

Community Transport Conference and Report – briefing, March 2017

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- To have a Working Group of partners looking at Community Transport.
- To consider where the outcomes of the working group feed into: Community Planning or Health and Social Care Partnership.
- Working Group to scope feasibility of the recommendation in the report of a Community Transport Project Manager, including sourcing funding options.

2. BACKGROUND

- A Community Transport Conference was held on 31 August 2016 in Oban. Approximately 60 delegates attended. 13 of these represented Community Transport organisations, some of these being their service users. The aim of the event was to explore the issues and opportunities and generate an action plan.
- Community Transport (CT) is defined as: *“Meeting passenger transport needs on a non-profit making (or social enterprise) basis, often involving large numbers of volunteers”*.
- A report was issued some months after the event summarising the main points of the day and presenting a route map.

3. MAIN POINTS OF REPORT

- Issues raised:
 - Perceived lack of integration between all transport providers, whether commercial, private or third sector and whether scheduled or demand-responsive.
 - Some dissatisfaction with regular bus routes and their accessibility for elderly people. Community transport does not penetrate all of the most rural areas.
 - Difficulty in accessing health services, particularly the distant city hospitals.
 - Ageing population with complex health needs.
 - Changing way of delivering health provision; Community Transport providers and funders will need to adapt to include self-management solutions, and follow the shift of care to the community.
 - Commercial operators have a role to play, but were not present, however they keynote speaker noted that it is important not to undermine the private sector.
 - No forum for CT issues to be shared and supported within Argyll and Bute.
 - Community Transport not just a health issue, but could include, for example, young people accessing extra-curricular activities.

- Solutions offered:

The route map has 3 themes:

- Community development activity to explore, promote and develop new community-led CT projects and improve partnership working in order to make better use of existing resource. It is proposed to seek funding for a Community Transport Project Manager, but if this were not successful, community development staff could share best practice in order to support community action to develop new community transport projects as required. The report further recommends the recruitment of “local Champions” – a volunteer role who would support connectivity and information in local communities.

- Technology- it was thought necessary to explore how to improve communication and availability of booking as well as integration – and explore opportunities offered by social media sites or mobile phone apps. It would be useful to link surgeries/local hubs, village and town Facebook pages, and other natural gathering sites, whether online or offline to transport information. The report did not look at the changing ways communities and individuals look for and share information, such as organising lifts through social media.
- Health service coordination: The report noted that an action linking more appointments to existing public transport timetables, particularly where complicated, would be helpful. The Health and Social Care Partners should offer more outreach health or care delivery to avoid travel, whether by online appointment or visit by community health or care practitioner: this is the predicted direction of travel since Integration in any case.

4. IMPACT TO COUNCIL

- Argyll & Bute Council provides grants to Community Transport Organisations, through the Community Transport Officer- we fund on average 6 organisations a year.
- The Community Transport Officer advised that most of the community transport organisations are at full capacity and therefore further publicity to make their services known may create further unmet need. The Scottish Ambulance Service are applying stricter criteria to whom they will collect and this is having an impact on existing providers.
- The Council has no statutory duty to provide community transport, however it contributes hugely to social wellbeing and fills in gaps in rural areas as well as broadly contributing to Strathclyde Partnership for Transport's Regional Transport strategy and our own Transport strategy.

5. POTENTIAL COURSE OF ACTION TO CONSIDER

- A Working Group required to scope feasibility of the recommendation in the report of a Community Transport Project Manager.
- The working group could include relevant council staff as well as a variety of community development workers from Health and the Third Sector.
- The criteria for Council community transport grant could take cognizance of the direction of travel for health provision and could be checked to ensure they are future proof and permit health based activity that might not be hospital based.
- Existing Community Development, Social Enterprise and Community Planning activity could become more informed about support and opportunities for Community Transport so as to be more alert to opportunities to develop new services to meet expanding need.
- The Health and Wellbeing networks could hold a Community Transport Development day to include learning about set up, scoping for new opportunities and create a forum to strengthen networks.
- It would be proper to critically explore some reservations about the recommendations in the report to recruit Local Champions – if these are a volunteer role then this will be hard to recruit to and will lead to gaps in some areas, unless the volunteer is from an existing CT organisation and then they might not be impartial. The most rural and remote places would find it particularly hard to recruit a Champion and they are the ones that need it most. It would perhaps be better that there is leadership on this from local forums such as the CPG or the LPG. This would ensure parity and objectivity.

6. Reference

- CT meets SOA outcomes 2, 3 and 6.
- CT supports the SPT transport outcomes as outlined in Argyll and Bute's Transport Outcomes Report 2015/16, particularly "Access for All".
http://www.spt.co.uk/wmslib/Documents_RTS/TORs/argyll_bute.pdf?1