

## Public Policy Statement

### Transport

January 2018

#### Summary

Public and community transport are vitally important in helping older people to maintain independence and well-being. Such transport networks can ensure communities are well-connected and that services, facilities and amenities are accessible to older people. Without these, there is an increased risk that isolation and loneliness will impact upon people's well-being. It is essential that older people in all areas have the means to get out to buy food, get medical attention, get money and pay bills, and have social contact. These are basic features of a decent life and ought to be a high priority in transport policy.

Many older people rely on public transport, usually the bus, to get out and about. The free bus travel scheme has been invaluable in helping older people in Wales to retain their independence and remain active, and it is vital that this continues to be supported by the Welsh Government. However, the provision of bus services and the number of passengers using them has declined in Wales.<sup>1</sup> We are extremely concerned that local bus services remain vulnerable to spending cuts or commercial decisions. There is a danger that reductions in bus services mean that access to a whole range of services and amenities can become impossible for some older people. The Welsh Government must work with local authorities to support a sustainable network of bus services across Wales, and contingency plans must be developed in the case of threats to existing services.

Older people are more reliant on the bus than other age groups but they are less likely to manage with poor quality services. An Age Cymru research study<sup>2</sup> showed that 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. Travel to hospital can be a major problem for older people.

Community transport schemes provide an essential lifeline for many older people, especially in rural areas. We wish to see increased provision across the whole of Wales, with successful models being replicated more widely. Levels of public funding allocated to community transport must be closely monitored by the Welsh Government to ensure stability of provision and maintenance of vital services.

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Consultation Document. Bus services policy discussion. Improving local bus services in Wales.

<sup>2</sup> Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales. A report by the Bevan Foundation for Age Cymru.

Age Cymru supports the aims of active travel for older people, in light of the documented health and social, as well as environmental, benefits that this can bring to individuals. Local authorities have a key role in making sure that the built environment in public spaces and streets in communities is safe and inclusive. Age Cymru's vision of an age friendly Wales<sup>3</sup> would see the development of a fully integrated sustainable transport network, with trains and buses linked to other forms of transport including pedestrian and cycle routes, and better integration between transport and key services.

Accessing public transport can present significant physical problems for many older people. Accessibility problems at railway stations include stairs to platforms, a lack of lifts, and difficulties in negotiating the gap between the train and the platform edge. For older people with limited mobility, 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. More bus stops and shelters with seating would make public transport more accessible. It is essential that information about public transport services is easily accessible in various formats, since many older people are not able to access online information. We welcome the publication of the Welsh Government's accessible and inclusive public transport objectives,<sup>4</sup> developed in collaboration with their Accessible Transport Panel (includes Age Cymru).

A car may become the only practical form of independent transport for many older people, particularly for those who experience mobility problems and for carers. Continuing to drive may be crucial for older people to get out and about, access essential services such as health care, and reduce the risk of social isolation, particularly in rural areas. An age-based approach to premiums among some insurers continues to penalise older drivers, and we believe that older people should have access to such financial services based on individual circumstances and not arbitrary age limits.

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<sup>3</sup> Age Cymru (2015) Creating an age friendly Wales.

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Policy Statement – Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives.  
<https://beta.gov.wales/accessible-and-inclusive-public-transport-objectives>

