



Herts People First

Report to: The Herts County Council Transport Scrutiny Committee

On: Friday 17th March 2017

Herts People First (HPF) is an independent user led, rights based, self - advocacy charity working with and for adults with a learning disability providing education, training and support to enable people with learning difficulties to access their rights as citizens, to speak up on issues of community interest and to be as fully involved as they want to be in their community.

Herts People First has 25 years of experience delivering a wide range of projects working locally and nationally. All through this time at self advocacy groups, forums, through training and consultations working locally, regionally and nationally people with learning disabilities have had a lot to say about transport.

Some of the things we have been involved in locally and nationally about Transport

East Herts District Council consultations:

1. All Aboard the Bus
2. Talking about Transport
<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/article/8502/Evidence-for-East-Herts-Sustainable-Community-Strategy-2009> (Talking about transport in East Herts 2007, point 6 **East Herts on the Move**)

Design and delivery of Keep Safe on the Bus training for people with learning disabilities

A number of **countywide Transport focussed groups** – including HCC facilitated groups:

1. New Herts transport group
2. Transport Issues for Disabled People group

Co-production and distribution of the **Hertfordshire Orange Travel Wallet**

Responding to **local and national consultations and strategies on transport** issues of importance to disabled people including:

1. Valuing People 2001 and Valuing People Now 2008
2. HCC bus consultations 2014 and 2015
3. Equality and Human Rights Commission 'Hidden in Plain Sight' and 'Out in the Open' Disability related Harassment Hate Crime strategies
4. 2015 House of Lords Enquiry into the impact of the Equality Duty on Disabled People

Transport is the number 1 subject people with learning disabilities speak up about

The *Disability Watford* survey reflects the experiences of people with learning disabilities when using the public transport buses.

Herts People First especially want to acknowledge the report's finding on how people feel about using the bus though it is outside the scope of this scrutiny.

Q1 What provision do bus operatives make for people with learning disabilities

The provisions described in Matthew's report to this committee are already noted.

Stories from people with learning disabilities:

- Buses do not always pull up enough to the kerb so people struggle to get on and off the bus and then have to negotiate a kerb
- Some bus drivers are unwilling to put the ramp down when asked.
- People with learning disabilities who have attended the Keep Safe on the Bus training course have seen the 'I'm a passenger too' bus driver training DVD and will quote this to drivers if they do not provide a service they want. Some drivers then say they do not know about this training tool.
- The role of the bus driver when conflict arises between people, over designated spaces and allocated seating and in an emergency is not clear

Please can the role and expectations of the bus driver be made clear and include being passenger friendly, help that can be offered - especially when getting on and off the bus, when there is conflict around space or between people and in an emergency

People with learning disabilities say they are pleased Hertfordshire County Council extended the English National Concessionary Transport Scheme to enable people to travel before 9.30 am and ask if this can please be kept.

The importance of bus travel in the everyday lives of people cannot be stressed enough. John gave examples of how using public transport enables him to have and keep a paid job and to attend a funeral in a neighbouring County.

John also described how he was able to 'Travel Buddy' 2 people with learning disabilities, who would otherwise not have attended the wake, as they were unsure of the second connecting bus location or times and John had the information to do this by using his smartphone.

The number of disability bus passes sent out is 9,800. In Hertfordshire the estimated number of people with learning disabilities is at least 20,000. It raises a question for Herts People First as to why more people who are eligible to apply for a pass are not doing so?

There is some confusion around the companion pass.

Q2 What training is provided by bus operators to support people with disabilities accessing public transport?

Bus Drivers receive Disability Awareness training. We do not know the details of Disability Awareness training that Bus Drivers receive locally. We would like to know.

The Governments' new Bus Services Bill recognises the value of disabled people in the development of best practice training. We would like to be involved in developing best practice disability awareness training guidelines for Hertfordshire.

We know the 'I am a passenger too' Bus Driver training DVD and we use this to let people know what they can expect from a bus driver and what are their travel rights when travelling by bus.

