



Rural Issues Group

TICKET TO RIDE

*Transport
As A Main Problem in Rural Life*

V 2.1

CITIZENS ADVICE RURAL ISSUES GROUP

JANUARY 2017

Citizens Advice is a network of 316 local charities for the purposes of providing advice that helps people to overcome their problems and campaigning on big issues when their voices need to be heard.

Within that, the Rural Issues Group is an informal group of 157 local Citizens Advice charities for the purpose of representing clients and local offices in relation to rural issues. The group works through a small steering group, and meets at an annual conference.

The purpose of the group is to identify and highlight the issues around delivering advice to rural areas, liaise with Citizens Advice, helping them to ensure that their policies are fully rural-proofed and provide a regular flow of information on new developments and good practice.

At network level, local level and RIG level, the main area of work is the giving of advice. But from time to time issues emerge that deserve more; and all three levels have a Research and Campaigns component.

The Group Chair is Jane Mordue (Trustee – Buckingham, Winslow & District).

Steering Group Membership is as follows:

- Tresanna Borgman – Wiltshire
- Peter Carefoot – Derbyshire
- Nick Hubbard – Sedgemoor
- Amy Jones – Sedgemoor
- Fran Keene – Trustee Citizens Advice
- Fred Lumb – Wiltshire
- Moira McFarlane – Northumbria
- Gwyneth Millington – Conwy
- Louise Russ – Sedgemoor
- Rachel Talbot – Cambridge

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Foreword by RIG Chair, Jane Mordue

'M will walk the 24 mile round trip to attend the initial meeting to receive Universal Credit as he is desperate'

'Bus service 67 Burnham to Wells being stopped at the end of the year'

'Couple in Mickleton, with mobility problems, they feel as though they are trapped in this village'

Just three quotes from rural Citizens Advice clients which show the disproportionate impact that poor transport has on people who live in the country.

Here at the Rural Issues Group of Citizen Advice we've been asking our clients and this is what they said. We are now sharing these case studies and our analysis with key decision-makers to ask your help in tackling this problem.

This is raw data, not a glossy report. It is a conversation leading to action. If you have more evidence to add, please tell us. If you have ideas for how to solve this problem, definitely please tell us!

On Thursday 23 February we will hold a 'summit' meeting at Citizens Advice, 200 Aldersgate St, London EC1A 4HD with a key decision-maker present, to launch the report and decide what can be done.

So what is the problem? Beyond our busy towns, there is a ticking time bomb of increasing social isolation. This affects all ages. The elderly are cut off from healthcare and social contact. The young too struggle, as they can't afford the fare to work or even to sign on for benefits. It is a social blight and also a drain on the economy.

Transport is the main problem but there is a knock-on effect on employment, education, health and the environment. Oh, and you cannot go online... no broadband signal.

This report is a call to action for decision-makers.

We acknowledge that this is not an easy problem to solve. But our report shows that we are at a tipping point. The key is bus services, or lack of them. But bus services are declining faster than ever before in the countryside.

Everyone involved – government nationally, locally; transport companies, especially bus providers; and communities themselves – let's have a concerted push to stop this blight. Let's act now - rural communities deserve a ticket to ride.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Earlier in 2016 research by the Rural Issues Group produced a list of concerns of rural people and established Transport as the top priority by a significant margin. A further research project has now explored the nature of the concern and gathered evidence and case study material. The concern focuses largely on bus services.

Transport is a contributory factor in many of the problems our clients bring in. It is a critical part of our infrastructure – some people simply enjoy the journey but most have another reason for making it.

Bus services are seen as under used and uneconomic. There are many indicators that the industry is in decline and services are being reduced and withdrawn across England and Wales. A key indicator is the fact that operating costs for bus companies increased from £2.19 billion to £3.08 billion in 2015/16. This illustrates both the problems of viability and the scale of the industry. Bus passenger journeys fell by 2.6% in 2014/15; “supported mileage” fell by 26.2% in 2015/16; concessionary journeys fell by 1.3%.

However the industry remains huge and more than a billion bus passenger journeys took place in 2014/15. In 2015/16 there were 2.24 billion bus passenger journeys outside London (nationally the average is 49 per head of population).

We acknowledge the decline, but we are concerned for those who continue to rely on bus transport. The evidence from our questionnaire indicates that although the buses are under used, the disadvantaged – meaning older people, those with health problems, young people and those who are economically disadvantaged – still depend on bus services heavily. The motor car remains the transport of choice – for those who can afford it.

The industry employs 104000 people and uses 35000 buses.

In 2014/15 there were 9.8 million Concessionary Bus Passes in England, which is an increasing number and reflects a takeup of 80 per 100 eligible people. In non metropolitan areas 93% of passes were for older people. Disabled people are also eligible, and authorities have discretion to issue passes on other criteria. It is estimated that 68% of pass holders used their pass and 26% used it at least once a week. And that 16% of pass holders were on a low income.

The industry was privatized in 1985 and now consists of commercial operations. Commercial rigour is mitigated by a system of subsidies estimated at a total of £2.21 billion. Subsidies include Bus Services Operators Grants, Concessionary Travel and a Rural Bus Subsidy Grant. These account for 45% of the income of bus operators.

Shopping and Personal Business are the main reasons for travel. Residents in rural areas travel 44% further than urban residents. Bus trips account for less than 10% of the total distance travelled.

In March 2013 the Government published a Door to Door strategy in which it said that “The government wants more journeys to be made by sustainable transport, public transport, supported by cycling and walking”. It is concerned about congestion and emissions as well as the social and welfare issues.

25% of people have no car, on the other hand 33% have two or more cars in the household.

Statistics tell us that bus punctuality runs at 80%.

Our questionnaire produced a small number of responses, but a wealth of insight, including 39 case studies (details in Appendix A and Appendix B). Dominant concerns are about the cost of public transport, its availability, and the fact that the situation is worsening.

Services are changing in rural life. For example there are 31% less Post Offices now than in 2000.

There are significant differences between rural and urban environments.

- Less than half of those living in smaller rural settlements have access to a regular bus service.
- In urban areas, 100% of people live within 4 kms of a GP surgery, and 97% within 8 kms of a hospital; in Villages (a category of rural resident) only 65% live within 4 kms of a GP surgery and only 52% within 8 kms of a hospital.
- In Wales, for example, traffic is growing more than 13 times as fast on rural roads as on urban ones.

The problems occur in urban life as well. Numbers of people affected in rural environments are smaller, but it is suggested that effects are more severe.

There are 600 Community Transport organisations in England and Wales that provide various supporting services, largely through volunteers and largely to “Bus Pass” holders; this involves 60000 volunteers (12000 in rural areas). About a third of those serve rural areas. These provide about 8 million rural journeys each year. This is a growing sector but is not yet strong enough to be considered as a mainstream solution. Community Transport schemes benefit from Bus Services Operators Grants.

It seems clear that the local authorities are unable to find additional funding; and it is clear that the commercial viability of rural bus services is falling. Community Transport Schemes are to be commended. But they are not yet enough to significantly mitigate the problem or to “take the weight” as subsidies are withdrawn.

It is important to note the benefits of improving public transport in rural areas. These can be expected in terms of:

- Sustainability
- Road congestion
- Education
- Benefits
- Employment
 - Therefore economic
- Health
- Welfare

So...

- 1 Our intention is to raise awareness of this issue locally, and nationally - in public and in government.
- 2 We encourage Community Transport Schemes and other forms of self help.
- 3 We seek a review of public funding of bus travel, particularly in rural areas, and with special reference to the implications for those who are economically disadvantaged, and considering this as a critical matter of infrastructure.

Transport – The Perspective of the Citizens Advice Rural Issues Group

In 2015, attendees at the annual conference of the Rural issues Group (RIG) identified 14 areas that cause difficulty to people in rural life¹:

- Access / accessibility of services
- Cost of fuel / fuel poverty
- Discrimination
- Employment – lack of - within travelling distance
- Fracking
- Housing Costs
- Internet / broadband access
- Isolation
- Lack of food deliveries
- Preserve of the Rich
- Rural Poverty
- Schools
- Transport, including cost of rural public transport, lack of access to rural transport
- Volunteer recruitment – smaller pool

In 2016, a first online survey (via Survey Monkey) established an order of priority.

The top priority by a significant margin (62%) was Transport. But people do not often come to us complaining about it directly: but they often tell us of a problem in which transport is a contributory factor.

