

Case Study 8: York Independent Living Travel Scheme

Knowing Our Communities

There are 3,427 students placed on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register with 501 holding a current Statement of SEN. There are 276 SEN students provided with council funded home to school/college transport.

Leadership, organisational and partnership commitment

York Independent Living Travel Service (YILTS) was set up to move students with special educational needs (SEN) away from dependence transport provided by the council towards a more independence-based / self-determining model. Challenging the expectation that SEN students are dependant on transport organised and paid for by the council.

The York Independent Living Travel Scheme (YILTS) assess the ability of SEND students in order that they might be able over a period of time, to travel independently in and around the City of York via the use of public transport and from this reinvest any travel costs offset back into the Council in order to further grow and develop the YILTS Service.

The YILTS Service is located within the SEN and Transition Teams and benefits from close contact with the range of professionals in these teams. The team work in partnership with:

- Students and their families
- SEN Services and the Transitions Team
- Social workers
- Connexions Advisors
- Educational Psychologists
- Specialist teachers
- Special Educational Needs Coordinators
- Staff at the local Further Education Colleges
- 'Bikeability' scheme staff members
- Transport Police
- Bus companies, including bus drivers
- Taxi companies

The YILTS Service has embarked upon a public / private partnership with Streamline Taxis and York First Buses. Both organisations have signed a Service Level Agreement to release resources and staff to help support delivery of the scheme.

Involving our Communities

Individual consultation with the young person and their parent/carer is undertaken in developing Independent Travel Plans. One to one support is provided with the training programme split into 3 stages:

- Accompany
- Follow
- Meet

Responsive Services

Making a real difference, this scheme enables students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) to travel independently to school and college by using public transport, or by walking or cycling. The service supports students with a full range of special educational needs and disabilities aged 11 to 19.

Every SEND student aged 11 to 19 who currently accesses council-funded transportation, can be referred to the YILTS Service for consideration for submission onto the YILTS independent travel training programme. Each referral is considered against available staff capacity and initial criteria check. A risk assessment is undertaken. If at, or below the acceptable risk level, then a contract is signed with the young person and their parents / carers and an Independent Travel Plan (ITP) with targets, will be drawn up.

A YILTS worker will discuss the young person's needs with their school, college or a place of work. We then visit the family and the young person so that everyone contributes to a realistic Travel Plan. To build skills and confidence, a YILTS worker will typically start with road skills and safety around traffic. Because the team work with vulnerable young people, issues around personal safety and appropriate behaviour are also addressed including how to ask for help when things go wrong. As the student's skills develop, the YILTS worker will follow, rather than travel with them. As confidence and self-esteem is enhanced, the YILTS worker promotes independence by progressing to meeting the student at agreed points on their journey.

Through partnership working with the main bus provider, *First York*, both YILTS workers and students have access to free bus passes for use during their travel training sessions.

Developing a key set of core life skills is crucial to independent living and personal growth. The service supports the young person to develop autonomy, self-esteem, self-worth and confidence including:

- Pedestrian/ traffic skills
- Interaction with the public
- Bus skills
- Sense of place
- Life skills including using money and mobile phones
- Keeping safe

The YILTS project has a number of beneficial social, financial and personal outcomes including:

- Fewer taxi journeys have resulted in lower carbon emissions, reduced council costs and less traffic on the roads.
- Students have benefited from increased exercise opportunities and access to greener modes of transport
- More cultural and leisure activities have become available to students as independent travel opens up their world of opportunities
- Students are better equipped to travel to work in the future

The outcomes for the young people themselves and their families are long term and often life-changing, providing the most crucial measures of success. The following feedback gives an indication of how positively the service is viewed by users and carers:

Young man starting to cycle to school after YILTS support:

'I just want to do it on my own. I don't want to go in the taxi anymore. I want to be the same as everyone else'

Head of Learning Support in a secondary school about a student supported to catch the school bus

"He could not catch the bus to school. It is good that he can do this on his own as he doesn't want me around now he is 16. I'm very grateful for your help. You have been marvellous. I would give you 10 out of 10"

Parent of a young man who learnt to catch the bus and train to a school for students with ASC out of York

"He is brimming with pride at school whenever it is mentioned. What a wonderful success story"

Parent whose son started to travel to a local college on leaving school

"An invaluable experience. My son is certainly more confident travelling independently. He does not panic or become over anxious when amongst the general public as he used to. Peta coming to the house explaining clearly to my son and myself what the plans were was great - communication was always good"

See Laura's story and how it has made a difference to her at Appendix 1.

Workforce

A *First York* driver and senior member of staff work with the YILTS coordinator in schools. Taking a bus into school promotes bus travel and enables selected vulnerable groups to have practice sessions on how to catch a bus. To date six sessions have taken place. *First York* have committed to providing the staffed bus for annual visits to every secondary schools in York. .

Streamline taxi company holds the current CYC contract to transport students with SEN to and from their place of education. *Streamline* have offered one of their experienced members of staff to work with YILTS for up to 20 hours a week. Following an initial training period, the *Streamline* taxi driver has taken on her own YILTS caseload, to date working with five students.

Appendix 1 - Laura's Story

Laura is a Year 11 student who holds a Statement of SEN for Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and who attends Applefields School. Laura has travelled to and from this school via the use of a 'shared' council-funded taxi since she started in Year 7. It was agreed that she be assessed by the YILTS Service. Following the initial assessment meetings, 5 targets were identified in her Independent Travel Plan (ITP) for her to work towards. Laura needed help to develop her skills and confidence in:

- Pedestrian skills
- Bus skills
- Sense of place
- Life skills
- Personal safety

Parental concerns at the start:

Laura -

- Can't tell the time,
- Will not use her bus pass when she gets on the bus – needs to put it up to the ticket machine and was once spoken to unkindly by the driver so she won't do it now,
- Can be overfriendly and will talk to anyone,
- Is scared of 'gangs' of kids,
- Can be impulsive – knows how to cross a road but might rush over if she saw a friend, etc,
- Might feel rushed by the YILTS Service involvement,
- Won't be able to cross Tang Hall Lane safely.

Laura's wishes / concerns before the YILTS Service training started:

- I would like to travel on my own but I am nervous and want to practice first.
- I am worried that people might pick on me or that I might panic if something went wrong.

Summary of what happened over the next 16 months:

Between October 2012 and April 2013, Laura accessed 14 YILTS training sessions with the targets identified on her ITP, worked towards being achieved,

The YILTS Coordinator also worked with Laura's Teaching Assistant from school, to employ the 3 stages of the YILTS Service independent travel training programme. This resulted in Laura being able to attend her work placement at the Retreat,

By May 2013, Laura was able to travel home from school, independently via the bus, travelling once per week. This same bus route allowed her to travel to and from her 2 week work experience placement at DEFRA with some additional YILTS sessions,

From September 2013 onwards, Laura has been travelling independently using the bus from school to home.

The last target is for Laura to be a completely independent traveller (AM and PM) by the time she starts attending York College from September 2014.