



TRANSPORT IN BRIGHTON & HOVE

At the Partnership Board meeting on 12th December 2011, the main discussion was about keeping safe and safeguarding. One of the issues that came up was travelling on public transport. Eva Jarvis was asked to find out some more information about what is happening and how we can improve things. This is the first report back.

Richard Johnson is the Public Transport Officer for Brighton & Hove and he was asked a number of questions;

Q1: With the introduction of the swipe cards for concessionary travel – will the orange wallets still be able to be used? I think the bus drivers now understand about the orange wallets and do give people some additional support if needed so it would be a pity if they were lost?

A1: I'm very pleased to say that bus passes can still be used in their orange wallets: the wallets just needs to be opened to display the front of the card (as before) – and then placed face down on the card reader. There is no need to remove the card from the wallet. In fact drivers are now more likely to notice the orange wallets: they will be highly visible to them when the bus pass section is placed face down on the card reader

Q2. Are there any plans for changes to the times when a concessionary travel card can be used? Will it still be from 9 am in the future? Any plans for an earlier time?

A2: (answered by Jayne Fox, responsible for the concessionary travel scheme) The mandatory scheme is an off-peak scheme, allowing travel from 9.30 am on Mondays to Fridays (any time at weekends). However in Brighton & Hove the scheme is already more generous, allowing travel from 9am. There are no plans to fund further extensions of the start time at present.

Q3: Any plans for introducing free travel for individuals who need a companion/support worker with them for travel? As you can imagine many people with learning disabilities rely on a very small income and having to pay bus fares for a supporter they need to have with them is difficult and directly impacts on their ability to use public transport?

A3: With regard to companion bus passes the Council does not issue these and has not done so for many years – since well before the introduction of National Free Travel in 2008. However, as an alternative to companion passes, and as an important commitment to equality of access for citizens, the Council does offer taxi vouchers for people who qualify for a bus pass on the grounds of a disability but, who are, in fact unable to use public buses due to that disability.

The potential discretion of issuing companion passes was considered by Policy & Resources Committee on 29 November 2007 but was not actioned on the grounds that taxi vouchers provided an alternative and the funding of companion passes for eligible disabled people would present the Council with severe financial pressure, which would fall on the city's Council Tax payers.

In addition to providing answers to the above questions, Richard also promised to come to a meeting by Taking Part In The City sub group on Wednesday 18th April 2012 at 1-3pm at Grace Eyre to answer more questions about transport arrangements, plans for the future and learning disability awareness issues for public transport staff. Roger French from Brighton Buses has also been invited to this meeting. I would really appreciate a good attendance or questions or examples of good or bad treatment on the buses or trains being sent to me beforehand.

Taking Part In The City will provide a report about transport in Brighton & Hove after this meeting.

Eva