



Driving Change Together

Toolkit 2024

Leeds
Older
People's
Forum



Making Roads Safer

Introduction

Driving Change Together (DCT) was funded by the [Road Safety Trust](#) and led by [Leeds Older People's Forum](#) (LOPF) in partnership with [William Merritt Disabled Living Centre](#) and the Influencing Travel Behaviour team at Leeds City Council.

The project worked with older people in Leeds to understand the complexities of retiring from driving and find ways to help them assess their driving ability as they age and consider safer alternatives. The project ran for nine months and involved conducting focus groups and public engagement events to gather information about the barriers, challenges, and benefits of retiring from driving, as well as preferred messaging and language. Findings from the consultation process were then used to develop Mature Driving Appraisals (MDA), a tangible resource for older drivers with the foundations in work done by the [Older Drivers Forum](#).

This practical toolkit shares learning from the DTC project, which may help other regions develop similar appraisals for older drivers.

Our Project Aims

- 1** Consultation and co-production with older people on driving in later life and retiring from driving
- 2** Development of a behaviour change campaign to encourage older people to consider their driving capabilities
- 3** Delivery of the campaign through promotional events and activities
- 4** Development and rollout of a Mature Driver Appraisal (MDA).

What We Did

The Project Development Officer collaborated with five community organisations that work primarily with older people to hold local focus groups. They also conducted three public engagement events to get a broader variety of opinions and feedback. Initially, the discussions highlighted issues with public transport in Leeds. The officer researched similar projects to guide the conversations and connected with the Older Drivers Forum, a registered charity based in Gloucester. They then designed conversation prompts and a questionnaire to explore attitudes towards retiring from driving and the idea of a Leeds-based driving skills assessment.

How We Did It

Focus Groups

The project development officer worked with five community organisations to plan local focus groups in which 57 older adults participated. The participants discussed retiring from driving and general problems with the public transport infrastructure in Leeds.

A more in-depth review of the focus groups and what they included is linked here: [Older Drive Focus Group Findings Report](#)

Feel free to use our Focus Group Questionnaire (Appendix 1) as a guideline. It is designed to provide a framework for questions to ask your participants. The questionnaire is intentionally kept simple and concise, with the understanding that in-depth discussions may naturally develop.

Learning Point: Communication and consultation

The MDA campaign was developed with the input of eight focus groups and 128 individuals. Capturing the views and experiences of older people provided valuable knowledge and insights into transport, road safety, and retiring from driving. Their input was instrumental in shaping the Mature Driver Appraisal (MDA) and informing the campaign messages. Additionally, the DCT initiative raised awareness about the challenges of retiring from driving, facilitating important conversations between older drivers and their families on this topic.

Designing and implementing the MDA

We identified an opportunity to work with William Merritt Centre to create new, lighter-touch MDAs alongside their existing [medical driver assessments](#). These would offer older drivers an easy way to check their driving skills with one of their Approved Driving Instructors. The goal was to encourage older drivers to assess their driving ability as they aged (using their car to drive the Instructor on familiar routes) by receiving constructive feedback from a professional to help them make informed decisions. The cost of taking an MDA varied between £0 and £49.

It is essential that these assessments are carried out by Approved Driving Instructors who have the skills and experience to conduct them safely. Ideally, the ADI would have received additional training to support older drivers. For example, the [RSGB Ageing Driver ADI Training Course](#) that is endorsed by the DVSA and the Older Drivers Forum.

We were fortunate to partner with William Meritt Disabled Living Centre, which already had similar infrastructure. We advise anyone looking to replicate the MDAs to look for an equivalent setup/partner.

The driving instructor carried out risk assessments before each appraisal, and we used a driver checklist put together by the Older Drivers Forum. The Older Drivers Forum also has a [self-assessment form on its website](#), which you can download in PDF format.