Other priorities were Access to Services (52%), Housing Costs (39%) and Internet Access (36%).

As a result the RIG has adopted Transport as a Research and Campaigns Theme and a second survey has been carried out to identify the issues and gather evidence. The issues are discussed in this document and the evidence can be found in Appendix B.

Two respondents (7%) considered trains; responses focused almost entirely on bus services.

Bus services are taken to mean timetabled services using public service vehicles to carry passengers over relatively short distances and usually eligible for Bus Services

¹ It is acknowledged that there are several authoritative definitions of “rural”. The Rural Issues Group membership includes a significant number of bureaux that are mixed - part rural/part urban. This survey invited respondents to indicate whether they were staff belonging to a member bureau, and to indicate whether they live or work in rural environments, whether they have done so, or whether they intend to do so. 88% of responses came from members of staff and 80% of respondents told us that they live in a rural environment.

Operators Grant; including school services and long distance coach services (slightly different from the government definition which excludes school services and coach services).

The ***RIG is not suggesting that rural people are the only ones suffering from difficulties relating to public transport but that these problems may be more acute for rural people where it is a simple fact of life that distances are longer.*** And we are among the first to appreciate the positive aspects of country life.

17.6% of the population of England lives in rural areas.² 21% of people are retired in rural areas, by comparison with 15% in urban England.

A second survey was designed in the autumn of 2016 to examine the problem in more detail, and the following insights emerged:

- Lack of transport is a theme that is common to all.
- Indications that the position is currently worsening are also prevalent.
- 46% of responses referred to a feeling of social and personal isolation as a consequence of the Transport Problem.
- 46% of responses referred to the cost of travel.
- Timeliness is a common comment, but it arises in several ways – as where the service does not match the purpose (eg gets pupils to school, but not in time for the start of school), where journey times are long (eg a 60 mile round trip to work takes 2 hours each way), and punctuality.
- One response highlights a problem with the Concession – which is available for use only at “off peak” times. And of course this is not helpful for young people travelling to work or travelling for education.
- Responses highlight the impact on vulnerable people – older people, the blind, the physically disabled, and those with mental health problems, for example.
- 23% of respondents refer to Digital Inclusion issues. Bus services are published online and this is a main way of obtaining information about transport. But people in rural areas are less likely to have the skills, the equipment and the connections to do so. The arrival of Broadband throughout rural life will change the travel picture.
- Several examples are provided of cases in which travel takes a significant proportion of benefits/earnings.
- The Problem has major impacts on employment and education as well as health, welfare and financial wellbeing.

So...

Bus services are run as businesses. As such they respond to commercial and financial issues – which are currently suggesting that services are less viable.

² 2011 Census.

The public requires services as services. Irrespective of the commercial issues. This is more especially true for people living in rural areas; and more especially true still for disadvantaged and vulnerable people such as the disabled and those with mental health problems, and the elderly.

Our Research

Methodology

This research began with a trawl of opinions at a conference of the Citizens Advice Rural Issues Group by reference to a whiteboard and sticky notes. The question was “What are the concerns of Rural people?” and it yielded a useful list of concerns.

This was followed by two online Questionnaires by reference to Survey Monkey.

The first was designed to prioritise the concerns identified so far and it used closed questions to obtain statistical facts.

Transport was emphatically at the top of the list, and the second Questionnaire was designed using very open questions to identify more detailed insights and aspects of that concern and to gather evidence in the form of case studies.

There is some difficulty with the use of the word “rural”. It is noted that the distinction is always difficult – and this is complicated by the fact that many bureaus are actually mixed: part urban and part rural. Firstly we published the surveys through the Rural Issues Group Community. We accepted responses from anyone interested. In the first online survey 92% of respondents lived/worked in a rural environment, had previously done so or considered the possibility of doing so in future.

The final stage has been “desk research” of existing source material online and on paper to develop as complete and understanding of the problem as possible.

Discussion

Disclosed by Our Survey

In the RIG Survey “Making Transport a Priority” (see Appendix A), 46% of respondents expressed concern about cost.

One respondent illustrated how cost is an issue in that many of our clients have come to us mainly because of financial problems; another explains that clients must spend £6.40 to travel to the nearest Job Centre to “sign on” (three more respondents also comment on the cost of travelling to sign on”); a third reports sudden and large (58%) increases in fares; a fourth reports that clients are unable to secure work because they are unable to meet the cost of travel that is required; a fifth provides a case study of a homeless man with no money who must travel 24 miles to “sign on”; a sixth reports that clients are unable to access help from foodbanks because they need to travel to do so; two respondents comment on the difficulties of study/apprenticeships when travel is required.

Timeliness can be an issue in several ways. It may be that the service is available on days or times so as to be unsuitable for the purpose (eg children being directed to services that do not get them to school before school starts); other examples have emerged in which journey times are too long (eg a case in Shropshire involving a 60 mile round trip to work involving six buses (3 each way) and taking 2 hours each way); two respondents comment about buses failing to keep to published timetables.

Lack of a transport service is common to all responses: numerous villages and areas are identified that have no bus service. 16% of responses referred to withdrawals of service.

The evidence from our questionnaire indicates that although the buses are under used, the disadvantaged – meaning older people, those with health problems, young people and those who are economically disadvantaged – still depend on bus services heavily. The motor car remains the transport of choice – for those who can afford it.

From the emerging evidence, impact can be identified on benefits problems, employment problems, education and health problems. As well as the aspect of social isolation, and linked to existing problems of Digital Exclusion.

46% of respondents referred to a feeling of isolation as one of the consequences of transport problems.

Responses highlight the impact of the Transport problem on people who are blind, people with mental health problems and people with other disabilities.

One response refers to the Travel Concession: the Concession applies only to “off peak” times – which are unhelpful to young people with disabilities, on minimum wage and travelling for work.

One response refers to Industrial Action making things worse.

It is clear that the elderly are particularly aware of transport problems: responses contain eight references to age and pensions. The young also find difficulty travelling to school, college and work (7 references, see also case studies in Appendix B).

23% of respondents refer to Digital Inclusion (cost/availability of broadband). Bus services are published online and this is a main way of getting information about transport. People in rural areas, and especially older clients, are less likely to have the skills, the equipment and the connections to do so.

Disclosed in other Work

State of Rural Public Services 2013, published by the Rural Services Network.

Less than half of those living in smaller rural settlements have access to a regular bus service (ie within 13 minutes walk).

Households in the smallest rural settlements spent 63% more on travel than households in urban areas in 2009.

In urban areas, 100% of people live within 4 kms of a GP surgery, and 97% within 8 kms of a hospital; in Villages 65% of people live within 4 kms of a GP surgery, and 52% within 8 kms of a hospital.

In March 2013 there were 6429 post offices in rural areas, which is 55% of the nation’s network – and which is 31% less than in 2000, and cuts have continued.

Increasingly rural people are compelled to travel for postal services.

In 2011/12 there were 600 community transport organisations.

Round The Bend – A review of local bus provision by Scottish Citizens Advice Bureaux

55% of Scottish bus users felt that buses are good value for money. Prices were found to vary from 7p/mile to £1.80/mile.

38% of locations surveyed had no Sunday service that connected them with local hospitals

In remote rural areas the median cost of a return ticket to the nearest Job Centre was £9.00

Consumers in the rural areas surveyed face an average 40 minute round trip to access the nearest bank branch

Residents of rural areas were on average 5 miles from the nearest GP surgery

College students in remote areas on average face journey times of over an hour and at a median cost of £10 return.

In 2014 it was estimated that around 420 million bus passenger journeys were made in Scotland with these journeys covering over 330 million kilometres per year. There are 1.3 million holders of a National Concessionary Travel Scheme Card, who travel free at the point of use.

38% of those using buses in Scotland have an income of less than £15000 per year.

86% of bus users live in urban areas.

Conclusions

We conclude that the main aspects of the Transport problem for rural people are:

- cost,
- lack of services
- and the fact that the situation is worsening.

But improving public transport in rural areas would have a wide range of benefits. Thinking about the time that is wasted in traffic congestion and delays caused by the use of public transport, that time may well be paid time – expensive to an employer. Where the employer is public sector, the bill falls ultimately back to the taxpayer. And employee is private sector, the cost ultimately damages the economy. Transport is a factor that directly affects people economically; it also affects education, employment, health and many other aspects of life. Several respondents emphasised the fact that people often simply feel isolated. To categorise the benefits as being welfare is a massive understatement. The RIG recognises that it will be enormously difficult to improve the situation. The need to do so is undermined by the fact that it is a minority that is affected, and by the fact that some services are under used and uneconomic. However ***bus use still helps millions of people millions of times a year, and those users need a service and deserve one.***

Apparent options for improvement are stark:

- 1 We recommend an increase government subsidies. It seems clear that the local authorities are unable to find additional funding; and it is clear that the commercial viability of rural bus services is falling. We see no realistic alternative way of providing a service for rural people, not particularly including the vulnerable.

- 2 We recommend that Community Transport schemes should be developed, supported, publicised, and encouraged. However they are not yet enough to significantly mitigate the problem or to “take the weight” as subsidies are withdrawn.

It is important to note the wide benefits of improving public transport in rural areas.

These can be expected in terms of:

- Sustainability
- Road congestion
- Education
- Benefits
- Employment
 - Therefore economic
- Health
- Welfare

Rural Issues Group Survey – Making Transport a Priority

Raw Data (Sanitised for Confidentiality)

	Issues	Evidence & Other
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited public transport in rural villages Where transport is available, its expensive Public transport can take a long time for the client to get to where they want to go as often the client has to go to additional villages before reaching their drop off point For the elderly and disabled it is difficult for them to even get to a bus stop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A client living in a rural village is isolated as she lives at the bottom of a steep hill and the community centre which offers lots of activities and meals in its cafe supported by the local food bank, is at the top of the hill. There is no way she can engage with the local community without a lift. Older people in particular don't like to ask for help and therefore are socially isolated.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closure of local offices (JC+, post offices, support centres) so clients have to travel Lack of understanding by those in authority of the real meaning of rural isolation Unable to get to work interviews, benefits interviews, hospital appointments etc Prohibitive costs of rural transport 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of joined up or serviced routes Cost ability to use public transport lack of joined up transport services 	<p>I think that more and more people are talking to use about re-nationalising certain parts of the transport system. Clients from all political views. I do not hear this reflected on a cita level however.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about bus services difficult to find, especially without internet • Difficult to coordinate bus services offered by different operators • Train services infrequent 	<p>personal experience. We are also developing surveys to obtain more information from our client's, and possibly from the local Job Centre.</p> <p>Connectivity will only get worse with Austerity cuts, and the view that routes must be profitable rather than providing a service.</p> <p>The service is already poor if you are reliant on it for work, or attending interviews.</p> <p>A lot of people (like me) may not use individual services on a frequent basis but rely on them being available when needed.</p> <p>Information about services can be hard to find if you don't have internet access, and sometimes websites can be confusing</p>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of public transport in area • access to PIP assessment centres issue for clients locally 	<p>I feel it's a good idea. Here in the Forest access to public transport is a problem in outlying villages etc. We have various local volunteer driver services but they are often too expensive for clients to use.</p>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in number of buses and longer route to take in more villages • Insufficient time in Newbury to do much shopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I broke my arm this year and was unable to drive, My journey into Newbury usually takes 20 mins. I tried going on the local bus but I could not travel until 9.45 and would not have arrived in time to do my shift. The only two buses back to the village were at 1.45 and 5.30 meaning no sensible time for me to travel. Also the journey took over an hour! <p>One of our buses has now been replaced by a minibus which is one of three purchased by West Berks Council to provide a reduced service. Some of the services only run during school term - no help for those working in Newbury.</p>

		<p>I believe that unfortunately it is a fact of life that if you live in a small rural village you really need some form of transport be it cycle, motor bike or car. It is for this reason that the social housing bungalows in our village (4) are no longer let to pensioners but are now being let to young people with their own transport.</p>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxfordshire dial-a-ride no longer available in some areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elderly neighbours who live in a small hamlet, no longer able to drive due to failing eyesight, one disabled so cannot walk to bus stop which is one mile away. After dial up bus service withdrawn now have to rely on volunteers to get to shops, appointments etc. (I have not discussed this with them, but would be willing to approach them for more detailed information about how it is affecting them.) This will be the first winter for them. <p>I am told that colleagues elsewhere in Oxfordshire have done quite a bit of work on rural transport.</p>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't access jobs • Can't access services • Can't afford phone helplines • Severe rural isolation as a result 	<p>We come across clients who cannot get in to the local office as there are either no public transport services (maybe only one service per day) or they can't afford to use it. They can't afford internet access or a phone line. Very patchy mobile service across parts of our area and they cannot afford to use their pay as you go mobile to call helplines anyway. We then end up doing a costly home visit as there is no other way the client can access the service.</p>
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor internet access / no wi-fi • off-grid houses heated by oil - very expensive to fill up oil tank and have to pay in full for full tank. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A client came to us in financial crisis last week as she couldn't afford to heat her house. She lives in private rented house heated by oil and hadn't realised when she moved in nearly a year ago that she would need to fill up the oil tank once a year at a cost of

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of public transport 	<p>several hundred pounds. Living on benefits with a small child, she now can't afford this. We helped her to join the local credit union to get instant access to a loan to pay for her fuel and also to set up a savings account so that she can save for next year's oil costs.</p>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor bus service connecting outlying villages to local towns • Southern rail service which is exacerbating the situation with constant strikes • Slow broadband and poor mobile telephone coverage 	<p>Although highlighting the problems is really good and very worthwhile there needs to be a massive involvement in infrastructure which is extremely unlikely to happen with government (both local and national) funding as it is.</p>
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of service • Choice of location and time available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bus service to a local town did not leave enough time for traveller to have a hair appointment • The day of service does not always tie up with local markets or available hospital clinics <p>Some local people would be happy to provide transport as part of their normal travel arrangements but concerned on the implications on their car insurance in the event of an incident.</p>
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cost - clients in Amble pay £6.40 to get to the job centre to sign on for benefits. teenagers can get a teen card but each journey is £1 and can't use on teacher training days or before 4pm weekdays • frequency - clients have difficulty with appointments when buses are every 2 hours or less often. Local train services are also very limited outside of peak work times. • early last bus - last bus from Newcastle is around 7pm which limits social activities / visiting friends and 	

