

Summit Report

Thursday 25th February 2016 20 Cavendish Square, London

Mental Health & Transport Summit Report

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Executive Summary

This Summit marked a new beginning; a beginning of a vital new relationship between the transport industry and everyone who is experiencing or will experience a mental health condition. According to latest statistics over 16 million people every year in the UK are affected by mental health disorders. Yet their difficulties in accessing transport have remained largely unrecognised. But on 25th February 2016, all that was changed as representatives from every mode and strata of transport – providers, regulators, watchdog bodies, policy makers and two Ministers of State – gathered at the Royal College of Nursing to listen to the voices of experience.

Getting us off to an excellent start to the day Alastair Campbell talked about mental health still being in the land of the 'Big C'. We now have a language to talk to each other about cancer but we are still so ill equipped to talk about mental health. Yet there are thousands of people feeling anxious on buses, trains and planes right now! So imagine what a difference you could make as transport providers, he urged, if you decide to take a lead and let people know that you understand.

Members of the Mental Health Action Group talked to delegates about the stark reality of their transport experience and the psychological obstacles they have to overcome. Liese described her experience of a major panic attack at Birmingham New Street station which forced her to abort her journey, Shona talked about her flight to Australia which proved a traumatic experience and left her housebound for many weeks. Both had requested formal assistance in advance of the journey but because their disability is not recognised or understood they did not get the help they needed.

Laura Whitehurst from Anxiety UK told delegates that the impact of not being able to access transport is profound on someone who is trying to recover from a mental health condition. For herself it almost had tragic consequences as her world shrank down to the four walls of her home. If you are deprived of a bus pass, a blue badge and the kind of travel assistance that other disabled people are normally able to access it is extremely hard to overcome the obstacles to recovery. The challenge she gave to the transport industry is to start thinking about 'the ramps' that would make travel possible for this sector of disabled customers.

Time to Change's Employer Manager, Rosie Mckearney, urged transport companies to invest strongly in the mental wellbeing of their own employees. Staff who are encouraged to look after their own mental health and are trained to recognise early

signs of distress will feel equipped to meet the needs of their customers. Transport for London gave some excellent examples of how to build a mentally resilient workforce which can deliver a better customer service and reduce long-term sickness absences.

Minister of State, Andrew Jones, underlined the Transport Department's commitment to closing the gap on mental health. Parity of esteem between physical and mental health is now enshrined in the Health & Social Care Act but there is some catching up to do to make this a reality in transport provision. The Minister urged transport stakeholders to make their pledges to deliver improvements. He too would pledge to include the key recommendations from this Summit in the Department for Transport's Accessibility Action Plan.

Workshops in the afternoon offered delegates the chance to explore potential 'ramps' such as training for customer facing staff, assistance cards, pre-journey orientation sessions, mental health first aiders - all relatively low cost and reasonable adjustments. The climax of the day was the break-out sessions which saw delegates working, across transport modes, to come up with potential transport solutions. Amongst the key recommendations were assistance cards specifically for people with hidden disabilities operated on all transport modes and clear training standards for staff in mental health awareness which equips them to deliver appropriate and empathetic support (See page 24 for all recommendations.)

Justin Tomlinson, Minister for Disabled People, addressing delegates before the panel session, concluded that the Summit represents a great opportunity for the people that he represents but also for the transport industry. Disabled people in this country represent a huge source of customers and revenue and people with mental health conditions are a very large percentage of them!





Foreword from Ann Frye OBE

To describe an event as "ground breaking" sounds clichéd to say the least – but in the context of this Summit I believe that it is entirely justified.

The first huge success was the number of delegates from every side of the transport industries – not just token representation but senior level people who came to listen and to learn – and who stayed all day!

The second success was the outstanding quality and range of speakers and, in particular, those who gave vivid and often painful insights into the realities of living with a mental health condition and what it means when transport providers are ignorant of or unresponsive to your needs.

Above all, the success of the Summit was that it did not stop at simply exposing the issues, it went on to demand commitments to action from all those attending and from the wider transport world.

Of course, the work does not stop there. We need to ensure that the promises made on the day are translated into new policies and practices and better understanding of mental health across the transport industries.

- 1 in 4 of your potential customers will experience a mental health condition at some time in their life
- 1 in 10 of your potential customers is living with a severe and enduring mental health condition

Why a Mental Health & Transport Summit?

In 2011 when the Mental Health Action Group launched its national survey on the transport experiences of people living with a mental health condition we were astonished and very moved by the volume and quality of the responses that came flooding in. As we read through those responses we knew beyond a doubt that the experience of our members in Derbyshire was mirrored right across the UK. Their unanimous plea was for the transport industry to be educated about their needs and difficulties so that they could receive appropriate support as and when needed.

At the same time Anxiety UK were receiving dozens of calls and posts from their members describing the frustration and limitations of not being able to access transport, of not having their needs recognised. Being convinced that this really was a big issue and one which deserved our combined time and energy we formed a partnership which would enable us to deliver this national summit.

Already aware of some small pockets of good practice in parts of the UK, what we really needed was to get all stakeholders to a baseline of understanding and then to raise the bar with some aspirational targets for the whole industry. An opportunity to get mental health firmly on the map across all transport sectors and across providers, regulators, policy makers, umbrella bodies and watchdog bodies was essential. Only this way could we hope to achieve the kind of change that would open up possibilities for thousands of people across the UK to visit friends and family, to participate fully in their community, to seek volunteering and work opportunities and to make the best possible recovery.

All too often mental health sits on the margins of society shrouded in myths and misunderstandings but on 25th February 2016 we finally had the chance to bring it out of the shadows and onto the mainstage of transport provision. That would not have been possible without funding and support from the Department for Transport and additional support from DPTAC, Derbyshire Mind and the Forum of Mobility Centres to whom we extend our sincere appreciation. Our grateful thanks also go to all of our excellent speakers on the day.

Niki Glazier Co-ordinator

NGlazier

Mental Health Action Group

Nicky Lidbetter Chief Executive

Anxiety UK

The Extent of the Problem

Every seven years a comprehensive survey is carried out on the prevalence of mental health conditions in households in England. In the last report, published 2009, one person in every four (23.0 per cent) had at least one psychiatric disorder and 7.2 per cent had two or more disorders. Below is a list of the statistics reported on the more common conditions. It is hard to imagine that these statistics will have improved much in the latest survey results due to be published in Sept 2016.

