

## Assessing Equality – The Equality Act 2010 FDC Concessionary Travel payments - Update December 2023

### Customer Impact Review

#### **Name and brief description of policy being analysed**

*Briefly summarise the policy including any key information such as aims, context etc; note timescales and milestones for new policies; use plain language – NO JARGON; refer to other documents if required*

#### The policy being analysed – FDC Concessionary Travel Policy

In 2007 the Government brought in the National Concessionary Bus Pass Scheme which entitled passengers over the age of 60 and some passengers who had certain disabilities to travel free of charge after 9.30am Monday to Friday and all day at weekends and Bank Holidays. As Fenland is a rural area and there is a lack of buses which serve the villages, FDC introduced a policy which allowed bus pass holders who were members of FACT Community Transport to use the Dial A Ride service free of charge. The scheme operates on a revenue foregone basis and FDC pays the cost of the fares up to a maximum of £50,000 per year.

In 2010 the bus pass scheme transferred from Fenland District Council to Cambridgeshire County Council (from 2017 transferred to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority CPCA). When this happened Cambs CC/CPCA decided to provide only 50% of the cost for bus pass holders to use the DAR service for local travel. Discussions were held with FDC Members and in conclusion it was decided that FDC would provide the other 50% for local travel but also 100% of the cost for some “special” trips. These are journeys that are provided by FACT which are deemed to be essential for accessing local services and facilities. The wider FDC definition of essential journey in FDC policy ensures that residents who had been using DAR do not lose out.

From 2022 onwards, the FDC concessionary travel funding has been part operated on a revenue foregone basis and partly covid19 recovery payments. The recovery payments have been in line with central government guidance and are aimed at bridging the gap between fare payments and the cost of delivering services. Nationally, bus use has not yet returned to pre-covid levels and community transport levels are lower still. Many services are not able to continue without covid19 recovery payments. Such payments are reviewed on an annual basis.

#### **Information used for customer analysis**

*Note relevant consultation; who took part and key findings; refer to, or attach other documents if needed; include dates where possible*

#### The Main Stakeholders

Fenland District Council

Cambridgeshire County Council

Community Transport Providers - Fenland Association for Community Transport (FACT) and Care Network

General Public

## Findings & Research

During 2007 a bespoke database was developed by the IT team at FDC. As the database was being built in house we were able to add functions in that were not available on other databases. Features such as GIS mapping helped to plot where concessionary bus pass holder lived and then we were able to promote DAR in areas that had little or no public transport. As part of the GIS mapping we were also able to map the bus routes throughout Fenland. This showed limited opportunity for residents living in the villages and the more rural areas on Fenland. Due to the recession and loss of bus services there is now more of a tendency for residents to rely on the FACT Dial A Ride service and the community car schemes.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) shows that due to the rural nature of Fenland, transport and access to services is very difficult especially for the more vulnerable people such as the elderly. According to the IMD Fenland comes in the top 5% of the most deprived areas nationally.

2011 Access to Healthcare Research which was undertaken partnership with the Fenland GP Surgeries and Hospitals. Around 1,500 people completed a questionnaire about their travel. In terms of the transport available and access. Survey days were also undertaken at Wisbech Hospital to meet patients and to understand their transport issues. The survey work showed that people living in more isolated communities without a car have a real difficulty getting to medical appointments.

2014 and 2015 CCC Public Health Team – Transport and Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). This work is looking to update the existing Fenland access to healthcare evidence base but also provide new information about access to hospitals. This evidence includes statistics and map based information.

2017 and 2018 the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) became the new Passenger Transport Authority. Devolved responsibility was given to Cambridgeshire County Council between April 2018 and the end of March 2021. This concentrated on the operation elements of bus services and the delivery of the concessionary travel scheme.

The CPCA commenced a review of bus services in 2018. Various reports, surveys and information have been collated and reported since that time to the CPCA Board. This is to set the future direction of local bus services and therefore the bus infrastructure network it will impact on the ability of Local Residents to use their bus passes FDC and the Fenland Transport and Access Group continue to input into the review. The main points we are making are those set out in the key findings section of this CIA. A key outcome of this ongoing work has been to consider new ways of working and new models for delivering bus services including enhanced partnerships and bus franchising.

In November 2020 new Government Guidance on Community Transport and Section 19 permits was issued by the Department for Transport. This guidance sought to clarify what is meant by not for profit. This guidance also provides advice about travelling distances for dial a ride services and rural area exemptions where longer distance travel may be necessary to reach a shop or a health facility.

In early 2020, the Coronavirus entered the UK and from March 2020 onwards, various restrictions and local downs have been essential to keep safe and well. This has significantly impacted older people and those who are typically dial a ride customers. FACT Community Transport established a shopping service and a prescription service whereby members could phone up and volunteers collect the shopping which is then delivered by minibus. Overtime this service was extended to other vulnerable or elderly members of the community. By January 2021 the shopping service remains in existence but there is the option for members to use the dial a ride as normal (with social distancing) should they want to go out. To support this approach (and in line with Government Guidance) payments have still been made by FDC for community transport for the dial a ride and the shopping service. Additional information is provided by the operator to show their costs and income to demonstrate the finding is needed. This enables these vital services to continue supporting the public who need them. In December 2021 FDC continues to make payments in respect of the shopping service. This is intended to be reviewed on a monthly basis due to the changing nature of coronavirus and Government guidance.

