

National Centre for Accessible Transport: Theory of Change Narrative

This Theory of Change has been developed by the National Centre for Accessible Transport (ncat) following its launch as an Evidence Centre in early 2023. As ncat progresses further, reports and insights will also be published on our website www.ncat.uk

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ncat (2024). 'Theory of Change 2024'. Available at www.ncat.uk

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1. Introduction

What is the National Centre for Accessible Transport?

Launched in 2023, the National Centre for Accessible Transport (ncat) was set up to provide robust evidence to support the aim of making transport accessible for all. This is explained more in ncat's strategy and the about ncat section at the end of this report.

What is the purpose of this document?

This document defines the National Centre for Accessible Transport's (ncat) Theory of Change (ToC).

A Theory of Change explains how neat's activities are intended to influence change, to work towards **a more inclusive society through accessible transport**. It helps people understand:

- What change needs to be achieved: That transport operators and policy
 makers have high quality research and evidence to influence and inform their
 decision-making to improve transport accessibility.
- How it will be achieved: ncat will work with disabled people and Disabled People Led Organisations, along with industry and policy partners, to cocreate solutions based on robust evidence.
- How we'll know if change is happening: When we can evidence through disabled people's experiences, improvements in transport legislation, policy, and services.

The ToC allows neat to measure progress and adapt plans as needed. This ToC should not be viewed as a fixed plan which strictly outlines all the work neat will do. Instead, the ToC is a live framework which guides its work and will be reviewed regularly as neat develops.

This narrative describes the development of the ToC and the context that sits behind it. It references relevant literature that supports implementation of planned interventions and their ability to generate change.



This ToC explains how, through its resources, neat will work with disabled people, policymakers, transport organisations, charities, and other companies to produce evidence about accessible transport. It explains how neat will raise awareness and amplify the experiences of disabled people, to influence people and organisations to change policies, products, and services.

This report will describe how these outcomes can be achieved.

2. Context

Why is neat needed?

As identified in Motability's 'The Transport Accessibility Gap' report – published in March 2022 – the transport accessibility gap in the UK stands at 38%. This means disabled people (as defined under the Equality Act 2010) take 38% fewer trips than non-disabled people. Furthermore, this figure has not altered for over a decade, pointing to the deeply embedded issues that exist surrounding accessible transport in the UK.

Disabled people have been campaigning for change for a long time, but the Transport Accessibility Gap research highlights that there is further to go.

The research shows that the transport accessibility gap cuts across multiple modes of transport, with 1 in 5 disabled people unable to travel due to the lack of appropriate transport options. The following statistics from that research² highlight the wide-reaching issues within the transport sector.

- 40% of disabled people often experience issues or difficulties when travelling by train in the UK.
- Whilst disabled people are more likely to travel by **bus** than other modes of public transport, issues often arise as a result of poor journey planning information.
- Across the UK, it's been reported that 57% of disabled people find using airports or flying difficult, with 33% of people saying they were unhappy with

¹ Motability (2022)

² Motability (2022)



the opportunities provided when it came to asking for assistance at the booking stage.

Disabled drivers represent 5% of the driving population, which is around two
million people. Car travel remains the most popular form of transport among
disabled adults and around a third of these journeys are made as a
passenger.

The transport accessibility gap has a wider impact than simply inability to travel. Reduced transport options can have a significant detrimental impact on a person's social needs. It is incredibly important to consider these, as satisfying them are critical to sustain a person's mental and physical wellbeing, and subsequently their quality of life and personal growth. Transport is a means of accessing employment, education, healthcare and social opportunities. Further information is provided below.³

Safety and security

Providing a safe and secure environment for those making a journey is critical to the physical health of travellers. It has been found that disabled people are 4 to 5 times more likely to be injured as a pedestrian than non-disabled people, and disabled people report two to three-times more difficulties when travelling than non-disabled people.⁴

It is important to consider different types of access needs in relation to safety when travelling. For example, a report published by the Department for Transport highlighted that people with memory loss are more likely to feel unsafe on public transport, whilst people with physical coordination conditions are more likely to have avoided taking public transport in the first place.⁵

The absence, or perceived absence of safety when travelling, particularly when moving through unfamiliar or unpredictable environments, can have wider impacts on a person's mental health. Unsafe environments or experiences can lead to feelings of insecurity, stress, and anxiety.

