

SIAA Response

Free bus travel for older and disabled people and modern apprentices

November 2017

1. Do you think that we should retain the existing age eligibility criteria for the Scheme?

Yes X No

Please use the box below to provide details.

My comments:

As the consultation document highlights, concessionary bus travel has been associated with reducing loneliness and the degree of social exclusion amongst older people; improving mental and physical well-being, and encouraging a modal shift from car to public transport. For those older people with few family or friends, concessionary bus travel is immensely important with regards to encouraging healthy, active lifestyles amongst older people who suffer from mental and physical disabilities. Concessionary bus travel ensures that older people are able to access vital health and social care services.

2. Are you in favour of raising age eligibility to female State Pension age in this way?

Yes No X

Please explain your answers.

The changes that occurred to the state pension age of women have already meant that some women are likely to lose out financially, many of whom have worked in precarious, low-skilled work over their working lifetime, who had planned to retire at 60

years old, and who are now struggling to re-enter the job market. Consequently, removing this right to concessionary bus travel at the age of 60 without gradual, incremental change will negatively impact the financial situation of women who are close to approaching 60, and who had not anticipated the change in legislation on the age of eligibility for a state pension.

3. Are you in favour of raising age eligibility to female State Pension age gradually over time?

Yes X No

At what rate?

By 1 year per year

By half a year per year X

Please explain your answers.

Raising the age of eligibility on an incremental basis will ensure that women who are approaching 60 are less likely to struggle financially, considering that the age of eligibility for a state pension has been raised for women.

4. Are you in favour of providing free bus travel to Modern Apprentices?

Yes X No

Should this be targeted at Modern Apprentices under Age 21?

Yes No X

Is there a better way to provide support to help with the travel costs of Modern Apprentices?

Not sure X

5. Are you in favour of providing a companion card for disabled under 5s where this is needed?

Yes X No

Please explain your answer.

The decision to provide companion cards for disabled children under five would reduce the financial costs placed on their carer. It would ensure that the financial concerns of carers do not place a restriction upon a child's capacity to travel. As companion cards are currently available for disabled children over 5 years old, this would ensure that children do not have their access to public services restricted on account of their protected characteristics.

Part 3

Are there any likely impacts the proposals contained within this Consultation that may have on particular groups of people, with reference to the 'protected characteristics' listed above? Please be as specific as possible.

The proposals regarding changing the age of eligibility for concessionary bus travel may have a significant impact upon older people. The proposals will also affect disabled children.

Do you think the proposals contained within this Consultation may have any additional implications on the safety of children and young people?

The capacity of children under the age of five to access crucial health and social care services is made more likely under these proposals.

Are there any likely impacts the proposals contained in this Consultation may have upon the privacy of individuals? Please be as specific as possible.

The Scottish Government should consider how they will explain to individuals how their personal information will be stored. As the health and social care status of disabled children under five will be disclosed, the Scottish Government should consider how a breach of their data may infringe upon the privacy of these individuals.

Part 4

You may wish to use the box below to provide comments on these or any other way in which you believe the long-term sustainability of concessionary travel could be achieved, as well as other comments you may wish to make for improvements to the scheme.

My comments:

Given the clear individual and societal benefits of concessionary bus travel for older people, we do not agree with any policy that seeks to place the financial burden of bus travel upon individual older people. We believe that the Scottish Government should work towards ensuring free bus travel for all older people, without placing restriction upon the time or frequency of travel. This is crucial to ensure that the mental and physical well-being of older people is supported, to reduce levels of social isolation amongst older people, and more broadly, to tackle inequality, so that older people who are struggling financially are not forced to bear the cost of bus travel. Free bus travel is vital to ensure that older people access health and social care services, and in enabling older people to be independent.

The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance also believes that the benefits that concessionary bus travel provides to older people would similarly benefit other groups, such as unemployed workers. The Scottish Government should consider how the financial burden placed upon unemployed workers can be reduced, and how their mental and physical well-being can be improved.

The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA) is Scotland's national membership body for advocacy organisations.

The SIAA promotes, supports and defends independent advocacy in Scotland. It aims to ensure that independent advocacy is available to any person who needs it in Scotland.

SIAA is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation Charity number SC033576

Mansfield Traquair Centre, 15 Mansfield Place, Edinburgh, EH3 6BB

enquiry@siaa.org.uk www.siaa.org.uk