In March 2021, Government launched the new national bus strategy buses back better. This includes a range of significant measures around new low carbo buses, funding for rural areas and significant investment programmes for buses. This is a long-term bus strategy for England outside of London. The strategy aims to deliver more buses, more routes and higher frequencies of service. This new strategy encourages Mayor Authorities such as CPCA to deliver bus franchising. Such Authorities are expected to submit Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP) to Government to secure some of the funding available. CPCA submitted a BSIP to Government in December 2021 unfortunately that BSIP bid was unsuccessful.

In Summer 2022, the main bus operator in Fenland announced they were withdrawing from most local bus services. This would have created a situation where Fenland has virtually no bus services. CPCA found funding to retenders services up to end of March 2024. A bus network review and future network review were established along with research into demand responsive transport. By October 2023 these reviews had confirmed that all but 3 bus services in Fenland would be retendered in their current format. Work is ongoing to confirm what will happen with the remaining 3. Better bus/rail integration is being considered for March town. The future network study will include a public consultation is expected in 2024 to seek the views of local people and stakeholders about enhanced partnerships and bus franchising. A second BSIP is also being developed alongside this work. Significant improvements to the bus network in Fenland will help to ensure all eligible residents can make better use of their bus pass.

Key Findings

- Over 20,000 residents in Fenland have a bus pass
- Many residents in the surrounding villages rely on the FACT Dial A Ride service
- Residents were finding it difficult to access local services
- Access for medical appointments especially to hospitals is particularly difficult
- Reductions in bus services are creating a reliance on community transport
- During 2020 and now in 2021, the shopping and prescription services have been vital for ensuring that elderly and vulnerable residents have been able to obtain food and medication. Many hundreds of journeys have been made to take essential supplies across Fenland to residents.
- COVID19 has hit bus services very badly and the recovery is taking much longer than anticipated. This has caused many bus services to be withdrawn and substantial public funding being needed to keep a basic service level available.

	Could particularly benefit	Neutral	May adversely impact	Explanations	Is action possible or required?	Details of actions or explanations if actions are not possible  Please note details of any actions to be placed in your Service Plan
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	Officers have considered all of the equality strands. This Customer Impact Assessment does not raise	N	
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>		N	

<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	any negative equality issues. Officers have concluded that the FSP Concessionary Travel policy will have positive impacts for those who are bus pass holders. There are older people and those with disabilities who are eligible for community transport membership. There is no evidence that the policy may result in adverse impacts on equality or good community relations. During the coronavirus pandemic nonmembers who are Fenland residents have also benefitted from the shopping and prescription services.	<b>N</b>	
<b>Disability</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>N</b>	
<b>Age</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>N</b>	
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>N</b>	
<b>Religion or belief</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>N</b>	
<b>Pregnancy &amp; maternity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>N</b>	
<b>Marriage &amp; civil partnership</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>N</b>	
<b>Human Rights</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>N</b>	
<b>Socio Economic</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>N</b>	
<b>Multiple/ Cross Cutting</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>N</b>	
<b>Outcome(s) of customer analysis</b>						
a) Will the policy/ procedure impact on the whole population of Fenland and/ or identified groups within the population; negative <input type="checkbox"/> neutral <input type="checkbox"/> positive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
No major change needed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adjust the policy <input type="checkbox"/> Adverse impact but continue <input type="checkbox"/> Stop and remove / reconsider policy <input type="checkbox"/>						
<b>Arrangements for future monitoring:</b>						
Note when analysis will be reviewed; include any equality indicators and performance against those indicators						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The policy is reviewed annually as part of FDC Corporate Planning and Review cycle</li> <li>Monthly monitoring information is provided on concessionary fares to support invoices this allows us to assess if the policy is working</li> </ul>						

- Ongoing work to support the future strategy for bus services in Cambridgeshire is continuing and we are feeding into this approach where possible including local concerns about not being able to use bus passes due to limited bus services.

**Details of any data/ Research used** (both FDC & Partners):

- Bus timetables including routes of services and times
- Concessionary Fares Database
- Bus pass questionnaires
- Access to Healthcare Questionnaire results (2011)
- FACT patronage figures - Monthly monitoring statistics to support invoices
- Index of Multiple Deprivation (2010)
- Transport Issues in Fenland Evidence Base report (2007)
- CCC Public Health Team – Transport and Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2014 and 2015
- National Bus Strategy – Buses Back Better (2021)

**Completed by:**

**Name & Position:** Wendy Otter, Transport Development Manager & Belinda Pedler, Senior Transport Officer

**Approved by** (manager signature):

**Date published:** This should be the date the analysis was published on the website

**Details of any Committee approved by** (if applicable):

**Date endorsed by Members** if applicable: