced with the risks. Therefore increased resourcing of travel training opportunities by bodies such as TFL is required to provide meaningful capacity for, and access to such innovations.

London Councils looks forward to reviewing the outcome of the investigation and is happy to meet with GLA members and officers to discuss our response and the overall findings.

London Assembly Transport Committee – Consultation on Door-to-door transport services

Response prepared by the Licensed Taxi Drivers Association

The Licensed Taxi Drivers Association (LTDA) is the professional and authoritative voice for the licensed taxi trade in London, representing over 11,000 drivers. We have been supporting taxi drivers in London for over 50 years and are committed to assisting the trade and maintaining the high professional standards London taxi drivers are known for across the world.

The LTDA welcomes the Transport Committee's investigation into door-to-door transport services, as a provider of door-to-door transport services the black cab trade in London believes strongly that everyone should have equal access to public transport and a safe and easy way of getting from A to B.

Black cabs are the only 100% wheelchair-accessible and guide dog-friendly form of public transport, offering a truly user-friendly alternative to private cars. Our drivers undergo specialist training to help vulnerable passengers ensuring that they provide the best service possible for passengers with mobility issues and this is something the industry prides itself on.

Ensuring that passengers with mobility issues continue to have access to these vital services and that they are delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible should be a priority for TfL and the Mayor of London, to ensure that all Londoners have fair and equal access to public transport.

We believe that there is a clear danger that the vital door-to-door services currently provided by black cabs could be eroded.

Minicabs in London are increasing at a rate of 600-700 per week – with more than 100,000 now operating on London's roads – and undercutting the taxi trade, there is a real possibility that black cab numbers will fall. This would limit consumer choice and diminish the quality of door-to-door services in London.

At present there are no accessibility standards for PHVs and it is the trade's view that if the high-quality, accessible service that black cabs, and many reputable minicab firms provide, is not being replicated across the board, there is a chance that cheaper, inaccessible operators will win out – significantly restricting the ability of vulnerable passengers to move around. As such, we believe that all taxi and PHV operators should be required to meet a minimum accessibility standard for their vehicles.

In the following responses, the LTDA has outlined its views on the advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal budgets below, as well as setting out what we see as a clear way forward to ensure greater provision of accessible transport options in London and to help fund door-to-door services.

What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

For vulnerable adults in London, especially those that rely on the use of a wheelchair, private transport can be the only option to travel around the Capital. Door-to-door services provide an alternative and valuable method of public transport for these people.

Personal travel budgets for door-to-door services would give users the freedom to choose a preferred supplier, which suits their needs. Current use of centralised contractors has limited the flexibility of door-to-door transport services, as they are often unable to provide transport in a specific locations, or at required times. When using both Dial-a-Ride and community transport users are required to pre-book, often several days in advance. The introduction of personal travel budgets would likely see usage of these services decline, in favour of more convenient, immediate travel options, as people would be free to choose a supplier and pay using a pre-payment card.

The current system also hampers innovation and the use of new technology, which could be used to enhance the passenger experience, making it easier to find, book and use door-to-door transport services.

By contrast, all taxis now accept card payments and users can book a taxi through a variety of methods including apps, existing contractors such as computer cab, as well as more traditional street or rank hail. Ultimately, introducing personal budgets would make the system more user-friendly and easier to navigate, promoting consumer choice and convenience and ensuring that public transport truly is accessible for all.

The introduction of personal travel budgets does present a huge logistical challenge for providers including the taxi trade. However, the LTDA believes that, once introduced, this will be an easier way to deliver door-to-door services for both passengers and providers.

How would introducing personal budgets affect the financial efficiency of door-to-door services?

Allowing users to independently choose a supplier, rather than relying on a central contractor, would increase the financial efficiency of door-to-door services by eliminating the additional administrative burden and associated costs of going through a middle organisation.

Ensuring the provision of accessible transport

All London black cabs are 100% wheelchair-accessible and guide dog-friendly, the only form of public transport that is. Taxi drivers also undergo specialist training to help vulnerable passengers. However, some sections of the PHV trade do not comply with these high standards. At the most recent APPG on Taxi event, assistance dog users said that without taxis they would not be able to travel in London, because PHVs frequently refuse to carry their dog and similar accounts, have frequently, been covered in the press¹.

We have already seen the problem that occurs when PHV operators are not required to meet minimum standards: the President of the United Spinal Association in America asserted in September 2015, “Uber’s growth in New York City has shamefully ignored and excluded the approximately 60,000 wheelchair users in the five boroughs.”²

The LTDA believes that all PHV operators should be required to offer a service, which can cater for the 9% of working age adults in the UK with mobility difficulties, with specially adapted vehicles and drivers capable of supporting passengers throughout their journeys.

In May 2016, Uber launched Uber WAV (Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle) with an initial 55 vehicles and plans to provide around 100 in “the coming months”. Given that Uber has 25,000 vehicles in London, this

¹ <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/uber-driver-refused-to-carry-blind-woman-because-she-had-a-guide-dog-a3274516.html>

² <http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Group-Uber-needs-to-amp-up-accessibility-6536256.php>

represents 0.4% of their fleet, the service is also only available in certain areas and can take up to 40 minutes to arrive.

We believe that the company and others in the PHV industry are not living up to their responsibility to passengers with mobility issues as a result.

Transport for All, which provides information and advice for disabled transport users in London, called for at least 25% of PHVs to be wheelchair/mobility scooter accessible in its manifesto published ahead of the 2016 mayoral election.³

We want to see the PHV industry go further than this and believe that in order to incentivise PHV operators to provide an accessible transport option, TfL should increase the licence fee for PHVs from £100 to £500, whilst creating a discount for accessible vehicles. Drivers or operators registering an accessible vehicle would be given a discounted fee, with a £400 discount, paying £100 as before and those registering vehicles that do not meet accessibility requirements would pay the full fee.

This system would not only incentivise drivers and operators to make the right choice when purchasing or hiring a vehicle, but could deliver a step change in accessibility provision in the PHV industry helping to make accessible vehicles increasingly the norm in the industry. This would also benefit the industry giving them access to a new group of service users and potential customers.

On top of this, the additional revenue generated from the higher licence fee paid by inaccessible PHVs could be used to subsidise personal budgets for door-to-door services. This would also provide a welcome source of additional funding for door-to-door services – at time when local authorities are increasingly struggling to fund them – helping them to continue to meet their obligations to their residents.

We would encourage TfL and the Mayor of London to consider introducing such a system to ensure that the rapidly increasing PHV industry lives up to its obligations to passengers with mobility issues and to promote more choice for such service users.

³ <http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2016/april/transport-all-issues-five-election-demands-accessible-transport>

Personalised budgets in door-to-door transport services

Submission from Transport for London

1. Introduction

- 1.1. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this investigation into the potential to introduce personal travel budgets for door-to-door service users. We are a key provider and funder of existing door-to-door services, as the operator and funder of London's Dial-a-Ride (DaR) service, the sole funder of the Capital Call service and the majority funder of the Taxicard service. We also support the continued provision of Community Transport services through their involvement as contractors in the delivery of the DaR service.

2. Background

- 2.1. Personal travel budgets for door-to-door services in London have previously been used within single schemes (e.g. Taxicard and Capital Call). Customers 'spending' their budget across multiple services would be a new approach.
- 2.2. Taxicard
- 2.3. The Taxicard scheme has always operated with an individual, virtual trip budget allocated to each customer. Taxicard trip budgets vary by borough, but members receive an average of 104 trips a year. Most boroughs allocate this budget to individual users monthly, with no 'roll over' between months. This is to help customers manage their annual budget and to help manage overall costs. The allocation of a monthly trip budget helps prevent vulnerable adults and children being left towards the end of a financial year with no remaining budget to undertake essential journeys.
- 2.4. Capital Call
- 2.5. Capital Call was originally introduced to mitigate a problem with the Taxicard service in a small number of boroughs where the supply of taxis was low.
- 2.6. The scheme offers a virtual cash budget of £200 to book private hire journeys through a designated call centre. Private hire operators contracted to provide journeys as part of the scheme have been thoroughly vetted before they are able to transport vulnerable adults and children. As the current Taxicard service now includes private hire operators as well as black cabs, the demand for Capital Call has diminished and the scheme closed for new customers in 2015.
- 2.7. However, during the consultation into the future of Capital Call, it was clear many customers valued the additional control that a virtual cash budget provided them, as

it enabled many to undertake longer distance journeys that can be difficult to arrange with the door-to-door services. This is costly and the Capital Call scheme continues to be funded with additional money to complement the existing DaR and Taxicard schemes.