## Summary of public policy proposals:

- The Welsh Government must work with local authorities and community and public transport providers to support a sustainable integrated transport network across Wales to ensure that older people remain connected to communities and services
- The Welsh Government must monitor and respond to the impact of cuts and changes to bus services with reference to the ability of older people to access key services
- Given its importance to older people, the Welsh Government must continue to support the free bus travel scheme for all older and disabled people
- The Welsh Government must ensure that local authorities consult with older people in the preparation of their transport plans, and in decisions about the location and destinations of bus services
- The Welsh Government must work with local authorities to support a sustainable network of bus services across Wales, and contingency plans must be developed in the case of threats to existing services
- The Welsh Government, local authorities and health boards across Wales must seek to develop effective, co-ordinated transport links to enable older people to access vital health services
- Successful models of community transport provision should be replicated where possible and properly supported by local authorities to ensure their sustainability
- The current anomaly, whereby people entitled to free bus travel in Wales are charged for using community transport, should be addressed for the future by the Welsh Government
- The Welsh Government must closely monitor funding allocated to community transport and ensure stability of provision and maintenance of vital services
- The Welsh Government must ensure that work on improving accessibility to various railway stations is completed as soon as possible and extended to other areas in Wales
- A fully integrated strategy for public transport including rail, buses and community transport should be developed by the Welsh Government in conjunction with local authorities and community and public transport providers to particularly address the needs of those individuals without access to a car
- Local authorities must ensure that streets are safe and accessible, with good lighting. Pedestrian crossings must allow sufficient time to cross roads, signage should be easily visible, and pavements must be well maintained and be free of obstruction.
- Local authorities must provide adequate lighting, seating, shelter and accessible information at bus stops, with regular inspection to promote people's safety and encourage more frequent use of some bus services
- Comprehensive information about public transport services must be accessible and available in various formats. Online information needs to be high quality and easy to use, whilst information provided in other formats must be of equal quality and fully accessible.
- The UK Government should reconsider the financial services exemption from the ban on harmful age discrimination, with reference to the Equality Act 2010.

## Transport

This policy statement covers:

- Importance of transport for older people
- Policy and legislation
- Bus services
- Community transport
- Rail travel and integrated transport
- Active travel and accessibility of public transport
- Provision of information
- Older drivers.

## Public policy proposals

### Importance of transport for older people

Public and community transport are vitally important in helping older people to maintain independence and well-being. Such transport networks can ensure communities are well-connected and that services, facilities and amenities are accessible to older people. Without these, there is an increased risk that isolation and loneliness will impact upon people's well-being. It is essential that older people in all areas have the means to get out to buy food, get medical attention, get money and pay bills, and have social contact. These are basic features of a decent life and ought to be a high priority in transport policy.

Transport is a crucial factor in determining older people's ability to access vital amenities. Without appropriate services and infrastructure older people can become isolated from their community and society, unable to access essential services, participate in activities or visit friends and family.<sup>5</sup> Reliable and accessible local transport networks become increasingly significant as people get older. 48% of pensioner households do not have access to a car compared to 26% of all households,<sup>6</sup> and many older people rely on bus services to get out and about.<sup>7</sup>

There is growing evidence to suggest that travel can have a range of positive outcomes, for older people themselves and the wider community and economy.<sup>8</sup> Access to reliable, affordable and safe transport is important for older people to maintain contact with friends and family who may live some distance away, helping to avoid loneliness and isolation which can both adversely affect wellbeing. Travelling, importantly as part of the general public rather than separately, can reduce isolation and increase opportunities for interaction.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2014) The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales.

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government (2015) National Transport Finance Plan 2015 Impact Assessments  
<http://gov.wales/docs/det/policy/150716-ntfp-impact-assessment.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales. A report by the Bevan Foundation for Age Cymru.

<sup>8</sup> Age UK & ILC-UK (2015) The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society. George Holley-Moore and Helen Creighton.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

To achieve an age friendly Wales, we believe that there must be sufficient integrated public and community transport available throughout Wales, to ensure that older people remain connected to communities and services.<sup>10</sup> An age friendly transport system is needed to keep people independent, healthy and engaged with their communities without having to use the car.<sup>11</sup>

### **Public policy proposal:**

- The Welsh Government must work with local authorities and community and public transport providers to support a sustainable integrated transport network across Wales to ensure that older people remain connected to communities and services.

