

Best Value Review on The Promotion of Independence

Baseline

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Young Disabled Adults are strongly reliant on accessible public Social Services County Dial a Ride and community transport. Collectively these services facilitate independent living, social contact, and therefore impacts on quality of life. This is repeatedly proven in consultation.

What is the current provision in general:-

The BVR of transport (2002) shows that Nottinghamshire generally performs well in comparison with other Authorities. The relevant areas of the Transport review for the Promotion of Independence BVR are:

- The provision of fully accessible bus services including Demand Responsive Transport
 - Concessionary fares
 - Publicity and information
 - Transport infrastructure.
- (1) In the provision of bus services the Council is in the top quartile of performance. The areas of good practice in bus services are evidenced in the level of service density and frequency sustained in rural areas, and in the responsiveness to additional funding needs.
 - (2) Concessionary fares: Nottinghamshire is recognised as a best practice Authority. In this it exceeds the national minimum standards with few Authorities having such a generous concessionary scheme and a high usage of modern technology.
 - (3) Community transport is seen in the Review as the weakest part of the Department of Environment's range of transport provision. It is difficult to compare with other Authorities as community transport is a highly individualistic area of provision. There is a concern identified in the Review that the service has become limited by a shortage of supply of volunteer drivers.
 - (4) In Publicity and Information the Authority is a top quartile performer.
 - (5) Transport infrastructure: the Authority has a good track record.

The Government's view of Nottinghamshire's Transport Plan is that it is 'well above average', and Nottinghamshire is to be viewed as a centre of excellence.

Social Services Transport Unit (SSTU)

The Social Services Transport Unit, (SSTU) which featured highly in the Best Value Service Review on Passenger Transport Subsidies, 1998/2000 continues to provide innovative accessible transport services. In addition to providing "In House" and contracted services to Special Schools, (1037 children per academic school day) and Social Services Day Centres, (1738 service users per day), the unit provides many services that directly contribute to the Promotion of Independence for people throughout Nottinghamshire

These services comprise:

- (a) The County Dial a Ride Service which now has 3279 registered users and in 2002/3 provided over 23,000 travel opportunities to people in Nottinghamshire with severe mobility disabilities.
- (b) The unit has a fleet of some 203 vehicles, 72 of which are passenger lift vehicles that can be made available to any bona fide group wishing to hire them during periods of natural downtime. The vehicles are available most evenings and weekends complete with professional Driver/Attendants. Currently only 11 organisations avail themselves of this service for which a charge to cover costs is levied.
- (c) Accessible transport services are provided to 19 Luncheon Clubs.
- (d) Transport is provided to and from Respite Care.
- (e) Accessible transport is provided to facilitate the conveyance of disabled athletes at National Games facilitated within the County.
- (f) At least 12 accessible vehicles are contracted to the East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) each week day, some evenings and weekends.
- (g) The SSTU has commissioned/opened several Travel Clubs to facilitate an accessible transport passenger service for small groups in an area where there is a lack of appropriate services.
- (h) The SSTU is nationally regarded as "Innovative" and has recently featured in the Social Exclusions Unit's guide to "Making the Connections" citing the EMAS contract as "Good Practice".

Environment Department Transport Provision

Environment currently secures by contract some 400 contracted bus routes each day. Whilst many are solely for school transport purposes, about 10% of the daytime public bus network across the County, and a much higher proportion of evening and Sunday services are funded by Environment. Commercial viability patterns means that revenue expenditure tends to be focussed more on rural areas, although the reliance on County Council funding to sustain services in both urban and rural areas is growing.

In addition there is a partnership between Nottinghamshire County Council and the County's District Councils to fund a County wide half fare concessionary travel scheme, more generous in scope than the legal minimum. Some 70,000 participants are users of the scheme, although many more could participate if they chose (there is no joining fee).

Environment has funding agreements with 23 suppliers of community minibus and car schemes across the County, and produces or sponsors a wide choice of comprehensive printed and electronic information services.

What are the known problems?

- Increasing levels of service withdrawals by commercial operators
- An inability or an unwillingness to pay for passenger transport services.
- Community Transport provision in Nottinghamshire is relatively weak as compared to the other transport functions in the county area
- Nottinghamshire is endeavouring to meet the Rural White Paper standard (hourly schedule, and a 10-minute walk) by 2005
- The desire for more "demand responsive transport" particularly in rural areas
- An improvement in the bus waiting environment
- There appears to be pressure on expenditure for the provision of transport for some prevention schemes and for some organisations currently funded through Nottinghamshire County Council Grant Aid. There has been an increased demand for transport provision.

Proposals for Improvement

- The review of Community Transport is now complete.
- It is intended to use a best value approach to appraise local bus revenue expenditure. A tendered bus performance management scheme is now in place. This incorporates the criteria of social exclusion.
- It is planned to achieve the Rural White Paper transport standard by 2005.
- It is planned to involve Local Strategic Partnerships in the consideration of transport provision where appropriate.
- Agreement is to be sought over respective responsibilities for transport with the health and social services sectors to remove duplication and maximise efficiency
- It is proposed to link the IT resources necessary for Demand Responsive Transport services with the current County Dial a Ride service utilizing existing Dial a Ride staff thereby achieving savings through economies of scale.
- The Social Services department is currently looking to recruit a Mobility/Audit Transport Officer whose objective will be to match service user's **capability** with **public passenger transport availability** in the interests of promoting independence through the use of normal Public Transport.

Source of Evidence

- The final report and executive summary of the Best Value Service Review of Public Transport Operations 2002, Nottinghamshire County Council.

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