³ SimplyPsychology (2023)

⁴ Motability (2022)

⁵ Department for Transport (2018)



Belonging and esteem

Belonging in an environment, and within wider society is essential for a person's emotional wellbeing. The feeling of connectedness and being part of a group has significant benefits on building confidence. Similarly, having a sense of esteem, through feelings of dignity and independence, but also respect from others, provides people with feelings of worth, purpose and acknowledgement.

The ability to travel confidently plays a key role in satisfying the needs of belonging and esteem. 1 in 4 disabled people say that negative attitudes from other passengers prevent them from using public transport and 30% of disabled people say that difficulties with public transport has reduced their independence.⁶

Self-actualisation

Self-actualisation relates to the realisation of a person's full potential. This cannot be fully fulfilled before other needs, discussed previously are satisfied. Additionally, to achieve self-actualisation a person should be able to achieve their personal goals, for example through education, within their career or perhaps by exploring creative achievements⁷.

Being able to travel with ease is key when accessing education and employment opportunities, as well as other services. Currently, 10% of disabled people in the UK state that inaccessible transport is a key barrier to their education, with disabled people twice as likely as other citizens to have no recognised qualifications. Furthermore, over one third of all those without any formal qualifications are disabled.⁸

When examining access to employment, 25% of working age disabled people cite inaccessible transport as a key barrier to participation in employment. As a result, on average, disabled people apply to 60% more jobs than non-disabled people yet are almost twice as likely to be unemployed. Time should also be considered – with a

⁶ Motability (2022)

⁷ Britannica (2023)

⁸ Motability (2022)



wheelchair users' commute typically taking up to 5 times longer than that of a non-disabled person in London.⁹

Being able to act spontaneously is a key characteristic of self-actualisation. The ability to make spontaneous decisions (for example - to attend a last-minute appointment or switch your travel plans due to a service cancellation) without feelings of stress or anxiety, can be aided by providing flexible travel options that are both open and accessible to disabled people. However, currently this flexibility is limited, with nearly one in three disabled people saying they simply didn't make some journeys due to problems with transport (before Covid-19 pandemic).¹⁰

What are the challenges ncat needs to overcome?

The findings outlined above summarise the impact that inaccessible transport can have on disabled people. Various research has identified a number of issues which have hindered progress towards closing the transport accessibility gap, these are summarised below.

Lack of evidence

There are key limitations to the current evidence base regarding travel behaviour of disabled people. This has informed the decision by the Motability Foundation to fund the National Centre for Accessible Transport.

Although there is a significant body of knowledge addressing the differences of travel experiences between disabled people and non-disabled people, it is recognised that there is limited or inadequate evidence on how this varies within the population of disabled people — for example, by level and type of impairment, and by age, as well as the interaction of these characteristics (referred to as intersectionality)¹¹. This is further supported by a report by the Department for Transport (2018), which identified that disabled people should not be viewed as one homogenous group, particularly when assessing their travel purposes and requirements.¹²

⁹ Britannica (2023)

¹⁰ Motability (2022)

¹¹ Motability (2022)

¹² Department for Transport (2018)



In summary, the behaviour, attitudes, and feelings of all disabled people are different, based on their personal lived experiences.

