



Scotland's Health and Social Care Strategy for Older People

A Response from CTA

June 2022

www.ctauk.org

Summary

The Community Transport Association (CTA) welcomes the Scottish Government's work on co-producing a Health and Social Care Strategy for Older People with Scotland's older people and the third sector organisations which deliver advice, services and support to meet their needs.

We share the Scottish Government's ambition to make Scotland 'the best place in the world to grow old' and our consultation response sets out how the Community Transport sector can work with the public sector to help make this happen.

Our submission makes the following key points:

- The local charities, community groups and social enterprises of Scotland's Community Transport sector are at the heart of their communities. They often represent the only accessible, affordable means of transport for older people
- Community Transport supports Scotland's older people to live happier, healthier and more independent lives for longer in their own homes and communities, thereby reducing long-term costs for the health & social care system through prevention and early intervention
- Many older people rely on Community Transport to access amenities, education, employment, family and friends and health & social care, as well as other public services like swimming pools and libraries or support groups like book groups and lunch clubs, which improve physical and mental health and wellbeing
- A lack of funding from the NHS and Health & Social Care Partnerships for Community Transport schemes which provide non-emergency patient transport results in missed appointments, higher costs and worse health outcomes and inequalities experienced by older people
- Accessible, inclusive transport in their local community should be considered an integral part of holistic, person-centred care packages for older people
- Health, social care and transport services should be aligned. A more joined-up, strategic approach to non-emergency patient transport is required, backed by long-term planning, stable public funding and genuine partnership working between the NHS, Health & Social Care Partnerships, the forthcoming National Care Service and the Community Transport sector

Place and Wellbeing

1. Do you have examples of communities, voluntary/third sector and public sector organisations working together to improve older people's health and wellbeing and reduce any health inequalities which they experience?

The local charities, community groups and social enterprises of Scotland's Community Transport sector work with communities, the third sector and the public sector every single day to improve older people's health and wellbeing and reduce any health inequalities which they experience. Community Transport is always for a social purpose, never for a profit and provides community-led and -owned transport services which are accessible, inclusive and sustainable.

Community Transport schemes exist to meet the otherwise unmet transport needs of local people – often older and disabled people in particular – and communities – often where there is a lack of accessible or affordable public transport. **Many older people rely on Community Transport to access amenities, education, employment, family and friends and health & social care, as well as other public services or support groups like libraries and lunch clubs, which improve physical and mental health and wellbeing.**

The Community Transport Association (CTA) champions, connects, supports and grows this sector. We have over 160 members serving rural, urban and island communities across Scotland in 30 out of 32 local authorities. Our members utilise a range of different transport modes, from cars to minibuses to e-bikes. A large proportion of vehicles in the sector are wheelchair accessible, with rear passenger lifts and convertible spaces. Staff and volunteer drivers and passenger assistants are professionally trained to assist passengers with health or mobility issues. Many operators provide door-to-door or door-through-door services to older people, which offers a personalised, higher-quality service compared to taxis or public transport, which offers a friendly, familiar face and new or deeper social connections.

Over 100,000 Scots use Scotland's Community Transport sector every year. Non-emergency patient transport is a major function of the sector, especially through volunteer car schemes which help older people – who represent the core user base for many schemes – to travel to GP surgeries, NHS hospitals or care centres. **85% of Community Transport providers serve older people, while 53% serve disabled people. 61% report that their services are used to take people to health services and 56% for access to care centres.**¹ Potential users in some places are signposted to, or become eligible for their local Community Transport scheme, through referral by their local GP.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, CTA members went above and beyond to protect older people by continuing to deliver their essential services safely or providing access testing and vaccination centres. 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.² 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'.³

Most schemes have not and are not funded by the NHS or any other public body in the health & social care sector to operate these kinds of essential health transport services, despite the vital role they play in the health & social care system and reducing costs for the taxpayer. More

¹ https://ctauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/State-of-the-Sector-Scotland_2015.pdf

² <https://ctauk.org/report-serving-scotland-during-covid/>

³ www.gov.scot/publications/commission-future-delivery-public-services

generally, Community Transport schemes typically survive on small-scale, short-term local authority grants or donations from charitable foundations, the general public, their users and other non-governmental sources.⁴ There needs to be fair, sustainable and multi-year funding in place for the long-term to help the Community Transport sector to thrive, rather than simply survive.⁵ The Scottish Government and COSLA's joint route map to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030 contains a welcome commitment to 'working with Community Transport Association UK and volunteer community transport groups to improve patient access'.⁶

Case Study: Transport to Healthcare Information Centre in NHS 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 & 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 regional picture of Community Transport coverage.

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

<http://thinc-hub.org>

Case Study: Killin and District Volunteer Car Scheme in Stirlingshire

Killin and District Volunteer Car Scheme provide a door to door voluntary car service for people who by reason of age, ill-health, disability or financial hardship, need the provision of accessible transport to aid their mobility, alleviating discomfort and contribute to an improvement in their quality of life. Local volunteer drivers help many older people in the village and surrounding area to access medical appointments across Forth Valley and beyond.

