

## Public Policy Statement

### Transport

January 2022

#### Summary

Public and community transport are vitally important in helping older people to maintain independence and well-being. Such transport networks can ensure communities are well-connected and that services, facilities and amenities are accessible to older people. Without these, there is an increased risk that isolation and loneliness will impact upon people's well-being. It is essential that older people in all areas have the means to get out to buy food, get medical attention, get money and pay bills, and have social contact. These are basic features of a decent life and ought to be a high priority in transport policy.

Many older people rely on public transport, usually the bus, to get out and about. The free bus travel scheme has been invaluable in helping older people in Wales to retain their independence and remain active, and it is vital that this continues to be supported by the Welsh Government. We are extremely concerned that local bus services remain vulnerable to spending cuts or commercial decisions. The Welsh Government must work with local authorities to support a sustainable network of bus services across Wales, and contingency plans must be developed in the case of threats to existing services.

We support Welsh Government's Wales Transport Strategy's<sup>1</sup> vision for the development of an accessible, sustainable and efficient transport system, and we would wish to see better integration between transport and key services.

The Strategy prioritises active travel and public transport ahead of private motor vehicles, and states the need to change the way we travel, with fewer cars on our roads, and more people using public transport, walking or cycling. Whilst we support the Strategy's aim to 'reduce the need for people to use their cars on a daily basis',<sup>2</sup> some people depend on a car as the only practical form of independent transport, including older people that may experience mobility issues, or for carers, and for those living in rural areas where public transport is sparse. Continuing to drive may be crucial for older people to get out and about, access essential services such as health care, and reduce the risk of social isolation, particularly in rural areas.

Furthermore, in order to encourage people to use public transport, reliable, accessible and sustainable public transport services need to be available, with good connections and ease of

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd. The Wales Transport Strategy 2021.

[https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy_0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

connection between the different forms of transport. Key issues relating to public transport raised in Age Cymru's Community Calculator survey<sup>3</sup> (pre-pandemic) were problems with physical accessibility to public transport, cuts to bus services, and a lack of public transport in rural areas. The need for more direct bus routes to health services was also raised. Concerns were also raised over the frequency and reliability of bus services and the lack of bus and community transport in the evenings.

Community transport schemes provide an essential lifeline for many older people, especially in rural areas. Levels of public funding allocated to community transport must be closely monitored by the Welsh Government to ensure stability of provision and maintenance of vital services. We welcome Welsh Government proposals for the development and piloting of more demand responsive transport.<sup>4</sup> It is important that the findings of pilot services are publicised, and that successful good practice models are replicated and supported by local authorities to ensure their sustainability.

Accessing public transport can present significant physical problems for many older people. Accessibility problems at railway stations include stairs to platforms, a lack of lifts, and difficulties in negotiating the gap between the train and the platform edge. We welcome proposals for improvements at rail stations for step-free access, better waiting rooms, shelters, toilets, lighting and seating.<sup>5</sup>

For older people with limited mobility, getting to the bus stop and on and off the bus are significant issues which are compounded by a lack of facilities at bus stops. More bus stops and shelters with seating would make public transport more accessible. It is essential that information about public transport services is easily accessible in various formats, since many older people are not able to access online information. It is important that Welsh Government's Accessible and Inclusive public transport objectives<sup>6</sup> are implemented.

Age Cymru supports the aims of active travel for older people, in light of the documented health and social, as well as environmental, benefits that this can bring to individuals. To enable active travel, it is essential that the built environment in communities is safe and inclusive. More than a third of respondents to Age Cymru's Community Calculator survey<sup>7</sup> rated the pavements in their community as poor. Uneven pavements and brick pavements that are slippery when wet were seen as hazardous. Pavements obstructed with parked cars, bins and street furniture restricted access for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Problems with dog fouling and litter were also highlighted. Local authorities have a key role in making sure that the built environment in public spaces and streets in communities is safe and inclusive. We welcome Welsh Government's proposals to tackle pavement parking.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Age Cymru (2020) Key findings of the Community Calculator [Age Cymru | Community Calculator \(ageuk.org.uk\)](https://ageuk.org.uk)

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Age friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/10/4/1633593161/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Policy Statement – Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives. <https://beta.gov.wales/accessible-and-inclusive-public-transport-objectives>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd. The Wales Transport Strategy 2021.