It is also clear that the voices and experiences of disabled people are frequently not prioritised in evidence. Therefore, additional research is required to investigate the relationship between accessibility of transport and its relationship with different types of transport users.¹³

Limited awareness

Public awareness on barriers experienced by disabled people when travelling is limited. A lack of knowledge and understanding regarding accessibility constraints within transport system has contributed to the historic segregation of disabled people, with ongoing stigma still playing a role today. As highlighted by Motability (2022), there is also limited awareness within the transport sector, with a limited number of disabled individuals in senior decision-making roles across the industry.¹⁴

Lack of investment

Generally, it is difficult to measure the impact of accessibility investments – it is simpler to quantify the costs than the benefits. Investments and retrofitting of physical transport infrastructure, such as step-free access is often considered difficult and expensive. For example, £200m has been invested in the London Tube and Overground networks to work towards providing step-free access to over 100 stations. As such, it is important to examine social value when assessing accessibility investments to measure the impact a scheme or project will have on the people it sets out to serve.

The commercial benefits for transport operators and providers are often ignored – accessibility is still often considered a 'nice to have'. One report by the International Transport Forum (2017) found however, that transport providers are likely to benefit from providing improved accessibility through a boosted reputation and increased

¹³ Motability (2022)

¹⁴ Motability (2022)

¹⁵ Transport for London (2018)



patronage, as well as reduced staff costs if disabled people can access transport more independently without reliance on dedicated personnel.¹⁶

Communication and collaboration

There have been long-running difficulties in system-level thinking within the transport sector, particularly when considering relationships between various actors within the network, such as transport operators, local authorities, and other community groups. The lack of communication and interaction across various transport modes and organisations has limited the progression/implementation of sector-wide initiatives and standards/policy that improve accessibility.

Additionally, research into accessible transport has been fragmented and transactional, and hasn't initiated system-level change. As such, to date, there has been a lack of evidence and focus considering how mobility products and services could be developed and improved to meet the needs of disabled transport users.¹⁶

3. How can neat support address such challenges?

Ultimately, there are wide-reaching issues across the whole transport sector in the UK when assessing disabled peoples' propensity and ability to travel with ease. As a result, neat will cover the whole of UK and consider all modes of transport but will use insight from disabled people to prioritise areas of focus.

ncat aims to bridge the evidence gap by implementing initiatives which seek to shape the future of transport, by conducting applied research. ncat aims to increase awareness of the issues and opportunities, as well as the work being done by ncat to address them. To increase awareness, ncat will undertake a wide range of engagement with the public, organisations, and the media.

¹⁶ International Transport Forum (2017)



4. The Theory of Change

This Theory of Change aims to highlight how neat will deliver evidence through research, and work with partners to support our objectives towards the delivery of outcomes that enhance transport accessibility. neat's work must be led by disabled people and start and finish with the views and experiences of disabled people.

The sections below provide a text description of the ToC. A diagram laying this out visually in include as Appendix 1. Following on from previous sections, where the context of the ToC explains why the National Centre for Accessible Transport is needed, this section covers:

- 1. **ncat's inputs:** A high-level summary of inputs needed to deliver ncat effectively.
- Activities: Activities undertaken to deliver ncat's anticipated outcomes and impact.
- **3. Outcomes and impact:** What neat aims to achieve during the period it is funded by the Motability Foundation (7 years).

Who did we speak to?

The ToC has been developed using input from consortium partners, the Motability Foundation and the neat Board. Crucially, an Experts by Experience panel was set up, where disabled people from the <u>Community for Accessible Transport Panel</u> developed the objectives for neat's work. Key findings from the Experts by Experience panel are summarised below:

- Transport accessibility needs improve and enhance disabled people's quality of life and independence.
- Positive change would mean transport is more accessible, reducing discrepancies between disabled and non-disabled experiences, and influencing legislative, policy, and funding decisions.
- To affect change, ncat must conduct research involving disabled people and transport providers, facilitate collaboration between stakeholders, develop guidance, and raise public awareness.



 Challenges include lack of legally binding legislation, accountability issues, and the reliance on individual efforts for progress.