Campaign promotion

The Project Team undertook various promotional and awareness-raising activities to share the campaign messages and increase awareness of the MDA during formal events, meetings or community activities. Leeds-based organisations and programmes were targeted to help promote the MDA. William Merritt Centre also contributed to the campaign delivery via promotional events and activities.

A leaflet (example opposite) was put together that incorporated:

- A clear, concise goal
- A noticeable headline
- An overall motivating message
- Simple, high-quality pictures
- A clear call to action
- A QR code and straightforward 'how to book' instructions

William Merritt Centre
Enabling Greater Independence

Mature drivers

Check that your driving is good to go with our **NEW Mature Driving Appraisal**

This informal review of your driving skills is delivered:

- In your own car
- Driving in your local area to places you go
- With an Approved Driving Instructor

You will also receive up to date road safety advice, information about vehicle adaptations and confidence to keep you driving safely for longer.

Book your mature driver review here
<https://bit.ly/WilliamMerritt>
or by calling
0113 350 8989

OLDER DRIVERS FORUM | **ROAD SAFETY TRUST** | **Leeds Older People's Forum** | **Connecting Leeds TRANSFORMING TRAVEL**



Free road safety goody bags were very popular, and each contained:

- Information about the MDA
- Leaflets about accessible transport options, including the Access Bus
- A leaflet for William Merritt Disabled Living Centre
- Concessionary Bus Pass information
- A pin badge based on the Older Drivers Forum logo

The miniature stress reliever toy pictured, designed like a car, kept things on brand and added an element of fun to the pack.



The MDA campaign was launched during Road Safety Week in November 2023 and continued throughout the project, garnering positive attention. Promotion included:

- » **Social media:** An [MDA flyer](#) was created and shared around various social media outlets and local newspapers.
- » **Via partners:** William Merritt Centre created a [dedicated website page for MDAs](#), advertising this via email signatures across the organisation and on X and Facebook. They also sent information via Mailchimp to their healthcare contacts within their database. The Influencing Travel Behaviour team promoted MDAs as part of their Vision Zero campaign.
- » **Printed materials in the local area:** An advert was placed in the Connecting Leeds Newsletter and East Leeds Doorstep magazine. The latter was delivered to 18,000 homes and freely available in a popular local shopping centre visited by older adults. This was a very successful method of advertising.
- » **Word of mouth:** Local events and community activities were targeted to spread the word to others. DTC Champions promoted MDAs to their peers, and MDA participants were also encouraged to tell their friends about the MDA. This approach was also a successful method of reaching the target audience.
- » **Paid advertising:** An [advertorial in the Yorkshire Evening Post](#) and banner adverts were used to reach the target audience directly.
- » BBC article, Older Drivers Forum website
- » **TV, news & radio:** Interviews were aired on BBC Look North television programme, BBC Radio Leeds and [BBC News](#)

Learning Point: Evolving the marketing campaign

In collaboration with older people, the multi-agency partnership successfully created and refined campaign messages. The materials underwent a thorough review involving 38 individuals and were subsequently modified to better resonate with older drivers and their families. Working closely with the Influencing Travel Behaviour team, we tested different approaches via the media campaign by sharing stories, raising awareness of the offer and trialling messages to various audiences, including older drivers and their families, tweaking them when necessary. The marketing also slowed around the Christmas period. For organisations looking to replicate this process, it is crucial to adapt your marketing strategies to seasonal challenges, utilise localised and varied promotional methods, and involve direct and indirect stakeholders to reach and engage your target audience effectively.

