

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	Concessionary Fares Scheme 2023-24
Brief Service Profile (including number of customers)	
This ESIA support the report to approve the Concessionary Fare Scheme and Methodology for 2023-24 in Southampton. This covers the 23,000 concessionary and disabled pass holders in Southampton, and all Concessionary Travelcard holders in England.	
Summary of Impact and Issues	
<p>Concessionary Fares enable those eligible (older people and disabled people) free travel on buses in England after 0930 and the reimbursement of bus operators for those journeys made. Southampton has a local enhancement that means Southampton residents with passes can use buses for free from 0900 rather than 0930.</p> <p>Each year the Council needs to agree the final scheme and the reimbursement rate and methodology for bus operators for the Concessionary Fares Scheme in Southampton, and how this aligns with the Department for Transport (DfT) guidance for the English National Concessionary Fare Scheme (ENCTS).</p> <p>The DfT has provided guidance for how Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) reimburse bus operators for the number of concessionary fare passenger journeys made. As bus patronage, particularly concessionary patronage, recovers gradually from the Covid-19 pandemic and not yet reached pre-pandemic levels, the DfT have produced supplementary guidance. This encourages LTAs to legally pay at higher levels (above that of the number of concessionary passengers carried up to a threshold) with the aim that the additional revenue will support the retention of essential public transport services until patronage stabilises at, or close to, pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>In creating the method of reimbursement for 2023/24 financial year the Council needs to take this guidance into account. Concessionary patronage in Southampton in 2022 was at 75% of its pre-pandemic levels. This report sets out the proposed methodology for 2023/24 for how the Council will reimburse bus operators and to what level.</p>	

The 2022/23 concessionary fare methodology was approved by Cabinet in July 2022 but has been reviewed following engagement with the local bus operators, who have raised concerns about inflationary pressures that have not been considered when setting the methodology. The methodology generated a baseline by removing 2.5% from 2019/20 levels annually to reflect national decline in concessionary patronage (this has been done each year since 2020/21, for 2022/23 3x annual reductions of 2.5% had been applied to reach 92.7% of 2019/20 baseline). The combination of this reduction and operator inflationary pressures (e.g. fuel and driver costs) has led to a review to ensure that the bus network is sustainable during this recovery phase.

The methodology was developed following DfT guidance published in February 2022 with the aim of reducing the level of additional support (payments above those paid on actual journeys made up to the threshold) by 5% every two months to November 2022. From this point payments would have been made on actuals only.

With concessionary patronage levels, while increasing, having not increased to the extent anticipated and the inflationary pressures this report sets out an adjustment to the current year (2022/23) methodology which will retain the payments at 80% of an adjusted 2019/20 baseline and to remove one of the annual 2.5% assumed national decline in patronage.

Potential Positive Impacts

The Southampton ENCTS sets out measures that are likely to help promote equality of opportunity for a number of protected groups – namely those eligible older people and those with disabilities, who are more likely to be reliant on public transport and those who face increased barriers to using public transport.

Providing free

The National Bus Strategy and current Connected Southampton 2040 highlights the important role that bus plays in addressing key strategic equality and inclusion challenges. 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 Planning & Transport
Date	22/02/2023
Approved by Senior Manager	Adam Wilkinson, Executive Director for Place
Date	

Potential Impact

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
Age	Bus services in Southampton carry a high proportion of elderly and younger passengers, so they can access to key facilities (retail, health and education).	Positive impacts

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
	<p>Elderly people (those at state pension age) benefit from free bus travel after 0900 and in the evenings through the existing English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS).</p> <p>There are currently 25,970 senior citizen bus passes issued in Southampton (2020/21 latest DfT data). From 2021 Census 34,245 (13.7%) of Southampton's population of 248,941 is aged 65+. This shows that 76% of eligible population have taken up the pass.</p> <p>In 2020/21 3.4m concessionary fare journeys were made (down from 4.35m in 2016/17) at 131 journeys per pass.</p> <p>Those not eligible for ENCTS would not be able to participate in the scheme.</p> <p>If an ENCTS passholder wishes to travel before 0900 they would have option to pay the commercial bus fare or delay their journey until after 0900.</p>	
Disability	<p>Disabled people benefit from free bus travel after 0900 through the existing English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS). of the Group Fare offer.</p> <p>There are currently 3,284 disability bus passes issued in Southampton (2020/21). From the 2021 Census 43,937 (17.6%) of Southampton's population is classed as disabled under Equality Act definition. This shows that 7.4% of the eligible population have taken up the pass offer.</p> <p>A proportion of the 3.4m concessionary fare journeys made in Southampton in 2020/21 will be made by disabled pass holder.</p> <p>Those not eligible for ENCTS would not be able to participate in the scheme.</p> <p>If an ENCTS passholder wishes to travel before 0900 they would have option to pay the commercial bus fare or delay their journey until after 0900.</p>	Positive impacts
Gender Re-assignment	Not applicable	N/A
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Not applicable	N/A

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
Pregnancy and Maternity	Not applicable.	N/A
Race	The ENCTS is open to all eligible people so there is no impact on race.	N/A
Religion or Belief	The ENCTS is open to all eligible people so there is no impact on religion or belief.	N/A
Sex	The ENCTS is open to all eligible people so there is no impact on sex.	N/A
Sexual Orientation	The ENCTS is open to all eligible people so there is no impact on sexual orientation.	N/A
Community Safety	Not applicable	Positive impacts
Poverty	<p>Improvements to bus services will help those in lower income areas of the city, 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. These areas tend to have higher levels of commuting to work by bus and a greater reliance on bus for other trips (shops, leisure, education).</p> <p>The ENCTS is free to all eligible users and access to the SmartCities card application can be done online, via paper and in person at Gateway. This ensures that access to ENCTS is for all.</p>	<p>Positive impacts</p> <p>ENCTS enables those who are eligible, particularly disabled people, can access bus travel for free so that they can get to work, training or leisure opportunities.</p>
Health & Wellbeing	<p>The planned delivery of improved public transport networks will help offer an alternative to driving, which will reduce congestion and air pollution.</p> <p>Free bus travel through the ENCTS enables people to travel around to get to appointments, see friends, participate in leisure activities etc that help with mental well-being.</p>	Positive impacts
Other Significant Impacts	None	N/A