Theory of Change Structure

Using this input, the Theory of Change is structured around ncat's three strategic objectives; generate, translate and adopt.

- Strategic Objective 1 Generate: This relates to the planning, collecting and reporting of real-world accessible transport-based evidence. We will meet this objective by embedding human-centred approaches and ensure transport issues faced by disabled people are heard.
- Strategic Objective 2 Translate: This relates to translating evidence into results, products and service applications that directly benefit disabled people.
 We will meet this objective through a human-centred design focus and collaborative working/cocreating to deliver new transport solutions.
- Strategic Objective 3 Adopt: This relates to the adoption of evidence, innovative practices and solutions and policy to influence change for disabled people and stakeholders. We will meet this objective with the consistent takeup of evidence-based practices, solutions and policy amongst disabled people and transport operators, policy makers and stakeholders.

4.1 ncat inputs

Delivering outcomes that improve transport accessibility are dependent on a combination of resources and activities that can be referred to as 'levers of change'.

- Funding: ncat's work requires financial contributions and investment to enable engagement activities and projects to be delivered. The Motability Foundation have grant-funded ncat £20m over seven years.
- Resourcing: A collaborative consortium of partners working together towards a shared goal will be required to deliver outcomes.



- Expertise and experience: Knowledge and skills will be required to enhance the outcomes of ncat. This includes subject matter expertise of transport, accessibility and policy, and covers expertise in tasks required to run ncat and its initiatives for example, user researchers, design researchers, business development, support staff, impact assessment (e.g., economists, academics). ncat have recruited an expert independent Board to provide expertise and oversight.
- Stakeholders input: ncat aims to establish a network of supportive stakeholders which will provide essential insight and feedback on ncat initiatives.
- Learning: Throughout the seven-year period, ncat will learn from its operations through a monitoring and evaluation and a formal governance structure.

4.2 Activities (what ncat does):

- 1. Develop evidence that facilitates change (Generate)
 - a. ncat conducts and facilitates co-produced research with the Community for Accessible Transport Panel, which includes disabled people and people in the transport and policy sectors.

2. Raise awareness of ncat, its research and campaigns (Translate)

a. Conduct awareness activities and campaigns through press, media,
 radio, social media, the ncat website and events.

4.3 Outputs (direct results of ncat's activities):

- 1. Evidence is produced that facilitates change (Generate)
 - a. Disabled people participate in a representative CAT panel and directly contribute to ncat's national evidence base and co-production activities.
 - b. People in the transport and policy sector participate in the CAT panel.



c. Disabled people and people in the transport and policy sector participate in research / co-production projects and events.

2. Awareness of ncat, its research and campaigns are raised (Translate)

a. The public are increasingly made aware of ncat and its campaigns through press, media, radio, social media, website and events.

4.4 Intermediate Outcomes (changes influenced):

- 1. People understand the need for accessible transport.
 - a. Disabled people recommend the CAT panel and its co-production activities to others.
 - b. People in the transport and policy sector recommend the CAT panel to others.
 - c. People feel they have contributed to ncat's research and that it was delivered in a meaningful way and will lead to change.
 - d. People have a better understanding of barriers to accessible transport and disabled people's experiences based on ncat's research and campaigns.
 - e. People have an improved attitude about the importance of accessible transport.
 - f. People believe that ncat's research and campaigns are good quality, accessible and relevant.
 - g. People are aware of ncat's research and campaigns and recommend it to others.

4.5 Outcomes (changes influenced):

- 1. Disabled people have informed improved transport legislation, policy and services through ncat.
 - a. New or improved legislation, policies, services, products and solutions have had input from neat and CAT panel members.



b. People can demonstrate that changes to legislation, policies, guidance and funding were implemented because of ncat's research.

