

Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) screening



As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provides a record of both the **process** and **decision**. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.
- whether or not equality, diversity, cohesion and integration is being or has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an impact assessment.

Directorate: City Development	Service area: Highways & Transportation
Lead person: Kasia Speakman	Contact number: 787533

1. Title: Response To the Deputation from David Smith of the BusFair Campaign.

Is this a:

Strategy / Policy

Service / Function

Other

If other, please specify: Response to a Deputation.

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

The purpose of this report is to provide a response to the deputation submitted to Full Council on January 17th, 2024, by Cross Gates Good Neighbours, in the person of David Smith, and a campaign by the name of *BusFair*.

He was assisted in this at Full Council by Diana Al-Saadi from the Age Friendly Steering Group; Geraldine Montgomerie, Executive Producer at The Performance Ensemble; and Doctor Erik Thomasson from the Institute for Transport Studies at the University of Leeds.

In brief the Deputation would like the *Council to support free travel at all times for older and disabled people with bus passes in Leeds and West Yorkshire, and particularly before the current 0930 start time.*

3. Relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

All the council's strategies and policies, service and functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – city wide or more local. These will also have a greater or lesser relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Also those areas that impact on or relate to equality: tackling poverty and improving health and well-being.

Questions	Yes	No
Is there an existing or likely differential impact for the different equality characteristics?	x	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal?	x	
Could the proposal affect how our services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?	x	
Could the proposal affect our workforce or employment practices?	x	
Does the proposal involve or will it have an impact on <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment• Advancing equality of opportunity• Fostering good relations	x	

If you have answered **no** to the questions above please complete **sections 6 and 7**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above and;

- Believe you have already considered the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 4**.
- Are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 5**.

4. Considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

If you can demonstrate you have considered how your proposals impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you have carried out an impact assessment.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below (use the prompts for guidance).

• **How have you considered equality, diversity, cohesion and integration?** (think about the scope of the proposal, who is likely to be affected, equality related information, gaps in information and plans to address, consultation and engagement activities (taken place or planned) with those likely to be affected)

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) currently consists of guaranteed free travel for people over state pension age and people with an eligible disability on all eligible local bus services anywhere in England from 0930 until 2300 on weekdays and all day at weekends and on Bank Holidays. Local authorities may provide further concessions in accordance with their local priorities – these extend only to the local authority area borders, unless a cross-border agreement has been reached with a neighbouring authority.

Leeds ambition is to be a place where people age well: where older people are valued, feel respected and appreciated, and are seen as the assets they are. That is why age-friendly is one of the eight priorities in the Best Council Plan, with the ambition to be the best city to grow old in.

The opportunities and challenges presented by an ageing population are well-rehearsed. People in, and approaching, later life contribute in countless ways to Leeds's rich and vibrant communities – through the skills and knowledge that they bring to their local communities, high levels of volunteering, acting formally and informally as community connectors, intergenerational interactions, unpaid caring roles, and through the skills and experience they bring to their workplaces.

• **Key findings**
(think about any potential positive and negative impact on different equality characteristics, potential to promote strong and positive relationships between groups, potential to bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other, perception that the proposal could benefit one group at the expense of another)

In West Yorkshire, free concessionary travel on buses is available after 0930 only.

Eligible older people are defined in the legislation as follows:

- In the case of a woman, her pensionable age; and
- In the case of a man, the pensionable age of a woman born on the same day.

As a result of the policies of successive governments, going back to 1995, the women's state pension age (and latterly the state pension age for both men and women) has been

increasing, and now stands at 66. Accordingly, the age at which older people have been able to claim a free bus pass has increased in tandem. In Wales and Scotland anyone aged 60 + continues to be eligible.

TCA's are responsible for reimbursing bus operators for journeys made by passengers with a bus pass. The Government funds this reimbursement as part of the main Revenue Support Grant for local authorities. London receives a quarter of all the funding available to local authorities in England to cover the cost of concessionary bus travel.

There have long been concerns that the amount of money TCAs receive from the Government does not adequately match what they pay out to bus operators to reimburse them for carrying passengers who do not pay a fare. Local authorities must make up any shortfall from other sources. In 2018, the Local Government Association (LGA) estimated that councils were spending "at least £200 million a year to subsidise the scheme" at the cost of funding other council services and discretionary travel concessions. In January 2019 Paul Woods, representing the Local Government Association, said that he had produced a revised estimate showing that the shortfall was not £200 million but "over £650 million now and will rise to over £760 million next year".

