



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**

CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

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# Evaluation of the National Concessionary Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People

## Research Materials

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# Cardholder Survey Questionnaire

The postal survey questionnaire issued to cardholders is provided below. The participant information and survey questions were the same in the postal and online surveys.

## Survey Introduction

Transport Scotland has commissioned an evaluation of the Scotland-wide Free Bus Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People - this is the free bus pass. The evaluation aims to establish whether the scheme has achieved its objectives and delivered benefits to older and disabled people.

The evaluation is interested in the following free bus passes:

- Older person's free bus pass
- Disabled person's free bus pass
- Disabled Companion (+1) free bus pass
- Sight Impaired person's free bus pass
- Sight Impaired Companion (+1) free bus pass

If you have one of these, please complete the following survey, no matter how often or how little you use it.

Please note: to take part you must live in Scotland, have one of the above bus passes or respond on behalf of someone who does, and be over the age of 16. Parents/carers should respond on behalf of card holders under the age of 16.

The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to. Do not include any personal details that would identify you or others, except if opting-in to the focus groups and/or prize draw (this is optional). Please follow any instructions to skip over questions as required.

The closing date for all responses is 23 November 2025.

Returning your questionnaire: Once you have completed the questionnaire you can return it to the research team using the reply paid envelope provided. You do not need a stamp.

**Prize Draw:** At the end of this questionnaire there is the opportunity to take part in our prize draw to win a Love2Shop voucher. There is a top prize of £250, as well as other prizes of £150, £100, and 10 x £50 vouchers to be won. Love2Shop vouchers can be used across a wide range of retail and leisure providers, cafes, restaurants, and supermarkets.

**Handling your data:** Wellside Research has been commissioned to conduct the survey. All data will be treated confidentially, and only used to conduct this research and for monitoring the impact of the free bus travel scheme. Data will be held by Wellside Research, with only anonymised data shared with Transport Scotland. Transport Scotland will publish the findings from the evaluation, including this survey, in 2026. It will not be possible to identify you in the reporting. A Privacy Notice with more details about the work is attached [provided to respondents].

**Contact us:** If you have any questions about the research or problems completing the questionnaire, please email our researchers at email address [redacted] or telephone [redacted].

## Profile Questions

### 1. Do you currently live in Scotland?

- Yes, full-time permanent
- Yes, part-time
- No- you are not eligible to take part

### 2. Do you personally have an older or disabled person's free bus pass, or are you responding on behalf of someone who has one of these free bus passes?

- I have a free bus pass and I'm under age 16- you are not eligible to take part
- I have a free bus pass and I'm aged 16+
- I am a parent/carer of a child under age 16
- I am responding on behalf of someone aged 16+
- None of the above- you are not eligible to take part

### 3. Which of the following free bus passes do you/the card holder have?

- Older person's bus pass
- Disabled person's bus pass
- Disabled Plus Companion (+1) bus pass
- Sight Impaired person's bus pass
- Sight Impaired Plus Companion (+1) bus pass
- None of the above- you are not eligible to take part

**If you are answering on behalf of someone else, please answer all following questions as if you were them.**

## Awareness and Application Process

### 4. How long have you held your free bus pass for?

If you have ever renewed or replaced your free bus pass, please tell us the time since your first application.

- Less than 2 years
- 2 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- Over 10 years

### 5. How did you first find out about the free bus pass? (Tick one option)

- The internet
- Social media
- My social worker
- My GP / A health worker
- Advocacy or support group
- My school
- From the council
- The library
- The Post Office
- The bus station/on board a bus
- Word of mouth (e.g. friends, family, colleagues)
- Media, such as TV radio or newspaper
- Other (please write in below)
- Don't know/Can't remember

**6. How easy did you find it to get the information you needed about the free bus pass and information on how to apply? (Circle one option)**

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Neither
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult
- Can't remember

**7. When you applied for the free bus pass, did you complete the application yourself or did you get help from someone to do this?**

- Applied myself (go to Q9)
- Had help from someone (continue)
- Can't remember (go to Q9)

**8. Who helped you with the application? (Tick one option)**

- Family, friend or neighbour
- Staff at a council office
- Library staff
- Citizens Advice
- Social worker
- Other (please specify below)

Other (please tell us the service you used or the professional role of the person who helped you, do not enter a person's name): Free text response

**9. What type of application did you complete? (Tick one option)**

- Online (go to Q11)
- By post (continue)
- Don't know (go to Q11)
- Can't remember (go to Q11)

**10. Please tell us why you applied by post and not online?**

Free text response

**11. Was your application successful the first time, or did you have to resubmit the application?**

- Successful first time (go to Q13)
- Had to resubmit the application (continue)
- Can't remember (go to Q13)

**12. Please tell us, in general terms, why you had to resubmit the application?**

Free text response

**13. How easy or difficult did you find the application process you used? (Circle one option)**

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Neither
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult
- Can't remember

**14. Please tell us if there anything that could be done to improve the initial application process?**

Free text response

**15. Have you ever had to renew or replace your pass at any time? (Tick all that apply)**

- Yes, had to renew it (continue)
- Yes, had to replace it (continue)
- No (go to Q19)
- Don't know (go to Q19)

**16. If you have ever had to renew your pass, were you notified that you needed to renew it?**

- Yes
- No
- Can't remember
- Not applicable, not renewed

**17. How easy or difficult did you find it to get a new or replacement card?**

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Neither
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult
- Can't remember

