



## **Inclusive travel:** Motability's learning and innovation

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# More journeys, better lives for disabled people

There are **14.6 million disabled people in the UK** – more than a fifth of the population. Yet disabled people routinely struggle to make the journeys they want to due to inaccessible transport.

**Disabled people tell us that lack of access to transport impacts on every area of their lives; from seeing friends and family to working, with wide-ranging consequences for individuals, the economy and society as a whole.**

Motability, the Charity oversees the Motability Scheme; a car-leasing scheme for disabled people receiving certain mobility benefits from the Government, it is operated by Motability Operations Limited, under contract to Motability. The Motability Scheme offers affordable, worry-free motoring to 630,000 disabled people and their families every year, as well as providing powered wheelchairs and scooters for 18,000 people across the UK.

The Motability Scheme has provided five million vehicles since it began and has changed millions of lives.

## **Our research with Scheme customers shows that:**

- **74%** reported significant or life-changing improvements in their ability to go out since joining the Scheme
- **Customers felt less isolated**, had more freedom and autonomy, and improved confidence and self-esteem than non-customers with cars

However, we know that there is significant unmet need. Right now, an additional 1.2 million disabled people are eligible to use the Scheme. They choose not to join for many reasons; from financial challenges to being worried about being judged by others for having a brand new lease car. Others don't drive or don't live in a household with someone who drives.

Clearly, driving in private cars cannot be the only answer to disabled people's transport needs. As the UK approaches Net Zero in 2050, people are expected to make fewer car journeys. Disabled people will need the same options for public transport and "active travel", such as walking and wheeling, as non-disabled people.

In 2020, Motability launched our innovation programme to better understand disabled people's needs and how transport can evolve to meet them. We now fund research and innovations which seek to make all transport accessible for disabled people, both now and in the future.

Our grant programmes to charities and organisations, launched in April 2022, aim to fund accessible transport provision in communities right now, focusing on the greatest need. Our systems-level innovations aim to build accessibility into all modes of transport in the long term, so that disabled people can make the journeys they want to by road, rail, air and sea.

**This report presents highlights of our current learnings and innovations based on research and broad engagement with disabled people and across the transport and disability sectors carried out since 2019.**

***We are grateful to all of the disabled people and organisations who continue to share their expertise and insight to help us with this work.***

# The transport system is not yet inclusive for disabled people

## What we have found

In 2019, disabled people made 38% fewer journeys than non-disabled people due to poor access to transport. This is known as the “transport accessibility gap”.

- **1 in 5 disabled people** are unable to travel due to the lack of appropriate transport options
- **Disabled people report** two to three times more difficulties when travelling than non-disabled people
- **1 in 4 disabled people** say that negative attitudes from other passengers prevent them from using public transport

Poor access to transport has wide-ranging consequences for individuals, for society and for the UK economy. It contributes to disabled people being twice as likely as non-disabled people to be unemployed, twice as likely to have no qualifications and more than twice as likely to live in poverty.

Research commissioned by Motability revealed that completely closing this “transport accessibility gap” for disabled people in the UK would deliver economic benefits **worth £72.4bn per year**, improving everything from people’s health and wellbeing to their job prospects.

## What we have learned

Inaccessible transport is a well-recognised issue. There are a wide range of public and charitable programmes aimed at addressing specific challenges. However, there has been no improvement in disabled people’s overall access to transport in the last decade.

Our research shows that there is a lack of evidence about what is going wrong, and what works across different modes of transport. Where evidence does exist, we know that it is not necessarily being used to make changes. Disabled people’s needs are very diverse and the transport needs of some groups are even less understood, such as people with mental health problems or learning disabilities.

## What we are doing

### 1 Evidence Centre for inclusive transport

The way we travel is changing. The Government’s Net Zero strategy focuses on reducing car journeys and increasing the use of public transport and “active travel” such as walking and wheeling. Motability believes that this shift must deliver more accessible transport options for disabled people.

In 2023, Motability hopes to launch the world’s first Evidence centre for inclusive transport. The centre will work with disabled people, disabled people’s organisations, researchers, transport providers and policy makers to gather the evidence, understand the problems and work out what needs to change. It will be run by an independent consortium of research,

transport and disability experts, and grant funded by Motability with £20 million over seven years. The centre will focus on delivering “quick wins” – changes transport providers can make now – as well as wide scale systems change so that disabled people in the UK can make the journeys they want to using public transport, private transport and active travel.

### 2 Research grants for charities and organisations

Our research grants fund charities and organisations to develop and expand transport related research that can be freely accessed by all. Funding is available for projects ranging from research to develop a business case for a new product or service, to influencing decision makers

to do something differently. We are awarding grants from £50,000 to £1 million over the next three years.

