

Later Years Partnership

Meeting 14th December

Transport and older people -

1. This paper is intended only as a framework for the discussion at the meeting. It seeks to set out the whole transport picture within the city, and some of the issues. Mobility is the key issue that affects older peoples' ability to be active, participate, maintain social networks as well as carry out basic activities and live independently.
2. The purpose of the discussion is to air some of the issues and improve understanding, from which the Partnership can decide how it wants to proceed in raising the profile of the problem and the need for action to improve older peoples' ability to 'get about'.
3. The car is the primary form of transport in the city, but as older people get older, they become reliant on other forms of transport. For those older people who do drive, there are issues in respect of parking facilities.
4. Bus services operate in an un-regulated manner, although some services are subsidised by the local authority. A MORI study 2001 concluded that public transport in England failed older people.
5. The council operates a concessionary fares scheme, based on reduced rate travel within the city, worth around £1.5m per year. This scheme differs to the scheme operated in Hampshire. In Scotland and Wales older people travel free on public transport.
6. The council provides some transport for care service users, as do other providers, in particular Southampton Care Association.
7. There is a range of voluntary sector provision including:-
 - Dial-a-ride
 - Community car schemes
 - ShopmobilityThe council has previously sought to establish a flexible 'dial-a-bus' service.
9. The environment and the health agendas are now impacting on transport planning, shifting the focus towards reduced car travel, cycling and walking. However, this shift is of little significance to older people.
10. There are currently a number of transport-related initiatives:-
 - The council is conducting a review to improve the co-ordination and efficiency of publically-owned transport in the city. A submission has been made in the name of the Partnership highlighting the needs of older people.
 - The council's Environment and Transport Scrutiny panel is to undertake an investigation into parking in the city.

- The city's Local Transport Plan is shortly to be reviewed and rewritten. This sets out the direction and priorities for transport in the city, and is the basis for government funding.

11. The Partnership needs to consider:-

- Adopting some high-level objectives and aspirations in line with its desire to 'improve quality of life'.
- How best it can raise the awareness of older peoples' needs both to those who plan and run transport.
- How to persuade all service providers that they must consider the mobility and transport needs of older people when planning, designing and delivering services.
- How to increase the capacity of transport available to help older people 'get about'.
- How it can influence the various initiatives under way to ensure that older peoples' needs are fully taken into account, and older people benefit.

Charlie Hislop
Later Years Partnership Co-ordinator

Flexible Transport Provision – Nottinghamshire County Council

In Nottinghamshire, the county council Best Value Review of Independence and Older People included a section on transport.

Recognising the potential threat to independence and the impact on quality of life that poor transport arrangements can have, the team set out to explore how resources might be better arranged to support older people who were beginning to lose their independence because of transport problems. The review focused specifically on the needs of older people, including those in rural communities who were starting to find it difficult to access public transport and those who could no longer use a private car. Focus groups with older people found that problems existed with the current transport arrangements. These included:

- the location of bus routes;
- the fixed time of the bus service;
- the cost and availability of taxis and voluntary sector providers;
- the gaps in service provision between the fixed bus routes

and the specialist disabled vehicles, such as Dial-a-Ride.

The review team identified that between the county council and other local providers there are substantial resources (such as the minibuses used by Social Services and the Education Department) that are not required all the time and could be used to address the problem.

As a first step, the county council plans to introduce a trial to test out a flexible approach and has chosen the rural area in North Nottinghamshire covered by the RENEW project. A Demand Responsive Transport service is already operating as part of this project, using a vehicle that is both comfortable and attractive, fully accessible and available to all. The service operates a mix of fixed and fully demand responsive journeys pre-booked locally with the operator. This will provide a:

- pre-bookable service;
- service tailored to suit individuals' requests;
- flexible service at a reasonable price.

Case study extract from 'Link-Age'