As stated above, a car may become the only practical form of independent transport for many older people. It remains a major concern that a broad exception for financial services in the Equality Act 2010 may restrict older people's access to essential products including motor insurance, making it harder for older people to shop around for the best products.<sup>9</sup> For those who drive, stopping driving can be a major life event. Accessible and good quality transport options are therefore important to help facilitate older people through this major life transition.<sup>10</sup>

## Summary of public policy proposals

- Welsh Government must ensure that its Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives are implemented
- Welsh Government must work with Transport for Wales, local authorities and community and public transport providers to support a sustainable, integrated and inclusive transport network across Wales to ensure that older people remain connected to communities and services
- Given its importance to older people, the Welsh Government must continue to support the free bus travel scheme for all older and disabled people
- Welsh Government must work with local authorities to support a sustainable network of bus services across Wales, and contingency plans must be developed in the case of threats to existing services
- Welsh Government must monitor and respond to the impact of cuts and changes to bus services with reference to the ability of older people to access key services
- Local authorities must consult with older people in the preparation of their transport plans, and in decisions about the location and destinations of bus services
- Welsh Government, local authorities and health boards across Wales must seek to develop effective, co-ordinated transport links to enable older people to access vital health services
- The Welsh Government must closely monitor funding allocated to community transport and ensure stability of provision and maintenance of vital services
- Successful models of community transport provision and demand responsive transport should be replicated where possible and properly supported by local authorities to ensure their sustainability
- Welsh Government and Transport for Wales must ensure that work on improving accessibility and facilities at rail stations is completed as soon as possible
- Local authorities must ensure meaningful consultation with disabled and older people about proposals for shared spaces, to promote safety and avoid exclusion as a result of poor design
- Local authorities must ensure that streets are safe and accessible and well lit, with increased use of 20mph zones and traffic calming measures in residential areas. Pedestrian crossings must allow sufficient time to cross roads, signage should be easily visible, and pavements must be well maintained and free of obstruction

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<sup>9</sup> Age UK (2018) Ageism and Age Equality (Great Britain) policy position paper [ageism-and-age-equality-pp-great-britain-august-2018.pdf \(ageuk.org.uk\)](#), citing Financial Conduct Authority, Access to Financial Services in the UK, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Age UK & ILC-UK (2015) The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society. George Holley-Moore and Helen Creighton.

- Local authorities must provide adequate lighting, seating, shelter and accessible information at bus stops, with regular inspection to promote people's safety
- Comprehensive information about public transport services must be accessible and available in various formats. Online information needs to be high quality and easy to use, whilst information provided in other formats must be of equal quality and fully accessible.
- The UK Government should reconsider the financial services exemption from the ban on harmful age discrimination, with reference to the Equality Act 2010
- Welsh Government should undertake equality impact assessments on transport decisions to ensure that older people are not disproportionately affected financially to ensure a fair transition in the move towards net zero.

## Transport

This policy statement covers:

- Policy and legislation
- Importance of transport for older people
- Bus services
- Community transport
- Rail travel and integrated transport
- Active travel and accessibility of public transport
- Provision of information
- Older drivers.

## Public policy proposals

### Policy and legislation

The Programme for Government (2021-2026)<sup>11</sup> sets out how Welsh Government aims to invest in travel options that encourage public transport and support walking and cycling. Welsh Government's Net Zero Plan<sup>12,13</sup> aims to reduce the number of car miles travelled per person by 10% by 2030 and to increase the proportion of trips by sustainable travel mode (public transport and active travel) to 35% by 2025 and 39% by 2030.

Welsh Government published the new Wales Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd,<sup>14</sup> in 2021, which 'places people and climate change at the front and centre of our transport system'. The Strategy's vision is the development of an accessible, sustainable and efficient transport system. The Strategy prioritises active travel and public transport ahead of private motor vehicles, and states the need to change the way we travel, with fewer cars on our roads, and more people using public transport, walking or cycling.

Welsh Government aims to deliver the public transport Metro to improve services and better integrate other public transport and active travel with the rail system,<sup>15</sup> and Welsh Government is aiming to publish a new bus strategy and a White Paper to follow, and a bus reform Bill this Senedd term.<sup>16</sup>

Age Cymru supports Wales Transport Strategy's ambition of an accessible, sustainable and efficient transport system and the perceived benefits it would bring, and we would wish to see

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<sup>11</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Programme for Government: update <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/12/2/1640097820/programme-for-government-2021-to-2026.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> [net zero - means the greenhouse gases taken from the atmosphere is in balance with the greenhouse gases emitted] - see <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-10/net-zero-wales-summary-document.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 (2021-2025) [Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 \(2021 to 2025\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd. The Wales Transport Strategy 2021.

[https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy_0.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Welsh Government (2021) [Oral Statement: Update on the Metro \(20 October 2021\) | GOV.WALES](#)

a fully integrated, sustainable, accessible and inclusive transport network, with trains and buses linked to other forms of transport including pedestrian and cycle routes, and better integration between transport and key services.

Whilst we support a priority in the Strategy to 'bring services to people in order to reduce the need to travel' which includes 'reduce the need for people to use their cars on a daily basis',<sup>17</sup> some people depend on a car as the only practical form of independent transport, including older people that may experience mobility issues, or for carers, and for those living in rural areas where public transport is sparse. Continuing to drive may be crucial for older people to get out and about, access essential services such as health care, and reduce the risk of social isolation, particularly in rural areas.