2.8. Newham Door-to-Door

- 2.9. An example of personal travel budgets in door-to-door services is the Newham scheme, which ran from 2001 to 2015. This scheme was initially established as a pilot project under the Commission on Accessible Transport's report "Door-to-door Transport for Disabled Londoners – into the new millennium¹", which looked at how to integrate door-to-door services in London.
- 2.10. Newham Door-to-Door operated a pilot integrated Taxicard and Dial-a-Ride service restricted to a single London borough. The scheme operated trip rather than cash budgets for customers with two service providers. The service depended on the type of booking, with the majority of saver bookings (see table 2.12) allocated to an accessible minibus (with a taxi only if that were not possible) and standard bookings (see table 2.12) provided by Taxi, provided by the Taxicard contractor. Standard bookings would be allocated to an accessible minibus if that were possible.
- 2.11. The comparatively high cost of operating the pilot required the virtual trip budgets and the costs paid by customers to be changed several times over the course of the project, demonstrating the complexity of the scheme. The final iteration of trip budgets and user costs in place at the time the scheme closed in 2015 is shown in the table below.

2.12. Newham Door-to-Door: travel budget structure as at 2015

Type of booking	Definition	Budget per month	Fare and subsidy levels
Saver	Journey must be booked before 12 noon, the day before travel	20 trips	If allocated to Dial-a-Ride bus: free If allocated to taxi: £2, up to a meter reading of £16
Standard	As soon as possible telephone booking or street hiring	6 trips	If allocated to bus: free If allocated to taxi or hired in street: £3 up to a meter reading of £11.60

¹ Published by the Transport Committee for London (now London Councils TEC) April 1999

- 2.13. The final trip budgets and cost structures balanced the needs of users (for an adequate number of monthly journeys at a reasonable cost) and its funding bodies² for adequate cost management. Like the Capital Call scheme, this pilot secured additional funding and was designed to complement existing transport schemes.

3. Advantages and disadvantages of personal travel budgets

- 3.1. Our experience using travel budgets has provided us with insights on advantages and disadvantages of cash-based, virtual, and more personalised methods.

3.2. Advantages

- Both cash-based and virtual budgets are popular with many customers, as they provide more choice in how the money is spent.
- Both cash-based and virtual budgets enable the use of flexible pricing to influence travel choices that reflect cost and availability for services (individual journeys by taxi or multi-occupancy journeys by minibus) or the time that travel occurred (peak vs off peak).
- Both cash-based and virtual budgets can provide greater opportunities for customers to choose how to use their budget. For example, they can choose to make a greater number of shorter journeys or a smaller number of longer journeys.
- A cash-based budget potentially allows customers to buy additional access to specialised door-to-door transport services. For example, by using additional payments included in the new Personal Independence Payments benefits provided by the Department for Work and Pensions.

3.3. Disadvantages

- Establishing travel budgets for a particular service involves difficult judgements to determine the budget needed and to predict the impact on existing demand. For example, introducing a trip budget of one trip a week for DaR services could limit daily customers.
- Travel budgets do not offer any operational cost savings when compared to door-to-door services that do not operate with travel budgets. The use of travel budgets requires complex administrative and fraud prevention systems, whether or not the budgets are in cash or virtual forms. Opening up travel budgets to a customer's own choice of supplier would increase administrative and fraud prevention costs.
- The Newham scheme demonstrated that budgets and cost structures must be kept in check to ensure the financial sustainability of such schemes.

² Transport for London and London Borough of Newham

- A 'free choice' travel budget system would leave judgements regarding the suitability of potential journey suppliers in the hands of customers. While this would be welcomed by some customers who are able to make such judgements, other vulnerable customers may need assistance with such decision making.
- Significantly, the pilot schemes we have pursued to date have involved additional funding and relied upon the continued delivery of existing services, DaR and Taxicard.

4. Conclusion – personal travel budgets in a future integrated door-to-door service

4.1. We are interested in potentially introducing some form of personal travel budget to future door-to-door services.

4.2. As the Committee is aware, we have set out a vision for the development of social needs transport in the Capital. This vision seeks to integrate the currently irregular provision, remove barriers to access and improve the quality and capacity of transport services provided. This vision and the proposed roadmap for delivery, the Social Needs Transport Review Roadmap, has been progressed in a number of ways, including the following:

- The DaR operation has been separated into two distinct parts - *commissioning*, and *delivery* of operational services;
- The existing Multi-Occupancy Assisted Transport contracts have been reviewed and expanded, and are in the process of being reproduced to provide operators – in particular community transport groups – with greater contractual and financial security. This will help strengthen the provision of minibus-type accessible transport services across London;
- An outline agreement has been reached with London Councils to jointly re-let the Taxicard and Dial-a-Ride taxi contracts to achieve efficiency savings that could be used to reinvest in future service provision; and
- The single booking point – that the Social Needs Transport Review aims to create – will provide access to a range of door-to-door providers, the safety and reliability of which are managed through a London-wide door-to-door scheme. This could enable a trial of an appropriate platform for a personal customer travel budget, representing all or part of the door-to-door provision available to customers.

4.3. We look forward to the findings of this investigation to help shape our future thinking on the potential role that travel budgets could play in providing greater customer choice for the integrated service that we plan to provide.

5. Responses to specific questions asked

1. *What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?*

Advantages	Disadvantages
Both cash-based and virtual budgets are popular with many customers, as they provide more choice in how the money is spent.	Establishing travel budgets for a particular service involves difficult judgements to determine the budget needed and to predict the impact on existing demand. For example, introducing a trip budget of one trip a week for DaR services could limit daily customers.
Both cash-based and virtual budgets enable the use of flexible pricing to influence travel choices that reflect cost and availability for services (individual journeys by taxi or multi-occupancy journeys by minibus) or the time that travel occurred (peak vs off peak).	Travel budgets do not offer any operational cost savings when compared to door-to-door services that do not operate with travel budgets. The use of travel budgets requires complex administrative and fraud prevention systems, whether or not the budgets are in cash or virtual forms. Opening up travel budgets to a customer's own choice of supplier would increase administrative and fraud prevention costs.
Both cash-based and virtual budgets can provide greater opportunities for customers to choose how to use their budget. For example, they can choose to make a greater number of shorter journeys or a smaller number of longer journeys.	The Newham scheme demonstrated that budgets and cost structures must be kept in check to ensure the financial sustainability of such schemes.
A cash-based budget potentially allows customers to buy additional access to specialised door-to-door transport services. For example, by using additional payments included in the new Personal Independence Payments benefits provided by the Department for Work and Pensions.	A 'free choice' travel budget system would leave judgements regarding the suitability of potential journey suppliers in the hands of customers. While this would be welcomed by some customers who are able to make such judgements, other vulnerable customers may need assistance with such decision making.
	The pilot schemes pursued to date have involved additional funding and relied upon the continued delivery of existing services, DaR and Taxicard.

2. *How would introducing personal budgets affect the financial efficiency of door-to-door services?*

Travel budgets do not offer any operational cost savings when compared to door-to-door services that do not operate with travel budgets. The use of travel budgets requires complex administrative and fraud prevention systems, whether or not the budgets are in cash or virtual forms. Opening up travel budgets to a customer's own choice of supplier would increase administrative and fraud prevention costs.

There is the potential that, despite differential pricing to encourage people to use DaR buses, that large numbers of people would opt for individual transport options (such as a taxi or minicab), with resulting implications for congestion, pollution and cost.

3. *How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?*

Travel budgets could improve individual choice for those able to use a wide range of vehicles and who are able to make informed choices on safety and reliability.

Those who are able to use less specialised vehicles and comprehensively trained drivers are likely to do so, which would reduce demand for these specialised services. This reduced demand is likely to result in a reduction in the supply of these services, which would affect service users' ability to choose such services in the future.

4. *To what extent do door-to-door service users want to be able to use a personal budget for these services?*

From the results of the consultation into the future of Capital Call, it was clear that many customers valued the additional control that a virtual cash budget provided them, as it enabled many to undertake longer distance journeys that can be difficult to arrange with the other door-to-door services. However, this clearly needs to be balanced with support for existing forms of social needs transport.

5. *What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment, and how could these be overcome?*

Approximately one in ten door-to-door users has a significant cognitive impairment and would be unable to manage a personal budget. They would need someone to manage it on their behalf, but that would be no different from many other aspects of their life.

However it is not just service users with a significant cognitive impairment who may have difficulties in managing a personal budget. The experience that we have had with virtual budgets is that many service users spend the budget they are provided before the end of the budgetary period and then find themselves without access to transport. Authorities then need to make difficult decisions about the fairness of

granting additional budget to those who have not budgeted adequately, but due to their vulnerability cannot be left without any access to a door to door transport.

