

Over 50s and Active Travel

Summary Report

Enabling Active Travel for over 50s in Greater Manchester, in support of GM Moving and our shared ambitions to enable Active Travel and Active Lives for all.



By GreaterSport, The Greater Manchester Ageing Hub, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), The Centre for Ageing Better and The University of Manchester.

September 2021

About

In early June 2020 GreaterSport's Active Ageing lead, working with GM Moving leads, the Centre for Ageing Better and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) brought a range of Greater Manchester colleagues together to explore and collate evidence on active travel and people aged over 50 years old. The partners decided to form an Active Travel and Over 50s Steering Group in order to progress this work.

Over 50s and Active Travel Steering Group Membership

- **Beth Mitchell**, Active Ageing Lead, GreaterSport
- **Nicola Waterworth**, GM Partnership Manager, Centre for Ageing Better
- **Eve Holt**, Strategic Director at Greater Sport and for GM Moving
- **Anne Clarke**, Cycling & Walking Evaluation Officer, Transport for Greater Manchester
- **Dr Aideen Young**, Evidence Manager, Centre for Ageing Better
- **Dr Karen Lucas**, Professor of Human Geography, University of Manchester
- **James Baldwin**, Senior Policy Officer, Transport for Greater Manchester

Purpose

The purpose of the group was to consider opportunities to increase levels of participation in active travel among people in mid and later life in order to increase physical activity levels, and boost health and wellbeing. This work forms part of the **Active Ageing programme** led by GreaterSport and part of the **Greater Manchester Age-Friendly Strategy** coordinated by the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub led by Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). The Greater Manchester Ageing Hub is a partnership responding to the opportunities and challenges of an ageing population in the city region. GMCA has a strategic partnership with the Centre for Ageing Better, in place since 2016.

For this work the group has **defined active travel** as:

“Travel [that] includes walking and cycling in all its forms for purposeful journeys, parts of journeys and smaller modes of active transport, e.g. e-bikes, scooters”

This report will refer to **“over 50s”** or **“adults in mid and later life”**.

Context

The aim was to support GM ambitions for a transformational growth in active travel, building on the current momentum resulting from initiatives introduced to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing work to develop GM's Bee Network. This also forms part of the work going on to develop a more inclusive integrated transport network for Greater Manchester and to collectively address the inequalities exposed and exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, recognising the role active travel and sustainable travel can contribute to making GM a great place to grow up, get on, grow old and to invest, do business, visit and study. And the need to reduce carbon-emissions and air pollution across the city region.

Scope of report

This report summarises the work that has been undertaken by the steering group and the group's recommendations for ensuring active travel strategy and delivery across Greater Manchester is inclusive of the needs, wants and aspirations of residents over 50 years of age. The report also identifies the next steps agreed by partners to implement these recommendations. There is a range of supporting information exploring the evidence and research gathered and the strategy, policy and delivery opportunities identified that could encourage active travel in this cohort, alongside the gaps in the current evidence and knowledge base.

Strategic landscape

The focus on over 50s and Active Travel aligns with and offers opportunities to progress a number of strategic and policy initiatives in Greater Manchester:

- Active Ageing programme led by GreaterSport and integrated within the **GM Moving Plan (2017-21)** and refreshed strategy **GM Moving in Action 2021-31** to enable Active Lives for all.
- **Ageing Well** programme (GMHSCP)
- The **Age-Friendly Transport Action Plan (TfGM)** and its priorities:
 1. Promoting accessible and inclusive transport network (including bus reform, community transport and involving older people)
 2. Active travel
 3. Addressing the impact of Covid-19
- The **GM Transport Strategy 2040** Network Principles.



Figure 1: GM Transport Strategy 2040 Network Principles.

- The **Streets for All** strategy and vision - that "our streets will be welcoming and safe spaces for all people, enabling more travel on foot, bike and public transport"¹.

¹ (GREATER MANCHESTER Transport Committee, 2020: 5).

