

Equality and Safety Impact Assessment



The **Public Sector Equality Duty** (Section 149 of the Equality Act) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities.

The Equality Duty supports good decision making – it encourages public bodies to be more efficient and effective by understanding how different people will be affected by their activities, so that their policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people’s needs. The Council’s Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) includes an assessment of the community safety impact assessment to comply with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and will enable the Council to better understand the potential impact of proposals and consider mitigating action.

Name or Brief Description of Proposal	Dial-a-Ride
Brief Service Profile (including number of customers)	
This ESIA supports the budget decisions to approve change the budget for Dial-a-Ride services for 2023-24 in Southampton. This covers the x users of Dial-a-Ride (DAR).	
Summary of Impact and Issues	
Southampton Dial-a-Ride (DAR) is a dedicated minibus service providing door-to-door on demand transport across Southampton for those unable to use public bus services. Funded by Southampton City Council (SCC), the services is currently provided under contract by Southampton Care in Action (SCiA).	
SCiA, a social enterprise that provides a range of social care and health services, was awarded the contract for a 4-year term in 2015 at a fixed maximum cost of £104,000pa. The specification that sets out the service is ‘for residents who have a disability that prevents them from using mainstream public transport and do not have access to other forms of transport, such as a mobility vehicle.’	
The purpose of providing the service is to enable vulnerable, independent residents to attend appointments, go shopping or socialise, as well as to take pre-arranged day trips to place such as shopping centres or garden centres. The main aims of the service are to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a door-to-door service, • Enable people to get out and about regularly and retain personal independence, • Offer a pre-booked service, • Be as accessible and easy to use as possible, including for wheelchair users, • Accommodate companions who wish to accompany people on their journeys, and • Maximise the number of journey opportunities. 	
The provision of a DAR service is not a statutory obligation for SCC but providing one has wider benefits for social inclusion, tackling loneliness, providing a viable option for those unable to use buses etc.	

The current contract commenced in March 2015 and has been extended several times, most recently from September 2022 to March 2023.

For 2023/24 the administration of the DAR was transferred to the Southampton Integrated Commissioning Unit (ICU) with the budget remaining with Integrated Transport. The contract wasn't extended in March 2023 due to limit on exemptions however a grant agreement for 23/24 has been completed with SCiA for costs up to £100,000.

The budget for DAR has been £104,000 and as part of budget review for 2023/24 savings of £29,000 has been identified to permanently reduce the budget to £75,000.

The current service has been operating at 1 minibus since 2020 due to suppressed demand from the Covid-19 pandemic. As demand has not recovered the budget is being adjusted accordingly to reflect this level of service.

Service Provision

SCiA, who also provide services for Adult Day Care and other community transport services via the Southampton Integrated Commissioning Unit (ICU), currently provide a 1 minibus Dial-A-Ride service. When the service was tendered in 2015 the offer was for a 2 minibus service Tuesday-Saturday with 1 minibus on a Monday, operating between 0900 and 1500 Monday-Friday and 0900 and 1030 on Saturday.

With demand reducing as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the 2nd minibus was withdrawn and focused on providing a 1 minibus service Monday-Friday 0900-1700. The reduction in number of minibuses also then reduced the contract £104,000 to £76,000 in 2022/23. Within each year annual inflation was also included.

Advanced bookings are permitted, with members able to make a maximum of 3 bookings at any one time. Pick ups can be up to 10 minutes before or after the arranged time. A contribution fare is charged, with the revenue retained by SCiA.

Service Use

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the use of Dial-a-Ride in Southampton. This is a trend repeated elsewhere nationally with similar services and in standard bus services.

In 2019 there were 447 people registered to use Dial-a-Ride, in 2022 this decreased to 296 registered users. 31% of these were wheelchair users, and 61% used a walking aid. 75% of members are aged over 70 years, a further 22% between 50 and 70, with less than 3% aged under 50 years.

Since 2015 the total number of passenger journeys has gradually fallen and in 2019 stood 16.5% lower than in 2015. The decline was exacerbated through the pandemic with 2021 patronage 80% lower than 2019.

In 2022 (calendar year) figures have shown an increase on 2021 and are similar to 2020 but remaining 68% lower than 2019. In 2022 there has only been 1 minibus in operation compared to 2 in 2019, and recovery from the height of the pandemic has continued to suppress use.

In 2019/20 the service operated 2 minibuses making 7,500 journeys and received income of £91,949 through the contract payments and fares revenue of £21,418.

This suggests that each passenger journey cost £15.14 to provide. In 2022/23, the service made 2,350 journeys and received income of £52,885 contract payment for 1 minibuss and £5,449 fares revenue. This suggests that each passenger journey costs £22.44 to provide.

Survey in 2019 indicated that people used DAR for shopping (50%), going out as a group (31%) and going on organised trips (29%). 45% had experienced instances of not being able to make a booking at some point in the previous year.

Over past 12-18 months SCC officers have been working with the ICU on developing a combined DAR and Patient Transport offer. This would mean that DAR would be managed by the CCG as part of a combined contract with their own transport needs. With both DAR and CCG transport being operated by SCiA there would be efficiencies for the operator, commissioner and users.

However, the ICU have not been able to progress this to completion due to resources and are placing it on hold. In the interim, the administration of the DAR service has been transferred to ICU along with the budget.

Potential Positive Impacts

Dial-a-Ride is a form of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) as set out in the Local Transport Plan ambition for public transport – the Southampton Mass Transit System. It provides a useful, if small scale, part of the public transport network for those unable to access conventional buses.

