COMMUNITY TRANSPORT INQUIRY
BRITISH RED CROSS
WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Who we are

> We help people in crisis, whoever and wherever they are. We are part of a global voluntary network that responds to conflicts, natural disasters and individual emergencies. We help vulnerable people in the UK and abroad to prepare for and respond to emergencies in their own communities and when the crisis is over, we help them to recover and move on with their lives.

> The British Red Cross is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which comprises:

   The International Committee of the Red Cross

   The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and

   188 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide.

> As a member of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the British Red Cross is committed to, and bound by, its fundamental principles. These are: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

> Volunteers are at the core of the Red Cross. Our motivated and skilled body of volunteers continue to provide help and assistance to those in need, whoever and wherever they may be. The British Red Cross has approximately 4,000 volunteers in Scotland. Over 1,200 of our volunteers are involved in delivering community transport services.

> We help people at times of personal crises through a range of activities including transport support, loan of mobility aids and support at home. We also provide first aid services at public events and promote first aid education and training as part of developing community and individual resilience. As an auxiliary to the Government, we support the emergency services during major incidents.

> Last year our community transport services supported individuals to make 45,000 journeys. This can include transport home following discharge from hospital, transport to hospital appointments including chemotherapy, radiotherapy, day surgery and renal dialysis and MyBus demand responsive transport.

Introduction

The British Red Cross welcomes the opportunity to respond to the committee’s call for evidence on community transport in Scotland.
We provide a number of community transport schemes across Scotland which are run by either staff, volunteers or both. The schemes use different vehicles including ambulances, accessible minibuses and volunteer’s cars. Most of our community transport services are provided to address unmet need in health and social care. Our response to this inquiry will be based on our experience of delivering community transport in Scotland.

The Red Cross provides community transport in order to meet a humanitarian need. Transport is an enabler which lets people live a full life within their community. The Red Cross believes that sustainable community transport schemes are essential in supporting independent living and the shift of care from acute settings to the community based settings.

As a national charity we operate our transport services under Section 19 permits and to support this we are a registered issuing body for these permits.

In Scotland our community transport schemes include:

> Patient transport schemes taking direct referrals from the Scottish Ambulance Service and using Red Cross vehicles
> MyBus service – which provide demand responsive transport on a not-for-profit basis using a vehicle provided by SPT
> Transport to hospital appointments and day clinics for those who do not qualify for patient transport but could not reasonably be expected to make the journey by public transport using either Red Cross vehicles or volunteer’s cars
> Supported discharge services which use a mixture of Red Cross vehicles and volunteer’s car to take people who have been discharged from hospital home.

Our services are funded through a variety of different methods. Our patient transport schemes, which work on direct referrals from the Scottish Ambulance Service are contracted services with the Scottish Ambulance Service. The MyBus service which is run on Arran is funded by SPT. The supported discharge services are funded through NHS Boards and in some cases the Reshaping Care for Older People Change Fund. Other transport services for people attending appointments who do not qualify for patient transport, but could not reasonably be expected to make the journey by public transport can be funded in part by NHS boards, or sometimes are wholly or significantly dependent on donations or a mileage based charge.

We believe that our services meet a vital need for the people they serve. They can be lifeline services which not only help people to access essential medical treatments, but also support them to live and participate in their community, overcoming social isolation and contributing to better personal outcomes.

Overall the Red Cross believes that this inquiry presents an opportunity to highlight the challenges and opportunities around building sustainable community transport.
Challenges facing community transport services

1. Limitations with short term funding

The main challenge faced by the British Red Cross is accessing sustainable funding. At a time of shrinking budgets it is getting increasingly difficult to find sustainable funding streams. Most grants are no longer available and those that are tend to be focused on providing short term funding and often require match funding. This makes it extremely challenging to develop sustainable community transport.

Each year, some of our services face a great deal of uncertainty between one financial year and the next, as funders are unable to guarantee continuation of funds. This creates stress and anxiety for the service users who often have no other way of getting to essential medical appointments.

In essence the short term nature of funding makes it increasingly difficult to plan and invest in community transport services.

As a result additional pressures are placed on donations to wholly or significantly fund services. While donations can play a role in funding, relying heavily on them can make it difficult to build sustainability in the same way as short term, year to year funding.