Depression	2.6 in 100 people
Anxiety	4.7 in 100 people
Mixed anxiety and depression	9.7 in 100 people
Phobias	2.6 in 100 people
OCD	1.3 in 100 people
Panic disorder	1.2 in 100 people
Post-traumatic stress disorder	3.0 in 100 people
Eating disorders	1.6 in 100 people

The presentations by MHAG and Anxiety UK, detailed later in this report, help to explain the debilitating impact that mental health conditions can have; especially when people finds themselves in very crowded, stressful and unfamiliar situations of which transport is a prime example.

Being able to successfully use transport however is one of the key determinants of the extent and speed of a person's recovery from a period of mental ill health.

Being denied the opportunity to travel not only prevents us from participating as equal citizens, it also worsens our mental health condition in a negative spiral of exclusion. Too many of us remain prisoners in our own homes or in supported accommodation. The loneliness and loss of self-worth that results lead us to give up on ourselves and our possibilities. We live without hope for the future.... Any efforts to reduce this cycle of despair and enable us to access work and other opportunities in our communities cannot be successful if we are denied access to the transport necessary to access the opportunities we value.

Rachel Perkins, Chair of Equality 2025

The importance of this should not be underestimated. The longer it takes to recover your confidence to travel, the more entrenched and severe the mental health problems can become. The longer you are out of touch with your colleagues and friends the harder it is to take the necessary steps back to involvement, recreation and employment. A vicious cycle develops and before you know it your whole world has shrunk to the four walls of your house. Imagine then the day when you finally feel well enough and brave enough to walk down the road and catch a bus and imagine the difference the driver's attitude will make to you for better or worse. Will it be the turning point towards recovery or will it send you rushing back home convinced that your goal is unattainable?

Huge numbers of people with mental health conditions find catching buses very difficult, let alone trains, planes and boats. Many have given up completely on one or more transport modes and yet their difficulties have, to date, remained largely unnoticed and unaddressed. This Summit represented the first coming together of the transport industry to listen, to learn and to respond to this wealth of unrealised opportunities, untapped potential and lost revenue.

The Objectives of the Summit were:-

- 1) To deliver a national Summit for transport providers, policy makers, regulators and umbrella bodies
- 2) To create an opportunity for the above stakeholders to understand the difficulties experienced by their customers, and potential customers, with mental health conditions
- 3) To encourage the transport industry as a whole to be more open and accepting of mental health
- 4) To share examples of existing good practice
- 5) To provide opportunity for networking and learning across the transport sectors
- 6) To initiate a Call to Action which spurs the transport industry into delivering a better travel experience for these customers
- 7) To start the conversation on potential transport solutions



Opening Address
Alastair Campbell

When Alastair Campbell had his own experience of mental health problems in the midst of a very high profile career it would have been understandable had he chosen to try and hide it but thankfully for us and for so many others he didn't. He decided to speak out and encourage all of us to do the same.

In his opening address he candidly told delegates how there were not infrequent times during his illness when he found himself having conversations with buses. He talked of the intensity of feeling he experienced as he watched so many other travellers moving around with great purpose and confidence. This, he said, underlined his own sense of disengagement and he reminded us that there are thousands of people feeling anxious on buses, trains and planes right now! The world of public transport can be an intensely lonely and anxiety-provoking experience which is made all the worse because of the taboo which still surrounds mental illness.

Drawing on personal experience of being told as a child not to talk about 'the Big C' Alastair pointed out that mental health is still today in that place of taboo, fear and shame in our society. We have moved so far in our understanding and ability to talk about cancer but we are still ill equipped and ill prepared for conversations about our own and other people's mental health. The stigma and taboo that still surrounds mental illness has a profound effect on public services and what happens to people when they are in distress.

It is not at all uncommon for people's underlying anxieties to come out when they are in a stressful crowded public transport situation. So imagine what a difference you could make as transport providers, he urged, if you decide to take a lead and let people know that you understand. Begin to develop an open attitude and the language and confidence to talk to people in distress, train up mental health first aiders as well as physical first aiders because there are probably more people who are going to need it on any given day. What a big difference that would make and hopefully one day in the not too distant future we will look back and think why on earth didn't we talk about mental health? Why did we think that was the right thing to do, when any sense of logic, any sense of compassion tells us it is fundamentally the wrong thing to do!



First Stop – Panic Station

Suman Gupta & Alex Cope (Mental Health Action Group)

Introduction

Alex and Suman explained how the Mental Health Action Group has had to campaign nationally on transport accessibility because it plays such a vital role in recovery and

maintenance of good mental health. It is a vital link and yet for so many people it is a missing link! They also drew delegate's attention to the fact that whilst they could see their physical problem, because of the walking sticks, they could not see what was going on in their heads. Both speakers explained the number of mental health conditions that they also have to manage in their daily lives. This is the problem that they and so many others with non-visible disabilities face when trying to get assistance with transport.

Bus Travel

The main media presentation featured members of the Group explaining how their mental health conditions affect their ability to access transport. Wendy for example suffers from severe Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) describes how the anxiety of her condition prevented her from getting out of her home. It took her about a year just to be able to go into the garden! So it's not difficult to imagine the challenge of trying to catch a bus. Many people with OCD find public transport extremely difficult because the anxiety of the situation triggers the obsessive thoughts and compulsions.

Shona who has <u>Bi-Polar Disorder</u> describes her first attempt to catch a bus on her own in over 30 years. *Just getting to the bus stop is absolutely exhausting, all the time your head is telling you to turn back.* Having made it to the bus stop and stepped on the bus the first thing you see is the driver and if he/she is intimidating or frightening then that's it, you're off! A friendly and helpful manner from the driver is therefore vital and can mean all the difference between a successful journey and a completely aborted journey. Further difficulties described on buses include having your bus pass challenged and not being allowed to access the disabled seating when you feel unwell, because you happen to have a non-visible disability.