- Greater Manchester's **Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan, 'Change a Region to Change a Nation'**
- '**The Next Level: Good Lives for All in Greater Manchester**', report of the Independent Inequalities Commission (Mar 2021) and '**Build Back Fairer in Greater Manchester: Health Equity and Dignified Lives**', Michael Marmot (Jul 2021) recommendations for tackling health inequalities in Greater Manchester.

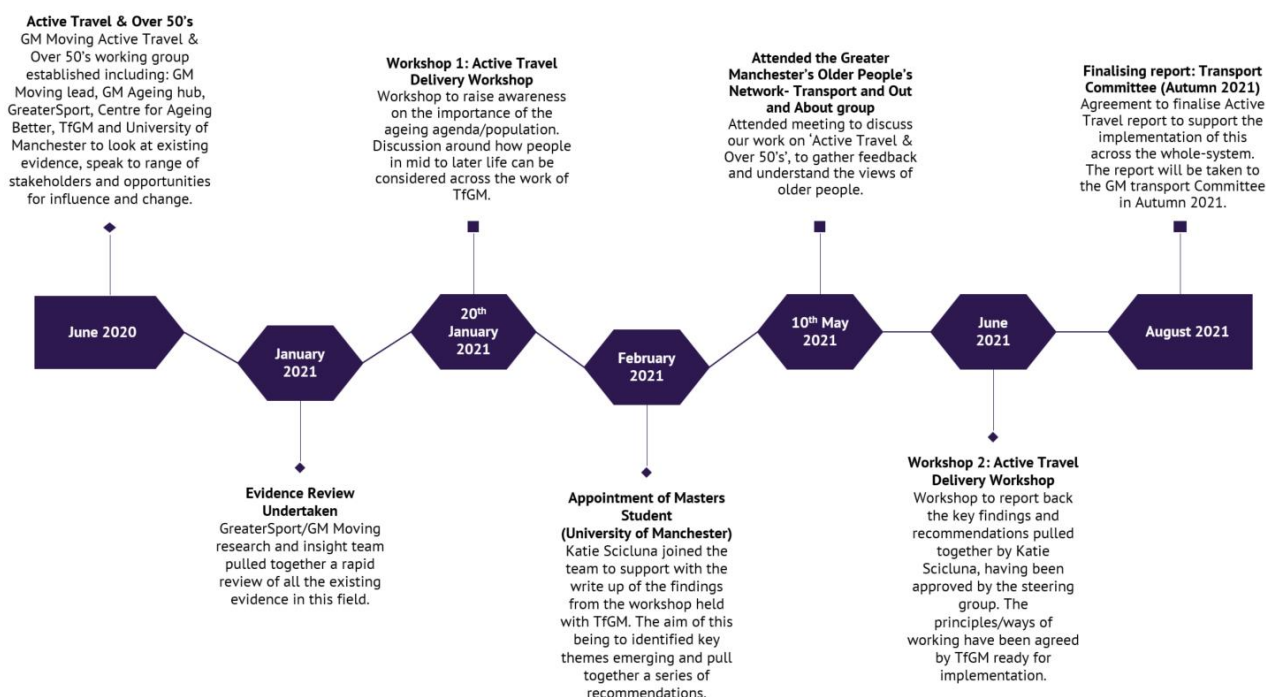


Figure 2: Time line for the Active Travel and Over 50s Steering Group

Research and evidence base

Active Travel for the 50-70 cohort has been a key research area for the Centre for Ageing Better as part of a focus on physical activity within the Priority Goal Healthy Ageing. Published research in 2021 includes, 'Active travel and midlife: Understanding the barriers and enablers to active travel'.