	<p>relatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more and more villages have their bus service withdrawn or frequency reduced so much that they cannot use public transport at all 	
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural isolation due to shortage of bus services 	
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercialization of services leading to : sudden large increases in bus fares • Reduced number of bus services • School transport issues - including post 16 transport - prohibitive fare increases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus services in Uttlesford have been scarce for many years. However, problems became far more acute in September when Essex County Council commercialized many services carrying school children. Little or no notice was given to parents; services disappeared; fares increased, sometimes by as much as three times; routes were merged, leading to overcrowding and children left stranded, changes in route times resulted in children arriving late for school. <p>This is an extract from a press release we sent out in October.</p> <p>Uttlesford Citizens Advice Facebook account has been busy this week with problems parents and young people have been sharing about school buses. Issues seem to be numerous and wide-spread.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bus services used by children having insufficient capacity for all those who need them, regularly leaving children stranded at both the start and end of the day. · Services used by children not entitled to free school transport being withdrawn without notice or consultation.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Children being directed to use services that do not get them into school on time. · Children being directed to services that leave up to an hour after school ends. · Primary and secondary children whose catchment school is not their nearest school being left without funded transport. · Buses being late and unreliable · A lack of a child rate for single journeys being is being offered on some public services · Demand Responsive Transport, which is meant to replace some bus services, does not have enough capacity at peak times, such as the start and end of the school day. · Examples of prohibitive ticket price increases. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The case studies below are taken from comments left by parents on our facebook page. https://www.facebook.com/UttlesfordCAB/ • My twin daughters attend Forest Hall School which is out of catchment as we only had one choice of school in our area.
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		<p>We accepted that we would have to pay for transport out of area and got places under the 'spare seats' private ticket arranged with Acme transport. Since year 7 (now year 11) the annual fare has been between approx £475-£552 per child for the first three years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This year at one weeks notice we were told that it would now be £867 each per year - a rise of 58%!! Acme tell us that it is because ECC have changed the way that they fund the 'entitled' children and the private tickets are now not subsidised. ECC say that the council are not obliged to make any arrangements or subsidy for non entitled children and the price rise was entirely down to Acme.• To add insult to injury the service we are getting is worse than it was before with the girls having to take two different buses each way with a 15-30 minute wait in Hatfield Heath.• This is impacting many people who have had a huge rise in fares, not to mention Forest Hall school who have already lost pupils because of it. In normal business practice an increase of 58% would not be allowed to happen without at the very least consultation with customers. Why are Acme able to do this to parents who often can do little about it except drive their children to school therefore adding to congestion on the roads and pressure on parents who need to work. It is a disgrace! <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The service is shocking. The prices have been hiked with very little notice. The buses get the children to school late;
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		<p>sometimes they don't turn up and sometimes they break down (water leak today).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will cost my 17 year old £25 a week to travel to school for year 13. She has no choice but to catch a bus: both her parents work; the train station is too far away from the school and the paths are unsafe. She, of course, wants to do her A levels but, even if she didn't, she'd still have to attend full time education until she's 18, in line with government policy. Unfortunately, our local school has no 6th form of any description. All the local 16 to 18 year olds rely on public transport in order to abide by the law. Then our government (at local level) chooses to make it prohibitively expensive for its future workforce to go to the 6th forms it provides. Truly inexplicable; truly unfair; truly inexcusable. • Our catchment school is not our nearest school, distance wise, but I chose our catchment school as the 1st choice for my son knowing full well he would not get into the nearest school as it is over subscribed. We live over 7 miles from any high school, so should get free transport, but we were told we don't qualify as we didn't put the nearest school as our first choice. • Children in higher years still get free transport under the old school transport policy , but we are forced to pay up to £1000 for our son to travel on the same bus as those travelling for free. We are a one wage family and we are
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		really struggling.
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transport in rural villages • Distance to travel to the job centre • Cost of travel to the job centre • Problems accessing work 	<p>Poole Job Centre serves the Purbeck area. Clients experience problems where either there is no bus or train service to Poole from where they live or it is prohibitively expensive to travel there regularly. We often see clients who need to travel to the job centre to sort out an issue and do not have the money to do so. Clients living in rural villages with no transport find it almost impossible to secure work as they do not have the means to travel to where the work is. Bus services are going to be cut and there has been a consultation which we have encouraged clients to get involved in. We are awaiting the outcome of the consultation but it is likely that the situation for our clients will get worse not better.</p>
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First bus is at 8am through my village so people unable to get into Bridgwater/Taunton to work if they start before 9.30am/10am.Puyrbeck • Last bus is around 7.30pm (in the winter) which makes it difficult for people who work in the village to get home if they work late shifts. 	
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrequent Services • Fares too expensive especially for those on benefits • Bus journeys often complicated because of changes and waits between connections 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clients having to go to Luton and Ilford from Buntingford and other East Herts villages for ESA medicals find the journey virtually impossible and totally impossible if the appointment is early in the morning 2. Clients having to go to Hertford to sign on from Buntingford and nearby villages often have unreasonable waits to return home, plus the expense involved

		<p>3. Clients with mental health problems and needing to keep health appointments find they cannot cope with the journey by bus which is the only available public transport</p> <p>4. Client finding it difficult to cover the cost of transport to school for their children</p>
18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutting of bus services from 3+ an hour to 2 an hour (erratically) • Very erratic bus services - buses not arriving on time / sometimes departing early • Cutting local bus routes • County Council failure to prioritise public transport • At a minimum, bring back a local transport forum, enabling a dialogue with the local authority - at the moment it appears nobody is addressing these issues for clients in Sedgemoor - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus service 67 Burnham to Wells being stopped at the end of the year - Clients based in Mark, Wedmore and surrounding areas will not be able to get access to support they previously managed to access on the bus • Bus service 21 has gone from every 20 minutes to two an hour. However this is erratic and there has been a frequent failure of them turning up - additionally sometimes they turn up then depart early. • In less than a week two clients who have been late for appointments at Job Centre, meaning they have to make a fresh appointment and then will face the possibility/likelihood of being sanctioned. • Loss of service through Brent Knoll/East Brent
19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Transport • Disability 	<p>Disabled clients can really struggle to access local amenities in rural areas, the extra time needed to be planned into their journeys can be as much as five or six times it takes to get into your car and "pop into town".</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I myself rely upon a disabled bus pass to travel to work, First buses have now changed to their less frequent winter timetable, on top of halving the number 21 service, which now travels from Taunton to Burnham-on-Sea instead of Weston-Super-Mare, and from January the bus ticket price will have increased by approximately 40% since the same time 2016. • If I wasn't able to get a lift to the nearest bus stop, a simple journey from Burnham to Bridgwater, return, would take me two hours (without waiting times) for a total journey that would only take 45 minutes by car, and I am not wheelchair bound. • The changes First have put in place for all bus pass users, only allowing to be used after 9.30am, means that I cannot get to work using my bus pass before 10.40am, not a very helpful start time for the majority of business hours. <p>Many clients to the Advice Line service also refer to rural locations and public transport provision, as being a major reason as to why they are forced to use the service as getting to their local office or satellite branch to "see someone", which is usually imperative to their issue, is so problematic for them particularly at the time of their most need.</p> <p>I understand that rural provision of public transport is problematic</p>
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		<p>for financial feasibility.</p> <p>But for those of us whose disability stopped our chosen careers and we have needed to retrain to get back into the job market, to then find that the local provider has made it impossible to attend regular office hours can be such a blow to their confidence.</p>
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working parents paying for sixth form students to go to school on a bus and initially told they would have to pay one year's cost in advance. extra curricular activities mean the bus is missed and parents having to travel from work early or leave their child there until they can get there Poor mobile phone signal. Children/teenagers cannot be allowed to walk home long for many miles along dark country lanes as it's simply not an option. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My daughter's difficulties working in Dorchester full time, living in Buckland Newton and a 15 and sixteen year old in school in Sherborne. Her husband works in Poole. My daughter is currently struggling to hold down a job and meet the needs of her young teenagers and keep them safe especially in the dark which is an added worry. Loyalties between leaving work early and family commitments places the parents in an impossible situation. Also, the cost went into hundreds for the school bus for the year, which my daughter simply couldn't afford and only through fighting this and raising it with her mp was she able to get monthly payments.
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor provision of public transport Inconsistency in infrastructure Inconsistency in provision for older people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As someone who lived in a rural area (Llanrwst), where provision of public transport was already patchy, the news some six months ago that Arriva, the main provider of public transport, was ending its service entirely came as a bitter blow. Having recently changed employment proved very fortunate as I would not have been able to continue in that post and would have faced the prospect of having to give up work.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My grandmother who is Registered Blind has also experienced the problems faced with very patchy transport facilities. She does not live on a main bus route and her disability means she requires taxis etc to even reach a service which is problematic.
22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our rural clients effectively receive less benefits than their urban counterparts - people who live in towns and cities can walk to sign on, or take frequent, quick, reliable and inexpensive public transport. Our clients often end up paying more than 10% of their money just to get to the job centre to sign on, . • Journey's that take less than an hour by car can take several buses and the best part of the day, making journeys very stressful for clients and leaving a very small window in the middle of the day to get somewhere, complete an appointment and catch the many buses home again. Makes simple tasks like visiting your doctor or JCP difficult and daunting - the knock on effect of this is that people end up having their support removed and experiencing massive difficulties. • There are parts of the community that are completely cut off and clients struggle to access basic services if they do not own a car/cannot drive. This stops people from being able to see their doctors etc. • There are big gaps throughout Shropshire were there just isn't a job centre - south Shropshire clients have to go to a different county to sign on and for other 	<p>Case studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin is homeless and is currently living in a tent after being kicked out of his friends rented accommodation where he was previously staying. As a result he could no longer continue working at his job and has had to move away to a different town. Martin has no money to travel the 24 mile round trip to the Jobcentre to sign on to receive Universal Credit and attend subsequent appointments. Martin was advised to sign on at a local library and will walk the 24 mile round trip to attend the jobcentre initial meeting to begin receiving UC as he is desperate. Because he hasn't been able to begin this process previously Martin has no money, is hungry and had to have meal vouchers and a food parcel made up of food that needed no more than boiling water to prepare as he does not have a home or access proper cooking facilities. • Sophie lives in a village in south Shropshire, and is claiming ESA. She was asked to attend a work-focused interview in Shrewsbury, which involves an expensive 60 mile round trip and 3 buses to get there and 3 buses to get back (taking 2 hours each way).