There are also issues with managing the costs of maintenance, repair and replacement of community transport vehicles, particularly as many smaller organisations rely on older vehicles requiring more maintenance. With fewer capital grants available, and short term funding in place, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find the funds to invest or replace vehicles which are no longer fit for purpose.

2. An inconsistent approach by statutory funders

Another of the challenges around community transport is that each local authority and NHS Board approaches community transport differently. From our experience the extent to which local authorities and health boards take ownership of community transport varies. There needs to be greater recognition of the role that community transport plays in supporting people to live independently in their own home, which fits with key outcomes in Single Outcome Agreements and helps NHS boards meet NHS HEAT targets.

3. A lack of strategic coherence

Furthermore the Red Cross believes that there is an overall lack of ownership and strategic direction for community transport. At present it is difficult to identify where responsibility for community transport lies, which could be one reason why the approach across Scotland varies per local authority or health board. This presents a number of challenges which include building sustainable funding, undertaking strategic planning, and developing service provision which effectively meets the needs of people.
4. Higher costs for Section 19 Permit drivers

Finally, the removal of the D1 category from the drivers licence test is presenting challenges for community providers who use paid staff drivers. Indeed as time passes this is becoming a growing problem as fewer and fewer drivers have the category on their licence. Due to an alteration to the categories included in the standard driver’s licence test in 1997, the D1 category is no longer automatically included in the standard test. If a provider is using paid staff to deliver a service under a Section 19 Permit then the driver must have D1 on their licence. If the person passed their test on or after 1st January 1997 they will require additional training and a further test in order to obtain the D1 category. This will have resource implications for community transport providers using paid staff in the future.

Proposals to help deliver sustainable community transport

1. Widening the scope of the Concessionary Fare Scheme

The Red Cross would support the inclusion of Section 19 schemes into the Concessionary Fare Scheme. This will help to secure a funding stream for essential transport links and enable better planning and provision to address transport needs. However, we believe that this alone will not address all the challenges around building sustainable community transport.

2. Support for an integrated approach in health and social care

The integration of health and social care may provide an opportunity to ensure the role and value of community transport in supporting people to live independently is recognised. The Red Cross hopes that integration creates the environment to look strategically at what community transport enables people to do, and how that supports the reshaping care agenda. The Red Cross believes that community transport will play a role in ensuring the success of this agenda and therefore calls on integrated health and social care boards to take a more strategic approach which recognises the value and contribution of community transport.

3. Community transport being addressed through community planning

Furthermore, community planning also provides opportunities to give community transport greater strategic focus. By directly linking community transport into the community planning process this places a requirement on all community planning partners to deliver on the policy. As community transport is complex and stretches across a number of local authority departments this would be a welcome step. Linking it into the community planning process will enable a strategic planning, provision and delivery approach which ensures local need is met.

4. Greater partnership working across sectors
The Red Cross would support measures which would improve engagement and partnership working between local authorities, health boards and third sector providers. Ensuring that the third sector is an equal partner in planning, provision and delivery would further enhance the strategic focus that is needed in community transport. The third sector has a detailed knowledge and understanding of provision and gaps in community transport which could be utilised. Moreover, improved partnership may enable better use of community assets and utilise existing public sector resources and buying power. By engaging with each other providers, local authorities and health board will develop a greater understanding of what is on offer and how they could work together.

5. Raising standards through quality monitoring

It may also be worth considering introducing a light touch quality assurance framework which monitors community transport providers based on the VOSA best practice guides. It would be essential to ensure the framework is not overly onerous and could include some minimum requirements such as driver’s licence checks, vehicle Safety Inspections and driver training. In addition to this it may also be worth providing education and support to community transport providers to develop and enhance their awareness and knowledge of their roles and responsibilities as a provider of community transport.

Conclusion

The Red Cross welcomes the opportunity to respond to the committee’s inquiry into community transport.

We believe community transport is an essential and valuable service particularly in health and social care, which is the area in which we have the strongest experience.

We recommend that in order to develop sustainable community transport the committee should consider the following:

> Inclusion of section 19 permits into the concessionary travel schemes
> Valuing and recognising the role of community transport in supporting independent living in the health and social care integration bill
> Directly linking community transport into the community planning process
> Introducing measures which would support better partnership working and engagement across the statutory and third sector in the planning, provision and delivery of community transport
> Establishing a light touch quality assurance framework.

British Red Cross
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