

Section 4

Equality

Analysis Toolkit

**CMTY024 Reduced budget for community
transport provision**

For Decision Making Items

August 2018

Question 1 - What is the nature of and are the key components of the proposal being presented?

Reduction in funding for Dial-a Ride/Community Transport Provision:

Dial-a-Ride and Community Transport (CT) services are largely provided across Lancashire by a combination of in-house provision through the Travelcare service and through a contract with the Lancashire Community Transport (LCT) consortium.

Dial-a-Ride and other Community Transport services are extensively used by many of our more vulnerable citizens. There are more than 6,200 regular users who, between them, made in excess of 166,000 journeys in 2016/17. The rules for its use are that it is restricted to those who are unable to use conventional bus services or there is no provision. The services are door to door and are of particular help to those who are too frail to use bus services or may have a disability that makes it impractical as the services offer a high level of assistance to passengers boarding and alighting and with their luggage.

The services play a major role in promoting good health and wellbeing, reducing loneliness and isolation and help people access important services.

Lancashire Community Transport currently provides volunteering opportunities for over 160 people.

The proposal is to reduce County Council funding for these activities. Whilst CT operators obtain some funding through grant awards and other means, the overwhelming majority of funds come from the County Council.

Question 2 - Scope of the Proposal

Is the proposal likely to affect people across the county in a similar way or are specific areas likely to be affected – e.g. are a set number of branches/sites to be affected?

These changes are likely to have disproportionate effect on smaller communities and those living in rural areas.

Question 3 – Protected Characteristics Potentially Affected

Could the proposal have a particular impact on any group of individuals sharing protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, namely:

- Age
- Disability including Deaf people
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race/ethnicity/nationality
- Religion or belief
- Sex/gender
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage or Civil Partnership Status

And what information is available about these groups in the County's population or as service users/customers?

The proposal will have a disproportionate effect on people using the service with the protected characteristics of age, disability and, to a lesser extent, gender.

The services provided by Lancashire Community Transport are largely provided by volunteers who may also have protected characteristics.

Question 4 – Engagement/Consultation

How have people/groups been involved in or engaged with in developing this proposal?

The consultation was done in two phases. The first phase aimed to establish how the proposed reduction in funding for community transport would affect the service provision of community transport operators. This was done by consulting community transport operators over a four week period. The information gathered in this phase was used to inform the questions we asked community transport users, volunteers and other interested parties in the second phase of the consultation.

For the second phase of consultation, community transport providers distributed paper questionnaires to their service users and volunteers. An electronic version of the consultation questionnaire was available online at www.lancashire.gov.uk. PDF, Microsoft Word, large print and easy read versions were also available at www.lancashire.gov.uk. Posters were used to publicise the consultation as well as Facebook and Twitter posts.

416 stakeholders with interests in community transport were emailed at the beginning of the consultation to inform them that the consultation had started and that they could respond online.

The second phase of the fieldwork was initially due to run for eight-weeks between 16 April 2018 and 10 June 2018. However, during the fieldwork period the closing date was extended by 14 days, ending on the 24 June 2018.

In total, 1,062 completed questionnaires were returned (909 paper questionnaire responses and 153 online questionnaire responses).

Key findings included:

85% of respondents said that they were users of community transport services, 4% said that they were volunteers on community transport services and 11% said that they were neither of these.

Community transport service user responses:

- Over four-fifths of respondents who use community transport (84%) said that they use it because of a disability or health condition.
- Respondents who use community transport were most likely use Preston Community Transport (31%), Central Lancashire Dial-a-Ride (26%), West Lancashire Dial-a-Ride (22%) and Lancashire County Travelcare Dial-a-Ride (20%).
- Nearly half of respondents who use community transport (47%) said that they generally use it a few times a month, and about a third (32%) said that they use it a few times a week.
- For community transport journeys in a car, about two-fifths of respondents (41%) said that they generally spend £2.00 or less on a single community transport journey and about a third (35%) said that they generally spend £2.10 to £5.00.
- For community transport journeys in a minibus about half of respondents (47%) said that they generally spend £2.00 or less on a single community transport journey and a third (33%) said that they generally spend £2.10 to £5.00.
- The most common reasons respondents gave for travelling on community transport were shopping (67%), leisure/social activity (38%), day trips (29%) and medical appointments (29%).
- Respondents who use community transport were most likely to say, if community transport services were reduced, places would become inaccessible (38%), it would negatively impact on their freedom and ability to stay active (31%), services would become inaccessible (28%) and they wouldn't/might not get out at all/as much (20%).
- When asked how it would affect them if the community transport services fare was increased, over half of respondents who use community transport (53%) said that a modest rise in fare is better than losing the service.
- Respondents who use community transport were most likely to say that if community transport services stopped altogether it would affect them negatively as they rely on the service to stay active (40%), it would lead to isolation/social exclusion (29%), they will be completely housebound (25%), and it would limit/remove access to shopping, socialising and other amenities (24%).
- When respondents were asked how they would get to the places they usually go if they could not use community transport services they were most likely to say they would not able to access the places they go to (61%), they would use a taxi (47%) and they would go less often (37%).

