

## Case Studies<sup>3</sup> Derived from the Survey – As Reported by the Respondent

1. A client living in a rural village is isolated as she lives at the bottom of a steep hill and the community centre which offers lots of activities and meals in its cafe supported by the local food bank, is at the top of the hill. There is no way she can engage with the local community without a lift. Older people in particular don't like to ask for help and therefore are socially isolated.
2. I broke my arm this year and was unable to drive, my journey into Newbury usually takes 20 mins. I tried going on the local bus but I could not travel until 9.45 and would not have arrived in time to do my shift. The only two buses back to the village were at 1.45 and 5.30 meaning no sensible time for me to travel. Also the journey took over an hour!
3. My twin daughters attend Forest Hall School which is out of catchment as we only had one choice of school in our area. We accepted that we would have to pay for transport out of area and got places under the 'spare seats' private ticket arranged with Acme transport. Since year 7 (now year 11) the annual fare has been between approx £475-£552 per child for the first three years. This year at one weeks notice we were told that it would now be £867 each per year - a rise of 58%!! Acme tell us that it is because ECC have changed the way that they fund the 'entitled' children and the private tickets are now not subsidised. ECC say that the council are not obliged to make any arrangements or subsidy for non entitled children and the price rise was entirely down to Acme. To add insult to injury the service we are getting is worse than it was before with the girls having to take two different buses each way with a 15-30 minute wait in Hatfield Heath. This is impacting many people who have had a huge rise in fares, not to mention Forest Hall school who have already lost pupils because of it. In normal business practice an increase of 58% would not be allowed to happen without at the very least consultation with customers. Why are Acme able to do this to parents who often can do little about it except drive their children to school therefore adding to congestion on the roads and pressure on parents who need to work. It is a disgrace! The service is shocking. The prices have been hiked with very little notice. The buses get the children to school late; sometimes they don't turn up and sometimes they break down (water leak today).
4. It will cost my 17 year old £25 a week to travel to school for year 13. She has no choice but to catch a bus: both her parents work; the train station is too far away from the school and the paths are unsafe. She, of course, wants to do her A levels but, even if she didn't, she'd still have to attend full time education until she's 18, in line with government policy. Unfortunately, our local school has no 6th form of any description. All the local 16 to 18 year

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<sup>3</sup> A story is considered to be valid as a case study where it is documented and/or can be sourced to a known individual. Ultimately we accept what clients tell us and we are therefore dependent upon their veracity. Several of these studies are stories of members of the Citizens Advice organisation.

olds rely on public transport in order to abide by the law. Then our government (at local level) chooses to make it prohibitively expensive for its future workforce to go to the 6th forms it provides. Truly inexplicable; truly unfair; truly inexcusable. Our catchment school is not our nearest school, distance wise, but I chose our catchment school as the 1st choice for my son knowing full well he would not get into the nearest school as it is over subscribed. We live over 7 miles from any high school, so should get free transport, but we were told we don't qualify as we didn't put the nearest school as our first choice.

5. Children in higher years still get free transport under the old school transport policy , but we are forced to pay up to £1000 for our son to travel on the same bus as those travelling for free. We are a one wage family and we are really struggling.
6. Clients having to go to Luton and Ilford from Buntingford and other East Herts villages for ESA medicals find the journey virtually impossible and totally impossible if the appointment is early in the morning
7. Clients having to go to Hertford to sign on from Buntingford and nearby villages often have unreasonable waits to return home, plus the expense involved
8. Clients with mental health problems and needing to keep health appointments find they cannot cope with the journey by bus which is the only available public transport
9. Client finding it difficult to cover the cost of transport to school for their children
10. Bus service 67 Burnham to Wells being stopped at the end of the year - Clients based in Mark, Wedmore and surrounding areas will not be able to get access to support they previously managed to access on the bus. Bus service 21 has gone from every 20 minutes to two an hour. However this is erratic and there has been a frequent failure of them turning up - additionally sometimes they turn up then depart early. In less than a week two clients who have been late for appointments at Job Centre, meaning they have to make a fresh appointment and then will face the possibility/likelihood of being sanctioned. Loss of service through Brent Knoll/East Brent
11. I myself rely upon a disabled bus pass to travel to work, First buses have now changed to their less frequent winter timetable, on top of halving the number 21 service, which now travels from Taunton to Burnham-on-Sea instead of Weston-Super-Mare, and from January the bus ticket price will have increased by approximately 40% since the same time 2016. If I wasn't able to get a lift to the nearest bus stop, a simple journey from Burnham to Bridgwater, return, would take me two hours (without waiting times) for a

total journey that would only take 45 minutes by car, and I am not wheelchair bound. The changes Fife have put in place for all bus pass users, only allowing to be used after 9.30am, means that I cannot get to work using my bus pass before 10.40am, not a very helpful start time for the majority of business hours.

12. My daughter's difficulties working in Dorchester full time, living in Buckland Newton and a 15 and sixteen year old in school in Sherborne. Her husband works in Poole. My daughter is currently struggling to hold down a job and meet the needs of her young teenagers and keep them safe especially in the dark which is an added worry. Loyalties between leaving work early and family commitments places the parents in an impossible situation. Also, the cost went into hundreds for the school bus for the year, which my daughter simply couldn't afford and only through fighting this and raising it with her mp was she able to get monthly payments.
13. As someone who lived in a rural area (Llanrwst), where provision of public transport was already patchy, the news some six months ago that Arriva, the main provider of public transport, was ending its service entirely came as a bitter blow. Having recently changed employment proved very fortunate as I would not have been able to continue in that post and would have faced the prospect of having to give up work.
14. My grandmother who is Registered Blind has also experienced the problems faced with very patchy transport facilities. She does not live on a main bus route and her disability means she requires taxis etc to even reach a service which is problematic.
15. Sophie suffers from anxiety and depression and experienced a panic attack on the day of the interview triggered by the stress of the impending journey to the jobcentre plus. As she failed to attend the interview, Sophie had her ESA withdrawn and is currently ineligible to claim Universal Credit. Because of this when Sophie came to see us she had been experiencing financial hardship for a number of weeks.
16. Dev lives and works on his landlord's rural farm. When he started experiencing back and shoulder pain he got treatment from the GP who is based in the nearest market town. Unfortunately Dev is rarely able to get to see his GP due to a lack of available appointments and a total lack of public transport, and he struggles to ring them as he doesn't have credit on his mobile phone – sometimes he can borrow a friend's phone but not always. Dev had successfully applied for ESA but this stopped in July as he was unable to provide a recent sick note from his GP, this had a knock on effect and his housing benefit stopped too and now he is experiencing considerable hardship. He is reliant on the generosity of his friends and help from local food banks to keep himself fed and clothed.

17. Clients have complained about the cost of fares especially when they are unemployed and have to travel to the Job Centre - Costs average around £6.50 for a return. This is quite a substantial chunk of JSA.
18. The number of buses servicing some rural communities are often very limited. A client could only come to an appointment on a Thursday as this was the only day there was a bus from her village into Alnwick. She had a two hour window to go things in Alnwick before the last bus back to the village.
19. Clients have mentioned being late to sign on as the bus was either late or did not turn up - this can result in benefit sanctions if the JC do not believe client.
20. Parents struggle to support children in further education because of the cost of transport, for example Newcastle college are over 65 miles away there is a main line train service but this is expensive. Also this limits access to apprenticeships because current bus services do not meet bus timetables.
21. There are no big employers in rural areas so need to use public transport to access work. Often the buses do not get into the towns on time to be able to find or keep work. This leaves them with only options of short term seasonal work locally with sometimes poor employment practices and zero hour contracts keeping them in the poverty trap. One client who was sanctioned for not applying for a job could not get into the town on time for the job so had not applied. For those without access to the internet they have to come into the towns to access a computer to look for work or apply for benefits.
22. Shift work and seasonal work and public transport do not mix. One highly skilled worker had to change buses twice in order to get to work but had to leave as could not get there on time. Some journeys have many stops on the way making journeys slow. It is difficult to move house because of the shortage of affordable housing.
23. We have an Island in North Northumberland, Lindesfarne where tides have a bearing on transport issues and schooling.
24. There is a chronic shortage of affordable housing in the towns and this means that people have to live in the rural areas with cheaper rents even if this is not their first choice to live in the country but then there are additional costs of transport.
25. The young or the long term unemployed have no resources to get a car or even bicycle to get to work or look for work. For example a young client got a job for a local store, the bus would not get him to work on time and therefore had to rely on his grandfather to take him to work.
26. Clients cannot access cheaper food stores such as markets, or larger supermarket chains, and many local rural stores and post offices have closed