Recruiting older people to become DCT Champions

Prior to the launch of MDAs, we recruited three older Champions. One Champion was an older person who had retired from driving and chosen safer transport options, and two were older people who continued to drive and would test out MDAs and help promote them to their peers. Four more Champions were recruited between December and February. Creating Champions in specific localities and organisations was a proactive approach to increasing the scope of MDAs via peers. One older people's organisation, Cross Gates and District Good Neighbours' Scheme, was particularly active in promoting MDAs and identified a small number of Champions who talked to their peers about the opportunity, answered their questions and encouraged older drivers to participate. They added an article to their [Spring Newsletter \(page 10\)](#) sharing insight from David¹ and John, two of their Champions. The newsletter was distributed to 5000 households locally, celebrating their input into - and support for - the campaign. The trusted and well-liked CEO acknowledged the benefits of MDAs and was quoted as saying that this campaign is essential for keeping her members safe on the road. As a result, Driving Change Together was embraced by its older members, leading to requests to be referred for an MDA. Being introduced to one of the Cross Gates Champions enabled members to hear first-hand about the experience of MDAs and ask questions. This built confidence and was an excellent first step towards booking an MDA.

In addition to formal DCT Champions, we found that MDA participants often became informal peer champions as they were keen to spread the word amongst their peers:

Diana* (name changed), age 86, visited her GP to ask if she was still OK to drive because her son (who lives away) suggested she stop driving because of her age. Her GP recommended an MDA, and Diana called the William Merritt Centre to arrange it. Diana did well in her appraisal, and Lee, the Advanced Driving Instructor, reassured her. Diana said, "What a marvellous opportunity this is for older drivers to be able to check their driving skills, and I am telling all my friends about it." Diana has put the ADI's driving skills appraisal feedback form in a plastic wallet so it doesn't get crumpled and she can't wait to see her son to show it to him.

¹ User happy to have their first name mentioned in this report.

Administrative systems for booking MDAs

William Merritt Centre uses an online booking system for the existing driver assessments and this online process was expanded to MDAs. Feedback from older people was that they also wished to have the option to make telephone bookings. The process was updated to enhance accessibility for older people. Telephone conversations were introduced with the project worker at Leeds Older People's Forum, allowing them to discuss their needs and ask questions before booking online. The project worker made the booking on request if the caller couldn't book online. While the online booking system remained available, leaflets were revised to reflect these changes. This new approach successfully removed barriers and significantly improved the booking experience for older individuals. However, it is important to note that MDA bookings were slower to take off than expected and establishing a new offer takes time.

Some MDAs were charged at £49, while others were free due to the need to 'mystery shop' the experience, support older drivers on a low income, or encourage uptake. When they rang to enquire, people didn't know the cost of MDAs and were pleasantly surprised if they were offered a free session. LOPF believes that older drivers would be willing to pay for MDAs in the future, which would, in turn, increase the sustainability of the MDA offer.

Learning Point: Adapting to the target audience

Identifying a barrier to the booking process for the intended audience was a pivotal moment for the project. Many website visits to the online booking system were not translating into booked MDAs, demonstrating the need for a more personalised approach: the opportunity to engage in telephone conversations and enquire about the MDA to address any concerns. The Project Development Officer began handling all incoming calls from individuals interested in MDAs, allowing her to dedicate time to understanding their needs and expectations.

Understanding older drivers' experiences of taking MDAs

An independent evaluator was appointed to assess the extent to which Driving Change Together met its stated aims. Group and individual interviews were conducted with MDA participants and workers involved in the project itself to assess the overall success of the project and whether there was enough evidence to recommend that it should continue after the funding had concluded.

There are many quotes from MDA participants included in the final report: [Evaluation of the Driving Change Together Project by Sarah E Frost](#)

Obtaining feedback from MDA participants

In the early stages of MDAs, William Merritt Centre obtained permission from MDA participants for the project worker to telephone them at a later date to gather feedback on their experience of taking an MDA. During the call, the project worker used a series of conversation prompts and recorded the key points of the conversations. A key takeaway from this experience is the value of using prompts to gather feedback. The MDA's positive reception of these prompts demonstrates the potential for gaining a broader perspective and identifying future improvement areas. This successful approach enabled us to iron out any issues or adapt the process based on this feedback and ensure that MDAs were meeting older drivers' needs.

