



# Digital Futures in Community Transport Podcast from The Transport and Health Integrated research Network

## Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1 [on the Fflecsi bus]

Has she got COVID?

00:00:02 Speaker 1

Well, she's got this as she knew her son had it last week.

00:00:06 Speaker 2

But her son was saying she's OK like.

00:00:10 Speaker 4

Hod do you know when you've got it?

00:00:11 Speaker 1

Well her

00:00:12 Speaker 1

Son had it, so I suppose once you were living in the same

00:00:16 Speaker 1

House... It's like a bad flu.

00:00:17 Speaker 1

Like a bad flu, yeah.

00:00:22 Speaker 4

Isn't it?

00:00:24 Speaker 1

But then I [fades out]...

00:00:26 Speaker 3

[Lucy] Welcome to this THINK podcast on Digital Futures and Community Transport.

00:00:30 Speaker 3

I'm Lucy Baker, a researcher in transport, mobility, mobility justice and health.

00:00:35 Speaker 3

My colleague Amy Nicholass, also producing this series is a project officer for the Transport and Health Integrated Research Network.

00:00:43 Speaker 3

The THINK project is funded by Health and Care Research Wales and is hosted by Aberystwyth University.

00:00:49 Speaker 3

For this series on community transport, we visited Pembrokeshire, a fairly rural county in South West Wales. This episode explores one of the new pilot Fflecsi on demand services which is a bus service embedded into a community transport service provider and funded by the Welsh Government.

00:01:08 Speaker 3

Just then, we heard from some of the passengers that had boarded the bus to go to the Monday club, which is a kind of a social club that runs in St. David's Community Hall.

00:01:19 Speaker 3

So it's available for group bookings, but while it's not being used for groups, it's also available to the general public to book through an app.

00:01:27 Speaker 3

So it kind of works in a flexible way to integrate into the community transport organizations and the needs of rural communities.

00:01:36 Speaker 3

[Lucy on the Fflecsi bus to the driver and Project Manager] Is it useful for younger people then?

00:01:38 Speaker 5 [

Yes, it is.

00:01:39 Speaker 5

Yeah, we we take, we take a few people to Pembrokeshire College which is an education setting.

00:01:50 Speaker 2

[driver] And this one we take over to White Sands.

00:01:54 Speaker 2

There's a surfing club over there.

00:01:56 Speaker 5

Oh, I see.

00:01:58 Speaker 2

Flint Jones.

00:02:00 Speaker 5

I wondered why he goes to the Whitesands so often.

00:02:03 Speaker 2

Yeah nice chap.

00:02:09 Speaker 5

What other groups are there?

00:02:12 Speaker 2

Well, I I tend to take up a lot of kids on a Saturday and they've been out places.

00:02:19 Speaker 2

Because they all tend to meet they're a couple of hours walking around the shops with their friends

00:02:26 Speaker 2

And then take them home again.

00:02:28 Speaker 3

[Lucy] With these youngsters, you said they spend a couple of hours and then you take them back again, yeah.

00:02:33 Speaker 3

Did you all agree like a time to meet?

00:02:35 Speaker 3

We'll meet back at the bus.

00:02:36 Speaker 2

Yeah, they they booked on.

00:02:37 Speaker 3

Type of thing.

00:02:39 Speaker 2

Themselves or their parents booked them on, and then they.

00:02:43 Speaker 3

But they must all want to go roughly about the same time to make it work. Do they?

00:02:48 Speaker 5

Yeah, roughly.

Yeah, yeah, 1 person can book a journey and include seven other people on the same booking.

00:02:56 Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah.

00:02:56 Speaker 5

Is that the way they do it?

00:03:00 Speaker 5

But they they pay individually.

00:03:03 Speaker 7

[Amy] OK, so they pay when they board rather than pay on the App when they book?

00:03:10 Speaker 2

Yeah. And then there's there's a couple of youngsters that work part time and the Centre here, Oriol Parc.

00:03:16 Speaker 2

So they're picked up on Saturday.

00:03:18 Speaker 2

And brought up and then taken home again.

00:03:22 Speaker 5

I mean the fact that people can book in advance.

00:03:25 Speaker 5

But not pay until they get on the bus does cause some problems because people book

00:03:31 Speaker 5

and either forget they've done it, or or or or choose not to cancel their booking, even though they have no intention of catching the bus and

00:03:42 Speaker 5

we have to record that as a no show.

00:03:45 Speaker 5

Which is sometimes difficult to do because the app

00:03:48 Speaker 5

doesn't work properly.

00:03:52 Speaker 5

And we're trying to get that bug fixed.

00:03:54 Speaker 5

It's taking a long time.

00:03:56 Speaker 5

But I think once people have accumulated several no shows, then they they might not be able to use the

00:04:02 Speaker 5

service anymore. Yeah.

00:04:05 Speaker 7

[Amy] So this is like a pilot?

00:04:07 Speaker 7

Testing out how the Fflecsi bus system's gonna work?