Furthermore, in order to encourage people to use public transport, reliable, accessible and sustainable public transport services need to be available, with good connections and ease of connection between the different forms of transport. Key issues relating to public transport raised in Age Cymru's Community Calculator survey<sup>18</sup> (pre-pandemic) were problems with physical accessibility to public transport, cuts to bus services, and a lack of public transport in rural areas. The need for more direct bus routes to health services was also raised. Concerns were also raised over the frequency and reliability of bus services and the lack of bus and community transport in the evenings.

We support the Wales Transport Strategy's aim 'to remove the physical, attitudinal, environmental, systemic, linguistic and economic barriers that prevent people from using sustainable transport, including walking, cycling and public transport',<sup>19</sup> and we welcome reference to Welsh Government's Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives.<sup>20</sup> It is important that these objectives are implemented.

The three priority areas for transport set out in Welsh Government's Strategy for an Ageing Society<sup>21</sup> are: developing more demand responsive transport; improving bus services; and supporting people to plan journeys door to door. We welcome the focus on these priority areas, which are discussed in more detail below.

## Public policy proposal

- Welsh Government must ensure that its Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives are implemented.

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<sup>17</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd. The Wales Transport Strategy 2021. [https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy_0.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Age Cymru (2020) Key findings of the Community Calculator [Age Cymru | Community Calculator \(ageuk.org.uk\)](https://ageuk.org.uk/age-cymru-community-calculator)

<sup>19</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd. The Wales Transport Strategy 2021. [https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy_0.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Policy Statement – Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives. <https://gov.wales/accessible-and-inclusive-public-transport-objectives>

<sup>21</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Age friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/10/4/1633593161/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society.pdf>

## Importance of transport for older people

Public and community transport are vitally important in helping older people to maintain independence and well-being. Such transport networks can ensure communities are well-connected and that services, facilities and amenities are accessible to older people. Without these, there is an increased risk that isolation and loneliness will impact upon people's well-being. It is essential that older people in all areas have the means to get out to buy food, get medical attention, get money and pay bills, and have social contact. These are basic features of a decent life and ought to be a high priority in transport policy.

Reliable and accessible local transport networks become increasingly significant as people get older, and many older people rely on bus services to get out and about.<sup>22</sup> Welsh Government's Strategy for an Ageing Society<sup>23</sup> states that accessible public and community transport can be a lifeline for people of all ages, and that it is imperative to create an age friendly transport system that is accessible to all older people.<sup>24</sup> However, the Strategy highlights that cuts to local bus services and a lack of coordination between bus and rail networks can make even short journeys difficult for older people. Poor quality signage, seating and public toilets can also make older people feel less confident about using public transport.<sup>25</sup>

Access to reliable, affordable and safe transport is important for older people to maintain contact with friends and family who may live some distance away, helping to avoid loneliness and isolation which can both adversely affect wellbeing. Travelling, importantly as part of the general public rather than separately, can reduce isolation and increase opportunities for interaction.<sup>26</sup>

In a survey carried out by Age Cymru and older people's organisations in 2021 about the experiences of people aged 50 or over in Wales during the winter COVID-19 lockdown,<sup>27</sup> some respondents said that they were concerned that public transport would not be fully replaced after the pandemic. Some older people have raised concerns about people not wearing face masks on public transport.

To achieve an age friendly Wales, we believe that there must be sufficient integrated public and community transport available throughout Wales, to ensure that older people remain connected to communities and services.<sup>28</sup> An age friendly transport system is needed to keep people independent, healthy and engaged with their communities without having to use

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<sup>22</sup> Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales. A report by the Bevan Foundation for Age Cymru.

<sup>23</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Age friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/10/4/1633593161/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Age UK & ILC-UK (2015) The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society. George Holley-Moore and Helen Creighton.

<sup>27</sup> Age Cymru (2021) Experiences of people aged 50 or over in Wales during the winter Covid-19 lockdown, and the road to recovery [Lockdown survey provides an insight into what older people need to emerge from pandemic | Age Cymru \(ageuk.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>28</sup> Age Cymru (2015) Creating and age friendly Wales.



the car.<sup>29</sup> We believe that Welsh Government must work with Transport for Wales, local authorities and community and public transport providers to support a sustainable, integrated and inclusive transport network across Wales to ensure that older people remain connected to communities and services.

## Public policy proposal

- Welsh Government must work with Transport for Wales, local authorities and community and public transport providers to support a sustainable, integrated and inclusive transport network across Wales to ensure that older people remain connected to communities and services.