Full details of the steering group and the activities undertaken to deliver this report are set out in the more detailed evidence review. The steering group undertook a process of collating and sharing available data, analysis and research; workshops and discussions with key stakeholders in particular two workshops with the TfGM Active Travel team, participating in wider stakeholder conversations as part of GM's Big Active Conversations (in March and June 2021) and discussions through the GM Older People's Network's 'Transport and Out and About' steering group (May 2021); and sharing information with wider networks to include speaking at a national Centre for Ageing webinar on 'How we create active travel environments for older adults' and membership of an Impact Advisory Group on Active Travel convened by the Centre for Ageing Better with a range of local, regional and national policy makers and practitioners.

The work has explored the following core questions:

1. What do we know about the current active travel participation rates for over 50s?
2. Why focus on over 50s? What could be the benefits for increasing active travel participation for over 50s?
3. What is already happening in GM that encourages active travel in these cohorts?

4. Are there new or enhanced opportunities that could be added or developed that target and/ or prioritise active travel for over 50s?
5. What are the gaps in evidence, knowledge, and learning or support that need addressing to support a focus on this group?

In collating the supporting information and findings of this work, the steering group were supported by Katie Scicluna, a postgraduate student at the University of Manchester, supervised by Professor Karen Lucas.

Why focus on over 50s?

Broad statements are often made in relation to people in mid to later life and assumptions are commonly made. This demographic is not homogenous and covers a wide range of chronological age and life experiences. Age intersects with a wide range of other characteristics and experiences across the life course which need to be better understood if we are to ensure that places, infrastructure and active travel initiatives are designed in a way that works for people and caters for their diversity of needs and aspirations.

The primary starting point for this work was the health and wellbeing of adults in mid and later life, and the potential cardiovascular, strength, balance and mental health benefits active travel could bring. This was based on the evidence of declining physical activity levels for this age group and the importance of health related behaviours between 50 and 70 years of age to the quality of life in later life. This will have the secondary impact of reducing Greater Manchester's environmental impact, as travel will be carried out more often by cycling and walking, thereby reducing transport-based carbon emissions in the city region and working towards the wider target of becoming carbon neutral by 2038².

In discussions with partners and stakeholders, the following rationale was identified for the benefits of focusing on this group when thinking about active travel strategy and delivery:

1. Greater Manchester commitment as a WHO age-friendly city region and being an exemplar in age-friendly practice.
2. Potential for active travel to address the declining physical activity levels from mid-life, recognising that keeping physically active in mid-life helps to delay onset and progression of many age-related health conditions to support good health and quality of life as people grow older.
3. Addressing interacting and intersecting inequalities, as highlighted by the GM Independent Inequalities Commission in Good Lives for All in GM :
 - a. In 2013-2015, the lowest life expectancy for men, at age 65 in England was in Manchester (15.8 years)
 - b. Men at age 65 in parts of GM have a healthy life expectancy that is up to 4 years shorter than in England as a whole
4. The over 50s cohort is a growing demographic in Greater Manchester, by 2025 those aged 50 and over will exceed 1 million resulting in a significant cohort at risk of poor later life without improvements to physical activity and a potential sizeable opportunity for population level behavioural change in active travel.
5. As well as physical health and mental well-being we know walking helps strengthen social connection and address social isolation and loneliness (Age-Friendly Transport for Greater Manchester, Charles Musselwhite).

² (GREATER MANCHESTERCA, 2019: 3).

6. People have differing capabilities and needs in relation to physical activity and other travel behaviours as they age (e.g. see walking speeds).
7. Diverse voices and experiences of people over 50 are often overlooked in policy making and implementation (Global Report on Ageism).
8. Understanding the opportunity presented by the link between increasing active travel and the longevity dividend, e.g. in the design and purchase of new active travel products such as e-bikes. Greater Manchester is a leading innovator on Healthy Ageing through the work of the Innovation Partnership on Healthy Ageing.
9. There are life experiences that affect many in this cohort that are likely to impact on their participation in active travel, creating potential additional and specific barriers e.g. the role of caring for both children and older adults and other aspects of marginalisation associated with ageing.