00:04:10 Speaker 7

Yeah, so all these bugs are gonna be sorted out in the system.

00:04:13 Speaker 7

For this one continuing, hopefully, and when the other ones

00:04:16 Speaker 7

roll out, yeah.

00:04:17 Speaker 5

OK.

00:04:17 Speaker 5

Yeah, it it is a new idea.

00:04:19 Speaker 5

And so instead of having lots of big buses running on fixed routes to fixed timetables with nobody on board...

00:04:28 Speaker 5

...Polluting the atmosphere and using that fuel, they are trialing in this system which responds to where the need is so we're not running buses around all day long for no reason.

00:04:40 Speaker 5

We just go to people who have actually booked a journey.

00:04:46 Speaker 5

It's more cost effective.

00:04:49 Speaker 5

And less wasteful of resources, yeah.

00:04:53 Speaker 3

[ Lucy] It might be worth – like - so people could sign up if they are using this app.

00:04:57 Speaker 3

So say it's maybe a bit for a younger audience.

00:04:59 Speaker 3

You get an alert saying the van is coming in an hour, maybe, and then like.

00:05:04 Speaker 3

Oh, yeah

00:05:05 Speaker 3

I could do with getting something from the shop and book on?

00:05:06 Speaker 2

Yeah, that would be a good idea that way.

00:05:07 Speaker 3

Yeah.

00:05:09 Speaker 3

[Lucy in studio] Demand responsive, digitally booked systems obviously have

00:05:13 Speaker 3

Been used for young people.

00:05:15 Speaker 3

But they're also showing signs of being a way of integrating public transport with community transport, particularly for rural communities, where there's not enough demand to run standard bus services.

00:05:26 Speaker 3

We also caught up with Rod Bowen, who is Transport Development Officer for Community Transport organization Dolen Teifi.

00:05:34 Speaker 3

[Lucy] Do you think there's any future in - what is the future of the app in community transport?

00:05:39 Speaker 3

I know there's.

00:05:41 Speaker 3

barriers in terms of people of a certain age using perhaps they're not that popular, but is there any utility for them at the moment or?

00:05:43 Speaker 6

[Rod] OK, fine.

00:05:48 Speaker 6

No, the the the only thing I would say to you that.

00:05:53 Speaker 6

We try as an organization to be a one key - well, the term for it - one key organization.

00:06:03 Speaker 6

So in one key press does everything for us, right.

00:06:05 Speaker 6

So in other words, we're going, so we use GPS in our vehicles for tracking the vehicles.

00:06:11 Speaker 6

We're in discussion with Swansea University to look at putting some hardware into the vehicle, designing it so that basically we can actually look at our compliance issues.

00:06:21 Speaker 6

We could do walk around checks.

00:06:23 Speaker 6

And so on.

00:06:24 Speaker 6

By integrating into our GPS system, which basically means

00:06:27 Speaker 6

you get into the vehicle, you tap the computer and that will ask you to do your walk around checks.

00:06:34 Speaker 6

You tick all that, it'll send it to us electronically. The next bit of that then would be before you start the vehicle it will ask you for the start mileage, end mileage. That start mileage, end mileage and the driver's name or whatever else.

00:06:47 Speaker 6

We need that from them because it will come to us electronically.

00:06:51 Speaker 6

It will be put into the invoicing system and that then should actually start generating the bits for us, right.

00:06:58 Speaker 6

So going back into this app side of things...

00:07:02 Speaker 6

We don't envisage that we'll be providing transport by people just using an app, yeah, because we need to plan it in a different way because lots of lots of our journeys are planned, is strange to say, by negotiation.

00:07:17 Speaker 6

So, for instance, if this vehicle is not available in Aberaeron for a particular journey, but there may be one somewhere that's available for the journey not known to that person.

00:07:29 Speaker 6

So if if, in the most simplistic way you would go, somebody said I need a vehicle in, in, in Aberaeron and it wasn't available, that would be the end of it.

00:07:38 Speaker 6

But saying that, we could, if the software was clever enough to, say, recruit this vehicle elsewhere, but it'll cost

00:07:43 Speaker 6

you a little bit extra.

00:07:45 Speaker 6

Maybe that's the solution, but the reality of it is we could, you know, I don't envisage



00:07:50 Speaker 6

that the customer will have full control of booking a vehicle and so on because there's a lot more to it than just pressing a button on an app.

00:07:59 Speaker 6

Hmm. But from the perspective of operating this organization properly, because we need to be as fine-tuned as possible, and that's what we're investing.

00:08:09 Speaker 6

So we've got we've just put

00:08:11 Speaker 6

A spec out for software, and that's about a calendar because 25 vehicles on a Google Calendar is not accurate right, so we've got we've gotta have a much, much more robust system working for us because if we add another 12 vehicles onto the system, that's going to be a nightmare.

00:08:29 Speaker 3

So you need to say what trips they've done, and then you need to invoice them for that?