### **Policy and legislation**

The Programme for Government (2016) sets out how the Welsh Government aims to build a united, connected and sustainable Wales, including delivering a more effective network of local bus services, a multimodal integrated transport system for the whole of Wales, including the south and north Wales Metros, together with the development of seamless integrated and multimodal ticketing arrangements as part of the new travel arrangements for Wales.<sup>12</sup>

In December 2017 the Welsh Government launched the Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) which embeds the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 so transport schemes can be developed using the sustainable development principles to maximise their contribution to the well-being of future generations.<sup>13</sup>

The Welsh Government's National Transport Finance Plan published in 2015 (updated in 2017) sets out how the Welsh Government proposed to deliver the outcomes set out in the Wales Transport Strategy from 2015 and beyond. Sustainable forms of travel highlighted - targeting new railway stations, improvements to bus and rail services and promoting walking and cycling and integrated transport solutions.<sup>14</sup> The 2015 Plan's Impact Assessment states that around 48 percent of pensioner households do not have access to a car compared to 26 percent of all households, and highlights that the Plan contains commitments to provide funding to support socially necessary services and continue a concessionary fares scheme for older people. It also states that public and community transport services provide access to key services including health but also enable improved social interaction for older people helping to tackle chronic loneliness.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Age Cymru (2015) Creating and age friendly Wales.

<sup>11</sup> Age Cymru (2016) EnvisAGE. Towards an age friendly Wales. Article by Charles Musselwhite 'Vision for an age friendly transport system in Wales'. <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/policy/age-cymru-policy-publications-1/envisage-1/>

<sup>12</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Consultation Document. Bus services policy discussion. Improving local bus services in Wales.

<sup>13</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Future-fit transport appraisal guidance launched.

<http://gov.wales/newsroom/transport/2017/171213-future-fit-transport-appraisal-guidance-launched/?lang=en>

<sup>14</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Welsh Government maps out latest transport finance plans.

<http://gov.wales/newsroom/transport/2017/171221-welsh-government-maps-out-latest-transport-finance-plans/?lang=en>

<sup>15</sup> Welsh Government (2015) National Transport Finance Plan 2015 Impact Assessments.

The Welsh Government's Accessible Transport Panel (includes Age Cymru) produced a 'Policy Statement – Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives'.<sup>16</sup> The Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport made a statement in Plenary at the National Assembly for Wales about the Wales Transport Strategy announcing that these objectives will be one of the cornerstones of the new strategy.<sup>17</sup> The policy statement includes the 'Vision - We aim to provide access to safe, affordable, inclusive, accessible and sustainable integrated age friendly transport systems' and sets out six outcome-focused objectives to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of the public transport network in Wales.

With the commencement in 2017 of provisions in the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the publication of lists of wheelchair accessible taxis by licensing authorities, passengers can be better informed about the availability of wheelchair accessible taxis serving their areas.<sup>18</sup> As part of the new devolved settlement for Wales to be introduced through the Wales Act 2017, the regulation of taxis and private hire vehicles will become a matter within the legislative competence of the National Assembly for Wales.

The Welsh Government's Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023 recognises the importance of public transport to older people's sense of well-being. The Strategy's Delivery Plan<sup>19</sup> aims to create a Wales where older people: are able to participate and contribute in their communities and access services and amenities; and can access affordable transport which assists them to play a full part in family, social and community life.

### Bus policy

Matters relating to bus services are within the National Assembly for Wales' legislative competence, subject to exceptions including the registration of local bus services. It is expected that the registration of bus services and the relevant functions of the Traffic Commissioner in relation to Wales will be brought within the legislative competence of the National Assembly by the Wales Act 2017.<sup>20</sup>

Bus services in Wales face considerable challenges. The provision of bus services and the number of passengers using them has declined in Wales. The number of local registered bus services in Wales declined by approximately 46%, from 1,943 services in March 2005 to 1,058 in March 2015.<sup>21</sup>

In September 2016, the Economy and Infrastructure Secretary announced a five point plan to support the bus industry in Wales.<sup>22</sup> Arising from the five point plan, the Welsh Government hosted the Welsh Bus Summit in January 2017. In collaboration with bus operators, local

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<sup>16</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Policy Statement – Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives.