### 3 Transport scholarship programme

Our scholarship programme offers four people with lived experience of disability the chance to do a funded PhD on accessible transport at Coventry University. Disabled people’s experiences and views are not well-represented or considered when decisions about transport are made. By offering funded research opportunities to disabled people and those with lived experience, we hope to grow diversity in the transport design community so that accessibility is prioritised when planning, designing and improving future transport.

## CASE STUDY

‘I have lost count of the number of times I’ve had difficulties travelling because transport is not accessible to me. This has been traumatic, such as when I have been stranded on platforms due to lifts not working. These experiences have meant I’ve lost confidence and feel very anxious whenever I leave the house.’

## Want to know more?

1. Motability, Transport Accessibility Gap Report, 2022
2. Britain Thinks for Motability, User Research: Transport needs for disabled people, 2020
3. NatCen for Motability, Secondary Analysis of the National Travel Survey (NTS) 2018, 2020
4. NatCen for Motability, Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA): Disability and transport needs, gaps and innovation, 2020

# More than one million disabled drivers will rely on public EV charge points, which are not currently accessible

## What we have found

By 2030, the sale of new petrol and hybrid vehicles will be banned. The switch to electric vehicles (EVs) means that new EV charging infrastructure is needed across the UK. Motability believes that every charge point should be accessible by 2030 so that the UK's transition to Net Zero emissions is fully inclusive.

- **By 2035, there will be 2.7 million** disabled drivers or passengers in the UK
- **Of those, up to 1.35 million** will rely partially or entirely on public charging infrastructure
- **Disabled people face a range of barriers** to charging their EVs – from the lack of space in charging bays, to heavy cables, connectors that are difficult to attach, obstructive bollards, no dropped kerbs or dropped kerbs in the wrong place
- **In July 2022, there were 33,281** charge points at 20,336 locations in the UK. It is unknown how many are accessible.

## What we have learned

Many different stakeholders are responsible for creating EV charging infrastructure – from local councils who often procure charge points, to the manufacturers who make the parts, the installers who put the charge point in the ground, the companies that provide and manage a charging network, and the distribution network operators who supply the energy.

The main challenge cited by industry is that there is no clear understanding of what “accessible” looks like in practice for the diverse range of disabled drivers. This is an international problem – our research suggests that even countries ahead of the UK in transitioning to EVs do not have design standards for accessible charge points.

While many providers are embracing accessibility and looking to learn what they can to improve, there are others who are focused on a narrower group of consumers and are slow to make changes.

## What we are doing

### 1 Accessible charging standard PAS 1899

Motability is directly tackling the lack of information on how to make an EV charge point accessible. Alongside the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) we are sponsoring the British Standards Institution (BSI) to develop what we believe is the world's first accessible charging standard, called PAS 1899. The standard will show everyone involved in procuring, providing and designing charge points how to create an accessible charging experience for people with a wide range of disabilities.

### 2 Design guide

We have grant-funded the charity Designability to create accessible charge point prototypes and design guidance to help bring the standard to life. These will be available for free. The accessible charging standard and design guidance will launch in 2022.



### 3 Stakeholder engagement

The roll-out of infrastructure is accelerating as we approach 2030, and we are working hard to encourage uptake of the accessible charging standard. We are looking at whether there are stronger enforcement measures for the standard we can ask for from the Government as well as from industry. We have worked with more than 100 stakeholders to engage them in our work and the need to make charge points accessible, including carrying out joint research with electricity distribution network operator UK Power Networks.



## Want to know more?

1. UK Power Networks, 2022, Enable
2. Designability and Motability, 2021, Scoping and Discovery Report: EV charging
3. Designability and Motability, 2021, User Engagement Report: Accessible EV Charging
4. Ricardo Consulting for Motability, 2020, Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure for people living with disabilities
5. Research Institute for Disabled Consumers, 2020, Going Electric? Research report into the accessibility of plug-in electric vehicles
6. Zap-Map, 2020, Electric Vehicles Lack Accessibility

## CASE STUDY

‘When unplugging while sitting in a wheelchair you are reaching from a difficult angle (so you cannot use your full strength) and you have to reach up (and I can't hold my hand up for long).’



# Many disabled people would benefit from better door-to-door transport

## What we have found

Community transport is the provision of minibuses and other vehicles to help people make door-to-door journeys, or to travel along set routes. It is usually subsidised and can provide an affordable way to travel for people who do not drive or live in areas with limited public transport.

