



Report To:	Inverclyde Alliance Board	Date:	1 October 2018
Report By:	Louise McVey Corporate Policy, Performance and Partnership Manager	Report No:	
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Subject:	Tackling transport-related barriers to employment in low-income neighbourhoods		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) report on tackling transport-related barriers to employment in low-income neighbourhoods <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/tackling-transport-related-barriers-employment-low-income-neighbourhoods>. Port Glasgow is one of the case study areas.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The JRF recognise that transport can be a major barrier to finding work and looked at six areas across England and Scotland: Harpurhey (Manchester), Hattersley (Tameside), Seacroft (Leeds), Dewsbury Moor (Kirklees), Port Glasgow (Inverclyde) and Castlemilk (Glasgow).
- 2.2 The key finding of the report is that public transport is all too often seen as something that constrains rather than enables a return to work, because of a lack of affordable and reliable transport that gets people to locations where there is suitable work.
- 2.3 The report calls for co-ordinated action by the UK Government, combined and local authorities, transport bodies and partner agencies to make sure that:
- ‘Stronger’ models of partnership or bus franchising (through the Bus Services Act 2017) improve the availability, reliability and affordability of public transport, to make it easier to access employment.
 - Planning tools and approaches ensure that new housing and employment developments are well served by public transport that reduces the travel costs, times or distances between places of residence and work.
 - Transport and employment policy are better integrated to enable employment support providers to help clients understand travel choices as part of their return to work.
- 2.4 The report contains in- depth studies of travel time to jobs in the wider city region, as well as quotes from interviewees from Port Glasgow, which give a flavour of some of the issues experienced locally. Cost and the lack of reliable buses seem to be the major barrier, as well as jobs being located in areas which are difficult to access via public transport or require two to three different buses to be taken.
- 2.5 There is a clear role for a range of Alliance Partners to come together to identify ways in which to break down the barriers to public transport for those seeking work, particularly SPT, Job Centre Plus,

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Alliance Board:

- a. Considers the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's report 'Tackling transport-related barriers to employment in low-income neighbourhoods'
- b. Remits the Inverclyde Regeneration and Employability Partnership (IREP) with taking forward discussions and outcomes from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) report on tackling transport-related barriers to employment in low-income neighbourhoods as part of their action plan.

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4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Public transport in Inverclyde is something that is mentioned regularly in any community engagement feedback, particularly the cost of local bus services and how early they finish across the whole area. Additionally, in regard to the wider travel to work area, many people cite the cost of public transport as a barrier to employment.
- 4.2 This Joseph Rowntree Foundation report supports the idea that lack of affordable public transport acts as a barrier to accessing jobs in the wider city region for Inverclyde, and elsewhere. The research set out to explore the potential to address the transport-related barriers to work that face households in poverty in low-income neighbourhoods. It draws on an evidence review, interviews with 79 residents and 51 stakeholders, an analysis of travel time maps, and policy development workshops to explore:
- how transport shapes the capacity of residents living in low-income neighbourhoods to secure and sustain employment
 - how transport issues interact with other factors such as the nature of work in local labour markets, individual and household circumstances, and institutional support, to constrain or enable access to employment
 - the scope for national, city regional and local stakeholders to reduce transport-related barriers to work.
- 4.3 The headline messages from the report are:
- Transport is a key barrier to employment for many residents living in low income neighbourhoods. All too often, public transport is seen as something that constrains rather than enables a return to work
 - Transport issues are intimately related to the nature and location of employment. The prospect of poorly paid and insecure work limits the range of areas that individuals consider looking for work. This is sometimes compounded by the inaccessibility of jobs that have become increasingly dispersed across city regions. Public transport systems have not accommodated this changing geography of employment.
 - Transport-related barriers to work facing individuals on low incomes are more practical than perceptual. There is little evidence of limited special horizons where localised, cultural outlooks constrain people's perceptions of viable commutes.
 - Challenges around transport and access to work cannot be solved through transport policy alone. Improving access to employment requires co-ordinated action across a range of policy areas that includes transport, but also relates to economic development, regeneration, housing and planning, and employment and skills.
 - Transport could play a bigger role in supporting poverty reduction and mitigation by making it easier for low-income households to access work. The current focus on major national and pan-regional transport projects such as Crossrail, HS2, and Northern Powerhouse Rail arguably overlooks the need for significant complementary investment in local transport systems within city regions, to meet the needs of low income households.
- 4.4 The report goes into greater detail on the main issues faced by people from low income households and public transport, but the key issues raised for Port Glasgow include:
- Port Glasgow (along with Dewsbury Moor and Hattersley) is functionally disconnected from the wider region in terms of the time it takes to travel to key centres of employment by public transport.
 - The relatively long commute times required to access many employment opportunities may be a problem, given the tendency of lower-skilled workers to undertake shorter commutes and the high travel costs they may face relative to wages.
 - There is a sense of labour market insecurity because of concerns about the quality and quantity of work available.
 - There are issues with the location of appropriate work relative to where people live, and