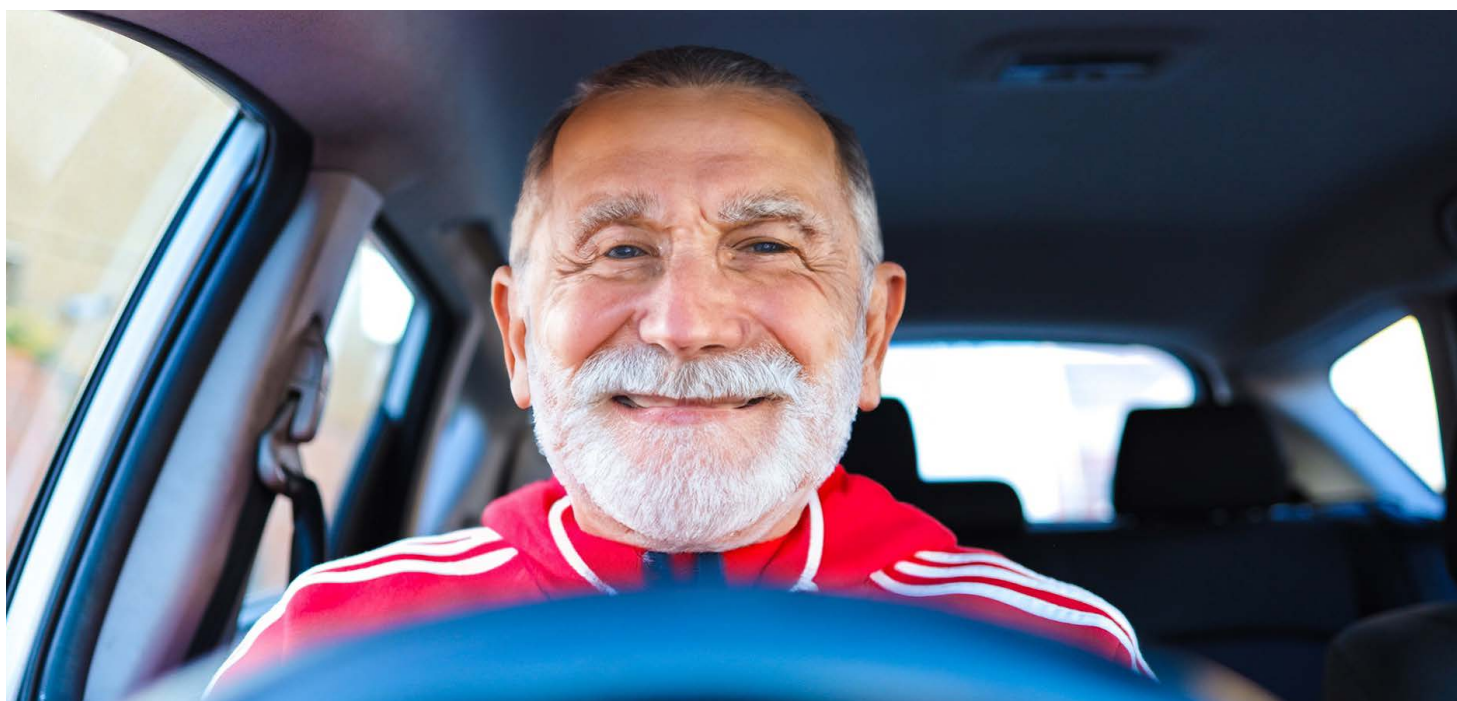
Examples of MDA feedback from older drivers taking part:

"I think the actual appraisal was very good and very reassuring. I know lots of people my age that should be checking their driving skills and I have recommended it to one of my friends."

"I'm 90 in June and some people have commented on my age and that I am still driving. It does frustrate me to hear these comments, and it does put doubt in your mind, so now I have had an instructor say my driving is safe I can ignore the doubters."

"I was absolutely delighted with the outcome. I was reasonably confident that my driving was still safe, but obviously, being assessed by a professional and receiving all green ticks made me feel on top of the world."

Feel free to use our **MDA feedback prompts** (Appendix 2) as a guideline. It is important to note that the prompts have been divided into two sections: the first focuses on the driver and how they feel, and the second focuses more on the appraisal itself. The MDA is a voluntary service, and the underlying theme of the promotional campaign is a light-touch approach to encourage older drivers to get their driving skills objectively appraised. The feedback prompts reflect this.



Outcomes

At the end of the Driving Change Together project, Leeds Older People's Forum and partners **reflected** on the outcomes beyond the impact on older drivers and their family and friends:

Improved partnerships and collaboration across Leeds: The success of the DCT project relied on effective collaboration and communication between partners. They shared knowledge, supported independence in older age, and strengthened connections with local organisations and LOPF.

Raised profile of LOPF's work on transport and older drivers: DCT has helped to advance LOPF's transport agenda by building new relationships, enabling conversations about the safety of older drivers, and raising LOPF's profile in this area.

Generated insight into how to target future campaigns: While developing the marketing campaign, collaborating with older people, partner agencies, and experts in the field led to valuable learning for future campaigns. Sharing ideas and experiences helped refine the focus on safer driving, alternative travel options, and the MDA tool for older drivers. The media campaign used different approaches to raise awareness and test messages for different audiences.

MDA gave older drivers confidence and reassurance:

The MDA received extremely positive feedback from participants. They described benefits such as reassurance, increased confidence, and overcoming stigma. Participants felt reassured about their driving being objectively safe and appreciated the 'green ticks' as a measure of success.

Identified a need for further roll-out of the MDA:

Partner agencies and older people saw the MDA as an ongoing need. William Merritt Centre viewed it as part of their services to help clients remain independently mobile and safe road users. Older people's organisations in Leeds considered the MDA an additional referral option and a tool for discussing the sometimes difficult subject of retiring from driving.

Further reading

[Evaluation of the Driving Change Together Project by Sarah E Frost](#)

[Older Driver Focus Group Findings Report](#)

Appendix 1

Driving Change Together Focus Group

How do you feel about these statements:

1. How would you feel about the driver skills assessment being available for drivers aged 60+ to test their driving skills?



2. Would you pay for this service?

Yes / No / Maybe

Any comments: _____

3. Would you take a driving assessment to check your driving skills?

Yes / No / Possibly

If no, could you say why: _____

4. Do you think more mandatory legal requirements should be added when the driving licence is renewed? (Renewal age 70 then every 3yrs after)

Please tick any options below that you feel should apply:

Driving Appraisal

Eye Test

GP Medical Examination

No change to the current renewal process

Other (please say what) _____

5. How will you know when is the right time for you to retire from driving?

How do you feel about these statements:

6. If you didn't drive your car, how confident are you with knowing the different options for travel? Please tick which box applies below

Not at all confident

Quite Confident

Very Confident

7. What transport options would you use? Tick all that apply and number 1-5, with 1 being the most preferred method.

Bus Number:

Train Number:

Taxi Number:

Bike Number:

Walk Number:

8. How confident are you using websites and apps to plan your journey:



9. How do you feel about using public transport?



Please add two words that describe your feelings about public transport

1. _____ 2. _____

Thank you for supporting LOPF with your views and opinions and helping to shape our project Driving Change Together. All information you have shared will be anonymised and you will not be identified.

Appendix 2

MDA Feedback prompts

About you and your driving

Your Outcome:

How did you feel about that?

How important is being able to drive to you?

Do you use other transport options?

Are there any aspects of driving you find challenging?

About the MDA

Was booking the appraisal an easy process?

What did you expect from the appraisal?

How did you feel after the appraisal, and how do you feel now?

Did you learn anything?

Are you going to do anything differently?

Changes in Knowledge:

Changes in Attitude:

Changes in Behaviour:

Additional support/signposting