Train Travel

On train travel Liese describes an attempt she made to use passenger assistance. She was told that there wasn't a tick box for her problem and not surprisingly the staff did not give her appropriate assistance. She was left in the middle of Birmingham New

Street in a major panic attack and had to return home, she couldn't complete her journey. Nowadays she only travels familiar journeys – the same time, the same station, if there is any change in routine her confidence would be shattered and if she had to try a new journey she wouldn't feel able to cope without appropriate assistance.

Chris, who has autism, <u>anxiety and depression</u> explains how his difficulties are limiting his travel. He only makes short local journeys these days but would love to travel further afield. For him personal contact with staff is very important for necessary reassurance especially when things go wrong, as they inevitably do sometimes. He finds ticket machines very stressful to use and worries that customers are being expected to depend more and more on machines rather than people.

Air Travel

Shona relates the experience she had of flying to Australia when her mother was dying. She felt let down at every stage of her journey from trying to book assistance in advance to asking for help when things went wrong. An unexpected 9 hour delay at an airport found her desperate for some help but she couldn't get anyone to take her needs seriously. She believes that had her disability been visible she would have been treated quite differently. The impact of this experience when she finally got home was that she was housebound for several weeks and couldn't imagine ever making the flight back again to her native homeland.

Alex who has had <u>Post Traumatic Stress Disorder</u> for many years and is also diagnosed with <u>Borderline Personality Disorder</u> talked about people's misunderstanding of anxiety. When you say you are feeling anxious people seem to react with 'there, there dear, have a cup of tea, you'll be fine'. But it is so much more disabling than that – you can't breathe, you can't think, I feel everyone is against me, they're coming in at me and I need to get out very quickly – it's the flight or fight response. Alex relates an incident when he supported a fellow flyer who was having a severe panic attack onboard. He makes a strong plea for a flexible attitude from staff to allow a passenger in this situation to move seats to somewhere quiet where he/she is not so hemmed in. This may even mean moving them up to Business Class temporarily whilst they recover.

Final comments – we have told you the bad news and it may all sound very negative but today is all about turning the negative into positives. By addressing these issues, training your staff and providing as much care as you hopefully would for someone with a physical or sensory disability you can significantly increase your customer base and your revenue.



All Aboard!

Laura Whitehurst (Anxiety UK)

Laura began by explaining that Anxiety UK are a national organisation based in Manchester which represents the needs of anyone with an anxiety based stress disorder or anxiety based depression. Anxiety disorders is a huge umbrella term that covers anxiety, obsessive

compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, phobias etc.

Laura explained a bit about the physiological causes of anxiety, the fact that it was very helpful to our ancestors when faced with sabre toothed tigers or other cavemen but today of course we don't face those kinds of threats. Instead we experience stress for other, generally, less threatening reasons and our system can unfortunately over react to perceived threats. She described anxiety as being a bit like a smoke alarm; smoke alarms are great when there is a fire but sometimes they go off when you're just making toast! That's what anxiety is like sometimes, it goes off when you're just making toast which can be really difficult and can intensely and severely impact your functionality.

Anxiety UK's interest in transport began with the Blue Badge Scheme with many of their service users and members experiencing direct discrimination because of revisions to benefit criteria. Those who had initially been awarded a blue badge because of their mental health difficulties had the badge taken away unless they were able to prove that they were physically unable to walk. This made a huge difference to their lives with many having to abandon journeys when panic set in and they couldn't find a space near enough to their destination. This presents a big problem when food is needed, jobs are waiting and children need to be collected. The CEO of Anxiety UK, Nicky Lidbetter, credits her Blue Badge with helping her to regain her independence after agoraphobia left her housebound for a very long time. For people like Nicky public transport is an impossibility and now, without a blue badge, personal transport is also very difficult so what is left for them? In Laura's case the answer is £2,324.60 which is the amount she had to pay for taxis over the course of a year when her anxiety was at its worse.

Thera are many others who are having to make major adjustments to their travel arrangements because of their anxiety like a teacher whose 20 minute commute takes him over 2 hours because he can't use the tube or a book publisher who has to leave home an hour early and come home an hour late to avoid a crowded train.

And why is it so important for people with a mental health problem to use public transport? It is quite simply a lifeline, it is often the only means of getting to doctor's appointments, family, friends, therapist etc. For Laura the consequences of not having that lifeline was nearly tragic. She found herself in £2,324.60 of debt, with no job, not able to travel, not able to get her doctor, she became very isolated and depressed and took an attempt on her life.

There are huge numbers of people who are struggling with anxiety like Laura. The options for them in terms of travel are 1) Not travel and become housebound and depressed, 2) Travel but with great difficulty and under serious duress or 3) Be able to travel because some small and inexpensive adjustments have been made for them. The adjustments were talking about today can put an awful lot more people into that 3rd category. So what can be done to help? What would the equivalent 'ramps' be to help someone with a mental health condition to access public transport? Taking the time to understand the particular difficulties experienced and investing in training for your staff from organisations like Anxiety UK can make a big difference.

Laura has had very variable responses to her requests for support from extremely helpful to completely inappropriate. She once asked for help from both an airline and airport and in both cases was offered a wheelchair! How can this be remotely appropriate she asks. Only 8% of people who identify themselves as disabled actually use a wheelchair. But imagine if the same help were provided but without the wheelchair ie support getting through security and queues and being allowed to board the plane either first or last. It isn't difficult and it isn't expensive. A train company told Anxiety UK that they would strongly recommend people who are prone to anxiety and panic 'not to travel with them' because it would cost the company a lot of money to make any unscheduled stops. Imagine a company saying the same thing to someone who was physical disabled or had a learning disability; it just wouldn't happen. So why is there such a lack of parity especially when people aren't even asking for an unscheduled stop but just for some simple inexpensive adjustments?

Laura has managed to get back to using trains and planes thanks to the kindness of a few exceptional members of staff so today let's start to change those exceptions into a standard of care that can be relied upon. You can be the ones to make the difference, to break down the barriers of isolation and discontent, to stop people having to put themselves through hell just to get to work. Reliable help and understanding will result in vast numbers of extra people using your transport through just simple adjustments.

