
TRANSPORT AND POVERTY IN SCOTLAND

REPORT OF THE POVERTY AND INEQUALITY COMMISSION



30 June 2019

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared for the Poverty and Inequality Commission by the Commission's Transport working group. The group's members were:

Kaliani Lyle (Chair)	Poverty and Inequality Commission
Caroline Kennedy	Poverty and Inequality Commission
Richard Crisp	Reader, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University
Emma Ritch	Director, Engender
Ranald Robertson	Director, Hitrans (Highland Regional Transport Partnership)
Emma Scott	Equality Projects Manager, Disability Equality Scotland

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TRANSPORT AND POVERTY IN SCOTLAND: REPORT OF THE POVERTY AND INEQUALITY COMMISSION

Introduction

Transport plays a vital role in all our lives. It enables us to get to work, education or training; to see friends and family; to take part in leisure activities; to access health appointments and so much more.

When the Poverty and Inequality Commission consulted on what should be included in its work plan, transport was an issue that came out strongly, particularly from people with lived experience of poverty. Since we made transport one of our priorities, we have come to understand much more about the importance of transport to the lives of people on low incomes. People across Scotland have been keen to talk to us and tell us about their experiences of transport, what it means to them, and what needs to change. Beyond the practical issues, people have told us about feeling isolated, about the anxiety that unreliable transport causes them, about the stress they feel due to high transport costs putting pressure on already stretched budgets.

It is clear to the Commission that action is needed on transport in order to help unlock people from poverty. This report sets out a number of principles that provide a framework for thinking about transport and poverty. These principles set out what people should be able to expect from a transport system in Scotland and are informed by the evidence base and by the things we have heard from people with lived experience of poverty. We then make recommendations that, if implemented, would start to move the transport system closer to meeting those principles.

The Commission's approach

The Commission set up a working group which included members of the Commission and other people with relevant expertise. The working group's remit was to identify recommendations relating to transport that can help reduce poverty or address the impact of poverty in Scotland. In order to do this the working group considered issues of affordability, availability and accessibility of transport.

The working group started by undertaking a brief review of the evidence about transport and poverty. It wanted to ensure that its work was shaped by the knowledge and experience of people with lived experience of poverty. Working with the Poverty Alliance, Oxfam and HUG, the Commission undertook two workshops about transport with people with lived experience of poverty. One workshop took place in Glasgow and the other took place in Lairg, in the Highlands. Around forty

people attended each event. The findings from those workshops have helped shape the recommendations in this report.

Members of the working group also visited or asked for feedback from a number of other groups with lived experience of poverty, and some individuals sent written contributions to the working group.

As part of its consideration of the issues, the working group met with officials from Transport Scotland to discuss poverty and transport, the National Transport Strategy and the Transport (Scotland) Bill.

Why does transport matter in relation to poverty?

Transport matters in relation to poverty because of its potential impact on income, household expenditure and mitigating the impact of poverty. Good, affordable transport can enable people to access jobs, education and training. This can contribute to raising household income and preventing people from experiencing poverty or enabling people to move out of poverty (Crisp et al, 2018; Titheridge et al, 2018). On the other hand, poor access to transport can lock people into poverty by limiting access to these opportunities to increase income.

The cost of transport can put significant pressures on household budgets. This can include the cost of public transport, or the cost of needing to run a car. Transport costs can also prevent people from travelling entirely. Transport costs need to be weighed against earnings in making decisions about taking jobs, for example (Crisp et al, 2018).

Access to transport can also reinforce or lessen the impact of poverty. Being unable to access or afford transport can prevent people accessing services, reduce quality of life and lead to social isolation (Titheridge et al, 2014). This can increase inequalities linked to income, such as health inequalities (Lucas et al, 2019).

The relationship between use of transport and income

The modes of transport that people use are influenced by their income. Evidence shows that people in lower income households are more likely to take the bus, while people in higher income households are more likely to drive or take the train (Transport Scotland, 2019; Transport Scotland, 2018). 44% of people with an income of less than £10,000 travelled by bus once a week or more compared to 16% of those with an income over £40,000 (Transport Scotland 2018). Having a driving licence, and having access to a car, is strongly related to income. Only 37% of households with a net annual income of up to £10,000 and 47% of those with an income of £10,000 - £15,000 have access to a car compared with nearly 97% of those with an income of over £40,000 (Transport Scotland 2018).