**18. Please tell us if there anything that could be done to improve the renewal or replacement process?**

Free text response

## General Perceptions of Buses

**19. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements? (Circle one number per row)**

| Statement                                        | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't know |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| I think buses are environmentally friendly       | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| I think bus travel helps to make the roads safer | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |



| Statement                                             | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't know |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| I think buses are a fast and convenient way to travel | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| I think buses are too busy/ crowded                   | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| I think there is anti-social behaviour on buses       | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| I feel confident travelling by bus                    | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| I generally feel safe travelling by bus               | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| Current bus services meet my needs                    | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| Buses are clean and comfortable                       | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |

## Use of the Free Bus Pass

**20. On average, how often have you used the free bus pass for travelling on buses in the last 12 months?**

- Five days a week or more (continue)
- Two to four times a week (continue)
- About once a week (continue)
- About once a fortnight (continue)
- About once a month (continue)
- A few times a year or less (continue)
- Not used it in the last 12 months (go to Q22)

**21. When using the bus for travelling, in general what is your main reason for choosing to take the bus? (Tick one option)**

- I don't have the option of travelling by other means
- It's free/it costs less than travelling by other transport options

- It's more convenient than the car
- It's more convenient than other transport options
- It's better for the environment than the car
- It's better for the environment than other public transport options
- I prefer the bus to other means of travel
- Other (please specify below)
- Don't know

Other: Free text response

**22. Please indicate what, if anything, discourages you from using the bus more often than you could or would like to, or the reasons why you do not travel by bus/use your free bus pass more often than you do?**

**(Tick all that apply - note: options continue on the next page)**

- There is no bus service near to me
- There are no bus stops or stations nearby
- I have difficulty physically accessing buses (e.g. getting to/from the bus stop, getting on/off the bus)
- Buses are not suitable for my condition, illness or disability (e.g. lack of wheelchair space)
- There are no direct bus services/routes to get where I want
- The buses don't run when or how often I need
- Buses take too long
- Buses are unreliable
- A lack of information/Information is not in an accessible format to help me plan journeys
- Information during journeys is not available or accessible to me
- The buses are too busy
- I'm concerned about anti-social behaviour
- I don't feel safe on buses
- I'm concerned about catching illnesses (e.g. cold, flu, Covid)
  - There is no Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) available (DRT is a flexible service that provides shared transport to users who specify their desired location and time of pick-up and drop-off).
- My companion prefers to travel by other modes of transport
- My companion is not always available to travel
- It is difficult to book a companion onto buses with me (where this is an option)

- I prefer/need to use other modes of travel
- My journey(s) is too short to need a bus
- Other (please specify below)
- No specific reason/nothing
- I have no need or desire to use the bus more often

Other: Free text response

**23. Have you experienced any of the following practical problems when using the free bus pass in the last 12 months? (Tick all that apply)**

- Not applicable, I've not used the bus in the last 12 months (go to Q32)
- Problems physical putting the card on the machine (on board buses)
- Machines on the bus being broken
- Card not working, not recognised by the machine
- Problems booking seats (where this is an option, e.g. coach journeys)
- Any other problems (please specify below)
- Not experienced any problems

Other: Free text response

**If you said at Q20 that you travelled by bus 'a few times a year or less', or 'have not travelled by bus in the last 12 months', please now skip straight to Q32 (do not answer Q24-Q31).**

**24. Thinking about your bus use over the last 12 months, please use the table below to tell us:**

- all the reasons for the journeys you have made using the free bus pass; and
- your main journey purpose using the free bus pass - i.e. the reason for the journey you made most often.

| <b>Journey</b>                             | <b>(a) All bus journeys (tick all that apply)</b> | <b>(b) Main bus journey purpose (tick one)</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Education/training                         | 1                                                 | 1                                              |
| Commuting to/from work                     | 2                                                 | 2                                              |
| Travelling within my job/as part of my job | 3                                                 | 3                                              |

| <b>Journey</b>                                                                 | <b>(a) All bus journeys<br/>(tick all that apply)</b> | <b>(b) Main bus journey purpose<br/>(tick one)</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Volunteering                                                                   | 4                                                     | 4                                                  |
| Social and leisure purposes                                                    | 5                                                     | 5                                                  |
| Shopping and personal business (e.g. banking, post office, paying bills, etc.) | 6                                                     | 6                                                  |
| Health and medical appointments/services                                       | 7                                                     | 7                                                  |
| Visiting family and friends                                                    | 8                                                     | 8                                                  |
| Day trips and holidays (including overnight trips)                             | 9                                                     | 9                                                  |
| Just to get out                                                                | 10                                                    | 10                                                 |
| Other (please specify):                                                        | 11                                                    | 11                                                 |

**25. Thinking about your main journey purpose (from Q24b), on average how often did you travel by bus (using your free bus pass) for this reason over the last 12 months?**

- Five days a week or more
- Two to four times a week
- About once a week
- About once a fortnight
- About once a month
- A few times a year or less
- Don't know

**26. Again, thinking about your main journey purpose in the last 12 months (from Q24b), how long did this journey typically take? (Based on one way, not a return trip)**

- Up to 10 minutes
- 11 to 30 minutes
- 31 to 45 minutes
- 46 minutes to 1 hour
- Over 1 hour and up to 1.5 hours
- Over 1.5 hours
- Don't know

## Behaviour Change as a Result of the Free Bus Pass

In this section we are trying to understand the impact that the free bus pass has had on your travel behaviour. We will therefore ask you to consider how you would travel if the free bus pass did not exist. These questions are simply trying to understand and evidence the extent to which it has impacted on travel choices.