Another challenge is the need to explain any changes to service users, the majority of whom are older disabled people.³ We find that older customers prefer information about changes to their service to be delivered in person and can take time to adapt to changes with a service.

6. *What lessons can be learned about personal budgets from their use in other sectors, particularly social care?*

We have made no assessment of this impact, but look forward to the Committee's findings on this.

7. *Are there any other cities that have introduced personal budgets for door-to-door services? What lessons have been learned?*

We are not aware of any schemes other than those described earlier.

8. *What would be the main challenges of implementing personal budgets in door-to-door services, and how could these be addressed?*

9. *To what extent would implementing personal budgets rely on greater integration of service provision than currently exists?*

[Response to questions 8 and 9] It would require greater integration across services as set out in the Social Needs Transport Roadmap, with a single booking system in place for multiple vetted providers. More detail on the Social Needs Transport Roadmap can be found in the Appendix.

Integration, prior to the personalisation of budgets, can bring benefits including a better service for users which is based on their needs and the type of journey they are making.

Integration should also help to make services more efficient by reducing duplication, which is essential given current funding constraints. Previous pilot schemes have involved additional funding and relied upon the continued delivery of existing services. Introducing personal budgets would therefore require additional funding or the reallocation of resources from existing schemes. The reallocation of resources away from DaR and Taxicard could threaten the viability of these services. It is therefore essential that efficiencies are secured, prior to supporting the transition to personal budgets.

10. *To what extent would providing all service users with a personal budget increase demand for services, including from those who currently use services infrequently?*

³ 52 per cent of Dial-a-Ride customers are over the age of 80

We have not made an assessment of this, as we do not have any detailed proposals for such a scheme.

11. *To what extent would the introduction of personal budgets affect usage of bus-based services like Dial-a-Ride and community transport?*

Frequent users could have their number of journeys limited, with a resulting impact on bus loading, if appropriate incentives are not in place (or are not effective).

Financial support for DaR and other social needs transport schemes would also need to continue to assist the delivery of the personal budget agenda.

December 2016

Appendix: The Social Needs Transport Roadmap

Provision of social needs transport is a complex area with a number of operators providing different services across London:

- The TfL Dial-a-Ride service provides a door-to-door multi-occupancy London wide bus service that is free to users.
- Taxicard is an on demand, guaranteed, subsidised kerb-to-kerb taxi service for mobility impaired Londoners paid for by TfL and London boroughs. This is complemented by the smaller Capital Call Service.
- TfL also provides a travel mentoring service to encourage disabled people to make use of mainstream transport services.
- A number of independent, borough based, Community Transport (CT) operators provide transport, usually for group travel. These operators are charities, and any surplus profits they make are reinvested in the communities they serve.
- Statutory Transport comprises Local Authority social care and special education needs transport services, and NHS non-emergency Patient Transport Services.

The table below shows the key features of these services.

Service	Operator	Cost and Funding	Membership & Usage
Dial-a-Ride	TfL in-house operation supplemented by taxi, private hire and MOAT provision (currently provided by CTs)	£34m in 2014/15 100% funded by TfL	48,000 members 1.3m passenger journeys per year Free to use No journey limit 90% of journey requests accommodated

Service	Operator	Cost and Funding	Membership & Usage
Taxicard	Operates across all London boroughs Booking, scheduling and dispatch operated by London Councils on behalf of TfL and the boroughs Travel services provided by a taxi consolidator service (CityFleet)	£11.7m in 2014/15 83% funded by TfL (9.6m) 17% funded by boroughs (£1.9m) TfL's funding contribution has increased from 38% in 2002/03 to 83% in 2014/15	83,000 members 1.3m trips per year Subsidised cost Journey limits apply On demand, guaranteed service
Capital Call	Operates across 10 London boroughs Membership and booking, scheduling and dispatch operated by Hackney CT. Travel services provided by local private hire companies.	£460k per year 100% funded by TfL	2,000 members 23,000 trips per year Subsidised cost Journey limits apply On demand, guaranteed service
Travel Mentoring	TfL in partnership with local authorities, disability organisations, and health and social care professionals.	£300k in 2014/15 100% funded by TfL	12,000 accompanied journeys 59 multi-occupancy bus days for 1,900 people
Community Transport	22 independent operators covering 29 boroughs	290 full time staff 320 part time staff Overall costs not aggregated	1.8m trips per year

It is because of this complexity that the TfL Social Needs Roadmap proposals are set out in incremental manageable steps. With each step we aim to capitalize on further synergies across different service providers. The proposals focus on two key elements, improvements in the customer contact experience and the delivery of transport services.

Bringing these together is a challenging undertaking, although the customer benefits are worth having. Integration can help ensure better services for users, as it should mean users get the right kind of service delivered to them, according to their needs and the type of journey they are making. It should also help to make services more efficient by increasing service integration and reducing duplication.

Customer Contact Experience

- **Short term:** Following joint tendering, move to a single customer complaints and feedback process, a single set of eligibility criteria and a single membership process for Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call, and, where applicable, the TfL Travel Mentoring service. This will result in a service that is much simpler for customers to use and understand and one that is cheaper to administer.

- **Medium term:** Work to introduce a single booking process for customers. Initially this could mean a single phone number, with calls connected through to the relevant call centre. The fundamental step will be to move to an integrated booking centre providing an integrated service for users of Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call and Travel Mentoring, providing a single booking point for all services.
- Following these steps, trials of a local, decentralised booking process (as requested by a number of stakeholders, who believe this would lead to more effective booking and scheduling and a more personalised customer service) could take place.
- **Long term:** Seek to expand the role of the integrated operation to secure more cooperation and coordination with other providers across London, with the aim of commissioning provision from the most appropriate and cost-effective providers.

Transport Services

- **Short Term:** TfL will re-let its current contractual arrangements for Dial-a-Ride's Multi-Occupancy Accessible Transport (MOAT) contracts, currently in place with six community transport providers, in a form that would incentivise contractors to invest in the vehicles, drivers and training. This will provide ongoing support for the community transport sector.
- TfL will start to diversify the use of the Dial-a-Ride fleet, contracting out to other service providers who also have a need for the fleet's specialist vehicles and trained drivers. This would improve the overall efficiency of the fleet and start to integrate the services TfL provides with those in the education and health sectors.
- **Medium Term:** The taxi and private hire industry already provides significant transport services to both Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard. In partnership with London Councils and boroughs, TfL will develop a new contracting framework, letting a series of contracts to meet the requirements on the service. The new contracts will include enhanced standards of customer service including enhanced training requirements.

Progress

Since producing the Social Needs Transport Roadmap, TfL has been working with London Councils to progress integration and joint commissioning of door-to-door transport, specifically across Taxicard and Dial-a-Ride.

TfL has made progress with other proposals outlined in their Roadmap by taking the following steps internally:

- a) separating the Dial-a-Ride (DAR) operation into two distinct parts – Assisted Transport Services and Fleet Services. This provides a clear distinction between the commissioning and delivery of DAR services;
- b) reviewing, expanding and re-procuring its Multi-Occupancy Assisted Transport (MOAT) contract to provide DAR services. The new MOAT contract will provide operators with greater contractual and financial security and by ensuring social value is a key component of the assessment criteria, thereby help to strengthen the provision of transport services across London. The procurement is on track;

- c) implementing a review of the five mile trip focus criteria in line with recommendations from the London Assembly and feedback from users – this review is seeking to balance the desire for longer journeys with the demand for more frequent access to trips; and
- d) outline agreement with London Council's to jointly re-procure the taxicard and taxi DAR services to deliver efficiency savings that could be used to reinvest in service provision and deliver a reduction in operating costs, and therefore, funding requirements for TfL and Boroughs.



London Assembly Transport Committee

Door-to-Door Transport Services: Call for Evidence

Introduction

Thomas Pocklington Trust is a registered charity which offers people who are blind or partially sighted support they require to lead an independent life. We are committed to increasing awareness and understanding of the needs of people with sight loss and to developing and implementing services which meet their needs. The Royal National Institute for the Blind's (RNIB) Sight Loss Data Tool shows that over two million people in the UK are blind or partially sighted, with 200,000 living in London.

Thomas Pocklington Trust is pleased to be able to respond to this this consultation.

Executive Summary

The RNIB's report on the Labour Force Survey 2016, shows that Currently 27% of the working age population of blind and partially -sighted people are in employment. This is due to various barriers to work, including difficulty in travelling independently. Blind and partially sighted people have a huge reliance on door-to-door transport. It allows them to participate in everyday activities such a shopping and attending hospital appointments, and enables them to get out and about, thus reducing social isolation. Door-to-door transport is a regularly used and is a high cost mode of transport for a typically low income section of the population.