Mind the Gap

Joanna Dean (Mind's Legal Dept)

Joanna ran through the bare minimum compliance standards for transport operators under the Equality Act. The obligations apply when providing a service to anyone who has a long term mental health condition which has a serious impact on their normal day to day activities. Although



these activities are not listed it is clear that travelling would be considered a normal day to day activity so operators need to consider the needs of people with a mental health condition when developing their policies and practices.

<u>Direct discrimination</u> occurs when a person is treated less favourable than another person because of their disability. So you would need to compare the service you give to them with the service you give to someone who does not have a disability. This discrimination can apply to the person's friends and family who may also be affected.

<u>Indirect discrimination</u> whereby because of a company's systems and practices a person with a disability is rendered unable to use their service. Joanna gave the example of someone being unable to book their ticket on-line because of paranoia or anxiety. If the company didn't provide alternative means of booking tickets that person would effectively be discriminated against.

Additionally some organisations such as the Civil Aviation Authority or Transport for London for example have a <u>Public Sector Equality Duty</u>. This is a proactive responsibility to consider the needs of people with disabilities rather than a reactive responsibility. So when developing new policies companies with this duty need to ensure that they take into account the potential impact on people with mental health conditions. This is not a tick box exercise but should be thorough and ensure you have enough evidence about how this group of people are likely to be affected.

Joanna noted that most transport operator websites and publications place a clear emphasis on physical and sensory disabilities. But in terms of making reasonable adjustments you must make it clear to people with a mental health condition that they too can have appropriate assistance. Avoiding heavy use of the wheelchair symbol or images of elderly people for example is very important to make others without visible disabilities feel included as well.



Fixing your own Oxygen Mask before helping Others Rosie McKearney (Time to Change)

Rosie opened her talk by explaining that 'Time to Change' is Britain's most ambitious project aimed at changing public attitudes about mental health. She then invited delegates to take part in an exercise to help them appreciate the impact of stigma. Using 3 scenarios she asked delegates to remain standing if they would feel able to talk about their experience of a mental health problem in each scenario or

sit down if they would not. By the end of these scenarios it is fair to say that most delegates had sat down! A graphic way to portray how stigma, when allowed to exist unchallenged in the workplace, can isolate and erode confidence in your employees.

Since mental health is probably the number one reason for absence in workplaces across Britain it makes sense to get people talking about it and giving them support sooner rather than later. It also makes sense for your customers. *If your workforce can't talk openly about mental health they will struggle to identify signs and symptoms in their customers and to have the courage to step in and offer help.* It is important to get your own house in order first. So what can you actually do to get your workforce talking openly?

3 Top Tips for Reducing Stigma in the Workplace

- 1. <u>Promote mental wellbeing for all staff</u>. This prevents only some people with a diagnosed condition being labelled as 'other' or 'different'. Very important for employees to see senior level buy-in from managers who are prepared to talk openly about mental wellbeing.
- 2. Equip your line managers to feel confident in spotting signs and symptoms and having supportive conversations with their staff. Many line managers are scared to address this issue for fear of treating people differently or simply because they don't know what to say. This leaves staff feeling isolated and unsupported.
- 3. <u>Increase your employees' mental health literacy</u>. The more we know about mental health the better we can support each other and our customers. Some companies have a page on their intranet where staff can go for resources and information if they are struggling or want to help a colleague who is struggling.



Building a Mentally Resilient Workforce

Ben Gatty, Errol Dinnall & Jess Evans (Transport for London)

Ben Gatty, a psychotherapist working within Transport for London's Trauma Support Group, explained how he and his colleagues facilitate the Peer Support Service that TfL provide for their employees. The transport industry and its staff experience a lot of stress and strain these days when dealing with the travelling public particularly when

things goes wrong. Peer-support is built on the premise that when things do go wrong and people experience trauma they find it most helpful in the early stages to be supported by those they know well. TfL has recently been trialling a new form of peer support training called Mental Health First Aid. This is built onto existing approaches and offers staff specific training to help them recognise their own resources and build resilience in themselves and in their colleagues. Effectively they offer each other compassionate support, reaching out to provide a genuine and safe space to talk. If our staff are enabled to help themselves and each other in this way then they are all the better at helping the general public.

Jess Evans spoke about the difference that mental health first aid training has made to her as an employee. She described how it enabled her to help one colleague who she noticed wasn't on her usual form. Although she didn't know the person well the training had given her confidence to open up a conversation. This enabled her colleague to share how she was struggling at work because of her parent's diagnosis of terminal illness. Jess suggested they continue to meet and together they talked about strategies to help her manage her work and her evident emotional stress. The colleague subsequently told Jess that having someone at work to talk to who was not her linemanager had enabled her to continue working when at times this was extremely difficult. This is just one example of the difference that well trained staff who are able to draw on their own resources can make to each other and to the company.

Errol Dinnall, also a psychotherapist with TfL, then offered delegates an opportunity to reflect on what resources are most important to their own mental wellbeing. He encouraged them to take a couple of minutes to share with each other and invited them to notice how they felt when they talked about it. He underlined the importance of companies providing a strong lead in supporting staff to use strengthen their own resources and their ability to self-care.



Notes from the Underground – Making Art out of Anxiety

Sophie Winter (On the Button Theatre)

Sophie was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder a few years ago which manifested itself in a fear of travelling on the tube and on trains. This left her having to cycle from one side of London to the other every day to work, a round trip of some 35 miles. The strain of that meant that her anxiety started to spill into other areas of her life forcing her to seek help.

Sophie found Cognitive Behavioural Therapy very helpful with

her experiences of anxiety but she is aware that many others are still struggling. *The difficulties that people experience can end up dictating other bigger life choices. For example you may feel you cannot live or work in a certain part of London if you cannot use the tube.* It can also add a huge amount of extra time onto your working day as you have to use slower, more circuitous forms of transport. Sophie felt she wanted to something to highlight the problem and being an artist she decided to portray it through theatre.

What Sophie came up with was her Challenge Anneka production. She felt this was particularly apt as Anneka was always able to stay calm despite being thrown some enormous challenges. To Sophie and many others travelling by train and especially by tube, can be an enormous challenge. As part of her preparation for the production Sophie interviewed many people about their own difficulties with transport and these conversations started to inspire the narrative.