**27. Again, thinking about your main your main journey purpose in the last 12 months (from Q24b), what would you do if the free bus pass was not available? (Tick one option)**

- I would make the same trip by bus and pay for a ticket (go to Q29)
- I would make the same trip by bus using another free bus pas I am eligible for (e.g. an under 22s pass) (go to Q29)
- I would make the same trip by another mode of travel (continue)
- I would not have made this trip at all (go to Q29)
- Don't know (go to Q29)

**28. How would you have travelled instead? (Tick one option)**

- By car (as either a driver or passenger)
- By taxi
- By train
- Walking
- Cycling
- Other (please specify below)
- Don't know

Other [Free text response]

**29. Thinking about all the other reasons you use the bus (from Q24a), are there any bus trips that you would not make, or would make less often if you did not have the free bus pass? (Circle one number per row)**

| Journey                                                                        | Would use the bus as often as I do now | Would use the bus less often | Would not use the bus at all | Don't know | N/A |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Education/training                                                             | 1                                      | 2                            | 3                            | 4          | 5   |
| Commuting to/from work                                                         | 1                                      | 2                            | 3                            | 4          | 5   |
| Travelling within my job/as part of my job                                     | 1                                      | 2                            | 3                            | 4          | 5   |
| Volunteering                                                                   | 1                                      | 2                            | 3                            | 4          | 5   |
| Social and leisure purposes                                                    | 1                                      | 2                            | 3                            | 4          | 5   |
| Shopping and personal business (e.g. banking, post office, paying bills, etc.) | 1                                      | 2                            | 3                            | 4          | 5   |
| Health and medical appointments/services                                       | 1                                      | 2                            | 3                            | 4          | 5   |
| Visiting family and friends                                                    | 1                                      | 2                            | 3                            | 4          | 5   |
| Day trips and holidays (including overnight trips)                             | 1                                      | 2                            | 3                            | 4          | 5   |
| Just to get out                                                                | 1                                      | 2                            | 3                            | 4          | 5   |
| Other (please specify)                                                         | 1                                      | 2                            | 3                            | 4          | 5   |

**30. On the whole, thinking about all the travel you make do you think that the free bus pass has changed how often you travel by each of the following modes of transport? (Circle one number per row)**

**Please only consider the impact of the free bus pass, not other reasons for changing usage.**

| Mode                  | Use more often | No change | Use less often | Don't know | N/A |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|------------|-----|
| Travel by bus         | 1              | 2         | 3              | 4          | 5   |
| Travel by train       | 1              | 2         | 3              | 4          | 5   |
| Travel by taxi        | 1              | 2         | 3              | 4          | 5   |
| Travel by private car | 1              | 2         | 3              | 4          | 5   |

| Mode                                         | Use more often | No change | Use less often | Don't know | N/A |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|------------|-----|
| Walking (including getting to/from bus stop) | 1              | 2         | 3              | 4          | 5   |

### 31. Please outline any other changes to your travel behaviour not captured above?

(For example, do you travel to different destinations because of the free bus pass; do you travel with other free bus pass holders more often; are there any trips you only make because you have the free bus pass or are there any trips you would be unable to make if you did not have the free bus pass?)

Free text response

If you said at Q20 that you use the bus at least once a month or more often (i.e. options 1-5 at Q20), please now skip over the Travel Patterns section (Q32-Q36) and go straight to Q37.

If you said at Q20 that you use the bus 'a few times a year or less' or have 'not used it in the last 12 months', please answer the Travel Pattern section below.

## Travel Patterns

In this section please tell us about all your travel. We are interested to know how you travel, by any mode, not just bus travel.

### 32. Thinking about all your travel over the last 12 months, regardless of mode of travel, please use the table below to tell us:

- all the reasons for the journeys you have made; and
- your main journey purpose - i.e. the reason for the journey you made most often.

| Journey                | (a) All journeys (tick all that apply) | (b) Main journey purpose (tick one) |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Education/training     | 1                                      | 1                                   |
| Commuting to/from work | 2                                      | 2                                   |

| <b>Journey</b>                                                                   | <b>(a) All journeys<br/>(tick all that<br/>apply)</b> | <b>(b) Main<br/>journey<br/>purpose<br/>(tick one)</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Travelling within my job/as part of my job                                       | 3                                                     | 3                                                      |
| Volunteering                                                                     | 4                                                     | 4                                                      |
| Social and leisure purposes                                                      | 5                                                     | 5                                                      |
| Shopping and personal business (e.g. banking,<br>post office, paying bills, etc) | 6                                                     | 6                                                      |
| Health and medical appointments/services                                         | 7                                                     | 7                                                      |
| Visiting family and friends                                                      | 8                                                     | 8                                                      |
| Day trips and holidays (including overnight trips)                               | 9                                                     | 9                                                      |
| Just to get out                                                                  | 10                                                    | 10                                                     |
| Other (please specify):                                                          | 11                                                    | 11                                                     |

**33. Thinking about your main journey purpose (from Q32b), on average how frequently did you travel for this reason over the last 12 months?**

- Five days a week or more
- Two to four times a week
- About once a week
- About once a fortnight
- About once a month
- A few times a year or less
- Don't know

