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Encouraging children and young people to use public transport

Background and context

Age is widely recognised as a significant barrier to mobility, with a range of policy interventions currently in place to support, in particular, older peoples' access to public transport. Younger people, mainly those aged between 16 and 25 [who are classified as adults by public transport providers] are less well catered for.

The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) has identified inertia with regards to youth mobility as a significant problem, leaving this [16-25] cohort particularly susceptible to social exclusion. The UKYP argue that young people face many of the same barriers to using public transport as older people, such as cost and availability, while young people are also affected by social aspects, such as, how they are perceived by the public and transport staff.¹ The main barriers to young people accessing public transport can be summarised as follows:

Cost The cost of fares can prevent young people from using public transport. This relates both to the actual cost and also the age at which full fare becomes payable (many young people have to pay adult fares although they may have little or no income).

¹ UKYP (2009) Fares Fair: Transport report for the UK Youth Parliament. Available at: <http://nia1.me/df>

- Availability** The lack of services in a particular location is seen as a barrier, particularly by young people wanting to travel in the evenings or late at night, and also by young people in rural areas.
- Reliability** Public transport is often seen as unreliable - expressed mostly in terms of services running late or being cancelled without notice.
- Safety** Very few young people identify safety as a barrier, although the research shows it is often a concern for parents.
- Attitudes** Attitudes of bus drivers and the bus environment: Some young people think bus drivers are very unwelcoming to young people while many bus environments are described as very poor.
- Expectations** Many young people express a preference for travelling by car and want to stop using buses and drive once they are old enough.²

Transport Matters

The Consumer Council and Youth Action Northern Ireland (NI) conducted research involving young people aged 11 to 25, from across Northern Ireland. The aim of the research project, entitled, Transport Matters was:

- To identify young people's attitudes, views and experiences of using public transport; and
- To ensure the needs of young people are considered in the development of public transport policy and provision.

The results showed that while young people were using or wanted to use public transport, many of the common barriers to young people accessing transport (discussed above) are mirrored in Northern Ireland. The research noted that the current transport provision, particularly in rural areas, was impacting on young peoples' ability to take part in after school activities, access job opportunities or to socialise with their friends.

As part of the project participants were asked to make recommendations 'to encourage and enable more young people to avail of public transport', these included:

- Develop an integrated (multi-modal) approach to public transport provision;
 - Provide safer, more attractive infrastructure, such as well-lit and clean bus halts;
 - Provide concessionary fares for young people (up to 25);
 - Make greater use of technology e.g. smart phone ticketing and on-board WiFi;
 - Promote greater empathy for young people among staff, through training;
 - Provide active travel solutions e.g. bike parking facilities and bike rental schemes;
- and

² Department of Transport (2006) "Young People And Transport: Their Needs And Requirements" Available at: <http://nia1.me/dg>

- Continue to engage with young people on public transport issues.

Youth Action will be presenting details to the Regional Development Committee of the work they have subsequently undertaken to act on these recommendations.

Many of the recommendations made by Youth Action would not only benefit young people but would also make public transport more attractive to the public as a whole. As increasing the use of public transport is primary goal of the Northern Ireland Executive, issues such as integrated transport, better technology, safer and more attractive infrastructure, better active travel solutions and engagement with customers including youth are already at various stages of development by both the Department for Regional Transport and Translink.

The remainder of this paper will therefore focus on examples of initiatives designed to target some of the issues which perhaps are most unfairly affecting young peoples' ability to access public transport, including:

- Concessionary fares for young people (under 25)
- Training to change attitudes/perceptions of young people; and
- Alternatives to public transport where it is unavailable;

Concessionary fares

Many of the recommendations made by Youth Action, if implemented, would make public transport more attractive to all users and as such it is unsurprising to find that many of them are currently being considered by Translink as part of its on-going commitment to customer service.

Looking then at what interventions can be made to specifically target young adults, it is clear that cost is consistently shown as their biggest barrier to accessing public transport. 16 year olds are considered adults by most public transport providers, however, this group are often constrained by having no, or at the very best, a low income. There is however, growing recognition that this impacts their ability to get around and there appears to be increasing political support for subsidising their use of public transport.

