Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: PE1424

Main Petitioner: Joyce Harkness on behalf of the Road to Health: Community Partnership Project 3 team.

Subject: Improving transport provision for older people in remote and rural areas.

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to (a) work with local authorities, NHS boards, Regional Transport Partnerships and the ambulance service to improve provision of transport for older people in remote and rural areas in order to improve their access to health, social care and wellbeing facilities, and (b) to take forward the key recommendations of the Transport for health and social care report by Audit Scotland.

Background

Dumfries and Galloway Third Sector Forum is a partner of the Scottish Parliament’s Community Partnership Project. In January 2012 it published a report into rural transport for older people in Dumfries and Galloway. This focused on transport to health care appointments and transport related to wellbeing.

Health related transport in Scotland is provided by a range of different providers, including voluntary drivers, the Patient Transport Service of the Scottish Ambulance Service and neonatal transport and paediatric retrieval services¹. The Patient Transport Service is currently undergoing a three year (2012-2015) programme of change².

The Audit Scotland report Transport for Health and Social Care, published in August 2011, assessed the efficiency and effectiveness of transport for health and social care in Scotland. It found that services are fragmented and that there is a lack of leadership, ownership and monitoring of services. It affirms that joint working across the public sector with voluntary and private providers is crucial and that reducing or removing funding can have a significant impact on people on low incomes, older people and people with on-going health or

² Scottish Ambulance Service
social care needs. The report made recommendations for the Scottish Government’s short-life working group on healthcare transport, the Scottish Government and partners including local government, NHS boards, Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) and the Scottish Ambulance Service.

**Scottish Government Action**

The Scottish Government published *Better Health, Better Care* in December 2007. The report stated that as part of a national approach it would strengthen RTPs to ensure that patients benefit from the statutory obligation to develop regional transport strategies that address access to health care facilities. The report also committed to developing a national approach to travel management and ensuring that NHS Boards publish operational transport plans by April 2008.

In May 2008 the Scottish Government published *Delivering for Remote and Rural Healthcare: Final report of the Remote and Rural Workstream*. This highlighted that there was not an integrated response to transport needs and that this resulted in delays for patients. It found that there was little or no planning or co-ordination between and within agencies, which resulted in a fragmented approach and an inefficient use of resources. It stated that there was a pressing need for a co-ordinated and collaborative national response to the development of an integrated transport infrastructure, to support healthcare across Scotland and in particular in remote and rural communities.

To help develop a national approach to travel management the Scottish Government issued the Healthcare Transport Framework to NHS Board Chief Executives in November 2009. This included a Transport Action Plan checklist to help NHS boards identify local need and improve access. Audit Scotland noted that by 2011 eight of the fourteen NHS Boards had completed transport action plans and that these plans varied in terms of detail and approach⁴.

Following the publication of the Healthcare Transport Framework, Chairs of the Regional Transport Partnerships recommended that the Scottish Government establish a short-life working group on healthcare transport. This group was set up in January 2011 and met quarterly between January 2011 and February 2012. The remit of the group was to make recommendations for improving approaches to transport to healthcare services and to provide appropriate advice to NHS Boards, local authorities and other relevant bodies and placing particular emphasis on collaboration to tackle inequities in access to health care⁵. Three sub groups were formed to take forward work on equity of access, integration of services, and leadership and planning⁶.

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³ RTPs were established under the terms of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 to strengthen the planning and delivery of regional transport. Each RTP developed a regional transport strategy supported by a delivery plan (*Transport Scotland*). SWESTRANS covers the Dumfries and Galloway council area. The Partnership Board consists of five Councillor members and two external members, one from Scottish Enterprise and one from NHS Dumfries and Galloway.


The group was due to report towards the end of 2011\(^5\), however, publication of the report is now expected in April/May 2012\(^5\). The Scottish Government has advised that the report, as drafted, focuses on developing a patient-centred service which alleviates barriers in access to health and healthcare. It will set out the steps that could be taken for improving the provision of healthcare transport across NHS Scotland. It will also encourage stakeholders to work together more effectively to make the best use of available resources. In addition, work is being undertaken on the possibility of the Scottish Government commissioning and partly funding pilot projects in two NHS Board areas around an integrated ‘hub’ model of provision i.e. co-ordinating the transport resources of various providers such as the Scottish Ambulance Service, local authorities, NHS Boards and the third sector etc\(^6\).

In 2006 the Scottish Government introduced free bus travel for people aged 60 or over and disabled people. One of the key objectives of the concessory fares policy was to allow older and disabled people improved access to services, facilities and social networks and promote social inclusion\(^7\). Further information is available in the SPICe briefing Concessionary Travel.

**Scottish Parliament Action**

On the 14 December 2011 time for reflection was led by Dumfries and Galloway Third Sector Forum and focused on its report. A motion S4M-01763 A Road to Health was lodged by Alex Fergusson on 19 January 2012. This motion has achieved cross party support. There have also been a number of parliamentary questions on the subject of the Patient Transport Service (S3W-38680, S3O-09931).

On the 13 December 2011 the Equal Opportunities Committee took evidence on Access to Transport from the Mobility and Access Committee Scotland and Community Transport from the Rural Development Trust and Buchan Dial-a-Community Bus.

**Lizzy Burgess**  
Senior Researcher  
28 March 2012

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\(^6\) Scottish Government personal communication 22 March 2012.  
\(^7\) Scottish Government [Scotland-wide Free Bus Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People](#)