## Bus services

Bus services in Wales face considerable challenges. The number of journeys undertaken by local bus in Wales declined by 22% between 2008/9 and 2018/19. Despite this decline, recent years have seen a slight recovery in bus use, with the number of journeys rising by 2.2% between 2016/17 and 2018/19.<sup>30</sup> There was a 19% reduction in bus service availability between 2008/9 and 2018/19; part of the reason for the overall decline in bus service availability is the 37% decline in subsidised services since 2008/09.<sup>31</sup>

Many older people rely on public transport, usually the bus, to get out and about. Older people are more reliant on the bus than other age groups but they are less likely to manage with poor quality services. An Age Cymru research study<sup>32</sup> showed that many older people rely completely on the bus for going about their daily lives and that there is a dearth of bus services in many communities and at certain times, which is likely to be exacerbated by cuts in support for subsidised services. There are significant variations in the challenges faced in different parts of Wales, and one size does not fit all.

Being able to use the bus is very important for the wellbeing of many older people who rely on bus services to get out and about. The concessionary bus travel scheme has been invaluable in helping older people in Wales to retain their independence and remain active.<sup>33</sup> This scheme is an indispensable part of the lives of many older people,<sup>34</sup> providing a vital connection to services and amenities. Research has also found that it is invaluable in helping older people in Wales to retain their independence and remain active.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Age Cymru (2016) EnvisAGE. Towards an age friendly Wales. Article by Charles Musselwhite 'Vision for an age friendly transport system in Wales' <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/policy/age-cymru-policy-publications-1/envisage-1/>

<sup>30</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd. A New Wales Transport Strategy. Consultation Document. Support information. Transport data and trends. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2020-11/supporting-information-transport-data-and-trends.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales. A report by the Bevan Foundation for Age Cymru.

<sup>33</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2010) Concessionary Bus Pass Research.

<sup>34</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2014) The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales.

<sup>35</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2010) Concessionary Bus Pass Research.



Welsh Government is continuing to offer free bus travel for those aged over 60, and the concessionary scheme now extends to discounted or free travel on many rail services.<sup>36</sup> We believe that it is vital that this scheme continues to be supported by Welsh Government, and would welcome a bus pass that can be used for different forms of transport for older people, including community transport.

A reduction in bus services often disproportionately affects older people.<sup>37</sup> We are extremely concerned that local bus services remain vulnerable to spending cuts or commercial decisions by operators. We believe that Welsh Government must work with local authorities to support a sustainable network of bus services across Wales, and contingency plans must be developed in the case of threats to existing services.

We believe that significant alterations to bus services should be subject to an equality impact assessment by local authorities into the effect they will have on older people's ability to access services and communities. Furthermore, Welsh Government must monitor and respond to the impact of cuts and changes to bus services with reference to the ability of older people to access key services.

We welcome the transport priority for improving bus services proposed in Welsh Government's Strategy for an Ageing Society, and proposals for investment to improve provision of bus services and accessibility on buses.<sup>38</sup>

An issue that has been raised with us regarding bus services is that people may be required to travel into town or city centres to access a bus transport hub, and they then have to travel back out of the city/town centres to reach their destination, whereas in some cases a circular route, avoiding the city/town centres would be more efficient. It is important that public transport services are designed around the journeys that people need, and that older people are consulted about the journeys that they make, including travel to hospitals, healthcare, key services, and the need for bus services in the evenings and on Sundays.

We believe that local authorities must consult with older people in the preparation of their plans, and in decisions about the location and destinations of bus services. We welcome proposals that to develop an integrated vision for transport in Wales, Transport for Wales is working with local communities to learn more about the journeys they make.<sup>39</sup>

We believe there should be better integration between transport and key services, and public transport provisions must be taken into account in housing development schemes for older people, so that people can access communities.

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<sup>36</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Age friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/10/4/1633593161/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2014) The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales.

<sup>38</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Age friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/10/4/1633593161/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Travel to hospital is widely recognised to be difficult for older people. Age UK's 'Painful Journeys' campaign<sup>40</sup> highlights the struggle that many older people endure when travelling to hospital appointments. We believe that the Welsh Government, local authorities and health boards across Wales must seek to develop effective, co-ordinated transport links to enable older people to access vital health services. Older people have also highlighted that public transport should also be co-ordinated with hospital visiting times.

## **Public policy proposals**

- Given its importance to older people, the Welsh Government must continue to support the free bus travel scheme for all older and disabled people
- Welsh Government must work with local authorities to support a sustainable network of bus services across Wales, and contingency plans must be developed in the case of threats to existing services
- Welsh Government must monitor and respond to the impact of cuts and changes to bus services with reference to the ability of older people to access key services
- Local authorities must consult with older people in the preparation of their transport plans, and in decisions about the location and destinations of bus services
- The Welsh Government, local authorities and health boards across Wales must seek to develop effective, co-ordinated transport links to enable older people to access vital health services.

