

## Street mobility and network accessibility: towards tools for overcoming barriers to walking amongst older people

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### Project summary

**Street Mobility** is a £1.28m 'Design for Wellbeing' research project (grant [EP/K037323/1](#)) funded by three research councils (the EPSRC, ESRC, and AHRC), as part of the Lifelong Health and Wellbeing Cross-Council Programme. The aim of the project is to develop tools to measure and overcome **community severance**

### What is community severance?

Community severance (CS) occurs where transport infrastructure or the speed or volume of traffic act as a physical or psychological barrier to the movement of people. Busy roads lead to trip avoidance; mitigation measures may increase distances or be considered inaccessible, unsafe or unpleasant. This leads to reduced mobility as well as less use of streets as social spaces due to concerns for physical safety.

Residents living on busy streets have smaller soci

d) **Valuation of improvements to CS** using 'stated preference' surveys and 'willingness to pay' data for assessment of policy options

This toolkit will enable **cross-sector policy development and appraisal** allowing the creation of a common language and set of issues that can then be shared between policy makers and community leaders.

**Street Mobility** will fill a gap in academic knowledge, offering a cross-disciplinary evidence-based approach to studying community severance (CS). Increasing understanding of the built environment's influence on older users' activity and mobility is also of wider strategic importance. Our findings will have implications for urban design and spatial planning locally, nationally and internationally.

**Street Mobility** will be valuable to policy makers, practitioners and local communities themselves. It focuses on making people's lives better and offers local communities tools to engage with professionals about the forms and consequences of CS that impact adversely on their lives. This study will bring to policy makers' attention the forms of CS, their impacts on people's lives, and the mitigations that can be used. Interventions that reduce CS and increase mobility and activity will help maintain older people's independence, reducing health and social care costs, and facilitate access to local goods, enhancing the local economy. The study will identify 'willingness to pay' to reduce severance and the knock-on cross sector benefits of improved wellbeing and physical and mental health.

Our proposed **user impact plan** will ensure that findings are disseminated across the many users in the UK and internationally, using our extensive experience in disseminating research through traditional routes and also novel means including public-facing articles and reports, mass-media and new web-based communication (including social media), and workshops for policy-makers and planners nationally run jointly with local communities. We will invite residents from the case study areas to participate.