or are expensive. Cannot get access to benefits or bank accounts because rural banks are closing. Our clients cannot access the food bank because of lack of transport or fares.

27. Many clients cannot access utility companies because of the cost of telephones and come to this office for support. There is also limited access to Pay Points to get meter keys in rural areas.
28. We now have only 2 ambulances serving north Northumberland. The A&E department for serious injury is approx 55 miles away.
29. Lady with child, living on benefits, has no transport so relies on the temperamental bus service between Samundham (home) and Leiston (the Bureau), in need of debt advice but has missed several appointments as she misses the bus or, if she does get here, she has to go back at a set time to get the bus in time to collect her child from school. As a result, the debt advice process has dragged on for months.
30. Lady with no money living on a caravan site, needed to get to Leiston Jobcentre for benefit advance payments but no money and buses too expensive, so had to walk both ways (about 7 miles each way) several times.
31. Lady having to attend Jobcentre in Leiston re JSA payments, also in Saxmundham, no money for bus fare and told by Jobcentre to walk - was offered the bus fare by man living in the same block in exchange for sexual favours.
32. Several clients required to attend medical tribunals in Bury St Edmunds or Ipswich but unable to pay the fares - trains are expensive and buses can take hours. Several clients also afraid to use public transport as it is unreliable and can be threatening if you are not used to people and noise etc.
33. CI disabled: great difficulty in walking and partially blind. He is having extreme difficulties getting around by bus because of the loss of a bus service run by Webbers, a company which went into liquidation earlier this year. Without the Webbers service, CI has to walk about a mile to the nearest bus stop to take a service run by First Bus, the principal supplier of bus services in Somerset. CI states that he lives in a location housing many elderly people, with the same difficulties as he. CI has spoken at length on the telephone to First Bus regarding replacement of the previous Webbers bus service, but received a very dismissive response. He has also spoken to Somerset County Council on the matter, but was simply referred back to First Bus.

CAPABILITY	OR	VULNERABILITY	ISSUES	DISCLOSED	BY	CLIENT
Difficulty	in	walking;	partial	blindness.		