Through the LDPB Transport Group we asked how many Bus Drivers have recently seen the HCC 'I'm a passenger too' DVD and used the training booklet?

We know some Bus Drivers are aware of the Orange Travel Wallet and would also like to know how Bus Drivers are made aware as it is not included on the DVD? It is included in the training booklet.

We know of experiences of people with learning disabilities who travel on the bus. We know just how important the friendliness and helpfulness of the bus driver is to the bus passengers' travelling experience.

Story 1. A group of people, who live in Stevenage, choose when to travel into town – when their friendly bus driver is working.

Story 2, 3 and 4

2. Bus pulls away before people are seated
3. Bus going round corners too fast
4. Bus not stopping at the bus stop to pick up passenger

“Better to get their safely than on time”

A. People with learning disabilities want Travel Training

Hertfordshire County Council has funded and delivered through Health and Community Services a 'Train the Travel Trainer' course.

We would like to have details of Travel Training currently provided in Hertfordshire and how people can find out about it and apply?

Please see example Essex Travel Training: www.travel-training.co.uk/

We would like to know what has been the success of the Hertfordshire Train the Travel Trainer scheme and how has it developed?

Keep Safe on the Bus training course: In response to the identified learning needs of people with learning disabilities Herts People First designed a bespoke Travel Training course with and for adults with learning disabilities.

The course includes: Your Travel Rights (when travelling on the bus) How to use the Travel Wallet and Travel cards, How to find Travel information and use the intalink website and information bus, How to make a Complaint and Report incidents that happen when traveling by Bus.

The course is available but is not currently being delivered and will now need updating to include: QR codes and pre-paid tickets.

Other examples of travel training resources to show what is available:

<https://tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility/learn-to-use-public-transport>

www.transportforall.org.uk/public/training/

www.brent.gov.uk/media/3612757/TFL%20out%20and%20about%20guide%20-%20carers.pdf

www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMxRuxop64Q

www.networkwestmidlands.com/media/1200/travel_training_manual2.pdf

B. People with learning disabilities want to be and have Travel Buddies and Travel Buddy schemes

Please see links to example Travel Buddy schemes:

www.ripfa.org.uk/blog/enabling-people-with-learning-disabilities-and-autism-to-travel-independently/

www.ealingmencap.org.uk/what-we-do/projects/26-travel-buddy-project

www.brandontrust.org/information-and-support/travel-buddy-project/

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmtran/writev/disabledaccess/dat80.htm

www.l-a-t.org.uk/travel_buddies_programme

Example: Opening Doors, a user led self advocacy organisation for Norfolk have been re-commissioned by Norfolk County Council for the Opening Doors Bus Project, see a film of this here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMxRuxop64Q

Norfolk County Council recognise the benefits and financial savings of people being trained to use the bus.

2 other local authority examples of savings (from information made available in 2008)

Lincolnshire:

1. Following travel training a year 10 student previously travelling alone in a taxi at a cost of £60 per day now travels by public bus at a cost of £2.30 per day, saving £14,000.

2. A learner with severe disabilities was due to travel to college with a passenger assistant. However, following Travel Training he was happy to travel on his own with a regular driver, saving £20 per day, £7,200 a year

South Tyneside:

1. South Tyneside Flexible Training Fund aims to widen the travel horizons of long term unemployed people. South Tyneside assisted over 1000 people in 2 years saving £3 million in benefits

c. People with learning disabilities would like to be involved in Quality Checking of Training and taking part in Mystery Bus Travelling

Conclusion on Q 1 and Q 2.