**34. Again, thinking about your main journey purpose in the last 12 months (from Q32b), how long did this journey typically take? (Based on one way, not a return trip)**

- Up to 10 minutes
- 11 to 30 minutes
- 31 to 45 minutes
- 46 minutes to 1 hour
- Over 1 hour and up to 1.5 hours
- Over 1.5 hours



- Don't know

**35. For your main journey purpose (from Q32b), i.e. the reason you travelled most often in the last 12 months, how did you normally travel?**

- Car (as a driver or passenger) (continue)
- Taxi (continue)
- Bus - using the free bus pass (go to Q37)
- Bus - not using the free bus pass (continue)
- Train (continue)
- Subway or tram (continue)
- Walk (continue)
- Cycle (continue)
- Other (please specify below) (continue)

Other: Free text response

**36. Please outline your main reason for not using the free bus pass for your main journey purpose? (Tick one option)**

- There is no bus service near to me
- There are no bus stops or stations nearby
- I have difficulty physically accessing buses (e.g. getting to/from the bus stop, getting on/off the bus)
- Buses are not suitable for my condition, illness or disability (e.g. lack of wheelchair space)
- There are no direct bus services/routes to get where I want
- The buses don't run when or how often I need
- Buses take too long
- Buses are unreliable
- A lack of information/Information is not an accessible format to help me plan journeys
- Information during journeys is not available or accessible
- The buses are too busy
- I'm concerned about anti-social behaviour
- I don't feel safe on buses
- I'm concerned about catching illnesses (e.g. cold, flu, Covid)
- There is no Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) available
- My companion prefers to travel by other modes of transport

- My companion is not always available to travel
- It is difficult to book a companion onto buses with me (where this is an option)
- I prefer/need to use other modes of travel
- My journey(s) is too short to need a bus
- Other (please specify below)
- No specific reason/nothing

Other: Free text response

## Other Aspects of the Free Bus Pass

**37. If your free bus pass is a companion (+1) card - In the last 12 months, on average, how often have you had someone travelling with you as a companion? (tick one option)**

- I don't have a companion (+1) card (go to Q39)
- I have not used the bus pass in the last 12 months (go to Q39)
- Every time I travel
- Most of the time I travel
- Some of the time I travel
- Rarely when I travel
- Never
- I didn't know a companion could travel with me for free
- Don't know

**38. Do you have any feedback about using the Companion (+1) element of the card you'd like to tell us about (good or bad)?**

Free text response

**39. Sometimes the free bus pass can be used for other things. Do you ever use it for something other than bus travel? (Tick all that apply)**

**(Your local council should be able to give you more information about what you can use your free bus pass for)**

- Discounted train travel

- Discounted ferry travel
- Access to leisure services (e.g. swimming)
- Access to library services
- Discounts to other services, activities and attractions
- Age verification/identification
- Other (please specify below)
- Never used for other purposes
- I didn't know my bus pass could be used for other purposes

Other: Free text response

## Impacts of the Free Bus Pass

**40. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Circle one number per row)**

| Access to services                                                                                                        | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't know |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| The free bus pass has improved my access to education and training (e.g. school, College, University or training courses) | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| The free bus pass has improved my access to healthcare (e.g. GP Surgery, medical or treatment centres, etc.)              | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| The free bus pass has improved my access to employment opportunities                                                      | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| The free bus pass has improved my access to volunteering opportunities                                                    | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |

| Practical impacts                                                                               | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't know |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| The free bus pass lets me have support from a companion when travelling                         | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| The free bus pass saves me money                                                                | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| The free bus pass encourages me to travel by bus more often                                     | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| The free bus pass has little/no benefits for me due to the lack of bus services                 | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| The free bus pass has little/no benefits for me because buses are not suitable for my condition | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |

| Personal welfare                                                                                | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't know |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| The free bus pass gets me out/out more often                                                    | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| The free bus pass allows me to socialise or do leisure activities more                          | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| The free bus pass gives me independence/freedom                                                 | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| The free bus pass gives me confidence to travel                                                 | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| I'm more active because of the free bus pass (e.g. due to walking to the bus, getting out more) | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |

| Personal welfare                                              | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't know |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| I feel less isolated or lonely because of the free bus pass   | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |
| The free bus pass has improved my mental health and wellbeing | 1              | 2     | 3       | 4        | 5                 | 6          |

**41. Please use the space below to outline any other benefits or positive impacts that the free bus pass provides (i.e. any benefits not outlined in the previous questions)?**

Free text response

**42. Please use the space below to outline any negative impacts that the free bus pass may have?**

Free text response

**43. Thinking about the last 12 months, please indicate how much money, if any, you think the free bus pass has saved you on travel each month?**

- Not used in last 12 months
- Nothing
- Up to £10 a month
- Over £10 and up to £50 a month
- Over £50 and up to £100 a month
- More than £100 a month
- Don't know

**44. During the time you have had your free bus pass, have you (at any point) had access to a private vehicle (e.g. a car or van for personal use)?**

- Yes, currently have access (continue)
- Yes, previously had access but not now (continue)
- No, neither currently nor previously (go to Q46)

- Prefer not to say (go to Q46)

**45. What impact, if any, has the free bus pass had on your private vehicle (car/van) use? If you do not currently have access to a private vehicle, please indicate the impact the free bus pass had on usage when you did have one.**

**Please only consider the impact of the free bus pass, not other reasons for changing usage.**

- I use a private vehicle a lot less because of the bus pass
- I use a private vehicle a little less because of the bus pass
- There is no change in my use of a private vehicle because of the bus pass
- I use a private vehicle a little more because of the bus pass
- I use a private vehicle a lot more because of the bus pass
- Don't know

## Satisfaction with the Free Bus Pass

**46. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the free bus pass scheme?**

- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

**47. Please explain the reason for your level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the free bus pass scheme?**

Free text response

## About You/The Card Holder

All questions in this section are optional, you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to.

The information in this section will be used to ensure that we get feedback from a range of people with different characteristics and from different areas and backgrounds. Answers in this section will also be used to compare responses at key questions throughout the survey to identify any differences in use and experiences of the free bus pass by different groups.

If you are responding on behalf of someone else, please continue to answer the following questions about the cardholder and not yourself.

**48. What is your sex? (If responding on behalf of someone else, what is the card holder's sex?)**

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

**49. What was your age last birthday? (If responding on behalf of someone else, what was the card holder's age on their last birthday?)**

Please enter your age as a number (e.g. 64):

**50. Do you/does the card holder have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?**

- Yes (continue)
- No 2 (go to Q52)
- Don't know 3 (go to Q52)
- Prefer not to say 4 (go to Q52)

**51. Does your condition, illness or disability/do any of your conditions, illnesses or disabilities reduce your ability to carry-out day-to-day activities? (If responding on behalf of someone else, does their disability reduce their ability to carry-out day-to-day activities?)**

- Yes, a lot
- Yes, a little
- Not at all

- Prefer not to say

**Do not answer this question if you are responding on behalf of someone else**

**52. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? (Tick one box)**

- Straight/heterosexual
- Gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other sexual orientation (please specify below)
- Prefer not to say
- Other: Free text response

**53. What is your employment status? (Tick one box)**

**(If responding on behalf of someone else, what is their employment status?)**

- In education (full or part time, school, further or higher education)
- Doing an apprenticeship or other training programme
- In work (full or part time, including self-employed)
- I volunteer (i.e. unpaid work)
- Unemployed - seeking work
- Unemployed - not seeking work
- Not in education, training or work due to health condition
- Looking after home/family
- Carer
- Retired
- Other (please specify below)

Other: Free text response

**54. Which of these phrases best describes how you and your household are managing financially these days? (If responding on behalf of someone else, how are they and their household managing financially?)**

- Manage very well
- Manage quite well



- Get by alright
- Don't manage very well
- Have some financial difficulties
- Are in deep financial trouble
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

**55. What is your ethnic group? (If responding on behalf of someone else, what is their ethnic group?)**

- a. White**
- Scottish
  - Other British
  - Irish
  - Polish
  - Gypsy/Traveller
  - Roma
  - Showman/Showwoman
  - Other (please write in)

Specify: Free text response

- b. Mixed or multiple ethnic groups**
- Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups, please write in:

Specify: Free text response

- c. Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian**
- Pakistani, Scottish Pakistani or British Pakistani
  - Indian, Scottish Indian or British Indian
  - Bangladeshi, Scottish Bangladeshi or British Bangladeshi
  - Chinese, Scottish Chinese or British Chinese
  - Other (please write in)

Specify: Free text response

- d. African, Scottish African or British African**
- Please write in (e.g. Nigerian, Somali)

Specify: Free text response

- e. Caribbean or Black**
- Please write in (e.g. Scottish Caribbean, Black Scottish)

Specify: Free text response

- f. Other ethnic group
- Arab, Scottish Arab or British Arab
  - Other, please write in (for example Sikh, Jewish)

Specify: Free text response

- g. Prefer not to say

**56. What is the first or main language spoken in your household? (If responding on behalf of someone else, what is the main language spoken in the card holder's household?)**

- English
- Other (please specify)

Specify: Free text response

**57. Which council/local authority area do you live in? (If responding on behalf of someone else, which council/ local authority area do they live in?)**

**If you have a second home, please select the council/ local authority area of your primary/main residence**

- Aberdeen City
- Aberdeenshire
- Angus
- Argyll & Bute
- City of Edinburgh
- Clackmannanshire
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles)
- Dumfries & Galloway
- Dundee City
- East Ayrshire
- East Dunbartonshire
- East Lothian
- East Renfrewshire
- Falkirk
- Fife
- Glasgow City

- 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

**58. Which of the following best describes where you live? (If responding on behalf of someone else, where do they live?)  
(Tick one box)**

- In a city
- In a town
- In a village
- In the countryside
- On an island
- Prefer not to say

## Focus Group and/or Prize Draw Opt-In

### Focus Groups

In addition to this survey, Wellside Research will be conducting a small number of focus groups to discuss the free bus pass in more detail. These groups will take up to 1.5 hours. Focus group participants will receive a £50 Love2Shop voucher as a thank you for their time. Where groups meet in person (rather than online), all reasonable travel expenses will also be reimbursed.

Please note: those under the age of 16 will not be eligible to take part in a focus group. Instead, parents/carers can attend on their behalf.

If you would be interested in being considered to take part in a focus group for this work, please indicate at the opt-in section below and provide your name and preferred contact details. Please also outline the village/town/city you live in/near to help us allocate you to a suitable group. Due to limited spaces, we will not be able to invite everyone who expresses an interest to join us at an event.

## Prize Draw

We are offering a prize draw to all those who take part in the survey. There are 13 Love2Shop vouchers to be won, including a top prize of £250, and other prizes for £150, £100, and 10 x £50 vouchers. Love2Shop vouchers can be used across a wide range of shops, supermarkets and leisure providers.