	<p>clients the 'nearest' job centre is so difficult to get to clients often don't manage to hitch a lift or aren't up to walking 20+ mile round trips and are unable to attend to get the money they are entitled to.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sophie suffers from anxiety and depression and experienced a panic attack on the day of the interview triggered by the stress of the impending journey to the jobcentre plus. As she failed to attend the interview, Sophie had her ESA withdrawn and is currently ineligible to claim Universal Credit. Because of this when Sophie came to see us she had been experiencing financial hardship for a number of weeks. • Dev lives and works on his landlord's rural farm. When he started experiencing back and shoulder pain he got treatment from the GP who is based in the nearest market town. Unfortunately Dev is rarely able to get to see his GP due to a lack of available appointments and a total lack of public transport, and he struggles to ring them as he doesn't have credit on his mobile phone – sometimes he can borrow a friend's phone but not always. • Dev had successfully applied for ESA but this stopped in July as he was unable to provide a recent sick note from his GP, this had a knock on effect and his housing benefit stopped too and now he is experiencing considerable hardship. He is reliant on the generosity of his friends and help from local food banks to keep himself fed and clothed.
23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural clients having difficulty accessing services because of transport costs • Specific services are delivered in a way which disadvantages rural clients or adds to their costs • Organisations are centralising services as they can't 	<p>Rural clients having difficulty accessing help from foodbanks because they can't get to the foodbank and the foodbank can't always deliver.</p> <p>Clients having to walk for miles to access services e.g. signing on, because they can't afford the bus fare.</p>

	<p>afford the costs of maintaining face to face access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural clients can face difficulty access advice 	<p>Local authority emergency support service (local social fund replacement) won't fund replacement washing machines except in very limited situations (e.g. medical reasons) but people in rural areas limited in terms of access to a launderette.</p> <p>Range of organisations, including local charities, are moving out of rural towns and centralising services in urban areas. Some will offer to go out to rural areas to deliver the service but only if they can get enough people together at the same time.</p> <p>We currently operate from 13 sites across Northumberland but we know that some people have difficulty accessing our advice because they can't get into an office and telephone advice is not always suitable.</p>
24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expenses Fares in comparison to urban areas Limited service - some villages only have two buses in a day at best. Service can be late or withdrawn leaving people stuck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clients have complained about the cost of fares especially when they are unemployed and have to travel to the Job Centre - Costs average around £6.50 for a return. This is quite a substantial chunk of JSA. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of buses servicing some rural communities are often very limited. A client could only come to an appointment on a Thursday as this was the only day there was a bus from her village into Alnwick. She had a two hour window to go things in Alnwick before the last bus back to the village. Clients have mentioned being late to sign on as the bus was

		<p>either late or did not turn up - this can result in benefit sanctions if the JC do not believe client.</p>
25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrequent bus times. Bus times have been recently cut again. • Cost for people under pension age. • Getting into work on time and at a reasonable cost. • Getting to further education both time and cost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents struggle to support children in further education because of the cost of transport, for example Newcastle college are over is 65 miles away there is a main line train service but this is expensive. Also this limits access to apprenticeships because current bus services do not meet bus timetables. • There are no big employers in rural areas so need to use public transport to access work. Often the buses do not get into the towns on time to be able to find or keep work. This leaves them with only options of short term seasonal work locally with sometimes poor employment practices and zero hour contracts keeping them in the poverty trap. One client who was sanctioned for not applying for a job could not get into the town on time for the job so had not applied. For those without access to the internet they have to come into the towns to access a computer to look for work or apply for benefits. • Shift work and seasonal work and public transport do not mix. One highly skilled worker had to change buses twice in order to get to work but had to leave as could not get there on time. Some journeys have many stops on the way making journeys slow. It is difficult to move house because of the shortage of affordable housing.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have an Island in North Northumberland, Lindesfarne where tides have a bearing on transport issues and schooling. • There is a chronic shortage of affordable housing in the towns and this means that people have to live in the rural areas with cheaper rents even if this is not their first choice to live in the country but then there are additional costs of transport. • The young or the long term unemployed have no resources to get a car or even bicycle to get to work or look for work. For example a young cl got a job for a local store, the bus would not get him to work on time and therefore had to rely on his grandfather to take him to work. • Clients cannot access cheaper food stores such as markets, or larger supermarket chains, and many local rural stores and post offices have closed or are expensive. Cannot get access to benefits or bank accounts because rural banks are closing. Our clients cannot access the food bank because of lack of transport or fares. • The lack of public transport means it is difficult to access entertainment such as the local theatre, the older population and young parents can be isolated isolated. • There seems to be a shortage of child care available in rural areas and this limits employment options for the young
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		<p>putting them in a poverty trap. This also limits opportunities to socialise and gain different experiences for the children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To access other services for example hospital appointments means sometimes a long journey and is costly. • We now have only 2 ambulances serving north Northumberland. The A&E department for serious injury is approx 55 miles away. • There is a limit to the options of getting help and advice face to face. Clients often have mobile telephones but no money on them. • Many clients cannot access utility companies because of the cost of telephones and come to this office for support. There is also limited access to Pay Points to get meter keys in rural areas.
26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty for older people to access public transport for important appointments • Lack of buses now subsidised routes have been curtailed • PIP and ATOS appointments a long way away 	
27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of public transport leads to isolation and hardship. • Accessibility and affordability. 	<p>1. Fatima is a single parent originally from Morocco and speaks poor English. She has 3 children, one at the local grammar school and the others in years 2 and 4 in junior school. She suffers from stress, anxiety, epilepsy, is on ESA and was</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting to appointments, work, medical assessments, court hearings - • large rural district. Few options for people living in the villages who do not have access to car or cannot drive 	<p>forced to leave the family home with her children due to domestic abuse. She was housed in temporary accommodation in Stratford and sent the two younger children to the school closest to her where they are settled and happy. She was then rehoused by the Council on an estate out of town, around 2 miles from the school. She has to take them to school by bus each day and the company providing the service, Johnsons Coaches, will not issue return tickets before 9am. So she has to buy expensive single tickets for each journey. Warwickshire County Council will not issue a bus pass as the children are not at the closest school to their new home, The school does not currently have spaces for both the children. She is on benefits and pays £25 a week on bus fares.</p> <p>2. We have a client, a young woman who lives in Stratford and has been assisted by one of our projects. She got a job at Warwick Hospital but felt unable to take it because there was no bus at convenient times and the fares would have made the job financially unviable. In the end her mother paid for her to be insured on her (mother's) car which has enabled her to take the job.</p> <p>3. Tricia is 52 years of age and has struggled with her disabilities since her early 30's. She lives with her partner in a 2 bed housing association (Orbit Heart of England) bungalow in a small village 5 miles outside Stratford upon Avon having moved there in April. Prior to this they lived with his mother for a while in a very small flat in Henley in Arden. They have had a very rocky road but with great courage and humour have stayed the course when many</p>
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		<p>may have faltered.</p> <p>Tricia was first diagnosed with severe osteo-arthritis in 2000 in her spine and hips and this is now affecting every part of her body. 6 vertebrae in her spine were very badly damaged when she was subjected to repeated assaults when younger and in a previous relationship, Her then partner used to knock her to the ground and repeatedly kick her in the spine . Her new GP has informed her that it is imperative she has a right hip-replacement as soon as possible and then the other hip will be replaced in a year's time. She has also been re- assessed by Warwickshire County Council Adult Social Care Team who are providing her with a wheelchair shortly, this having been previously refused..</p> <p>Tricia has very limited mobility and has to use 2 elbow crutches to transfer herself from her current chair to the bathroom or to a wheel chair. She can only move with assistance and support from her partner and it is a very painful process to observe. She is in receipt of Enhanced Rate PIP, both Mobility and Daily Living and is in the Income based ESA Support Group. Patrick her partner for 7 years is in receipt of Carers Allowance and is an amazing person who devotes his life to being Tricia's support-system.</p> <p>She also has Diabetes 2, Arrhythmia and has a stent in her right kidney after it stopped functioning in 1976.</p> <p>TRANSPORT</p> <p>She has to attend Clinics/ Scans /blood Tests etc at Stratford Hospital, Warwick Hospital and University Hospital, Coventry as well as regular visits to her GP at Shipston Medical Centre. They have no transport of their own and therefore have to us the bus service which runs every 2 hours to Stratford or to</p>
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		<p>Shipston. The only way Tricia can become mobile is by using her motorised wheel chair but this does not fit through the doorway of many buses and she has been refused access on to buses because of this.</p> <p>She recently was prevented from getting on to a returning bus from Stratford to Newbold because she was told that they could only carry one wheelchair at a time and there was already one on the bus. They had to wait another 2 hours for the next bus in very bad weather.</p> <p>She cannot access UBus because the back door is not wide enough to accommodate her wheel chair.</p> <p>They have to make use of the Volunteer Driver Scheme but have been informed that VASA are cutting back the service in Shipston on Stour. There is a £2 administration fee and last week a trip to Stratford Hospital cost £7.60 each way. A taxi costs £26 each way to Stratford. Paying for transport even under this scheme is expensive on a low income</p> <p>Hospital Transport generates the highest number of complaints - it doesn't turn up at all, it is late – Tricia recently missed a 4.30pm appointment at with a Specialist at Warwick she had been waiting 3 months for – driver turned up at 10 to 5. Overstretched and understaffed drivers are sent all over Warwickshire and nobody relies on getting to the hospital on the right day or right time.</p> <p>Have emailed Tricia for breakdown of costs and we are getting more details for clients – a taxi from Stratford to Shipston is £40 one way and a client was charged £60 to go one way from Shipston to Hospital in Moreton.</p> <p>Most clients say they have to cancel appointments frequently because they don't have the money.</p>
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		<p>Designing a questionnaire to put out to clients – Tricia would be very vocal for us – she is effectively trapped in her home.</p> <p>I think our rural transport issues are real. The cost and availability of public transport coupled with our large rural district are two of the reasons why we have so many outreach offices, and succeed in getting project funding for home visiting and taking our CA service out into the community. It was a factor in our objecting to the closure of the County Court in Stratford in 2011 and it has an impact in the field of health when people have to travel to visit hospital/surgeries. Not to mention the problems around claiming benefits and signing on in person, attending Jobcentre appointments, medical assessments for ESA etc etc.</p> <p>We also see problems for people accessing school transport. The local volunteer bureau who provides drivers for people needing hospital appointments etc are having difficulty in attracting volunteers and have been increasing the cost of the service so that users are no longer able to afford it.</p> <p>The biggest local housing association, Orbit Heart of England insist on their tenants against whom they are taking possession proceedings attending court in Warwick which is often difficult if not impossible, leading to threatened homelessness.</p> <p>Some people who have difficulties with public transport might turn out to have to have health issues that limit their ability to use the buses, even though there is a service. For example we have a client couple in Mickleton, around 10 miles from Stratford who we visit in their homes because they can't get into Stratford to see us. He is terminally ill with cancer and she has health and mobility problems. They rely on their daughter</p>
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		<p>who works full time to take them to hospital etc. However there is an hourly bus service between Mickleton and Stratford, and they are retired so eligible for a free bus pass. In this case it's their health that's the main problem, making a long bus journey around the villages too uncomfortable and exhausting to contemplate. Also doctors' surgeries, hospitals etc are often not close to the bus stop. They are on Pension Credit, AA, carers etc and paying third parties for transport is expensive. They feel as though they are trapped in this village. Hope this helps. Would be interested in the results of all this and in possible outcomes as we feel that no matter how hard we try, with one-off client problems particularly we rarely get a successful result.</p>
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Case Studies³ Derived from the Survey – As Reported by the Respondent

