

Buses – a lifeline for older people

Older people's experience of bus services in Wales



A report by the Bevan Foundation for Age Cymru

SEFYDLIAD
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Contents

Executive summary	1
1. Introduction.....	3
1.1 What we did.....	3
2. Context.....	5
2.1 Use of the bus	5
2.2 Bus travel and wellbeing	5
2.3 Policy context	6
2.4 Free bus travel scheme.....	8
2.5 Conclusion.....	8
3. Older people's use of public transport	9
3.1 Bus services in case study areas.....	9
3.2 Frequency of using the bus.....	10
3.3 Getting to essential services.....	10
3.4 Alternatives to usual travel methods.....	13
3.5 Conclusions.....	15
4. Experiences of using the bus.....	16
4.1 Satisfaction with services.....	16
a. Frequency.....	16
b. Routes and destinations.....	18
c. Reliability.....	19
d. Disability and impairment issues	20
e. Other issues.....	21
4.2 Conclusions.....	22
5. Conclusions and recommendations	23
5.1 Improving commercial services.....	25
5.2 Improving non-commercial services.....	26
5.3 When the bus isn't an option	27
Annex Profile of survey respondents.....	28

Executive summary

Bus services are vitally important to older people, yet many commercial services do not respond to the needs of older people while public spending cuts mean non-commercial services are under significant threat.

This report draws on the views and experiences of more than 300 people aged 60 and over, supplemented by findings from other research, to paint a vivid picture of the importance of bus services to older **people's independence and wellbeing**.

Key findings

- Many older people rely completely on the bus for going about their daily lives.
- There is a dearth of bus services in many communities and at certain times, which is likely to be exacerbated by cuts in support for subsidised services.
- There are significant variations in the challenges faced in different parts of Wales – one size does not fit all.
- Getting to and from hospital is a major problem for older people – the heaviest users of secondary care services – even in urban areas.
- Information about bus services, especially when several operators provide services on the same route, can be very difficult.
- The new Regional Transport Services Grant provides an opportunity to improve and integrate bus services.

We also identify three distinct challenges for government and bus operators:

- Improving the operation of services, mainly in urban areas.
- Improving the provision of services where there are currently few, such as evening and Sunday services in much of Wales, and those at any time in rural areas.
- Ensuring the mobility of older people when they are unable to use bus services e.g. because of location or disability.

The report concludes that action is urgently needed to address these challenges. This must involve bus operators, local authorities and regional transport consortia, the Welsh Government **and the Older People's Commissioner, older people's** forums and Age Cymru itself.

Recommendations in respect of commercial services

- At local level, Bus Users UK Wales should be encouraged to take a more proactive approach to the interests of older bus passengers in Wales.
- **The Older People’s Commissioner for Wales should meet regularly with principal bus operators and with the Welsh Local Government Association to discuss bus services and older people, and seek to agree a ‘service standard’ with bus operators through the Confederation of Passenger Transport Wales.**
- **Older people’s forums should draw up action plans and their concerns** about services for discussion with bus operators and the regional transport consortia.
- Welsh Government should require the regional transport consortia to include consultation with older people, including disabled older people, in the preparation of their plans, as a condition of their funding.
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission should monitor the regional **transport consortia’s compliance with the public sector duties of the Equality Act 2010** in the preparation of their plans. They should demonstrate how they address the needs of older people and disabled people including issues such as routes, accessibility and the proximity of bus stops to destinations.
- **Older people’s forums should be enabled to regularly discuss their** concerns about bus services and facilities with their local authority.
- Further work be undertaken to investigate the potential of linking the free bus travel scheme for older and disabled people with improvements to services.

Recommendations in respect of non-commercial services

- Regional transport consortia should actively engage with older people, including disabled older people, in the preparation of their plans.
- **The National Assembly’s Health and Social Care Committee should closely scrutinise arrangements for patients getting to and from hospital appointments both at present and following service reorganisation.**

Recommendations in respect of other transport services

- Older people should continue to press for concessionary fares to be available on community transport services and for stable funding.
- Welsh Government should further explore how it can encourage the rollout of demand responsive bus services across Wales.
- Local authorities should ensure that licensing of taxis takes into account the needs of older people.

1. Introduction

Being able to get out and about is critical to the wellbeing of older people. Whether it is being able to go shopping, visit friends or attend medical appointments, the ability to get there independently and without extortionate cost is key.

Many older people rely on public transport, usually the bus, to get out and about. Some have never been able to drive a car, while many others are no longer able to do so because of their health, the cost or concern about traffic. Bus services therefore matter a great deal to older people, arguably more than to any other group in society.

Most bus services are provided on a commercial basis, but public bodies can commission services which are socially necessary but not commercially viable e.g. evening and weekend services or routes which serve particular locations. In 2012, the then Minister for Transport announced a major change in funding of public transport involving, amongst other things, a 25% cut in expenditure.

Many organisations representing older people expressed concern about the potential impact of the proposed cuts on what are often already skeleton services. In order to increase understanding about how older people might be affected, Age Cymru asked the Bevan Foundation to research older people's experiences of using public transport.

The research was undertaken during 2012/13, during which time the Welsh **Government's position on funding for public transport developed and other studies** on older people, and on public transport, were also published. We hope that our findings and others will inform the Welsh **Government and local authorities'** policies and actions, so that public transport services are not only protected but enhanced given their importance in supporting many older people to live fulfilling and independent lives.

1.1 What we did

This report draws on a number of published reports and official statistics on older **people's use of public transport in Wales.**

It also uses the views and experiences of more than 300 older people (defined as those aged 60 and over) gathered in February and March 2013. We used, first of all, a postal and online questionnaire to which a total of 285 older people responded. The questionnaires were distributed through mail shots by Age Cymru and the **Older People's Commissioner for Wales, through older people's forums, Bevan Foundation newsletters and social media.** Recipients were encouraged to pass on information about the survey to other older people.

A profile of the characteristics of the respondents to the questionnaire survey is in the Annex. Although respondents are not statistically representative of older people in Wales, the results on key questions such as bus use and satisfaction with services are very similar to the results of large, Welsh Government surveys. We therefore believe that our findings are a reliable basis from which to draw conclusions.

In addition, three areas in Wales were selected as case studies. These were chosen to provide a mix of urban and rural communities, with different types of public transport provision, as well as having older people who could be asked to participate in a focus group. The areas chosen were:

- Aberystwyth, Ceredigion
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Welshpool, Powys.

