



Getting around Leigh

Social research with older and Disabled people

Dr Graeme Sherriff

Ian Cookson

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Salford
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Active Neighbourhoods in Greater Manchester

Qualitative insights into
resident experiences

Harriet Larrington-Spencer
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Alan Price



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Methods

Stakeholder interviews

Mapping workshops

Walking and wheeling interviews



Findings

Stakeholder interviews

Geographical data from phases two and three

Themed reflections across phases two and three

Quotes from participants alongside images of Leigh

Sociability and third space



It's somewhere outside of the work and the home that's distinct; a space of sociability, to put it essentially. I think somewhere like that, wherever that might be, I think that would be pretty integral to sit within their 15 minutes. (S2)

Greenspaces as third spaces



Parks and green spaces you're speaking about, but yes, I think a lot of people, older people maybe do feel that certain spaces are maybe not even for younger people but more for families, which obviously implies younger people but not just children. (S5)

Cycling



Again, that idea of a bicycle being a mobility aid is something really powerful, I think. I think it's something that I increasingly feel myself personally... But you could also utilise other stuff that are mobility aids like bicycles, like a scooter. (S1)

Walkability

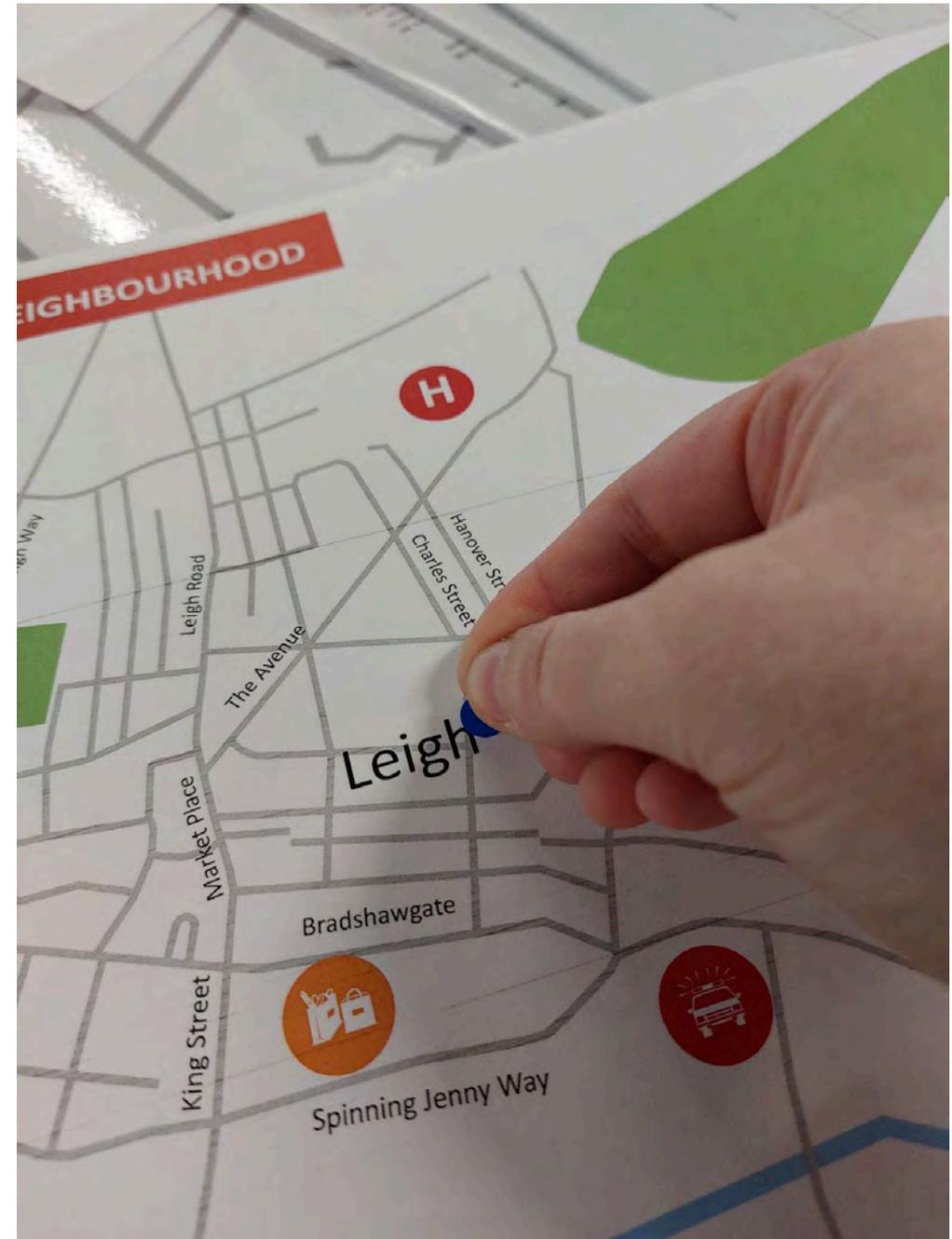


One of the most scariest things in the world is to go outside, right. I've walked along this street 50 years. Now I don't know. What don't you know? There's a kerb 100 metres up the road. Yes, but it's unpredictable. I don't know if there's going to be a car parked on the pavement. I don't know if there's going to be a bin in the way. Again, going back to the PIP thing, the question is, is are you able to walk a familiar route? When you leave your house, for someone who's blind or partially sighted, there's no such thing as a familiar route, because there could be roadworks, there could be a bin. (S7)