The situation is more complex for people on low incomes living in rural areas. People in rural areas drive more frequently than those in urban areas (Transport Scotland, 2019). The issue of 'forced' car ownership has been identified in both rural and urban

areas, but is particularly pronounced in rural areas where lack of public transport means that people can be forced into running a car even if it puts real pressures on their budget (Lucas et al, 2016).

Research has also found a relationship between living in areas with higher levels of deprivation and having poorer transport options. While this is not universally the case, research suggests that areas with higher levels of deprivation tend to have worse public transport links in terms of both the number of options and quality of services (Lucas et al, 2016, Titheridge et al, 2014).

It is difficult to measure transport affordability because, unlike spending on food or fuel, spending on transport actually goes up as incomes rise (Office for National Statistics, 2019). This is because some spending on transport is discretionary, with transport being used to enable leisure activities such as days out and holidays. People in better paid jobs may also travel further for work. On the other hand the travel of people on low incomes may not reflect their actual travel needs. They may have to restrict their activities, limiting opportunities for work, education or leisure, because they cannot afford transport.

There can also be trade-offs between different types of expenditure. Moving further away from shops, employment and leisure opportunities may allow people to get cheaper housing, for example, but may increase transport costs (Lucas et al, 2016). High transport costs or poor transport services may restrict people to using local shops and services which may have higher prices – one example of the poverty premium.

What would an ‘ideal’ transport system look like?

In our workshops with people with lived experience of poverty we asked people what an ‘ideal’ transport system would look like. We have built on what they told us and on the evidence drawn from the wider evidence base about poverty and transport in Scotland to develop a framework of principles setting out what a transport system that aims to reduce poverty would look like.

We have linked our principles to the draft vision and outcomes that have been developed by Transport Scotland as part of their work to develop a new Transport Strategy for Scotland. This is due for consultation in summer 2019. The draft vision for the Transport Strategy is:

“We will have a sustainable, inclusive and accessible transport system helping to deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors.”

It sets out a number of outcomes around the themes of:

- Promotes equality
- Helps our Economy Prosper
- Improves our Health and Wellbeing
- Takes Climate Action

TRANSPORT AND POVERTY FRAMEWORK		
Transport Strategy Vision & Outcomes	Poverty & Inequality Commission proposed principles	
Vision	Rights-based	Access to suitable transport, no matter your level of income or where in Scotland you live, should be seen as a necessary requirement in order to achieve other human rights such as the right to work, right to education, right to take part in cultural and public life, and right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.
Promotes Equality	Affordable	Transport should be affordable for everyone, no matter their level of income. People should not have to make trade-offs between spending on transport and spending on other essential items such as food or fuel.
Promotes Equality	Accountable	The transport system should be accountable, with people and communities able to influence the delivery of services. It should be clear who people need to contact when transport is not meeting their needs and who is accountable for making sure that standards are met.
Promotes Equality	Inclusive	Transport systems should be explicitly designed to be inclusive, taking into account the different needs of women and disabled people, particularly in relation to issues such as caring responsibilities, access to health services and participation in public life. These groups of transport users should be part of the design process.
Promotes Equality	Integrated and connected	Transport services should be delivered in a joined up way that properly considers the type of journeys people take. People should be able to change transport easily and affordably on their journeys (e.g. changing between buses or changing between different types of transport). Particular attention should be paid to connectivity in rural areas and to the needs of disabled people when changing transport.
Helps our Economy Prosper	Supports employment and education	People should have access to transport that enables them to get to education, training and employment. This transport needs to be affordable and reliably get them to education/employment by the time they need to be there.
Helps our Economy Prosper	Joined up	Strategies for delivering housing, employment, education, health, leisure, and transport services should not be developed in isolation from each other but should be considered in a connected way so that they maximise accessibility and reduce transport costs.
Improves our Health and Wellbeing	Reduces the Poverty Premium	People should not face a poverty premium on food and other goods and services as a result of a lack of access to transport.

