

Clean Air Consultation



Results from the Clean Air Consultation undertaken by Skills for People with people with a learning disability



May 2019

Introduction

Councils in Newcastle, Gateshead and North Tyneside have been working together to develop proposals for improving air quality. This is in response to a Government order following concerns about the level of pollution on parts of the A167 Central Motorway, the Tyne Bridge and a section of the A1058 Coast Road. Without action, pollution levels will remain above legal limits.

Skills for People were approached by the Councils' Transport Engagement Team to find out the views of people with a learning disability about the proposals to improve air quality.

There are two primary reasons for targeting consultation directly at people with a learning disability:

- As citizens of the North East, people with a learning disability have a right to have their say. To do this in a meaningful way involves easy to read materials, interactive sessions and a friendly space where people feel comfortable to speak up.
- To find out if there are any specific concerns that are unique to people with a learning disability that the councils should be aware of.

How we carried out the consultation

An easy read guide to understanding the councils' proposed clean air solutions has been made and widely distributed. Consultation itself has focused on getting a representative view across the region initially targeting people in North Tyneside, Gateshead, Newcastle and Sunderland. The numbers seen were 26 people with a learning disability and 6 non-learning-disabled support staff. Within the people seen, 3 people had lived experience of being autistic. With only 3 people however this report remains primarily about the experience of people with a learning disability.

The workshops were a mixture of image-based PowerPoint presentations and group work, with an emphasis upon pulling from individual stories the wider experience of people with a learning disability.

The people with a learning disability who took part in the consultation are used to expressing the views of themselves and of the experience of people with a learning disability – they were primarily from Speaking Up Groups such as Skills for People, Sunderland People First and the North Tyneside Forum. Whilst 26 people cannot of course claim to be fully representative of the wider population of people with a learning disability, their wide-spread experience speaking up for other people, geographical spread across the region and gender balance certainly gives power to the views expressed.

Summary

1: Understanding the issues

- People with a learning disability have considerably poorer health outcomes than the wider population. This is evidenced by significantly earlier deaths, higher rates of obesity and higher rates of Long-Term Conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer.
- The workshop participants were highly aware of the health needs of the wider population of people with a learning disability, clearly understanding how pollution could affect the health of an already vulnerable population.
- Concerns were also raised about the vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with mental health issues and the physically disabled were affected by poor quality air.
- Many people understood air pollution within the wider context of environmental concerns such as litter, beach pollution, recycling, etc.
- The workshop participants gave examples of a wide range of the causes of pollution but clearly saw the main source as stemming from road vehicles.

There is undoubted support for improving the quality of the region's air with a full understanding of how this can impact upon the most vulnerable sections of the community

2: Ideas to make the air cleaner

These ideas were discussed **before** the option of a Charging Clean Air Zone (CAZ) and A Low Emission Zone with Tolls (LEZ) were put as options to the workshop participants.

- The workshop participants' ideas centred around alternatives to the use of cars and making cars less polluting. Popular ideas were encouraging greater move to electric vehicles, greater use of public transport and more cycling.
- The ideas are in line with the councils' general approach before considerations were given to CAZ and a LEZ.

There is full support for a general attempt to improve air quality and move to a greener, cleaner world

3: Specific issues around the idea of a CAZ and a LEZ that relate specifically to people with a learning disability

- To participate as full community members many people with a learning disability rely upon a large network of professionals, tradespeople, family and friends. This includes Support Workers, family, food deliveries, support from health workers and many more people.
- Support Workers / Care Workers are some of the lowest paid workers in our society. Participants in the workshops believe this raises specific issues for people with a learning disability who might be affected **if they live in areas affected by either charging or by older cars being banned:**
 - Will there be many Support Workers with older cars that need replaced? How will they afford this on low wages?
 - If there is a car scrappage scheme will it be enough to allow a worker on minimum wage to buy a vehicle that is adequate for their working role?
 - Will a Toll charge mean people look for other forms of work or care work in areas that avoid the charging zone?
 - If support Workers decide not to use their own cars because of a LEZ and use public transport, in some cases this might mean less travel support for people with a learning disability.
- Has the possible full impact upon charging been considered for all vulnerable groups?
- Loneliness and social isolation are a major concern for vulnerable groups. There is real concern about whether or not Tolls might increase people's social isolation by reducing the amount of visitor's people have.

Other general comments include:

Concern that any extra costs to business like taxi firms, small tradespeople, food deliveries etc could be passed onto the customer. Many people with a learning disability rely upon taxis, tradespeople and take-aways so will any passing on of costs disproportionately affect them?

If people, try to avoid a toll zone the pollution might just be transferred to other areas of the city as well as causing parking problems outside of the LEZ.

Whilst there is full support for cleaner air for everybody there is a genuine concern that charging tolls and replacing old cars might disproportionately affect people with a learning disability and other vulnerable people

5: Ideas about how people could be supported during transition period

A well thought out plan to help low paid workers if they have to replace their cars; ideas include compensation, a generous car scrappage scheme, cheap loans and significant time to prepare before either any tolls or a car needs to be replaced.