1. A client living in a rural village is isolated as she lives at the bottom of a steep hill and the community centre which offers lots of activities and meals in its cafe supported by the local food bank, is at the top of the hill. There is no way she can engage with the local community without a lift. Older people in particular don't like to ask for help and therefore are socially isolated.
2. I broke my arm this year and was unable to drive, my journey into Newbury usually takes 20 mins. I tried going on the local bus but I could not travel until 9.45 and would not have arrived in time to do my shift. The only two buses back to the village were at 1.45 and 5.30 meaning no sensible time for me to travel. Also the journey took over an hour!
3. My twin daughters attend Forest Hall School which is out of catchment as we only had one choice of school in our area. We accepted that we would have to pay for transport out of area and got places under the 'spare seats' private ticket arranged with Acme transport. Since year 7 (now year 11) the annual fare has been between approx £475-£552 per child for the first three years. This year at one weeks notice we were told that it would now be £867 each per year - a rise of 58%!! Acme tell us that it is because ECC have changed the way that they fund the 'entitled' children and the private tickets are now not subsidised. ECC say that the council are not obliged to make any arrangements or subsidy for non entitled children and the price rise was entirely down to Acme. To add insult to injury the service we are getting is worse than it was before with the girls having to take two different buses each way with a 15-30 minute wait in Hatfield Heath. This is impacting many people who have had a huge rise in fares, not to mention Forest Hall school who have already lost pupils because of it. In normal business practice an increase of 58% would not be allowed to happen without at the very least consultation with customers. Why are Acme able to do this to parents who often can do little about it except drive their children to school therefore adding to congestion on the roads and pressure on parents who need to work. It is a disgrace! The service is shocking. The prices have been hiked with very little notice. The buses get the children to school late; sometimes they don't turn up and sometimes they break down (water leak today).
4. It will cost my 17 year old £25 a week to travel to school for year 13. She has no choice but to catch a bus: both her parents work; the train station is too far away from the school and the paths are unsafe. She, of course, wants to do her A levels but, even if she didn't, she'd still have to attend full time education until she's 18, in line with government policy. Unfortunately, our local school has no 6th form of any description. All the local 16 to 18 year

³ A story is considered to be valid as a case study where it is documented and/or can be sourced to a known individual. Ultimately we accept what clients tell us and we are therefore dependent upon their veracity. Several of these studies are stories of members of the Citizens Advice organisation.

olds rely on public transport in order to abide by the law. Then our government (at local level) chooses to make it prohibitively expensive for its future workforce to go to the 6th forms it provides. Truly inexplicable; truly unfair; truly inexcusable. Our catchment school is not our nearest school, distance wise, but I chose our catchment school as the 1st choice for my son knowing full well he would not get into the nearest school as it is over subscribed. We live over 7 miles from any high school, so should get free transport, but we were told we don't qualify as we didn't put the nearest school as our first choice.

5. Children in higher years still get free transport under the old school transport policy , but we are forced to pay up to £1000 for our son to travel on the same bus as those travelling for free. We are a one wage family and we are really struggling.
6. Clients having to go to Luton and Ilford from Buntingford and other East Herts villages for ESA medicals find the journey virtually impossible and totally impossible if the appointment is early in the morning
7. Clients having to go to Hertford to sign on from Buntingford and nearby villages often have unreasonable waits to return home, plus the expense involved
8. Clients with mental health problems and needing to keep health appointments find they cannot cope with the journey by bus which is the only available public transport
9. Client finding it difficult to cover the cost of transport to school for their children
10. Bus service 67 Burnham to Wells being stopped at the end of the year - Clients based in Mark, Wedmore and surrounding areas will not be able to get access to support they previously managed to access on the bus. Bus service 21 has gone from every 20 minutes to two an hour. However this is erratic and there has been a frequent failure of them turning up - additionally sometimes they turn up then depart early. In less than a week two clients who have been late for appointments at Job Centre, meaning they have to make a fresh appointment and then will face the possibility/likelihood of being sanctioned. Loss of service through Brent Knoll/East Brent
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total journey that would only take 45 minutes by car, and I am not wheelchair bound. The changes First have put in place for all bus pass users, only allowing to be used after 9.30am, means that I cannot get to work using my bus pass before 10.40am, not a very helpful start time for the majority of business hours.

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14. My grandmother who is Registered Blind has also experienced the problems faced with very patchy transport facilities. She does not live on a main bus route and her disability means she requires taxis etc to even reach a service which is problematic.
15. Sophie suffers from anxiety and depression and experienced a panic attack on the day of the interview triggered by the stress of the impending journey to the jobcentre plus. As she failed to attend the interview, Sophie had her ESA withdrawn and is currently ineligible to claim Universal Credit. Because of this when Sophie came to see us she had been experiencing financial hardship for a number of weeks.
16. Dev lives and works on his landlord's rural farm. When he started experiencing back and shoulder pain he got treatment from the GP who is based in the nearest market town. Unfortunately Dev is rarely able to get to see his GP due to a lack of available appointments and a total lack of public transport, and he struggles to ring them as he doesn't have credit on his mobile phone – sometimes he can borrow a friend's phone but not always. Dev had successfully applied for ESA but this stopped in July as he was unable to provide a recent sick note from his GP, this had a knock on effect and his housing benefit stopped too and now he is experiencing considerable hardship. He is reliant on the generosity of his friends and help from local food banks to keep himself fed and clothed.