00:08:33 Speaker 6

Yeah, as a sector you know we're not very clever either because basically, as a sector we go to we we we we know our customers, right.

00:08:34 Speaker 3

And that's fine.

00:08:41 Speaker 6

But we don't shout about it!

00:08:42 Speaker 6

So the social value and what the customers who actually utilize our service for is not captured, nor is the volunteer hours.

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Even though we've got some paper database with great tracking of volunteer hours,

00:08:54 Speaker 6

It's not then digitized and put into a spreadsheet.

00:08:56 Speaker 6

So what the vision is, and this is what the consultant is saying to us now, is the fact that we'll be able to capture all this data, but basically utilize it in a much more clever way because you know there were

questions last week which was CTA UK, we met the director and she was asking her how many of the are journeys for health, how many journeys for this and what type of journeys.

00:09:17 Speaker 6

This and that the other can't tell it.

00:09:19 Speaker 6

Yeah, you know, I I've got a gut feeling. But you know, yeah, I think 99% or whatever.

00:09:25 Speaker 6

But the reality is, is you need it on paper and volunteer hours is something that none of the sector captures.

00:09:32 Speaker 6

But if I could probably tell you, then that if Dylwyn does 1800 hours per year, I've got plenty of other drivers doing exactly the same.

00:09:39 Speaker 6

And when you think about that problem, we've got about 800 active drivers, that's a lot. But trying putting that into money, it's clever because basically that's the cost saving, isn't it? Yeah. And the other problem is, is how do you

00:09:57 Speaker 6

convert what we are doing into cost savings for the National Health Service?

00:10:01 Speaker 6

Yeah, and and and we just haven't got that.

00:10:04 Speaker 6

Because basically, we don't do that, but I'd love to be able to do it.

00:10:11 Speaker 3

Lucy in studio] We spoke to Gemma Lelliott, who is the Director for Wales for the Community Transport Association.

00:10:16 Speaker 3

Gemma also mentions how apps or digital technologies can be particularly useful in terms of gathering data about how community transport is used

00:10:29 Speaker 3

and what are the costs to run that service?

00:10:33 Speaker 3

But she also mentions the need to build capacity in community transport provision to deliver new digital based services and she brings an interesting and important point later in the conversation about the value of these personal relationships that service users have.

00:10:56 Speaker 3

How is community transport kind of like running alongside more digital - sort of technological - versions of community transport?

00:11:05 Speaker 3

Can they blend with services like commercial services?

00:11:09 Speaker 3

For example, like, how do you see the future of services like on- demand digitally based?

00:11:15

Right.

00:11:16 Speaker 3

Or hybrid versions of them working?

00:11:19 Speaker 8

[Gemma] Yeah, I mean

00:11:20 Speaker 8

I think this is

00:11:22 Speaker 8

a really exciting area of development.

00:11:24 Speaker 8

Welsh Government have invested quite heavily in the Fflecsi model over the

00:11:27 Speaker 8

last couple of

00:11:28 Speaker 8

Years. That's primarily been focused on working in partnership with commercial organizations, although we do have two of our members that are

00:11:36 Speaker 8

very firmly in the not-for-profit camp that are successfully delivering Fflecsi services in Pembrokeshire and up in the Llyn Peninsula, that are showing a really interesting data set in terms of taking that more digital demand responsive model rather than a traditional Community transport model which

00:11:54 Speaker 8

is very much focused on local relationships and local knowledge to be part of that bigger picture and a national approach to

00:12:02 Speaker 8

managing that I think creates some opportunities which we've never had before, particularly around things like data being able to see behind the scenes about the number of passengers.. where they're booking their journeys from.. all of those kinds of

00:12:15 Speaker 8

Things. I think the challenge that we've seen from those operators who've got involved with the Fflecsi pilots to date is that they're in a very different position to somebody like Stagecoach or Arriva or First Cymru. They don't have that same wealth behind them.

00:12:32 Speaker 8

And that same level of resource in terms of staff.

00:12:36 Speaker 8

And maintenance and and...

00:12:37 Speaker 8

All of that sort of stuff.

00:12:39 Speaker 8

And where, you know, it's fantastic to be given £100,000 to fund a brand new shiny vehicle to run a service along a coastline.

00:12:48 Speaker 8

Actually you need a dedicated coordinator who's going to be able to manage the bookings and feed that data in and work with Welsh Government or work with the local authority. Arriva has got that, First has.

00:12:59 Speaker 8

The local

00:13:01 Speaker 8

Community transport provider has basically never had funding to have that person or to have that dedicated resource in their team and it

00:13:09 Speaker 8

Is a mindset shift as well as a delivery shift, and that's something which we are going to be working on very closely with the network over the next couple of years - is how do we upscale Community transport operators to be in a place where they can take those opportunities on? And what do they need in terms of additional resource and capacity to be able to do that as well as a commercial operator?