There is currently a pilot concessionary fare scheme underway in Northern Ireland. The Translink Young Person's Card is a trial involving 144 young people aged 16 to 23 years of age as well as those aged 24 years or over who are also in full-time education. The card offers 30% discount on Metro and Ulsterbus services and 33% discount on NI Railways services within Northern Ireland.³

The House of Commons (HOC) Transport Select Committee suggested in its report on concessionary travel (2008) that it was surprised Government decided not to offer half-fares to young people and those on low incomes when it rolled out concessions for

³ Translink (2011) Translink Young Persons Card (website) available at: <http://nia1.me/dl>

over 60s, and recommended that these groups should be a priority if the concessionary fare scheme was to be extended.⁴ In a subsequent inquiry into school travel, The HOC Transport Committee recommended additional financial support should be provided to enable 16-19 year olds to access further education colleges, possibly through a top-up to their Educational Maintenance Allowance payments, if they lived beyond a specific distance.⁵

Concessionary fares for young people are fairly widespread in England and Wales and are generally provided under one of three mechanisms:

1. The Transport Act 1985 – which permits authorities to provide concessions but only up to 18 years of age and for those in full time education (although the concession may apply to journeys other than to/from education) (see figure 1)
2. The Education Acts - including statutory free transport for certain pupils and discretionary powers to provide free or reduced cost travel to children and young people up to 25 years of age with special needs, but this only applies to journeys to and from education/college/work based learning not to other journeys
3. The Local Transport Act 2008 (LTA) – provides broad well-being powers, giving local authorities powers to improve the quality of local bus and greater control over the planning and delivery of local transport and governance arrangements. This includes setting requirements on local bus service providers that cover frequency, timing of services, and maximum fares. The LTA also requires local authorities to consult with transport users, including young people.

Figure 1: Kent Freedom Pass (provided under the Transport Act (1985))

In June 2007, Kent County Council launched the 'Kent Freedom Pass' as a two-year pilot in three areas of the county. For a one-off payment of £50, young people aged 11 to 15 have unlimited free travel on buses throughout the county. The original objectives: to help reduce peak traffic congestion, remove travel costs as a perceived barrier to school choice, to improve social inclusion and encourage use of public transport are, to a large extent, being met.¹ Uptake has been very high, with over 21,000 passes now on issue and around 600,000 journeys are made each month with Freedom Passes. Amongst a number of pressures the Council is being pressed to make, is to extend the parameters of the scheme.

While this scheme does not target young adults it is still a noteworthy example of how concessionary fares can achieve modal shift. Indeed it could be argued that encouraging young school going children to use public transport will have positive repercussions down the line and remove any stigmas which may be attached to this mode.

This scheme is predominately used for home to school travel, with 76% of trips made during the peak home to school slot. The costs of the scheme are high: the pilot cost £2 million, while the roll out cost in 08/09 cost £4.5 million; the cost in 09/10 was £8.7 million.

Kent County Council (2009) Kent Freedom Pass – Progress Update. Available at: <http://nia1.me/do>

⁴ HOC Transport Committee (2008) Ticketing and Concessionary Travel on Public Transport. Available at: <http://nia1.me/dh>

⁵ HOC Transport Committee (2009) School Travel. Available at: <http://nia1.me/dj>

Aiming High for Young People: a ten year strategy for encouraging positive activities made a commitment to 'work with the Department for Transport to improve guidance, support and challenge to children's trusts and transport planners to encourage joined up planning and commissioning of local transport'⁶. The strategy offers guidance for local authorities to address the issue of young people and transport. This strategy places a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure young people can access positive activities such as culture, sport, recreation and employment. It suggests one way in which to do this could be done is through subsidising their travel.⁷ This discretionary power to subsidise young people's travel more widely, has seen the introduction of various concessionary schemes which allow young people to travel more cheaply to access positive activities.