Community transport volunteer responses:

- Respondents who volunteer with a community transport provider were most

likely to volunteer with Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale CVS (10 respondents), Preston Community Transport (10 respondents) and Little Green Bus (9 respondents).

- Respondents who volunteer with a community transport provider most commonly said that they volunteer because the service supports/has a positive impact on marginalised elderly (34 respondents) and they have strong commitment towards what the service does (26 respondents).
- When asked how it would affect them if service changes meant that they had to volunteer less, or not at all, respondents who volunteer with a community transport provider most commonly said they wanted to contribute to improve the lives of others (29 respondents), they would be disappointed for service users (28 respondents) and it would be upsetting (25 respondents).

Other comments:

When all respondents were asked if they think there is anything else that we need to consider about community transport or that could be done differently, the most common responses were to express satisfaction with the service (keep it/invest in it) (76%) and to describe the service as a 'lifeline' that users rely on (67%).

Additional responses:

We received seven emails and four letters in response to the consultation including responses from West Lancashire Pensioners Forum, Lancashire 50+ Assembly, Whittingham Parish Council, Woodplumpton Parish Council, Halsall Parish Council, Ribchester Parish Council, Ribble Valley Borough Council, Macular Society (Chorley group), and service users. All the responses express support for the work that the community transport service does and they appeal to us to continue the service or ensure that the savings are made in a way that has the least impact on service users.

Question 5 – Analysing Impact

Could this proposal potentially disadvantage particular groups sharing protected characteristics and if so which groups and in what way? This

pays particular attention to the general aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation because of protected characteristics;
- To advance equality of opportunity for those who share protected characteristics;
- To encourage people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life;
- To contribute to fostering good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not/community cohesion;

- Community Transport is used in the main by older and disabled people. The letters received and the demographic profile from consultees indicates that a significant number of users (64%) are at the 75+ stage of older person.
- Additionally, and significantly, the majority of respondents did not have access to the internet in their home – so losing a method of accessing services or having it reduced would have an additional impact on those groups.
- There were also a number of letters which focus on the additional impact for people in rural areas where there may be little public transport – that is in addition to those who said they could not use public transport anyway or that it was too far away. Taxis will also be more expensive than the fares quoted in the consultation report for most journeys.
- The questions about impact of any reduction/service stopping do indicate that many people will feel isolated, will not get out as much/at all or will lose contact with friends they have made using the service. There are a number of response in the consultation report that all seem to refer to points of this nature. The Macular Society letter, for example, was particularly noticeable as it suggested the existence of the group could be in doubt if Travelcare was unavailable or unaffordable and they had a high proportion of members who were over 90 which made the service more valuable to them. There may be other groups who would similarly be affected.
- Volunteers, who are on the ground with these services, also overwhelmingly saw helping "marginalised" elderly people who couldn't access other services as the main reason they volunteered. That also gives us a clue about the age demographic of users.

- The main Public Sector Equality Duty aim(s) which will be affected is "advancing of equality of opportunity" and its associated element of participation in public life, because Community Transport users' ability to access a wide range of services including shopping, banking, meeting friends, medical services/appointments, etc will be adversely affected if Community Transport services reduce or are stopped. There would also be an impact on people's ability to access training and education which was mentioned by some respondents. Again, because many respondents are unable to use public transport services either because they are unavailable or inaccessible, this would also be connected to the "advancing equality of opportunity" general aim. There were some letters about how community transport helped people to access supermarkets and the help drivers gave them in carrying heavy shopping was invaluable and much appreciated by users. In the consultation people also valued that the drivers and staff went "above and beyond" what others might do and clearly this is both needed and valued. Many described the service as "a lifeline".
- A slight majority (53%) of respondents would accept a modest fare increase, preferable to reducing or stopping the service. This also reflects an understanding of the difficult budget position.

Question 6 –Combined/Cumulative Effect

Could the effects of this proposal combine with other factors or decisions taken at local or national level to exacerbate the impact on any groups?

If the LCC funding were to be reduced substantially, many Community Transport operators would be at risk of no longer being financially viable. More than 6,200 individuals and over 1,000 community groups benefit from their services.

The impact of Lancashire County Council reducing its funding will be a negative impact on some of the most vulnerable members of society and may put at risk the financial viability of some Community Transport services in Lancashire.

This negative impact would include increases in:

- Social isolation
- Missed medical appointments
- Loneliness for already vulnerable people
- Mental health issues due to inability to access services
- Malnutrition due to lack of access to food supplies
- Debt issues resulting from people with no means of increasing their weekly income, having to pay for unaffordable transport services rather than the

- more manageable fare that are charged for the Dial-a-Ride services.
- Decline in physical health and mobility
- Lack of access to key local services

The close relationships that Dial-a-Ride drivers often have with their passengers can be invaluable in detecting issues with passengers such as health crises or similar.