00:13:33 Speaker 8

I think the interesting challenge - cause we've got a member of our team, David, who's come from a local authority transport background - and he was working in, in, in England and saw quite a large number of these, they call them digital DRT or DRT, Welsh government call it integrated responsive transport.

00:13:49 Speaker 8

But it's it's all versions of the same thing.

00:13:52 Speaker 8

But Arriva, for example, have had multiple pilots of these kinds of digital models, so Uber for minibuses and every time it's been piloted, they've run it for a year or 18 months, find that it's really expensive, they close that pilot down and move that vehicle to a different location.

00:14:08 Speaker 8

So actually, in terms of the long-term financial viability of a service...

00:14:13 Speaker 8

there's still really no answer in terms of whether that is viable in the longer term and how much subsidy is an acceptable level of subsidy in order

00:14:22 Speaker 8

to be able

00:14:23 Speaker 8

to create a more demand responsive system.

00:14:27 Speaker 8

Particularly in areas in which it's never going to be viable to run a traditional bus route.

00:14:31 Speaker 8

So we've got lots of that in Wales, we've got valleys communities, we've got people living up on the

00:14:36 Speaker 8

side of a hill.

00:14:37 Speaker 8

We've got kind of sparse communities where you've got a group of 50 houses, a group of 50 houses, a group of 50 houses, but you might have to do 20 miles between each one of those conurbations.

00:14:50 Speaker 8

I think that's going to be a big part of the conversation for us in partnership with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales - is what does sustainability look like for delivering that model of transport and

what again, what the value is of connecting those communities and helping people to be able to integrate with their communities in a way that works for them?

00:15:10 Speaker 8

Rather than constantly going back to this more traditional viewpoint of where we need a bus once an hour. Is a bus once an hour gonna be better value for money than something that potentially is more expensive but is more effective in making the connections that people need to make?

00:15:26 Speaker 8

So there's there's going to be a big, I I anticipate that that's going to be a big part of the conversation as these networks are designed

00:15:34 Speaker 8

ing forward, but I've got no doubt that community transport operators can absolutely deliver.

00:15:39 Speaker 8

You know, we particularly, I went up to the operator in, in the Llyn Peninsula.

00:15:44 Speaker 8

I went to O Ddrws i Ddrws in

00:15:47 Speaker 8

end of November, I think it was, and had a chance to go on a ride on the bus and see the work that they do with the local community as well as then serving the tourist community that you know massively increases the population across the peninsula over the summer.

00:16:02 Speaker 8

It's a fantastic resource and because you can book it on your

00:16:05 Speaker 8

phone - you might struggle with the

00:16:07 Speaker 8

signal if you're out in the sticks trying to book your return journey - but it's so accessible it's it's really inclusive.

00:16:13 Speaker 8

It's a nice vehicle.

00:16:15 Speaker 8

People with all kinds of backgrounds and experiences would be able to use it.

00:16:18 Speaker 8

And then it's also there for the local community to use the rest of the year as well and that I think is where we'll be able to see some real gains for the community transport sector if we can make sure that they are not left out of that conversation.

00:16:34 Speaker 3

I was thinking as well with cancellations, it's quite an important thing.

00:16:38 Speaker 3

So like I know commercial operators working in the on demand kind of space now really can't cope with the cancellations.

00:16:45 Speaker 3

So it means loss of revenue that

00:16:46 Speaker 3

they can't get

00:16:47 Speaker 3

Back. They've already spent the money on the fuel to get to

00:16:49 Speaker 3

that place, the

00:16:50 Speaker 3

last thing, the cancellation is the worst thing.

00:16:52 Speaker 3

And they penalize then the customer to make sure that they'd be blocked from an app. For example, if they do say 3 cancellations. In some situations, you can imagine if somebody's got a health problem or a disability, having the flexibility to

00:17:05 Speaker 3

be able to cancel without being penalized,

00:17:07 Speaker 3

that's probably really important, and it's not something I'm saying that I've observed, but it's something that could be important in future.

00:17:13 Speaker 3

Particularly in this space, making services really accessible and just having an option

00:17:18 Speaker 3

to be able to cancel.

00:17:20 Speaker 3

Perhaps not right at the last minute, but within 30 minutes, say on the date.

00:17:24 Speaker 3

So I know a lot of people were kind of

00:17:26 Speaker 3

feeling worried or guilty that they weren't sure if they can make it next week, but they didn't want to book it in case they had to cancel it and

00:17:32 Speaker 3

like yeah, the driver and so forth.

00:17:35 Speaker 8

Yeah, I think that's one of the things that we see the community transport sector is, is is a real strength area is that local knowledge and that local

00:17:43 Speaker 8

relationship and that's

00:17:44 Speaker 8

something I think there's a concern from a lot of our members

00:17:48 Speaker 8

that if they if they, for example,

00:17:51 Speaker 8

were expected to switch to delivering on a Fflecsi system because that was what their funding relied on, and then that meant they weren't able to be as flexible with their passengers or as supportive..