Methodology

The evidence gathered for this report is collated from interviews with blind and partially sighted users of door-to-door transport services, and voluntary sector workers. The quality of evidence collated has been impacted by the short time period of this consultation, which fell over the holiday season. As a result the veiws of blind and parcially sighted people will have not been thougherly represented.

The respondents were asked the following questions.

1. What door-to-door transport do you use and how frequently?

2. How is your door-to-door transport funded and at what personal expense to yourself?
3. What benefit does door-to-door transport have on your life?
4. The Transport committee would like answers to the following questions:
5. What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?
6. How would introducing personal budgets affect the financial efficiency of door-to-door services?
7. How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?
8. What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment?
9. What lessons can be learned about personal budgets from their use in other sectors, particularly social care?
10. To what extent would implementing personal budgets rely on greater integration of service provision than currently exists?

Review of Evidence

The main modes of transport used by service users were the Taxicard scheme and Dial-a-ride. The waiting times for Comcab bookings in the outer boroughs of London, such as Greenwich and Kingston, have longer waiting times. Areas in the south east such as Lambeth and Southwark, experience a more efficient service.

Dial-a-ride is a popular service, as it's free, and the drivers are helpful in supporting the service users. Service users wished they were able to book successfully more often.

Capital Call only operates in ten London boroughs. Service users have been turned down by Capital Call as other schemes are offered in their area of London.

However, as this reports included case studies show, there is not always a sufficient quality of service in these areas.

Personal budgets would be effective only for those who have the capability and capacity to manage budgets.

The budgets should not be implemented as a way to cut spending. Free and discounted door-to-door transport funding for people with disabilities is essential. Research by disability charity, Scope, in their report "Priced out: Ending the financial penalty of disability by 2020", published in April 2014, shows that on average, that living costs £550 more per month if you have a disability, compared to an able bodied person.

Door-to-door transport is vital for the visually impaired population. A reduction in being able to afford or access this mode of travel will lead to social isolation, and in turn a decrease in health and wellbeing.

A personal budget should not be implemented to encourage service users to use other cheaper modes of travel such as taxi apps and private hire firms. These companies do not have the level of care or training required to provide the necessary service.

Instead, current approved modes of door-to-door transport, such as Dial-a-ride, Taxicard, and community transport schemes should be improved and to create a more efficient and cost effective service.

An Overview of Responses

Questions from the Transport committee:

- **What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?**

Most responses by service users indicate a concern for not being given enough within the personal budget for their needs. The interviews demonstrate that the Taxicard scheme already fails to provide enough swipes for the needs of service users.

Others raised concerns about the difficulty in managing the budget with regards to not spending it all, and dealing with the paper work.

Respondents felt that the money could be made to go further by using cheaper local private hire companies, and taxi apps such as Uber. However, it was strongly expressed that these companies are lacking in accessible taxis, and the drivers are not trained to assist people with sensory impairments and disabilities adequately. This is a vital part of the service for people who rely on door-to-door transport. The Guide Dogs "Access All Areas" report, conducted in July 2015, presents evidence that 44% of respondents were refused from taxis in the year because of their dog.

Some respondents failed to see any advantage at all; case study two commented "I honestly don't know. A travel budget would be of no benefit to me. Perhaps it would make it easier for TFL."

- **How would introducing personal budgets affect the financial efficiency of door-to-door services?**

Most respondents were unsure of how the financial efficiency would be affected without further information on how the budgets would be allocated and what they would be used for.

- **How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?**

Most felt that the quality of service would not improve with a personal budget. The problem the current services are related to customer care and availability. Changing the way a service user pays for door-to-door transport will do little to change this.

- **What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment?**

Feedback during the interviews indicated that people felt those who are more vulnerable, for example people with mental health conditions, dementia, and learning disabilities would be unable to manage a personal budget for travel.

- **What lessons can be learned about personal budgets from their use in other sectors, particularly social care?**

Case study 5, a Personal Budget broker from a pan disability charity in Kingston, highlighted the problems which have occurred for service users who use personal budgets within social care.

“People can opt for a managed budget whereby a third party deals with payments with the service user still choosing how the funding is spent, this can be helpful for those who would struggle to manage a Personal Budget. However this service often comes at a cost which is not always met by the council.

One of the main concerns for the door to door service providers is that if current service users opt to take a personal budget and remove the funding from their current allocation, a tipping point will come whereby either services are required to charge their service users (or the council)”

- **To what extent would implementing personal budgets rely on greater integration of service provision than currently exists?**

Some respondents felt that it would be better to integrate services, whilst others believed this would have negative implications. More clarification on what the integration would involve is needed. Integration with social care funding will have a negative impact on users. Blind and partially sighted people do not generally qualify for social care budgets, therefore an integrated system could fail to meet their needs.

Case Studies

Case Study 1

Male

Age 58

Greenwich

I think this is an exciting and potentially extremely useful innovation for blind and severely sight impaired people, but there are all sorts of implications.

I am registered severely sight impaired. I have Retinitis Pigmentosa, which has left me with an advanced state of sight loss. I receive disability living allowance including the enhanced rate component for mobility.

I do not at present use a Motability car, to which I am entitled, although I did have one for three and a half years and my wife was the driver. I stopped using the car partly because it was very difficult to find car parking spaces in central London and the cost taken from my disability living allowance was quite high at well over £60 a week. People with Motability cars would be eligible for this proposed scheme, and it could be a more flexible alternative. With this scheme you would only use it when you needed it whereas the car has to sit in a car space somewhere even when you are not using it. Furthermore if anything happens to your driver such as illness then you cannot use your car. If you are using transport as and when you need it then there should be a driver available.

Before I had the Motability car, I used the London Taxicard Scheme. There were occasions when the driver was very late and it was not reliable. On one occasion in 2010 the cab was over two hours late to take us to the airport so I had to send my wife on the head in a local taxi and I stayed behind to tell the late driver off and send him away. While waiting I rang their office several times to find out what was happening, and to tell them that I needed to get to the airport. They told me that he was on the way each time. I missed my plane. After that I stopped using the London Taxicard scheme.

After using the Motability car from June 2012 until November 2015, I applied once again in 2016 for the London Taxicard scheme. Although sending in the application form correctly filled and with the relevant information I have still heard nothing from them after nearly twelve months. If such a scheme were to be introduced, it would make sense to terminate the funding given by London Borough councils to London Taxicard scheme, in order to use that same funding to go towards a new transport for London door-to-door transport scheme.

Although I still have a freedom pass, I am regrettably reluctant to use it unless I am accompanied by my wife or somebody else. On my own I cannot orientate myself since I cannot read signs and passers-by do not always know the way; it is also hazardous since obstacles cannot always be detected by my long cane or people moving fast who sometimes walk into me. Even when accompanied it can be hazardous moving around in the underground or on a bus.

What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

One of the main advantages of such a scheme is that it could be a lot more reliable than the London Taxicard scheme. The concept behind that scheme is great, but the execution falls short. A new scheme could present an opportunity to come up with a much better and more reliable door-to-door transport option.

The eligibility criteria for such a scheme would need some clarification. The criteria could be the same as those for the Motability scheme, that is to say higher rate mobility component under the disability living allowance or enhanced rate mobility component under the personal independence payment scheme. The criteria could be much wider, for example including anyone who is registered blind or partially sighted with their local authority. The benefit would be that many more people could use the scheme but the disadvantage would be that the cost would be much higher at a time of very restricted public spending. If different criteria were adopted then there would need to be a debate about the rationale. Clearly people who are blind or with a severe sight impairment would feel that they should be given priority over people who have a less pronounced partial sightedness. People who are still engaged in social activities involving travelling around would be more interested and would feel that they needed to be given higher priority than would people who are more sedentary and stay at home. On the other hand with such a budget people who are more reclusive might start to get out and about more.

People with sight loss who are working and receive remuneration should in my view be encouraged to apply for fares to work under the Department of work and pensions access to work scheme. This would leave more money in the budget for people who needed transport for social, leisure or other reasons.

Under the London Taxicard scheme the participating London boroughs subsidised the cost while the user paid a proportion of the cost to the taxi/cab driver out of his or her own pocket. I assume that the introduction of transport budgets would not be intended to cover the full cost and that the user would continue to pay a contribution. On the other hand, if the eligible user were given a budget then it would presumably be up to him or her how they used it. The budget could be in the form of credit on an Oyster card or similar device which could be swiped over a reader. If the user ran out of budget before it was due to be topped up, then that would be the user's problem.

What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment?

