

Equality Impact Assessment

Policy title and purpose (brief outline):	VOLUNTARY WELSH BUS QUALITY STANDARD 2016
Name of official:	STEPHEN CHAMBERLAIN
Department:	TRANSPORT STRATEGY
Date:	MARCH 2016

Brief description of the policy or decision being taken

The Bus Policy Advisory Group (BPAG) convened January 2014 to consider the future sustainability and financial viability of local bus services in Wales. Recommendations from the group were submitted in June 2014. The Minister for Economy, Science and Transport agreed that development of Welsh Bus Quality Standards be taken forward as a priority. The proposals were developed by a working group of the BPAG during the summer of 2015 and a public consultation was undertaken in January 2016. The proposals for the Quality Standards are rooted in the quality expectations announced in 2013 by the Welsh Government as part of the reformed Bus Services Support Grant.

Engagement that has taken place

Invitations were extended to groups representing people sharing the protected characteristics to attend an equality impact panel on 18 February 2016. The purpose of the panel was to consider the draft proposals for the Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standard as amended following a public consultation undertaken in January 2016.

Relevant information considered

Relevant information gathered during the development of the Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standard included:

- Annual Statistical Bulletin setting out information about Public Service Vehicles in Wales in the financial year 2014-15. Public Service Vehicles are the local buses, coaches and licenced taxis.
- National census statistics 2011
- State of the Welsh Bus Fleet prepared by the TAS partnership on behalf of the Bus Policy Advisory Group published November 2015
- Working Women's Journeys: An Overview of the Relationship between Commuting and Gender Dr Lucy Knight, Chwarae Teg, February 2016
- Part-time train travel for Wales Chwarae Teg & Sustrans Cymru 2012

Relevance to protected characteristics

Protected Characteristic	Relevance	Possible Impact	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
Age Younger people	Yes	Neutral	Funding is provided to support the Welsh Government's discounted bus travel scheme "My Travel Pass". The requirement to participate in the scheme is a core requirement within the Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standard
Age Working age	Yes	Neutral	1.3m working age people work in Wales. Evidence suggests that part time workers and those on irregular work patterns are treated less favourably than full time workers.
Age Older people	Yes	Neutral	Older people are beneficiaries of the Older persons' mandatory concessionary fares scheme. More than 750,000 permits have been issued in Wales. The scheme sits outside the Voluntary bus Quality Standard.
Disability	Yes	Positive	<p>Certain categories of disabled people are eligible for the mandatory concessionary fares scheme entitling them to free bus travel across Wales.</p> <p>More than 100,000 people are blind or have some form of sight loss in Wales. Bus services are vital to maintaining independent living.</p>
Gender	Yes	Positive	More women use the bus for commuting compared to men and more often work part time or

Protected Characteristic	Relevance	Possible Impact	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
			irregular work patterns.
Transgender	No	Neutral	No evidence to suggest there is any relevance to transgender people.
Marriage Civil partnership	No	Neutral	No evidence to suggest there is any relevance to people on the basis of their marital or civil partnership status.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Yes	Neutral	Media reporting suggests that tension between disabled people and new mothers with pushchairs persists when using local bus services.
Race	No	Neutral	No evidence to suggest there is any relevance to people on the basis of their race.
Religion or belief	No	Neutral	No evidence to suggest there is any relevance to people on the basis of their religion or belief.
Sexual orientation	No	Neutral	No evidence to suggest there is any relevance to people on the basis of their sexual orientation
Human Rights	Yes	Positive	Independent living – UN Convention on the rights for people with disabilities

Impact assessment panel meeting to consider proposals for a Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standard – February 2016

Background to the Welsh Bus Quality Standards

The Bus Policy Advisory Group (BPAG) convened January 2014 to consider the future sustainability and financial viability of local bus services in Wales. Recommendations from the group were submitted in June 2014. The Minister for Economy, Science and Transport agreed that development of Welsh Bus Quality Standards be taken forward as a priority. The proposals were developed by a working group of the BPAG during the summer of 2015 and a public consultation was undertaken in January 2016. The proposals for the Quality Standards are rooted in the quality expectations announced in 2013 by the Welsh Government as part of the reformed Bus Services Support Grant.

The current proposals and possible impacts on people sharing the protected characteristics thereby relevance to equality groups is recognised. Standards need to address behaviours that are less than acceptable, and whilst wanting to go further in some areas, there is a need to strike a balance for improvement of service quality and the need to maintain services by operators working on tight financial margins, particularly in rural area.