2. Transport is more accessible for disabled people, through ncat's projects.

- a. Transport is more accessible (overall, by mode, and by geography).
- b. The disparities between the experiences of disabled people and non-disabled people are reduced (time spent journey planning, cost to travel, time to travel / travel duration, travel frequency, time not travelled / 'lost' miles).

5. Impact statement:

ncat's evidence needs to lead to disabled people having a better quality of life by increasing the accessibility of transport.

6. Assumptions

For the outcomes of the Theory of Change to be realised, a number of assumptions have been made. These assumptions and risks associated with them are summarised below:

- 1. Definition: ncat has defined disabled people through the Equality Act 2010 and Disability Act definition. A person is disabled if they 'have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. In-depth engagement will be required to ensure that diverse needs are not ignored.
- 2. Co-production with disabled people: Consistent and meaningful engagement with disabled people will need to take place throughout the seven-year funding period. Effective engagement will encourage continuous improvement to ensure neat achieves the desired outcomes. The implication



- of this is that the remit of neat will only be defined once insight from disabled people has informed it.
- 3. **Consortium partner input:** There will be ongoing input from partners through the sharing of data, skills and knowledge. The team will work closely to collaboratively deliver neat's initiatives as part of the consortium. All partners have a collective responsibility to work towards neat's goal.
- 4. Buy-in from stakeholders: Stakeholders will be willing to conduct meaningful engagement with ncat. ncat will work closely with various groups who have an interest or concern in the issues being targeted. Stakeholder buy-in is critical in order to gain valuable information, externalise learnings and raise awareness of ncat's work. The Theory of Change assumes that stakeholder awareness and trust in ncat will influence stakeholders to change policies, products, and services, which will in turn lead to more accessible transport. If stakeholders are not bought into ncat's purpose, there is a risk that ncat's desired outcomes will not be achieved.
- 5. **Political environment:** ncat is reliant upon government support and influence in the sector, but the political and government context is expected to change within the seven-year funding period. This poses the risk that ncat's desired outcomes will take more time to deliver than anticipated.
- 6. ncat remit: Due to the seven-year funding period, ncat will not be able to solely close the transport accessibility gap. However, ncat aims to generate evidence which can influence meaningful change across the transport sector, and it is assumed that ncat's evidence and engagement will contribute to the outcomes outlined within the Theory of Change. This poses the risk that ncat's outcomes will not be achieved, as several activities are not within the control of ncat.

7. About ncat

The National Centre for Accessible Transport (ncat) provides high quality, human-centred evidence, insights, and tried and tested solutions. ncat is the first evidence centre to consider the transport system as a whole, to create an evidence base that inspires others to develop solutions for accessible travel that works for everyone.



This evidence will inform policy and strategy, and influence investment decisions by government, transport operators, and providers of mobility services. ncat's work is fully rooted in the realities of the lived experiences of disabled people and stakeholders who inform and help prioritise our work. ncat defines its research priorities and then commissions projects in conjunction with external organisations to address the barriers to transport faced by disabled people.

ncat aims to:

- Engage with disabled people to better understand their experiences and codesign solutions
- Amplify the voices of disabled people in all decision making
- Collaborate widely with all transport stakeholders
- Demonstrate good practice and impact to influence policy

ncat is delivered by a consortium of organisations that includes Coventry University, Policy Connect, The Research Institute for Disabled Consumers (RiDC), Designability, Connected Places Catapult, and WSP. It is funded for seven years from 2023 by the Motability Foundation.

