

Get on Board 2020:

Making the economic case for “levelling up” inclusive transport



Leonard
Cheshire



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Inclusive transport would make careers and fulfilling work so much more accessible for disabled people, which would mean not just increased spending power, but also increased earning power.



Emma, Birmingham

About Leonard Cheshire

Leonard Cheshire supports individuals to live, learn and earn as independently as they choose, whatever their ability. Led by people with experience of disability, we are at the heart of local life – opening up opportunities, choice and support in communities around the globe.

About the research

Leonard Cheshire commissioned an economic research project from WPI Economics to capture the financial commitment required to fully implement the UK Government's target to achieve inclusive transport by 2030 in Britain, with a focus on making train stations step-free.¹ This analysis builds on our Get on Board campaign for accessible train travel in 2019 and also assesses the evidence on the social and economic benefits that meeting the target would bring.

Between 1 July 2020 – 10 November 2020, Leonard Cheshire conducted in-depth telephone interviews with 20 working age disabled people about their experiences of inaccessible transport, the impact on their personal finances and their engagement with employment.

Executive summary

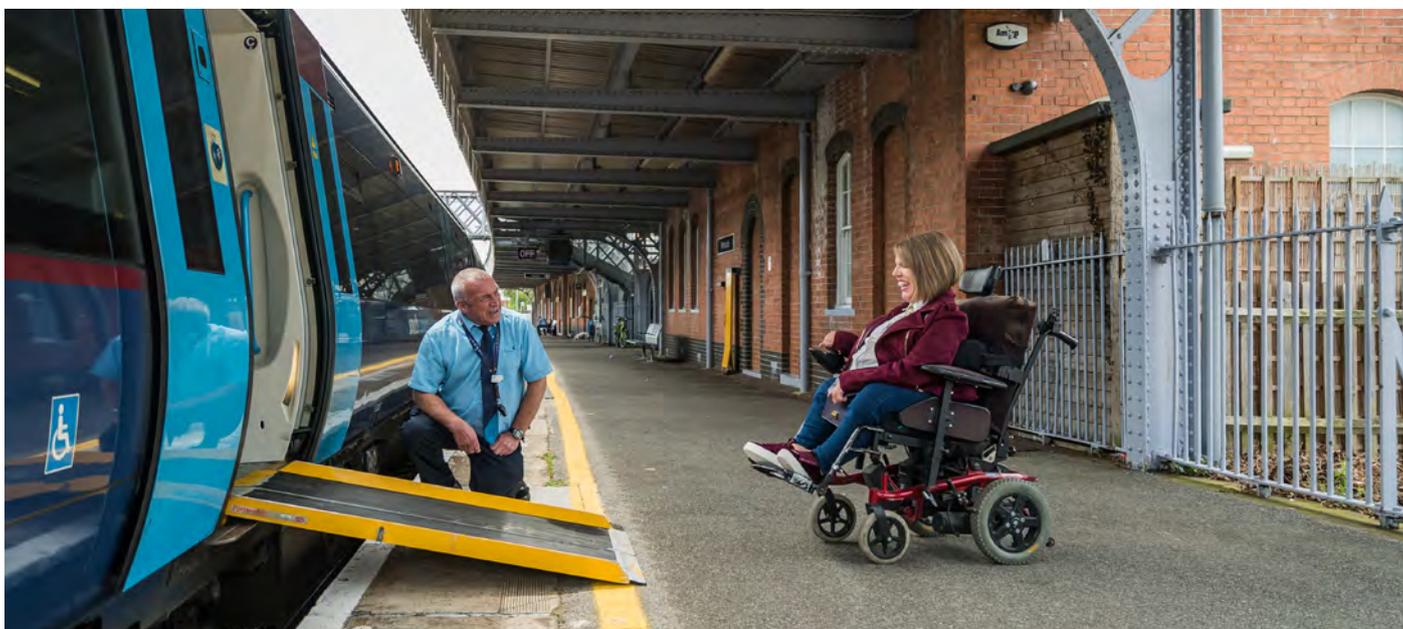
Making transport inclusive for disabled people

Public transport is an essential tool that enables us to participate fully in various parts of our lives – in work, having active and connected social lives and engaging with the wider world. We know, however, that all too often disabled people are left out of the public transport offer. When interacting with the railway network in Britain, disabled people face patchy and inconsistent accessibility and our research shows that 41% of train stations do not have step-free access.² This lack of accessibility leaves many disabled people unable to participate fully in society. The impact of inaccessible transport is far-reaching – extending to every aspect of disabled people’s lives. 22% of disabled people said that inaccessible transport made them feel isolated, 21% said it had a negative impact on their mental health, 18% said they were unable to keep active and 15% said they were unable to go out with family or friends.