In its May 2019 report into the bus market, the Transport Committee observed that this funding gap was unsustainable and recommended that the Government review how it finances concessionary bus passes. In its reply to the Committee the Government disagreed that this was needed and argued that as local funding is not ringfenced it gives councils the flexibility to manage their finances appropriately. Thus, any extension of the entitlement to free travel or concessionary fares would come from the diminished Local Government grant, with the current shortfall in funding in Leeds. WYCA currently fund the older people's concessionary travel to the sum of £36 million per year and estimate that funding concessionary travel for older and disabled people before 09:30 would cost an additional £9 million, which they may look to re-coup from local authorities. The same budget is used to subsidise unprofitable bus routes and services, which are often regarded as a lifeline of the local community for those reliant on public transport, which includes many older and disabled people. It also funds the Access Bus which available to those who are unable to use mainstream bus services.

National data shows that, as people get older, they make fewer trips in general. People walk and cycle less and spend less time in the car but, from the age of 50, start taking more trips on the bus. In West Yorkshire, more than half of people aged 65 and over say they take a bus at least once a week.

One of the benefits of the concessionary travel for older people is that this increased the use of bus services; enhanced bus services is one of the key benefits of concessionary travel listed in the *Greener Journeys* 2017 report. Older and disabled concessionary pass holders account for almost one in four of all journeys on local bus services. Arguably this patronage is more important for the retention of off-peak services and their frequency as it provides revenue for services operating at a loss.

Perhaps more significantly Leeds Old People's Forum reported that cancelled services and cuts on routes have made a huge impact on those who rely on public transport (Trending Elders quarterly survey #1 Jan March 2023). Although they did also report the strong desire to be able to use bus passes before 0930.

It also highlighted the concern over putting the emphasis on 'core' bus routes, which leaves people who use other routes/ times without transportation. Pricing mechanisms that differentiate between peak and off-peak travel are aimed at spreading the demand onto less well supported services by incentivising off peak travel for non-essential journeys, which in turn helps ensure their retention. At this time, it is not clear how much the demand for travel would shift from off peak services to the morning peak, and how this would affect services outside of the core times, and in turn whether further cuts or subsidies to services would be required.

The objectives for concessionary travel in England and Wales tend to be based around social inclusion and access to essential services with key policy documents noting benefits arising from:

- Enabling 'elderly people, especially those on low incomes, to continue to use public transport and to use it more often, improving their access to a range of basic necessities such as health care and shops and reducing social isolation'
- Recognising 'the importance of public transport for older people and the role access to transport has to play tackling social exclusion and maintaining wellbeing'.
- Achieving 'social inclusion benefits for older and disabled people by allowing them greater freedom to travel, for free, by local bus'.
- Giving 'older and disabled people greater freedom and independence to visit family and friends and a lifeline to facilities both within and outside their local area'.

Other benefits include wellbeing impacts, increase in active travel and physical activity and associated health benefits ('The Impact of a Free Older Persons' Bus Pass on Active Travel and Regular Walking in England'; 2012). However, the reports do not differentiate between different devolved schemes so that at this stage is not possible to say whether some of these benefits are not realised in England due to the inability to use the free pass before 0930. The time restrictions on the use of the free pass would affect those who do regular volunteering, attending medical appointments which require a journey to commence before 0930 or offer childcare to relatives and family members; however, they would only impede or prevent these journeys for those older people who would not otherwise be able to afford a bus fare, currently capped at £2.

Further data is required as to what this suppressed demand may be.

According to analysis based on GP registrations, the majority of people aged 65 and over in Leeds identify as White British (85%), followed by White Other. This is followed by the more settled migrant groups such as Indian (14%), Pakistani (11%) and Black Caribbean (6%).

Older people predominantly live in the outer suburbs of Leeds, particularly the south-east, the north-east and the north-west of the city. Since the population is ageing, we will see more older people in the most deprived parts of the city, with the cumulative inequality that brings.

There are however 49,300 aged 50+ living in parts of Leeds which are in the 10% most deprived areas of the country which arguably would benefit most from the free travel without time restrictions. Inequalities in older age are cumulative and have a significant impact on a person's health, wellbeing and independence. However, without introducing

means testing as part of the eligibility assessment it is impossible to ensure that the benefits of free bus travel are targeted at the group(s) that need them most. If the national eligibility criteria are followed and additional free travel before 0930 is funded by the combined authority this would create further inequality in that a person who is 66 years old living in the least deprived area and drawing multiple pensions is entitled to free bus travel all day and a 65 year old living in one of the most deprived wards nationally has to pay full fare regardless of the time of travel.