34. CI returned to BoS outreach. He called in to keep me updated on how he is getting on. He rang ESA as agreed and appealed the decision made. He said they requested a letter from his GP. He spoke to his GP who said that the benefits agency should not be talking to CI as this is too stressful for him so the GP wrote another med cert for CI to take to the JC+ and will contact CI's psychiatrist at Glanville House to sort out CI's benefits. CI has another appt at JC+ on Friday for his UC claim. CI wants to know if he can get a budgeting loan. He said he should get his first UC payment at the end of December. CI stated that he has to borrow money from friends to pay for the bus fares to Bridgwater to attend the JC+ to proceed with his UC claim. Due to the bus service changes he now has to catch 2 buses which is more expensive and he sometimes has to wait up to an hour for a bus as the connection is not good. The HB form was completed at outreach SDC last wk and they want a bank statement which shows his UC when he finally gets it. CI requested a food voucher.
35. Client had Tribunal for benefits at Blackbrook Park, Taunton. The client caught the train from Bridgwater to Taunton as he was unsure where the tribunal centre was in comparison to the train station when he left. His plan was to catch a taxi from the train station, however there were none there so client decided to walk. The client has mobility issues and struggled with this so found the nearest bus stop and asked for the first bus that was heading that way. A bus eventually arrived and the client was informed by the driver that he was 5 minutes away from the venue. The client's tribunal was at 10am, the bus eventually got the client to the venue at 10:45am, however by this time the clerk had decided to postpone the tribunal due to his lateness and another tribunal planned for 11am. The client's benefits have been affected and he has to wait a further (unknown) period for the issue to be resolved, whilst on limited income.
36. 2 clients, both live in Sedgemoor, both have face to face assessments for their benefits, one of whom has a visual impairment. Both of the clients have been given face to face assessments in Exeter.
37. Client has a number of physical and mental problems. Client has lots of debts and currently has no income. He is extremely vulnerable. Client has made Universal Credit application and was given appointment at Bridgwater Job Centre for commitment interview. Client relies on public transport for getting to appointment. The 21 First bus was late and the client was late for his appointment. JC+ would not see client and he had to make a further appointment for another date.

38. Client lives in Highbridge area of Sedgemoor. She will have no public transport available to her at all from the end of December. Her husband has terminal cancer, she uses the bus for everything.
39. We have a client couple in Mickleton, around 10 miles from Stratford who we visit in their homes because they can't get into Stratford to see us. He is terminally ill with cancer and she has health and mobility problems. They rely on their daughter who works full time to take them to hospital etc. However there is an hourly bus service between Mickleton and Stratford, and they are retired so eligible for a free bus pass. In this case it's their health that's the main problem, making a long bus journey around the villages too uncomfortable and exhausting to contemplate. Also doctors' surgeries, hospitals etc are often not close to the bus stop. They are on Pension Credit, AA, carers etc and paying third parties for transport is expensive. They feel as though they are trapped in this village.

## A Brief History of Bus Services

The omnibus service is considered to have emerged from the more traditional stage coach service in 1820s – but it did so in the cities.

Omnibuses were horse drawn until petrol driven vehicles were permitted by law in 1897. A motor bus service started in that year between Helston and The Lizard – perhaps the first country bus.

Services were run by municipalities as well as in the private sector.

In 1980s it was considered that nationalized industries were inefficient, and a programme of privatization and deregulation began through Transport Act 1985.

Since then there has been free competition, dominated by five large companies and regulated through local government, (in Wales, by the Welsh Assembly). But there is a view among shareholders that revenues are not meeting expectations, and recently some companies have changed (eg Stagecoach Group disposed of two large London operations).

Throughout the history of the bus, service providers have been free to issue concessions – so that older or disabled people can travel at more attractive rates. An English National Concessionary Travel Scheme became effective in April 2008 (a Welsh scheme is run by local authorities).

So history suggests that:

- The provision of bus services is not intrinsically profitable: service providers would argue that services were not well used.
- Which creates a problem in which business imperatives are in conflict with a public need for a service.

In recent years Community Transport schemes have emerged. There are now about 600 schemes nationally<sup>4</sup>, of which about a third are in rural areas. They provide 15 million passenger journeys a year – 7 million of which are in rural areas. This involves 60000 volunteers (48000 rural).

Typically these schemes depend upon volunteers; they offer group transport (used by 42000 voluntary groups), community car schemes and door-to-door services.

Community Transport Schemes are eligible for the Bus Services Operators Grant.

This sector is growing. Grants awarded grew by 16% in the 2010/11 financial year.

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<sup>4</sup> State of Rural Public Services 2013 - Rural Services Network



# Economics of Bus Transport

## Service Providers

In 2016, the provision of bus services is on a commercial basis – done for profit.

The effect of this is mitigated by several schemes for subsidising the providers totalling £2.3billion in 2011/12, accounting for 45% of bus operators revenues<sup>5</sup>:

- Bus Service Operators' Grant, including a fuel duty rebate
- Green Bus Fund (to encourage the use of low carbon buses)
- Better Bus Areas Fund to boost partnership working between local authorities and bus operators.