In response, Leonard Cheshire launched its Get on Board campaign in December 2019, calling for the Government to enshrine in legislation its commitment to ensuring rail travel – and public transport more widely – is made fully accessible to all by 2030. Inclusive transport is a fundamental right for disabled people that enables people to have full and engaging lives. Accessing public transport

freely is a key mechanism in being able to participate and progress in the workplace. The UK Government must demonstrate real commitment in delivering on its promises – backed by investment and subject to an ongoing review of progress – so that disabled people can live as independently as they choose and seize valuable opportunities in every part of their lives.





The impact on the wider economy

Delivering equal access to public transport would be not only be transformative for the economic empowerment and social lives of many disabled people, but also offers tangible benefits to the UK economy. The new research that we present in this report examines the investment required from the UK Government to deliver a step-free rail network as well as indicating the substantial economic benefits involved. We analyse the impact of inaccessible public transport on employment. We also illustrate the barriers it creates, holding disabled people back from participating and progressing in the workplace.

Working with WPI Economics, we have developed an economic model that presents the estimated costs of accessibility improvements. We have found that the total cost of making the entire railway network step-free to platform level would be between £2bn and £6bn, with a central estimate of £4bn. We estimate that this would amount to just 1–3% of total transport capital investment between now and 2030. Compared to other rail infrastructure projects, e.g. High Speed 2 (HS2) and wider transport spending more generally, making train travel accessible involves a significantly lower financial commitment.³ Furthermore, our analysis shows a fully accessible rail system could:

- Help around 51,000 people with work-limiting disabilities into employment⁴ (24,000 of whom are actively seeking work and 27,000 of whom say they

would like to work), leading to benefits such as:

- Offering the Exchequer benefits of £450 million per year.⁵
- Delivering an economic output (GVA) boost of £1.3 billion.⁶
- Increase the well-being of those who gain employment.⁷
- Help around 85,000 employed people with work-limiting disabilities into a new job. As there are significant earnings and productivity benefits to employees gaining new jobs, it is reasonable to expect further positive outcomes in increased earnings and an additional economic boost.⁸
- Help a further 43,500 unemployed people and 115,000 employed people to attend an interview that may lead to a new job.

It is clear that the current funding framework of Access for All – the central source of government funding for accessibility improvements to train stations⁹ – is not sufficiently addressing disabled people’s needs. Adapting the network to be physically accessible is taking too long; at the current rate of progress, disabled people will have to wait until 2070 for the railway network to have full step-free access in Britain.¹⁰ In this report we seek to improve understanding of the impact of inaccessible transport on disabled people’s lives and their ability to participate fully in employment. It is unacceptable for disabled people to be expected to put their lives on hold; the UK Government must put in place a legally binding duty for all train journeys in Britain to be fully accessible by 2030, backed by sufficient funding and a clear implementation plan.

Unequal access to trains – and other forms of public transport – often denies disabled people the freedom to engage fully in work. Public transport that fails to be inclusive of disabled people’s needs means that individuals can face additional delays to arriving at their destination

with considerable and wide-ranging impact on their access to the workplace. Contending with these obstacles often creates an overall deterrent to using the railway network. It causes stress and anxiety when worrying about what potential problems are likely to emerge on a journey.

We also know that disabled people can face obstacles in train travel that go beyond physical accessibility, and at every stage of their train journey. Alongside the economic research and analysis, we also present findings from 20 interviews undertaken by Leonard Cheshire in summer and autumn 2020 with a diverse group of disabled people – across working age and living in various regions in England, Scotland and Wales. Our interviews show that accessible methods of booking tickets, live information on route, audio-visual provision, sufficient staffing at stations and better staff training are clearly all-important elements that must also be put in place. It is essential that disabled people can have confidence that they will be treated equally and be able to access their rights when travelling.

“

As a disabled person, I know that the system doesn’t go the way it’s supposed to. I make sure to have info on my rights saved on my phone to refer to so that I can stand up for myself and tell people what I need.

”

Emma, Birmingham

Levelling up equally

Our research shows that the level of spending required to make train travel accessible is affordable for the UK Government and will generate economic benefits for individuals as well as significant dividends for the UK Exchequer.

