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# Evaluation Report of Pilot of Free Bus Travel for People Seeking Asylum in Scotland

## Research Materials

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# Survey Questionnaire for Participants

The online survey questionnaire is provided below.

## Survey Introduction

This survey asks for your views on the Scottish Government's free bus travel pilot for people seeking asylum. This pilot was delivered using the National Entitlement Card (NEC).

It takes about 10 minutes to complete. Taking part is voluntary, and your answers will be kept confidential. All data will be anonymised and only used to show the impact of the pilot on people seeking asylum in Scotland.

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

## Application Process

### 1. How did you find out about the free bus travel pilot?

- The Transport Scotland website
- A refugee support organisation or community group
- Local Council Accommodation provider (Mears)
- College or university
- By word of mouth
- Other

### 2. Overall, how easy or difficult did you find the process to get your National Entitlement Card?

- Very difficult
- Fairly difficult
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Fairly easy
- Very easy

**3. Did anyone help you to complete your application, if so who helped? Please select all that apply**

- A refugee support organisation or community group
- Local Council
- Accommodation provider
- College or university
- Friend
- No one helped me/I completed it myself
- Other

**4. What did you think of the availability of buses when using your National Entitlement Card?**

- Very good
- Fairly good
- Neither good nor poor
- Fairly poor
- Very poor

**5. How easy did you find it to understand and communicate with the driver when using your National Entitlement Card?**

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult

**6. How easy or difficult did you find it to use your National Entitlement Card to travel?**

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult

**7. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your experience of participating in the free bus travel pilot scheme?**

- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

**8. Is there is anything else you would like to tell us about your experience of applying for your National Entitlement Card? If so, please use the text box below**

Free text box

## How you travel

**9. How long would it normally take you to walk or wheel to the following places?**

| Statement           | Less than 5 minutes | 5 – 15 minutes | 15 -30 minutes | More than 60 minutes | Not applicable to me |
|---------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Local food shop     | 1                   | 2              | 3              | 4                    | 5                    |
| Your child's school | 1                   | 2              | 3              | 4                    | 5                    |
| Doctor's surgery    | 1                   | 2              | 3              | 4                    | 5                    |
| Legal advice/lawyer | 1                   | 2              | 3              | 4                    | 5                    |

## **10. What was your main mode of travel before getting the National Entitlement Card?**

- Walking/wheeling
- Bicycle
- Bus
- Train
- Car
- Taxi
- Subway
- Tram
- Other

## **11. What is your main mode of travel since getting the National Entitlement Card?**

- Walking/wheeling
- Bicycle
- Bus
- Train
- Car
- Taxi
- Subway
- Tram
- Other

## **12. How often do you use the National Entitlement Card to travel by bus?**

- Every day
- 2 -3 times a week
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less than once a month
- Never

### **13. Please tell us why you have never used the NEC.**

Free text box

Impact of free bus travel

### **14. What are the main purposes for using your National Entitlement Card. Please choose all answers that apply**

- To travel to/for appointments with my solicitor or the Home Office
- To travel to/for medical appointments
- To travel to/for church, mosque or another place of worship
- To travel to/for social activities
- To travel to/for sports activities
- To travel to/for English language classes or other education
- To travel to/for shopping
- To travel to/for volunteering
- To travel to/for visiting family and friends
- To travel to/for
- Taking child/children to school or nursery
- Other

### **15. Please select the statement that best applies to you**

- Since getting my National Entitlement Card, I travel a lot more often
- Since getting my National Entitlement Card, I travel more often
- Since getting my National Entitlement Card, I travel about the same amount
- Since getting my National Entitlement Card, I travel less often
- Since getting my National Entitlement Card, I travel a lot less often

### **16. Please select the statement that best applies to you**

- Since receiving my National Entitlement Card I have more money to spend on other items
- Since receiving my National Entitlement Card I have about the same money to spend on other items
- Since receiving my National Entitlement Card I have less money to spend on other items

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

**17. Having free bus travel has made it easier for me to travel to services and appointments**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**18. Having free bus travel has helped my mental health and wellbeing**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**19. Having free bus travel helps me feel less lonely or isolated**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**20. Having free bus travel helps me feel like I am part of the community**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

## 21. I feel safe travelling by bus in Scotland

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

## 22. I am less likely to miss medical appointments

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

## 23. I am less likely to miss legal appointments

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

## 24. Since getting your National Entitlement Card, how likely are you to do the following?

| Statement                | More likely than before | About the same as before | Less likely than before | Don't know | Not applicable |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Visit friends and family | 1                       | 2                        | 3                       | 4          | 5              |
| Volunteer                | 1                       | 2                        | 3                       | 4          | 5              |

| Statement                                                                                             | More likely than before | About the same as before | Less likely than before | Don't know | Not applicable |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Meet local people from Scotland or attend events                                                      | 1                       | 2                        | 3                       | 4          | 5              |
| Take my children out                                                                                  | 1                       | 2                        | 3                       | 4          | 5              |
| Take children to school                                                                               | 1                       | 2                        | 3                       | 4          | 5              |
| Take English classes or other education/training                                                      | 1                       | 2                        | 3                       | 4          | 5              |
| Seek support that I need, but is too far to walk/wheel to (e.g. doctor, lawyer, support organisation) | 1                       | 2                        | 3                       | 4          | 5              |