Quality standards

Complaints policy

The amended requirements for the core standards included the availability and operation of a passenger complaint policy was noted. It has been suggested that response times for responses be 20 days, but the BPAG had agreed that an acknowledgement be issued within seven days and a substantive response issued within 21 days.

There was evidence to suggest that when making a complaint, disabled people were being required to wait in excess of three months for a response so the suggested timescales were welcomed. The panel recognised that smaller operators may struggle to develop a complaints policy if one is not in place.

It was recommended that the core standard on complaints procedures should be more detailed and include adherence to a model complaints policy developed and issued by the Welsh Government to be used by operators in receipt of public funding.

Smart-card ticket machines

The requirement for the availability of ITSO compliant Smartcard ticket machines as part of the core standard was explored, and the availability of certain ticketing types set out in the enhanced standards.

The continuing availability of mandatory concessionary fares for disabled people was welcomed, which could be made easier with improved smart card ticketing functionality whilst improving the detection of card misuse. The gender bias in respect of commuting by bus remains a characteristic of the bus industry.

Reference was made to a report to be issued by Chwarae Teg about the relationship between commuting and gender. The report points out that:

- Twice as many women commute by bus (6% compared to 3% of men)
- There are 1,388,200 working people (aged 16-64) in Wales, of whom 52.5% are men and 47.5% are women. 56% of women in Wales work full-time compared to 87% of men, and 44% work part-time compared to 13% of men.
- women commute shorter distances than men

Based on this evidence, the panel considered that part time workers, the majority being women, are being treated less favourably when using public transport for commuting, and unable to take full benefit from weekly and other season ticketing products. **It was recommended that the availability of a ticketing scheme that benefitted part time workers was included as part of the enhanced requirements within the standards.**

Disability Training

The panel expressed disappointment that disability awareness training was not within the core requirements of the standard, amplified by recent media reporting of incidence whereby disabled passengers had been denied entry onto a bus. The work being undertaken by the Disabled Passengers Transport Advisory

Committee about the quality of disability awareness training was noted and recognised that smaller operators could continue to experience difficulty in releasing drivers to undertake training.

The panel was supportive of the BPAG recommendation to develop an accredited module as a requirement for driver continuing professional development. Following discussion, it was **recommended that the Welsh Government consider making available an e-learning module on equality and diversity awareness and once available, the requirement to undertake this e-learning was included as a core requirement.**

Duty to Co-operate

The panel considered that relationships between bus operators and the train operating companies in some areas could be improved, especially in working to support disabled passengers at transport interchanges. There was a consensus and **recommendation that a duty to co-operate with local rail operators should be a core requirement for bus operators.** It was noted that further consideration would be required in respect of competition law but, if deemed acceptable, could especially be a useful precursor to metro development.

Punctuality/Reliability

It was recognised that punctuality and reliability is a key priority for passengers, but the panel accepted that the technology is not universally available at the current time to collect data to accurately assess the performance of operators.

Accessible Information

There was a wide ranging discussion about the need for information about bus services to be made available in accessible communication formats and not to be over reliant on web based information. The development of apps and mobile friendly web information does not work well with current screen reading packages used by blind people. It was noted that information about accessible information issued by the Office of Disability Issues will be included as part of the Welsh Bus Quality Standard. Disability groups maintain that blind people and people with sight loss rely on bus information from Travel line Cymru telephone helpline and given the cost of these calls, disabled people are treated less favourably than people able to access web

and app based information. **The panel recommended that calls to Travel line Cymru should be free of charge.**

Similarly, the panel was disappointed that audio visual next stop announcement systems were not a core requirement of the standard and that when fitted, the requirement that drivers are not able to disable the system has not been included. There was recognition that the cost of systems could negatively impact on smaller operators, but the 'vehicles acquired after 2015' caveat should offer some safeguard. Non disability groups suggested that next stop audio visual announcements benefit not only passenger with sight loss or who are blind, but all passengers during the winter when street are dark and windows are misted during inclement weather conditions. The panel also considered that the Equality Act 2010 public sector equality duty requires that public authority advances equality of opportunity and on that basis, AV next stop systems should be a core requirement of the standard. **The panel recommended that AV next stop systems are included in the core requirements of the standard.**

Declaration

The Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standard is relevant to some people sharing equality characteristics introduced by the Equality Act 2010 and where appropriate, amendments have been made to mitigate or remove negative impacts or advance the elimination of unlawful discrimination, bullying or harassment.

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