Geographical data

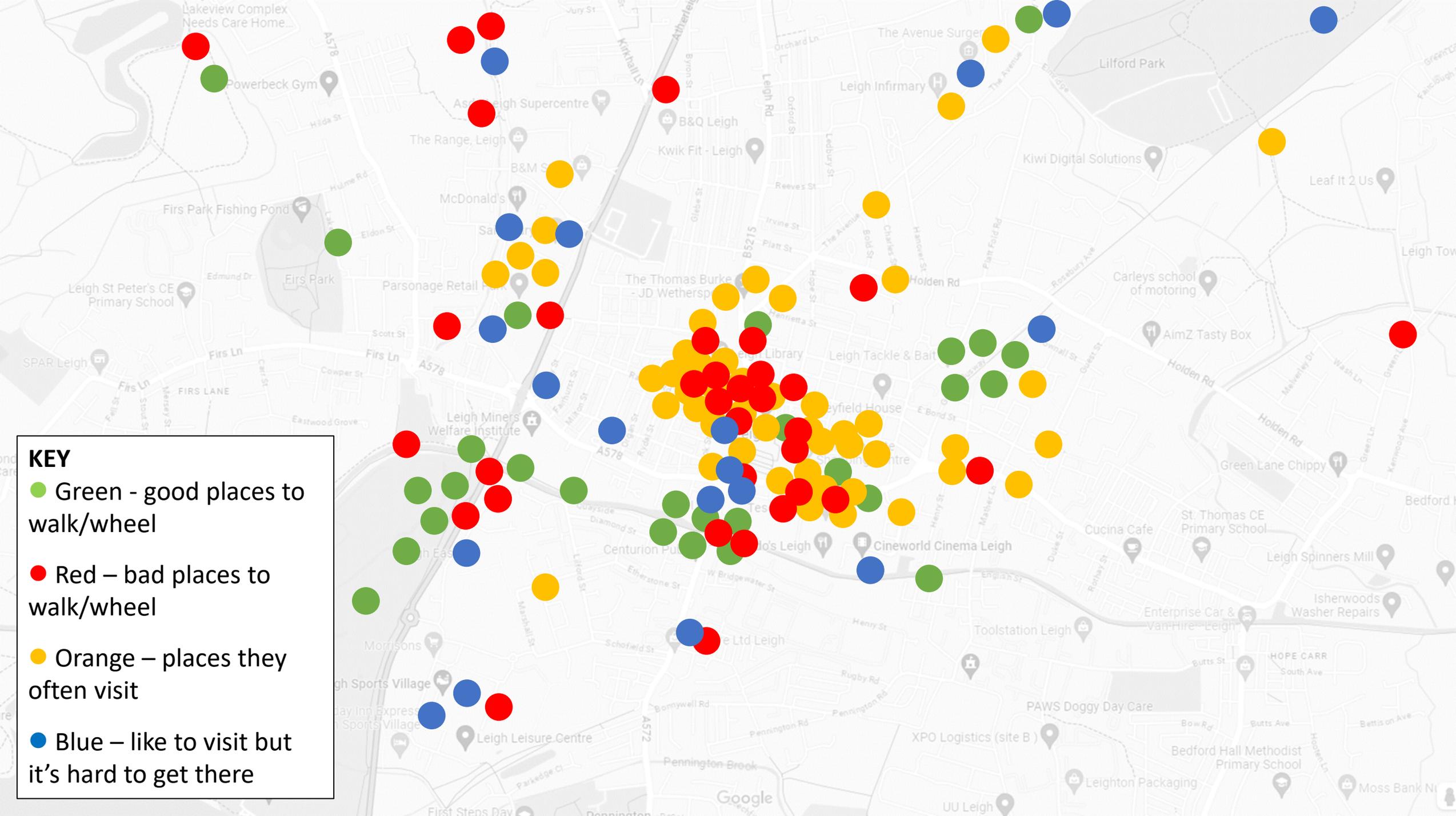
Mapping Leigh

19 participants, all either over 55 or disabled
Asked about their neighbourhoods
Asked to categorise locations



KEY

- Green - good places to walk/wheel
- Red – bad places to walk/wheel
- Orange – places they often visit
- Blue – like to visit but it's hard to get there



Walking and wheeling interviews

1 hour walking or wheeling interviews

Semi-structured

Largest geographical area covered was
by people with mobility aids





Walking and wheeling interviews

A changing high street



The biggest thing that in Leigh was when the pit shut, when the pit shut all the mills shut. There were towns where people bused to, and towns where people worked. They all bused into Leigh. There's no buses into Leigh like there used to be any more, because your cable work, pits; no industry. All that went, so Leigh went downhill fast...I keep thinking about it, what it used to be and what it is now. When I was growing up it was completely different. It was buzzing. Leigh town centre was buzzing. (P23)

Community, culture and Sport



Yes, meeting friends, go on to the evenings, and that's really good. It goes on 'til about 12 o'clock of a night, so old '60s music, and whatever, just blaring out everywhere. Nobody complains about it. It's probably tucked away really, do you know what I mean. (P22)

There's nothing in the town centre for kids or adults like here. (P16)

I've got a few friends up here that I've met since just before Covid for a group called the Meet and Mingle, which was run by some lady who set the group up for people regardless of age or marital status so they could mix and find friends that way, but because of Covid that has not really happened any more. (P22)

Why walk?



Early morning. Not necessarily the same days, it depends how much food I need and got through. Basically, it's to fill the days, isn't it? (P3)