- **2.8 million disabled people** have no access to a car
- **2.1 million disabled people** need a travel companion to support them to use public transport
- **17% of disabled people** in rural areas do not have a household car, compared with 3% of non-disabled people
- **Disabled people who do not drive often travel less** and rely on friends and family or pay for costly taxi journeys

## What we have learned

Many disabled people told us that door-to-door journeys are their preferred – or only – way to travel. Community transport has the potential to provide many features that disabled people could benefit from, including assistance from drivers. Disabled people told us that they use community transport to shop, stay connected with friends and family, and participate in leisure activities and their communities.

However, the sector is managed locally, often run by volunteers who cannot always provide a consistent service, and is difficult to scale up. Uptake is also low. Disabled people told us that the reasons they do not use community transport include not realising that the service was “meant for them”.

## CASE STUDY

‘[The drivers] are always there to help me. They hold my hand and take me into the shops. They help me if the terrain is dodgy or the pavements are ragged. They carry my bags of shopping and they even bring them into the kitchen.’

## Want to know more?

1. What is Community Transport?
2. The value and potential of community transport for disabled people, Collaborate Research for Motability, 2021
3. Transport needs for disabled people, Britain Thinks for Motability, 2020
4. Secondary analysis of the National Travel Survey, NatCen for Motability, 2020
5. Disabled people’s travel behaviour and attitudes to travel, Department for Transport, 2017

## What we are doing

- 1 **Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS)**  
Motability has partnered with the Community Transport Association and Hampshire County Council to transform the existing training given to minibus drivers. The updated training will be designed with all community transport users in mind, and specifically gives drivers the knowledge and confidence to support disabled people to use their service from door to door.

- 2 **Community Transport Grant Programme**  
In 2022, Motability launched our new Community Transport Grant Programme. The grants will support other charities and organisations to create community transport or expand provision for disabled people in their area. Organisations and charities can apply for grants from £100,000 to £4 million over the next three years.

# Many disabled people face real challenges in getting the right wheelchair

## What we have found

Disabled people can face real challenges getting a wheelchair that suits their needs. There is limited information available to show whether the demand for wheelchairs is being met and whether people are being given a suitable, good quality wheelchair.

- **Despite an 18-week target**, 30% of users have to wait more than six months for an NHS-supplied wheelchair
- **68% of wheelchair users report problems** with their wheelchair, including wheelchairs not being fitted to them properly
- **There is a “postcode lottery”** affecting the availability and quality of wheelchairs, because individual CCGs are able to design their own wheelchair service



## What we have learned

NHS England acknowledges that wheelchair users can find that their activities are “not enhanced, but instead limited by the sub-optimal chairs supplied”. The long waits and issues with fit can lead to people buying their own wheelchairs or turning to charities. Our Wheelchair Economic Study in partnership with the Wheelchair Alliance showed a variety of factors affecting supply, quality and disabled people’s overall experience of their wheelchair. For example, existing guidance on wheelchair commissioning is not mandatory, and there are gaps in regulation for both NHS and private wheelchairs including reporting problems with equipment.

## Want to know more?

1. Wheelchairs Economic Study, Frontier Economics for Motability, 2022
2. Disability and transport needs (Secondary analysis), NatCen for Motability, 2020
3. Transport needs for disabled people, Britain Thinks for Motability, 2020
4. Right Chair Right Time Right Now, NHS Improving Quality, 2014

## What we are doing

### 1 Wheelchair Sector Grant Programme

Charities and social enterprises play an important role in filling some of the gaps in wheelchair provision. In 2022, Motability launched the Wheelchair Sector Grant Programme to support other charities and organisations to expand their access to good quality, affordable wheelchairs. Organisations and charities can apply for grants from £100,000 to £4 million at any point over the next three years.

### 2 Research Grant Programme

In addition, Motability offers the Research Grant Programme for organisations and charities undertaking research around disabled people’s access to travel, which could include wheelchairs. Organisations and charities can apply for grants from £50,000 to £1 million at any point over the next three years.

# What’s next?

The **COVID-19 pandemic** presented challenges for disabled people, including how and when they can make journeys. We are currently researching the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people’s travel behaviours and experiences in the UK.

We continue to look ahead for the best opportunities to innovate more accessible travel for disabled people. For Motability, this means continuing our deep engagement with disabled people, disabled people’s organisations and disability charities to understand transport experiences and needs. It also means innovating in new ways, such

as co-creating solutions directly with disabled transport users. As our learning grows, we are looking forward to engaging national government, local government, and different transport sectors and industries so that disabled people’s needs are prioritised when transport decisions are made.



If you have any questions or ideas, or want to get involved, contact us at [innovation@motability.org.uk](mailto:innovation@motability.org.uk)