A Rural Bus Subsidy Grant was paid to local authorities to help support the provision of non-commercial rural services. This is no longer paid separately.

The Rural Bus Challenge was a competition that ran from 1998 to 2003 in which local authorities bid for funding aimed at stimulating innovation.

Kickstart funding was available to help where commercial routes were not viable from 2003 to 2008.

Local bus operators employ an estimated full time equivalent staff of 104000<sup>6</sup>. The number of buses used by local bus operators is fairly steady at about 35000; the average age of a bus is 7.6 years.

Government support, characterized by the Bus Services Operators Grant and concessionary travel reimbursement, was estimated at £2.21 billion in 2015/16<sup>7</sup>.

In England outside London, operator costs increased from £2.19 billion to £3.08 billion in 2015/16.

## Service Users

The problem is mitigated for travellers by concessionary travel arrangements.

In 2014/15 there were 9.8 million concessionary travel passes in England<sup>8</sup>: this was an increasing number over the previous year, however total concessionary bus journeys fell by over 1.3% - but was still over a billion journeys. Travel Concession Authorities spent an estimated £1.2billion.

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<sup>5</sup> 2010 to 2015 government policy: local transport

<sup>6</sup> National Travel Survey

<sup>7</sup> National Travel Survey

<sup>8</sup> Department for Transport: Concessionary Bus Travel Statistics: England, 2014/15.

There were 80 passes per 100 eligible people.

In non metropolitan areas, 93% of passes were for older people.

It is estimated that 16% of pass holders were on a low income. And that 68% of pass holders used their pass; 26% used it at least weekly.

42% of journeys were in non metropolitan areas.

Almost all of the Authorities offer additional discretionary travel concessions on a variety of bases – such as companions to disabled people, on demand transport services, and park & ride.

People living in England can get a bus pass for free travel when they reach the retirement age for women; in Wales they can be obtained at 60.

Discretionary concessions may also allow young people to travel free.

In the last year bus fares have increased by 1.8%<sup>9</sup> - which is similar to the Retail Prices Index.

## Comparing Costs

It is extremely difficult to develop any valid comparison of costs.

However the Automobile Association have produced some indications of motoring costs<sup>10</sup>. In 2014 the minimum estimated cost per mile, assuming a car priced at less than £13000 doing 30000 miles per year, was estimated at 25.45p; the highest cost per mile (assuming car priced at over £36000 doing 5000 miles/year) was 169.83p.

HMRC expect companies to pay their staff 45p/mile for the first 10000 miles (25p/mile above 10000). They allow 24p/mile for motor cycles and 20p/mile for cycles<sup>11</sup>.

This gives only the vaguest idea of the cost per mile for a bus. And, of course the cost per mile is divided between variable numbers of passengers over variable distances.

Buses subsidies (2015/16) average £1.768/mile<sup>12</sup>, counting only miles in which the vehicles were “open for business” (acknowledging that not all miles are “supported” by subsidies, and that not all miles are “open for business”).

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<sup>9</sup> National Travel Survey

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.theaa.com/resources/Documents/pdf/motoring-advice/running-costs/petrol2014.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/expenses-and-benefits-business-travel-mileage/rules-for-national-insurance>

<sup>12</sup> Calculation derived from National Travel Survey

## Trend

The trend appears to be worsening – as authorities consider their responses to a worsening financial climate and services are currently being reduced or withdrawn.

“Supported” mileages are declining – by 26.2% in 2015/16.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> National Travel Survey

## Travel Behaviour<sup>14</sup>

English residents travel 6649 miles/year on average – 49% more than in 1972/3. They spend 368 hours travelling (only 4% increase). The average is 914 trips (a 4% reduction). Most trips (66%) are under 5 miles.

Shopping and personal business are the most common trip purposes, accounting for 20% each. Leisure accounts for 41% of distance travelled.