issues with the connection of employment opportunities by existing employment links.

- Most people who were interviewed expressed a willingness to commute an hour or more to work.
- Residents in more peripheral neighbourhoods do not necessarily benefit from decentralisation of lower skilled jobs away from the city centres as many areas of employment growth are relatively inaccessible. This can be seen in Inverclyde for businesses such as Amazon which can be difficult to access using public transport especially if working very early in the morning or late at night.
- There are issues around the availability, reliability and affordability of public transport. This came up time and again in the responses to the Our Place Our Future community engagement.
- The need to take more than one bus to reach jobs means that many people do not see these as viable commutes, particularly if there are already issues with availability, reliability and affordability.
- Financial constraints can rule out car ownership for many people, but would open up commuting options.
- Low-waged work constrains the amount households can spend on travel, while 'atypical' work may be considered insufficient to warrant lengthy commutes.
- Caring commitments can also limit viable commutes.
- Complex fare structures and ticketing options can limit understanding or perceptions of commuting options.
- People may struggle with using the transport system where it is considered uncomfortable or unsafe, particularly if they have mental or physical health problems.
- The complex nature of transport barriers to work requires solutions from across multiple partners although transport policy alone cannot solve the problems that originate in the labour market.

4.5 The report suggests that in order to tackle these problems strategic and co-ordinated action is required, across four overarching priorities, to improve the connectivity of low-income neighbourhoods:

- implementing bus franchising or 'strong' models of co-operation, to address transport-related barriers emerging from a deregulated public transport system that all too often fails to meet the needs of low-income users
- making public transport more accessible and more accountable through technology – particularly through open data (including fares) and real-time data on public transport – to understand issues, develop solutions and communicate information to users
- developing longer term spatial planning frameworks and tools to embed sustainability, density and transport-oriented development principles that better connect places of residence and work
- integrating transport and employment policy to enable employment support agencies to play a vital role in supporting clients to understand travel choices and how to navigate them as part of their return to work; action is required across spatial scales, but there is much that agencies working at local or city regional level (especially local authorities, Job Centre Plus and other employment support providers, transport bodies and combined authorities) can do to develop solutions.

5.0 PROPOSALS

5.1 It is proposed that the Alliance Board consider the key finding of the JRF Report 'Tackling transport-related barriers to employment in low-income neighbourhoods', particularly the issues raised for Port Glasgow and access from Inverclyde to jobs in the wider City Region, including Paisley and Glasgow. There is a clear role for Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, Job Centre Plus, Inverclyde Council Economic Regeneration and Inverclyde Community Development Trust to work together to attempt to alleviate the travel-related barriers experienced by residents in Inverclyde in accessing job opportunities.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Legal: none at present
Finance: none at present
Human Resources: none at present
Equality and Diversity: the report highlights that uncomfortable public transport and perceptions that it is unsafe can have particular negative impacts on people who have mental and physical health conditions.
Repopulation: good reliable, affordable public transport which enables commuting to job opportunities across Inverclyde and the wider City Region would make Inverclyde a more attractive place to stay.
Inequalities: Tackling barriers to employment, which are a result of unaffordable and unreliable public transport would significantly increase access to jobs, and thereby increase the money in many people's pockets.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 n/a

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/tackling-transport-related-barriers-employment-low-income-neighbourhoods>