Eileen, who is 73 years old and has become reliant on Community Transport since losing her driving licence after being diagnosed with glaucoma several years ago, said: "The volunteers who operate this car scheme go above and beyond to make sure I reach critical healthcare appointments. These wonderful people ensure I am physically and socially supported, heard and connected to my community... The service they offer is priceless. These volunteers continue to adapt and evolve in the face of adversity for the good of their community and its most vulnerable people."

www.killinanddistrictvolunteercarscheme.com

5. How could local organisations and places such as community groups, cultural centres such as libraries,

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

⁵ <https://ctauk.org/scotlands-spending-review-ctas-call-for-multi-year-funding>

⁶ www.transport.gov.scot/publication/a-route-map-to-achieve-a-20-per-cent-reduction-in-car-kilometres-by-2030

museums and art galleries and leisure/sports centres, help you with this?

Community Transport schemes play an important role in tackling exclusion, isolation and loneliness and helping older people across Scotland to stay socially connected. They are at the heart of their communities. Community Transport helps to build a sense of belonging and connection by creating new and nurturing long-standing relationships between local staff or volunteers and older people who share a community or neighbourhood. 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. They can support older people to visit family and friends, facilitate day trips by older people's groups or clubs, enable access to libraries, museums, art galleries and leisure/sports centres and often deliver informal or formal befriending services.

We agree with the need for better information sharing between the third sector, NHS and social care services. We also agree that provision of services and the quality of signposting or referrals to third sector support organisations is patchy and unequal across the country. The transport needs of patients are typically not assessed or addressed. Social prescribing could also more frequently link patients to the support which Community Transport schemes can offer.

Preventative and Proactive Care

3. How do you think services could be improved?

Preventative and proactive care for older people could be improved by aligning care with and investing in Community Transport services, which play an important role in prevention and early intervention. 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. Community Transport helps older people to stay active in their communities and connects them to many different kinds of formal and informal advice, information and support from volunteers, organisations and neighbours that they trust in the places they live.⁷

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, 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.

As a result of Scotland's ageing population and a long-term squeeze on the provision of public transport, especially bus routes in many rural communities, CTA members are noting rising demand

⁷ <https://ctauk.org/national-care-service-scotland-response>

for Community Transport providers to help with access health & social care due to a lack of accessible, affordable alternatives. Our research shows that it is consistently the second most common reason for using Community Transport.⁸

Investment in Community Transport is therefore strategic, preventative spending which delivers benefits for communities, better outcomes for older people and lower long-term costs for taxpayers by reducing the number of people who need to rely on social care or who need to go into costly full-time residential care.

Case Study: Interloch Transport in Argyll

With many of their passengers at high-risk, many Community Transport 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. It has helped many older people locally to maintain their independence and continue to live locally, rather than having to go into supported accommodation or a care setting. Rena, who is 83 years old, said: "Without Interloch, I'd be in a care home right now. I've no doubt about that at all."

www.interlochtransport.com

Integrated Planned Care

8. What support would you need to assist you in self managing your general health or any long-term health conditions that you have?

We support the proposal to expand regular health checks or 'Health MOTs' for older people and believe this should include an assessment of their mobility in relation to their transport needs. Health & social care professionals conducting these assessments could signpost or refer patients to their local Community Transport provider, or work with them through social prescribing, to ensure they get the support they need at the earliest opportunity.

13. What needs to be improved?

We strongly recognise the finding from previous consultations and engagements with older people that the 'most frequent single improvement that people said was needed was around patient transport'. Our members tell us that **large numbers of older people across Scotland face significant barriers or challenges in accessing health & social care due to a lack of accessible or affordable public transport in their area and a failure to match the times of transport services and clinics to align**, especially for patients travelling from rural areas or over longer distances to early morning

⁸ https://ctauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/State-of-the-Sector-Scotland_2015.pdf

appointments. One in 3 older people in Scotland report having had difficulty getting to a medical appointment due to lack of suitable transport.⁹ The Community Transport sector helps many older people to overcome these barriers and challenges, but often with little funding or support.

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 exacerbating by record high fuel prices and the cost of living crisis; or a failure to plan forward and align provision of health & social care by the public sector with the provision of transport by the third sector. **A lack of funding from the NHS and Health & Social Care Partnerships for Community Transport schemes which provide non-emergency patient transport results in missed appointments, higher costs and worse health outcomes and inequalities experienced by older people.**

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 effective delivery are often underestimated or overlooked. Community Transport providers need time and resources to plan and scale-up their capacity to deliver these services. There is a need to develop and deepen relationships between the sector and NHS health boards.

Transport is integral to service users' experience of health & 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 NHS, Health & Social Care Partnerships, the forthcoming National Care Service and Community Transport operators.** 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 the public, private and third sectors.

Further information

David Kelly, Director for Scotland: david.kelly@ctauk.org

The Community Transport Association (CTA) is the UK charity that champions, connects and supports the Community Transport sector. We have over 160 members in Scotland, which are local charities and community groups providing transport services always for a social purpose and never for profit. We believe in accessible, inclusive and sustainable transport for all.

⁹ www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-scotland/documents/politics-and-government/parliamentary-briefings/2019/age-scotland-msp-briefing---transport-scotland-bill---stage-3.pdf