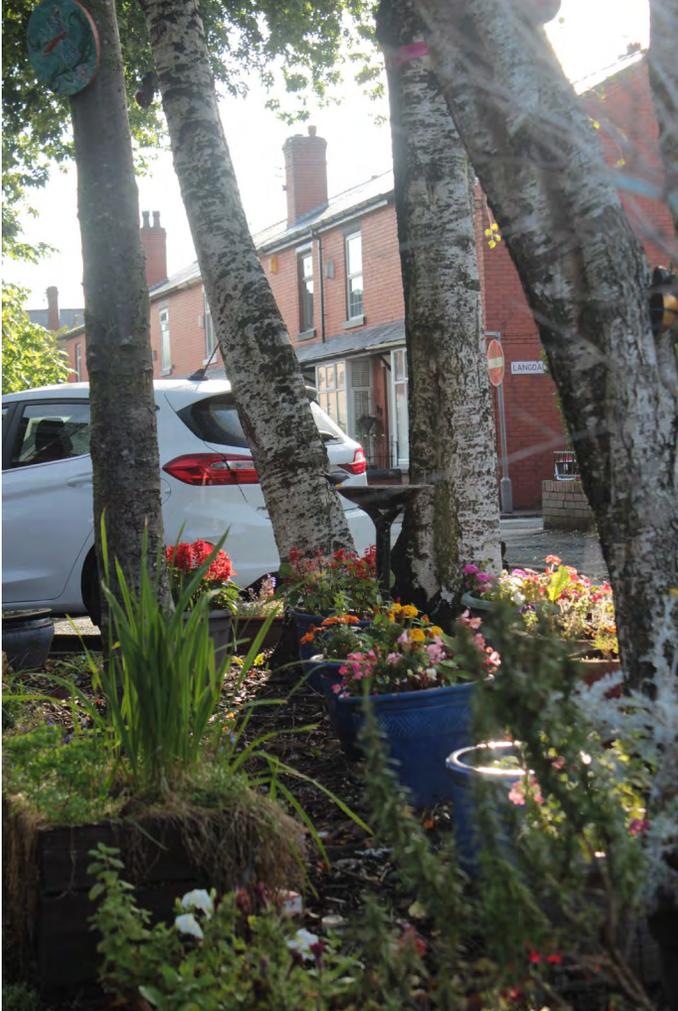
Yes, it is. Like you say, I am fairly independent, so I'm self-employed, I volunteer for scouts. Within that remit, I'm a shooting instructor, do axe throwing, all different bits and pieces. Oddly enough, a lot of the time I find it easier to get around a scout campsite than I do to get from my house to here. (P20)

Accessing greenspace



It's beautiful, isn't it? We could be in Japan, couldn't we? (P3)

A pleasant urban environment



(Interviewer) Does this not bother you, walking near the road?

No. Well, not so much. You don't think about it, because I'm just going into town, but you can smell the fumes, and stuff like that.

(Interviewer) Is that why you would take the other route if you can?

Yes. Yes, it's a bit more peaceful. (P22)

So, the reason I come down here is they make a fuss of the gardens, and at various times, like, say, it's Halloween, there will be lots of Halloween displays. Christmas there will be Christmas lights and Christmas trees. (P10)

There's a general litter problem, lots of litter, lots of overgrown vegetation. (P16).

A walkable public realm



As I say, it's frustrating because my daughter is 14 and I would really, really love to be able to say to her, 'Go, explore the world.' You see here there's a very distinct lack of dropped kerb ... There's one there.

(Interviewer) On the other side, but there's not one on this side.

But to get to it, I've got to go on the road, on the roundabout. Yes, it's nice, isn't it? (P20)

Safety



Now they've stopped, yes, but the number of times, if I'm sitting this side, cars go through when it's in my favour. Because they come round that bend, they don't see the lights in time, and, if they don't see you, I don't think they panic, they just think, well, I'm committed. So, I'll just sit there and wait until something stops, because they come round at a fair speed, and it would hurt. (P20)

Public transport and cycling



Needs a little bus running to the sports village and down through estates as well. (P16).

But you are very limited in where you can go because you couldn't both jump on a bus to Manchester. Trains, depending on where you are, I can't get a train from any of my local stations because they're not accessible. (P20)

I have a cycle, but I don't use it because I nearly got knocked off it a couple of times now. (P3).

Recommendations

Recommendations (1)

How we think and talk about places

- Value of social infrastructure
- Sense of place and community
- Focus on walkability
- Avoid simplistic assumptions about time and distance



Recommendations (2)

How we create sociable places

- Social infrastructure in context
- A pleasant public realm, a place to spend time
- Greenspaces in urban centres
- Diverse mix of retail
- Accessible amenities
- Well connected walking routes



Recommendations (3)

How we plan for older and disabled people

- Surfaces and paths: safe, consistent and easy to navigate
- Restrict and tackle illegal and inconsiderate parking
- Benches, toilets, places for refreshments
- Sensory environment
- Review communication channels



Recommendations (4)

How we provide transport services

- Prioritise walking and cycling
- Walking routes separate from traffic noise, pollution and danger
- Audit of public transport, ensuring accessibility
- Cycling routes and support
- No more barriers



Thankyou!

Dr Graeme Sherriff

g.sherriff@salford.ac.uk

Ian Cookson

i.p.cookson@salford.ac.uk



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