Concessionary travel in London

There are many travel discounts available for people using bus, Tube, tram, Docklands Light Rail (DLR), London Overground and National Rail services within Greater London including those for children and young adults,⁸ costing approximately £250 million in foregone fares in 2009.⁹ However, according to the London Assembly's Budget Committee the city's concessionary fare structure is overly complex, applying differentially across both time and mode of travel (table one). It recommends that for concessions to work "...they must be generally understood and widely used to provide the social benefits intended".¹⁰ The Budget Committee did note in evidence that the schemes for children and young people had been comparatively successful and although exact figures were not presented it was estimated that the volume of young people using buses increased by 50% following the introduction of half fares.¹¹

Another point provided to the committee was that there was a possibility that journeys that would have been completed on foot, on bicycle and other healthier and more environmentally friendly journeys have actually been displaced because of reduced cost of bus travel while there was 'anecdotal' evidence to suggest that fee-paying passengers were discouraged at travelling at certain times by the volume of young people on the buses.¹²

A lack of formal evaluation means there is an absence of quantifiable data available on which to judge the success of the London schemes, and anecdotal evidence provided should be treated with caution. Similarly across the UK there is little being done to evaluate these schemes and it is therefore difficult to provide meaningful analysis.

⁶ DCSF (2007) Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities (Page 58) available at: <http://nia1.me/dj>

⁷ DCSF (2007) Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities (Page 58) available at: <http://nia1.me/dj>

⁸ Transport for London (2010) Getting around with discounts. TfL: London. Available at: <http://nia1.me/dr>

⁹ Budget Committee (2010) A fare decision: The impact of the Mayor's fares decision. Available at: <http://nia1.me/ds>

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ London Assembly (2009) Shashi Verma (Director of Fares and Ticketing, TfL): Evidence to the Budget and Performance Committee 18 June 2009. Available at: <http://nia1.me/dt>

¹² London Assembly (2009) Shashi Verma (Director of Fares and Ticketing, TfL): Evidence to the Budget and Performance Committee 18 June 2009. Available at: <http://nia1.me/dt>

Research commissioned by The Passenger Transport Executive Group (pteg) confirms this point, however, it has found instances where concessionary schemes bring positive outcomes in terms of achieving modal shift, increasing patronage as well as increasing revenue for transport providers.

Table 1: Level of concession for children and young people in London

Mode \ Age	5-10	11-15	16-18		18+ (student)
			In Education	All Other	
Bus	FREE	FREE	FREE	Half adult rate on single fares and season tickets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% off Travelcard and Bus & Tram Pass season tickets
Tram					
Tube					
Docklands Light Rail (DLR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free on some Services • Child Rate on most services • Travel off peak in zones 1-9 for £1.30 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Rate • Travel off peak in zones 1-9 for £1.30 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half adult fare on single fares and season tickets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% off Travelcard season tickets 	
London Overground					
National Rail					

Source: Transport for London

Pteg’s research report¹³ recommends that a combination of the following elements are likely to be required to achieve consistent and sustained growth in public transport use by children and young-people:

1. A medium-term approach to fares policy - through concessionary intervention - that allows fares to stay constant in money terms and not be dependent upon operators’ commercial action;
2. A simple fares and ticketing offer that is easy to communicate and readily understandable both by children/young people and their parents/carers;
3. An adequately resourced and continuous programme of work through schools to ensure that children understand the public transport offer in their areas and have confidence to travel independently;

¹³Scott Wilson Transport Consultancy (2010) Concessionary Fares for Young People. PTEG: London. Available at: <http://nia1.me/dg>

4. A good quality of service delivery by local operators that values children and young people as customers and treats them with respect; and
5. A strategy for providing for young people as they approach adulthood and which avoids a large increase in fares as young people leave the 'shelter' of concessionary fares

Young Persons' Concessionary Travel Scheme - Scotland

The Scottish Government widened the scope of its concessionary fare scheme, to include young people in 2007. Transport Scotland run the concessionary fare scheme for 16-18 year olds. It is accessed with a Young Scot National Entitlement Card (figure one). This allows users to receive:

- one third off most bus fares;
- up to 50% off rail travel; and
- Ferry vouchers for two free return journeys to the mainland a year for those who live on a Scottish island
- Full-time volunteers (30+ hours a week) aged 19-25 are also eligible.

Figure 1: Young Scot Entitlement Card



The key policy objectives of the scheme include:

- providing young people in Scotland with better public transport access to work, education and social activities at reduced financial cost;
- encouraging the use of public transport travel among young people; and
- promoting public transport as a viable and sustainable alternative to the private car.¹⁴

Cost of Providing National Concessionary Travel Schemes in Scotland

The scheme works on the basis that bus operators should be 'no better or no worse off', meaning they receive a standard reimbursement rate from local authorities. The young person's concessionary travel scheme was expected to cost between £27 million and £30 million per year depending on take-up¹⁵, however, The Scottish Government has indicated that "The vast majority, almost 99%, of the [concessionary travel] budget is for bus operators participating in the Scotland-wide free bus travel scheme for older and disabled people"¹⁶ meaning considerably less is being spent on the young persons' scheme than was planned at its launch.