00:18:03 Speaker 8

How do you resolve that tension? Like when we've got people who've been using their local community transport vehicle for 5, 10,15 years? They've got a relationship with the person in the office that books their journeys. They've got a relationship with the driver

00:18:16 Speaker 8

Who picks them up and drops them home.

00:18:19 Speaker 8

Those local relationships are actually really important and and for some people are even more important than making the connections that they're making.

[Now on the Fflecsi bus]



00:18:27 Speaker 7

[Amy] And what do you think of the drivers compared to regular bus drivers?

00:18:31 Speaker 7

Pretend he can't hear you!

00:18:31 Speaker 3

He's lovely.

00:18:32 Speaker 3

He's lovely.

00:18:33 Speaker 3

He's marvelous.

00:18:34 Speaker 3

He's - honest to God -

00:18:35 Speaker 1

He's got the patience of a Saint.

00:18:37 Speaker 1

He'll wait for anybody.

00:18:38 Speaker 1

Even if it's to change and you've forgotten! [laughter]

00:18:47 Speaker 4

It's it's a good service because

00:18:48 Speaker 4

it's flexible and it

00:18:51 Speaker 4

you know - they do -

00:18:52 Speaker 4

They're very, very accommodating.

00:18:54 Speaker 4

The boys are all brilliant, you know, so it's got...

00:18:57 Speaker 7

[Amy] So do they help you with your stuff when you come back from shopping and stuff like that?

00:19:01 Speaker 7

The driver sorry, pet?

00:19:02 Speaker 7

Do the drivers help you?

00:19:04 Speaker 7

On and off

00:19:04 Speaker 4

Oh, oh, yeah.

00:19:04 Speaker 7

The bus with

00:19:05 Speaker 4

Well, no, I don't need that.

00:19:05 Speaker 7

your shopping or?

00:19:06 Speaker 4

I mean, one of the drivers said to me today he brought trolleys for the other two ladies.

00:19:11 Speaker 4

And he said you don't need one yet, I said, well, that's a back-handed compliment if ever I heard one!

00:19:16 Speaker 4

{laughs} you know?

00:19:17 Speaker 4

But yes, they're very, very good, you know, and..

00:19:21 Speaker 4

But they, you know, take my shopping and all sorts of stuff.

00:19:24 Speaker 4

You know good.

00:19:25 Speaker 4

Just gives you that.

00:19:27 Speaker 4

And they've become friends.

00:19:29 Speaker 4

That's what's good about it is that they're all such nice lads that you know you've become well

00:19:36 Speaker 4

they become part of your routine, really, you know.

00:19:40 Speaker 4

And it gives me a lot of

00:19:42 Speaker 4

a boost because it's quite insular, living in a in a

00:19:47 Speaker 4

Village where

00:19:49 Speaker 4

you know, yes, we get to talk to the neighbours, but.

00:19:54 Speaker 4

it's quite nice to have somebody different to chat to twice a week and just

00:19:59 Speaker 4

that doesn't affect you know, you can chat away and not have any...

00:20:06 Speaker 4

It doesn't affect them.

00:20:07 Speaker 4

If I have a moan about something, you know, which I do, you know.

00:20:13 Speaker 4

But they're very as I say very accommodating in all ways, you know.

00:20:18 Speaker 3

Those were some of the users of the Fflecsi service operating in Pembrokeshire.

00:20:23 Speaker 3

We also caught up with Sue in Tenby.

00:20:26 Speaker 3

Sue is the coordinator for the Community Transport Dial-a-ride service operating in that area.

00:20:32 Speaker 3

She's responsible for taking bookings on the phone from users of the service and matching them with the driver.

00:20:38 Speaker 7

[Amy] How did you get into this role?

And are you paid or a volunteer?

00:20:43 Speaker 9

[Sue] Yeah, there's a bit of a story behind this, my friend used to do it.

00:20:47 Speaker 9

Lady called Pauline.

00:20:49 Speaker 9

Lovely lady.

00:20:52 Speaker 9

I'll get upset now. She died.

00:20:58 Speaker 9

A few years ago now.

00:21:01 Speaker 9

And I used to say to her cause we would play Scrabble together

00:21:03 Speaker 9

I used to say to her

00:21:05 Speaker 9

It's taken over your life.

00:21:06 Speaker 9

This has and I understand it now.

00:21:09 Speaker 9

And I understand why she let it.

00:21:11 Speaker 9

You know, because it's [pauses] that's the phone going, obviously.

00:21:18 Speaker 9

It's great. I love it.

00:21:19 Speaker 9

I really do love doing the volunteering.

00:21:23 Speaker 9

You get such

00:21:25 Speaker 9

You know when you like helping people, you get such satisfaction out of it.

00:21:30 Speaker 9

You really, really do.

00:21:32 Speaker 9

And I mean, I'm the best thing since bloody sliced bread.

00:21:35 Speaker 9

I really am.

