

Ms Lillian Greenwood MP
Chair, Transport Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Friday 3rd November 2017

Dear Ms Greenwood,

AGE UK WRITTEN EVIDENCE: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT INQUIRY

I am writing to you on behalf of Age UK, [Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI] in response to the Government's recent proposals affecting community transport services.

Every year, over 23 million community transport journeysⁱ take place. People in the UK rely on community transport services to access healthcareⁱⁱ, educationⁱⁱⁱ, employment^{iv} and leisure. The overwhelming majority (98%^v) of the users of community transport users are over 65 years old and 68% of users are disabled.^{vi} Community Transport is not just vital for getting older people from A to B but also to help older people increase their wellbeing, attend medical appointments, socialise,^{vii} participate in their local community and prevent loneliness.

If the Government were to change the licensing rules that apply to not-for-profit community transport providers, then all volunteer drivers for those organisations affected would need a Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (Driver CPC licence). This would require them to spend £78 (for people who completed their driving test before 1997) to go through their initial training plus an estimated £350-375 to go through the required 35 hours of periodic training (£75 per module for 5 modules). From age 45, volunteers would need to renew their Driver CPC licence every 5 years and from age 65 this requirement becomes an annual renewal. To complicate matters further, all the volunteers who passed their driving test after 1997, would need to obtain a Passenger Carrier Vehicle D1 on their driving licence before being able to undertake the Driver CPC Training. Obtaining a D1 is an even lengthier process and takes around 6 months, at a cost closer to £2,000. Given the time needed to gain a Driver CPC licence, we feel that many volunteers will be unwilling to undertake professional training, and many organisations that will be unable to afford the cost. Inevitably this would adversely affect the number of people who are able to rely on community transport.^{viii}

Overall, for Age UK and charities like us, these proposals would make it incredibly difficult to run community transport projects. By requiring volunteers to undertake significant cost and time commitments to be allowed to drive community transport vehicles, the Government would be discouraging people from giving up their time for community transport services.

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For Age UK, such extra commitment would mean our community transport services would have to be reduced, meaning more and more older people would be left with no way of getting to hospital appointments, leisure activities, social outings and educational facilities.

One such project that would be hugely affected is the TAP Community Transport service which is run by Age UK Cornwall and Isles of Scilly. Our internal statistics show, between April 2016 and March 2017, the service completed over 103,000 journeys and this resulted in the service being the primary supporter of 49,000 people across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly who have trouble attending medical appointments, social outings, leisure activities and educational facilities^{ix}. This being just one example of an active community transport scheme, in one county, run by one organisation.

We sincerely hope that less restrictive reforms are passed so that we can continue to support our community transport services and help our volunteers provide their invaluable service which improves the lives of older people on a daily basis.

If you would like to discuss our research and services in more detail please contact, Robert Henderson on Robert.Henderson@ageuk.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Abrahams
Charity Director

ⁱ HCT Group Impact Report 2017

ⁱⁱ According to the Community Transport Association 73% of Community Transport providers said they provide journeys for health-related reasons. Community Transport Association 'State of the Sector' Report 2014 p12

ⁱⁱⁱ According to the Community Transport Association 34% of Community Transport providers said they provide journeys to help people access educational facilities. Community Transport Association 'State of the Sector' Report 2014 p12

^{iv} According to the Community Transport Association 11% of Community Transport providers said they provide journeys to help people get to work. Community Transport Association 'State of the Sector' Report 2014 p12

^v Ibid

^{vi} Ibid

^{vii} According to the Community Transport Association 73% of Community Transport providers journeys are for social reasons. Community Transport Association 'State of the Sector' Report 2014 p12

^{viii} <https://www.gov.uk/driving-test-cost>

^{ix} Age UK Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, Internal Statistics, 2017 (unpublished)