The Bevan Foundation analysed bus services in each of these communities and also held a total of eight focus groups, one in each of Aberystwyth and Welshpool **and four in Merthyr Tydfil. Participants were invited via the local older people's forum or Age Cymru organisations.** Although they are not statistically representative their comments were broadly consistent with those from other studies. The discussions were recorded and analysed.



2. Context

Bus services are vitally important to older people in Wales. Around one in six people in Wales is over the age of 65, and older people are much more reliant on public transport than other groups of people. Welsh Government policies recognise the importance of bus travel to older people yet, in recent times, other than maintaining support for the extremely important free bus travel scheme, its main action has been to cut funding for non-commercial services.

2.1 Use of the bus

Older people generally have fewer choices about how to travel and they are more likely to use the bus than other groups of people. Welsh Government statistics show that older people are:

- less likely to have a driving license than people in other age groups – in 2007/08 36% of older people in Wales did **not hold a valid driver's licence** compared with 20% of people aged 30-59¹
- less likely to have access to a car than people in other age groups – in 2006 44% of retired households did not have access to a car compared with 24% of the population as a whole²
- twice as likely to travel by bus as younger people – in 2007, 24% of men and 35% of women aged 60+ had used the bus in the previous week compared with 13% of men and 18% of women aged 30-59.³

Bus travel is even more important for older women and for older people on low incomes. In 2007, older people on low incomes were two and half times more likely to have used the bus in the previous week than older people on high incomes,⁴ while older women are 50% more likely to use the bus than older men.⁵

2.2 Bus travel and wellbeing

There is considerable evidence that being able to 'get out and about' improves older people's wellbeing. The main drivers of quality of life in older age are psychological, health and social / community factors. These have been found to be far more important to perceived quality of life than material circumstances, such as income or home ownership.⁶ Personal mobility is a critical part of psychological

¹ Welsh Government (2012) People and vehicle licensing and ownership – 2011, SB 98/2012 Table 2.18 Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2012/121023sb982012en.pdf>

² As above, p.3

³ Welsh Government (2008) Public Transport Use in Wales: Results from the Living in Wales Survey 2007 SB 73/2008 Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2012/121023sb982012en.pdf>

⁴ Welsh Government (2008) Public Transport Use in Wales: Results from the Living in Wales Survey 2007 SB 73/2008 Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2012/121023sb982012en.pdf>

⁵ As above

⁶ Economic and Social Research Council (undated) Independence crucial to wellbeing in older age: evidence briefing. Available at: http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/Wellbeing%20in%20older%20age_tcm8-18760.pdf

and social quality of life, giving older people a sense of independence and control, and enabling social contact and purposeful activity.⁷

Being able to use the bus is, therefore, very important to the wellbeing of many older people. In Wales, a massive 99% of respondents to a survey on the free bus travel scheme felt that having the pass afforded them more independence,⁸ while a survey by WRVS (now RVS) found that some older people reported that being unable to use the bus meant they were lonely or depressed.⁹

2.3 Policy context

The Welsh Government's Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023¹⁰ recognises the importance of public transport **to older people's sense of wellbeing** and acknowledges that older people experience more difficulties than younger **people accessing public transport. The strategy identifies access to 'affordable and appropriate transport which assists them to play a full part in family, social and community life' as one of the four outcomes on environmental issues** that it aims to achieve by 2023. The strategy identifies the following as helping to achieve this outcome: the National Transport Plan, the Active Travel Bill (now the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013) and the Blue Badge Action Plan.

Public intervention in the provision of bus services is difficult as the vast majority of bus services are provided by private businesses on a commercial basis. Regulation **of these services is 'light touch' and, crucially, not devolved whilst co-operation between operators is constrained by competition rules.** However, for some years **the Welsh Government's Local Transport Services Grant has provided funding to local authorities to support non-commercial services which are socially necessary, such as services in the evenings. The Welsh Government's Bus Services Operator Grant has also provided support to bus operators to run services by offsetting the duty paid on bus fuel.**

The Welsh Government's National Transport Plan¹¹ states it will use this funding and other powers in the Local Transport Acts 2000 and 2008 to improve public transport by 2014, although there is little evidence that there has been any change to date.

⁷ WRVS (2011) Voices on Well-being: a report of research with older people. Available at: http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/Uploads/Documents/Reports%20and%20Reviews/voices_on_wellbeing_report.pdf

⁸ Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2010) Concessionary Bus Pass Research.

⁹ WRVS (2013) Going nowhere fast: Impact of inaccessible public transport on wellbeing and social connectedness of older people in Wales. Available at: <http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/our-impact/reports-and-reviews/2013>

¹⁰ Welsh Government (2013) The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023 <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dhss/publications/130521olderpeoplestrategyen.pdf>

¹¹ Welsh Government (2010) National Transport Plan. Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/transport/publications/ntp/?lang=en>

The National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise and Business Committee¹² recently recommended that the regulation of bus (and rail) services be devolved, skills and capacity be developed and that greater efforts should be made to improve the quality of bus services from integrated timetabling to through-ticketing and passenger information. The Welsh Government is yet to respond at the time of writing.

There are signs of change. In 2012, the Welsh Government announced cuts to funding of the Bus Services Operator Grant and Local Transport Services Grant. Following representations, the size of the cut was reduced and a review of funding launched. In January 2013, the Welsh Government announced that both the Local Transport Services Grant and Bus Services Operator Grant would be replaced with a new Regional Transport Services Grant, to be administered by the four regional transport consortia in Wales.¹³ The value of the grant would be £25 million, with 2013-14 being a transitional year during which bus services and operators adjust to the new arrangements.

The aims of the new grant and the combination of two different funding streams into a single grant are laudable. Nevertheless, there has been a significant reduction in public subsidy for public transport. Table 1 shows that the Local Transport Services Grant was virtually unchanged for five years despite rapidly rising transport costs and increasing public expenditure on other services, while the combined value of the two funding streams has fallen by 22% between 2011-12 and 2013-14.

Table 1 Bus Services Operator Grant and Local Transport Services Grant 2007/08 to 2013/14

	Bus Services Operator Grant	Local Transport Services Grant
2007-08	n.a.	£10.5
2008-09	n.a.	£10.7
2009-10	n.a.	£11.2
2010-11	n.a.	£10.9
2011-12	£21.3	£11.0
2012-13	£19.8	£9.9
2013-14	£25 million	

Source: Welsh Government.