For more information about neat and its work please visit www.neat.uk

To contact neat, either about this report or any other query, please email info@neat.uk





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Appendix 1 - Theory of Change Diagram

Delivery map from inputs to impact statement

Inputs				
Funding	Resourcing	Expertise and experience	Stakeholders input	Learning

Activities – what ncat does	
Develop evidence that facilitates change (Generate)	Raise awareness of ncat, it's research and campaigns (Translate)

Outputs- Direct results of in neat's activities	
Evidence Is produced that facilitates change (Generate)	Awareness of ncat, it's research and campaigns are raised (Translate)

Intermediate Outcomes – changes influenced

People understand the need for accessible transport

Outcomes – changes influenced		
Disabled people having informed transport	Transport is more accessible for disabled	The disparities between the experiences of
legislation, policy, and services through neat	people, through ncat's projects	disabled people and non-disabled people
		are reduced through ncat's projects

Impact statement

ncat's evidence leads to disabled people having a better quality of life by increasing the accessibility of transport



Outputs (direct results of ncat's activities)

Metrics	Evidence is produced that facilitates change – Generate
Disabled people participate in a representative CAT panel and directly contribute to ncat's national evidence base	Number of disabled CAT participants (and representation)
	Number of disabled CAT participants that maintain engagement - (opt out link)
People in the transport and policy sector participate in the CAT panel	Number of transport sector CAT participants, by: - Transport provider
	Local governmentCentral governmentTransport authority
	- Community enterprise - Unknown
Dischlad manufactured manufacture that the transport and malinus action	No week are of disable of CAT reputing outs that are going reputing
Disabled people and people in the transport and policy sector participate in research / co-production projects and events.	Number of disabled CAT participants that engage in ncat's surveys / research
	Number of disabled people that participate in a) qualitative research,
	b) specific co-production activities
	Number of people that complete ncat's surveys / research, by stakeholder category
	Number of research projects



Outputs (direct results of ncat's activities)

Metrics	Awareness of ncat, its research and campaigns are raised -
	Translate
The public are increasingly made aware of ncat and its campaigns through press, media, radio, social media, website and events	ncat events - number of events (hosted and attended)
	ncat events - registrations
	ncat events - attendees
	Press, media, and radio – number / reach / sentiment of stories
	about ncat, by region/nation
	LinkedIn - average. engagement / impressions
	X (formerly Twitter) average. engagement / impressions
	ncat website – number of visitors (top 5 pages)
	ncat website – average engagement time
	Number of knowledge products developed



Intermediate Outcomes (Changes influenced)

Metrics	Changes influenced
People understand the need for accessible transport	People understand the purpose and remit of ncat (all
	stakeholders)
	Disabled people recommend the CAT panel to others
	Disabled people recommend the CAT panel to others
	People in the transport and policy sector recommend the CAT
	panel to others
	People feel they have contributed to ncat research and ncat's
	research was:
	- delivered in a way that was meaningful and relevant
	- will lead to change
	People have a better understanding of barriers to accessible
	transport and disabled people's experiences based on ncat's
	research and campaigns
	People have an improved attitude about the importance of
	accessible transport
	ncat website – average engagement time
	People believe that ncat's research and campaigns are good
	quality, accessible and relevant
	People are aware of ncat's research and campaigns, and
	recommend it to others - ncat website, visitors to research page
	People are aware of ncat's research and campaigns, and
	recommend it to others - CRM contacts



Outcomes (Changes influenced)

Metrics	Changes influenced
Disabled people have informed improved transport legislation, policy	Number of new or improved legislation, policies, services,
and services through ncat.	products or solutions ncat / CAT panel members have input into
	Policy makers, transport operators and authorities can
	demonstrate that they have changed policies, guidance or
	services as a result of ncat's research
	Transport is more accessible, by geography
Transport is more accessible for disabled people, through ncat's projects.	Transport is more accessible, by mode
	Transport is more accessible, by geography
The disparities between the experiences of disabled people and	Time spent journey planning is reduced (average for disabled
non-disabled people are reduced through ncat's projects.	people and non-disabled people)
	People feel they have contributed to ncat research and ncat's
	research was:
	- delivered in a way that was meaningful and relevant
	- will lead to change
	Time to travel / travel duration is reduced (average for disabled
	people and non-disabled people)
	Travel frequency is increased (average for disabled people and
	non-disabled people - transport accessibility gap