In this special episode https://vimeo.com/132811298 Sophie plays Anneka, who has been instructed to travel to Bethnall Green on the tube. Whilst on the tube she is told to observe a particular woman who is clearly feeling very uncomfortable about being there. This woman's experience of course mirrors Sophie's own experiences of anxiety and distress. 'Anneka' describes the physical reactions that she can see going on in the woman's body and clearly perceives the distress that is happening.

Following the screening of this episode of Challenge Anneka delegates were treated to a flying visit from "Anneka" who said she was delighted to help to highlight the problem of anxiety disorders in relation to transport. She encouraged delegates to support the efforts to smash the stigma of mental health and to open up conversations to get it out there in the open. After a couple of selfies with everyone Anneka made her apologies as she rushed off to face her next challenge!



Setting the Satnay - Call to Action

Andrew Jones (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport)

This Summit is the biggest gathering of transport and mental health advocates we've had in this country and my Department is delighted to be supporting it. As a department we have made some good progress with improving transport accessibility for many people with disabilities, for example 90% of buses are now equipped to meet the needs of people with physical health

problems. When it comes to serving people with a mental health condition however transport has some catching up to do.

Transport's problem with mental health is a symptom of the wider society. Across our society and across our economy mental health has not received the same level of attention as physical health. Over the last few years we have made some real progress through the work of mental health charities and through legislation, for example the Government's Health & Social Care Act giving parity of esteem to mental and physical health care. Bit by bit we are breaking down the stigma and misunderstanding that surrounds mental health but now we need that important change to come to the transport sector too. There are some early signs of progress with initiatives such as the Better Journey Card used by First Bus and companies like Virgin Trains working with the Alzheimers Disease Society. But we need to see the industry continuing to take steps to ensure that some of the most vulnerable people in our society have the support they need to access transport.

In the end it is skilled and helpful transport staff who make the biggest difference to passengers. The Government doesn't want to impose a one size fits all approach – it's about knowing your customers and taking action in the most effective way for your sector. So make your pledges, I will make a pledge too – I will incorporate all that I can in an Accessibility Action Plan for all disabled people which my Department is writing and will publish later this year. This summit is not a one day wonder. There will be actions coming out of this summit which will make sure that mental health keeps on rising up the agenda.

Call to Action Areas

- Introducing policies and practices that supports the needs and protect the rights of customers experiencing a mental health condition.
- 2) Training staff to have a positive and supportive attitude towards passengers and colleagues experiencing a mental health condition
- 3) Introducing and advertising assistance and travel initiatives specifically designed for people experiencing a mental health condition; thereby increasing confidence to travel

Signposts to Success – Good Practice Workshops

Delegates were now invited to choose 2 workshops from which to discover potential transport solutions. Options included were:-

1) 'Blue Assist' Scheme

Tom Davidson from Transpennine Express presented the merits of this assistance card for non-visible disabilities. The card, which is specifically designed for non-visible disabilities, offers an alternative symbol to the blue wheelchair sign; thus giving a feeling of



credibility and confidence for the user. Card owners can write on the reverse of the card the kind of assistance they would like. The scheme is designed for use in all service sectors and encourages anyone presented with the card to respond in a positive and helpful way. It is not essential to provide specific training to staff because requests are generally clear and obvious. However, as usual, additional training does help to guarantee better outcomes. *One big advantage of this card is that, if recognised across all transport modes, it would allow the user to simply carry one card throughout the whole journey.*



2) Flying with Confidence

Presenting this workshop and the latest customer care initiatives from Virgin Atlantic was Geraldine Lundy, Passenger Accessibility Manager.

She described how rig visits have enabled customers with severe anxiety and other mental health conditions to make journeys that would otherwise seem

impossible. Being able to book an individual visit to discuss your needs and to experience the upper class and economy cabins can make all the difference. Virgin Atlantic are also currently liaising with Gatwick Airport to enable customers to book an accompanied airport experience as well.

The second crucial aspect of their assistance service is the high quality crew briefings. These are bespoke and ensure that assistance is tailored to individual customer needs. High quality crew briefings give the customer confidence that they will receive appropriate assistance if and when the need arises. It is noticeable that airlines who have invested in special assistance departments are the ones who pass enhanced information to crew and have seen customer satisfaction scores rise.

3) Supporting Anxious Car Drivers

Anuraj Varshney & Ed Passant of the Forum of Mobility Centres

Anu and Ed led this workshop about the initiative they are taking forward at the Mobility Centres to support people who are anxious first drivers or who have become anxious. Research shows that a huge



number of people do give up driving each year. It is highly likely that some of these are making a premature decision because they have lost confidence following an incident or other life change. It may well be possible to support a proportion of these people to stay mobile.

Anu has been looking into joint working with local mental health services in Kent to find the best ways of maintaining people's personal mobility. We have heard a great deal today about the importance of mobility. He has already done some work in the area of dementia which will be affecting so many people in the future. There is great potential for mobility centres around the country to offer support and training sessions that can make all the difference.

Another issue raised by the workshop was the fact that information about help with driving is not always very accessible for the public. Government websites can be quite densely populated and difficult to extract the information that you need. It would be really helpful if this could be improved. One delegate shared the experience of a friend of hers with agoraphobia in trying to take his theory driving test. He needed a slight adjustment to enable him to take it within his geographical comfort zone and it took many phone calls and letters just to establish the fact that he could do that.



4) '1 in 4 People' CPC Accredited Training for Bus Drivers

Jacqueline Poole is a full time trainer at Nottingham City
Transport (NCT) and has been delivering the '1 in 4 People'
training module for bus drivers over the past 3 or 4 months.
She therefore had plenty of experience to share with workshop attendees and was keen to explain how the training material has helped both with customer care and with employee wellbeing.

Drawing on feedback from participants and from her own observations she explained how NCT have adapted the material to suit their own needs and how she has personally witnessed a lot of 'lightbulb moments'. The training features first-hand experience from members of the Mental Health Action Group and shows how relatively small adjustments in attitude and approach can make all the difference. By helping bus drivers to understand the needs and reactions of this sector of disabled people they can be given confidence to offer help when a customer is clearly struggling to complete the journey.