¹² National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee (2013) Integrated Public Transport in Wales. Available at: <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-business-fourth-assembly-laid-docs.htm?act=dis&id=246495&ds=5/2013>

¹³ Welsh Government (2013) Bus Services in Wales. Written Statement by Carl Sargeant Minister for Local Government and Communities, 17th January. Available at: [http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-business-fourth-assembly-written-ministerial-statements/dat20130117-e.pdf?langoption=3&ttl=Bus%20Services%20in%20Wales%20\(PDF%2C%20189KB\)](http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-business-fourth-assembly-written-ministerial-statements/dat20130117-e.pdf?langoption=3&ttl=Bus%20Services%20in%20Wales%20(PDF%2C%20189KB))

It is not clear what the impact of these changes to the funding arrangements and the quantum of funding for bus services will be. In particular, the response of bus operators to the reduction in and possible loss of rebate for fuel costs is unknown and could have unforeseen consequences especially for marginal services. Similarly, the change to funding arrangements could improve cross border services, enable stronger commissioning and, crucially, better non-commercial services, but could also mean that fewer services can be subsidised.

2.4 Free bus travel scheme

Older people's use of bus services has been significantly shaped by the introduction of the free bus travel scheme for older and disabled people, which provides free travel at any time of day to people aged 60 and over. Altogether 650,000 free passes have been issued to date,¹⁴ with an estimated takeup of 83% in 2012.¹⁵ The scheme currently costs the Welsh Government £70 million a year in fares reimbursed to bus operators and administrative costs, equivalent to approximately £100 per pass holder. Expenditure on the free bus travel scheme dwarfs expenditure on support for local bus services by a factor of nearly three.

At present the free bus travel scheme does not apply to rail or community transport services. A pilot scheme funded by the Welsh Government has supported concessionary fares in various types of community transport projects but, following two evaluations of the pilot, the Welsh Government has concluded that the scheme is not financially viable and that funding will therefore end.¹⁶

2.5 Conclusion

Bus services are crucial to the wellbeing of older people – older people are less likely to be able to drive and have use of a car and use the bus much more than other people. This is recognised by various Welsh Government policies. Yet despite this, other than the free bus travel scheme, there has been little action to seek to improve bus services. Indeed, funding for non-commercial services has been cut.

¹⁴ Older People's Commissioner for Wales, Concessionary Bus Pass Research, November 2010. Available at:

<http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/documents/s10513/04.07.12%20Correspondence%20from%200Older%20Peoples%20Commission-Annex.pdf>,

¹⁵ Welsh Government (2013) Bus Services in Wales. Written Statement by Carl Sargeant Minister for Local Government and Communities, 17th January. Available at: [http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-business-fourth-assembly-written-ministerial-statements/dat20130117-e.pdf?langoption=3&ttl=Bus%20Services%20in%20Wales%20\(PDF%2C%20189KB\)](http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-business-fourth-assembly-written-ministerial-statements/dat20130117-e.pdf?langoption=3&ttl=Bus%20Services%20in%20Wales%20(PDF%2C%20189KB))

¹⁶ Welsh Government (2013) Evaluation of the Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative, Decision Report 21st February. Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/publications/accessinfo/drnewhomepage/dr2013/janmar/transport/cs3138/?lang=en>

3. Older people's use of public transport

Welsh Government surveys show that, in Wales as a whole, older people use the bus more than other age groups. However, there is little information about the **purpose of older people's bus use or about how older people use services in different parts of Wales even though services vary considerably.** This section looks at the availability of services in the case study areas, and analyses how older people access key services in these and other parts of Wales.

3.1 Bus services in case study areas

In each case study area we used bus timetable information available on either the **local authority's or main bus operator's website to identify the destination and frequency of bus services, and identified the time of the last service from the town.** This in itself was not **straightforward. Ceredigion Council's website¹⁷ listed bus services in the county and included downloadable timetables. Powys Council's website included a link to Traveline Cymru and to its own bus information service Powys Bus Info,¹⁸ from which timetables can be downloaded. However, it was not especially user-friendly. Merthyr Tydfil Council's website¹⁹ did not include timetable or route information. It identified the main operator (Stagecoach) and provided a link to the company's website. It also identified two other bus companies, but not all companies providing services in the area, without website or telephone details. It also provided a link to the Traveline Cymru website. Only Stagecoach's services are therefore included in this analysis.**

It is clear that different areas face different issues in respect of their bus services:

1. In Merthyr Tydfil, there are numerous, frequent services Monday to Saturday in the daytime covering the town itself and nearby towns such as Cardiff and Pontypridd, Aberdare, Ebbw Vale and Brynmawr. The main gaps in provision are services to smaller communities (e.g. Nelson where the service is only hourly and Ponsticill where there is no service). Services after 6pm and on Sundays are virtually nonexistent: some evening and weekend services are provided by small operators but timetable information is not readily available.
2. In Aberystwyth, there are a few services at hourly or half hourly frequencies within the town and between Aberystwyth and larger communities such as Borth and Aberaeron. A few routes have one evening and Sunday service. More distant communities, such as Ponterwyd, have fewer services and some, such as Bont-Goch and Clarach, have none all year round.

¹⁷ <http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=15888>

¹⁸ <http://www.powysbus.info/>

¹⁹

<http://www.merthyr.gov.uk/english/transportandstreets/publictransport/pages/busesinformationandadvice.aspx>

3. In Welshpool, only the town centre service is relatively frequent. Some larger communities nearby, such as Berriew, have limited service (e.g. two hourly) while others, such as Llanfair Caereinion, have only two services a day. Evening and Sunday services are non-existent.

This breadth of different issues raise challenges for the regional transport consortia, the Welsh Government and, as will be shown later, for older people wanting to use bus services in these areas.

3.2 Frequency of using the bus

The findings of our survey confirmed that a large proportion of older people rely on public transport. A third of respondents lived in a household in which no one could drive or had access to a car (n=265). Car access decreases significantly with age: while 83% of people aged 60-69 live in a household with a car, only 59% of people aged 70-84 and 45% of people aged 85+ and over do so.

Bus use amongst respondents is common. More than half of respondents (54%) said they used the bus at least once a week (n=282). People aged 70-84 are the most likely to use the bus at least weekly (61.2% do so), followed by those aged 85+ (57.1%) whilst people aged 60-69 are least likely to use the bus weekly (39.3%). This may reflect the higher levels of access to a car amongst people aged 60-69.