<sup>17</sup> National Assembly for Wales (2017) Plenary. Statement by the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport: Connecting Wales, a strategic approach to Transport. <http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/4665?lang=en-GB#A40383>

<sup>18</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Policy Statement – Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives.

<sup>19</sup> Welsh Government (2014) Strategy for Older People in Wales (2013-2023): Strategy Delivery Plan.

<sup>20</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Consultation Document. Bus Services Policy Discussion. Improving local bus services in Wales.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Welsh Government (2016) Economy Secretary outlines plan to support bus industry. 15 September 2016 <http://gov.wales/newsroom/transport/2016/160915-economy-secretary-outlines-plan-to-support-bus-industry/?lang=en>

authorities, equality groups and passenger groups, the summit provided an opportunity to explore the short and medium term weaknesses and strengths that characterise the local bus network in Wales.<sup>23</sup>

The Welsh Government acknowledge that the quality of local bus services delivered in Wales is not consistent.<sup>24</sup> In March 2016 the Welsh Government, in consultation with local authorities, bus operators and passenger groups (including Age Cymru) published the Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standard as a first step in designing a national quality framework universally available to passengers. The guidance helps bus operators and local authorities to improve the quality of bus services. Bus operators meeting these should attract a premium payment from authorities.<sup>25</sup>

Being able to use the bus is very important for the wellbeing of many older people who rely on bus services to get out and about. The concessionary bus travel scheme has been invaluable in helping older people in Wales to retain their independence and remain active.<sup>26</sup> This scheme is an indispensable part of the lives of many older people,<sup>27</sup> providing a vital connection to services and amenities. Research has also found that it is invaluable in helping older people in Wales to retain their independence and remain active,<sup>28</sup> and we believe that it is vital that this scheme continues to be supported by the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government has been recently consulting on the mandatory concessionary fares scheme in Wales to seek views on free bus travel for older people, disabled people and injured service veterans in Wales, including whether the eligibility age for older people who are new applicants to receive free bus travel should be increased to match the UK state retirement age.<sup>29</sup> Age Cymru's response to the consultation will be available on our website.

There is evidence that use of the bus system increases with 'free' travel for older people,<sup>30</sup> and Greener Journeys<sup>31</sup> found that the benefits of concessionary travel extend to other passengers, other road users and the wider community.

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<sup>23</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Consultation document. Bus Services Policy Discussion. Improving local bus services in Wales.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Welsh Government (2016) Voluntary Welsh bus quality standard <https://beta.gov.wales/voluntary-welsh-bus-quality-standard>

<sup>26</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2010) Concessionary Bus Pass Research.

<sup>27</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2014) The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales.

<sup>28</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2010) Concessionary Bus Pass Research.

<sup>29</sup> Welsh Government (2017). Consultation Document. Mandatory concessionary fares scheme in Wales. Maintaining free bus travel for older people, disabled people and injured service veterans.

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/mandatory-concessionary-fares-scheme-wales>

<sup>30</sup> Age Cymru (2016) EnvisAGE. No 11. Towards an age friendly Wales. Mackett (2013) cited in an article by Charles Musselwhite 'Vision for an age friendly transport system in Wales'.

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/pagefiles/52142/Age%20Cymru%20EnvisAGE%20No%2011%20Eng.pdf?epslanguage=en-GB-CY?dtrk=true>

<sup>31</sup> Greener Journeys (2014) The costs and benefits of concessionary bus travel for older and disabled people in Britain. <https://greenerjourneys.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Concessionary-travel-costs-and-benefits-September-2014.pdf>

## **Public policy proposals:**

- The Welsh Government must monitor and respond to the impact of cuts and changes to bus services with reference to the ability of older people to access key services
- Given its importance to older people, the Welsh Government must continue to support the free bus travel scheme for all older and disabled people.

## **Bus services**

Many older people rely on public transport, usually the bus, to get out and about. Older people are more reliant on the bus than other age groups but they are less likely to manage with poor quality services. An Age Cymru research study<sup>32</sup> showed that many older people rely completely on the bus for going about their daily lives and that 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, and one size does not fit all.