People in the highest income groups travel more than twice as far as people in the lowest.

Residents in rural areas travel around 44% further than urban residents.

Traffic is growing more than 13 times as fast on rural roads in Wales as on urban ones.<sup>15</sup>

25% of people have no car and this greatly influences personal travel patterns. 33% of households have 2 or more cars.

Bus trips account for less than 10% of travel. It is mainly used for medium length trips (1 to 25 miles). In Wales 79% of road traffic consists of cars (and taxis), 15% is light vans, 4% is goods vehicles, 1% is buses and coaches and 1% is motorcycles<sup>16</sup>.

Bus users are categorized either as concessionary, meaning elderly or disabled people, and in some areas young people or non concessionary.

Bus punctuality runs at over 80% (on time means less than 5 minutes late).

## Trend

In 2015/16 4.53 billion passenger journeys were made by bus in England – 2.6% less than the previous year.

Outside London, bus use has been in steady decline since 2008/9. In 2015/16 it was 2.24 billion journeys.

Viewed as bus mileage, the statistics give the same impression. Currently the national use is 1.25 billion bus service miles (a decline of 2.8%).

Viewed as mileage supported by local authorities, the picture is the same.

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<sup>14</sup> From National Travel Survey 2015

<sup>15</sup> <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/road-traffic/?lang=en>

<sup>16</sup> <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/road-traffic/?lang=en>

The average number of bus journeys per head outside London in 2015/16 was 49 (53 in 2010/11).

Within London, 2015/16 was the first year of decline. This indicates/illustrates a difference between urban and rural.

## Legal Landscape

The following primary legislation is relevant:

- *Transport Act 1985* (introduced privatized and deregulated bus services throughout the United Kingdom).
- *Transport Act 2000* (reforms to local transport planning and delivery)
- *Local Transport Act 2008* (gives local authorities the power to ... meet local transport needs in the light of local circumstances.)

Secondary legislation is massive and is not considered helpful in this report.

The *Bus Services Bill* is in the Parliamentary process<sup>17</sup>. Its main points are:

- to strengthen arrangements for partnership working
- to introduce new franchising powers
- to provide for a step change in the information available to bus passengers.

So it is of only indirect relevance to this work.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/busservices.html>

## Government Policy

Policy relating to bus services is not yet published.

The previous government published a document “*2010 to 2015 government policy: local transport*”.

It tells us that 55% of car journeys are under 5 miles and it suggests that many of these could be walked, or made by bike or public transport.

Its Actions include “To make bus services more punctual, interconnected, green and accessible...”

It has many drivers including congestion and emissions.

In March 2013, the government published a strategy document “*Door to Door*”<sup>18</sup>. It says “The government wants more journeys to be made by sustainable transport, public transport, supported by cycling and walking.” It recognises that for this to happen, sustainable transport must become more attractive. It identifies four core areas:

- accurate, accessible and reliable information about the different transport options for their journeys;
- convenient and affordable tickets, for an entire journey;
- regular and straightforward connections at all stages of the journey and between different modes of transport; and
- safe, comfortable transport facilities.

The Welsh Government publishes a Bus Policy:

**“We are committed to improving the quality and accessibility of local bus services in Wales.**

Local bus services are vital to Welsh economic, cultural and social life. Every day, 63,000 people rely on the bus to get to work and about 350,000 trips are made every day to get to hospital appointments, visit friends, go shopping or access leisure. Bus services have the potential to offer people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds a reliable, flexible, affordable and more sustainable way of travelling.

Local bus services provided 107 million passenger journeys in 2013/2014.

73% of the total distance travelled was on commercial routes, with the remaining 27% on routes subsidised by local authorities.

As well as improving the quality and accessibility of local bus services in Wales, we are exploring the potential for offering a better deal on bus fares

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<sup>18</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/142539/door-to-door-strategy.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/142539/door-to-door-strategy.pdf)

for people on lower incomes.”





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*Transport Act 2000*