The bus is extremely well used by older people without access to a car – 85% used the bus at least weekly. Even those with a car sometimes use the bus, with the reasons for choosing the bus being cost (the bus is free whereas fuel prices and car parking charges are rising), convenience (sometimes bus stops are closer to city centre destinations than car parks) and reluctance to drive in heavy traffic.

Overall, just over a quarter (26.5%) of respondents said they rarely or never used the bus. Of these, people aged 60-69 were the most likely not to use the bus whereas people aged 70-84 were the least likely not to use the bus. Only 12% of those without a car rarely or never use the bus.

3.3 Getting to essential services

The focus groups we held confirmed that people use the bus for a wide variety of different reasons (Table 2). This ranges from everyday activities that are a key part of maintaining independence, to day-trips and leisure activities that are not essential but are nevertheless an important part of a varied and fulfilling lifestyle.

Table 2 Selected reasons for using the bus

Medical services – hospital, doctor, dentist, chiroprapist, etc.	Access to other transport.
Paying rates	Taking grandchildren swimming
Going to meetings	Walking
Church	Bank
Education	Post Office
Lunch club	Food shopping
Library	Council offices
Walking group	Swimming
Shopping	Fitness classes
Visiting friends	Cinema
Meeting family	

A review of evidence²⁰ suggested that the following reasons for using the bus are the most important for older people:

- food shops
- post office or bank
- GP surgery.

Being able to reach these so-called **‘key services’** is not only important to access the service itself – it also provides social contact and purpose for older people.

We asked survey respondents how they get to the three key services of food shopping, the bank and the GP surgery. We also asked respondents how they would travel to visit family and friends as social contact is important to wellbeing.

a. Going food shopping

Just under a quarter of respondents (24.2%) said they use the bus to go food shopping (n=256), with most of the rest using the car. The bus was much more important for going food shopping for households without a car (59% use it, n=90) but even in these households, 1 in 5 did use a car to go food shopping (for example being driven by someone else). Nearly 1 in 10 older people without a car used a taxi or asked someone else to do their shopping for them.

Reliance on the bus for food shopping increases sharply with age – more than a third (35.1%) of people over the age of 85 rely on it compared with just 15.9% of people aged 60-69 (n=237). These older people face not only the challenges of using a sometimes imperfect bus service but also of carrying heavy shopping.

²⁰ Burnett, A. (2005) In the Right Place: Accessibility, local services and older people. Help the Aged. Available at: <http://celebrate.mtcserver4.com/images/cmsimages/media/publications/equality/accessibilityolderpeople.pdf>

b. Going to the bank or post office

Use of the bus to get to the bank or post office was more common than to go food shopping – 30% of all respondents used the bus for this activity. This may well reflect the near universal location of banks and post offices in town centres whereas many food shops are on the edge of town with poorer bus services. Less than half (43%) used a car to get to the post office or bank. A high proportion (69%) of people without a car in their household used the bus to get to the bank or post office. As with food shopping, the bus is more important for people aged over 70 (34% use it) than for people aged 60-69 (21%).

c. Going to the GP surgery

The bus was less commonly used for going to the doctor's surgery, used by just 1 in 5 people. The majority rely on going by car. However, people without a car were twice as likely to use the bus to get to the GP surgery than older people as a whole – 41% did so. People over the age of 85 were also more likely than other age **groups to rely on the bus to get to the doctor's surgery** – 29% did so compared with 19% of 70-85 year olds and 14% of 60-69 year olds.

Participants in focus group meetings pointed out that the issue was not simply that **of getting to the doctor's surgery on one occasion** – many older people had multiple, frequent appointments at a variety of health care services. These included optician, chiropodist, dentist, hospital appointments and visits to a pharmacy. Services are rarely nearby and appointments rarely on the same day, increasing the need for older people to travel and the complexity of travel arrangements. In parts of Ceredigion, services for older people have been centralised in one building which was welcomed.

Travel to hospital is widely recognised to be difficult for older people.²¹ It was regarded by our respondents to be a particular problem in Ceredigion if treatment is offered in Glangwili Hospital in Carmarthen or Withybush Hospital, Haverfordwest. Public transport from Aberystwyth to Glangwili takes almost two hours, and to Withybush Hospital takes about three hours with at least one change of bus. For people living outside Aberystwyth who use a connecting bus service the journey may be simply impossible. Focus group participants told us that patients were often not informed that hospital transport may be available and relied on family or friends to take them. If this was not possible, patients would cancel their appointment or simply not attend. Even if hospital transport is provided, the need to wait for all patients to be seen or have treatment could mean a long wait and a late return home. Early appointments could sometimes mean patients and their family having to stay in a hotel overnight.

²¹ Burnett, A. (2005) *In the Right Place: Accessibility, local services and older people*. Help the Aged. Available at: <http://celebrate.mtcserver4.com/images/cmsimages/media/publications/equality/accessibilityolderpeople.pdf>

In Merthyr Tydfil, many focus group participants commented that the daytime service to Prince Charles Hospital was good, although some believed that there was no evening or Sunday service to enable them to visit friends and family who are inpatients. They were surprised to learn that there is an hourly evening and Sunday service operated by a small bus company, with a different route number, about which there is no information at the bus station or stops.

“It is wrong because when you are in hospital, if they are using the bus, you can’t get any visitors in the evenings.”

Getting to hospitals further away was more difficult. One participant described difficulties reaching Royal Glamorgan Hospital from Merthyr Tydfil:

“I had a 7:30 morning appointment in Llantrisant, I couldn’t get there any other way but a taxi. It cost a fortune.”

Reaching the new Mountain Ash Hospital was also problematic as it could take more than two hours to get there from Merthyr Tydfil. One focus group participant described her experiences:

“When I tried getting to the new Mountain Ash Hospital I ended up walking all the way from Abercwmboi, it took ages then I missed the visiting hours. I had to get a taxi back to Aberdare because I didn’t know how to get back with the buses. I was trying to visit my friend.”

In Ceredigion, participants suggested that information about transport should be provided when appointments were booked, and that patients living far away should be offered appointments later in the day if possible. They asked that the possibility of medical staff occasionally holding clinics in Bronglais Hospital rather than requiring patients to travel be explored.

d. Visiting friends and relatives

The bus was used by just over 1 in 5 people (22%) to visit friends and relatives. However, nearly half of people without access to a car (47%) relied on the bus to visit friends or relatives and nearly a third (30%) of people aged 85 and over relied on the bus compared with 14.6% of respondents aged 60-69 and 22% of 70-85 year olds.

