



# Job access schemes

## - Transport initiatives for supporting jobseekers into employment

Briefing

**77% of jobseekers in British cities outside London do not have regular access to a vehicle**

Public transport is vital in enabling people to find, and sustain, employment. One of the first considerations when embarking on a job search is 'where can I get to?' Transport plays a major role in the decision making process about whether to apply for, accept or stay in employment.

This briefing looks at job access schemes for supporting this decision making process and enabling people to overcome transport barriers to employment. It also considers how the core elements of these schemes can be secured, supported and extended.

### What are job access schemes?

Job access schemes help unemployed people into work by removing transport barriers. Barriers might include, for example, the cost of travelling to interviews or a new job; lack of awareness of public transport options or shifting travel and employment patterns that take jobseekers outside of their local area in the search for work.

Through transport authority-led partnerships, these transport initiatives seek to overcome these barriers by offering:

- **Travel advice and personalised journey planning**, often via Jobcentre Plus, to enable people to get to interviews or new jobs (which may be in unfamiliar places).
- **Free or discounted tickets and passes** to reach these opportunities, including during the first crucial weeks of a new job when money can be particularly tight.

We refer to schemes that offer these two elements as job access schemes, as the name given to such schemes may vary between areas, 'Workwise' is one such example.

These job access schemes are highly adaptable, meaning that different areas may choose to build in additional elements such as cheap bike hire, travel buddies or demand responsive transport to employment sites, according to local need.

### Why are job access schemes needed?

Around 40% of jobseekers say that a lack of personal transport, or poor public transport, is a key barrier preventing them from getting a job<sup>1</sup>. Some 77% of jobseekers in British cities outside London do not have regular access to a car, van or motorbike<sup>2</sup>. Almost 60% do not have a full car or motorbike driving licence<sup>3</sup>. Consequently, compared to all individuals aged 16 or over, people who have never worked or are long-term unemployed, are considerably less likely to make trips as a car driver and more likely to make trips on foot, as a car passenger or by bus<sup>4</sup>.

Most job opportunities are likely to be further than walking distance away, especially as jobseekers are required to apply for, and take up, job opportunities that involve up to a 90 minute journey. Many jobseekers rely on public transport, and the bus in particular, to reach these opportunities.

<sup>1</sup> Social Inclusion Unit (2003) Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion.

<sup>2</sup> Institute for Transport Studies (2013) Buses and the Economy II: Survey of bus use amongst the unemployed.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Department for Transport, National Travel Survey, table NTS0708.



One in four people say their job search is inhibited by the cost of travel

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### Why are job access schemes needed?

Job access schemes help to broaden travel horizons, giving people the information and personalised advice they need to understand how to get to places using public transport, be reassured that they will arrive on time and have the confidence to look for work further afield.

*"I had a customer a few years back who had applied for a job in Oldbury and he nearly didn't go for the job because he didn't think it was feasible for him to get there. After I had gone through a journey plan with him he realised he could get to the job within 40 minutes."*

WorkWise West Midlands stakeholder

These schemes also help tackle the perceived cost of travelling by public transport. One in four people say their job search is inhibited by the cost of travel to interviews<sup>5</sup>.

*"Paying £4 a day for bus fare when you're on benefits and you're trying to look for work. It is a bit hard...you've got to have bus fare to get to the Jobcentre and then have whatever other appointments you've got and getting that all done on that little bit of money can be a real struggle for a lot of people."*

Jobseeker, Bristol

Furthermore, with most wages now paid monthly, it can be difficult to make ends meet between starting a new job and the first wage packet, a situation not helped by above inflation fare rises and confusing fare structures outside London.

Job access schemes help by guiding people through the maze of tickets and passes and by providing free or discounted travel to interviews and during those first 'make or break' weeks of a new job.

*"My customer started work for a cleaning company...The bus pass has been a great financial incentive as she was struggling to cope with paying dinner money for children, rent and council tax whilst waiting for her first working tax credit payment. She came into the office to say it had really helped her stay in her job."*

Jobcentre Plus Advisor, West Yorkshire

In addition to the core elements of these transport initiatives, some schemes also include further support such as free reconditioned bikes or low cost scooter loans to enable customers to reach job opportunities in places, or at times, that are not well served by public transport.

A study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation of urban labour markets and potential candidates for low skilled vacancies found that whilst 70-90% of unfilled jobs were easily accessible by car, only 35-55% could be reached within 30 minutes by public transport<sup>6</sup>. Where public transport does run, it tends to be structured around 'traditional' nine-to-five working hours, which can make accessing shift work difficult. In these circumstances, access to an affordable bike or scooter can enable jobseekers to access these opportunities.