What we would like

1. The role and expectations of the bus driver to be made clear and include being passenger friendly, help that can be offered when getting on and off the bus and at other times including when there is conflict around space or between people and in an emergency
2. People with learning disabilities say they are pleased Hertfordshire County Council extended the English National Concessionary Transport Scheme to enable people to travel before 9.30am and ask if this can please be kept.
3. A plain English and easy read leaflet on how to use the bus, bus pass and include companion pass
4. Hertfordshire disabled people to be involved in the review, design, delivery and quality checking of disability and awareness training for bus drivers
5. The HCC 'I'm a passenger too' DVD updated to reflect current laws and to include the Hertfordshire Travel Wallet
6. Bus passengers' stories are used to make it easy for everyone to know what is most important to do.
7. Easy access to travel training in Hertfordshire.
8. A Hertfordshire Travel Buddy scheme
9. Review of any other local district and countywide reports produced by disabled people and disabled people's organisations over the past years.
10. Research national best practice in resource and training designed and delivered over the past 5 years

Q3 How do people access information and advice and how are they made aware of the available support when using bus transport?

Historically access to information and advice had been limited. Most awareness was gained through experiencing bus journeys and by word of mouth from other passengers, family members, friends and paid support staff.

Some information and advice was gained formally through travel training opportunities provided on an ad-hoc basis through housing and day service support provision, local colleges and specialist learning disability colleges across the Country. Most recently by the HCS in-house travel training through day centre staff and Keep Safe on the bus training and through some schools.

Many people with learning disabilities do not have access to computers or the support to use them.

More people with learning disabilities are accessing digital and internet information through Smartphones/Smart TV's and tablets.

The Intalink website and app is helpful.

People with learning disabilities most often ask for their information on paper and in Easy Read.

There is evidence of the need to target people with learning disabilities with paper based easy read information (recognised with the recent production of an easy read orange travel wallet flyer/poster). A plan for the County wide distribution of this poster has been requested.

QR codes at every bus stop are good for people that can access with a smartphone, we acknowledge the limited number of bus stops at present that give live update information.

Many people would benefit from audio/visual information at bus stops and on buses.

Bus operators could make people aware of the live QR code information and other information when people are ringing up to make complaints and comments when buses are late or do not arrive at all, this isn't always happening.

The Intalink bus is a good way to get information direct to people.

The Intalink bus schedule is built into the 'Keep Safe on the bus' course and people gave positive reports on its usefulness when visiting the bus for the first time. Often people had seen the Intalink bus but never boarded it.

Timetables can be hard to read and understand.

The increase in numbers of bus drivers with English as a second language has made make communication difficult for some people with learning disabilities.

Conclusion for Q3.

What we would like

1. We would like a dedicated section of a website with travel information for disabled people, this could be the Intalink website or HCC website. We would like to be able to direct people to good quality information and from where easy read information can be printed off.

Please look at these examples:

<https://tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility/>

<https://www.networkwestmidlands.com/information-for/transport-accessibility/accessibility-products/>

2. A local 'easy read news' on transport to inform people of their rights and news of existing and new services to support people to travel, example news stories could be:

- The Intalink App and website
- QR codes
- Hertfordshire Travel Wallet

This can be shared through existing networks and the proposed Herts Transport Forum

3. Easier to read bus timetables and easy read guidance:

An example of guidance:

https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/globalassets/documents/global-pages/travel-help/making_bus_travel_easier_2017.pdf

4. A plan for the distribution of Travel Wallet information to include the display of the poster in good locations.
5. Bus operators to give advice when people phone in to complain or comment on services
6. Audio/visual information at bus stops and on buses
7. Easy read information of the Intalink information bus schedule

Q4 When work and developments are planned for bus transport, how are user groups engaged for their input and knowledge of what the public requires?

Transport is the number 1 subject people with learning disabilities speak up about.

It is not easy for disabled people to create and navigate processes to enable them to contribute toward development and design of transport planning and policy and for making a complaint.

It is important disabled people have easy to use ways to speak up.

Consultations and Equality Impact Assessment

A variety of effective consultation methods have been showcased at a district and county level by Herts People First including distribution of easy read paperwork and other reasonable adjustments.

People with learning disabilities are pleased that HCC processes recognise the importance of transport to people with learning disabilities and relevant transport consultations are automatically available in easy read.