17. Clients have complained about the cost of fares especially when they are unemployed and have to travel to the Job Centre - Costs average around £6.50 for a return. This is quite a substantial chunk of JSA.
18. The number of buses servicing some rural communities are often very limited. A client could only come to an appointment on a Thursday as this was the only day there was a bus from her village into Alnwick. She had a two hour window to go things in Alnwick before the last bus back to the village.
19. Clients have mentioned being late to sign on as the bus was either late or did not turn up - this can result in benefit sanctions if the JC do not believe client.
20. Parents struggle to support children in further education because of the cost of transport, for example Newcastle college are over 65 miles away there is a main line train service but this is expensive. Also this limits access to apprenticeships because current bus services do not meet bus timetables.
21. There are no big employers in rural areas so need to use public transport to access work. Often the buses do not get into the towns on time to be able to find or keep work. This leaves them with only options of short term seasonal work locally with sometimes poor employment practices and zero hour contracts keeping them in the poverty trap. One client who was sanctioned for not applying for a job could not get into the town on time for the job so had not applied. For those without access to the internet they have to come into the towns to access a computer to look for work or apply for benefits.
22. Shift work and seasonal work and public transport do not mix. One highly skilled worker had to change buses twice in order to get to work but had to leave as could not get there on time. Some journeys have many stops on the way making journeys slow. It is difficult to move house because of the shortage of affordable housing.
23. We have an Island in North Northumberland, Lindesfarne where tides have a bearing on transport issues and schooling.
24. There is a chronic shortage of affordable housing in the towns and this means that people have to live in the rural areas with cheaper rents even if this is not their first choice to live in the country but then there are additional costs of transport.
25. The young or the long term unemployed have no resources to get a car or even bicycle to get to work or look for work. For example a young client got a job for a local store, the bus would not get him to work on time and therefore had to rely on his grandfather to take him to work.
26. Clients cannot access cheaper food stores such as markets, or larger supermarket chains, and many local rural stores and post offices have closed

or are expensive. Cannot get access to benefits or bank accounts because rural banks are closing. Our clients cannot access the food bank because of lack of transport or fares.

27. Many clients cannot access utility companies because of the cost of telephones and come to this office for support. There is also limited access to Pay Points to get meter keys in rural areas.
28. We now have only 2 ambulances serving north Northumberland. The A&E department for serious injury is approx 55 miles away.
29. Lady with child, living on benefits, has no transport so relies on the temperamental bus service between Samundham (home) and Leiston (the Bureau), in need of debt advice but has missed several appointments as she misses the bus or, if she does get here, she has to go back at a set time to get the bus in time to collect her child from school. As a result, the debt advice process has dragged on for months.
30. Lady with no money living on a caravan site, needed to get to Leiston Jobcentre for benefit advance payments but no money and buses too expensive, so had to walk both ways (about 7 miles each way) several times.
31. Lady having to attend Jobcentre in Leiston re JSA payments, also in Saxmundham, no money for bus fare and told by Jobcentre to walk - was offered the bus fare by man living in the same block in exchange for sexual favours.
32. Several clients required to attend medical tribunals in Bury St Edmunds or Ipswich but unable to pay the fares - trains are expensive and buses can take hours. Several clients also afraid to use public transport as it is unreliable and can be threatening if you are not used to people and noise etc.
33. CI disabled: great difficulty in walking and partially blind. He is having extreme difficulties getting around by bus because of the loss of a bus service run by Webbers, a company which went into liquidation earlier this year. Without the Webbers service, CI has to walk about a mile to the nearest bus stop to take a service run by First Bus, the principal supplier of bus services in Somerset. CI states that he lives in a location housing many elderly people, with the same difficulties as he. CI has spoken at length on the telephone to First Bus regarding replacement of the previous Webbers bus service, but received a very dismissive response. He has also spoken to Somerset County Council on the matter, but was simply referred back to First Bus.

CAPABILITY	OR	VULNERABILITY	ISSUES	DISCLOSED	BY	CLIENT
Difficulty	in	walking;	partial	blindness.		

34. Cl returned to BoS outreach. He called in to keep me updated on how he is getting on. He rang ESA as agreed and appealed the decision made. He said they requested a letter from his GP. He spoke to his GP who said that the benefits agency should not be talking to cl as this is too stressful for him so the GP wrote another med cert for cl to take to the JC+ and will contact cl psychiatrist at Glanville House to sort out cl's benefits. Cl has another appt at JC+ on Friday for his UC claim. Cl wants to know if he can get a budgeting loan. He said he should get his first UC payment at the end of December. Cl stated that he has to borrow money from friends to pay for the bus fares to Bridgwater to attend the JC+ to proceed with his UC claim. Due to the bus service changes he now has to catch 2 buses which is more expensive and he sometimes has to wait up to an hour for a bus as the connection is not good. The HB form was completed at outreach SDC last wk and they want a bank statement which shows his UC when he finally gets it. Cl requested a food voucher.
35. Client had Tribunal for benefits at Blackbrook Park, Taunton. The client caught the train from Bridgwater to Taunton as he was unsure where the tribunal centre was in comparison to the train station when he left. His plan was to catch a taxi from the train station, however there were none there so client decided to walk. The client has mobility issues and struggled with this so found the nearest bus stop and asked for the first bus that was heading that way. A bus eventually arrived and the client was informed by the driver that he was 5 minutes away from the venue. The client's tribunal was at 10am, the bus eventually got the client to the venue at 10:45am, however by this time the clerk had decided to postpone the tribunal due to his lateness and another tribunal planned for 11am. The client's benefits have been affected and he has to wait a further (unknown) period for the issue to be resolved, whilst on limited income.
36. 2 clients, both live in Sedgemoor, both have face to face assessments for their benefits, one of whom has a visual impairment. Both of the clients have been given face to face assessments in Exeter.
37. Client has a number of physical and mental problems. Client has lots of debts and currently has no income. He is extremely vulnerable. Client has made Universal Credit application and was given appointment at Bridgwater Job Centre for commitment interview. Client relies on public transport for getting to appointment. The 21 First bus was late and the client was late for his appointment. JC+ would not see client and he had to make a further appointment for another date.

38. Client lives in Highbridge area of Sedgemoor. She will have no public transport available to her at all from the end of December. Her husband has terminal cancer, she uses the bus for everything.
39. We have a client couple in Mickleton, around 10 miles from Stratford who we visit in their homes because they can't get into Stratford to see us. He is terminally ill with cancer and she has health and mobility problems. They rely on their daughter who works full time to take them to hospital etc. However there is an hourly bus service between Mickleton and Stratford, and they are retired so eligible for a free bus pass. In this case it's their health that's the main problem, making a long bus journey around the villages too uncomfortable and exhausting to contemplate. Also doctors' surgeries, hospitals etc are often not close to the bus stop. They are on Pension Credit, AA, carers etc and paying third parties for transport is expensive. They feel as though they are trapped in this village.

A Brief History of Bus Services

The omnibus service is considered to have emerged from the more traditional stage coach service in 1820s – but it did so in the cities.

Omnibuses were horse drawn until petrol driven vehicles were permitted by law in 1897. A motor bus service started in that year between Helston and The Lizard – perhaps the first country bus.

Services were run by municipalities as well as in the private sector.

In 1980s it was considered that nationalized industries were inefficient, and a programme of privatization and deregulation began through Transport Act 1985.

Since then there has been free competition, dominated by five large companies and regulated through local government, (in Wales, by the Welsh Assembly). But there is a view among shareholders that revenues are not meeting expectations, and recently some companies have changed (eg Stagecoach Group disposed of two large London operations).

Throughout the history of the bus, service providers have been free to issue concessions – so that older or disabled people can travel at more attractive rates. An English National Concessionary Travel Scheme became effective in April 2008 (a Welsh scheme is run by local authorities).

So history suggests that:

- The provision of bus services is not intrinsically profitable: service providers would argue that services were not well used.
- Which creates a problem in which business imperatives are in conflict with a public need for a service.