The approach

When thinking about GM residents in mid and later life this work aligns with the overall approach of the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub:

- Recognising older residents as citizens, and taking a citizenship-based policy approach (see figure 3)
- Moving the narrative from vulnerable to valuable
- Recognising the diversity represented within the over 50s cohort
- Understanding the inequalities experienced within the over 50s cohort, and by people as they age.

<u>Citizenship-based policy approach</u>		
<small>Source: P.McGarry/MCC 2013</small>		
<u>Medical</u>	<u>Care</u>	<u>Citizenship</u>
Patient	Customer	Citizen
Focus on individual	Focus on individual, family and informal networks	Focus on neighbourhood and city
Clinical interventions	Care interventions	Promoting social capital and participation
Commission for 'frail elderly'	Commission for vulnerable people	Age-proofing universal services
Prevention of entry to hospital	Prevention to delay entry to care system	Reducing social exclusion
Health (and care system)	Whole system	Changing social structure and attitudes

Figure 3 taking a citizenship-based policy approach

Using a system change model

Throughout the work there has been a focus on understanding active travel for over 50s within a socio-ecological approach to system change. This indicates there are actions required at all levels of the system to widen access and participation in active travel for this cohort (Figure 4).

Widening access and participation in Active Travel for Over 50's

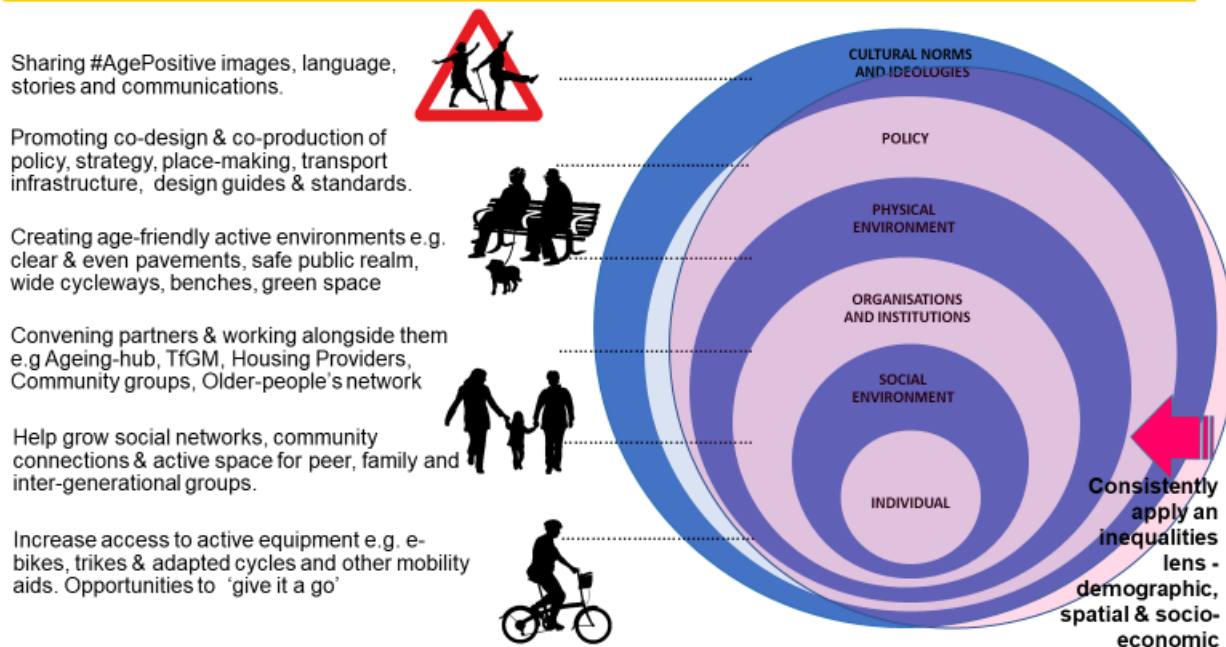


Figure 4, key priorities mapped against socio-ecological model, as used and developed to support GM Moving

Findings and principles for ways of working

Opportunities to discuss the opportunities and challenges for over 50s and active travel were welcomed by participants, there was good engagement and discussions were supportive that further focus on the over 50s and active travel with a wide range of professionals and stakeholders will support the progress and ambitions of strategies encouraging active travel in Greater Manchester.

