WRVS is a leading volunteering organisation that provides over . We deliver practical services for older people on a daily basis. WRVS in Scotland has over 9000 volunteers. We help 901 older people each month to live a more independent life through WRVS good neighbours. We gifted £1.3m to support NHS services during 2010-2011. There are 284 active WRVS services in Scotland, including 80 WRVS cafés, trolley services and shops in hospitals. There are 64 WRVS community centres and clubs in Scotland. WRVS delivered 273,000 meals in Scotland in 2010-2011.

Key points:

- Community Transport is vital to supporting services that alleviate isolation and loneliness;
- Community Transport provided by volunteers with their own vehicles is an effective addition or alternative to public transport;
- The key to good Community Transport is well funded support;
- We need to look at new technology as a way to improve community transport;
- Community Transport delivered by volunteers helps those volunteers themselves;
- Successful integration of health and social care requires work on transport.

WRVS has built up an extensive knowledge base through providing community transport for local authorities, the NHS and health board partners. This complements our unique face to face support personalised to the needs of the individual. The comments below are based on the experience of frontline service provision.

In response to this inquiry we have commissioned research into the status of community transport on the lives of older people across the UK. This report entitled “Going Nowhere Fast” is attached to this response.

**Case study: Clydesdale Community Transport Service**

The WRVS Community Transport service in Clydesdale provides a good example of our community transport provision. It

Clydesdale is a largely rural area comprising former mining communities, market towns, small rural villages and farms. Around 50 volunteers provide a bookable door-to-door transport service, using their own cars or a minibus, to help some of the most vulnerable people in Clydesdale to get out of their house for social and leisure activities, such as swimming trips, visits to health services and support groups, and trips to the supermarket. This helps ensure that older people can continue to live a normal, independent life for as long as possible. For the volunteers, taking part in the service helps them to develop new skills, and increase confidence and wellbeing.

Joyce Scott, who uses the service, says:

“The WRVS service has become invaluable in my life since my sight has started to go. My husband has been taken into hospital and the service has allowed me to visit him several times a week. It has also allowed me to lead a normal and active life in the community. The service means a lot to me, there is always a welcoming voice at the end of the phone, the staff always try their best to help even at short notice.”

Tom Morris, a volunteer community transport driver for the project, says:

“It’s an excellent service, it makes a big difference in the community and I feel volunteering has made a huge difference to my life.”

**Community transport and tackling isolation and loneliness**

For WRVS Community Transport is not an end in itself. For all of the people we serve our services are a vital link to other important services and social connections. It is clear that maintaining a high quality of life for older people means ensuring they are able to use services and meet people outside their own homes. Community transport is a vital element in this. It fills the gaps in public transport provision and does not require the individual to provide their own transport.

Very often the people we work with are unable to access public transport because it is too far from their homes to easily access or because it is too irregular to allow use of the concessionary scheme. Community transport can link with public transport where it is hard to access. It also allows connectivity for older people where public transport doesn’t serve their communities.

WRVS is able to provide a range of further services through community transport. These services include assisted shopping, lunch and social clubs and befriending. Many of these services would not be possible without the transport element. WRVS Community transport also allows for informal befriending opportunities for volunteers.
Community Transport as part of transport planning

Community transport can provide the vital connectivity for older people that leads to better social and health outcomes. It is, though something of a Cinderella service in our transport planning and support. The opportunity to tackle transport-exclusion through community transport is of the things that may appear to be overlooked in favour of big infrastructure projects.

Community Transport and Health and Social Care Integration

WRVS believes one area of particular political significance for community transport is in Health and Social Care integration. The proposals to integrate older people’s health and social care services through Health and Social Care partnerships has no proposed focus on transport. As discussed above transport is vital to ensuring that older people out of their homes. This reduces isolation and assists vital services by, for instance, ferrying people to hospital appointments. This is especially important in rural areas, where there is less public transport, community transport can be vital in improving older people’s quality of life.

It therefore seems relevant to identify ways in which transport can be included in any integration of health and social care. One way may be through creating links with Regional Transport Partnerships to and from the Health and Social Care Partnerships. While we make no specific proposal in this area we do think it is important that the role transport plays in delivering effective social care and improving health is placed centrally in the newly configured structures.

Case study: the impact of volunteering on John Ross

Working with the Inverurie WRVS service, John Ross first became involved in WRVS Meals on Wheels Service after retiring from his self employed job as a salesman.

Since then he has become involved in several of the organisation’s other services including being a community transport driver, taking people to the library and becoming a bus escort. John also manages to fit time in to volunteer for a local stroke charity taking people to meetings, exercise classes, bingo sessions and on shopping trips. John enjoys making a difference to the lives of the people he meets through his volunteering, as in some cases he will be the only person they may speak to that day.

He is a big advocate of volunteering and intends to continue playing an active role for as long as he is able to, acknowledging that there may be a time when he will need to call on WRVS services. He enjoys the personal element involved in his role and considers it a two-way relationship. As a result of his volunteering John has built up a network of friends and always looks forward to seeing the people he regularly supports and sharing a joke or two.
Key Asks:

- The Scottish Government should introduce a duty on transport providers to consult with older people when planning and designing services: this will allow individuals to be seen as citizens and not just consumers and provides a clear opportunity for older people to exercise choice and control in their lives- This should be imposed a pre-requisite for receipt of payments from the concessionary scheme;
- Scottish Government should extend the eligibility for the concessionary travel scheme to community transport schemes to allow concessionary card holders to travel at no personal cost;
- Regional Transport Partnerships having a duty to consider transport-exclusion and access to transport for older people and those with impaired mobility;
- Transport, and particularly accessible transport like WRVS schemes should be considered as part of the Health and Social Care integration proposals;
- Research is needed on how community transport could benefit from investment in new technology and this may help to tackle digital exclusion.

WRVS Scotland
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