We also demonstrate that inclusive transport is not just a rights issue but should be central to the UK's economic recovery. It has been the Prime Minister's stated aim to "unite and level up", to strengthen national infrastructure and better connect resource with economic opportunity. This commitment has been renewed in the context of the ongoing pandemic.¹¹ The UK Government has also announced a new £4bn "Levelling up" fund with the potential

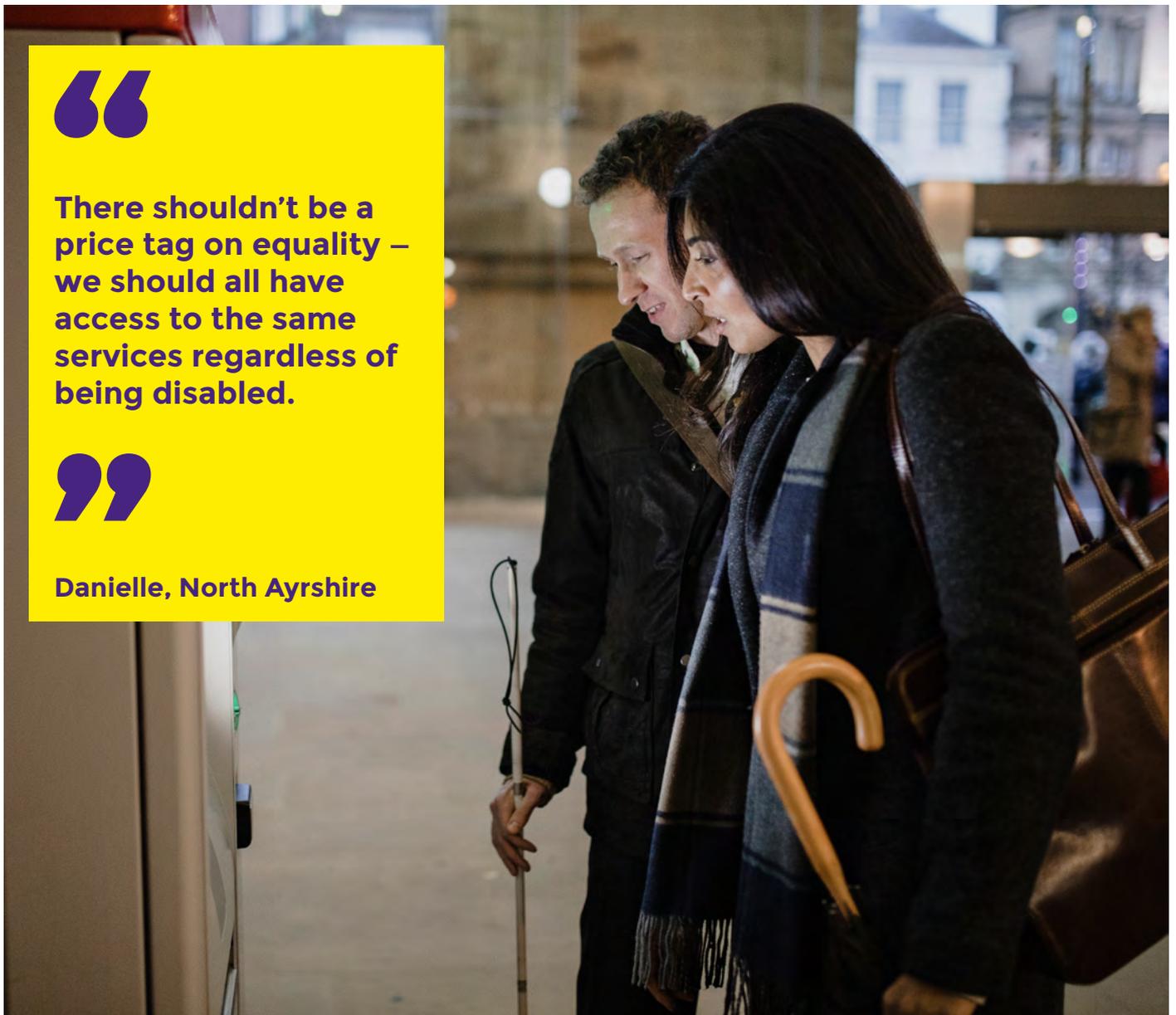
for infrastructure investment. Along with the National Transport Strategy and a new £2bn funding pot for the rail industry announced in the Spending Review, these infrastructure programmes must establish meaningful progress on accessible train travel as a priority.¹² It is critically important that the UK Government addresses the needs of disabled people in their plans to level up economic opportunity across the country.

“

There shouldn't be a price tag on equality – we should all have access to the same services regardless of being disabled.