A small number of people (4% of the total) said they had not recently visited friends or relatives, although twice the proportion (8.4%) of people without a car said this. However, the numbers here are small and should be treated with caution.

3.4 Alternatives to usual travel methods

We asked people how they would get to food shops, the bank or post office, the **doctor’s surgery** and visit friends or relatives if they could not use their usual way of

travelling to them. The results are only for those who usually travel by car (either driven by themselves or by someone else) or bus, as the numbers of people using other modes of transport (e.g. taxi) were too small. Even the numbers that are quoted are relatively small and should be treated with caution.

Table 3 **How people would travel if their usual mode wasn't available**
(percent)

Purpose of Trip and alternative chosen	Usual way of travelling	
	Car	Bus
Food shopping		
Wouldn't make the trip	16.0	29.3
Bus	32.7	
Taxi	10.3	17.2
Bank or post office		
Wouldn't make the trip	20.0	28.9
Bus	29.1	
Taxi	10.0	15.8
Doctor's surgery		
Wouldn't make the trip	11.3	20.8
Bus	25.6	
Taxi	13.5	20.8
Visiting friends or relatives		
Wouldn't make the trip	31.3	29.1
Bus	18.8	
Taxi	5.6	20.0

For all types of trip, a significant minority of people who usually travel by car or bus would not make the trip at all if their usual mode of transport was not available. People who usually used the bus were more likely not to make the trip at all than car users, for all types of trip except visiting friends and relatives. Amongst bus users, about one in three would not travel to go food shopping, go to the bank or visit friends and relatives if the bus wasn't available. One in five would not go to the doctor's surgery. For car users, one in three wouldn't visit friends or relatives, one in five wouldn't go to the bank or post office and one in six wouldn't go food shopping. One in ten said they wouldn't go to the GP if they couldn't use the car.

There are also important differences in the alternatives chosen by older people. For those who usually use the car, the bus is a key alternative which would be used by between one quarter and one third of people for food shopping, going to the bank or post office or getting to the doctor's surgery. For those who usually use the bus, the alternative is to use a taxi, which would be chosen by one in five people to visit the doctor's surgery or friends and by around one in six people to go food shopping or to the bank or post office.

In focus groups, people said they were used to supplementing or replacing bus journeys with taxis, especially in the evenings and on Sundays. However, taxis were regarded as expensive and difficult for people with hearing impairments to book. Booking a return journey by taxi could also be difficult for people who did not have a mobile phone or who found one difficult to use e.g. because of small print and small buttons. Some focus group participants also had concerns about safety, being reluctant either to use a hackney taxi where they are available or to wait alone or in the dark for a pre-booked taxi to arrive.

The bus is therefore not only essential for people who rely on it, but is also an **extremely important 'fall-back' for people who usually use the car. Taxi services are** also an often forgotten means of transport that are particularly important if usual **modes aren't available.**

3.5 Conclusions

A substantial proportion of older people are totally reliant on the bus for getting to essential services. People in the oldest age group and people without a car rely on the bus most of all. While many services in Merthyr Tydfil and some services in Aberystwyth are frequent enough to enable older people to use them to get about, some communities in all case study areas (and many communities in more rural areas) have sparse services or none at all.

The challenge is therefore to ensure that older people in all areas, and of all ages, have the means to get to buy food, get medical attention, get money and pay bills, and have some social contact. These are basic features of a decent life and ought to be a high priority in transport and social policy alike.

The value of bus services is not just for regular users – they are a valuable alternative for older people who usually rely on a car. As an indication of how important bus services are, some older people would not have access to essential services if the **bus wasn't available. While a minority did use taxis, some older people had concerns about safety and booking them.**

4. Experiences of using the bus

The experience of using the bus is just as important as whether or not there is a service or how much it **costs**. **This section looks at older people's satisfaction with the bus and explores what would be required to improve the service or to enable older people to use it.** Some of the issues that emerge are similar to those reported by people of other ages, but others are specific to older people.

4.1 Satisfaction with services

Older people generally report high levels of satisfaction with bus services. In a recent Welsh Government survey, 73% of people aged 65 and over were very satisfied with their bus journey compared with 54% of people aged 35–59 and just 36% of people aged 16–34.²² The vast majority of older people were very satisfied with value for money (88%, compared with 38% for 35–59 year olds and 25% for 16–34 year olds). Similarly high levels of satisfaction with specific aspects of using the bus were found **by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales** in separate research.²³

Our survey echoed these findings. More than half of respondents (57%) rated the bus service as 7 out of 10 or higher (where 10 is excellent). As one respondent said:

“For myself, the perfect travel is my bus pass, because I would not go out of my house because I could not afford the fare, therefore I would be eating not much because I could not afford my village shop.”

“When it is good it is very good, but when it is bad it is horrendous!”

In focus groups, participants were also generally very happy with services provided in towns in the daytime.

However, there was a significant decline in levels of satisfaction with age. 41% of people aged 60–69 gave a score of 7 or more compared with 25% of people aged 70–84 and 17% of people aged 85 and over.

We asked survey respondents and focus group participants who used the bus what would be required to improve the bus service so that it would receive a higher score, and asked those who did not use the bus for their reasons. By far the most frequent responses concerned frequency, the destinations of services and reliability. Issues associated with disability cut across these responses.

a. Frequency

In one of the case study areas, Merthyr Tydfil, a handful of routes have such **frequent day time services that they are almost ‘turn up and go’**. **Most routes here**

²² Welsh Government (2010) Bus Passenger Survey Results for Wales. Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2011/110311buswalesen.pdf>

²³ Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2010) Concessionary Bus Pass Research.

and those in Aberystwyth and Welshpool towns were less frequent, however, with two or three buses an hour. These were nevertheless regarded as a good service.

The main concerns were regarding services that were less than hourly, or which were very irregular, as these could force older people to spend longer at their destination than they would like and meant very long waits if a service was delayed or cancelled. For example, someone living in Ysbyty Ystwyth, 15 miles outside Aberystwyth, must get the bus at 7.45am (only on school days) or 9.28am (on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays) if they want to be in Aberystwyth in the morning. The first return bus is not until 14.05 on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, with another at 15.45 on schooldays.

“There's only one into and back to town and they're at inconvenient times and would mean I'd have to spend all day in town.”

