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| cts-logo-wallpaper | **RESEARCH BRIEFING SHEET**  **Version: 10.01.14**  **Start: 01.10.13 End: 31.07.14** |

**Mobility disadvantage, access to training and employment, and well-being: the case of Lawrence Weston in Bristol**

### Objectives and background

This **project** is a knowledge- and policy-informing research study into the relationship between mobility disadvantage, access to training and employment and well-being, experienced by residents of Lawrence Weston (LW). A post-war housing estate in the North West fringe of Bristol, LW has limited transport connections to key services, neighbouring employment sites and the city centre, while being disproportionately affected by the negative externalities of transport and land use.

The **objectives** of the research are:

* Understanding the role of transport barriers to access to training and employment in the context of the lives of individuals and the areas in which they live.
* Assessing the impacts on individuals of specific transport initiatives undertaken to improve access to training and employment.
* Disseminating findings to local policy-makers and practitioners and to UK/international academic audience.

### Research questions

To achieve its objectives, the study seeks to understand:

* The mobility practices, constraints and choices concerning in particular young people and parents in LW.
* The subjective experiences, needs and aspirations of these social groups, focusing on access to training and employment.
* How contextual mobility disadvantage impacts on and reflects needs, aspirations and life-chances.
* The impact of mobility interventions deployed in the local context on perceptions of transport, access to training and employment and well-being.

### Methodology

The study will adopt the following **methodological approach**:

* A short desk-based **review** of academic and grey literatures around transport disadvantage and social exclusion. The review will analyse the key theoretical frameworks around the topic, empirical research studies of similarly disadvantaged communities, relevant residents’ surveys (including the Quality of Life survey, Bristol City Council), national and local policies and reports. The literature in this area is well known and the review will aim to assist the design of primary data collection.
* The review will be complemented by **site visits** and **conversations** with key informants from local neighbourhood associations, in particular Ambition Lawrence Weston. A recent survey of the LW community’s needs and aspirations1 found significant public concern with congestion, pollution, cost and availability of public transport, lack of safe pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and identified poor transport links as key barriers to finding work.
* The nature of transport-related social exclusion is “highly context- and person- specific”2 and engenders differing outcomes for different groups within the same local context. Therefore the key methodological component of the proposed research is a **qualitative study** of a cross-section of the local population, comprising:
  + Four **focus groups**, involving young people and parents resident in LW. Ideally, the first focus group meeting will explore participants’ subjective experience of transport-related exclusion, whilst the second meeting will provide a participatory platform to co-develop solutions.
  + Semi-structured in-depth **qualitative interviews** with at least six selected participants from the focus groups, providing in-depth exploration of key training and employment accessibility problems (and solutions) emerging during the focus groups.

Focus group meetings and interviews will last 60-90 minutes and will be recorded for detailed content analysis with NVivo software.

### Impact of the research

This research addresses relevant knowledge and policy gaps. Although transport-related social exclusion is receiving growing academic attention, emphasis has been on older people and, where access to employment has been studied, it has been through case studies with limited depth of investigation of subjective experiences and the dynamic interplay between transport disadvantage and social exclusion. From a policy perspective, many academic scholars claim that local transport authorities have failed to seriously take up the transport and social exclusion agenda. The proposed study contributes towards filling both these gaps. It advances academic knowledge by investigating the personal histories of transport-related exclusion from employment in a specific context. It will be of immediate benefit to policy and practice in the UK, as it explores the impact of targeted mobility interventions in a case study area part of the West of England LSTF programme. The insights gained will be relevant to similar initiatives undertaken in other deprived areas to assist employment participation and the economy.

This research will provide a timely and important contribution to fostering economic development, social inclusion and well-being in LW and neighbouring employment areas. It will provide sound research evidence and recommendations supporting the on-going regeneration work of local community groups.

### References

Ambition Lawrence Weston and Lawrence Weston Community Network (2012) Lawrence Weston Community Research. Available online at: <http://www.lawrenceweston.co.uk/#/community-research/4569652395>

Lucas K. (2012) Transport and social exclusion: Where are we now? *Transport Policy.* 20, pp. 105-113.

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