The difference that volunteering opportunities make to individuals in terms of raised self-esteem, self-worth, confidence and inclusion in society by providing services to individuals that change their lives should not be underestimated as many volunteers take up their roles due to boredom/few interests, they feel isolated because they are no longer working and their personal mental health may suffer as a result of this. Along with the loss of volunteering opportunities, it is estimated that the equivalent of 3 full-time posts may be lost within LCC's Travelcare operation.

Lancashire Community Transport provides training for drivers such as The Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS) along with other care skills.

The impact on other local services, including wellbeing services, would be substantial as many local projects rely heavily on community transport as the only affordable means of ensuring that participants are able to access their services.

LCT indicate that it makes a financial contribution to the local economy by delivering people to local shopping opportunities of around £2.6m per annum representing a return on investment of £5.20 per £1.

There is a high risk that many Community Transport and Dial-a-Ride users will no longer be able to sustain independent living and will place added pressure on Adult Social Care and Health services.

We know from the evidence that being socially isolated or lonely has significant impacts on people's physical and mental health. Research suggests that being socially isolated reduces life expectancy, by affecting health as strongly as smoking 10 to 15 cigarettes a day or alcoholism.

Loneliness leads to greater risk of developing depression, dementia, or physical conditions such as high blood pressure. People who are lonely are more likely to visit their GPs or accident and emergency departments and are more likely to have emergency admissions. In addition, estimates suggest that people who are socially isolated and lonely are three times more likely to enter local authority funded residential care. This is due to the disproportionate impact across the social gradient of health.

During the course of producing the Hidden from View report into Social Isolation and Loneliness 5 stakeholder engagement events were held across Lancashire with members of the public, the VCFS and partners. The issue of accessible

transport was highlighted in all workshops. Often the issue was not a lack of activities for people to participate in, but a lack of accessible and appropriate transport to access such activities and this is felt more acutely in more deprived communities.

A recent study by the Royal Voluntary Service (formerly WRVS) found that both public and community transport provide a vital service which allow people to remain active and independent as they age. The key to social connectedness and an active life, they noted, is accessible transport to help people get out and about and participate in their communities as they grow older.

All of these elements contribute to the Public Sector Equality Duty's general aim of advancing equality of opportunity for those with protected characteristics including in particular supporting their participation in public life, which could be detrimental were the Service to significantly reduce or cease.

Question 7 – Identifying Initial Results of Your Analysis

As a result of the analysis has the original proposal been changed/amended, if so please describe.

Proposal remains unchanged subject to cabinet decision -September 2018.

Question 8 - Mitigation

Will any steps be taken to mitigate/reduce any potential adverse effects of the proposal?

Enhancements of the tendered bus network may mitigate some of the impacts for a very small number of users but not for those who rely upon assistance and particularly for those who rely on door to door transport because they are unable to walk to a bus stop, or those in rural areas where bus services are not available.

No mitigation has been identified for volunteers.

Question 9 – Balancing the Proposal/Countervailing Factors

This weighs up the reasons for the proposal – e.g. need for budget savings; damaging effects of not taking forward the proposal at this time – against the findings of the analysis.

This proposal has been brought forward because of the extreme financial challenges that the County Council is facing.

The potential significant adverse impact on CT users – over 6,200 people and 1000 groups – who will have protected characteristics including age and disability will be substantial. Consultees indicated that for many the service is "a lifeline" which helps them combat loneliness and isolation and enables them to access a wide range of places and services in a safe and affordable way. Many value the service so highly that they would rather meet a modest fare increase than see the service reduce or stop.

Whilst some mitigations will be provided by the re-introduction of some rural weekday bus services, this is unlikely to be of benefit to many of those who currently use CT services.

Additionally there will be an adverse impact on volunteers and employees with CT operators.

Question 10 – Final Proposal

In summary, what is the final proposal and which groups may be affected and how?

The proposal is to reduce County Council funding for Dial-a-Ride and Community Transport activities.

The users of these services are the elderly, those with disabilities or lack of access to mainstream public transport.

Question 11 – Review and Monitoring Arrangements

What arrangements will be put in place to review and monitor the effects of this proposal?

Monitoring may rely upon evidence of increased demand on social care and health services. Such impacts may be difficult to distinguish from the impact of other factors.

Equality Analysis Prepared By Liz McClarty

Position/Role Public & Integrated Transport

Equality Analysis Endorsed by Service Head Oliver Starkey

Decision Signed Off By

Cabinet Member or Director

For further information please contact

Jeanette Binns – Equality & Cohesion Manager

Jeanette.binns@lancashire.gov.uk