“At present, [the] timetable can be variable so I get 45 minutes or four and a half hours in town. We only have a 2 hour service here, if only we had it every hour!”

“[I'd like] more buses as we only have two each way every day.”

Evening, Bank Holiday and Sunday services were a particular concern amongst survey respondents and focus group participants:

“[I'd like] later buses to get further up the Swansea and Amman valley as I feel I am on a curfew when I go out for an evening and need to use the bus.”

“[I'd like] a service where the last bus in the evening would be running after 6.00pm to allow attendance at evening events or social activities.”

“In some areas we can't get out. It is stopping us doing what we want to do, especially in the lighter summer nights.”

“I would like to visit my family on a Sunday but I can't.”

“There is NO service at all on Sunday so I cannot get to church or hospital visiting hours. The service in the evenings is not convenient for evening classes or the cinema or theatre, as I do not drive at night.”

“No buses to my village after about 5.30.”

A number of those responding **said they didn't use the bus because there was no service at all.** This was particularly the case in rural areas.

“I live "off piste" in the country. Nearest bus stop - a mile away.”

“I live out of town, one mile away from the nearest bus stop and buses on the route are infrequent. I will sometimes park and use buses within the town boundaries.”

“It's an hour and a quarter's walk to the nearest bus stop!”

But some of those replying reported a lack of services in the south Wales valleys also, with services in parts of Merthyr Tydfil and parts of Neath Port Talbot and Powys mentioned several times.

“At the moment, there is no bus service from the bottom of Trelewis to Merthyr and it is too far for me to walk to nearest bus stop, which is about 3/4 of mile. Much too far to carry shopping.”

“**[I]** Live in Coelbren, Powys. Atrocious bus service. Would be afraid of not being able to catch bus connections to destination or getting home.”

b. Routes and destinations

A substantial minority of older people suggested that bus services would be better if they served a wider range of destinations or had routes that went closer to certain destinations. Some said destinations required a change of bus, often with poor connections between them.

“I used to go Cwmbran at least once a week but they took the bus off service so I do not go regularly anymore, only occasionally.”

“There is a bus to Pwllheli that passes my door but at times that don't necessarily get me to where I want, when I want and back. There are no buses to Nefyn where I go for Keep Fit, choir and book club so I have to use my car or not go.”

“**[I would like] buses straight through to Swansea... or Neath. Or at least a decent connection - this service is dreadful.**”

Related to this, some respondents pointed out that the routes of some buses did **not go close either to people's homes or to their ultimate destination.** People from Trelewis who attended the Merthyr Tydfil focus group explained that although there is a service to the village, the route omits a large part of it meaning that

some people are more than 20 minutes walk away from the bus stop. This was felt to be too far, especially for anyone with even a minor mobility impairment or with heavy shopping.

Other people described how buses stop at the edge of facilities such as supermarkets and hospitals rather than going right to the entrance. Focus group participants pointed out how many new developments, including public services, were situated in places that had limited public transport services, or where the bus stop was some distance away, or across a busy road or down a steep hill, from the service in question. For example, in Merthyr Tydfil, one focus group participant commented that it was difficult to get to the new leisure centre, cinema and restaurants located on an edge-of-town development and to the new edge-of-town health centre. While both did have services in the daytime, they required a change of bus which often did not connect with other services.

The distance of the bus stop from facilities was particularly important for older people with mobility impairments. There is some debate about what is a reasonable distance to expect an older person to walk, with some suggesting that bus stops should be no further than 200 metres from a key service.²⁴

“No direct link to train station - difficult (and painful) to walk from Westgate Street.”

“A bus for the journey to Monnow Vale Hospital so that patients can visit to the door.”

c. Reliability

A number of older people identified reliability as a key issue for them. While they appreciated that sometimes buses were held up by traffic, they were less forgiving of buses that broke down or simply failed to turn up.

“I live on a popular bus route, where services are frequent - I therefore use the bus on a daily basis. However some services don't turn up without any reason. Reliability is the issue.”

“They could stick to a proper timetable.”

“[I would like the service to be] 100% reliable with a back up service when the regular bus breaks down or doesn't turn up because of road accidents, leaving people on bus stops not knowing if a bus will turn up.”

²⁴ Burnett, A. (2005) In the Right Place: Accessibility, local services and older people. Help the Aged. Available at: <http://celebrate.mtcserver4.com/images/cmsimages/media/publications/equality/accessibilityolderpeople.pdf>

“Being on time and not cancelled without being notified.”

The impact of poor reliability is made worse by the lack of information at the vast majority of bus stops, and the very poor facilities for those waiting e.g. the absence of seats or effective shelter from bad weather.

d. Disability and impairment issues

Cutting across the issues of frequency, routes and reliability is the question of disability. Although the question was not asked directly in the survey, it is clear that disability or impairment affected the bus use of substantial minority of respondents. Some said that their ill health or impairment meant they could not use the bus at all.

“I suffer from agoraphobia so seldom travel on my own.”

“I am blind and 92 years old and getting older.”

When disabled older people did attempt to travel, they faced multiple difficulties from accessing the bus itself to getting to and from the bus stop and to getting information about services. A number said that buses were not always fully accessible and that they needed help to use them.

“I use a walker with wheels and I find it difficult getting on the buses.”

“**[I don't use it because of] the complete inaccessibility** of buses. Some are wheelchair accessible but often have inoperative ramps, or are old, inaccessible buses, or the wheelchair space is occupied by buggies.”

“At present, I am unable to walk to the bus stop and I need someone with me to either push the wheelchair or with a strong arm to give me support (with my stick) for just a short distance. I have osteoporosis and very limited walking.”

On infrequent services, lack of access to the bus can leave a disabled person with a long wait for the next service or, at worst, no means to get home.

Problems getting to the nearest bus stop were quoted by some respondents, with difficulties compounded by disability. The barrier was not just the distance of a bus stop from home, but whether or not there are seats at the bus stop to use while waiting for the bus, whether the route to the bus stop is hilly, and the proximity of the destination stop to services and facilities e.g. Shopmobility.

“I have a heart condition – I can't walk too far from bus stop to home etc.”

“Too far from home to bus stop - **no seats provided ... Bus terminal not disabled or older person friendly.**”

Related to this, a number of survey respondents mentioned drivers who set off before passengers were seated. Many older people are afraid of falling and sudden movement of the bus could make them do so.