¹⁴ Transport Scotland (2009) Evaluation of National Concessionary Travel in Scotland. Available at: <http://nia1.me/de>

¹⁵ Scottish Executive. (2007) Ticket to Ride for Young Scots. Press release 8 January 2007. Available at: <http://nia1.me/da>

¹⁶ Scottish Parliament. (2008) Written Answers Monday 28 July 2008 to Friday 1 August 2008. Question S3W-15226. Available at: <http://nia1.me/d9>

The Scottish Government's annual expenditure on both its national concessionary travel schemes for the Elderly and Disabled and concessionary travel for Young People is set out in Table two.¹⁷ A review of Scotland's concessionary travel was conducted in 2009 however due to the fact the young persons' scheme is administered by local authorities it was precluded from this review. Through a review of Scottish Parliament debates, however, cost associated to the scheme can be found: The total reimbursement paid to bus operators for concessionary travel for 2009-10 was £641,233.75, with the total sum for the young persons' travel card likely to be in the region of £1.75-3.5 million.

Table 2: Annual Scottish Government Expenditure on National Concessionary Travel Schemes for the Elderly and Disabled and Young People¹⁸

Year	Cash Value (£m)
2006-07	163
2007-08	174
2008-09	181.4
2009-10	187.4
2010-11	189.4

The remainder of this total will be made up of payments to rail operators and ferry companies, as well as marketing and administrative costs. These were discussed in another debate:

In preparation for the scheme and since it started various marketing activities have taken place in order to increase uptake. The marketing costs associated with the scheme (2006-2009) were:

- *In 2006-07, approximately £375,000 was spent;*
- *In 2007-08, approximately £420,000 was spent;*
- *In 2008-09, approximately £11,500 was spent.*

Since March 2009, no further formal marketing expenses have been incurred, although the scheme and the national entitlement card continues to be promoted via the Transport Scotland website, through the Young Scot organisation and through local authorities.¹⁹

Uptake of the scheme has increased steadily since it began in 2007, as follows:

- On 18 March 2007 there were 35,256 active cards in circulation;

¹⁷ Scottish Government. (2008) The Scottish Government Consolidated Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2008. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Available at: <http://nia1.me/d7>

¹⁸ Scottish Parliament. (2007) Written Answers Monday 10 September 2007 to Friday 14 September 2007. S3W-3043. Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament. Available at: <http://nia1.me/d8>

¹⁹ Scottish Parliament (2009) Written Answers 8 July 2009. Question S3W-25692. Available at: <http://nia1.me/dc>

- On 18 March 2008 there were 60,303 active cards in circulation; and
- On 18 March 2009 there were 80,236 active cards in circulation.²⁰

As of March 2009 uptake represents approximately 40% of the eligible age group.²¹

Changing attitudes towards young people

The attitudes and behaviour of both the public and public transport staff have been identified as a barrier by young people wanting to access public transport. While there is no doubt that there are factions of young people who engage in anti-social or nuisance behaviour they are not representative of all young people but unfortunately this is not always the way they are perceived by others.

The result is that young people often experience public transport as an unwelcome place to be. DCSF provide a number of examples of initiatives which illustrate how a gulf can develop at times between young people and other community members based on misunderstandings and show how these can be easily resolved by bringing different groups together and through training.

Members of the Young People's Scrutiny Forum in Leeds raised their concerns about the attitude of bus drivers as part of their report to the Children's Services Scrutiny Board. One of their suggestions was that young people-led training should be provided for bus drivers in an effort to break down the barriers between drivers and young people.

Metro, the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority, and the Scrutiny Forum arranged for young people to lead a session as part of a training day for drivers of school buses. The session asked both young people and drivers to share views on acceptable behaviour of passengers and staff and the condition of public buses. When compared, the two groups found little significant difference between their responses and; from this developed a shared basis for improving relationships in the future.

