Q: CT – Do we need a more strategic approach?

A: yes indeed. There is no overarching nationwide approach. CT has “just grown” where local individuals have had the vision and energy to get it going. This has resulted in a post code lottery. Some lucky people can access a CT service. Many who need one cannot get one and this is the situation in Dundee. We also need a more strategic approach at local level. The Audit Commission’s Report on Transport for Health and Social Care recommends that local authorities, NHS boards and the voluntary sector work together to improve transport access to health and social care and no action has been taken in Dundee.

Q: Are you seeing a growing demand for CT provision?

A: You cannot demand a service which doesn’t exist. What we are all seeing is a growing elderly population with the accompanying growth in the number of people who have serious mobility problems. They need door-to-door transport if they are not to become socially isolated. But many cannot afford to use taxis as their normal means of getting out and about. National research by the WRVS and local research undertaken in the East end of Dundee highlight the growing need for affordable accessible transport to prevent social isolation and to access key services.

Q: Do your local NHS bodies work closely with CT providers?

A: In Dundee the local NHS does not seem to acknowledge the need for CT. When Tactran held a meeting on transport and health, the NHS sent only 2 representatives. Neither of these had any responsibility for patients’ transport access to healthcare. However the new (2013) Dundee Partnership draft strategy on health and social care for older people does acknowledge that social isolation is not good for health. For the first time there is an intention to develop a Travel Plan in this context.

Q: How do you access non-emergency patient transport?

A: The SAS PTS eligibility criteria now exclude many people. It is only for hospital patients. There is a great need for transport to primary health care. Ninewells hospital is well served by buses during the day but not during evenings or on Sundays. The SAS uses volunteer drivers for some patients who have to make frequent journeys to hospital eg for dialysis. Roxburgh House/Macmillan has a well-used car scheme with volunteer drivers.

Q: Do you think that Community Transport should fall within concessionary fare schemes?
A: The people who need CT are eligible for the National Entitlement Card by reason of disability or age. But if they are unable to reach a bus stop or are not physically fit to use buses, they cannot benefit from concessionary fares. This is clearly unfair. They should be able to use a bus pass on CT journeys and this would contribute to the financial viability of much needed CT services.

Jan Goodall
Dundee Celebrate Age Network Forum
c/o Dundee Voluntary Action, 10 Constitution Rd, Dundee
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