



To: Neighbourhoods and City Transport

From: Adrian Davis

Date: 13/12/2013

Subject: Essential Evidence on a page: No 112 Older car drivers and planned approaches to driving cessation

Top line: There is a need for those who drive cars to begin to contemplate giving-up driving as they approach old age. Many older car drivers stall for time and do not face up to the fact that they may not be able to drive in the future.

Older people are more reliant on cars than ever before to meet their day-to-day needs. In the UK, 50% of those aged 70 or over hold a full driving licence, which has increased from 32% in 1989. The last 30 years has shown a substantial increase in car drivers who are 65 years and over in the UK, most markedly amongst female drivers, with a 200% increase in male drivers and a 600% increase in female drivers in this age group.

Giving-up driving is associated with much angst and can result in mental and physical health problems. However, such problems can be reduced if older drivers plan to give-up driving before they need to and gradually reduce their driving. Research shows that those who plan and gradually give-up driving face far less negative affect than those who have to be told to give-up driving or do so on the spur of the moment.¹ Planning to give-up driving can be associated with gradually giving-up on journeys that are becoming difficult to make and older people typically give-up driving in busy traffic, they avoid motorways and difficult junctions and in addition drive less often in darkness or inclement weather.

Those that suffer worst tend to be drivers who are told to give-up driving and do so without any preparation. Practical solutions for those giving-up driving are evident, including lifts, walking more and using community and public transport, but use of these varies with both provision and confidence in use. Affective and emotional factors associated with being a car driver, including independence, freedom, control, status and roles, are also lost when giving-up driving. Hence, support for life beyond the car is needed at a younger age (while older people are driving) to help build solutions and confidence in transport use beyond the car and should involve emotional support, as well as practical support. A social travel group is suggested as an appropriate mechanism for this, along with raising the need for early contemplation of giving-up driving and its associated social issues through the use of techniques such as community theatre.²

Since giving-up driving not only involves practical difficulties but affective needs not being met, then support for giving-up driving needs to be practical and emotional in nature. It should be continuous and help build confidence. Courses for older people have been developed to assist with giving-up driving in terms of emotional and practical support which reduce the negative feeling older people experience of being a burden and not paying their way for lifts while retaining a good level of mobility. More of this support is needed as future generations of older people will have used a car almost all of their adult life and geared their life around the car, making learning alternative ways of travelling even more difficult.

¹ Musselwhite, C. and Haddad, H. 2010 Mobility, accessibility and quality of later life. *Quality in Ageing and Older Adults*, 11(1), 25-37.

² Musselwhite, C. 2011 The importance of driving for older people and how the pain of driving cessation can be reduced. *Signpost: Journal of Dementia and Mental Health Care of Older People*, 15 (3). 22-26.