For people with a learning disability, any arrangement would very much depend on the circumstances and abilities of the individual. In some cases the individual could use the Oyster-type card like anybody else. In other cases the accompanying carer could use the card on their behalf. I suspect that this would be no different from the

care arrangements that are already made for such individuals. Some people may find it hard to understand the concept and that the money could run out if used a lot. If the scheme will be let as a contract to a private sector provider, then I think that active users, who could be easily identified from their Oyster card utilisation, should be involved in evaluation of contract performance on an annual basis and should be consulted before decisions are taken on re-letting the contract at a later date.

If an Oyster-type card were used, it would clearly have to be coded differently so that non-disabled people could not use their regular Oyster cards to order such transport. A photo-card would be a good idea to prevent misuse.

Case Study 2

Male

Hammersmith

I am registered blind and I have a Taxicard. I used to use it very frequently and did one year use up my full allocation of journeys. I now use it less frequently. The reliability of the Taxicard Scheme, mainly provided by Comcab, has decreased. I have become a bit more intrepid with my use of public transport, but I am also now going to fewer places which are unknown to me, so require less door to door transport. I did use this type of travel when I was doing more freelance training work. I am also a member of Dial-A-Ride, but have hardly ever used the service.

I fund my own door to door transport. If the journey is for leisure it comes out of my personal account and if it is for work it comes out of my business account. I do not keep a record of the total amount I spend on using my Taxicard, but I would estimate it may be approximately

I spend approximately £200 per year. The cost would have been far more when I was making more use of the service, but as I have mentioned, its reliability has decreased.

Door-to-door transport allows me to travel to destinations independently without stress. It is relatively cheap and so I use it for when I am going on train journeys and have heavy luggage. This is for journeys to and from the station.

What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

I honestly don't know. A travel budget would be of no benefit to me. Perhaps it would make it easier for TFL.

How would introducing personal budgets affect the financial efficiency of door-to-door services?

This would depend on who is providing the money for the budget.

How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?

Perhaps if the budgets were generous they would be able to budget to use a service that they preferred and was efficient.

What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment?

People with such impairments might not be able to allocate their budgets equally across the year or be able to prioritise when they would most need the transport. Perhaps there would be a danger that they would run out of funds before the end of the allocation period.

To what extent would implementing personal budgets rely on greater integration of service provision than currently exists?

I don't know, but I think what is behind this survey is a desire to streamline and not duplicate services and to give door to door transport users more personal choice. I just hope that at the end of this process there is not a decrease in accessible transport. We have to remember that many taxis are still not accessible for wheelchair users.

Case Study 3

Male

Age 60

Kingston upon Thames

The door-to-door transport service that I was liked Capital Call, as it worked. HCT, who ran it were very responsive and approachable. It was taken away from us as they said that there were now more cabs and Taxicard would do us.

What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

There are many ramifications to this, so I'd like to warn London Councils that messing with it or devolving it to the individual boroughs could end up with a "post code lottery" on isolation. It really needs to be London wide and the same everywhere as people travel everywhere.

Taxicard is expensive as the costs of black cabs are high, as they are based on both time and miles. Often you can only have two swipes and with only 104 trips a year, anywhere else but close by means that you are limited to less than one trip a week both ways and that costs 2.50 a swipe. If a personal budget allowed you to use a cheaper taxi firm this would be better, however private firms are not very disability aware.

It is far better now that all cabs have card facilities to have a pot of money, but the actual amount needs to be the same as the overall subsidy was previously or it would be a cut by a new name. Those of us who can use private hire, and do not need wheelchair access, will find that same budget goes further.

Currently I believe only about three companies are allowed to be used in the Taxicard scheme. If you book via the main dispatch system you tend to still get a black cab even if you show a preference for private hire. There is great animosity between the two operations. Because we as blind people cannot see black cab meters we have no idea if we are being ripped off. Any extra after the subsidy and its £2.50 swipe cost is payable at normal black cab rates.

One of the good things about private hire at present is that they tend to have fixed charges for trips so you know what fare you will get, up front.

Dial a Ride can be good but the system is now free. The main problem with it is that often you get refused trips at short notice or told you have to vary your times. Many people find the busses uncomfortable, and they can seemingly run almost empty, which seems like a waste of time, while on the other hand they claim its often not available due to demand.

Running door-to-door busses has always been a problem. It is hard for the company to find the most efficient route, with the added issue of having max passenger travel times because of elderly and vulnerable users. Also because it is regionalised anyone wanting to go into another area can have problems unless it is agreed a long time ahead, and a group is travelling.

Recently they have been piloting the use of community transport as helpers. They even use black cabs and minicabs sometimes. All of this costs money. I think the whole thing needs to be looked at, and some of the better private door to door solutions in other parts of the UK should be looked at as guidance.

One of the main complaints about Dial a Ride is that as you need to book you cannot use it spontaneously, and indeed one needs to be very careful about any of the transport options from two points of view. First they say none of them is a guaranteed booking, so theatre trips or say going to catch a coach, train or plane is a bad thing to use any of them for. Also one has to watch how many trips one has left for Taxicard. There are currently no limits on Dial a Ride but its so hit and miss its hard to use it.

To me any system that is flexible by using budgets also needs to include some solution to the vexed question of hospital and gp transport. At present GPs often rely on voluntary care schemes, which are struggling and it seems every hospital has its own transport company, sometimes more than one resulting in outpatients hanging about at hospitals.

It would be much better if you could use door-to-door transport you were familiar with such as a local private hire company, get a receipt after the trip and send it to the

hospital who would then credit your budget. It would mean the patient could simply ring up and come home reducing stress time. The problem of hospital and GP transport is also that despite guidelines on how to vet people for eligibility the trusts do it all kind of different ways and the first referral is done by your GP or referring doctor and then the hospital should do it automatically, but of course never do so leaving you to check and do it anyway.

At present going to hospital appointments using Taxicard is forbidden, though of course people tend to still do it by saying the address is just around the corner instead.

Case Study 4
Female Age 57
Male Age 86
Southwark

I am visually impaired and my father has reduced mobility and a visual impairment. We both use door to door transport. I mainly use Dial-a-ride and my father uses the Taxicard scheme, which he finds reliable.

Door-to-door transport is important in the winter as I can't see as well when its dark and I feel more vulnerable. I will use my Taxicard to go shopping.

My father uses it for hospital appointments. He will not use hospital transport because of being left in waiting rooms for a long time when he is in pain. My father's personal expense for taxis is around twenty pounds per month. He uses all of his nine trips a month, and does not get enough journeys for his needs. This stops him going out socially because he relies on taxis to go out. Sometimes the taxi drivers he gets are not always very helpful with guiding him. Taxi companies exist to make profit and they want people in and out of cabs as quickly as possible.

Despite not always being able to book, I find Dial-a-ride really good. The buses are big and the foundation of the service is good. The drivers are qualified and very good at guiding, and helping people with limited mobility. They will knock on your door and help you back as well. The booking system needs refining.

If door to door transport was of a consistent high quality I think people would be happier to pay towards it.

What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

It depends on the person's needs and their ability to manage a budget. I know managing a budget would be an issue for my father, and I don't have the time to do the extra paper work. If it was easy to use this would not be a problem.

The budget needs to be properly means tested and people will need to given enough for their needs.

Some people could be pressured to use it for friends and family.

How would introducing personal budgets affect the financial efficiency of door-to-door services?

I am not sure. I don't think it would change.

How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?

I think the quality service would stay the same. The quality of the service is hit-and-miss for door-to-door transport. I am not sure how personal budgets would improve this.

What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment?

They may not be able to manage the budgets, and they may spend it all.

To what extent would implementing personal budgets rely on greater integration of service provision than currently exists?

It would be good to integrate door to door services so you are able to find a mode of transport to get you to where you need to be, on time without a long wait.

**Case Study 5
SEND Personal Budget Coordinator
Kingston Centre for Independent Living**

I am the personal budget broker for young people with Special Needs and Disabilities in the boroughs of Kingston upon Thames and Richmond upon Thames. Prior to this role I brokered personal budgets for adults with disabilities in Kingston.

My role involves supporting people to take on a personal budget and working with them to plan how they will utilise and manage the funding. Transport budgets have been undertaken by several families within Kingston and Richmond and can be very useful.

What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

The main advantages of a personal budget, is that it allows the service user choice and control over how they access their services. Transport can be tailored to meet individual needs and can make accessing the community easier for some.

Disadvantages will often result because of challenges managing funding. If service users opt to employ staff with their Personal Budget (for instance to help them go shopping) challenges can present if payment runs are delayed or the staff member calls in sick. However if someone choice to give their Personal Budget to a service which provides door to door services the responsibility of being an employer is lessened.

What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment?