6: Recommendations

To closely monitor how people with a learning disability and / or autism as well as other vulnerable groups are affected by whatever decision is made. This should include closely working with people with a learning disability, families and care providers to determine the real impact upon people's lives. This impact assessment could look at the following:

- The numbers of people with a learning disability living in or close to the designated zone who will be most impacted by whatever future decision is made.
- What percentage of Support Workers / Carers are likely to need to replace their cars if the option for a CAZ is chosen? Will the support being offered be enough to allow people to change their cars?
- Are there real and demonstrable improvements to people's health over time – even years?
- Has any impact led to any increase in social isolation?

Overall it is clear, despite reservation regarding some Support Workers having to replace old cars, that the preferred option, certainly for those that took part in this consultation exercise, would be a Clean Air Zone.

There is full support for other ideas such as better walking and cycling routes, improving public transport and helping people with the costs of changing their vehicles.

7: Conclusion

People with a learning disability have significantly worse health outcomes than the general population and therefore mitigating anything that has a negative impact upon people's health, such as pollution is a good thing. It should be noted that this report unequivocally supports anything to improve the health of people with a learning disability. Many people with a learning disability are reliant upon a complex network of support, family and friends to be full citizens. We do not yet know if the costs in terms of tolls and car replacements for individuals in these networks will impact upon people with a learning disability in a significant way. It is however an area that must be closely monitored.

Appendix

Combined comments from all 4 of the workshops

Why do you think Clean Air is Important?

- Healthy living
- Poisoned
- It's really bad for people with allergies
- Poor air can kill you
- Things like asbestosis can kill you, it's flying around in the air
- It can cause you to cough
- There's lots of different types of pollution
- How do we know when there is clean air and when it's polluted if we can't always see it?
- Bad air comes from petrol used in cars and lorries doesn't it?
- For our health
- To breathe better
- Litter
- Environment and the air
- Clean beaches
- All the germs in dog mess and from other animals
- Burst drainage pipes
- Acid rain pollutes the air
- Hay-fever
- Hay-fever and allergies
- Increases asthma
- Death partially caused by air-pollution
- You're vulnerable if you have poorer health
- People with disabilities get sick more easily
- The elderly
- Babies
- People that are pregnant
- Adults
- People with dementia
- People with mental health problems
- People with autism in highly polluted areas can lead to over sensitisation (sensory overload)
- City centres should have clean air so people can breathe more easily
- People want clean air for the children
- For health reasons like asthma which will be a problem
- Poor air can be so bad it hurts babies in their brain
- It might cause meningitis it could cause cancer and breathing problems
- Cause a lot of the problems and pollution
- Living the construction sites is bad for you
- You can smell smoke in the car fumes carbon dioxide
- Leaving rubbish around, it rots and gets mouldy

- Sewers create smells they are dirty and horrible
- Makes me feel dirty
- Rivers can be polluted through dumping rubbish and oil
- Bad chest
- High death rates
- Climate change
- Rubbish in the sea
- Bad chest
- Asthma
- Heart disease
- Disabilities
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What do you think causes pollution in the air?

- It comes mainly from cars buses and wagons
- Could be power stations and the smoke
- Chimneys give off lots of smoke, don't they?
- Gas fires
- Carbon monoxide
- The cause of most pollution are lorries buses, trains, vans and taxis
- It used to be the old coal fires
- No, it's smoke from modern chimneys things like a log fire
- It can create a nasty smog
- Pollution can come through all the planes at Newcastle airport
- Car exhausts
- The making and manufacturing of cars
- Using diesel
- Dirty air in the tyres
- Factories polluting the air
- Chimneys
- Steam
- Burning rubber
- Burning coal
- Drilling
- Fire stations
- Cooking
- Smoking
- Animals like cats
- Gas
- Rubbish in landfills
- Cremating humans
- Cars and transport
- Diesel
- Fly-tipping
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What are the most important things about Clean Air?

- The environment
- It helps with asthma
- It helps the whole environment to recover
- It reduces cancer
- It's nice to breathe cleaner air
- People will be more healthy
- People have better lungs

How could Newcastle, Gateshead and North Tyneside make the air cleaner?

- We can go green
- We can have different energy fuels and use electric buses
- We can change the cars and get rid of the old ones and ban dirty cars
- We can use trams
- There could be more pedestrian zones
- We need to make it affordable for people to change their cars
- Diesel engines could be banned, or there could be a way to clean themselves
- We can encourage large organisations to go electric
- People could share cars
- Get people to just rent better cars help them to do this
- Electric cars
- More trees
- Park-and-ride
- Get rid of all the false grass
- More recycling and collecting of rubbish
- Call manufacturers technical innovations
- Better clean and public transport
- Electric cars
- More wall chargers
- Cheaper electric cars
- Stop cars going in pedestrian zones
- Vehicle sharing
- Buses
- Bike schemes and electric scooters
- Transport links
- More metros
- Less cars around
- More cycle lanes
- More bikes
- Walking to work
- The council needs to hear the voice of people with a learning disability
- The council is to blame
- Free bikes

- Driverless cars
- Electric car
- Walking and cycling
- Cleaner fuel
- More cycle lanes

How would people with a learning disability be affected if they lived near or in the polluted areas?