Our research<sup>33</sup> highlighted significant concerns about the poor frequency of daytime services in rural areas, and services in the evenings and Sundays in all areas.

A reduction in bus services often disproportionately affects older people.<sup>34</sup> Given that the Welsh Government's National Transport Finance Plan's Impact Assessment<sup>35</sup> identifies that '48% of pensioner households do not have access to a car', we believe that the Welsh Government must monitor and respond to cuts and changes to bus services, with particular reference to the ability of older people to access key services.

We are extremely concerned that local bus services remain vulnerable to spending cuts or commercial decisions by operators. There is a danger that reductions in bus services mean that access to a whole range of services can become impossible for some older people.

Welsh Government must ensure that local authorities consult with older people in the preparation of their plans, and in decisions about the location and destinations of bus services. We believe that significant alterations to bus services should be subject to an equality impact assessment into the effect they will have on older people's ability to access services and communities.

The Welsh Government must work with local authorities to support a sustainable network of bus services across Wales, and contingency plans must be developed in the case of threats to existing services.

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<sup>32</sup> Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales. A report by the Bevan Foundation for Age Cymru.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2014) The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales.

<sup>35</sup> Welsh Government (2015) National Transport Finance Plan 2015 Impact Assessments.

One of the key findings of our research<sup>36</sup> was that getting to and from hospital is a major problem for many older people, the heaviest users of secondary care services, even in urban areas. Travel to hospital is widely recognised to be difficult for older people. Age UK's 'Painful Journeys' campaign<sup>37</sup> highlights the struggle that many older people endure when travelling to hospital appointments. We believe that the Welsh Government, local authorities and health boards across Wales must seek to develop effective, co-ordinated transport links to enable older people to access vital health services.

### **Public policy proposals:**

- The Welsh Government must ensure that local authorities consult with older people in the preparation of their transport plans, and in decisions about the location and destinations of bus services
- The Welsh Government must work with local authorities to support a sustainable network of bus services across Wales, and contingency plans must be developed in the case of threats to existing services
- The Welsh Government, local authorities and health boards across Wales must seek to develop effective, co-ordinated transport links to enable older people to access vital health services.

### **Community transport**

Community transport (CT) can provide flexible, accessible and responsive solutions to unmet local transport needs, and often represents the only means of transport for certain user groups.<sup>38</sup> It can play a crucial role in helping people to access essential services by providing travel where public transport cannot or does not, and on a door-to-door basis for people with specific mobility needs. CT can provide transport for people who are unable to use public transport services due to their location or mobility, and do not have access to alternatives such as their own vehicle or are unable to afford taxi fares.

CT benefits those who are otherwise isolated or excluded, enabling them to live independently, participate in their communities and access education, employment, health and other services. Community transport often represents the only way in which particular user groups can access a range of essential services.<sup>39</sup>

As CT is regulated differently from conventional bus services, it can step in where conventional services are not viable or available. It can provide the connectivity needed to get to a range of destinations for otherwise isolated or excluded groups of people.<sup>40</sup> Typical CT services include community bus services, voluntary car schemes, hospital transport and dial-a-ride. CT schemes come in all shapes and sizes, but must be run on a not-for-profit basis.

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<sup>36</sup> Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales.

<sup>37</sup> Age UK (2017) Painful Journeys <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/campaigning/painful-journeys/>

<sup>38</sup> CTA (2014) A CTA State of the Sector Report. Wales 2014. CTA Cymru Wales. Community Transport Association.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

CT schemes provide an essential lifeline for many older people and we would like to see increased community transport provision across the whole of Wales as it plays a vital role in assisting people unable to use mainstream public transport. Successful good practice models of community transport and demand responsive transport should be replicated and supported by local authorities to ensure their sustainability.

CT operators cannot claim funding under the Welsh Government's free bus travel scheme, and most CT schemes involve charging. There is an anomaly, therefore, whereby people entitled to free bus travel in Wales are charged for using community transport; we believe that this should be addressed for the future by the Welsh Government.