Service users with cognitive impairments often struggle to manage their budget and spend it incorrectly, resulting in having to pay back parts of the budget.

What lessons can be learned about personal budgets from their use in other sectors, particularly social care?

People can opt for a managed budget whereby a third party deals with payments with the service user still choosing how the funding is spent, this can be helpful for those who would struggle to manage a Personal Budget. However this service often comes at a cost which is not always met by the council.

One of the main concerns for the door to door service providers is that if current service users opt to take a personal budget and remove the funding from their current allocation, a tipping point will come whereby either service are required to charge their service users (or the council)

Case study 6

Mutual Carers Support Worker Bromley Mencap

Most of my clients have stopped using Taxicard due to high cost and unreliability. A number of them have been let down by taxis they have booked that didn't arrive to take them on their journey. One of my clients, who is blind and was with her daughter with a learning disability, was waiting outside a hospital in very bad weather at night for over an hour, and the cab didn't turn up. This was very distressing for both of them and luckily a passer by helped them and got them a local cab. They are more expensive than getting an ordinary local taxi even with discount. I rang up our local firm and was quoted £13.50 to take my client from her home in Beckenham to The Princess Royal Hospital in Farnborough which is 6.3 miles away. I rang Taxicard and was quoted over £21. I asked why it was so expensive as I thought there was a maximum limit of about £10 and they said that it's because it's not local. Those limits apply only to local journeys. PRUH is our nearest and most local hospital. I asked them to define local and she said "taking her to the shops in the high street would be local."

I went on the Taxicard website which is thoroughly confusing. Nowhere does it say that these prices apply to a local journey. In fact it doesn't explain much at all.

Case Study 7

Male

Age 30

Wandsworth

I am registered blind. I sometimes use Dial-a-ride to get to places as its free, but its hard to get a successful booking and its unreliable. With the Taxicard, I feel like drivers charge extortionate rates and rip you with longer journey's than they should be. Even with the Taxicard discount. There is also a lack of information from the Comcab office.

I mainly use Uber as it is cheaper. The waiting time for Uber Access is too long, which is a shame because the drivers for the standard Uber bookings are often unable to guide or support people with disabilities. Many people with sensory impairments and limited mobility that I know will not use Uber because of this.

I get 52 Taxicard trips a year which is not enough. I spent on average £50 to £80 a month out of my pocket on door to door transport.

What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

For a visually impaired person its really difficult to deal with paper work and receipts. Not everyone has someone to help them.

The benefit of a personal budget could be that I might get more journeys out it, if I was given adequate funding. I would have more control over which taxi companies I used.

How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?

I think the service would stay the same

What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment?

Dealing with the paper work, and spending the budget wisely.

To what extent would implementing personal budgets rely on greater integration of service provision than currently exists?

Integration of services would be better. I would use Dial-a-ride a lot more if it was better. I have been told by other people it was a better service when people paid for it.

Case Study 9

Male

Age 49

Lewisham

I am visually impaired and I use a Taxicard and Dial-a-ride. I use Dial-a-ride as much as I can and I really like it, but I can't always get the booking I want. I can only book two journeys in advance which means that I can't make good use of it. I like that it is free because door to door transport is expensive.

I also use Access Lewisham. I was on a waiting list for Capital Call, but was refused because Lewisham has dial a ride and the taxi card scheme. I spend about £30 to £40 pounds a month on taxis.

My taxi card swipes are yearly allowance from April to April. I have only one swipe left with three months until my allowance is renewed. I do not get given enough swipes for my needs.

I find the waiting times for Comcab to be good. However on occasion, particularly Sundays I have had to wait for two hours for my cab to arrive.

Door to door transport is vital to me so I can get out and about.

What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

The advantage would be that you could get transport whenever you liked by using a local taxi firm. If not enough money was given for a budget, it would mean people would not be able to benefit from it. However, you can't get a personal service from local taxi firms. Most can't guide visually impaired people. They do not have enough wheelchair accessible cabs, and they would not be able to help someone with a learning disability or dementia like Dial-a-ride can. I would not want Dial a ride to be cut in favour of this despite the improvements which the service needs.

Being given a personal budget may impact other benefits which people with disabilities need to live on.

I can't see the benefits of having a personal budget for transport.

How would introducing personal budgets affect the financial efficiency of door-to-door services?

It would not make any difference.

How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?

I can't see how the quality of service would change.

What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment?

Vulnerable people feel safer using community transport. Some people may not understand how to use their budget.

Case Study 10

Female

Lambeth

I am visually impaired and work and live in London. I use Capital Call and Taxicard. I spend £50 to £100 of my own money on taxis each month. Door to door transport allows me to be independent. The fact that it is subsidised is very important. Comcab is really good in Lambeth as the waiting time is short.

What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

It would be hard to manage the budget.

What would the qualifying criteria be for a personal budget and would a fair amount be given?

There is already a choice of free and subsidised door to door transport services.

I am concerned that this potential change is to cut costs, and will lead to a reduction in subsidised door-to-door transport services. This would not benefit the service users who need it.

How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?

No impact on quality.

The problem with using door-to-door service is the delivery.

What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment?

Managing budgets

To what extent would implementing personal budgets rely on greater integration of service provision than currently exists?

There should be no integration. These services should be kept separately.

Case Study 11

Female

Greenwich

I am visually impaired and I rely on door-to-door transport regularly. I use Taxicard once a week. They are good when they come on time. But at times, I have waited as long as an hour or more for the driver to come and on several occasions I had to cancel and book for ordinary mini cabs.

Unfortunately, Greenwich Borough does not have the Capital Call service. I found that this service was more useful than Taxicard when I lived in Lewisham Borough. Why can't the Capital Call be available for all boroughs? Hope you can raise this question with the people concerned.

I used to use Dial-a-ride, but since I moved to the Mottingham area of Greenwich I haven't been able to get a slot for my booking yet. I don't think much of this service. You can only go to places in your own borough.

What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

It will be fine if you know how to control the budget. People can overspend in the first half of the year and then very little money left in the second half of the year. Some people might have difficulty in looking after their money. I am not keen on the idea of having a personal budget.

End of Document

Transportforall

Accessible transport is our right

London Assembly Transport committee review Personal budgets in Door-to-Door transport

January 2017

Transport for All (TfA) is a pan-London organisation of disabled and older people that champions accessible transport in the capital. We provide specialised advice, information, advocacy and training as well as campaigning and lobbying on transport access issues.

We were set up in the late 1980s when the user groups of Dial-A-Ride and Taxicard were amalgamated to form Dial-A-Ride and Taxicard users (DarT). Whilst our remit has broadened to encompass all forms of transport and our name has changed to reflect this; we still maintain a keen interest in London's lifeline Door to Door services and seek to work with commissioners and providers to get the best deal for members.

Introduction:

Over the last decade TfA has been involved in numerous reviews into London's Door to Door services, including the 2009 London Councils review cited in the consultation document. Most recently we gave our views on the Social Needs Transport Review conducted by Transport for London (TfL). The recommendations of the later are currently being acted on and therefore the publication of yet another review has been somewhat puzzling.

Nevertheless the motivation to make Door to Door service more effective and joined up is one which we very much share – however this must not be at the cost of funding and quality of the services. Above all with a public transport system making slow progress when it comes to accessibility – Door to Door services remain a lifeline accessible option for many Disabled and Older Londoners. Any changes to the services that currently exist must be to enhance provision and increase options and opportunity to travel.

1. What would be the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing personal travel budgets in door-to-door services?

2. How would introducing personal budgets affect the financial efficiency of door-to-door services?

TfA is not convinced that introducing personal travel budgets would have any advantages when it comes to Door to Door transport services.

We believe that it would be very difficult to price each of the different modes and that the comparative prices could mean the end of services like Dial-A-Ride which would be more expensive than say a PHV operator. The pricing of services in this way does not reflect the specialist nature of services and their enhanced service offer. TfA would also be very concerned that any introduction of personal budgets could mean the privatisation of services and lead to a post code lottery of service provision.

Lastly introducing such a system would be costly to implement and also require significant investment in its operation. In addition robust monitoring would be needed against fraudulent use. We believe that this investment should be spent on directly improving service quality and reach.

3. How would introducing personal budgets affect the quality of service received by service users?

We cannot see any way that personal budgets would enhance services.

4. To what extent do door-to-door service users want to be able to use a personal budget for these services?

TfA has not been approached by any of our members or supporters asking for personal budgets for Door to Door services.

5. What are the challenges of personal budgets for more vulnerable service users, such as those with a cognitive impairment, and how could these be overcome?

