

Roundtable Discussion with Motability Charity

5 November 2019

Victoria Quay

Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

Notes

Attendees:

Emma	Scott	Disability Equality Scotland
Linda	Bamford	MACS
David	Hunter	MACS (Chair)
Hilary	Stubbs	MACS
Fraser	Sutherland	MACS
Aga	Lysak	MACS Secretariat
Barry	Le Grys MBE	Motability
Ian	Goswell	Motability Operations (MO)
Lisa	Witherington	Motability Operations (MO)
Maureen	Morrison	Spinal Injuries Scotland
Claire	Smith	Transport Scotland

Apologies:

Marianne	Scobie	Glasgow Disability Alliance
Joanne	Martin	Spinal Injures Scotland
Simon	Hodgson	Carers Scotland

1. DH welcomed everyone and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to:
 - a) Discuss the update and actions undertaken by Motability and Motability Operations since the previous meeting in March 2019
 - b) Discuss the issues raised within MACS pre meeting briefing paper
 - c) Discuss the best way forward in medium to long term, especially in light of social security devolution to the Scottish Government.

2. MACS confirmed that they recognise and appreciate the service that the Motability Scheme provides. However they would like to discuss areas which could benefit from improvements. MACS confirmed that their main areas of concern remained value for money, strategy development and spending plans, customer and stakeholder engagement and transparency particularly around the governance.

3. Both Motability and Motability Operations confirmed that they are very dedicated to improving their services.

4. It was recognised that since publication of the National Audit Office (NAO) report, lots of actions have been undertaken or are in progress to address the report's findings and recommendations, for example:
 - a) Establishment of Motability Foundation - an endowment fund to invest and manage the charity reserves and allow for long term income, regardless of economic and political situation.
 - b) Liaison with other charities to ensure there is no overlap in donations and support is targeting the right groups.
 - c) Research is being undertaken to establish the feasibility of offering a wider range of mobility aids.
 - d) Governance is under evaluation with the board's diversity significantly increasing and recruitment being advertised publicly. MACS welcomed those improvements but noted that they had not seen any adverts for the Chair or Governor positions or heard about them through their wider networks.

5. MACS welcomed these initiatives but noted that by generating a high profit, customers were being over-charged for their leases. Initiatives were being funded from customer's benefits without meaningful engagement to determine what was important to them and what could make their lease agreements

work better for them, including the potential to reduce the lease amount and generate smaller profits.

MO explained that the recent second-hand car market was unusually beneficial and resale rates enabled them to generate more profit than anticipated. They stated that, it should be noted that having taken into account margins and not the sums, the overall excess income is not significant. Especially as it is not possible to foresee what the future brings - Motability confirmed that no donation is expected next year from Motability Operations (MO).

MO stated that it was important to ensure that the scheme is sustainable and benefits not only the current customers but also future generations. Lots of factors are taken into account when calculating leases to ensure that the scheme is universal to all customers across the country. Nevertheless, their forecasting methodology is being currently reviewed and work is ongoing on strategies to ensure the surplus can benefit disabled communities.

The Motability charity consulted with over 2,000 people at individual level (60% Motability customers, 40% non-customers, both eligible and not eligible for the scheme) on options for how it should spend its funds (largely donated by MO). Based on their feedback Motability launched four initiatives benefiting disabled people communities. In response to a question, Motability confirmed that reducing the costs of leases had not been an option in the consultation.

On scrutiny from MACS, Motability confirmed that this had been more of a market research exercise than a customer/DPO engagement opportunity, such as had been previously suggested by MACS as a good way forward.

6. MACS expressed disappointment that neither the Committee or any of the main Scottish DPOs had been consulted as part of this process, despite the fact that feedback and assistance had been offered at the March 2019 meeting and again after this.

Motability explained that they consulted at the individual and not organisational level.

7. Motability explained that they are currently trying to establish why two thirds of eligible people decide not to join the scheme. Although no formal consultation or research was undertaken, it is understood that there are three reasons explaining the situation:

- a) Lack of awareness – especially amongst those who recently became eligible. Motability understands that more action needs to be undertaken to promote the scheme more successfully. MACS offered its own assistance and proposed DES as an excellent platform to gather Scottish people’s feedback.
- b) Lack of scheme’s flexibility to address people’s variable accessibility needs throughout the lease period. However, Motability confirmed that they are currently piloting a new facility allowing people to switch the vehicles according to their needs and keep mobile.

