



A National Care Service for Scotland

A Response from CTA

November 2021

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Summary

The Community Transport Association (CTA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's plans for a National Care Service on behalf of our members in Scotland and as a champion of accessible, inclusive transport for all, including those who access, provide or rely on adult social care, child social care and child social work.

In summary, the key points of our response are:

- The community transport sector plays a critical role in supporting Scotland's social care system and reducing barriers to access to social care facilities, services and support
- Community transport providers are at the heart of their communities, understand the transport needs of local people and should be key partners for the National Care Service's local delivery boards in the planning, commissioning and delivery of the transport services which people and communities require
- Community transport services tackle exclusion, isolation and loneliness and help people to live happier, healthier and more independent lives for longer in their own homes and communities. It also reduces long-term costs for the social care system through prevention and early intervention
- The National Care Service should define high-quality standards for accessible, inclusive transport community health and social care in Scotland
- Accessible, inclusive transport in their local community should be considered an integral part of the holistic care needs of service users and their care packages
- Health, social care and transport services should be aligned. A more joined-up, strategic approach is required, backed by long-term planning, stable public funding and genuine partnership working between the NHS, the National Care Service and the community transport sector

Introduction

The Community Transport Association (CTA) is a charity that champions, connects, supports and grows the community transport movement of charities, local groups and communities across every nation and region of the UK.

Community Transport is always for a social purpose and never for a profit. Our members utilise a wide range of transport modes – from minibuses and cars, to mopeds and bikes – to deliver a diversity of services – including dial-a-ride, electric car clubs, non-emergency transport for health and social care, 'wheels-to-work', group hire and bicycle or e-bike schemes – which support connectivity and sustainability by fulfilling unmet transport needs and bridging gaps in the provision of public transport.

Community transport is about providing innovative and flexible community-led solutions in response to unmet local transport needs, and often represents the only means of transport for many elderly,

disabled, isolated or vulnerable people to access education, employment, family and friends or health and social care services.

We are for, and about, accessible and inclusive transport for everyone in every community in Scotland. Many community transport vehicles are wheelchair accessible, with rear passenger lifts and convertible spaces, while drivers and passenger assistants are professionally trained to assist passengers with health or mobility issues.

We have over 150 members in Scotland – including charities serving or supporting elderly, disabled and vulnerable people; schools, colleges, universities and youth groups; day care centres; and faith groups – in rural and urban communities in almost every local authority area. About a third of our members offer transport as their primary activity, the rest as a secondary purpose as part of their charitable or community activities.¹

By effectively harnessing local resources and forging partnerships with public bodies, civil society organisations and other local groups, community transport providers help to prevent, mitigate and tackle major challenges for the new National Care Service such as deprivation, exclusion and rurality; loneliness and isolation; and mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Community transport's role in the social care system

In his foreword to the Scottish Government's consultation paper, Kevin Stewart MSP, the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care, set out his conviction that 'social care services, just like health care services, should be provided on a truly universal basis. I want our social care system to consistently deliver high quality services to every single person who needs them, across Scotland'. He also called for 'a comprehensive community health and social care service that supports people of all ages'.²

We agree with the Minister's positive and ambitious vision and argue that it can only be delivered by the National Care Service and the Scottish Government working with and investing in community transport as an essential and valuable delivery partner in the provision of accessible and inclusive transport for communities, patients and service users and key workers in social care.

The social and economic impact of the community transport sector in Scotland is significant. By conservative estimates, **over 100,000 people use community transport across Scotland every single year**, connecting passengers of all ages and from all backgrounds to education, employment, family and friends and health and social care.³

Community transport reduces barriers to accessing health and social care. Our most recent data shows that 85% of community transport providers serve older people, while 53% serve disabled people. Access to health and social care transport is a major remit for the sector in Scotland. **61% report that their services are used to take people to health services and 56% for access to care centres.**

¹ <https://ctauk.org/report-serving-scotland-during-covid/>

² <https://consult.gov.scot/health-and-social-care/a-national-care-service-for-scotland>

³ <https://ctauk.org/report-serving-scotland-during-covid/>

However, most community transport providers are not funded by any health and social care body or partner to operate these essential services.⁴

Community transport provides lifeline connectivity. Community transport works to get people to where they need to be, and is particularly important when passengers are ill or at their most vulnerable, and their medical or mobility needs mean they cannot travel by public or even private transport.

Every day our members support people to access facilities and services like GP surgeries, pharmacies and respite care or to visit family and friends who need support or are in care settings. Often these journeys would be highly challenging or impossible without community transport due to a lack of public transport or the cost of private transport.