When considering the equality impact of decision being made by the council as well as considering and mitigating any likely impact we would like this to include a review of the actual equality impact on disabled people

Transport focussed groups

A number of different groups with a specific disability focus have existed over time with both a district and countywide focus. To list those with a countywide focus.

For people with learning disabilities these have included:

- The Herts Transport Group
- The New Herts Transport Group
- The Transport working group (currently meeting and a sub group of the Learning Disability Partnership Board)

For all disabled people these have included:

- The Transport Issues for Disabled People group (TIDP)

This group was facilitated and serviced by Hertfordshire County Council and was attended by HCC Transport Officers, individual disabled people, disabled people's representative organisations, Intalink, local community transport providers such as CVS, District Borough and Council Transport and Equalities officers and representatives.

When the TIDP group was closed by HCC – officers and disability groups drafted Terms of Reference for a new countywide transport focussed group based on what had worked well from the TIDP group and included an annual transport event.

We would like this co-produced Terms of Reference to be revisited and a Transport group for all disabled people to be re-established.

Compliments, Comments and Complaints processes

The process for making a complaint about public buses has been outlined:

1. Contact the bus company
2. Where this does not work to contact HCC

Herts People First has many stories from people who do make a complaint to the bus company and get no or an inadequate response. Local forms to assist people to make a complaint have been designed by local advocacy groups.

Many people do not know how to or find difficulty accessing processes in place to talk to HCC about the response from bus companies to complaints made or complaints about infrastructure – including bus stops.

Issues around disabled people finding difficulty with having their voice heard on Transport Issues was raised through HCC Equalities processes and in 2014 this resulted in the 'Action Plan for Transport Users with Disabilities in Hertfordshire'.

Action No 1 on this plan was to *'produce an online feedback form and Easy Read document to go with it, put on hertsdirect and publicise.*

The aim being to ensure issues raised were responded to appropriately and collated for evidence. Action to be taken was clearly outlined

'available information from online form will go through to Equalities team at HCC, who will feedback any issues to transport colleagues who can use evidence at Intalink meetings or to feedback to transport providers. Easy Read hard copies will go to PTU colleagues for action'.

The easy read and online form are no longer available and current knowledge amongst officers and the public of processes then agreed at that time is unclear.

We would like Easy Read information of how to complain about bus travel to be available. The Easy read form and online form to be re-established and publicised widely and the process established by Equalities Team to be re-established

Transport Reports and Action Plans

Disabled People want to be involved in shaping transport provision and planning.

It takes a lot of time and dedicated work for disabled people and their support groups to co-produce Action Plans with transport officers and providers. Most often this time is give voluntarily.

We would like a joint review to take place of the 'Action Plan for Transport Users with Disabilities in Hertfordshire' and all Transport Action Plans – with relevance to Bus Transport - written with Hertfordshire Disabled People and presented by them for consideration to be revisited and reviewed for relevance and for reassurance that all current issues are included in a new, comprehensive and coproduced 'Bus Travel for Disabled People in Hertfordshire' Action Plan.

Conclusions Q4

What we would like

1. When considering the equality impact of decision being made by the council as well as considering and mitigating any likely impact we would like this to include a review of the actual equality impact
2. We would like this co-produced Terms of Reference to be revisited and a Transport group for all disabled people to be re-established.
3. Easy Read information of how to complain about bus travel to be available
4. Easy read form and online form to be re-established and publicised widely
5. Process established by Equalities Team to be re-established
6. A joint review to take place of the 'Action Plan for Transport Users with Disabilities in Hertfordshire'
7. A review of all Transport Action Plans – with relevance to Bus Transport - written with Hertfordshire Disabled People and presented by them for consideration to be revisited and reviewed for relevance and for reassurance that all current issues are included in a new, comprehensive and co- produced '**Bus Travel for Disabled People in Hertfordshire**' Action Plan.

Contact: transport@hertspeoplefirst.org