## **Community transport**

Community transport (CT) can provide flexible, accessible and responsive solutions to unmet local transport needs, and often represents the only means of transport for certain user groups.<sup>41</sup> It can play a crucial role in helping people to access essential services by providing travel where public transport cannot or does not, and on a door-to-door basis for people with specific mobility needs. CT can provide transport for people who are unable to use public transport services due to their location or mobility, and do not have access to alternatives such as their own vehicle or are unable to afford taxi fares.

The availability of community transport can be the deciding factor in whether an individual can continue to live the life they chose or whether they become socially isolated and at risk of loneliness. It provides a key preventative service and is a core element of any age friendly community.<sup>42</sup>

CT benefits those who are otherwise isolated or excluded, enabling them to live independently, participate in their communities and access education, employment, health

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<sup>40</sup> Age UK (2017) Painful Journeys <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/campaigning/painful-journeys/>

<sup>41</sup> CTA (2014) A CTA State of the Sector Report. Wales 2014. CTA Cymru Wales. Community Transport Association.

<sup>42</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Age friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/10/4/1633593161/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society.pdf>

and other services. Community transport often represents the only way in which particular user groups can access a range of essential services.<sup>43</sup>

As CT is regulated differently from conventional bus services, it can step in where conventional services are not viable or available. It can provide the connectivity needed to get to a range of destinations for otherwise isolated or excluded groups of people.<sup>44</sup>

Typical CT services include community bus services, voluntary car schemes, hospital transport and dial-a-ride.

CT schemes provide an essential lifeline for many older people and we would like to see increased community transport provision across the whole of Wales as it plays a vital role in assisting people unable to use mainstream public transport.

We believe that levels of public funding allocated to community transport must be closely monitored by the Welsh Government to ensure stability of provision and maintenance of vital services.

A priority for transport in the Strategy for an Ageing Society is developing more demand responsive transport.<sup>45</sup> Transport for Wales is piloting a “fflecsi” community transport initiative across Wales in both rural and urban settings which will help to understand where Fflecsi and demand responsive travel fit in as part of the suite of measures to achieve an integrated transport network across Wales.<sup>46</sup>

It is important that the findings of pilot services are publicised, and that successful good practice models of community transport and demand responsive transport are replicated and supported by local authorities to ensure their sustainability.

## **Public policy proposals**

- Welsh Government must closely monitor funding allocated to community transport and ensure stability of provision and maintenance of vital services
- Successful models of community transport provision and demand responsive transport should be replicated where possible and properly supported by local authorities to ensure their sustainability.

## **Rail travel and integrated transport**

Rail services play a vital part in transport for older people in some areas in Wales. However, in some cases stations or trains are inaccessible or there is poor interchange between bus routes and railway stations.

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<sup>43</sup> CTA (2014) A CTA State of the Sector Report. Wales 2014. CTA Cymru Wales. Community Transport Association.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Age friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/10/4/1633593161/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Accessibility problems at railway stations include stairs to platforms, a lack of lifts, difficulties in negotiating the gap between the train and the platform edge. Older people who can and want to use trains require reliable rail travel supported by adequate infrastructure, including seating and accessible toilet facilities in stations.<sup>47</sup>

In terms of improving accessibility, we welcome proposals that Transport for Wales is investing £200 million across all rail stations in Wales for step-free access, better waiting rooms, shelters, toilets, lighting and seating, and is also improving the services it offers to people in need of assistance on their journeys.<sup>48</sup> It is important that toilets are available at all Metro stations (see below).

It is important that transport planners take steps to ensure that the rail network is linked to other forms of public transport. We support the development of a fully integrated public transport network. Welsh Government aims to deliver public transport Metro systems to improve services and better integrate other public transport and active travel with the rail system.<sup>49</sup> Three Metro networks are currently being developed in Wales: South Wales Metro, Swansea Bay and West Wales Metro, and the North Wales Metro.<sup>50</sup>

### **Public policy proposal**

- Welsh Government and Transport for Wales must ensure that work on improving accessibility and facilities at rail stations is completed as soon as possible.

### **Active travel and accessibility of public transport**

Age Cymru supports the aims of active travel for older people, in light of the documented health and social, as well as environmental, benefits that this can bring to individuals. An age friendly Wales would see the development of a fully integrated sustainable transport network, with trains and buses linked to other forms of transport including pedestrian and cycle routes, and better integration between transport and key services.<sup>51</sup>

Studies relating to accessible and inclusive age friendly environments identify a number of barriers in the physical environment for older people, including a barrier related to the issue of shared space, whereby such 'shared space' is often not segregated between car and pedestrian.<sup>52</sup> Older people have also expressed concerned over shared space for cycling

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<sup>47</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales (2014) The Importance and Impact of Community Services within Wales.

<sup>48</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Age friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/10/4/1633593161/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd. The Wales Transport Strategy 2021. [https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy_0.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> Transport for Wales (2021) How we're developing Metro [TfW Metro Development 2021\\_4.pdf](#)

<sup>51</sup> Age Cymru (2015) Creating an age friendly Wales.