We believe that levels of public funding allocated to community transport must be closely monitored by the Welsh Government to ensure stability of provision and maintenance of vital services.

#### Other transport options in rural areas

The Bwcabus service has transformed rural public transport in west Wales. It operates on a commercial basis and is a demand-responsive service tailored to the needs of passengers by operating in response to pre-booked journey requests.<sup>41</sup> Passengers are able to book a bus ride from home, via the phone or internet, to link up with conventional bus and train services.

#### **Public policy proposals:**

- Successful models of community transport provision should be replicated where possible and properly supported by local authorities to ensure their sustainability.
- The current anomaly, whereby people entitled to free bus travel in Wales are charged for using community transport, should be addressed for the future by the Welsh Government
- The Welsh Government must closely monitor funding allocated to community transport and ensure stability of provision and maintenance of vital services

#### **Rail travel and integrated transport**

Rail services play a vital part in transport for older people in some areas in Wales. However, in some cases stations or trains are inaccessible or there is poor interchange between bus routes and railway stations.

Accessibility problems at railway stations include stairs to platforms, a lack of lifts, difficulties in negotiating the gap between the train and the platform edge. Older people who can and want to use trains require reliable rail travel supported by adequate infrastructure, including seating and accessible toilet facilities in stations.<sup>42</sup> The Welsh Government must ensure that work on improving accessibility to various railway stations is completed as soon as possible and extended to other areas in Wales.

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<sup>41</sup> National Assembly for Wales (2013) Cross Party Group on Community Transport; Minutes of the meeting 30/01/13.

<sup>42</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2014) The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales.

We are also keen to see local transport planners taking steps to make sure that stations are linked to other forms of public transport. We support the development of a fully integrated public transport network. Decisions about the location and destination of services must take older people's needs into account; there should be better integration between transport and key services, and transport provisions must be taken into account in housing development schemes.

### **Public policy proposals:**

- The Welsh Government must ensure that work on improving accessibility to various railway stations is completed as soon as possible and extended to other areas in Wales
- A fully integrated strategy for public transport including rail, buses and community transport should be developed by the Welsh Government in conjunction with local authorities and community and public transport providers to particularly address the needs of those individuals without access to a car.

### **Active travel and accessibility of public transport**

Age Cymru supports the aims of active travel for older people, in light of the documented health and social, as well as environmental, benefits that this can bring to individuals. An age friendly Wales would see the development of a fully integrated sustainable transport network, with trains and buses linked to other forms of transport including pedestrian and cycle routes, and better integration between transport and key services.<sup>43</sup>

The Welsh Government's Active Travel Action Plan indicates that for many people the biggest barrier to walking and cycling is concern for their safety, notably the existing infrastructure, the speed and proximity of traffic, and personal safety.<sup>44</sup> Studies relating to accessible and inclusive age friendly environments identify a number of barriers in the physical environment for older people, including a barrier related to the issue of shared space, whereby such 'shared space' is often not segregated between car and pedestrian.<sup>45</sup> Older people have also expressed concern over shared space for cycling and walking. There is the need to ensure meaningful consultation with disabled and older people about proposals for shared spaces, to avoid exclusion as a result of poor design.

We believe that it is vital that the built environment enables, rather than prevents, older people taking an active part in their communities and that there should be appropriate infrastructure to facilitate older people to access community spaces safely. Barriers in the built environment can exclude older people from becoming fully inclusive members of society, for example: pavements in a poor condition and street 'clutter', which can be hazardous and pose an increased falls risk; a lack of public seating; inadequate street lighting; and a lack of safe pedestrian crossings that allow sufficient time to cross roads.

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<sup>43</sup> Age Cymru (2015) Creating an age friendly Wales.

<sup>44</sup> Welsh Government (2014) Active Travel Action Plan. Consultation Document.