Please note: young people under the age of 16 are not eligible to enter the prize draw. If you are participating on behalf of a young person, please enter your own details.

If you wish to enter the prize draw, please indicate below and provide your name and preferred contact details to allow us to contact you should you win. Wellside Research will randomly select and notify the winners after 24 November 2025, no cash alternative will be offered.

## Opt-In

Please specify which, if either, of these options you would like to opt-in to? (You can tick both the focus group and prize draw)

- I would like to register interest in the focus groups
- I would like to enter the prize draw
- I do not want to take part in either

Contact details:

- Name:
- Phone:
- Email:
- Village/town/city (for focus group use only):

Name and contact details will remain confidential, and will only be used for focus group recruitment and/or the prize draw related to this project. They will not be shared with Transport Scotland.

## **Thank you for completing this survey**

Please use the reply paid postage envelope provided to return your response to Wellside Research Ltd. You do not need a stamp.

# Cardholder Focus Groups

## Information Sheet

### Title of the research

Evaluation of the Older and Disabled Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme

### Background

Transport Scotland has commissioned an evaluation of the Scotland-wide Free Bus Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People - this is the free bus pass.

The scheme provides free bus travel within Scotland on any registered bus service to anyone who lives in Scotland and has one of the following National Entitlement Cards (NECs):

- Older person's free bus pass (for those aged 60+)
- Disabled person's free bus pass
- Disabled Companion (+1) free bus pass
- Sight Impaired person's free bus pass
- Sight Impaired Companion (+1) free bus pass

The evaluation aims to establish whether the scheme has achieved its objectives and delivered benefits to older and disabled people. The evaluation also seeks feedback from stakeholders and bus operators around the operation of the scheme, to understand any changes or adaptation to service provision that have occurred as a result of the scheme, or any challenges that exist in relation to service provision.

### What the research involves

We are seeking feedback from bus operators to understand their experiences of the scheme and how provisions may have changed over time. To gather feedback, we are running a small number of interviews and would like to hear about your views of the scheme and the impact it has had on your organisation. We would like to ask about:

- The processes and operational issues involved in delivering the scheme.
- What works well and less well with the scheme.
- Any challenges associated with operating the scheme.
- The operational impact of the scheme on your organisation and services.

- Any changes and adaptations to services as a result of the scheme.

The topic guide containing the list of interview questions will be provided in advance so you can consider any feedback and liaise with colleagues if required. You need to be able to respond on behalf of your organisation.

The interview will last up to 1 hour. It will be arranged to suit your availability, and can be conducted by telephone or online (via MS Teams or Zoom). There are no right or wrong answers, and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to. Taking part is completely voluntary.

## What we will do with the information you provide

Any personal information, like the contact details given to us to arrange the interview, will be held according to the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This means that it will be kept completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team. All personal/contact information will be deleted at the end of the project.

Subject to permission, we would like to record the interview using a digital voice recorder. Anything you say will be treated anonymously - it will not be linked back to you. We will never use your name or any of your personal details in reporting our findings from this work. Quotes or extracts from the discussion may be included in our reporting for illustrative purposes. These will be accompanied by an appropriate anonymised descriptive labels, e.g. 'bus operator'. Information you have told us will never be reported in a way that can reveal your identity. If you are willing for us to record the discussion, we will use the recording to write up the discussion and then securely, confidentially and permanently destroy the recording. Only the research team (excluding Transport Scotland staff) will listen to the recording and it will not be kept by us for any longer than is necessary to complete the project. If you do not agree to the recording, written notes will be taken during the discussion instead.

We may provide a list of the organisations that have contributed to the research to Transport Scotland, but this will not be linked to your responses, so they will not be able to link comments to individual organisations. This list will not be published.

A copy of the Privacy Notice for the work is attached [provided to participants].

## Who to contact if you want to take part

If you would be willing to take part in an interview with a researcher to share your views and experiences of the Older and Disabled Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme, please contact the research Project Manager, [redacted], to find out more/arrange:

Email: [redacted]

Telephone: [redacted]

The final report from this work will be published by Transport Scotland on their website and will be used by them and their partners to help plan ways to improve the Older and Disabled Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme in the future.

**Thank you**



# Cardholder Focus Groups Topic Guide

## Introduction

Thank you for taking part in this research which is being carried out independently by Wellside Research and KSO Research. Transport Scotland has commissioned an evaluation of the Scotland-wide Free Bus Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People - you may know this as the free bus pass.

The scheme provides free bus travel within Scotland on any registered bus service to anyone who lives in Scotland and has one of the following National Entitlement Cards (NECs):

- Older person's free bus pass (age 60+)
- Disabled person's free bus pass (age 5+)
- Disabled Companion (+1) free bus pass (no age requirements)
- Sight Impaired person's free bus pass (age 5+)
- Sight Impaired Companion (+1) free bus pass (no age requirements)

The evaluation aims to establish whether the scheme has achieved its objectives and delivered benefits to older and disabled people.

The session today will last up to 1 hour 30 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers, we simply want to hear about your views and experiences of the scheme. Taking part is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to. At the end of the session, we would like to give you a £50 Love2Shop voucher to thank you for your time.