00:21:35 Speaker 9

They just

00:21:37 Speaker 9

love me to bits.

00:21:37 Speaker 9

I have one volunteer I mean user and she was on the phone this morning.

00:21:42 Speaker 9

I love you, sue.

00:21:43 Speaker 9

I love you.

00:21:44 Speaker 9

Thank you, sue.

00:21:45 Speaker 9

Thank you, sue.

00:21:46 Speaker 9

I'm gonna send you some biscuits.

00:21:47 Speaker 9

I'll give them to the driver, you know.

00:21:51 Speaker 9

But yeah, it just makes

00:21:52 Speaker 9

it all worthwhile and again

00:21:55 Speaker 9

you've got the users that haven't had to use anybody or anything, and then their partner's died and they're having to, they've got nobody and then they have to make a big step because they've got to ask for

00:22:07 Speaker 9

help, which is really alien to them.

00:22:10 Speaker 9

And they get on the phone and you know.

00:22:12 Speaker 9

They come out

00:22:12 Speaker 9

with this very long spiel, and why suddenly they've got to

00:22:18 Speaker 9

ask for help.

00:22:22 Speaker 3

[phone rings] You're in demand!

00:22:27 Speaker 9

Yeah, I'll have to turn it off.

00:22:32 Speaker 9

And then

00:22:34 Speaker 9

so then they'll explain why they're having the need to use the car.

00:22:38 Speaker 9

And of course then they'll get like a bit emotional because the partner's died and they don't know how they're going to get to Withybush hospital.

00:22:46 Speaker 9

For this appointment that they really, really need to get to

00:22:49 Speaker 9

So I get all the information off them and I'll say it all right, I'll put it

00:22:53 Speaker 9

in the book.

00:22:53 Speaker 9

I will phone you a couple of days prior to your journey and I will let you know who the driver is and what time they're gonna pick you up.

00:23:00 Speaker 9

And it's happened quite a few times.

00:23:01 Speaker 9

This person has broke down in tears because it's just

00:23:04 Speaker 9

a huge relief

00:23:06 Speaker 9

of stress.

00:23:08 Speaker 9

And everything, you know that

00:23:09 Speaker 9

the girls, you know, they're saying, like, I've not been sleeping.

00:23:12 Speaker 9

I've been so worried.

00:23:13 Speaker 9

I don't know how

00:23:13 Speaker 9

I'm going to get there.

00:23:14 Speaker 9

I can't afford a taxi.

00:23:16 Speaker 9

You know, I just didn't know how I was gonna get there, and I can sleep again now.

00:23:21 Speaker 9

You know something as little

00:23:22 Speaker 9

as that.

00:23:26 Speaker 9

So yeah.

00:23:27 Speaker 9

I do find it very rewarding and I do enjoy doing it.

00:23:32 Speaker 10

[Emma] Within Pembrokeshire, I think we find a lot of the passengers still like the personal service of ringing and booking.

00:23:38 Speaker 10

They like the confidence of speaking to somebody, especially speaking to someone they know when they speak to them regularly.

00:23:44 Speaker 10

That's another part of their social inclusion, that conversation having someone connect with them in that way.

00:23:54 Speaker 10

Also, we do have a barrier of technology with the population who are using community

00:24:00 Speaker 10

transport, even with the uplift of digital awareness during COVID, a lot of the passengers prefer to use the phone.

00:24:08 Speaker 10

However, you know we're all aware that in 10-15 years time, our passengers then will be used to using technology and apps. And so, you know, community transport will move towards that.



00:24:21 Speaker 10

And will adopt technology as we need to going forward, but it's a quite a personal service, community transport and apps have their place and we're definitely seeing that with the Fflecsi.

00:24:34 Speaker 3

That was Emma Bingham, the development officer of the Community Transport Association Wales, in conversation with Amy Nicholass from think and Debbie Johnson, the Community Transport development manager for PACTO in Pembrokeshire.

00:24:47 Speaker 10

The app opens up that flexibility to people who wouldn't ring, younger people, who I mean wouldn't pick up a phone to book something so, but they will book through an app because they do everything through an app.

00:25:00 Speaker 10

And so that opens up community transport to a whole audience that perhaps traditionally we haven't managed to have such an impact with.

00:25:08 Speaker 10

[Debbie] But with flexi we're seeing that in in Pembrokeshire that it's really having an impact with younger people doing different types of journeys.

00:25:17 Speaker 11

Well and some

00:25:18 Speaker 11

of the stuff that the app then allows.

00:25:20 Speaker 11

Is being able to see exactly where your bus is and having that kind of confirmation that it's on the way and seeing the kind of map.

00:25:28 Speaker 11

That will help.

00:25:29 Speaker 11

You navigate to where you need to stand to wait for the bus.

00:25:32 Speaker 11

And then when you're on the bus, you can see, you know, like, like like an in flight thing.

00:25:36 Speaker 11

You can see exactly where the bus is going and where you're gonna arrive and how many people.