This is the first CPC accredited mental health training for bus drivers and is available from the Confederation of Passenger Transport. A proportion of the sales is donated to the Mental Health Action Group to support its continued work.

5) Airport & Airline Passenger Assistance for Hidden Disabilities

James Fremantle, Consumer Enforcement Manager for the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) explained their recent initiative to improve assistance for people with hidden disabilities. The initiative is based on general agreement that Regulation EC1107/2006 places an obligation on airports to provide assistance to those



passengers with an "intellectual disability or impairment". It is also underpinned by CAA

passenger research which suggests that people with hidden disabilities still lack confidence to travel.

This workshop provided opportunity to gather and share information from airlines and airports about what they currently offer. Some companies have consulted with charities about how to best tailor their service to needs of customers with hidden disabilities but assistance still varies considerably between airports. We all agreed that airlines and airports need to do more to proactively find out about their passengers' particular needs and tailor the assistance to meet these needs. The CAA plan to produce guidance on minimum compliance standards for airports and UK based airlines. This guidance will reflect current good practice and support the drive to deliver consistently high standards of assistance for these customers. Training and a flexible approach will no doubt be key features of this initiative.



6) Mental Health & Employment
Claire Walters, CEO of Bus Users UK, delivered
this workshop offering opportunity for
discussion and reflection on experiences of
mental health issues in the workplace.
Drawing on her prior experience as an
employer Claire discussed the positive benefits
of having an openly supportive environment

and why people with mental health issues can actually make the best employees.

Overarching points coming out of this workshop were:-

- 1) The numbers of individuals managed by people in the transport industry makes it very difficult to know them well enough to spot when somebody's off their game. The option of training up Mental Health First Aiders to support each other seemed a potentially good solution to this problem.
- 2) People lack confidence in how to react when they find somebody in distress. An example that was given was of someone walking into a room and finding an employee in floods of tears most of the men in the workshop agreed they'd be likely to back out quietly without speaking whereas most of the women said they would naturally tend to ask "Can I help"? But then may not be sure how to proceed. Across the board people are genuinely afraid of getting it wrong and making things worse. Good quality training would offer reassurance and confidence to open up conversations.

7) The Customers' Perspective on Good Practice

This workshop, hosted by the Mental Health Action Group, was very well attended showing the importance that transport providers put on this issue. Initial discussions focused on how transport providers could establish the needs of their customers or potential customers. For mental health, this might mean carrying out surveys or



workshops, and the facilitator pointed out that they could refer to MHAG's Transport Report (see related reports page 36) which explores some key issues.

For local advice, it was suggested that providers look to establish close links with mental health groups or charities in their area. This could be done through the local Councils for Voluntary Services (CVS) or NHS organisations. We also looked at how information gleaned from customers could be used to change or modify transport provision at a reasonable cost. MHAG members encouraged delegates to look at user involvement in designing these modifications.

Lastly, delegates discussed how they can keep up to date with customer needs. Regular customer feedback opportunities would be a good source, especially to find out whether customers have seen any appreciable improvement in how their needs were being met. In all, the delegates approached the topic with a great deal of enthusiasm and positivity, which was encouraging. There was a general feeling that a lot could be done to improve things with relatively small amounts of resource and that staff training and attitudes would be the key to success.

Upgrading to First Class Travel

Having heard the Call to Action, and had the opportunity to assimilate some good practice ideas from the workshops, delegates were now asked to come up with some aspirational but achievable recommendations for the Department for Transport and the transport industry as a whole.

Six break out groups bringing together delegates from mixed transport modes worked on the three themes of the Call to Action and each came back with their top two recommendations for achieving the necessary changes. These recommendations were subsequently fed back to a panel of experts.

Delivering the Customer Experience

- Training of front-line staff in mental health awareness to ensure empathy at point of service delivery
- Improvements in information systems so customers experiencing a mental health condition know what support is available for them
- Assistance cards for passengers with hidden disabilities on all modes of transport with corresponding training for staff
- Assistance cards for hidden disabilities that cross over all service sectors
- 'Try before you Ride' opportunities at Mobility Centres around England
- Assistance Ambassadors at transport terminals and modal interchanges

Mental Health in the Workplace

- Mental health first aiders trained up in the workplace as a resource for all employees
- Senior buy-in to workplace culture that encourages employees to talk about mental health in an open and supportive manner

Policy Making and Regulation

- Introduction of clear training standards for hidden disabilities across transport industry
- Thorough and robust consultation with stakeholders to identify needs
- Better use of soft levers such as influence and reputational regulation to drive improvements in performance
- DfT to embed these recommendations into their Accessibility Action Plan providing clear mandate for operators and regulators



Justin Tomlinson, Minister for Disabled People

Justin opened by saying that it was a real pleasure for him to be at the Summit and he was very impressed to see the 'great and the good of the transport industry' in attendance. This event represents a great opportunity he said for the people that I represent but also for you as businesses. Disabled people in this country have a combined spending power of 212 Billion Pounds and with mental health being the largest sector of disabled

people that is a lot of potential customers and revenue.

The Prime Minister has pledged the Government to halve the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people. That means helping around about a million people back into work. In order to help achieve this it has launched the Disability Confident Campaign to encourage businesses to tap into this lost potential. Around 50% of people currently on Employment and Support Allowance have a mental or behavioural disorder as their primary condition. The Fit for Work scheme, particularly helpful for small to medium size businesses, enables both the employee and the employer to get advice on how to help someone who has developed a condition to remain in work. It is far easier, he stated, to avoid long term unemployment when the right interventions are made early on. Justin thanked delegates for all that they are already doing to help disabled customers and employees and for all that they will do in the future.