“Make sure I sit down before starting off, also give enough time to get off before starting off. I nearly got thrown down a few months ago.”

“We have had shocking buses in the Rhondda but since August 2012 we are now starting **to have low loaders ... [they should] give the drivers more customer service** as they do not check that people are seated before they start off.”

The readability of timetable information for anyone with slight eyesight impairments was also highlighted. Focus group participants pointed out that even if timetable information was available, it was often in small print which was difficult or impossible for older people to read. The siting of timetable information very high up or low down on a notice board made reading it even more difficult as well as requiring bending down.

e. Other issues

Poor or non-existent bus shelters were identified as concerns by many focus group participants. The absence of seating, damaged or vandalised windows, poor design and lack of information were all mentioned.

“**It is important that ... bus shelters are kept clean and well lit at night.**”

We were told in focus groups that many rural bus stops have no shelter and **sometimes aren't even marked as bus stops, being no more than a field entrance.** Providing information for bus users in such circumstances is clearly difficult.

Lack of information was mentioned as a reason why older people did not use the bus. Focus groups' participants described occasions when bus times had changed with no prior notice for occasional users. As an example, one focus group member was late for the discussion because her regular bus service had changed to run **16 minutes earlier than before. She missed it and had more than an hour's wait for the next one.** Timetable information may be available online but many older people do not use computers – the Traveline Cymru service **was said to be 'OK' if used by phone.**

Older people commented on the courtesy of many drivers. While some were critical, more praised their helpfulness.

“[It would] be nice to have a smile off the drivers now and again.”

“I find the bus drivers **really helpful because they know I can't walk far. They pull up outside my house – they are very good and they help me with my shopping. I know you don't get this in big towns but you do here.**”

As many older people appreciate the social contact they get when traveling by bus, the courtesy and respect afforded to them by bus drivers matters a great deal.

4.2 Conclusions

Our findings confirm those of other research, that older people who use the bus are generally satisfied with the service. Improvements that older people would most welcome concerned greater frequency, during the day in rural areas and in the evenings and on Sundays across the board. They also identified the routes served by buses and the proximity of bus stops to destinations as barriers to bus use, as well as reliability of services and a variety of other issues such as lack of information and poor facilities.

Many of the problems highlighted are very similar to those identified by bus users of other age groups and are not specific to older people. However, they have a greater impact on older people because of the significantly higher incidence of disability in that age group. Older people are less likely than younger age groups to be able to walk 500 metres to a bus stop, stand and wait in the rain for a delayed service or climb steep steps onto the bus. What may be an inconvenience for younger people is a serious barrier to older people, which means at worst that they are cut off from everyday activities. It is highly likely that the marked decrease in satisfaction with services amongst older age groups is associated with higher levels of disability.

Older people thus suffer a double disadvantage. Not only are they more reliant on the bus than other age groups but they are less likely to manage with poor quality services.

The calls for improved frequency, reliability and better routes from people of all ages are, sadly, not new. Yet despite this, there has been little if any change in public policy nor much if any improvement in services. Indeed, the changes to funding for bus services being phased in during 2013-14 could see marginal, commercial routes being withdrawn at the same time as funding for non-commercial services is also cut. This is occurring at a time when the population of older people – and hence of people dependent on the bus – is forecast to rise.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Being able to get out and about is vitally important to the wellbeing of older people. It means that they can carry out essential activities independently, it enables social contact and provides a sense of purpose.

For many older people, getting out and about means using the bus. Buses are the main way in which thousands of older people go about their everyday lives, from buying food and getting their pension to going to the doctor and visiting friends. Even for older people who do not use the bus regularly it is an essential back-stop if they cannot use their car. Older women, people on low incomes and the oldest age groups are particularly dependent on public transport. Not only are these groups the most likely to use the bus but they are least likely to be able to use alternatives such as their own car or a taxi, for financial and other reasons.

Older people said that they are generally satisfied with bus services, particularly services in urban areas in the daytime. However, there are significant concerns about the poor frequency of daytime services in rural areas, and services in the evenings and on Sundays in all areas. Indeed, some rural areas have no bus services at all or only one or two services on selected days. Older people said they wanted buses serving more destinations, with bus stops closer to key services. Concerns about reliability, waiting facilities and information were also raised.

These concerns about public transport are very similar to those raised by other age groups. Young people wanting to socialise, or people on low incomes without a car, are also severely affected by the lack of services in some areas, poor reliability and lack of information. There is, therefore, a common cause between older people and other age groups in improving bus services. This is not just a matter for older people.

However, the impact of poor bus services on older people is greater because of the prevalence of disability and impairments among older age groups. For disabled older people, getting to the bus stop and on and off the bus are significant issues which are compounded by a lack of facilities at bus stops. Visual and hearing impairments make reading or ringing for timetable information difficult. Some older people, especially those in the oldest age groups, are unlikely to be able to use ordinary service buses at all even with suitable adaptations.

The forecast increase in the number of older people in Wales and in particular the number of people in the oldest age groups makes the question of improving public transport all the more urgent. Without steps to improve the frequency, reliability and accessibility of bus services throughout Wales, more and more older people will be unable to reach essential services. Not only will their wellbeing suffer but there are significant consequences for other services, notably health and social **care services, which will have to cope with older people's isolation.**

We conclude that there are multiple, different challenges to be tackled.

Firstly, the challenge is to improve the operation of services, mainly in urban areas. The provision of an adequate bus service is not just a question of putting a bus on a route. The frequency of the service, the provision and location of bus stops, the facilities at the stop, the reliability of the service, information about timings and changes to services, and disabled access all matter to older people. Many older people will be unable to use bus services unless these issues are taken into account in the planning and provision of them. Most of these services are provided by bus companies on a commercial basis, with the Welsh Government and local authorities having few powers over them.

Secondly, the challenge is to improve the provision of services where there are currently few or none, including evening and Sunday services in much of Wales and services across the board in rural areas. The former Local Transport Services Grant, now replaced by the Regional Transport Services Grant, plays a key role in the provision of these services. The consequences for older people of the loss of services as a result of funding cuts is a serious concern. Unfortunately, we are already beginning to see the impact of these cuts in some parts of Wales as commercial operators withdraw services.

Thirdly, there is the challenge of ensuring the mobility of older people when there are simply no public transport services or when older people are unable to use them, e.g. because of disability. Many older people rely on taxis in the absence of buses, but they are expensive, and are often poor quality and perceived to be risky. Demand-responsive and community transport services play a role in some areas.