<sup>52</sup> Age Cymru (2016) EnvisAGE. Towards an age friendly Wales. Article by Judith Phillips 'Accessible and inclusive age friendly environments'. <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/policy/age-cymru-policy-publications-1/envisage-1/>

and walking. We believe there is the need to ensure meaningful consultation with disabled and older people about proposals for shared spaces, to avoid exclusion as a result of poor design.

Welsh Government's Active Travel Act Guidance document recognises that shared use facilities which are available for use by both pedestrians and cyclists are generally not favoured by either pedestrians or cyclists, particularly when flows are high.<sup>53</sup> It can create particular difficulties for visually impaired people, and the interactions between people moving at different speeds can be perceived to be unsafe and inaccessible, particularly by vulnerable pedestrians.<sup>54</sup> The Active Travel Guidance document highlights that where a shared use facility is being considered, early engagement with relevant interested parties should be undertaken, particularly those representing disabled people, and pedestrians and cyclists generally. Engaging with such groups is an important step towards the scheme meeting the authority's Public Sector Equality Duty.<sup>55</sup>

We believe that it is vital that the built environment enables, rather than prevents, older people taking an active part in their communities and that there should be appropriate infrastructure to facilitate older people to access community spaces safely.

To encourage active travel it is important that there is sufficient provision of public seating and places to rest in communities. More than a third of respondents to Age Cymru's Community Calculator rated public seating and places to rest as poor, with a general lack of public seating in communities being a key issue.<sup>56</sup> In a survey carried out by Age Cymru and older people's organisations in 2021 about the experiences of people aged 50 or over in Wales during the winter COVID-19 lockdown,<sup>57</sup> some older people had concerns around a loss of physical fitness, which often went hand in hand with concerns regarding a lack of facilities in public places, such as places they can rest.

Barriers in the built environment can exclude older people from becoming fully inclusive members of society, for example: pavements in a poor condition, tree roots causing uneven pavements, and street 'clutter', which can be hazardous and pose an increased falls risk; a lack of public seating; inadequate street lighting; and a lack of safe pedestrian crossings that allow sufficient time to cross roads.

To enable active travel, it is essential that the built environment in public spaces and streets in communities is safe and inclusive. More than a third of respondents to Age Cymru's Community Calculator survey<sup>58</sup> rated the pavements in their community as poor. Uneven pavements and brick pavements that are slippery when wet were seen as hazardous.

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<sup>53</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Active Travel Act Guidance [https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-12/active-travel-act-guidance\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-12/active-travel-act-guidance_0.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Age Cymru (2020) Key findings of the Community Calculator [Age Cymru | Community Calculator \(ageuk.org.uk\)](https://ageuk.org.uk)

<sup>57</sup> Age Cymru (2021) Experiences of people aged 50 or over in Wales during the winter Covid-19 lockdown, and the road to recovery [Lockdown survey provides an insight into what older people need to emerge from pandemic | Age Cymru \(ageuk.org.uk\)](https://ageuk.org.uk)

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

Pavements obstructed with parked cars, bins and street furniture restricted access for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Problems with dog fouling and litter were also highlighted.

A lack of safe pavements can place serious restrictions on the freedom of movement and mobility of older people. Pavements that are in a state of disrepair or are obstructed can compromise the safety and independence of older people and increase the risk of falls. Increased effort is needed to ensure that pavements are well-maintained and kept free of parked cars and obstacles. Some older people have raised concerns about the expansion of shops and cafes onto pavements, which can be difficult to navigate, and that careful planning is needed so that streets are safe for people of all ages to enjoy. Concerns about bicycles and e-scooters on pedestrian only areas have also been raised, and difficulty navigating cycle lanes to get on a bus.

We welcome Welsh Government proposals to look at introducing legislation for a national default speed limit of 20 mph in residential areas and proposals to tackle pavement parking.<sup>59,60</sup> The Strategy for an Ageing Society highlights that with these two measures in place it will be easier for an ageing population to move around their communities, as they will feel and be safer.<sup>61</sup> We welcome the Strategy's transport priority of supporting people to plan journeys door to door, and we look forward to seeing how this will be implemented in the Strategy's delivery plan.

Key issues raised in relation to 'Neighbourhood safety' in Age Cymru's Community Calculator survey<sup>62</sup> included: speeding traffic and lack of facilities to cross roads safely, and a lack of, or dimly-lit, street lighting.<sup>63</sup>

Research on older people crossing the road at a pedestrian crossing reports that the 1.2 metres per second that the Department for Transport advises as the speed allowed for people to cross a road is not long enough and in around 89% of cases older people aren't walking at a fast enough speed to complete the crossing before returning to the green phase for traffic to proceed.<sup>64</sup> We believe that local authorities must ensure that streets are safe and accessible, with good lighting. Pedestrian crossings must allow sufficient time to cross roads, signage should be easily visible, and pavements must be well maintained and free of obstruction.

Many problems exist for older people wishing to access public transport, which can mean that it is often not a realistic or safe option. For older people with limited mobility, getting to and from the bus stop, and on and off the bus can be an issue, especially if carrying shopping, which is compounded by a lack of facilities at bus stops. Some older people are able to walk short distances and stand for short periods only, so more bus stops and shelters with seating

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<sup>59</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Llwybr Newydd. The Wales Transport Strategy 2021.

[https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy_0.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Age friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/10/4/1633593161/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Age Cymru (2020) Key findings of the Community Calculator [Age Cymru | Community Calculator \(ageuk.org.uk\)](https://ageuk.org.uk)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Age Cymru (2016) EnvisAGE. Towards an age friendly Wales. Article by Charles Musselwhite 'Vision for an age friendly transport system in Wales'.



would help to make public transport more accessible. Our research<sup>65</sup> highlighted concerns over the absence of seating at bus stops, with many rural bus stops having no effective shelter from adverse weather.

Safe and accessible buses are important for older people who are sometimes put off using services because of experiences where buses move off before passengers were seated.<sup>66</sup> Many older people are afraid of falling and sudden movement of the bus could make them do so. One of the objectives in the Welsh Government's policy statement – accessible and inclusive public transport objectives<sup>67</sup> includes a reference to 'Work with providers of public transport to raise awareness of the risk of trips and falls for older people and people with restricted mobility when vehicles move away from stops before passengers are seated', and it is important that these objectives are implemented. Older people have also raised concerns about the limited space for wheelchairs and pushchairs on buses.

The Blue Badge scheme enables people who meet the eligibility criteria to maximise their independence by improving their access to services and facilities. They can be the driver or a passenger.<sup>68</sup> Welsh Government's scheme also includes discretionary qualification which includes people with severe cognitive impairment (person who is unable to plan or follow any journey without the help of someone else); and temporary qualification, whereby an individual can apply for a temporary 12 month badge if they are recovering from, or awaiting treatment for serious illnesses or injuries.<sup>69</sup> With reference to the availability of the Badge for people with temporary mobility problems, we believe that the duration of the Badge should be based on the recovery time of the applicant and feedback from a relevant health care professional.

### **Public policy proposals**

- Local authorities must ensure meaningful consultation with disabled and older people about proposals for shared spaces, to promote safety and avoid exclusion as a result of poor design
- Local authorities must ensure that streets are safe and accessible and well lit, with increased use of 20mph zones and traffic calming measures in residential areas. Pedestrian crossings must allow sufficient time to cross roads, signage should be easily visible, and pavements must be well maintained and free of obstruction
- Local authorities must provide adequate lighting, seating, shelter and accessible information at bus stops, with regular inspection to promote people's safety.

### **Provision of information**

It is essential that older people can easily access information about public transport services. Our research study<sup>70</sup> highlighted that accessing information about bus services, especially when several operators provide services on the same route, can be very difficult.

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<sup>65</sup> Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Policy Statement – Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives.

<sup>68</sup> Welsh Government (2021) Who is eligible for a Blue Badge? [Blue Badges: eligibility \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/blue-badges-eligibility)

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Age Cymru (2013) Buses – a lifeline for older people. Older people's experience of bus services in Wales.



Our research also highlighted problems with the readability of timetable information for anyone with slight eyesight impairments. We believe that the provision of information about bus and rail services and should be accessible in various formats; many older people are not able to use, or do not have access to the internet, or have smartphones, and therefore may not be able to access such information if it is provided online only. Services provided online need to be high quality and easy to use, whilst offline services should be of equal quality and fully accessible. Service providers must ensure that the provision of online information is not to the detriment of the provision of information in other formats. In terms of good practice, we heard of a local authority sending timetables to residents for the local bus route in the post, which was most useful.

## Public policy proposal

- Comprehensive information about public transport services must be accessible and available in various formats. Online information needs to be high quality and easy to use, whilst information provided in other formats must be of equal quality and fully accessible.

## Older drivers

There are more than 5 million people aged 70 or more in Great Britain who hold a full driving licence.<sup>71</sup> The benefits of a car include being able to travel to an exact location. This is particularly important for older people that experience mobility problems as they age, or for carers. A car may become the only practical form of independent transport. Continuing to drive may be crucial for older people to get out and about, access essential services such as health care, and reduce the risk of social isolation, particularly in rural areas.