Case Study: Transport to Healthcare Information Centre, Grampian

In the Grampian region, community transport has been vital in supporting the Health and Transport Action Plan (HTAP), initiated in 2008 between NHS Grampian and Nestrans, which offers a centralised information and transport advice service for people travelling to health and social care appointments in the region. Over time, the service has helped to map how health, social care and transport are provided, and has helped to build a picture of community transport coverage, on a region-wide level.

Under the HTAP, the Transport to Healthcare Information Centre works as a signposting service for urgent requests for patient transfers and has been essential during the pandemic in transporting health and social care staff to work and taking staff home if they become unwell.

COVID-19 response and recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance and the value of community transport in the health and social care system and facilitating access to facilities and essential services. The sector demonstrated its adaptability, professionalism and resilience by innovating to keep services going throughout the pandemic.

When other potential providers such as private hire taxis were unable to do so, community transport providers helped to connect people and communities with hospitals, care homes and pharmacies for appointments, prescriptions and other vital support.⁵ As the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery recognised, ‘the crisis has revealed the depth and breadth of the reach of the third sector and the value of social care... as well as the importance of place- and community-based interventions’.⁶

Community transport has also been a **critical lifeline for key workers**, including across the social care sector, to access their places of work throughout the crisis. This is especially the case in many rural communities where an ageing population, housing shortages and labour shortages are creating a

⁴ https://ctauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/State-of-the-Sector-Scotland_2015.pdf

⁵ <https://ctauk.org/report-serving-scotland-during-covid/>

⁶ www.gov.scot/publications/commission-future-delivery-public-services

perfect storm which is affecting the number of social care workers, as well as the accessibility of social care jobs for prospective workers and the accessibility of social care services for service users.

Understanding communities' needs

Community transport operators and their staff and volunteers can therefore offer useful insights into the lives of people who rarely or never use public transport, because of challenges they face with accessibility, health or mobility.

As community-led solutions, **community transport providers are at the heart of their local community and many have developed befriending services and support.** Community transport providers are often a preferred mode of transport for elderly, disabled or vulnerable people as they offer a safe, high-quality and often personalised service.

Community transport also offers a friendly and comforting sense of connection and community from trained volunteers and staff, which can be absent from public transport or private hire alternatives and improve mental health and wellbeing. Community-led operators provides very high levels of customer service, often from 'door-to-door'. They know their passengers and can often be the first to spot something might be wrong to help find advice and support or in an emergency.

The sector should, therefore, always be consulted by the new National Care Service and its local delivery boards in the design and implementation of health and social care services in the communities they serve, as well as in the planning of how to connect these services with access to health and social care transport, to ensure that care is truly inclusive, accessible and fair.

Supporting prevention and independent living

Community Transport plays a critical role in supporting independent living and tackling exclusion, isolation and loneliness for people and communities across Scotland. The sector should be a priority for the new National Care Service in order to achieve the ambitions of the Christie Commission, which identified back in 2011 the need for public services to '**focus on prevention and early intervention**' by tackling 'root causes', reducing inequalities and minimising the long-term growth in demand in the face of our ageing demographics.⁷

Community transport operators have a long and proud record of helping older, vulnerable and disabled people to access the amenities, services and support they need to live happy, healthy and independent lives for longer in their own homes and in communities across Scotland. Investment in community transport is preventative spending which delivers strategic, long-term benefits and better outcomes for people, taxpayers and the National Care Service by reducing the number of people who need to rely on social care or who need to go into costly full-time residential care.

Many older people living alone, for example, struggle to access traditional public or private transport. This can cause elderly people to struggle with isolation and loneliness – or to access shops, pharmacies,

⁷ www.gov.scot/publications/commission-future-delivery-public-services

libraries and other amenities or services which they need to live independently – with resulting negative impacts on their physical and mental health and wellbeing. A lack of accessible, inclusive transport where they live can cause them to move permanently into full-time residential care earlier than might otherwise be the case to get the support they need.

Case Study: Interloch Transport, Argyll

With some community transport passengers at high-risk, many providers pivoted during COVID-19 to delivering groceries, medicines and other supplies directly to passengers' homes to help them stay safe.

Interloch Transport in Argyll, for example, scaled up their existing shopping and prescription delivery services, to an additional 200 people, which has been crucial in helping many locals maintain their independence and continue to live happily and safely in their own homes, rather than having to go into supported accommodation or a care setting.

Rena (83): “Without Interloch, I’d be in a care home right now. I’ve no doubt about that at all.”