<sup>45</sup> Age Cymru (2016) EnvisAGE. Towards an age friendly Wales. Article by Judith Phillips 'Accessible and inclusive age friendly environments'. <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/policy/age-cymru-policy-publications-1/envisage-1/>

Research on older people crossing the road at a pedestrian crossing reports that the 1.2 metres per second that the Department for Transport advises as the speed allowed for people to cross a road is not long enough and in around 89% of cases older people aren't walking at a fast enough speed to complete the crossing before returning to the green phase for traffic to proceed.<sup>46</sup> We believe that local authorities must ensure that streets are safe and accessible, with good lighting, and increased use of 20mph zones in residential areas. Pedestrian crossings must allow sufficient time to cross roads, signage should be easily visible, and pavements must be well maintained and free of obstruction.

The Welsh Government states that the development of seamless integrated and multi modal ticketing arrangements as part of the new travel arrangements for Wales is fundamental to their objective of building a connected and sustainable society.<sup>47</sup> We deem that a combined ticket for public transport in Wales would facilitate the smooth transition from one mode of transport to another and could potentially reduce time spent standing in queues. There would be the need to consider how the concessionary bus pass could be integrated onto such a system, whereby travel by bus would be free, but other elements of the journey (rail travel) may incur fares.

Many problems exist for older people wishing to access public transport, which can mean that it is often not a realistic or safe option. The Welsh Government acknowledges that 'continued inaccessibility to public transport continues to impose barriers on people's ability to live their lives independently'.<sup>48</sup>

For older people with limited mobility, 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. Access at certain bus stops is difficult since not all buses have low access facilities. The bus industry is working towards full fleet DDA compliance, which is being phased in over six years (between 2015 and 2020).<sup>49</sup> Some older people are able to walk short distances and stand for short periods only, so more bus stops and shelters with seating would help to make public transport more accessible. Our research<sup>50</sup> highlighted concerns over the absence of seating at bus stops, with many rural bus stops having no effective shelter from adverse weather.

Safe and accessible buses are important for older people who are sometimes put off using services because of experiences where buses move off before passengers were seated.<sup>51</sup> Many older people are afraid of falling and sudden movement of the bus could make them do so. One of the objectives in the Welsh Government's policy statement – accessible and inclusive public transport objectives<sup>52</sup> includes a reference to 'Work with providers of public transport to raise awareness of the risk of trips and falls for older people and people with restricted mobility when vehicles move away from stops before passengers are seated'.

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<sup>46</sup> Age Cymru (2016) EnvisAGE. Towards an age friendly Wales. Article by Charles Musselwhite 'Vision for an age friendly transport system in Wales'.

<sup>47</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Consultation Document. Bus services policy discussion. Improving local bus services in Wales.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Department of Transport (2005) Bus, coach accessibility FAQ.

<sup>50</sup> Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Policy Statement – Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives.

The Welsh Government has recently consulted on proposals that would include the introduction of national standards for all taxis and private hire vehicles.<sup>53</sup> In our response to the consultation, we suggested the inclusion of dementia awareness training in appropriate taxi/private hire vehicle staff training programmes.

The Blue Badge scheme provides eligible people with parking concessions to remove barriers to accessing services and facilities. The Welsh Government's eligibility criteria of the Blue Badge Scheme in Wales have been extended to include: discretionary qualification which includes people with severe cognitive impairment (a person who is unable to follow any journey without the help of someone else); and temporary qualification - to include those experiencing temporary but substantial injuries or illness.<sup>54</sup> With reference to the availability of the Badge for people with temporary mobility problems, we believe that the duration of the Badge should be based on the recovery time of the applicant and feedback from a relevant health care professional.<sup>55</sup>

### **Public policy proposals:**

- Local authorities must ensure that streets are safe and accessible, with good lighting. Pedestrian crossings must allow sufficient time to cross roads, signage should be easily visible, and pavements must be well maintained and be free of obstruction
- Local authorities must provide adequate lighting, seating, shelter and accessible information at bus stops, with regular inspection to promote people's safety and encourage more frequent use of some bus services.