With everyone's permission, we would like to digitally voice record the discussion today to help us to write-up the feedback. Anything you say will be treated anonymously, we will not use your name or any other personal details in our write-up of the discussion or our reporting - nothing you say will be linked back to you. We may wish to use some anonymised quotes from participants in our reporting for the work but, if we do so, we will never use your name or any of your personal details, and any information you share will be reported in a way that does not reveal your identity. If you are willing for us to record the discussion, we will use the recording to write-up your feedback (using an independent transcriber who will adhere to all the same data protection protocols we do) and we will then securely, confidentially and permanently destroy the recording. The write-up/transcript will be used for this research only and will not be kept by us for any longer than is necessary to complete

the research. If anyone is uncomfortable with the recording or does not want to be recorded, we can take written notes instead.

Any personal information, including the contact details used for setting up this group, will be held in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All personal information will be deleted at the end of the project.

Before we start, are there any questions that you would like to ask me?

Confirm verbal consent to:

- record the discussion Yes No
- use anonymised quotes Yes No

If you have any questions about the research after the focus group, you can contact the Research Manager, [redacted], at Wellside Research by telephone on [redacted] or email [redacted]

## Context and use

### 1. For context, and to help us understand your answers to the later questions, please can you all tell us:

- Which kind of bus pass do you have?
- How long have you held your bus pass?
- How often do you use your free bus pass?
- What types of journeys do you make using your free bus pass?

### 2. Has your use of the free bus pass changed at all over time? (e.g. changes in how often you use it, the types of trips you make, length/distance of journeys made, etc.)

- If yes, in what way has your usage changed and why?
- If no, why would you say your usage has remained the same?

## Impacts on travel/transport choices

### 3. Has the Free Bus Travel Scheme changed how you travel? If so:

- Do you travel more by bus since having the pass/because you have the pass?
- Has it impacted on how often you use other modes? (for example, car, walking, cycling and train? If so, how?
- In what situations do you still use other forms of transport rather than bus, and why?

## Companions and travel with others

### 4. Has the Free Bus Travel Scheme encouraged/allowed you to travel more with others?

- If yes, who do you travel with (relationship not names)? Where do you go to with others (purpose not location)? How often do you do this?
- Exactly how has the Free Bus Travel Scheme helped you to travel more with others?
- If not, why not? Are there any barriers that stop you travelling more by bus with others?

## Wider impacts

### 5. Has the free bus pass allowed you to make any trips to new places or to access new opportunities/do new things that you wouldn't have been able to without it? (including day trips, overnight trips and holidays)

- If yes, what has it enabled you to do? [Probe for educational, work, volunteering, leisure and social, holiday activities, etc.]
- How often do you use the pass for these 'new' purposes?
- What is it about the pass that has allowed you to make these new trips or access new things/opportunities?
- If not, why do you think that is?

**6. Has the free bus pass increased or improved access to services or facilities? (for example, access to healthcare facilities, leisure facilities or access to new/different social support services such as day centres, etc.)**

Open response

**7. In what ways, if any, has having the free bus pass impacted on your wellbeing? Probe:**

- Physical health? e.g. being able to get out more
- Mental health? e.g. reduced isolation, improved mood, reduced anxiety linked to travel costs, etc.
- Emotional wellbeing? e.g. being able to meet up with friends, etc.

**8. Specifically, do you feel you have more freedom and independence as a result of the Free Bus Travel Scheme?**

- If yes, in what ways?
- What does having more independence mean to you?
- If no, why do you say that?

**9. Do you feel that the free bus pass has any wider impacts (good or bad) on:**

- the economy? (e.g. costing or saving the government money, people able to get out and spend money in local shops, etc?)
- society? (e.g. making opportunities more accessible to more people?)
- the environment? (e.g. reducing congestion and emissions?)

**10. Overall, what do you consider the main benefits of the scheme to be and what would say is the main difference (if any) that the Free Bus Travel Scheme has made to you?**

- **PLEASE THINK ABOUT:** If the scheme didn't exist, what would be the main consequences for you?

BREAK FOR 10 MINUTES

## Barriers and challenges

### 11. Have you ever experienced any difficulties or barriers to using the Free Bus Travel Scheme? If so, please tell us more:

- Issues with application process or getting a new/replacement card?
- Technical challenges with the card/card machines on buses?
- Suitability and availability of routes/services?
- Accessibility issues (at bus stops, on buses and with bus information)?
- Lack of seating/overcrowding on buses?
- Travel at certain times of the day? (peak times, evenings, etc.)
- Personal safety concerns related to other passengers/anti-social behaviour issues?
- Other?

#### FOR THOSE WHO HAVE A COMPANION CARD:

### 12a. Have you ever experienced any challenges/barriers to travelling with companions using your companion card?

- If yes, please tell us more about the problems you have faced and any changes you would like to see to the way that the companion cards operate.

### 12b. To what extent, if any, could/would you be able to use the bus without a companion? (Probe: Not at all, or just on a less frequent basis, or different routes?)

Open response

### 12c. Before you had the companion card and/or if the companion card was not available, how (if at all) would you travel instead?

Open response

### 13. Have you experienced any negative impacts or have there been any negative consequences for you as a result of the Older and Disabled Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme?

Open response

**14. Thinking of the Free Bus Travel Scheme as a whole, is there anything that you think would make the scheme better/more suitable for you/any companions who travel with you?**

Open response

**15. Finally, does anyone want to say anything else about the Older and Disabled Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme that we've not already covered?**

Open response

Thank and close. Administer voucher payments and travel reimbursements.

