

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject: Concessionary Fares for Blind and Partially Sighted People
FROM: Jim Dickie Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 7 March 2000	
REPORT AUTHOR: Alan Stewart	
REF: JD/GMCI/AD/AS	

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Social Work Committee of a policy statement by the Joint Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People which advocates for a national scheme of concessionary travel.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Joint Committee for Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People is an independent organisation consisting of representatives of all the principal organisations of and for blind, deafblind and partially sighted people with a specific interest in mobility. The organisation believes that visually impaired people should be able to travel around safely and independently.
- 2.2 The government is proposing to provide a National Minimum Concessionary Fare scheme for pensioners entitling holders of a pass giving a 50% reduction on all bus journeys and the campaign calls for this to be extended to all blind, deafblind and partially sighted people of working age.

3 BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED PEOPLE

- 3.1 There are over one million blind and partially sighted people in the UK. It is estimated that there are some 15,737 adults in North Lanarkshire with a visual impairment of whom 2,431 are registered blind and 674 registered partially sighted.

- 3.2 Mobility, environment and transport are vital in ensuring that blind, deafblind and partially sighted people participate fully in society and are included in gaining access to education and employment, goods, facilities and services. As people with a disability they often face additional cost as they are unable to use independent motorised travel and can be reliant on friends, taxis or public transport sometimes requiring assistance from a companion.
- 3.3 According to government figures the incomes of people with a disability were between 20 and 30% lower than those of non-disabled people.
- 3.4 Research by the Royal National Institute for the Blind indicated that 58% of older blind and partially sighted people felt that more awareness of their needs with regard to transport was the single most important factor which would improve their quality of life.

4. CURRENT SITUATION

- 4.1 North Lanarkshire Council, as part of Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority, operates a concession scheme whereby all blind and deafblind travel free and partially sighted people benefit from reduced travel within the SPTA 's boundaries.
- 4.2 There is also a National Disabled Persons Railcard which offers concessionary travel to visually impaired people.
- 4.3 On December 1st 1999 Sarah Boyack, Minister for Transport and the Environment in the Scottish Executive, launched a national concessionary travel scheme which has been agreed with all bus, rail and ferry operators via CoSLA which enables all blind people to travel across the country for free.

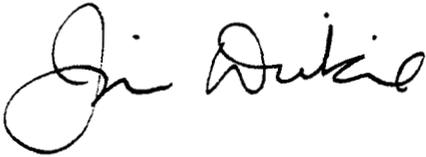
5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 North Lanarkshire Council, in conjunction with SPTA, CoSLA, the Scottish Executive and the bus, rail and ferry operators, offers a more generous scheme which goes further than that proposed by the Joint Committee.
- 5.2 The implementation of a National Minimum Concessionary Scheme would offer greater choice and extend access to travel by bus throughout the UK and would still allow local authorities the discretion to provide additional concessions.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Committee is requested to:

- (i) Intimate to the Joint Committee of their support for the campaign for the extension of the proposed National Minimum Concessionary Fare Scheme.
- (ii) Note the contents of this report.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
24 February 2000

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