00:25:40 Speaker 11

You know, and and some of that stuff that gives people confidence to travel, you know, cause people often say, well, I don't, I don't mind getting on the bus.

00:25:48 Speaker 11

But how will I know where to get off?

00:25:51 Speaker 11

And when to get off, you know, and and what do I have to do to to, you know, to to, to let the driver know and so

00:25:58 Speaker 11

Fflecsi does address

00:25:58 Speaker 11

some of those things that are kind of they're minor barriers.

00:26:01 Speaker 11

But you know those?

00:26:02 Speaker 11

They can just be something little like that can stop people from giving a service.

00:26:07 Speaker 10

{Gemma} Interesting thing with community transport is that

00:26:11 Speaker 10

when you talk about community transport to people who perhaps don't have an understanding of it, they would think that's a minor barrier.

00:26:19 Speaker 10

That's nothing.

00:26:19 Speaker 10

They would just get on with it.

00:26:21 Speaker 10

That's nothing. But to somebody.

00:26:23 Speaker 10

who has never

00:26:24 Speaker 10

used the bus before or who has mental health issues or a disability that

00:26:30 Speaker 10

sort of thing..

00:26:31 Speaker 10

It is a major issue to them, but it's such a

00:26:34 Speaker 10

small thing for us to

00:26:35 Speaker 10

be able to solve.

00:26:36 Speaker 8

And that I think

00:26:38 Speaker 8

is one of the

00:26:39 Speaker 8

things that we hope

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will be able

00:26:41 Speaker 8

to go across into this new version of what our transport network for Wales is going to look like. Is actually we want everybody who's driving a vehicle for a public or community transport provider to have that same level of respect for their passengers.

00:26:55 Speaker 8

That same level of care, that same level of understanding.

00:26:58 Speaker 8

About people having different mobility support needs.

00:27:01 Speaker 8

And different, you know, it might take one person an extra 10 seconds to get from boarding the bus to their seat and a community transport driver is going to wait that extra 10 seconds, whereas the public bus and I'm

00:27:14 Speaker 8

not saying this is due to anything about the drivers, it's because of the expectations that are set in terms of time-tabling and all.

00:27:21 Speaker 8

The rest of it.

00:27:22 Speaker 8

They're not gonna wait that extra 10 seconds because they know they've got to get to the next stop in their window, otherwise they're going to be penalized as an organization.

00:27:29 Speaker 8

And.. But there are things which we know they could be doing like getting disability equality training from disabled people so that their drivers and their staff who are booking journeys have a proper understanding of what it's like to access the public transport network as a disabled person.

00:27:47 Speaker 8

Being able to

00:27:47 Speaker 8

work with local advocates, for example, for young

00:27:50 Speaker 8

people or people with learning disabilities

00:27:52 Speaker 8

so that you can be more inclusive in the way that you're designing

00:27:55 Speaker 8

the literature around your journeys or

00:27:58 Speaker 8

offering opportunities for people to be able to book using an easy read version of the app.

00:28:02 Speaker 8

For example, I think things like that.. the Community transport sector has got a real opportunity to share our knowledge and expertise with the wider transport network and hopefully will result in a much more inclusive network

00:28:15 Speaker 8

in the future.

00:28:16 Speaker 3

[Lucy] So there is a potential of digital apps to make transport more inclusive, but as we've heard, it's really important that people, especially in community transport services.

00:28:26 Speaker 3

are able to speak to somebody in a community because that offers a great deal of support to people as they come to use these services.

00:28:35 Speaker 3

But I just had a few more questions relating to the new software and the use of these apps and Fflecsi services that I put

00:28:42 Speaker 3

to Gemma Lelliott.

00:28:43 Speaker 3

I was interested to observe how like the pins of where people can select to be picked up.

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So I had in my mind that it would work something like you'd select on the app that you need picking up.

00:28:54 Speaker 3

And it would route around to somebody's house and then it would reroute to another person's house. But actually sometimes it's more efficient to arrange the nearest point where people could walk to say yeah. So it'd be interesting to kind of work with some people to get their opinions and experiences or what their needs are in terms of where those

00:29:13 Speaker 3

pins might work.

00:29:16 Speaker 3

Just to make sure we're not getting those kind of barriers about people not being

00:29:19 Speaker 3

able to walk

00:29:20 Speaker 3

to those stops with the on-demand services, yeah.

00:29:23 Speaker 3

And then also

00:29:25 Speaker 3

Is it possible to have that extra flexibility to kind of stop?

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And I suppose there's an issue there with where's safe to

00:29:32 Speaker 3

stop for a minibus?

00:29:34 Speaker 3

It's not that straightforward, right?

00:29:36 Speaker 3

But we found that there were probably

00:29:37 Speaker 3

like a few people

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that could have been waiting on the side of the road that could maybe have been picked up.

00:29:43 Speaker 3

Or like people stopping and asking

00:29:45 Speaker 3

while the bus was stopped.