# Bus Operator Interview Topic Guide

## Introduction

Transport Scotland has commissioned an evaluation of the Scotland-wide Free Bus Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People. Wellside Research, an independent research company, are conducting the evaluation. This interview is part of a wider body of work, which includes a survey and series of focus groups with free bus pass holders, interviews with bus operators and other stakeholders, analysis of secondary data, and a cost effectiveness/value for money assessment.

This specific scheme provides free bus travel within Scotland on any registered bus service to anyone who lives in Scotland and has one of the following National Entitlement Cards (NECs):

- Older person's free bus pass (age 60+)
- Disabled person's free bus pass (age 5+)
- Disabled Companion (+1) free bus pass (no age requirements)
- Sight Impaired person's free bus pass (age 5+)
- Sight Impaired Companion (+1) free bus pass (no age requirements)

The evaluation aims to establish whether the scheme has achieved its objectives and delivered benefits to older and disabled people. The evaluation also seeks feedback from stakeholders and bus operators around the operation of the scheme, to understand any changes or adaptation to service provision that have occurred as a result of the scheme, or any challenges that exist in relation to service provision.

The interview will last up to 1 hour. There are no right or wrong answers, we simply want to hear about your organisation's views and experiences of the scheme – you'll be responding on behalf of your organisation. Taking part is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to.

Anything you say will be treated anonymously, we will not use your name or any other personal details in our write-up of the discussion or our reporting - nothing you say will be linked back to you. We may wish to use some anonymised quotes from participants in our reporting for the work but, if we do, we will never use your name or any of your personal details, and any information you share will be reported in a way that does not reveal your identity. A list of the organisations that have contributed to the research may be provided to Transport Scotland, but this will not be linked to your responses, so they will not be able to link comments to individual organisations. This list will not be included in the report or published.

With your permission, I would like to digitally voice record the discussion today to help us write-up the feedback. If you are willing for us to record the discussion, we will use the recording to write-up your feedback (using an independent transcriber who will adhere to all the same data protection protocols we do). We will then securely, confidentially and permanently destroy the recording. The write-up/transcript will be used for this research only and will not be kept by us for any longer than is necessary to complete the research. If you are uncomfortable with the recording, I can take written notes instead.

Any personal information, including the contact details used for setting up this interview, will be held in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All personal/contact information will be deleted at the end of the project.

Before we start, are there any questions that you would like to ask me?

Confirm verbal consent to:

- continue with the interview Yes No
- record the discussion Yes No
- use anonymised quotes Yes No

If you have any questions about the research, or points you wish to add, after the interview, you can contact the Research Manager, [redacted], at Wellside Research by telephone on [redacted] or email [redacted].

## Introduction/Context

### 1. Please can you begin by telling me a little about the organisation you work for and the services you deliver?

- Name of organisation?
- The type of services you provide? (e.g. urban, rural or mixed services; long-distance, inter-city, regional and/or local services; commercial or voluntary/community transport; scheduled or on-demand; etc.)
- Areas/regions covered?

### 2. What is your role within the organisation?

- How long have you held this role for?
- How does this relates to the free bus pass?



- Have you worked in other roles or for other organisations previously which are also relevant to the older and disabled person's free bus pass?

## Processes/Operational Issues

**3. How well are the processes and operational requirements of the ODPS free bus pass now accommodated within your organisations own processes?**

Open response

**4. How satisfied are you/your organisation with the administration of the scheme in general?**

- Please outline any areas you think work well?
- Please outline any areas you think do not work well/could be improved?

**5. Do you feel you are kept informed about the scheme by Transport Scotland, and are able to have your views or concerns heard and addressed?**

Open response

**6. Does your organisation you find any aspects of the ODPS particularly challenging? If yes, please explain.**

Open response

**7. Does/Has your organisation undertake any marketing or promotion of the scheme? If yes, please describe what this was and how effective it was?**

Open response

**8. In general, how effective do you feel the wider marketing of the scheme is and the dissemination of information about the scheme(s)?**

- Consider the different cards available, e.g. older people, disabled people, sight impaired people, companion cards.

## Impacts

### **9. What has been the operational impact of the older and disabled person's free bus pass scheme for your organisation?**

- Changes in patronage? (e.g. general trends/travel patterns, any changes specific to certain routes/services, etc.)
- Changes or updates to services? (e.g. changes in routes, frequencies, timings of services, fares updated for paying passengers, types of vehicles used, etc.)
- Changes or updates in the markets targeted?
- Any staff changes or training requirements identified/introduced?
- Any infrastructure or system changes? (e.g. hardware, software, data recording requirements, etc.)
- Has there been any lasting impact of COVID on bus use and use of the scheme? If yes, please explain.

### **10. Has the older and disabled person's free bus pass scheme resulted in any changes to your services to make them more accessible to older and disabled people?**

- Any changes or adaptations to fleet/vehicles for physical accessibility, accessibility of information, etc.?
- Any changes to other information provision to improve accessibility? (e.g. timetables, journey planning, general information, etc.)
- Any consultation activities with stakeholder groups (e.g. older and disabled people or support organisations) to inform services/changes?

### **11. Has the ODPS had any other impacts on your organisation, that are not covered above? If yes, please explain.**

Open response

## Suggested Changes and Other Comments

**12. Are there any elements of the scheme you would like to see changed?**

Open response

**13. Finally, is there anything else you would like to tell us about the Older and Disabled Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme, that you've not already had the chance to discuss?**

Open response

Thank and close.



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SCOTLAND**  
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

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