Transport Principles

Rights-based

Access to suitable transport is not in itself set out as a human right in international conventions, but it is a necessary requirement in order to achieve other human rights such as the right to work, right to education, right to take part in cultural and public life and the right to the highest standard of physical and mental health. Some of the people we spoke to in our workshops suggested that transport should be considered a right and that there should be a shift in thinking about the transport system from being merely a means to transport people and goods, to an active tool to prevent and reduce poverty (Poverty Alliance & HUG, 2019).

A rights-based approach to transport would start from the principle that access to suitable transport, no matter your level of income or where in Scotland you live, should be seen as a necessary requirement in order to achieve other human rights. The present transport system does not yet deliver this level of access to transport for all.

As set out in the section on the relationship between use of transport and income, the evidence shows that people on low incomes are significantly more dependent on public transport to enable them to exercise their rights. For people in rural areas – in particular disabled people – these transport barriers to accessing human rights are even more pronounced.

As well as determining access to employment and education opportunities (see *Support Employment and Education* below) the lack of suitable transport has a detrimental effect on people's ability to achieve the highest standard of physical and mental health. Difficulties in accessing health services was one of the issues that came up most frequently in our workshops. A survey of disabled people looking at transport in rural areas found that hospitals were the most difficult services to access from a rural area (Disability Equality Scotland, 2018). One respondent to the Commission from Skye, for example, identified issues accessing hospital appointments in Inverness from Skye:

“No bus to Inverness in winter that arrives before 12.10 i.e. 12.30 at Raigmore Hospital. So people can't take hospital appointments in the morning all winter unless they get a lift or stay overnight. Getting the bus leaves only a 3 hour window for appointments (1.30-4.30) before the return bus leaves again for Skye at 5pm.”

Some participants in our workshops also reported that the cost of transport was so high that they knew of people in their community who had missed hospital appointments due to being unable to afford the up-front cost of transport, even though they would receive subsequent reimbursement (Poverty Alliance & HUG 2019).

Affordable

Given transport is necessary in order for people to achieve their human rights, the cost of transport is very important. Transport should be affordable for everyone, no matter their level of income. People should not have to make trade-offs between spending on transport and spending on other essential items such as food or fuel.

People on low incomes are more likely to use buses, while those on higher incomes are most likely to drive. Bus fares in Scotland have increased by almost 18% over the past five years (11% in real terms when adjusted for inflation) (Transport Scotland, 2019). There is also a lot of variation in the cost of bus travel across Scotland. Research by Citizens Advice Scotland in 2016 found that the price varied across Scotland's bus routes ranging from 7p per mile to £1.80 per mile (Citizens Advice Scotland, 2016). The costs of travel to essential services were generally much higher in remote rural areas; the average return cost of travelling to college in Scotland was £6, for example, but was £10.50 in remote rural areas (Citizens Advice Scotland, 2016).

Transport policy recognises that the market will not make transport affordable for everyone and therefore provides concessionary travel for some groups. People aged 60 and over and eligible disabled people are entitled to free travel and young people are entitled to discounted travel. There are also concessionary schemes run by individual transport operators. At our workshops we found that concessionary travel was identified as one of the most positive aspects of the transport system (Poverty Alliance & Oxfam, 2019). There are other people on low incomes, however, who do not benefit from concessionary schemes and who will struggle with the cost of travel.

It was also apparent from our discussions that there were lots of differences in the concessions that were available locally and that people were not always aware of what was available. Some operators, for example, offered discounted fares for families during school holidays, others offered discounted travel for jobseekers, but not everyone was aware of these. People we talked to also highlighted loopholes in provision, such as discounted fares for young people that were only available off-peak and therefore no use for young people travelling to work or college.

Accountable

The principle of accountability is central to the delivery of good services. The transport system should be accountable, with people and communities able to influence the delivery of services. It should be clear who people need to contact when transport is not meeting their needs and who is accountable for making sure that standards are met.

The transport system in Scotland is complex, with a range of public and private sector organisations having a role. This can make it particularly difficult to identify how the various parts of the system can be held to account for the transport services that people receive.

The lack of accountability of the transport system came across strongly when we spoke to people with lived experience of poverty. People we spoke to felt unable to have any influence on the delivery of services. When asked whether they had ever raised any issues with transport operators, one respondent replied *“What’s the point? It’s a monopoly.”* Another suggested that older people were afraid to complain because the route they relied on might be cut off.