## 25. Have you used your National Entitlement Card to travel outside of your local council area?

- Yes, to essential services (healthcare, legal advice)
- Yes, for leisure and cultural activities
- Yes, for education or training
- Yes, to visit friends or family
- Yes, for another purpose
- No
- Don't know

## 26. Were you aware before completing this survey that people seeking asylum who are aged under 22, aged 60 or over or

who have a qualifying disability can get a National Entitlement Card to provide free bus travel in the longer term?

- Yes
- No

27. If there is anything else you would like to tell us about the impact of the pilot scheme on your life please use the text box below.

Free text box

### About you (optional)

This section seeks to gather general information about you to help us analyse the results of the survey. It is entirely optional and you do not have to fill in any of the questions below. You will not be identified from your responses and all answers will be anonymous.

#### 28. Your age group

- Under 22
- 22 - 39
- 40 -59
- 60 or over
- Prefer not to say

#### 29. How long you have been waiting for an asylum decision

- Less than 3 months
- 3 to 6 months
- 6 to 12 months
- More than a year
- Prefer not to say

30. Which Council area were you living in when you got your National Entitlement Card? This should be printed on the front of your card.

- Aberdeen City
- Aberdeenshire
- Angus Argyll & Bute
- Edinburgh
- Clackmannanshire
- na h-Eileanan Siar
- Dumfries & Galloway
- Dundee
- East Ayrshire
- East Dunbartonshire
- East Lothian
- East Renfrewshire
- Falkirk
- Fife
- Glasgow
- Highland
- Inverclyde
- Midlothian
- Moray
- North Ayrshire
- North Lanarkshire
- Orkney Islands
- Perth & Kinross
- Renfrewshire
- Scottish Borders
- Shetland Islands
- South Ayrshire
- South Lanarkshire
- Stirling
- West Dunbartonshire
- West Lothian
- Prefer not to say

**31. During your time in Scotland, have you lived in more than one local authority area?**

- Yes - two
- Yes - three
- Yes - more than three
- No
- Prefer not to say

**32. If English is not your first language, please select the language you use the most**

- Arabic
- Vietnamese
- Kurdish
- Sorani
- Pashto
- Farsi
- Dari
- Tigrinya
- Amharic
- Somali
- Urdu
- Prefer not to say
- Other

**33. Thank you for participating in the pilot scheme and completing this survey. If you have any questions about the survey, please set out below.**

Free text box

# Survey Questionnaire for Organisations

The online survey questionnaire is provided below.

## Survey Introduction

This survey has been designed to gather the views of stakeholder organisations of the Scottish Government pilot scheme for free bus travel for people seeking asylum. It should take around 10 minutes to complete. Completion of the survey is voluntary, and you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to. Survey responses will be anonymised and aggregated by business type. The names of businesses who participated in the survey will not be reported on and/or linked to their response. If you would prefer to reply by email, please send your completed form.

## Information

### 1. Which category best describes your organisation?

- Local authority/ Arms length external organisation
- Third Sector
- Education
- Bus operator
- Other

### 2. Which category best describes the role your organisation has played in the pilot scheme?

- Administrator for applications
- Trusted Verifier
- Advisor/signposting
- Other

### **3. Does your organisation operates in a specific local authority area or nationally?**

- One local authority area
- More than one local authority area
- Nationally

## Questions for Trusted Verifiers

Please answer the questions in this section only if you have been acting as a Trusted Verifier for the Pilot.

### **4. If you have been acting as a Trusted Verifier, how easy or difficult has the process been?**

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult

### **5. Please give any further details regarding Question 4 above**

Free text box

### **6. If you have been acting as a Trusted Verifier, what level of impact has the time required for this role had on your organisation?**

- Major impact
- Minor impact
- No impact

### **7. If you have been acting as a Trusted Verifier, what level of impact has this role had on your organisation's resources?**

- Major impact
- Minor impact
- No impact

**8. Please use the text box below to let us know any changes you would recommend to the Trusted Verifier process**

Free text box

Questions for all organisations

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about the impact of the pilot on people seeking asylum in Scotland and on organisations.