On further discussion it was confirmed that this pilot had not commenced but was in the concept stage. MACS suggested engagement with DPOs or Motability customers could help with the remit and scope of the pilot to assist with getting it right for scheme members.

- c) Lack of facility to use the scheme as an on-demand service. The feedback received by Motability suggests that a number of disabled people can use public transport for most of the time and would benefit from a service-based scheme, when a car can be hired for short time.

8. MACS called for greater transparency and a need for more information to be available in public domain. However Motability explain that due to some commercial sensitivities it may not be possible to publish certain information. Motability recognised that its online presence needs to improve and be more user friendly.

MACS asked if the scheme agreement between Motability and Motability Operations could be made public with any commercially sensitive information within this redacted. Motability agreed to consider this.

9. Future of Motability in Scotland was also discussed:

- a) Motability and Motability Operations have submitted a joint application for accreditation for the Scottish Government Accessible Vehicles and Equipment Scheme (AVES), proposing the continue to deliver in Scotland the same

universal service and standards as elsewhere. They are happy to work with Scottish Government to ensure customers experience a smooth and as seamless as possible transition. Results are expected to be announced on 4 December.

- b) Work is well underway to open a MO call centre in Edinburgh. The service provided will be universal and not solely Scottish-centred, open 7 days a week. Large sums have been invested on training to ensure high and strong customer services. The company is anticipating a long term engagement in Scotland and is building their strategies on the assumption of growth.

MO's new building in South Gyle is being designed with assistance of Disability Equality Scotland (in terms of accessibility guidance) and is going to be accessible, with public access. A Changing Places toilet is going to be available for the public and advertised on the national Changing Places database. A new and multipurpose conference centre is also going to be available from April 2020, with electric charging points and disabled parking spaces. These facilities will be available for community use, which will provide an excellent platform for gathering feedback from disabled people on how to enhance the Motability service. The importance of informal opinion gathering was highlighted by Motability who noted that this is often more constructive and effective than formal consultations.

When asked about any contingency plans in case of not receiving the SG AVES accreditation, Motability admitted they had not considered that option so far but also confirmed that the number of call centre staff would not be affected by the accreditation decision. They stated that they require increased call centre capacity because the number of customers is rising but also because the calls' complexity is increasing and therefore demanding more staff capacity.

- c) Discussing the possibility of more flexible services in the future, Motability Operations spoke about their willingness to raise the standards of taxi services for disabled and develop a guidance to ensure people are treated in an appropriate manner across the country. Lothian Community Transport Services was suggested by MACS as a body experienced in taxi drivers' training who Motability may wish to engage with.
- d) Motability is currently investigating the possibility of registering with OSCR, which would provide an avenue for addressing any complaints from Scotland.

10. MACS expressed its disappointment that the proposals suggested by the attendees of the first event in March 2019 on potential opportunities for spending the surplus money generated from lease charges to benefit disabled people have not been taken forward. Lisa ensured that she would look at them and respond to MACS.

Action Point: Lisa to advise MACS of the state of proposals suggested by attendees of the first event, on potential opportunities for spending the surplus from lease charges to benefit disabled people

11. A discussion took place on several areas of the 2017 Governance review of Motability. MACS had asked for an update on the recommendation that Motability Tenth Anniversary Trust and Motability should become one entity. Motability stated that an announcement would be made around March 2020 and after the Motability Tenth Anniversary Trusts AGM. They confirmed that this recommendations was being discussed and the announcement would clarify the outcome of these discussions
12. MACS raised their concern with the spending plans and, in particular, the announcement on the donation being made to the DWP to fund elements of the Access to Work Scheme. MACS position was that even if this arrangement met legal thresholds it still raised issues over ethics and morality. Motability explained it would be for new initiatives on Access to Work such as transport.

MACS confirmed that currently Access to Work covers transport and as such this wasn't new and that they also wanted Motability to be aware that Motability customers were angered at this announcement and felt that profits made from their lease charges should not be used to support the DWP's Access to Work Scheme. MACS asked that Motability consider this position.
13. DH thanked Lisa, Barry and Ian for their openness and engagement and offered to be in touch early next year.