The general consensus was that while many of the initiatives and strategies in place across Greater Manchester are planned for “all-ages”, there would be benefit to having a deeper understanding of the specific needs of over 50s, their views and experiences, sharing examples of where they are already engaged in active travel initiatives and increased understanding of how needs can be met by adapting the built environment.

Four main themes were identified in discussion with TfGM stakeholders for this work:

1. **Health and wellbeing benefits**
2. **Differences and diversity in the over 50s cohort, interacting and intersecting inequalities within the cohort**
3. **Importance of physical infrastructure design, location, and accessibility**
4. **Public engagement and policy messaging.**

These themes were then developed further into thirteen principles to embed and integrate an inclusive focus on over 50s in active travel strategy and delivery. Further workshop discussion with TfGM Active Travel colleagues agreed these principles.

Overall recommendation and indicator of progress

To increase access and participation of over 50s in active travel in Greater Manchester, making active travel a natural choice for short journeys. To help achieve this, targeted action should be taken in line with recommendations set out below.

Overall progress to be regularly measured through data on participation levels and changing perceptions, disaggregated to show differences by age, demographic and socio-economic group. The following indicators of change to be explored as complimentary measures of progress.

Priority recommendations	System layer	Who	Indicators and measures of progress & impact (stats & stories)
<p>1. Messaging: Promote physical and mental wellbeing benefits of active travel for those in mid and later life, including targeted communications (Valuable Not Vulnerable) and ensure the diversity of over 50s population represented across communications.</p> <p>Ensure information is accessible and inclusive. Reduce impact of digital exclusion for adults in mid and later life.</p>	<p>Cultural norms and ideologies</p> <p>Policy</p>	<p>TfGM, Local authorities, and other GM Moving partners</p>	<p>See and hear increasing age-positive, inclusive language, imagery, stories and narrative.</p> <p>Active travel feels more attainable and attractive to over 50s in GM, in their full diversity.</p> <p>Diversity of different communication methods used and positively accessed</p> <p>(Mix of data on engagement levels (on & offline) & wider intelligence)</p>
<p>2. Data, insight & measurement: Data collection and analysis includes and disaggregates those over 50, to inform transport and travel strategies.</p> <p>Understanding intersection of age with other experiences and characteristics e.g. those who do and do not take part, caring, gender differences.</p>	<p>Policy</p>	<p>TfGM, Local authorities, and other GM Moving partners</p>	<p>Disaggregated data is more routinely captured to include intersectionality.</p> <p>Both stats and stories are gathered and visible.</p> <p>Design and delivery is evidence-led.</p> <p>Consistent and high quality EIAs.</p>