Raising standards of accessibility

The consultation paper states that the National Care Service ‘will define the strategic direction and quality standards for community health and social care in Scotland’.⁸ We welcome this statement of intent and its recognition of the role of community-based interventions.

We also believe it is important that these **standards for the future of social care include high standards of accessible, inclusive transport** which meet and are personalised wherever possible to the needs of individual service users, as Community Transport operators do every day. Service users must be transported in a vehicle and by a service which is tailored to their specific needs and circumstances.

The provision of transport services for access to social care must at least meet the standards of the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR). The establishment of the National Care Service creates an opportunity to maintain and raise standards of accessibility in partnership with Community Transport operators. The sector can help design and deliver truly accessible social care and transport services.

Delivering person-centred, holistic care

As a result of an ageing population and a long-term squeeze on the provision of public transport, especially in many rural communities, **our members are noting rising demand for community transport providers to help them to access health and social care**. Our research shows that it is consistently the second most common reason for using community transport.⁹

⁸ <https://consult.gov.scot/health-and-social-care/a-national-care-service-for-scotland>

⁹ https://ctauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/State-of-the-Sector-Scotland_2015.pdf

However, this need is not always met due to a lack of capacity and resources in the sector, which is caused variously by a lack of funding; shortages of staff and volunteers; or a failure to plan forward and align provision of social with provision of transport.

Transport is integral to service users' experience of social care – from whether they can comfortably travel to access services, to whether their family and friends can visit them in respite or residential care. It should therefore be integral to the design, planning and delivery of care. **Accessible, inclusive transport in their local community should be considered an integral part of care needs and care packages or plans.**

Health care, social care and transport services should all be aligned to deliver truly person-centred, holistic and sustainable care. We believe there is a **need for a more joined-up, strategic approach backed by long-term planning, stable public funding and genuine partnership working** between the National Care Service, National Health Service and community transport operators to develop integrated networks of appropriate provision. The establishment of the new National Care Service should create opportunities to improve the commissioning, coordination, funding and planning of transport for social care across public, private and third sectors.

Local coordination and planning

At present, CTA members tell us that **community transport is generally not brought in at the planning stage for the provision of health and social care-related transport** and that the costs and necessary lead-in times for delivery of accessible, inclusive services in the right places is often underestimated or overlooked. Community transport providers need time and resources to plan and scale-up their capacity to deliver these services.

The consultation paper states that the National Care Service will have 'local delivery boards' known as Community Health and Social Care Boards which will 'work with the NHS, local authorities, and the third and independent sectors to plan, commission and deliver the support and services that the people of Scotland require'. It will be important that these local delivery boards work and develop close links with the local community transport sector in their region.

There will be a **need for local flexibility and innovation to reflect local needs and circumstances** across Scotland's diverse geography and demography. Access to social care transport is most effective where it draws on local knowledge and capitalises on resources that already exist within communities – including effective, experienced and informed community transport operators and their staff and volunteers. Data and intelligence from the sector could inform local and national decision-making about strategic plans, commissioning, delivery monitoring, partnerships and so on.

The National Care Service will need to identify and engage with community transport operators across the country who provide services and solutions – or could expand such provision to meet unmet or emerging needs – supporting access to social care. **CTA's ongoing 'Mapping Scotland' project** in partnership with our members and Transport Scotland will produce much of this quantitative,

qualitative and geographical data to evidence where services are; their scale; their effectiveness; and gaps or so-called ‘deserts’ in provision.

An **up-to-date, detailed and dynamic picture of the community transport sector across Scotland** – including those supporting access to health and social care – will be a major output. Its information and insights could be valuable in coordinating services and identifying partners and priorities for the National Care Service. The evidence gathering phase will launch in early 2022. We would be more than happy to discuss this project with you and to provide the results once it is produced to inform your future work and planning.

Further information

To discuss this consultation response further, or to engage with the CTA and our members in Scotland on any other issue, please contact:

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The Community Transport Association (CTA) is the national charity that represents and supports providers of community transport – thousands of local charities and community groups in all parts of the UK that provide transport services which fulfil a social purpose and community benefit.

Our vision is of a world where people can shape and create their own accessible and inclusive transport solutions and our mission is to achieve this through championing accessible and inclusive transport, connecting people and ideas, and by strengthening our members and raising standards.

We do this by contributing to the formation of public policy that affects our sector and their service users and showing how better outcomes are achieved for people and communities when they have access to community transport. We create partnerships with like-minded organisations across all sectors; manage a national programme of quality assured education and training; provide comprehensive advice and guidance to those delivering community transport; and we take every opportunity to champion the vital and indispensable work that our members do.