Local transport decision-making processes were unclear and a number of people at our workshops suggested there was the need for greater community involvement in the planning and delivery of transport services. Alongside this they felt there was a need to strengthen and open up complaint and feedback processes to ensure greater accountability of providers when services were not meeting the needs of people and communities (Poverty Alliance & Oxfam, 2019; Poverty Alliance & HUG, 2019).

Inclusive

A good transport system should be inclusive, taking into account the needs of everyone in society, and be an active tool to prevent and reduce poverty. We know that women and disabled people are particularly likely to experience poverty (Scottish Government, 2019), and that women and disabled people are less likely to drive and more likely to use buses (Transport Scotland, 2018), yet they have particular needs that are often not taken into account by transport systems which tend to be designed around the needs of some travellers and not others.

Transport systems should be explicitly designed to be inclusive of the different needs of women and disabled people, particularly in relation to issues such as caring responsibilities, access to health services and participation in public life. These groups of transport users should be part of the design process.

Accessibility of public transport is a particular issue for disabled people, and also for women with young children. While disabled people can be eligible for free concessionary bus travel, this is only useful to them if they can access services. Disabled people can face a range of issues using public transport, including physical accessibility, difficulties in getting to bus stops or train stations, lack of accessible information about journeys and lack of suitable facilities on journeys, such as toilets (Disability Equality Scotland, 2018; Scottish Disability Equality Forum, 2016). Where buses are not accessible for prams this can limit women’s access to transport. In a survey by the Scottish Youth Parliament one respondent said:

“As a pram user I can never get a bus. 6 different buses refused to allow me on this morning resulting in being late for a health visitor appointment. The GP surgery has now removed us from the surgery’s list for being late to attend.” (Scottish Youth Parliament, 2019)

Transport networks tend to be developed based on a ‘hub and spoke’ model that prioritises journeys into the centre of towns and cities (the types of commuting journeys made more often by men), with fewer services available for the more local trips women make more often. The journeys that women make are often not point to

point. We know that women are likely to have more responsibilities for children, elderly relatives and domestic chores, alongside paid work, which means they are more likely to make lots of shorter trips, rather than a single commute, and are more likely to be travelling with children, buggies, bags of shopping etc. (Duchene, 2011). Travel to work often involves a stop at a childcare facility, school, or both. The needs of modern society are well catered for by the private car but not by the hub and spoke transport network.

Women and disabled people travelling by public transport may also face safety issues, particularly where bus stops are situated in isolated or unsafe places (Duchene, 2011; Scottish Disability Equality Forum, 2016). At our workshops we heard that discrimination and stigma can be experienced by disabled people from both transport staff and other travellers (Poverty Alliance & Oxfam, 2019).

Integrated and connected

In a good transport system it should be straightforward for people to get to their final destination even if this requires changing transport. In order to do this transport services should be delivered in a joined up way that properly considers the type of journeys people take. People should be able to change transport easily and affordably on their journeys (e.g. changing between buses or changing between different types of transport). Particular attention should be paid to connectivity in rural areas and to the needs of disabled people when changing transport.

Poor connections and the expense of multiple tickets were common themes that came up in our workshops (Poverty Alliance & Oxfam, 2019). Some participants spoke of having to take multiple buses (operated by multiple companies) to make one journey. This meant purchasing multiple tickets and therefore substantially increasing the cost the journey. Research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that in some cases concerns that unreliable services and delays could lead to missed connections caused residents to dismiss some potential journeys to work entirely where they involved interchange to another bus or different mode of transport (Crisp et al, 2018).

The difficulties caused by poor connections can be particularly acute in rural areas where there may be long waits for the next bus or train, or there may not be another bus or train at all. One respondent to the Commission said:

“The timetable is also confusing and connections not easy to see. The local bus shelters do not even have copies of the latest timetable in them.”

Joined up

Ensuring that people are able to access services and opportunities may not always be the responsibility of transport services. Solutions in relation to accessibility may lie with agencies involved in planning, housing, employment, education and a range of public services, who need to ensure that they are better connected.

Strategies for delivering housing, employment, education, health, leisure and transport services should not be developed in isolation from each other but should be considered in a connected way so that they maximise accessibility and reduce transport costs.

Our workshops and discussions particularly highlighted health services and housing as policy areas where there needed to be greater consideration given to transport and accessibility. The perception that there was a lack of joined-up approaches when it comes to local planning, particularly around housing but also economic development, was raised in our workshops. One participant, for example, spoke of how a new low-cost housing development was built in their community, but that there was no suitable transport provision to enable people to travel from the housing development to areas of employment or to access health services (Poverty Alliance & HUG, 2019). The fact that challenges around transport and access to work cannot be solved by transport policy alone was also set out in research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation which recommended that planning tools and approaches ensure that new housing and employment developments are well served by public transport that reduces the travel costs, times or distances between places of residence and work (Crisp et al, 2018).

Supports employment and education

Access to employment and education is needed in order to prevent poverty and provide a route out of poverty for people on low incomes. People should have access to transport that enables them to get to education, training and employment. This transport needs to be affordable, and reliably get them to education or employment by the time they need to be there.

People in rural areas can face particular difficulties in getting to employment or education because services are not available or are very infrequent. One participant in the Commission's workshops told of how, despite there being good employment opportunities in John O'Groats due to the tourism industry, people in Wick were prevented from accessing these opportunities due to bus service timetabling that did not meet the needs of workers (particularly at weekends when there are no bus services between the towns at all) (Oxfam & HUG, 2019).

Even in more urban areas, transport between low-income neighbourhoods and employment opportunities may be poor. This is particularly the case for those doing shift work where bus services may not be available in the evening or weekends. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation research also found that poor reliability of buses was an issue and that, especially where journeys involved changing buses, this could put people off applying for jobs as they were afraid of being late and potentially losing a job (Crisp et al, 2018).

The cost of transport can also act as a barrier to accessing employment and education. Potential earnings often have to be weighed against the cost of travel when looking for work (Crisp et al, 2018). Young people can be particularly hit by the cost of travelling to college or work, especially if they have to travel some distance or are only earning the lower minimum wage for young people. One participant in one

of our workshops spoke of how their son has to pay £17 each day in order to travel to attend college in Inverness; a cost that represented a significant burden for a family already struggling to get by (Poverty Alliance & HUG, 2019). Where there are concessionary fares available for young people they may not include peak time travel which means they will not benefit those travelling to work or college. A survey of young people aged 16-26 by Scottish Rural Action found that almost half of the young people who responded said that transport costs had prevented them from accessing suitable employment, and a fifth of respondents said they had missed out on education opportunities (Scottish Rural Action, 2018).

Reduces the Poverty Premium

People on low incomes can face a 'poverty premium' where they have to pay more for food and other goods and services. Lack of access to transport can exacerbate this poverty premium where people cannot travel to cheaper shops or services (Davies et al, 2016). People should not face a poverty premium on food and other goods and services as a result of a lack of access to transport.

There was discussion at one of our workshops, for example, of how in some areas with high levels of poverty, there were no buses to major supermarkets. As a result, people are often forced into shopping at more expensive shops that are easier to access by foot; something that represents the 'poverty premium' in action (Poverty Alliance & Oxfam, 2019).

People may face a poverty premium on transport itself where cheaper fares are available to those who can afford to pay up-front for a monthly pass, while those who do not have the money to pay up-front have to pay for more expensive single or daily tickets (Corfe & Keohane, 2018). Night shift workers can be unable to take advantage of cheaper day tickets because their shift cuts across two days (Crisp, et al, 2018).

Discussion and recommendations

This report describes some of the issues people with lived experience of poverty face in relation to transport and provides a framework of principles setting out what people should be able to expect if transport is to play a role in lifting people out of poverty and mitigating the impact of poverty on people's lives.

The Commission would emphasise that these issues are not new, and therefore there are serious questions about how entrenched these issues are within the transport system and there needs to be investigation of what the blockages are within the transport system that prevent action.

It is worth reiterating here the importance that people place on access to transport. This was an issue that was strongly identified when the Commission consulted on what its priorities would be and around 80 people attended the workshops organised for the Commission, in some cases undertaking a round-trip of several hours in order to attend. We heard stories from people with lived experience of poverty from different parts of Scotland, but the issues, while not necessarily different, were particularly complex for those living in rural areas where poverty is compounded by the distance people have to travel to access services.

The principles set out in this report describe what people should be able to expect, but the stories the working group has heard and the evidence it has reviewed suggest a lot of work is needed in order to achieve this. This requires action in all parts of the transport system and beyond.

Transport can play a role in mitigating the impact of poverty by allowing people to access services and participate in public life, but importantly it also plays a role in preventing poverty and lifting people out of poverty, through access to education and employment.

The working group has identified a number of significant issues where action is needed in order to make progress towards the principles.

A rights-based approach to transport

Access to suitable transport is not in itself set out as a human right in international conventions, but it is a necessary requirement in order to achieve other human rights such as the right to work, right to education, right to take part in cultural and public life and the right to the highest standard of physical and mental health. The written evidence and the workshops highlighted examples of people being restricted in access to employment, education and healthcare because of restrictions on the availability of public transport or because of the cost of transport. Significant amounts of public money are invested in transport but some of those on the lowest incomes see few benefits.

The working group **recommends that:**

Recommendation 1: The Scottish Government and Transport Scotland should adopt a rights-based approach to transport that recognises that access to suitable transport, no matter your level of income or where in Scotland you live, is a necessary requirement in order to achieve other human rights such as the right to work, right to education, right to take part in cultural and public life, and right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. This approach should adopt the PANEL principles (Participation, Accountability, Non-Discrimination and Equality, Empowerment and Legality) in order to break down what a human rights based approach means in practice.¹

This rights-based approach should underpin decisions about transport planning and funding. It will require substantial culture change within the transport sector. The working group recognises the challenge that this poses given the complexity of the transport system in Scotland. As a starting point Transport Scotland should incorporate a rights-based approach in the forthcoming National Transport Strategy.

Recommendation 2: The new Poverty and Inequality Commission should undertake work to explore how a minimum transport standard (i.e. what access to transport should be available as a minimum for everyone) might be defined for Scotland. This should include consideration of:

- a) How the timing, frequency, reliability, routing and cost of services can be designed to maximise the capacity of residents on low income to access essential services and participate in economic and social life. Franchising or partnership should be considered as frameworks to address this through setting minimum service standards and working to reduce operational inefficiencies (e.g. congestion).
- b) the provision of information on transport that includes information to people without digital access

Recommendation 3: The National Taskforce that is being set up to take forward recommendations from the First Minister's Advisory Group on Human Rights Leadership should consider how transport might fit with the recommendations it is taking forward.

Involving communities

Culture change will only be achieved where there is real engagement with people with lived experience of poverty and inequality, in planning and delivering services. We were repeatedly told that those making decisions about services and routes did not understand local needs and that people felt they were unable to have any influence on those decisions.

We were told about one rural community where transport operators had worked with the local community around issues such as the timing of buses which had allowed

¹ http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/1409/shrc_hrba_leaflet.pdf

services to better meet local needs. This shows that better services are possible when communities are involved.

Transport planners and operators need to be held accountable for involving communities in planning and decision-making, but at present it is unclear what levers can be used to require this. Identifying these levers, which could, for example, be legislation or funding requirements, and making use of them must be a priority.

Recommendation 4: Transport Scotland should explain what levers it has to require transport planners and operators to involve individuals and communities with lived experience of poverty, women, and disabled people in identifying needs, and designing transport services to respond to those needs. It should set out how it will use these levers.

As a starting point the Transport (Scotland) Bill should specify that people with lived experience of poverty, women and disabled people in the various consultation requirements within the Bill.

It should ensure there is a clear way for people to raise a complaint where this requirement is not being met.

Accountability

The transport system in Scotland is complex, with different responsibilities at different levels and a mix of commercial services and subsidised socially necessary services. It is unclear how the various parts of this complex system are held accountable for the services that are provided. The lack of accountability of the transport system came across strongly when we spoke to people with lived experience of poverty. People did not know how they could complain about or appeal decisions that had a negative impact on them and their communities, and they did not have confidence that their issues would be addressed.

At a system level, despite significant investment of public money, it is not clear where and how the various parts of the transport system are ultimately held accountable for meeting the transport needs of people in Scotland.

Better involvement of people and communities in participating in the planning and design of transport services is the first step in addressing this issue, but beyond this transport planners and operators should be able to be held accountable by the communities they serve. There needs to be a straightforward route to raise and escalate complaints or concerns, and clear accountability within the system.

The issue of redress for poor services is also important. Train users are entitled to compensation when trains are delayed or cancelled but there is not system of compensation for bus users or ferry users where an adequate service is not provided.

Recommendation 5: The working group recommends that Scottish Ministers and Transport Scotland should review the accountability of the different

elements of the transport system in Scotland. This review should ensure that it is clear where accountability lies at each level of the system and that there are ways for communities to hold transport planners, funders and operators to account. This should include considering the establishment of an ombudsman role for transport.

Recommendation 6: Transport Scotland should look at establishing a simple ‘front-end’ (e.g. through a website) that allows people to raise and escalate issues about services no matter who is providing them.

Recommendation 7: Transport Scotland should also consider establishing a requirement for a system of redress for bus users and ferry users similar to the compensation offered by train operators in case of delays. This would hold public transport operators in receipt of any form of public subsidy to account for failing to provide an adequate service. Any system should ensure there are no unintended consequences for availability of services.

Affordability

Public transport costs can be significant for those on low incomes and particularly so for those in rural areas who travel longer distances and face higher costs, and for young people who may not be earning or who receive the lower level of national living wage.

Those on low incomes and those with irregular working patterns may be unable to benefit from existing discounted travel schemes such as monthly passes, or even, in the case of shift workers, from day saver tickets. They may face particularly high costs if they need to change between transport operators during their journeys. More needs to be done to look at ways of making travel affordable for those on low incomes.

Concessionary fares schemes that offer free or discounted travel can make a real difference to those on low incomes but are not available to everyone who might need them. Their value also depends on whether services are available.

Recommendation 8: Transport Scotland should explore and pilot a range of ways of making travel more affordable, such as radically widening access to concessionary travel (e.g. to low income workers in the first few months of taking up a new job, to all young people as recommended by the Scottish Youth Parliament, to ferry travel etc.); introducing carnet/multi-trip discounts; implementing lower-cost multi operator tickets that eliminate interchange penalties; implementing capped or flat fares; and introducing a peak period start time (e.g. 7am) to reduce costs for low paid workers travelling to early shifts. This work should include looking at practice from elsewhere, such as the introduction of free travel in Estonia.

Recommendation 9: Transport Scotland should look at how information about all concessionary fares schemes, whether national or local, could be made more accessible.

Joining up policies and planning

Not all transport needs and issues are the responsibility of transport services to solve. Sometimes we need to ‘look through the other end of the telescope’ and focus on the role and responsibilities of other services. Some of the issues we heard about could be improved by the response of other services. We heard a lot about health services, for example, and difficulties in accessing services or making appointments due to availability, suitability and cost of transport. If we are committed to reducing health inequalities in Scotland then the NHS should consider its role in not just providing services but supporting people to access those services. This could be through actions such as the provision of transport, subsidising transport for those on low incomes, or the timing of appointments around public transport availability.

People living in areas with higher levels of deprivation tend to have worse public transport links, fewer employment opportunities and in some cases fewer local services. Strategies and planning for delivering housing, employment, education, health, leisure and transport services should not be developed in isolation from each other but should be considered in a connected way so that they maximise accessibility and reduce transport costs. Scottish Government and Community Planning Partnerships should consider how transport operators can be partners in community planning.

The Scottish Government is focused on delivering inclusive growth in Scotland and transport has to be integrated as a key part of this if it is to benefit those on the lowest incomes.

Recommendation 10: Scottish Government (and agencies), COSLA and NHS Scotland should work together to consider how the full range of national and local strategies and plans can better take account of transport needs, particularly for those on the lowest incomes, and ensure that future strategies maximise accessibility and reduce transport costs.

Recommendation 11: The Scottish Government should ensure transport is fully integrated as part of its work to deliver inclusive growth.

Rural transport

The issues of affordability and availability of transport are particularly pronounced in rural areas of Scotland. Rural communities can face huge challenges accessing essential services, employment and education opportunities because of the limited public transport available and the often high cost. In our workshops we heard that the reliability of services can have a very significant impact, particularly when changing between services, as there is often no alternative. This can lead to people having to live with a constant level of uncertainty about whether they will be able to get to the places that they need to go to. People on low incomes in rural areas may have no choice but to run a car even if they cannot afford this, and those who are not able to can become isolated and unable to access the services they need.

Recommendation 12: Transport Scotland should examine ways of addressing the transport challenges faced by people on low incomes in remote and rural areas. This should include consideration of the availability of services at times, and to places, where people need to travel, and consideration of regulations around pricing structure to reduce financial pressures and ensure greater equality of pricing across communities in Scotland.

Future developments in transport

New technologies have the potential to open up further opportunities for transport to be delivered in ways that contribute to addressing poverty. There are also risks, however, that new developments could act to further exclude those on low incomes and impact on employment. The working group has not looked in any detail at future developments in transport, but is aware that there is work going on to explore ideas such as Mobility-as-a-Service and the further development of smart ticketing.

Recommendation 13: Transport Scotland should ensure that its work on new developments in transport and particularly the use of new technology should prioritise poverty reduction as an objective. It should investigate how new and innovative transport methods (e.g. ride sharing apps, demand-responsive transport, autonomous vehicles, and Mobility-as-a-Service) can be used to address transport barriers faced by people on low incomes and to connect particularly remote and rural communities.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Scottish Government and Transport Scotland should adopt a rights-based approach to transport that recognises that access to suitable transport, no matter your level of income or where in Scotland you live, is a necessary requirement in order to achieve other human rights such as the right to work, right to education, right to take part in cultural and public life, and right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. This approach should adopt the PANEL principles (Participation, Accountability, Non-Discrimination and Equality, Empowerment and Legality) in order to break down what a human rights based approach means in practice.

Recommendation 2: The new Poverty and Inequality Commission should undertake work to explore how a minimum transport standard (i.e. what access to transport should be available as a minimum for everyone) might be defined for Scotland. This should include consideration of:

- a) How the timing, frequency, reliability and routing of services can be designed to maximise the capacity of residents on low income to access essential services and participate in economic and social life. Franchising or partnership should be considered as frameworks to address this through setting minimum service standards and working to reduce operational inefficiencies (e.g. congestion).
- b) the provision of information on transport that includes information to people without digital access

Recommendation 3: The National Taskforce that is being set up to take forward recommendations from the First Minister's Advisory Group on Human Rights Leadership should consider how transport might fit with the recommendations it is taking forward.

Recommendation 4: Transport Scotland should explain what levers it has to require transport planners and operators to involve individuals and communities with lived experience of poverty, women, and disabled people in identifying needs, and designing transport services to respond to those needs. It should set out how it will use these levers.

Recommendation 5: The working group recommends that Scottish Ministers and Transport Scotland should review the accountability of the different elements of the transport system in Scotland. This review should ensure that it is clear where accountability lies at each level of the system and that there are ways for communities to hold transport planners, funders and operators to account. This should include considering the establishment of an ombudsman role for transport.

Recommendation 6: Transport Scotland should look at establishing a simple 'front-end' (e.g. through a website) that allows people to raise and escalate issues about services no matter who is providing them.

Recommendation 7: Transport Scotland should also consider establishing a requirement for a system of redress for bus users and ferry users similar to the compensation offered by train operators in case of delays. This would hold public transport operators in receipt of any form of public subsidy to account for failing to provide an adequate service. Any system should ensure there are no unintended consequences for availability of services.

Recommendation 8: Transport Scotland should explore and pilot a range of ways of making travel more affordable, such as radically widening access to concessionary travel (e.g. to low income workers in the first few months of taking up a new job, to all young people as recommended by the Scottish Youth Parliament, to ferry travel etc.); introducing carnet/multi-trip discounts; implementing lower-cost multi operator tickets that eliminate interchange penalties; implementing capped or flat fares; and introducing a peak period start time (e.g. 7am) to reduce costs for low paid workers travelling to early shifts. This work should include looking at practice from elsewhere, such as the introduction of free travel in Estonia.

Recommendation 9: Transport Scotland should look at how information about all concessionary fares schemes, whether national or local, could be made more accessible.

Recommendation 10: Scottish Government (and agencies), COSLA and NHS Scotland should work together to consider how the full range of national and local strategies and plans can better take account of transport needs, particularly for those on the lowest incomes, and ensure that future strategies maximise accessibility and reduce transport costs.

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