Recognise diversity, life journey stages and intersections, uneven experiences of ageing; including age in EIAs and tracking progress.			(Evidence and evaluation e.g. audits of system-wide data, EIA etc)
<p>3. Involve: Include adults in mid and later life, their views and experiences through consultation, co-design and co-production methods as appropriate, to understand and address barriers to inclusivity.</p> <p>Recognise the conflicts and differences in views and experiences e.g. on use of shared space</p>	<p>Policy</p> <p>Physical Environment</p> <p>Organisations & Institutions</p>	<p>TfGM, Local authorities, Over 50s working group, and other GM Moving partners</p>	<p>Our GM mantra 'Nothing about us, without us' is visibly put into practice.</p> <p>The involvement of local over 50s is hard-wired into design, do and review processes.</p> <p>Dialogue is ongoing.</p> <p>Increased relationships and trust with GM over 50s networks, orgs and advocates.</p> <p>(Visible in processes, networks and scale and diversity of networks)</p>
<p>4. Share practice: Promote and share examples of innovation and good design, what's already working and good practice from across GM and elsewhere.</p>	<p>Policy</p> <p>Physical Environment</p> <p>Organisations & Institutions</p>	<p>Over 50s & Active Travel Group, Ageing Hub, TfGM and GM Moving partners</p>	<p>Resources, good practice, learning and opportunities for discussion are regularly shared e.g. via the GM Moving, Active Travel and Ageing Hub websites & events.</p> <p>(There is an effective GM 'hub' or network in place. Measure outputs, circulation and impact)</p>
<p>5. Physical environment: Understanding and integrating age-friendly design guidelines into design of Active Travel schemes and the built environment.</p> <p>Utilising parks and green and blue spaces to promote active travel</p>	<p>Physical Environment</p>	<p>TfGM, Local authorities, GMCA, GreaterSport, GM Walking and other GM Moving partners</p>	<p>Streets for All Strategy implemented.</p> <p>Design Guide published including good practice for age-</p>

<p>and the benefits of this in terms of wellbeing.</p>			<p>friendly active environments.</p> <p>Temp and permanent infra is routinely age-friendly design.</p> <p>GM floor standards for age-friendly neighbourhoods? Building on ageing in place research, 15-20 Minute Neighbourhoods, access to green space and measures of walkability.</p>
<p>6. Workforce development: Develop inclusive messaging to encourage active travel behaviours across GM workforce, e.g. making links with over-50s and employment support.</p>	<p>Organisations and Institutions</p>	<p>TfGM, Public Health, Local Authorities, GM Walking, VCSE, all GM Moving partners</p>	<p>Positive messaging on active travel for over 50s is embedded GM partner workplace offers e.g. GM' Active Workplaces toolkit, Good Employment Charter, Working Well, NHS, Housing, LA workforce initiatives and programmes.</p> <p>Diversity of relevant workforce training and development on offer to include GM System Leadership.</p>
<p>7. Cycling opportunity & capability: Consider the particular benefits of e-bike schemes, tricycles and adaptable bicycles for the over 50s; innovation in bikeability approaches e.g. cycling proficiency for older people that address concerns re: safety.</p>	<p>Social Environment</p>	<p>TfGM, Public Health, Local Authorities, GM Walking and other GM Moving partners</p>	<p>Age-friendly lens applied to all activation and access projects and initiatives are increasingly inclusive of over 50s.</p> <p>Examples of age-friendly schemes and incentives in action across Greater Manchester, e.g. cycle loan & training schemes are suitable</p>

			for over 50s in terms of location, messaging and support.
8. Community organisations: Supported to be age-inclusive, and encourage over 50s as volunteers within community initiatives on cycling and walking.	Social Environment	VCSE orgs, sport and physical activity orgs, leisure, GreaterSport and GM Moving partners	Health services, community groups, workplaces, sports clubs champion active travel for over 50s. Data and stories show increasing access and participation in walking and cycling clubs, activities etc by over 50s.
9. Behaviour change interventions: During the development of behaviour change interventions, consider people in mid to later life.	Individual	TfGM, Public Health, Local Authorities, GM Walking and GM Moving partners	Look at the demographics of people taking part in behaviour change interventions vs. the target group or general population demographics, where we have this data.

Next steps:

- Recommendations shared with all partners including TfGM Active Travel team, GM Moving Exec and the GM Transport Committee.
- Identified partners and system actors to confirm which recommendations they will be adopting and corresponding timelines and measures of progress.
- Annual update published across all recommendations and progress measures

Further Information:

- Full Report of the Greater Manchester Steering Group on Over 50s and Active Travel
- Evidence Review by Sustrans, on Active Travel for 50-70 year olds in England, Commissioned by the Centre for Ageing Better. To be published on the 4th October 2021.