Various Welsh Government policies, from its Strategy for Older People to its National Travel Plan, recognise the importance of good bus services and claim to **be taking action. However, as the National Assembly's Enterprise and Business Committee noted, the Welsh Government's main action has been to peg and then cut funding for non-commercial bus services.** That funding has been cut just as the population of bus-reliant older people is increasing.

There is no doubt that the lack of powers to regulate bus services, both in general and by the Welsh Government, is a factor in the lack of action. But as the Enterprise and Business Committee noted, 'providing a coherent vision for integrated public transport is not dependent on powers and policy structures alone'.²⁵ There are things that can be done notwithstanding the lack of powers, many of which the Committee has identified.

The demands for better public transport come at a time when the Welsh Government is facing unprecedented constraints on its expenditure. There is little, if any, prospect for any increase in spending on bus services in the short to medium term – indeed, there is likely to be further downward pressure on expenditure. That said, there ought to be action that can be taken with existing levels of support.

²⁵ National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee (2013) Integrated Public Transport in Wales. Available at: <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-business-fourth-assembly-laid-docs.htm?act=dis&id=246495&ds=5/2013>

Based on our evidence, we recommend the actions under the following three headings:

5.1 Improving commercial services

How to improve very lightly regulated, commercial services has been discussed since their deregulation in the 1980s, and there is no instant solution. On most of the issues, older people have very similar concerns to other passengers. Ensuring **that all passengers speak with one, strong voice in which older people's views are heard** is vital.

Recommendations

- As the Welsh Government funded body representing bus passengers in Wales, Bus Users UK Wales should be encouraged to take a more pro-active approach to the interests of older bus passengers in Wales.
- **The Older People's Commissioner for Wales** should meet regularly with principal bus operators and with the Welsh Local Government Association to **discuss bus services and older people, and seek to agree a 'service standard'** with bus operators through the Confederation of Passenger Transport Wales.
- **At local level, older people's forums should draw up action plans and their** concerns about services for discussion with bus operators and the regional transport consortia.

It is also important that those planning and regulating bus services listen to the concerns of older people.

Recommendations

- Welsh Government should require the regional transport consortia to include consultation with older people, including disabled older people, in the preparation of their plans, as a condition of their funding.
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission should monitor the regional **transport consortia's compliance with the public sector duties of the Equality Act 2010** in the preparation of their plans. They should demonstrate how they address the needs of older people and disabled people including issues such as routes, accessibility and the proximity of bus stops to destinations.

Many local authorities are responsible for the provision of bus stations and shelters and for passenger information. While there are some bus stations that are **sympathetic to older people's needs**, many are woefully inadequate. Many local authorities do not provide full information about services in their area.

Recommendation

- **Older people's forums should be enabled to regularly discuss their concerns** about bus services and facilities with their local authority.

Some of the concerns of older people could be addressed if bus regulators were more responsive and their work was more closely integrated with that of the Welsh Government and local authorities / regional transport consortia. Many **organisations, and most recently the National Assembly for Wales's Enterprise and Business Committee**, have called for regulation to be devolved.

It is often forgotten that bus passengers are also customers and do have some power simply as **purchasers of services**. **Older people's bus use is underpinned by** the free bus travel scheme, which pays about £70 million a year to bus operators on their behalf. This is a significant public input into services for older people that in many cases does not meet their needs. While the free bus travel scheme is intended to compensate bus operators for income lost by providing free travel rather than as an investment, they are nevertheless benefiting from increased usage by older people.

Recommendation

- Further work be undertaken to investigate the potential of linking the free bus travel scheme for older and disabled people with improvements to services.

5.2 Improving non-commercial services

Services that are not commercially viable, e.g. those at evenings and weekends and those in sparsely populated rural areas, are usually procured by the local authority (formerly using the Local Transport Services Grant, now replaced by the Regional Transport Services Grant). In many areas the procurement process results in a number of different operators, running different routes with sometimes very poor quality vehicles and, as we found in Merthyr Tydfil, with very little information about services being available to passengers. Indeed, operators whose services are fully subsidised have little incentive to run an attractive service.

Services to hospitals were highlighted as particularly problematic by participants in our research.

It is not clear what impact the change in arrangements for funding, planning and procuring non-commercial services will have on evening, weekend and rural provision. While the regional transport consortia are optimistic that it will result in better quality and integrated services, this has to be off-set against the overall reduction in funding.

Recommendations

- Regional transport consortia should engage with older people, including disabled older people, in the preparation of their plans.
- **The National Assembly's Health and Social Care Committee should closely scrutinise arrangements for patients getting to and from hospital appointments both at present and following service reorganisation.**

5.3 When the bus isn't an option

Sometimes, using the bus is not feasible. There is a large minority of older people who are unlikely to be able to use a standard bus service, for example because of a disability. In addition, in rural areas and in evenings or on Sundays there may be insufficient demand even for a subsidised, non-commercial service.

Community and demand-responsive transport services are very important in these circumstances, and they should be considered as an integral part of bus service provision. **The National Assembly's Enterprise and Business Committee has recommend that the 'Bwcabus' scheme be rolled out across rural areas of Wales,** and that funding for community transport services should be stable. It is also disappointing that older people are still not able to use their free bus travel pass on services that are so important to them. Similarly, it is surprising that community based businesses are not able to benefit from the secure income stream of the scheme in the same way as commercial operators.

Recommendations

- Older people should continue to press for the free bus travel pass to be available on community transport services and for stable funding.
- Welsh Government should further explore how it can encourage the rollout of demand responsive bus services across Wales.
- Local authorities should ensure that licensing of taxis takes into account the needs of older people.

Annex Profile of survey respondents

A total of 285 people completed the survey, although not every respondent answered every question.

Of those who responded:

- 62% were female, 33% were male (n=265)
- 48% were aged 75 or over, 35% were aged 65-74 and 15.5% were aged 60-64 (n=265)
- 37% of respondents considered themselves disabled (n=265)
- 47% lived alone, 48% lived with a husband or partner with the rest living with another relative or shared accommodation e.g. a residential home.

There were respondents from all local authority areas in Wales except Anglesey and Blaenau Gwent. The largest number of respondents came from Rhondda Cynon Taf (56) and Cardiff (31).

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Age Cymru is the national charity for older people.

For further information about us and to download other policy publications visit www.agecymru.org.uk/forprofessionals



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