Panel Responses to Recommendations

Panel Members: Philip Rutnam - Permanent Secretary at the Department for Transport

Niki Glazier & Suman Gupta - Mental Health Action Group

Laura Whitehurst - Anxiety UK

Steve Gooding - Director of RAC Foundation

Philip Rutnam led the panel responses congratulating delegates on a fantastic array of ideas and stating that he hoped this event would be part of a continuing conversation across his own Department, with regulators and within the industry itself. He pointed to the upcoming Accessibility Action Plan from the DfT and that this Summit has proved a great opportunity to generate and harvest ideas to be included in the plan. He encouraged delegates to keep generating ideas and sharing them with his Department and with each other. He also talked about his other role as the civil service champion for employees with disabilities. Mental health is a really big issue for the civil service as it is for any other employer, large or small, but they have started to see tremendous energy

for change just by starting conversations which normalise mental health. He pointed to the synergy between making improvements for our customers and also for our own employees.



Laura Whitehurst agreed that the ideas were excellent and particularly liked the idea of an assistance card for people with hidden disabilities. Speaking for herself she said she would definitely feel empowered to ask for help by using such a card, particularly as it so discreet. The training that would go with the introduction of an assistance card is the other very important

thing for Laura. The combination of these two initiatives would certainly improve confidence to travel and encourage so many of their members to use transport.

Suman Gupta said how heartened she was at all the fantastic interest that delegates were showing and the ideas that were coming out. She pointed out that it was the culmination of a very long journey for MHAG and she felt overwhelmed in a positive sense that the day had been so productive.

Steve Gooding from the RAC Foundation said the Summit has really been something of an eye opener for him even though he knew roughly what to expect it has been even better! Travel and the ability to get around is so important to people's independence and if we're talking about people who in some way are struggling to lead an independent life then denying them access to transport is just about the worst thing you can do. Steve said he had been spurred to think about drivers – there are some 37 million people holding driving licenses in the UK which means that somewhere between 8 and 12 million people are likely to be experiencing some form of mental health problems. One of the actions he will be taking back to the Foundation is what should we be doing about that?

Niki Glazier, MHAG co-ordinator, said firstly how encouraging it was to see virtually a full house still at 4.30pm and thanked delegates for their commitment in spending the day with us. It feels as though everyone has heard what we've been saying today and have caught the vision so we pass the baton on to you and ask you to continue coming up with these inspiring initiatives that will make all the difference.

"A tipping point has been reached on transport and mental health with a conference that for the transport sector has moved the issue from the margins to the mainstream" Jonathan Bray (Urban Transport group)

The call for a National Assistance Card with a standard national design recognisable across every transport modes was raised by delegates during the panel session. This would probably require Government leadership and backing to implement it. One of the big advantages of this would be that far more cards would appear and many more people would become aware of it achieving a snowball effect. Whereas at that moment there is relatively little knowledge and therefore little use of such cards.

Blue Assist is an excellent example of a card that could be used by people with hidden disabilities not only on transport but within any service sector (see page 19 for more details on this scheme).

Philip Rutnam was asked to respond to this suggestion and said that on the face of it this seems like a very sensible idea. However these things are always more difficult to implement than one first thinks so it is something that the Department for Transport will need to give careful consideration to. The idea has been noted!

Niki Glazier and Laura Whitehurst gave strong backing to this call for a national assistance card. The benefit of having an easily recognised card with associated training cannot be under estimated. Laura gave the example from Anxiety UK that after they had provided training for staff at the London Eye on looking after anxious customers and had advertised it via social media loads of their members turned up to enjoy it. Economic as well as social benefit! Niki pointed out that journeys often involve more than one transport mode and for the customer it is so much easier to have just one card to use; after all it is the customer experience that has to be of highest concern.

Closing Remarks – Ann Frye

In delivering her summing up Ann reminded all delegates to sign the call to action so that this day will not be a one off but will be the start of a genuine process of change. She stated that we have heard a lot about the need for parity of esteem today. Mental health has for so long been not just a poor relation but a completely locked away in the turret relation! So it is excellent today to see it coming out into the open and being recognised and addressed.

Staff have a huge responsibility and huge potential to make people feel more confident. These staff need to be empowered to take sensible actions for example giving someone a free cup of tea even if their airline normally charges, allowing someone to move seats etc. So training is vital and so is empathy. The mental wellbeing of transport staff who face the travelling public every day has been clearly highlighted as an important issue. Support from senior management and empathy towards colleagues and the travelling public will go a long way to achieving the change we all want.

She hopes that transport companies and the Department for Transport will take away other practical ideas as well such as a national assistance card.

Finally, it is clear from the fact that this event has taken place and been sponsored and supported by the Department for Transport that the Government is open and receptive, it is listening and sees the need for action. The Call to Action has been repeated by both the Ministers today. We now need to make sure that the momentum is maintained from today, maybe we should re-convene in a year's time to see what's happen, what's gone forward. We need to ensure that this doesn't become another well-meaning day but that it is genuinely the beginning of a process of positive change, engaging with people with mental health conditions and giving them confidence to travel wherever they wish to.

Call to Action Statements from Companies

At the end of the day delegates were invited to complete their own personal Call to Action statements. These statements were intended for the individual's own reference and were taken away from the event for that purpose.



At the same time, delegates were invited to sign their specific company up as agreeing to take action against any or all of the Call to Action areas. This was only possible on the day for those delegates with very senior authority within their company. Three company statements and one Ministerial statement were completed immediately on the day.

For many delegates it was necessary to take the learning and call to action back to their company and seek buy-in at the necessary level of authority. This process takes time but between the date of the Summit and the time of completing this Report, a period of about 8 weeks, we are delighted to have received the following Call to Action statements. We are also aware that a number of companies are still discussing pledges at a senior and sometimes national level. This is extremely encouraging and we hope to bring you news of these in due course. For the time being we thank you for demonstrating that you have heard this representative voice of people all over the United Kingdom living with a mental health condition and you are willing to take positive action.

Action Area 1 Introducing policies and practices that support the needs and protect the rights of customers experiencing a mental health condition.

"I will take the pledges made today back to the Department for Transport and ensure that we make real progress supporting the needs of people with mental health conditions"

Andrew Jones, Under Secretary of State for Transport

"Virgin Atlantic is committed to enhancing accessibility in all areas. We are aware that this is especially important in the field of hidden disabilities such as mental / emotional health issues. Our Passenger Accessibility Manager will continue to work with experts in this area to ensure we become an even more mental health aware and friendly airline. We strive to maintain the safety, dignity and comfort of customers with hidden disabilities at every stage of their travel experience – from planning their journey to arriving at their destination".

"The TAS Partnership works to make passenger transport accessible for everyone. We will introduce policies and practices that support the needs and protect the rights of customers and staff experiencing a mental health condition.

We will encourage our clients, especially transport operators and local authorities, to adopt policies and practices that help passengers with mental health conditions to better communicate their needs and which enable employees to respond in a courteous and effective manner."

"Continue the work of my staff and board working group on a strategy for Bus Users to enable us to make a practical and effective 'Time to Change' pledge"

Bus Users UK

"We will, as a responsible employer and a member of the communities we serve, embed values that support diversity, inclusion and respect for all.

We will conduct regular reviews and foster a positive working environment where employees are able to raise issues with their line manager and will continue to provide staff access to a free confidential helpline counselling services. "

The Go Ahead Group

"The Urban Transport Group is not customer facing but in terms of our internal organisation we will arrange for an expert speaker on mental health to present to our Board and/or a meeting of our organisational development group. We will also sign up to the 'Time to Change' Pledge".

Urban Transport Group

"We will introduce a policy to ensure that people with mental health conditions understand what help and support they can expect from us"

Blackpool Transport Services

"We will train managers to be caring in their approach towards managing staff and promote a culture of empathy throughout the company. An anonymous support line for staff will also be provided."

Stagecoach Bus

"We will ensure we make much more use of our large scale qualitative surveys of transport user satisfaction to identify any issues of particular concern to users experiencing mental health conditions. Evidence is power!"

Transport Focus

Action Area 2 Training staff to have a positive and supportive attitude towards passengers and colleagues experiencing a mental health

"Ensure my Department's Accessibility Action Plan will reflect the importance of training staff and improving mental health awareness"

Andrew Jones, Under Secretary of State for Transport

"We will engage people who have experience of dealing with mental health issues to help us implement training and support programme for customers and employees"

Blackpool Transport

"We will provide our own staff with training so that they have a better appreciation of mental health conditions and can support colleagues experiencing mental health conditions."

The TAS Partnership

"We will ensure all customer-facing staff have disability awareness training, including awareness of mental health issues, at the start of their employment and throughout their employment with us. We will work with disability and other stakeholder groups to ensure the training given is relevant and in line with current guidelines

We will continue our work with Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Friends initiative to provide training on what we can do to support people to continue to travel on public transport.

The Samaritans will be one of our keynote speakers at our annual management conference this year – attended by directors of all our bus and rail subsidiary companies"

The Go Ahead Group

"We have circulated the slides and a note of the recent Summit to our staff and board. We will soon discuss what extra we can do for staff to help identify colleagues who might be suffering from mental health issues and support them." "We will include specific education on mental health within training modules for all driving staff as part of our induction and ongoing CPC training and support with ad-hoc poster campaigns to staff."

Stagecoach Bus

Action Area 3 Introducing and advertising assistance and travel initiatives specifically designed for people experiencing a mental health

"Work with DPTAC to promote initiatives across the transport sectors to make it accessible for all in our communities"

Andrew Jones, Under Secretary of State for Transport

"We will introduce a customer policy which gives people with a mental health issues assurance of how to access assistance with their travel needs" **Blackpool Transport**

> "Ensure that we promote any and all assistance initiatives on our social media feeds and throughout passenger events"

Bus Users UK

"We will support initiatives such as the Confederation of Passenger Transport's Journey Assistance scheme and also rail industry initiatives. We will, together with Network Rail and other industry partners such as Samaritans promote support services through employee training and advertising at stations.

We will hold 'try a train' events to encourage physically disabled people and those with mental health conditions to use train services.

We will review our operating company websites to ensure they are easy to navigate and easy to find information that all people - including those with mental health issues – need to buy tickets and make travelling by bus and train as accessible as possible."

The Go Ahead Group

"To improve the information, communication and awareness of travel choices and work to increase confidence and lessen the anxiety of our customers and potential customers whilst planning a journey and using our services"

First Manchester

We will engage locally with user groups and mental health groups by attending meetings and presenting information designed at breaking down barriers to using the bus."

Stagecoach Bus

"The Civil Aviation Authority, in its role as protector of the rights of disabled people in the UK, wants to ensure airports and airlines do more to help people with "hidden disabilities" such as mental health issues, autism and dementia. To this end we have launched a consultation with all stakeholders and will be issuing guidance later this year.

There will not be a "one size fits all" solution as people's needs can vary significantly. There is therefore room for flexibility in the way airports and airlines design the service. Some people might want to be easily identifiable so that they can be given appropriate attention at particular pinch points such as the security search area, whilst others may need to be guided through the airport by staff (so may require assistance in the same way as a PRM with a "physical" disability). Others might just want help on board an aircraft – a suitable seat, perhaps, or even just some comfort that cabin crew are trained sufficiently to recognise and emphasise with a particular disability should the need arise.

What we will not accept is for airports and airlines to do nothing. We hope over time as a result of our initiative, people with "hidden disabilities" will find air travel a little less painful and for some, they will be able to take a journey that previously they might not have been able to manage. "

Further Information available at the following organisations:-

Anxiety UK

Tel: 0161 2267727

https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/

Blue Assist

Tel: 01273 906221

http://www.blueassistuk.org.uk/

Derbyshire Mind (Mental Health First Aid training)

Tel: 01332 345966 x 2

http://www.derbyshiremind.org.uk/training-2/

Mental Health Action Group

Tel: 01332 345966 x1 http://www.mhag.co.uk

Mental Health First Aid

http://mhfaengland.org/getting-started/who-it/

Mind

Tel: 020 8519 2122

http://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/

On the Button Theatre Productions

http://onthebuttontheatre.org/

Time to Change

Tel: 020 8215 2356

http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/

Other related reports:

http://www.derbyshiremind.org.uk/pdf/MHPublicTransportReport.pdf

http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB02931/adul-psyc-morb-res-hou-sur-eng-2007-rep.pdf

Sound Bites from the Summit can be found at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WWXEHZTQgE