Whilst not all Disabled people with cognitive impairments are 'vulnerable' we believe that there are many challenges in introducing personal budgets for Disabled and Older users. Firstly the responsibility shifts from TfL as London's transport authority to provide services to Disabled and Older Londoners to the individual to 'buy' services. At a time when access to benefits and social care has been made very difficult this would add another burden on Disabled and Older Londoners that would be grossly unfair.

Also if the system is made any more complex it could simply make it unusable for many.

6. What lessons can be learned about personal budgets from their use in other sectors, particularly social care?

The main lessons would be that personalisation should not be used to make cost savings and that people need access to good support and advice services to empower them to make the right decisions.

7. Are there any other cities that have introduced personal budgets for door-to-door services? What lessons have been learned?

None that we are aware of.

8. What would be the main challenges of implementing personal budgets in door-to-door services, and how could these be addressed?

Please see answers above.

9. To what extent would implementing personal budgets rely on greater integration of service provision than currently exists?

The integration of existing services would be a necessary pre-requisite before the implementation of any personal budget system.

10. To what extent would providing all service users with a personal budget increase demand for services, including from those who currently use services infrequently?

TfA fears that moving to a personal budget system would probably lead to dramatic flux in demand seasonally; weekly and through the day. This could lead to the demise of services like Dial-A-Ride which we would be vehemently against.

11. To what extent would the introduction of personal budgets affect usage of bus-based services like Dial-a-Ride and community transport?

There seems to be an assumption that people would prefer to use a taxi rather than bus-based services. We do not agree that this is necessarily true.

Conclusion

TfA is against the introduction of personal budgets for Door to Door transport. We believe that the energy and focus should be on the integration of existing services reducing the bureaucracy by having one application process, form and booking number and finding a way to integrate patient transport services. As mentioned above however enhancing and expanding the reach of these services should be the aim.

Ultimately rather than personal budgets, London's lifeline Door to Door transport services needs increased ring fenced funding that reflects the crucial role they play in enabling Disabled and Older people to remain active and independent. With an ageing society this should be a definite priority.

UBER

Submission to Transport Committee Investigation: Personal budgets in door-to-door transport services

January 2016

Summary

Uber strongly supports proposals to introduce personal budgets in door to door transport services. The lack of existing personal budgets significantly limits consumer choice for disabled people. This reduces competition between transport operators who provide door-to-door services and results in poor overall provision of services - at high financial cost to both disabled people and the taxpayer.

The current inflexibility of subsidised door-to-door and kerb-to-kerb transport offered by TfL also means that technological developments - which can be potentially transformative for disabled people - cannot be easily utilised. It is notable that despite rapid advancement in the prevalence of transport booking smartphone apps - and the utility of specific accessibility functions such as *VoiceOver* *IoS* and *Google TalkBack* - TfL's transport options are still mostly analogue phone-based services.

In addition, this inflexibility also limits disabled people's access to new transport options like Uber's award winning¹ *uberWAV* and *uberASSIST* products. Despite well over 2 million Londoners now regularly using Uber's app to book private hire vehicles and travel around the Capital, the current door-to-door transport policy precludes a disabled person from using these options to make a subsidised journey.

We believe introducing personal budgets would allow disabled people to shop around and decide for themselves the type of service that best suits their needs and lifestyle. This would increase choice for disabled consumers and encourage private transport providers to invest in services designed for disabled people. In this way, the power of the 'purple pound' could be better leveraged to improve door-to-door transport and deliver greater financial efficiency for TfL, taxpayers and disabled people.

Disabled people already face significant difficulty accessing much of London's transport network. There are far fewer transport options available for a disabled person travelling in London than for a non-disabled person making the same point-to-point journey. Transport subsidies should therefore seek to increase, not restrict, the number of available transport options - enhancing an individual's ability to travel in the way that best suits them.

¹

<http://www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/media-centre/newsletter/members/november-2016/winners-of-2016-disability-smart-awards-announced/>

Offering personal travel budgets is an important step towards this goal and Uber looks forward to continuing our work and investment to support this aim.

Background

Uber is a technology business which allows people to tap a button and book a safe and affordable private hire journey from a fully licensed driver in over 20 towns and cities across the UK. Globally we serve over 400 cities across more than 70 countries.

At the heart of our business is a long term goal to facilitate convenient and reliable transport at an affordable price for everyone, everywhere. This means ensuring every person within the cities we operate is able to access our app and book a licensed vehicle when they need one, no matter where they live, their level of income or whether or not they have a disability or access need.

Facilitating high quality and affordable door-to-door transport for disabled people is a vital part of this mission. Although existing transport services in London often provide a good service - and are invaluable to many - it is well recognised that disabled people still face significant challenges when travelling around the city.

We believe the Uber app - and the transport options offered through it - can have a significant impact in overcoming these challenges and improving travel options for disabled people.

In order to deliver this impact, we have a number of features and products designed specifically to make it easier for disabled people to access affordable and high quality private hire services.

VoiceOver iOS

The Uber app is designed to [work seamlessly](#) with Apple's VoiceOver iOS technology. This allows blind and partially sighted users of the Uber app to enable a feature on their phone which verbally runs through the options they can select on each screen of their iPhone.

When booking a vehicle using Uber, this technology means that prior to a journey, users can open the Uber app, set the location for pick up, choose the type of vehicle they want and receive a price estimate using sound only. Once they've ordered a vehicle, users are read the name of their driver, vehicle model and registration plate, and an estimation of how long it will take the car to arrive. Verbal updates are also given as the vehicle approaches the user's location and when the car arrives.

At the end of their journey, riders can use the same technique to receive an audio readout of their journey summary and rate their driver out of five stars.

In addition, the latest Uber rider app is also fully integrated with Siri - Apple's voice command tool. This means blind or partially sighted users can now request a car by simply speaking a command to their iPhone.

Together, these features make Uber one of the most accessible ways of booking a private hire vehicle for people who are blind or partially sighted.

uberASSIST

Launched in October 2015, [uberASSIST](#) is a service that offers people with a disability or access need the opportunity to book a vehicle driven by an Uber Partner who has completed a specifically designed Disability Equality Training course. This training is developed and delivered by Transport for All and Inclusion London - two prominent London based disability organisations.

When a passenger requests an uberASSIST journey, uberASSIST partners are alerted that they are going to collect someone who may require additional assistance getting into the vehicle. As with all Uber journeys, a passenger can book a car through their app and wait safely inside their home or office until the vehicle arrives. As uberASSIST partners know they're collecting someone with a specific access need, they will park the car safely and get out to assist their passenger enter the car.

uberWAV

Launched in May 2016, [uberWAV](#) is Uber's award winning wheelchair accessible product. It offers wheelchair users in London the option of booking a fully wheelchair accessible private hire vehicle through the Uber app at the push of a button. Each vehicle (of which around 80 are currently available through the app) is equipped with a rear entry ramp, winch and four point floor restraints. This allows wheelchair users to travel safely and in comfort, facing forwards throughout the journey.

uberWAV journeys are always priced at the same level as uberX - Uber's cheapest private vehicle option. This ensures wheelchair users are never subject to price discrimination, and because every uberWAV journey is booked through the Uber app, wheelchair users can see exactly when their vehicle is arriving, what route they are taking whilst on the trip and a summary of their journey, including price, when they have been dropped off at their location.

uberWAV vehicles are driven by some of the highest customer rated Uber partners in London. Every partner has opted into the service and has received Disability Equality Training from Transport for All and Inclusion London, as well as practical advice in operating their vehicle.

Prior to the launch of uberWAV, wheelchair users in London often reported difficulty in booking a wheelchair accessible private hire vehicle without a number of hours notice and much negotiation over the phone. Since uberWAV launched, thousands of wheelchair users have made journeys using the service and the average wait time between booking a vehicle and it arriving at the pick up location is under 15 minutes. This represents a transformative change in the type of private hire services available to wheelchair users in the Capital.

In November 2016, the contribution uberWAV has made to lowering costs and improving convenience for disabled people was recognised by the Business Disability Forum, which awarded Uber with the 'Extra Costs Award' at their Disability-Smart Awards.

Personal travel budgets; increasing the quality, availability and financial efficiency of door-to-door services

Introducing personalised travel budgets in door-to-door services will give disabled people greater choice in how they travel. This will help create a bigger market for these services and encourage operators to invest in door-to-door transport - increasing the range of quality travel options available to disabled people.

Under the current system of subsidised door-to-door travel, disabled people often have to rely on poor or unreliable services, or good services at very high prices. This is largely due to the limited number of transport options disabled people can choose from in order to access their transport subsidy.

As disabled consumers are not able to spend their subsidy on innovative, high quality transport options such as uberWAV or uberASSIST, new operators are disincentivised from developing new door-to-door services. Existing subsidised options also have limited incentive to improve their offering.