### **Provision of information**

It is essential that older people can easily access information about public transport services. Our research study<sup>56</sup> highlighted that accessing information about bus services, especially when several operators provide services on the same route, can be very difficult.

Our research also highlighted problems with the readability of timetable information for anyone with slight eyesight impairments. We believe that the provision of information about bus and rail services should be accessible in various formats; many older people are not able to use, or do not have access to the internet, and therefore may not be able to access such information if it is provided online only. Services provided online need to be high quality and easy to use, whilst offline services should be of equal quality and fully accessible. Service providers must ensure that the provision of online information is not to the detriment of the provision of information in other formats. We welcome the inclusion of the objective: 'Transport information enabling passengers to plan and undertake their journeys will be available in accessible formats – at bus stops, stations, transport interchanges, on vehicles

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<sup>53</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Consultation Document. Taxi and Private Hire vehicle Licensing in Wales.

<sup>54</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Who is eligible for a Blue Badge?

<sup>55</sup> Age Cymru's response (2016) to the Welsh Government's consultation 'Blue Badge Scheme in Wales: Changes to eligibility to include people with temporary impairments, assessment and enforcement 2016'. Welsh Government (2016).

<sup>56</sup> Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales.

and in electronic/printed media' in the Welsh Government's accessible and inclusive public transport objectives.<sup>57</sup>

### **Public policy proposal:**

- Comprehensive information about public transport services must be accessible and available in various formats. Online information needs to be high quality and easy to use, whilst information provided in other formats must be of equal quality and fully accessible.

### **Older drivers**

Figures show there are over 4.5 million people aged over 70 in Britain holding valid driving licences.<sup>58</sup> There are almost 6,000 people aged over 90 holding a driving licence in Wales.<sup>59</sup> The benefits of a car include being able to travel to an exact location. This is particularly important for older people that experience mobility problems as they age, or for carers. A car may become the only practical form of independent transport. Continuing to drive may be crucial for older people to get out and about, access essential services such as health care, and reduce the risk of social isolation, particularly in rural areas.

Barriers to older people continuing driving include assumptions surrounding the safety and quality of older people's driving, with older drivers often thought of as less safe than younger drivers. However, in reality older drivers are less likely to be involved in minor accidents than younger drivers, although drivers over the age of 80 are more likely to suffer serious injuries in a car crash due to their physical frailty.<sup>60</sup>

An age-based approach to premiums among some insurers continues to penalise older drivers.<sup>61</sup> We believe that older people should have access to financial services such as car insurance based on individual circumstances and not arbitrary age limits.

For those who drive, stopping driving can be a major life event. Some older people do give up driving successfully; this best occurs where a great deal of planning has taken place over time, with long periods of trialling out new modes and destinations or where there are locally living very supportive family members.<sup>62</sup> Accessible and good quality transport options are therefore important to help facilitate older people through this major life transition.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Policy Statement – Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives.

<sup>58</sup> BBC news (26.7.2017) Number of drivers over 90 tops 100,000 for first time. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-40715377>

<sup>59</sup> BBC Wales news (26.7.2017) Thousands of drivers aged 90 or over in Wales, DVLA says <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-40725748>

<sup>60</sup> RAC Foundation (2013) Driving Choices for the Older Motorist.

<sup>61</sup> Age UK & ILC-UK (2015) The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society. George Holley-Moore and Helen Creighton.

<sup>62</sup> Age Cymru (2016) EnvisAGE. Towards an age friendly Wales. Article by Charles Musselwhite 'Vision for an age friendly transport system in Wales'.

<sup>63</sup> Age UK & ILC-UK (2015) The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society. George Holley-Moore and Helen Creighton.

We believe that the emphasis should be on supporting older people to continue driving safely for as long as possible. There needs to be an inclusive public transport system that is available, accessible, affordable and acceptable to help older people who wish to make the move from private to public transport.

**Public policy proposal:**

- The UK Government should reconsider the financial services exemption from the ban on harmful age discrimination, with reference to the Equality Act 2010.