Enabling access for people with mental impairments

Roger Mackett

Centre for Transport Studies

University College London

Great Britain

Email: r.mackett@ucl.ac.uk

Why look at mental health?

According to the Health Survey of England 2014:

- 26% of all adults in England have been diagnosed with one or more mental illnesses

- A further 18% say they have experienced a mental illness without being diagnosed

Effects of mental health conditions include:

- Lack of self-confidence

- Difficulty making decisions

- Panic attacks

The survey on mental health and travel

- Carried out at UCL using Opinio software
- On-line survey with link distributed by 17 organisations plus 3 individuals
- 42 questions covering the characteristics of the respondents, bus travel, rail travel, walking, cycling and driving
- Carried out in May, June and July 2018
- 385 useable responses received

The mental health of the respondents

Mental health condition	% of respondents with this condition
Anxiety	90
Depression	68
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	22
Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)	18
Agoraphobia	14
Bipolar disorder	8
Other	22

Number of responses: 385
Average number of conditions per respondent: 2.6

Causes of anxiety when travelling

	% of respondents
What other people think about me	69%
Feeling out of control	67%
Having to mix with strangers	67%
Feeling claustrophobic and unable to escape	58%
How other people behave	52%
Feeling disorientated	48%
Failure of the bus, train or car	47%
Having to talk to staff such as bus drivers	46%
Finding suitable toilet facilities	40%
Getting lost	39%
Having to take decisions about where to go	37%
Not being able to obtain help	35%
Remembering where I am going to	20%
Using ticket machines	18%
Handling money	14%
Something else	14%
Total	99%

Causes of anxiety when travelling

	% of respondents
What other people think about me	69%
Having to mix with strangers	67%
How other people behave	52%
Having to talk to staff such as bus drivers	46%
Having to take decisions about where to go	37%
Remembering where I am going to	20%
Feeling disorientated	48%
Getting lost	39%
Failure of the bus, train or car	47%
Finding suitable toilet facilities	40%
Using ticket machines	18%
Handling money	14%
Feeling out of control	67%
Feeling claustrophobic and unable to escape	58%
Not being able to obtain help	35%
Something else	14%
Total	99%

What can be done?

- Increase the confidence of the traveller:

    – Travel training

- Improve communication with staff

    – Staff training

    – Travel assistance cards

Source: Alzheimer's Society

- Improve the attitudes and behaviour of other people

    – Campaigns

    – Schemes like 'Please offer me a seat'
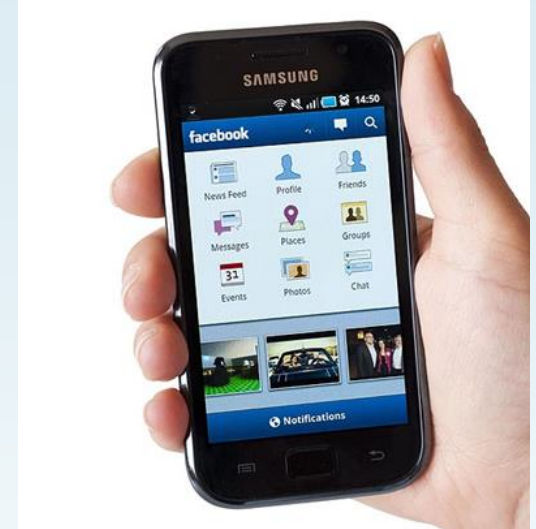

Source: Transport for London

What can be done to improve wayfinding?

- Use of mobile phone apps
- Clearer maps and timetables
- Clearer signposting
- AVI (audio-visual information) on buses and trains
- Safe Places to help people who become lost

What can transport operators do to help?

- Better information when the system fails
- Better design of ticket machines
- Simplified procedures for handling money
- More toilet facilities

Conclusions

- Many people have a mental health condition
- Many of them become anxious when travelling
- Two of the main causes of anxiety are interactions with other people and wayfinding
- Transport operators could do much to reduce anxiety for they passengers through staff training, providing better information and better design of some facilities