”

Danielle, North Ayrshire



The change we are calling for from the UK Government

1. Put in place a legally binding duty for all train journeys in Britain to be fully accessible by 2030, backed by a sufficient funding and implementation plan.

- Adequate funds must be identified and allocated to ensure that all train stations are made step-free. The UK Government must introduce a sufficient funding package as well as a commitment for future spending until 2030.
- A comprehensive implementation plan and timeline must be established within one year of the

new law being passed that sets out how the 2030 target will be achieved. Binding provisions should be secured by the end of the new parliament so that meaningful progress is made and the Government is accountable to its commitments.

- The implementation plan should identify the responsibilities held by each main component of the rail system to deliver the target, with a clear timeline. The plan should be fully aligned with the National Infrastructure Strategy and the “Levelling up” agenda.



2. Renew the Public Sector Equality Duty with a focus on affirming the rights of disabled people to live independently.

Principles of inclusive transport must be firmly established across Government and Train Operating Company standard practice, going beyond “accessibility” considerations to a whole system approach. This includes embedding better inclusive training of station staff and tackling negative attitudes from the wider public.

3. Design public transport services and their delivery based on the experiences of the people that they are intended to serve. Comprehensive and continuous civic engagement with disabled people must be incorporated from the earliest stage when taking forward the findings of the Williams Rail Review.

4. Improve its data practices to better understand – and respond to – current barriers to using the transport network. The research and analysis that we provide in this report presents indicative findings of the economic benefits of making the rail network fully accessible. The Government should develop this data to improve understanding of the additional costs related to being disabled and how public services should address this. This would involve:

- Publishing annual statistics on disabled passenger use of the rail network.
- An audit of train station accessibility based on the experiences of disabled people, ensuring that barriers beyond step-free access are captured.

- The Government’s National Strategy for Disabled People is expected to be released in 2021. This must build on our economic analysis of the links between inclusive transport and participation in employment for disabled people.

5. Ensure that disabled people are able to expect the same standards of treatment as everyone else on their journeys. It is clear from our interviews that accessing the right to use public transport services can be a fraught process. Improving awareness of the rights of disabled people – and how rights are enforced – among passengers and staff is needed.



Contact

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Endnotes

1. The scope of our research data only extends to Britain to reflect the rail structures of Network Rail and so Northern Ireland is not included.
2. Our data analysis of the provision of step-free access in train stations in Britain was compiled using information on the National Rail website as of October 2020.
3. The most recent cost projection of the HS2 project is between £80.7 billion and £88.7 billion. Source: Oakervee Review of HS2 (2019) www.gov.uk/government/publications/oakervee-review-of-hs2
4. The term “work-limiting disability” is based on how the Office for National Statistics refers to their calculation of the number of people who have a long-term disability which affects the kind or amount of work they might do. This phrasing does not follow the social model of disability, as it does not acknowledge that it is the societal barriers that limit the work disabled people can do, not their disability.
5. e.g. Government spending on benefits claims and reduced tax revenue.
6. Gross Value Added, i.e. the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area.
7. Harvard Business Review “Does work make you happy? Evidence from the World Happiness Report”. Available at: hbr.org/2017/03/does-work-make-you-happy-evidence-from-the-world-happiness-report
8. ONS evidence about the pay of people moving jobs. Available at: www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/uksectoraccounts/compendium/economicreview/april2019/analysisofjobchangersandstayers#:~:text=Job%20changers%20moving%20between%20firms,similar%20growth%20to%20each%20other
9. The central objective of Access for All is to improve access to – and within – stations, as well as to all platforms.
10. In the previous phase of the Get on Board campaign in December 2019, we illustrated that it would take until 2070 for Access for All to deliver inclusive train travel. This year’s analysis shows no demonstrative change to this rate and our indicative approximate date remains 2070. For more information on the method we have used see Leonard Cheshire’s Get on Board campaign policy briefing (December 2019). Available at: www.leonardcheshire.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/Get-On-board-policy-briefing.docx
11. See the PM’s New Deal for Britain speech on 30 June 2020 (“We are going to double down on levelling up”). Available at: www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-economy-speech-30-june-2020
12. UK Government, National Infrastructure Strategy, 25 November 2020. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-infrastructure-strategy

Sheffield

12:05

2

Calling at:

First Class towards the rear.

3rd Nottingham

12:24

11:56:34

Platform

2a

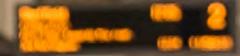


Telephone

Platform 2a

Platform 2b

Customer lounge



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