The ambition of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is to make bus services as accessible as possible in Southampton. DAR performs that function for those who are unable to use conventional buses. This allows them to engage in activities thereby reducing social isolation and loneliness which may have other costs on NHS and SCC services. The Accessible Southampton Scrutiny Inquiry looks to develop an Inclusive Transport Strategy of which DAR forms part of.

Older people, disabled people and other protected groups, as well as lower socio-economic groups, are more likely to rely on the bus network to access education, employment and other opportunities. Affordable, accessible and well connected services are vital in ensuring these groups are not marginalised.

Responsible Service Manager	Pete Boustred, Head of Transport & Planning
Date	
Approved by Senior Manager	Adam Wilkinson, Executive Director for Place
Date	

Potential Impact

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
Age	Dial-a-Ride in Southampton predominately carries elderly and disabled passengers, so they can	Potential negative impacts

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	<p>access to key facilities (retail, health and education).</p> <p>Eligible people (those at who meet the defined criteria) can access the DAR system either via phone or email to</p> <p>From the 2021 Census 37,768 (14.3%) of Southampton's population of 248,941 is aged 65+.</p> <p>Those who use DAR are generally unable to use standard buses or taxis because they require additional support (e.g. travelling with a companion/carer) or adaptations that the DAR minibus has (e.g. tail lift)</p> <p>In 2019/20 there were 447 people registered to use DAR and in 2022 this had decreased to 296 registered users. 75% of the members were aged over 70 years, a further 22% between 50 and 70, with less than 3% aged under 50 years.</p> <p>Since 2015 the total number of passenger journeys have gradually fallen, and in 2019 stood 16.5% lower than 2015 calendar year. The decline was further exacerbated through the Covid-19 pandemic with 2021 patronage 80% lower than 2019, and 2022 68% lower.</p> <p>Those not eligible for DAR would not be able to participate in the scheme.</p> <p>Since 2020 there has only been 1 minibus in operation compared to 2 in 2019 where demand was higher, and recovery from the height of the pandemic has continued to suppress use.</p>	<p>A 1 minibus operation would fit current level of demand but if demand were to recover quicker the operation may become unavailable increasing the number of incidences where users are not able to make a booking. Enabling bookings to be made further in advance – such as 48hrs instead of 24hrs would increase flexibility. Extending the time that DAR operated is not considered viable give additional costs and lower uptake.</p>

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
<p>Disability</p>	<p>Dial-a-Ride in Southampton predominately carries elderly and disabled passengers, so they can access to key facilities (retail, health and education).</p> <p>Eligible people (those at who meet the defined criteria) can access the DAR system either via phone or email to</p> <p>From the 2021 Census 44,062 (17.7%) of Southampton's population of 248,941 is considered disabled under the definitions in the Equalities Act.</p> <p>Those who use DAR are generally unable to use standard buses or taxis because they require additional support (e.g. travelling with a companion/carer) or adaptations that the DAR minibus has (e.g. tail lift)</p> <p>In 2019/20 there were 447 people registered to use DAR and in 2022 this had decreased to 296 registered users. 31% of these were wheelchair users and 61% used a walking aid.</p> <p>Since 2015 the total number of passenger journeys have gradually fallen, and in 2019 stood 16.5% lower than 2015 calendar year. The decline was further exacerbated through the Covid-19 pandemic with 2021 patronage 80% lower than 2019, and 2022 68% lower.</p> <p>Those not eligible for DAR would not be able to participate in the scheme.</p> <p>Since 2020 there has only been 1 minibus in operation compared to 2 in 2019 where demand was higher, and recovery from the height of the pandemic has continued to suppress use.</p>	<p>Potential negative impacts</p> <p>A 1 minibus operation would fit current demand but if demand were to recover quicker the operation may become unavailable increasing the number of incidences where users are not able to make a booking.</p> <p>Enabling bookings to be made further in advance – such as 48hrs instead of 24hrs would increase flexibility.</p> <p>Extending the time that DAR operated is not considered viable give additional costs and lower uptake.</p>

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Gender Re-assignment	Not applicable	N/A
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Not applicable	N/A
Pregnancy and Maternity	Not applicable.	N/A
Race	The DAR service is open to all eligible people so there is no impact on race.	N/A
Religion or Belief	The DAR service is open to all eligible people so there is no impact on religion or belief.	N/A
Sex	The DAR service open to all eligible people so there is no impact on sex.	N/A
Sexual Orientation	The DAR service open to all eligible people so there is no impact on sexual orientation.	N/A
Community Safety	Not applicable	N/A
Poverty	<p>DAR can provide a more affordable transport option for those who are eligible, as can be cheaper than using standard adapted taxis.</p> <p>Parts of Southampton being among the top decile in England for deprivation and can suffer indirectly from some of the negative impacts of transport such as emissions and lack of access to a private car. They are more likely to rely on public transport to get around to work or health choices.</p> <p>29% of all households in Southampton do not have access to a car, those parts of Southampton that have low levels of car ownership are in the poorer communities. Those eligible for DAR may not have access to a car all of the time. These areas tend to have higher degrees of health inequalities, although DAR users are spread across the city.</p>	Reducing the service to 1 minibus to match current demand will not have a significant impact.
Health & Wellbeing	The planned delivery of improved public transport networks will help offer an alternative to driving, which will reduce congestion and air pollution.	Reducing the service to 1 minibus to match current demand will not have a significant impact.

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
	DAR enables people to travel around to get to appointments, see friends, participate in leisure activities etc that help with mental well-being.	
Other Significant Impacts	None	N/A