<sup>5</sup> Social Inclusion Unit (2003) Making the Connections: Final report on Transport and Social Inclusion.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2012) The challenges for disadvantaged young people seeking work.



## Job access schemes are a tried-and-tested approach

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*"...getting the scooter was very important to me – there were just no buses that could have got me to work on time and having been out of work for over a year, I was desperate to accept the job."*

Jobseeker, South Yorkshire

### Job access schemes in action

The largest and longest running job access scheme WorkWise is led by **Transport for West Midlands**, and covers the entire Metropolitan area.

Since 2003, it has helped around 30,000 people to access work and over 12,000 people to attend job interviews. Follow-up surveys consistently show that over 70% of people who find jobs with assistance from WorkWise are still employed and nine out of ten are still using sustainable transport modes to get to work. Around half of those using the scheme say that they could not have taken up jobs without it. Over 90% believe the support has made a 'significant impact on their lives'. An independent evaluation of the Smart Network Smarter Choices Programme found WorkWise saved around £4.7 million in Jobseekers Allowance payments over three years. Transport for West Midlands are now working with bus operators in the region to offer enhanced discounts for job seekers entering employment, which will enable 5,000 unemployed people to access WorkWise support in 2017/18.

In common with results from the West Midlands scheme, half of jobseekers receiving free bus tickets in **Bristol and the West of England** said that they would not otherwise have been able to make their journey to training, interviews, careers fairs or new employment.

Travel Choices, a job access scheme led by **Transport for Greater Manchester**, has supported over 20,000 jobseekers back into work with free travel tickets, journey planning advice, recycled bikes and training for advisors<sup>7</sup>.

The inclusion of a cycling element has proven valuable. Over 2,000 bikes have been recycled through the scheme and are offered to eligible Jobcentre Plus customers who have gained employment. The bikes come with equipment and free training. Some 68% of recipients agreed or strongly agreed that they could not have reached their current employment without the recycled bike<sup>8</sup>.

The Greater Manchester scheme has provided training to over 300 frontline Jobcentre Plus and partner organisation staff to enable them to provide comprehensive personalised journey planning advice to their customers. The training equips advisors to become 'Travel Champions' who can cascade their knowledge to colleagues.

<sup>7</sup> Delivering Active Travel and Travel Choices, report to Greater Manchester Combined Authority 28/11/14.

<sup>8</sup> Active Travel and Travel Choices Update, report to Greater Manchester Combined Authority 15/07/15.



**This approach  
could help extend  
the benefits of  
these transport  
initiatives to  
jobseekers  
nationwide**

## Job access schemes

### Next steps for job access schemes

Job access schemes give people the confidence to widen their job search net and ensures that they can seize opportunities that arise thanks to tailored journey planning advice and help with travel costs when they need it most. It offers a tried-and-tested approach demonstrating impressive benefits and value for money.

Currently, job access schemes tend to be funded by transport authorities themselves or through time-limited funding streams. Funding cuts have hit transport authority revenue budgets particularly hard and have meant that many valuable schemes have had to close or be reduced in scope.

Given the benefits job access schemes bring in overcoming transport barriers to employment, we would like to see greater financial backing for this kind of jobseeker support from the departments and agencies that stand to benefit most from the savings generated.

As a starting point, we propose that the Department for Work and Pensions, in partnership with the Department for Transport, conduct an appraisal of the effectiveness and value for money of providing various forms of transport support for jobseekers compared to other support for this group. It should include a review of existing travel concessions available to jobseekers across the country and explore the potential for a new nationwide offer.

The review should consider how any such offer can build on existing initiatives; be implemented so as not to lead to unintended consequences for the overall level of bus service provision; and is adequately funded.

Furthermore, we believe that personalised journey planning advice should be available to all jobseekers. Jobcentre Plus now has more flexibility and choice over what support to offer to customers. Job access schemes should be a key component of the toolkit available to Jobcentre Plus managers to help customers overcome transport barriers to work. As is the case in Greater Manchester, training for advisors can be provided by transport authorities, utilising their knowledge of local transport networks. Those trained Jobcentre Plus advisors could then be supported to become 'Travel Champions' cascading their knowledge to colleagues, and thereby helping the training become self-sustaining.

This could be supported by improved tools to help jobseekers help themselves. For example, the Government's Universal Jobmatch vacancy listing service could be updated to provide transport options, journey times and mapping for each vacancy based on the jobseeker's location.

These actions could provide a starting point for extending the benefits of job access schemes to jobseekers nationwide, ensuring that they are not held back from finding and sustaining work by the costs of travel or by unnecessarily limited travel horizons. In turn, providing this support could save money for the public purse in reducing benefit claims and improving economic productivity.