Age Cymru's Community Calculator<sup>72</sup> showed that the loss of local services in communities in some areas is exacerbated by cuts to bus services, especially in rural areas, increasing the need for people to use personal or private transport to access services. A lack of car parking spaces, including blue badge parking, was raised as an issue in communities in some areas. Where a car may be the only form of transport for some older people, sufficient parking spaces are needed to enable them to access communities and services. Concerns have also been raised by older people about the width of car parking spaces which are often too narrow to accommodate larger cars, which can make it difficult for people to get in and out of cars.

An issue that has also been raised with us is that some car parks accept card payments only and not cash. Not all older people have access to card payment methods, and so it is important that car parks display available payment methods on the entrances to car parks.

Barriers to older people continuing driving include assumptions surrounding the safety and quality of older people's driving, with older drivers often thought of as less safe than younger drivers. In Great Britain in 2018, drivers aged between 20-29 represented the highest number

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<sup>71</sup> RAC (based on analysis of DVLA data) [General facts and figures about roads and road use \(racfoundation.org\)](https://www.racfoundation.org)

<sup>72</sup> Age Cymru (2020) Key findings of the Community Calculator [Age Cymru : Community Calculator \(ageuk.org.uk\)](https://www.ageuk.org.uk)

of those killed or injured on the roads (185 per million population), whereas the lowest level was for the 60-69 age group at 97 per million population. Figures for those in the 70-79 age group were lower than the 30-39 age group - although numbers start to increase for drivers who are 80+.<sup>73</sup> These figures provide an indication of the risks for different age groups but do not tell us the causes of an accident. Older people are generally more vulnerable to death or injury in a road accident as a driver, passenger or pedestrian.<sup>74</sup>

It remains a major concern that a broad exception for financial services in the Equality Act 2010 may restrict older people's access to essential products including motor insurance, making it harder for older people to shop around for the best products.<sup>75</sup> We believe that older people should have access to financial services such as car insurance based on individual circumstances and not arbitrary age limits.

For those who drive, stopping driving can be a major life event. Some older people do give up driving successfully; this best occurs where a great deal of planning has taken place over time, with long periods of trialling out new modes and destinations or where there are locally living very supportive family members.<sup>76</sup> Accessible and good quality transport options are therefore important to help facilitate older people through this major life transition.<sup>77</sup>

We believe that the emphasis should be on supporting older people to continue driving safely for as long as possible. There needs to be an inclusive public transport system that is available, accessible, affordable and acceptable to help older people who wish to make the move from private to public transport.

In its consultation document for the Wales Transport Strategy<sup>78</sup> Welsh Government posed the question: 'If charges for road use were to be introduced to help meet goals for cleaner air, a safe climate and better health, how can this be done in a way that's fair to everyone?' Should charges for road users be introduced, we would have concerns about the financial impact on older people that depend on a car as the only practical form of independent transport, including older people that may experience mobility issues, or for carers, and for those living in rural areas where public transport is sparse. We believe that older people that are dependent on car use should not be financially disadvantaged should such a system be introduced.

We believe that Welsh Government should undertake equality impact assessments to ensure that older people are not disproportionately affected financially to ensure a fair transition in the

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<sup>73</sup> Age UK (2019) Older drivers (England), policy position paper [ppp\\_older\\_drivers\\_policy\\_position.pdf \(ageuk.org.uk\)](#), citing figures from Department for Transport (September 2019) RAS30025: Reported casualty rates by age band, road user type and severity, Great Britain (2018).

<sup>74</sup> Age UK (2019) Older drivers (England), policy position paper [ppp\\_older\\_drivers\\_policy\\_position.pdf \(ageuk.org.uk\)](#).

<sup>75</sup> Age UK (2018) Ageism and Age Equality (Great Britain) policy position paper. [ageism-and-age-equality-pp-great-britain-august-2018.pdf \(ageuk.org.uk\)](#), citing Financial Conduct Authority, Access to Financial Services in the UK, 2016.

<sup>76</sup> Age Cymru (2016) EnvisAGE. Towards an age friendly Wales. Article by Charles Musselwhite 'Vision for an age friendly transport system in Wales'.

<sup>77</sup> Age UK & ILC-UK (2015) The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society. George Holley-Moore and Helen Creighton.

<sup>78</sup> Welsh Government (2020) Llwybr Newydd – a new Wales transport strategy. Consultation document. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2020-12/consultation-document-llwybr-newydd.pdf>

move towards net zero. Furthermore, we believe that any transport decisions made by Welsh Government further to their recent survey (in 2021) which sought views on tolls for older cars using the M4 and A470,<sup>79</sup> should also undergo an equality impact assessment.

### **Public policy proposals**

- The UK Government should reconsider the financial services exemption from the ban on harmful age discrimination, with reference to the Equality Act 2010
- Welsh Government should undertake equality impact assessments on transport decisions to ensure that older people are not disproportionately affected financially to ensure a fair transition in the move towards net zero.

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<sup>79</sup> [Climate change: M4 drivers asked for views on tolls for older cars - BBC News](#)