It is likely that intersectionality will accentuate differential impacts; for example ethnic minority communities living in deprived areas are more reliant on bus travel and pensioners from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to experience pension poverty – nationally this affects 33% of Asian or Asian British pensioners and 30 % of Black or Black British pensioners compared to 16% of White pensioners. Older women are also likely to experience lower income in pensionable age – 20% (this rises to 27% for single women, also less likely to have access to a car) compared to 16% of men – they are also more likely to have a carer role and assist with looking after grandchildren. However, a third of people performing an unpaid carers' role in Leeds are in the 55-64 age bracket and would not qualify for a bus pass under the national scheme; a fifth are 65 and over. Free bus travel before 0930 will benefit to these communities more; however, some of the most deprived areas with high percentage of ethnic minority population have lower uptake of concessionary older persons bus passes, severely limiting those benefits. This is against national data that shows greater uptake in the inner-city areas with lower car ownership and greater provision of bus services.

West Yorkshire residents aged 65 and over give an average satisfaction score of 6.4/10 for the affordability of public transport – a higher rating than other age groups. However, the data also suggests that they are less likely than younger people to have access to a frequent bus within 400m: only 8% live within this range. This may be particularly important for women – who are more likely to be living with frailty than men. Older women are also less likely to hold a driving licence/ have a car, especially if they live in a single household; they are more likely to rely on bus services and more likely to have a caring role so are more likely to benefit from free bus travel before 0930, especially given fewer travel options/ alternatives they may have.

80% of people aged 65 and over in Leeds have claimed their concessionary bus pass – but only 60% or fewer of this age group in some of the more deprived areas in the inner city (WYCA (2020), Concessionary Fares Data, 2021). This is a concern because, among people who have claimed their concessionary pass, those in more deprived areas are twice as likely to use it than those in more affluent areas, showing that they need it more. State of Aging report for Leeds draws attention to the fact that there is a 12 year difference in life expectancy and also years lived in good or poor health in between some of the city's least and most deprived areas, which further contributes to inequality and is only likely to increase with the corresponding increases in pension age. Given the age and population profile there is a risk that a scheme that would allow older person's pass holders to travel free of charge at all times would, at this time, benefit white residents of more affluent suburbs more than ethnic minority residents in the inner city, where affordability of peak travel is an issue, and that gap is likely to widen with subsequent increases in pension age. This would be compounded by the 20 % lower than average

uptake of free bus passes in some of these areas.

There is no statutory concessionary travel for young people so funding free or subsidised travel falls again to local authorities. It is not clear how extending the benefit of free travel before 0930 to older people would affect the ability to fund concessionary travel for young people. It is impossible to determine the likely impacts of extending the free concessionary travel to the morning peak without understanding first where the funding for that scheme would come from and what services would in turn be affected.

Without having a good estimate of what the current demand is from older people for travel in the peak that is currently not being met/ is deemed unaffordable it is also difficult to fully understand what additional benefits would be realised by extending the free use of the concessionary pass into the morning peak.

There is no doubt that the scheme would benefit disabled people, where the pass is available to people of working age. Disabled people are likely to have a more limited income, often able to work part time only and if they are in employment could be required to travel in the evening peak. Not being able to use the concessionary pass could be a deterrent to older people re-entering paid employment in order to supplement their pension.

- **Actions**

(**think about** how you will promote positive impact and remove/ reduce negative impact)

- Better Understand: -
 - What is the suppressed demand and the level of unaffordability of bus fares.
 - Where the funding might come from if the ENCTS scheme was to be extended.
- Consider potential alternative schemes, to address the affordability of bus fares before 0930 e.g. travel vouchers.
- Consider what impacts and opportunities might be available from the Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP) in the short to medium term and the Bus Reform process in the longer term.
- Work with Leeds Older People's Forum to understand and overcome barriers to the uptake of bus passes in the most deprived areas.
- Compile a full EDCI if appropriate.

5. If you are *not* already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you *will need to carry out an impact assessment.*

Date to scope and plan your impact assessment:	01/09/24
Date to complete your impact assessment.	14/06/25
Lead person for your impact assessment. (Include name and job title)	Kasia Speakman/Gwyn Owen

6. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening		
Name	Job title	Date
Gwyn Owen	Principal Transport Planner	14/06/24
Date screening completed		14/06/24

7. Publishing	
<p>Though all key decisions are required to give due regard to equality the council only publishes those related to Executive Board, Full Council, Key Delegated Decisions or a Significant Operational Decision.</p> <p>A copy of this equality screening should be attached as an appendix to the decision-making report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Services will publish those relating to Executive Board and Full Council. • The appropriate directorate will publish those relating to Delegated Decisions and Significant Operational Decisions. • A copy of all other equality screenings that are not to be published should be sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk for record. <p>Complete the appropriate section below with the date the report and attached screening was sent:</p>	
For Executive Board or Full Council – sent to Governance Services	Date sent: N/a
For Delegated Decisions or Significant Operational Decisions – sent to appropriate Directorate .	Date sent: N/a
All other decisions – sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk	Date sent: 21.06.24