People talked in great detail about the wider network of professionals, families and friends that are essential for ensuring that many people with a learning disability live full lives in the community and how charges could have a real impact on this wide network of people.

- Families
- Support workers
- Managers
- Friends
- I get nurses twice a day
- My cleaner comes in to help
- People who fix your roof
- People who repair your house
- People who sort out your garden
- Window cleaners
- People to clean your gutters
- Doctors
- My auntie and uncle
- Some people don't see anyone
- Friends
- Family
- Doctors and nurses
- Crisis team
- Mental health support
- Appointments
- People fixing your electrics
- People putting in fixtures
- People reading our meters
- Food deliveries
- Meals on wheels
- Support workers
- Manager
- Meter reader
- McMillan nurses nursing support
- Having medication delivered
- Having shopping delivered

- Gardener
- Support Worker
- Brother
- Friends
- Guardian
- Doctor
- My nurse three times a day
- Landlord
- Window Cleaner
- Social Worker
- Fire Brigade
- Ambulance
- Plumber
- TV repair
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Which idea do you think do you like most and why?

- Who's going to pay for it all?
- Isolation
- Will we have to pay a lot more money?
- Support workers are really low paid -what if they have a really old car?
- Will our costs go up?
- People might not want to work for us any more if it's too expensive to come to work
- People might look for jobs in other areas near where they live
- They might not be able to afford it
- They might not want to support us with their cars when they come to work
- They might have to use alternative transport
- Does it just shift the pollution?
- People might stop coming to support us
- Older people can also suffer
- It might affect all the different types of people who need care
- Could we end up lonely?
- People may not be able to afford new vehicles
- Carers are not paid well so this change will have more of an impact on them
- Will it cut Newcastle off?
- Is it a money-making exercise?
- Will it affect deliveries of things?
- People may not go out socially if it costs more
- People may have to pay more for their support
- Will it create more traffic in other areas?
- Will it shift pollution to residential areas?
- Taxis will need to be replaced so the cost will be passed on to passengers
- Old cars what will happen to them?
- Why should I be penalised because I can't afford a new car?
- Its unfairly hammering the low paid

- It unfairly affects people with a learning disability
- What will the effect on people with mobility issues be?
- If there are increased costs for bus companies', lorries, taxi firms will the costs be passed on to the customer - people with learning disabilities can be very poor
- How do you stop all the vehicles in one area going to another?
- How can we divert traffic without causing problems in other areas?
- People with a learning disability may be affected things like increasing isolation and less independence
- There are huge costs to people travelling and getting about
- Does it affect poor people more?
- For idea number two if everybody has to pay to use the zone wont, they just drive to other areas and pollute these?
- It is a good idea to have a good clean area. it's a start but why only such a small area?
- Will it cost us money, and will it hit the poorest harder and especially learning disability folks?
- Also, someone with an old car who supports people then will the council pay the charge?
- What will the cost be for the Low Emission Zone?
- Number two still has polluted cars going through the toll areas
- What is the effect on small business owners and the self-employed if you can't afford the cost of upgrading?
- People prefer the bigger zones to move around more
- How will it all be funded how do you make sure people are not disadvantaged?

How can we make it easier for people with a learning disability and carers?

- We should arrange somebody to come to talk to us
- More mobility badges
- Road tax exemptions
- The car scrappage scheme that is proposed will not cover the cost of replacement for people on the low-wage
- Accessible information explaining what is really happening to people with a learning disability
- People on benefits
- Mobility cars cost more to begin with
- I can't ride a bike
- The frequency of visits
- Remember family carers
- They can't just bring something in without explaining it
- What are the implications of the road tax?
- The council to meet people with a learning disability
- Scrap it is a good idea but how much money?
- Can the council help people to afford the cost of travel?
- People should be given enough time to get a new car

- The council should keep an eye on people in the future to see how they are coping with any changes
- Give people compensation
- Give people incentives and concessions
- Give people an easy loan scheme
- Modify the old cars
- Give a long timescale
- Make sure there is good information on TV, social media, easy read about when, how and what people are doing
- Will the person with a disability pay the cost
- Make sure car scrappage scheme really covers people's costs

What do you think of these ideas?

- Give people time to make the changes they need to their vehicles
- Help business with some of the costs of changing their vehicles
- Make better walking and cycling routes, that could help people get to the Metro and bus stations

In general people were supportive of all of these ideas – with the caveats already expressed in all the wider comments.

Report and consultation by Skills for People