00:29:48 Speaker 3

Like could they go somewhere?

00:29:49 Speaker 3

But I think it

00:29:50 Speaker 3

had to be booked in.

00:29:52 Speaker 3

So that advanced booking is kind of like making it less flexible, but I think the vision it has is to be super flexible.

00:29:58 Speaker 3

So that'll be interesting to see how that kind of evolves in the future.

**Speaker 8**

[Gemma] I mean, I think that's the beauty of the Welsh Government supporting the pilot in the way that they have is and we've got locations right away across the country now that are using

00:30:11 Speaker 8

Fflecsi in different ways. When they procured for the software system to manage the bookings and manage the journey planning and all the rest of it

00:30:20 Speaker 8

that was something they explicitly said that they needed to have is more flexibility about people being able to book their journeys.

00:30:26 Speaker 8

How far in advance they needed to be

00:30:28 Speaker 8

able to book them.

00:30:30 Speaker 8

That's one of the things that we hear a lot from the community transport sector because people rely on that service is, you know, if I know that I need to pick my child up from school and take them to an appointment, then I know that I need to be able

00:30:44 Speaker 8

to book that

00:30:44 Speaker 8

however, far in advance I get the letter from the hospital.

00:30:47 Speaker 8

Then I need to know that I can book that journey.

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The first iteration of the Fflecsi pilot in

00:30:52 Speaker 8

Conwy, the maximum amount of time that you had in advance to book your journey was two hours.

00:30:57 Speaker 8

So we're already seeing a progression in terms of how that software is being managed and how that relationship is evolving between Transport for Wales and the local authorities who are working with operators to deliver these services.

00:31:10 Speaker 8

But I agree, I think it's something if we want to deliver a properly integrated transport system, then we're going to need the maximum

00:31:18 Speaker 8

amount of flexibility and the services that are running behind the scenes that enable and facilitate that, because I think anything that means you can't book a week in

00:31:28 Speaker 8

advance or you

00:31:29 Speaker 8

can't you know you happen to be stranded in the town centre and you know there's a Fflecsi bus that will get you somewhere near your home, but they won't let you on the bus because you haven't booked your seat.

00:31:39 Speaker 8

Those are the kinds of things that

00:31:40 Speaker 8

will put people off.

00:31:41 Speaker 8

And then it doesn't take much to discourage people away from using public transport.

00:31:47 Speaker 8

If we're serious about getting people out of their private cars and using more sustainable

00:31:51 Speaker 8

Modes of transport,

00:31:52 Speaker 8

we need to make it as easy and as accessible as possible.

00:31:58 Speaker 3

[Lucy] So to conclude this episode on the digital futures of community transport and on-demand services, I think overall this is a really exciting opportunity for young people to engage in community transport services in ways that they haven't previously been able to or they haven't been targeted in this kind of a way we haven't thought about

00:32:18 Speaker 3

how younger people want to and need to use community transport services.

00:32:23 Speaker 3



And in new ways, we're bringing together third sector organisations and the way that transport is delivered for certain people in certain rural settings, for example, and finding new ways to kind of bring young people with older people disabled, people's needs together to offer

00:32:42 Speaker 3

services that are more sustainable to run economically, potentially, although there's still a lot to find out about the economics of these services.

00:32:52 Speaker 3

These services and the on-demand technology, are offering community transport providers ways of finding out and collecting more evidence and data to support the work that they do.

00:33:03 Speaker 3

Understanding the amount of volunteer hours and the costs of running these services and cost savings to the NHS, for example.

00:33:12 Speaker 3

They're able to collect more data to show the value of these services and how services are used in communities with Fflecsi transport and on-demand services, community transport providers are showing that they can still retain that personal and local touch, the relationships that hold value for the people who use these services, the drivers,

00:33:33 Speaker 3

also, the people who answer the phone and book people onto these services, they're vital to so many of the people who are using community transport now, so it's really important that these services stay, are blended kind of a service.

00:33:50 Speaker 3

Thank you for listening to this podcast episode on Digital Futures and Community Transport from THINK. There are three more episodes in the series you can explore about community transport.

00:34:00 Speaker 3

One is More Than Just a Journey, which is a soundscape of the many people involved in and using community transport, describing what it is, how important it is and how it contributes to our transport.

00:34:11 Speaker 3

Provision.

There's also.

00:34:13 Speaker 3

one on access to healthcare and co-production and community transport.

00:34:18 Speaker 3

I hope you can check them out.

00:34:20 Speaker 3

About THINK. THINK is a collaboration between Public Health Wales and Aberystwyth University.

00:34:26 Speaker 3

We hope you'll find out more about what we do by exploring our website for more resources or signing-up to receive news about our events and networking and collaboration opportunities or you can follow us on Twitter, @transporthealth.

00:34:39 Speaker 3

Many thanks to everyone

00:34:40 Speaker 3

Who has contributed to the

00:34:41 Speaker 3

interviews in the series. Good-bye for now.

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