**9. Applicants for the pilot scheme have had sufficient information and support to make applications**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**10. Please use this text box to explain your answer to Question 9**

Free text box

**11. Applicants for the pilot scheme have had sufficient information and support to make applications**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**12. There has been a decrease in asylum seekers' dropout rates at activities, services, or classes during the pilot**

- Strongly agree

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**13. The free travel card has made it easier for people seeking asylum to access essential services, in particular health, education, and legal support**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**14. The pilot scheme has made a positive impact on supporting integration of people seeking asylum within local communities**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**15. There has been a reduction in travel costs for organisations as a result of the pilot**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**16. Please use this text box to explain your answer to Question 15 in relation to your own organisation**

Free text box

**17. There has been an increase in administration costs for organisations as a result of the pilot**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

**18. Please use this text box to explain your answer to Question 17 in relation to your own organisation**

Free text box

**19. The administrative process for the Pilot was straightforward and easy to understand**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- No different to the process for the statutory schemes
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**20. The supporting guidance and advice provided was helpful for organisations in administering the scheme**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**21. Did you use or refer people to the translated guidance?**

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Potential issues and improvements

**22. Please use the text box below to set out any changes or improvements you think could be made to the administrative process**

Free text box

**23. Please use this text box to set out any improvements that can be made in the guidance and advice**

Free text box

**24. Please use this text box to set out any issues or difficulties associated with the pilot since it went live**

Free text box

**25. Please use this text box to provide any further feedback you would like to in relation to the pilot**

Free text box

**26. Name (optional)**

Free text box

**27. Organisation (optional)**

Free text box

## 28. Date

Date selection box

# Participant Focus Group Topic Guide

## Introduction

Many thanks for your time today. We are here representing Transport Scotland to find out about your experience of the Scottish Government's free bus travel pilot for people seeking asylum. I am [NAME] and my job is [XXXXX]. I will be facilitating the discussion today and [XXXXX] will be our note taker.

The information we gather today will be used alongside data from an online survey to help us determine what the impact of the pilot has been for people seeking asylum in Scotland and to inform any next steps on the policy.

Your views and experience will be really helpful for us to understand how the pilot has worked, the impact of being able to access bus travel during the pilot and how the application process worked.

I would like to be clear that everything you say during this session will be treated confidentially. Your responses will be anonymised, meaning you will not be personally identified in any notes, analysis, or publications.

The anonymised feedback you provide today may be included in the final report to help illustrate key themes and findings, but no comments will be attributed to you individually. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any question or to leave the session at any time.

I will ensure that an email address is shared after the session in case you have any further questions about the research and we will share a copy of the final report via [organisation hosting the session].

If everyone is happy to proceed on this basis, we will start.

## Prompts for discussion

### 1. Use of card

- How easy or difficult did you find using the card to travel on the bus?
- How did you find travelling on buses during the pilot?
- Is there anything that would have improved your experience of travelling on the bus?

## 2. Impact

- Has having access to free bus travel changed your travel habits?
- What differences has having the card made to your daily life?
- Are there places you have been able to travel to during the pilot that you weren't able to get to before? If so, has this included being able to:
  - attend essential appointments (health/legal)
  - access education and training opportunities
  - take part in community events and activities
- Has having free bus travel impacted your mental and physical health?

## 3. Application process

- Do you have any feedback on the application process?

## 4. Any other comments/observations

Open response

Close

[Thank people for their time, share email address and reiterate that the report will be shared when complete]

Share information on NCTS:

- People seeking asylum living in Scotland may qualify for existing national schemes if they are under 22, over 60, or disabled. You can find out if you are eligible by visiting [nec.scot](https://nec.scot) online.

## Key lines for questions

### When is the pilot ending?

The pilot scheme is ending on 31 March 2026. No new cards can now be issued and the cards will not work from 1 April 2026.

## **Why can free bus travel for asylum seekers not just be permanent like the other schemes?**

Scotland's concessionary travel schemes – that provide bus travel for people aged under 22, over 60 or with qualifying disability - are statutory. That means that the Scottish Parliament approved legislation for those schemes. Legislation can take a long time and there are things that need to be determined before legislation could be pursued, including whether this is something the Scottish Parliament has power to legislate for.

The evaluation of the pilot currently underway will help to inform any future decisions, including any longer term provision of free bus travel support.

## **What are the next steps?**

During the pilot, information on usage is being collected and participants and stakeholders have been invited to give their views on the impacts of free bus travel – through focus groups like this one and through an online survey.

This information will feed into an evaluation to be carried out to inform consideration of proceeding with this policy including future affordability and value for money and to determine if it has supported people seeking asylum to integrate into society in line with the Scottish Government's New Scots Strategy.

In parallel, the Scottish Government continues to explore if inclusion of people seeking asylum as a distinct group in the statutory National Concessionary Travel Schemes will be possible in the longer term. Asylum is reserved to the UK Parliament and handled by the UK Government, and it needs to be determined whether the Scottish Parliament has the power to legislate to create a scheme specifically for people seeking asylum.

In the meantime there are no changes to the existing statutory concessionary travel schemes which people seeking asylum can access if they meet the scheme eligibility on the basis of age or disability.

## **Has the pilot been well used?**

Provide the latest statistics.



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