



Shared Intelligence

Connected Futures Evaluation Report

Produced by Oxfordshire Community
Rail Partnership, with support from
Shared Intelligence

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Executive summary

Connected Futures was developed by Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership (OxCRP) in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council Public Health to explore how practical travel confidence support can improve independent mobility, access to opportunities and wellbeing for care-experienced young people and unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people. The programme engaged 27 young people across three cohorts through workshops, supported rail journeys and reflective sessions.

The evaluation demonstrates that independent mobility is a key enabler of access to employment, education, services, social connections and community participation. For young people facing multiple disadvantages, mobility can influence access to opportunities that support independence, wellbeing and inclusion.

A key finding is that mobility barriers are not experienced uniformly. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people were more likely to face practical challenges such as language barriers and unfamiliarity with the transport system, whereas care-experienced young people more commonly reported anxiety, confidence and personal safety concerns. These findings suggest that future provision should be tailored to differing needs rather than adopting a single delivery model.

The evaluation also found that travel confidence is most effective when linked to meaningful opportunities. The strongest outcomes emerged where travel was connected to employability, volunteering, learning and community participation. Young people were most engaged when mobility helped them access activities and aspirations that mattered to them.

Beyond transport outcomes, the programme generated evidence of wider benefits relating to confidence, social connection, wellbeing and agency. Participants reported increased confidence, stronger relationships, greater willingness to try new experiences and a growing belief that opportunities were within reach. For some, simply participating in activities they might previously have avoided represented a significant achievement.

The findings also highlight the importance of trusted relationships and existing support networks. Cohorts delivered through organisations with established engagement structures achieved stronger participation and retention, suggesting that mobility interventions are most effective when embedded within wider support systems.

From a public health perspective, the evaluation suggests that independent mobility should be recognised as both a wider determinant of health and a preventative intervention. Mobility influences access to opportunities, support services and social participation, and may therefore play an important role in addressing social exclusion and health inequalities.

From a transport planning perspective, independent mobility should be viewed as a core component of transport accessibility alongside infrastructure and service provision. Barriers to travel were often shaped by confidence, personal safety, access to information, affordability and the ability to navigate unfamiliar environments. The findings highlight opportunities to strengthen user-centred

accessibility, improve access to concessionary travel schemes and use lived experience to inform more inclusive transport environments.

Finally, the evaluation identified a gap between supporting young people to become independent and providing opportunities to practise independence in real-world settings. Many organisations support young people with employability, education and independent living but lack the capacity to deliver practical travel experiences. Connected Futures demonstrates the value of Community Rail Partnerships and delivery partners working together to bridge this gap through specialist mobility support, partnership working and integrated pathways to opportunity.