This type of meeting could easily and cheaply be set up by bringing together Translink drivers and the Translink youth forum members at little cost; however, it is difficult to see what the long term benefits would be other than to agree a code of conduct.

“Transport for London has a Behaviour Code which applies to all holders of a Child, 11-15, Under 14 and 16+ Oyster photocard. It states that “When on London’s public transport network or premises, always act sensibly and treat others as you would like to be treated. Your travel concession may be withdrawn if we believe that you have behaved in an antisocial or criminal way. We can withdraw your travel concession for behaviour such as: using

²⁰ Scottish Parliament (2009) Written Answers 6 August 2009. Question S3W-25691. Available at: <http://nia1.me/db>

²¹ Based on Population Estimates from: General Register Office for Scotland (2011) Mid-2010 Population Estimates Scotland. available at: <http://nia1.me/dn>

threatening or offensive language or bullying others; Smoking; Playing music out loud”.

Rather than being viewed as a threat this behaviour code is an agreement in which both parties are clearly winners i.e. young people get access to reasonably priced transport which they wouldn't otherwise have access to while the transport provider and other passengers are protected from a disruptive minority.

Scooter and moped loan schemes

Although not directly related to public transport, scooter and moped loan schemes have proved a successful alternative to public transport, typically in rural areas where provision is poor. These schemes are often targeted at young people facing difficulty accessing employment and/or formal education opportunities, but have also been shown to support young people's access to leisure and social activities, promoting greater independence.

A report by the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) of Wheels to Work schemes in 2005²² found evidence of the following benefits to users:

- Greater independence and improved social skills;
- Increase confidence and self-esteem;
- Improved responsibility;
- Improved road awareness and road skills; and
- Access to greater opportunities on an on-going basis.

West Midlands Wheels to Work²³

West Midlands Wheels to Work (W2W) comprises six schemes and provides a mix of moped loans and travel plans to help people living in rural areas. Users are referred through Connexions,²⁴ Jobcentre Plus, FE colleges or training providers, or self-refer. 70% are male, and 47% aged 16-19, with a further 23% aged 20 to 24. Most schemes also provide bicycles, subsidised driving lessons, and grants, with some also issuing taxi vouchers.

The scheme provides mopeds for up to six months, and users pay around £20 per month. The time limited loan and financial contribution encourages users to work towards independent travel. The average monthly cost to the scheme of maintaining a moped is £105 (in 2007).

²² Commission for Rural Communities (2005) Wheels to Work: the way forward. Available at: <http://nia1.me/dx>

²³ Benington, K (2007) 'Breaking the Cycle': Wheels to Work in the West Midlands. Advantage West Midlands/CSWP Ltd.

²⁴ Previously offered advice on education, careers, housing, money, health and relationships for 13-19 year olds in the UK

Costs

Typical costs for 'enabling' a Wheels to Work client to access an employment or training placement will vary, dependent upon the size and scale of the scheme and the level of assistance offered. 'Evaluation of Wheels 2 Work North West' WM Enterprise, (2008) calculated unit cost per beneficiary (for a six month loan) to be in the region of £2,600. Costs per client are likely to reduce the longer a scheme operates, as capital costs incurred are discounted. Some schemes use innovative solutions to bring costs down, such as running their own workshops and servicing. However, no scheme has yet been seen to be more than 50% self-funding.²⁵

Benefits

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs estimated that an unemployed person would have cost the economy £639 per month in benefits and therefore by enabling individuals to access employment not only is this burden on the public purse removed but it could actually save money over the period of the loan. The research noted that Wiltshire Wheels to Work has helped support nearly 200 people to access employment or work related training (such as Entry to Employment (E2E) schemes) with over two-thirds of those provided with a moped staying on in work or job training having returned their bike back to the scheme.²⁶

As well as getting young people into work evaluations have shown that the schemes also helps clients to increase their participation in the community and to maintain an active social life, which in turn can improve opportunities and enhance life chances.²⁷

²⁵ Motor Cycle Industry Association (2010) Wheels to Work in 2010: A review of the nationwide moped loan scheme for young people. Available at: <http://nia1.me/dv>

²⁶ DEFRA (2008) Wiltshire Wheels to Work. Available at: <http://nia1.me/dw>

²⁷ Commission for Rural Communities (2005) Wheels to Work: the way forward. Available at: <http://nia1.me/dx>