In recent years Community Transport schemes have emerged. There are now about 600 schemes nationally⁴, of which about a third are in rural areas. They provide 15 million passenger journeys a year – 7 million of which are in rural areas. This involves 60000 volunteers (48000 rural).

Typically these schemes depend upon volunteers; they offer group transport (used by 42000 voluntary groups), community car schemes and door-to-door services.

Community Transport Schemes are eligible for the Bus Services Operators Grant.

This sector is growing. Grants awarded grew by 16% in the 2010/11 financial year.

⁴ State of Rural Public Services 2013 - Rural Services Network

Economics of Bus Transport

Service Providers

In 2016, the provision of bus services is on a commercial basis – done for profit.

The effect of this is mitigated by several schemes for subsidising the providers totalling £2.3billion in 2011/12, accounting for 45% of bus operators revenues⁵:

- Bus Service Operators' Grant, including a fuel duty rebate
- Green Bus Fund (to encourage the use of low carbon buses)
- Better Bus Areas Fund to boost partnership working between local authorities and bus operators.

A Rural Bus Subsidy Grant was paid to local authorities to help support the provision of non-commercial rural services. This is no longer paid separately.

The Rural Bus Challenge was a competition that ran from 1998 to 2003 in which local authorities bid for funding aimed at stimulating innovation.

Kickstart funding was available to help where commercial routes were not viable from 2003 to 2008.

Local bus operators employ an estimated full time equivalent staff of 104000⁶. The number of buses used by local bus operators is fairly steady at about 35000; the average age of a bus is 7.6 years.

Government support, characterized by the Bus Services Operators Grant and concessionary travel reimbursement, was estimated at £2.21 billion in 2015/16⁷.

In England outside London, operator costs increased from £2.19 billion to £3.08 billion in 2015/16.

Service Users

The problem is mitigated for travellers by concessionary travel arrangements.

In 2014/15 there were 9.8 million concessionary travel passes in England⁸: this was an increasing number over the previous year, however total concessionary bus journeys fell by over 1.3% - but was still over a billion journeys. Travel Concession Authorities spent an estimated £1.2billion.

⁵ 2010 to 2015 government policy: local transport

⁶ National Travel Survey

⁷ National Travel Survey

⁸ Department for Transport: Concessionary Bus Travel Statistics: England, 2014/15.

There were 80 passes per 100 eligible people.

In non metropolitan areas, 93% of passes were for older people.

It is estimated that 16% of pass holders were on a low income. And that 68% of pass holders used their pass; 26% used it at least weekly.

42% of journeys were in non metropolitan areas.

Almost all of the Authorities offer additional discretionary travel concessions on a variety of bases – such as companions to disabled people, on demand transport services, and park & ride.

People living in England can get a bus pass for free travel when they reach the retirement age for women; in Wales they can be obtained at 60.

Discretionary concessions may also allow young people to travel free.

In the last year bus fares have increased by 1.8%⁹ - which is similar to the Retail Prices Index.

Comparing Costs

It is extremely difficult to develop any valid comparison of costs.

However the Automobile Association have produced some indications of motoring costs¹⁰. In 2014 the minimum estimated cost per mile, assuming a car priced at less than £13000 doing 30000 miles per year, was estimated at 25.45p; the highest cost per mile (assuming car priced at over £36000 doing 5000 miles/year) was 169.83p.

HMRC expect companies to pay their staff 45p/mile for the first 10000 miles (25p/mile above 10000). They allow 24p/mile for motor cycles and 20p/mile for cycles¹¹.

This gives only the vaguest idea of the cost per mile for a bus. And, of course the cost per mile is divided between variable numbers of passengers over variable distances.

Buses subsidies (2015/16) average £1.768/mile¹², counting only miles in which the vehicles were “open for business” (acknowledging that not all miles are “supported” by subsidies, and that not all miles are “open for business”).

⁹ National Travel Survey

¹⁰ <http://www.theaa.com/resources/Documents/pdf/motoring-advice/running-costs/petrol2014.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/expenses-and-benefits-business-travel-mileage/rules-for-national-insurance>

¹² Calculation derived from National Travel Survey

Trend

The trend appears to be worsening – as authorities consider their responses to a worsening financial climate and services are currently being reduced or withdrawn.

“Supported” mileages are declining – by 26.2% in 2015/16.¹³

¹³ National Travel Survey

Travel Behaviour¹⁴

English residents travel 6649 miles/year on average – 49% more than in 1972/3. They spend 368 hours travelling (only 4% increase). The average is 914 trips (a 4% reduction). Most trips (66%) are under 5 miles.

Shopping and personal business are the most common trip purposes, accounting for 20% each. Leisure accounts for 41% of distance travelled.

People in the highest income groups travel more than twice as far as people in the lowest.

Residents in rural areas travel around 44% further than urban residents.

Traffic is growing more than 13 times as fast on rural roads in Wales as on urban ones.¹⁵

25% of people have no car and this greatly influences personal travel patterns. 33% of households have 2 or more cars.

Bus trips account for less than 10% of travel. It is mainly used for medium length trips (1 to 25 miles). In Wales 79% of road traffic consists of cars (and taxis), 15% is light vans, 4% is goods vehicles, 1% is buses and coaches and 1% is motorcycles¹⁶.

Bus users are categorized either as concessionary, meaning elderly or disabled people, and in some areas young people or non concessionary.

Bus punctuality runs at over 80% (on time means less than 5 minutes late).

Trend

In 2015/16 4.53 billion passenger journeys were made by bus in England – 2.6% less than the previous year.

Outside London, bus use has been in steady decline since 2008/9. In 2015/16 it was 2.24 billion journeys.

Viewed as bus mileage, the statistics give the same impression. Currently the national use is 1.25 billion bus service miles (a decline of 2.8%).

Viewed as mileage supported by local authorities, the picture is the same.

¹⁴ From National Travel Survey 2015

¹⁵ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/road-traffic/?lang=en>

¹⁶ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/road-traffic/?lang=en>

The average number of bus journeys per head outside London in 2015/16 was 49 (53 in 2010/11).

Within London, 2015/16 was the first year of decline. This indicates/illustrates a difference between urban and rural.

Legal Landscape

The following primary legislation is relevant:

- *Transport Act 1985* (introduced privatized and deregulated bus services throughout the United Kingdom).
- *Transport Act 2000* (reforms to local transport planning and delivery)
- *Local Transport Act 2008* (gives local authorities the power to ... meet local transport needs in the light of local circumstances.)

Secondary legislation is massive and is not considered helpful in this report.

The *Bus Services Bill* is in the Parliamentary process¹⁷. Its main points are:

- to strengthen arrangements for partnership working
- to introduce new franchising powers
- to provide for a step change in the information available to bus passengers.

So it is of only indirect relevance to this work.

¹⁷ <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/busservices.html>

Government Policy

Policy relating to bus services is not yet published.

The previous government published a document “*2010 to 2015 government policy: local transport*”.

It tells us that 55% of car journeys are under 5 miles and it suggests that many of these could be walked, or made by bike or public transport.

Its Actions include “To make bus services more punctual, interconnected, green and accessible...”

It has many drivers including congestion and emissions.

In March 2013, the government published a strategy document “*Door to Door*”¹⁸. It says “The government wants more journeys to be made by sustainable transport, public transport, supported by cycling and walking.” It recognises that for this to happen, sustainable transport must become more attractive. It identifies four core areas:

- accurate, accessible and reliable information about the different transport options for their journeys;
- convenient and affordable tickets, for an entire journey;
- regular and straightforward connections at all stages of the journey and between different modes of transport; and
- safe, comfortable transport facilities.

The Welsh Government publishes a Bus Policy:

“We are committed to improving the quality and accessibility of local bus services in Wales.

Local bus services are vital to Welsh economic, cultural and social life. Every day, 63,000 people rely on the bus to get to work and about 350,000 trips are made every day to get to hospital appointments, visit friends, go shopping or access leisure. Bus services have the potential to offer people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds a reliable, flexible, affordable and more sustainable way of travelling.

Local bus services provided 107 million passenger journeys in 2013/2014. 73% of the total distance travelled was on commercial routes, with the remaining 27% on routes subsidised by local authorities.

As well as improving the quality and accessibility of local bus services in Wales, we are exploring the potential for offering a better deal on bus fares

¹⁸ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/142539/door-to-door-strategy.pdf

for people on lower incomes.”

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