In the case of entirely publicly subsidised services - such as Dial-a-Ride - there could even be an incentive to reduce the number of people served in order to limit financial exposure. This limits choice for disabled people and depresses the overall quality of available transport.

With regard to taxi and private hire services, this limited choice reduces the availability of transport for disabled people and significantly raises the costs they face.

For non-disabled consumers, the two tier licensing distinction between taxi and private vehicles gives choice between street hailed black taxis - a premium service available mainly in Zones 1-2 - and a pre-booked and usually lower priced private hire vehicle available in all parts of the City. For disabled consumers - however - this choice is reduced as a result of existing subsidies being heavily slanted towards travel in taxis through the taxicard scheme².

This disincentivises private hire operators from investing in door-to-door transport services as it's difficult to compete commercially with a subsidised service. As a result, private hire companies are often reluctant to invest in innovative door-to-door services or accessible vehicles. Prior to the launch of uberWAV, anecdotal evidence suggests waiting times of many hours for a wheelchair accessible private hire vehicle were not uncommon.

For journeys in Central London, taxicard members are unlikely to have a problem travelling by black taxi. For journeys outside of Zones 1-2 - however - Taxicard's reliance on black taxis can result in users either struggling to book a taxi or facing long wait times as a vehicle travels from a significant distance to fulfill a booking. Even in Boroughs where Capital Call is available, a long wait time for an accessible private hire vehicle is still likely.

If the taxicard subsidy was managed directly by the user as part of a personal travel budget, it would be far easier for them to choose between a taxi or private hire vehicle where appropriate. This would restore the choice that the two tiered taxi and private hire system is intended to provide for consumers - and provides for non-disabled users.

² £11.7m funding for taxicard, in comparison to £460,000 on Capital Call. (2015 figures, Social Needs Transport Review, <https://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s51404/Appendix%201%20-%20Social%20Needs%20Transport.pdf>)

In addition, the taxicard system means members are often forced to travel in one of the most expensive forms of personal transport in London. As the standard taxicard subsidy is around £10 and a number of councils do not allow 'double swiping', this results in disabled passengers having to pay a significant amount above and beyond their taxicard subsidy. In these cases, a private hire vehicle booked through uberWAV - which is on average at least 30% cheaper than a black taxi³ - would likely represent better value for a disabled consumer. Again - however - the lack of flexibility in the taxicard system denies disabled people this choice.

In terms of both value and availability, taxicard members would therefore be better served by a scheme that gives them greater control over when and how to spend their subsidy for taxi and private hire journeys.

Introducing personal budgets more widely will give disabled people not only greater control, but greater independence in spending their travel subsidy. This will give disabled people closer to the level of choice enjoyed by non-disabled people travelling in London and encourage transport operators to compete for their business. If existing subsidies were transferred to personal budgets, disabled people would have in excess of £45million of transport subsidy⁴ alone to spend on services - an attractive market for any transport operator.

This would likely raise the quality and availability of door-to-door transport services. It would also allow disabled consumers to make better use of technological developments - such as the rise of app based services - without having to wait for TfL provided services to utilise these advancements.

At present, although online booking platforms are available for some services, the majority of social needs transport is provided through phone booking systems. Few services, if any, are provided through smartphone apps despite there being many disabled people who may find it easier to book a journey through an app rather than phoning a call centre.

In addition, many young disabled people are increasingly reliant on their smartphones for increased and improved access to a wide range of products and services that were previously unavailable. For this group of people, not having a smartphone app that allows door-to-door transport booking is likely to be a barrier to accessing these types of services. When app based services are widely available and so frequently used by non-disabled people, it seems unfair to limit disabled people's opportunity to spend their travel subsidy easily using this method of booking.

With personal travel budgets, disabled people could choose the booking method (app, phone, online etc) which suits them best. This would also save money as existing publicly funded services would not need to make urgent investments in app development.

Introducing personal travel budgets - thus increasing the number of transport options recipients of these budgets can spend their subsidy on - is also likely to help improve the financial efficiency of door-to-door travel. As a larger number of options become available, disabled people will be able to shop around to get the best price for the journey they want to make. This should allow the existing level of subsidy to cover more travel on a mile by mile basis. It may also result in lower demand for free bus based services like Dial-a-Ride or community transport as greater numbers of users access cheaper journeys via other transport

³ Based on Aldgate East to Waterloo Station: £7-10 in an uberWAV, £15.29 in a black taxi. (Sources: <https://www.uber.com/en-GB/fare-estimate/>, <https://www.taxifarefinder.com/>)

⁴ Based on 2015 figures assuming Taxicard and Dial-a-Ride subsidies are personalised - *Social Needs Transport Review*.

options. This could be beneficial as bus based services could then be re-focussed to purely serve people who have few other options for travel.

In addition, by allowing disabled people to spend their personal budget with a wider range of transport operators, the existing expensive administrative burden on TfL, London Councils and the Boroughs, could be reduced.

In the USA, Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) has recently sought to explore this possibility by launching a year long pilot with ridesharing companies like Uber and Lyft to provide 'paratransit' services to local residents⁵. Over time, this is likely to significantly reduce the MBTA's costs as a greater number of journeys are provided by Lyft and Uber.

Overcoming the challenges of introducing personal budgets

The most significant risk in introducing personal travel budgets would likely be the danger that by allowing users to access a greater number of transport options, services could become fragmented. In a worst case scenario, this could make the new system difficult for some disabled people to navigate and choose their best option.

This risk should however be seen in the context of the current system's weaknesses. More than two million journeys a year are made through Taxicard, Dial-a-Ride, Capital Call and a large network of travel mentoring and community transport schemes. Each of these transport options has its own booking system, rules, and procedures, and costs to the user vary widely. For many disabled people, the current system is already hard to use, inconvenient and often does not meet their specific need. For someone who has recently become disabled, or recently become eligible for travel subsidies through a TfL funded scheme, understanding the system is likely to be a challenge.

For private transport operators, there is a clear incentive to make services easily usable by consumers - in this case disabled people. The Uber app - for example - has a range of accessibility functions built in to improve access to transport for disabled people through our app. Without this functionality, uberASSIST and uberWAV would likely be a great deal less popular with disabled consumers and would therefore require higher levels of subsidisation. Assuming this clear business imperative to make services as easy possible to book for disabled people is shared by other operators, it is likely that a post personal budgets range of services would be no harder to access than existing TfL funded options.

⁵ <https://newsroom.uber.com/us-massachusetts/announcing-ubers-partnership-with-the-mbta/>

From: [Manuel Button - Wandsworth Community Transport](#)
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Subject: Attn Richard Berry - Personal Budgets in Door-to-Door services
Date: 06 January 2017 10:03:43

Hi Richard


I know we are meeting on the 19th January in Wandsworth, but a quick overview of my thoughts on this to get in before the official deadline.

- 1 Taxi card has become unfit for purpose. Health and safety changes mean they can't carry most large wheelchairs and especially electric wheelchairs these days. Usage has fallen dramatically as they don't suit most disabled people.
- 2 DAR is fantastic for anyone who wants short regular trips and who is good on the phone, but for most other requirements (eg trips over 5 miles) it doesn't work.
- 3 What is needed is a system with more choice – If you want to use up your yearly travel allowance on some long distance trips, why not! Maybe a daily short trip on an UBER cab might be the cheapest and most convenient solution for you. Or maybe Dial-a-Ride suits you best. Have a list of approved transport suppliers (which could include Community Transports and accessible cab companies) and give people a budget and let them choose what suits them best.
- 4 Surely a system like this could be worked with a personal transport budget and list of approved suppliers?

Very brief and rushed, but a few points to ponder.

Best wishes

Manuel

Manuel Button
Managing Director
Wandsworth Community Transport


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From: [Wingfield, Ian](#)
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Subject: Re: Call for evidence: London Assembly - door to door investigation
Date: 28 December 2016 16:38:36

Dear Samira,

Please find response below:

There is considerable experience of personal budgets in social care and they are very popular with people who have physical disabilities as they afford them considerable choice and control over their lives. However, for many older people and adults with learning disabilities or mental health needs it is a mixed review as they are experienced as putting responsibility for making arrangements with them and often their experience of customer service is negative.

As when personal budgets were introduced in social care, we would recommend that they are offered voluntarily and not forced on people – if they are a real choice for people then we have found that they can empower, enable flexible arrangements that better meet personal needs and choices and can save money.

Regards,

Cllr Ian Wingfield

Cabinet Member for Environment & the Public Realm, Southwark Council, Cabinet Office, 4th Floor (north) 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH
