

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT INQUIRY
SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS
WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Our response

SCVO welcomes the opportunity to respond to this inquiry. Community transport is a vital component of many policy priorities for the third sector and is of great importance to our members. The 3.5 million journeys a year¹ provided by community transport operators play a critical role in improving wellbeing and ensuring people can live healthy and independent lives. Community transport helps reduce inequalities by providing transport services to those on low incomes, older people, people with disabilities and those with health or care needs². It also delivers significant savings to the public sector by preventing problems³ and reducing expensive acute interventions.

The importance of community transport's role in Health and Social Care⁴ is well documented and should be a primary consideration for any new policy. However, it also plays a critical role in reducing isolation, improving access to services and enabling people to participate more generally in society. This could help mitigate the impact of welfare reform and reduce poverty as well as enabling people to access training, job opportunities and volunteering.

To ensure the continuing development of community transport there are a number of areas where improvements could be made.

The National Concessionary Travel scheme should be expanded to include all eligible community transport operators

Expanding the National Concessionary Travel scheme to all eligible community transport operators would be a progressive step which would allow older and disabled people who are currently unable to access mainstream services the benefits of the scheme. In remote rural areas over 70 per cent of those over 60 do not have or use their NCT card compared to 31 per cent in urban areas⁵. As well as being fairer to those who are currently unable to access mainstream services, the additional financial costs associated with this change could be negated by the preventative savings brought about by community transport.

¹ <http://www.ctauk.org/UserFiles/Documents/In%20Your%20Area/Scotland/State%20of%20the%20Sector%20Scotland%202012.pdf>

² http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/health/2011/nr_110804_transport_health.pdf

³ <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb-sc/still%20waiting%20campaign/driving%20change.pdf?dtrk=true>

⁴ http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/health/2011/nr_110804_transport_health.pdf

⁵ <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb-sc/still%20waiting%20campaign/driving%20change.pdf?dtrk=true>

A national strategy for community transport would help tackle the problems created by the current uncoordinated approach

A national Strategy would help coordinate the variety of approaches taken by local authorities and NHS boards to community transport. Current approaches are often piecemeal so it would be beneficial if public sector bodies and community transport providers had a clearly set out strategy which provided details on how best to assign resources and deliver effective joined up services.

The strategy should seek to address some of the current problems which operators face. The issue of D1 training for those who passed their test after 1997 and the high associated costs must be tackled by the strategy. This could be by providing a small pot of funding for transport organisations to access that would ensure that younger drivers are still encouraged to volunteer their time. The strategy should also clarify the role community transport can play in providing transport for non-emergency NHS patients. This could ease the burden on the ambulance service and provide the additional social benefits to patients that are associated with community transport.

A national strategy would help raise the profile of community transport and highlight the important role it plays in delivering positive social outcomes for people and communities.

Procurement processes should be reformed to recognise the added value community transport brings

Procurement of services should fully recognise the additional benefits provided by community transport. As well as recognising the high quality of service provided, the additional social benefits to the community should be accounted for in the commissioning process. To enable the smaller operators to compete a more proportionate tender process will be required. Further details of the third sector's views on procurement can be found in our response to the consultation on the Procurement Reform Bill⁶.

Capital investment in community transport is required to replace ageing vehicles and provide a secure future for vital services

Replacing vehicles has been difficult for community transport operators in recent years and community transport vehicles are now ageing. In addition to causing increased maintenance costs, older vehicles produce higher levels of CO2 emissions and thus cause more damage to the environment. To address this issue, capital investment in community transport is required which will replace existing vehicles and ensure that vital community transport services continue to operate as efficiently as possible.

⁶ <http://www.scvo.org.uk/policy/briefings-and-consultation-responses/response-procurement-reform-bill/>

Conclusion

Community Transport continues to provide a vital service for people and communities in rural and urban communities. It is a preventative service which delivers significant financial savings as well as social benefits. To secure the future of community transport and help deliver greater benefits we need to see improved strategic coordination of services, expanded eligibility of concessions, reformed procurement practices and capital investment in vehicles.

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
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