

Development of Bus Strategy - Full Equality Impact Assessment Report

1. Introduction

1.1 This full Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) report considers the development of the Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) Bus Strategy to support the ongoing procurement of supported bus services in the borough. The key groups affected are in the disability and age equality categories.

1.2 Having conducted an EqIA Screening in July 2013 (see Annex 1) it was decided that the potential adverse impact on disability and age equality means a full Equality Impact Assessment should be produced and a detailed consultation was carried out on the proposed content the Bus Strategy.

2. Background

2.1 The Bus Strategy will form a key delivery action of BFC's Local Transport Plan and was agreed as necessary following the Council's budget reduction process in 2011/12. The intention was to concentrate on first principles for such a Bus Strategy, rather than the infinite number of options for supporting bus routes in the borough. In this way no matter what budget allocation is available officers can apply this to the priorities as agreed.

3. Methodology and Sources of Data

3.1 In order to understand the impact of the draft bus strategy, ensuring that the equalities impact on everyone affected is considered, a full 12 week consultation has been undertaken. A consultation questionnaire was developed and made available both in paper format and electronically via the BFC's website.

3.2 As many of the potential groups identified may find it difficult to access the website the questionnaire was distributed to a number of interested parties. These stakeholder groups were invited to contribute to the consultation, namely the Access Advisory Panel, the Older Peoples Partnership, the Federation of Community Groups, the Over Fifties Forum and the Council's Youth Services Manager.

3.3 The Council's Executive also requested the Overview and Scrutiny Bus Strategy Working Group should review the draft Bus Strategy.

3.4 Hard copies of the consultation and the link to the online questionnaire were distributed widely, and posters advertising the consultation were sent to various locations around the borough including schools, GPs and on board local buses.

3.5 Notice of the consultation and copies of the questionnaire were distributed to community groups across the borough via partner organisations including Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action.

3.6 The 12 week consultation period ran from 26th July 2013 to 15th October 2013.

4. Assessment of Impact on Equality Characteristics

4.1 None of the changes proposed in the draft Bus Strategy were considered to have an adverse or positive effect on the following EqIA characteristics: race, gender, sexual

orientation, gender re-assignment, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity or marriage and civil partnership.

4.2 Some positive or adverse impacts were identified as possible in the EqlA screening exercise, hence the need for the full EqlA report. The following characteristics have been identified as potentially being impacted by the draft Bus Strategy:

Disability Equality

4.3 Positive or adverse impacts are possible depending on how the strategy is implemented but generally the strategy itself is intended to be positive. Of 15,605 bus passes in circulation in the borough, 575 people qualify on disability grounds (4%)

Age Equality

4.4 There may be positive or adverse impact on older and younger people who tend as groups to use public transport more than other age groups. Nationally the proportion of trips made by bus is highest amongst those aged between 17 and 20. Bus use is higher for those aged 60 and over than those in middle aged groups. Nationally the proportion of people aged 60 and over, who use a local bus, increased from 28% in 2005 to 40% in 2010. Over the same period the proportion of people in this age group who said they never use a bus less than once a year fell from 46% to 32%.

4.5 The initial assessment of the equality impacts identified the need for a full EqlA and informed the Council to ensure that the 12 week consultation process identified the views of older people and people with disabilities.

5. Consultation and Engagement

5.1 The consultation was undertaken to find out views on the content of the draft Bus Strategy.

Methodology

5.2 The consultation took the form of a questionnaire (Appendix 2) that was publicly available both online and in hard copy. The methodology was designed to target as many interested parties as possible in the most efficient and effective way to maximise results within the timeframe. The consultation was particularly aimed at older people and people with disabilities as these were the groups identified by the EqlA Screening which the proposals could have the most adverse impact upon.

5.3 The hard copy questionnaire was fronted by wording that outlined the background to the consultation. Online a council 'Have Your Say' survey was provided.

Timeframes

5.4 The consultation ran from 26th July 2013 to 15th October 2013. The online questionnaire and corresponding webpage was available throughout this time and posters and hardcopy questionnaires were delivered within the first week of the consultation.

Questionnaire design

5.5 The questionnaire consisted of set of questions and the Equality Impact criteria:

- On average how often do you travel in or around Bracknell Forest by bus?

- What is the main purpose of travelling by bus?
 - What is your usual means of transport?
 - Please let us know your views on the current bus service (participants were asked to rank a number of features in order of importance)
 - Please let us know your views on the importance of the objectives in the draft bus strategy (participants were asked to rank the objectives in order of importance)
 - Please let us know your views on the importance of the principles in the draft bus strategy (participants were asked to rank the principles in order of importance)
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- What is your gender?
 - What is your age?
 - What is your ethnicity?
 - Do you have any health problems or disabilities?
 - If yes to the above, do these limit your day to day activities?
 - What is your religion/belief?
 - What is your sexual orientation?

5.6 When participants completed the questionnaire online responses were automatically captured and collated. When a paper copy was completed respondents were encouraged to post back the questionnaire using a free post envelope that was attached to each hard copy.

Publicity and Promotion

5.7 The consultation was promoted through a poster campaign on all subsidised bus services at publicly accessed buildings (such as libraries). The online questionnaire was promoted through the Council's main webpage.

5.8 In addition to the above posters, questionnaires and information were sent to Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action to network with local voluntary and community groups.

Other consultation

5.9 As well as responses from individual residents, BFC was also keen to hear from groups who may be particularly impacted on by the proposals identified in the EqlA screening, including older people and people with disabilities, internal departments who work with these groups, operators and other stakeholders. These groups were invited to comment more generally either via written correspondence or through face to face meetings. Stakeholders that were contacted include:

- Access Advisory Panel
- Older Peoples Partnership
- Over 50s Forum
- Youth Services
- Federation of Community Groups
- Overview and Scrutiny Working Group

6. Summary of Responses

6.1 In total 193 questionnaire responses were received.

Socio- Demographic

6.2 There were 40% of responses from males and 54% from females (the remainder choosing not to state their gender). The high proportion of female responses is not reflective of Bracknell 2011 census gender profile in which 50.4% of the population are female. However the 2010 National Travel Survey indicated that women use the bus more than men do, which may account for the higher response rate. The ratio of gender for each individual service was roughly in line with the general pattern, with the response rate for females greater than males.

6.3 There were 83% of the respondents 'white British' with less than 11% of respondents being from other backgrounds, and the remainder choosing not to state. This high proportion of 'white British' respondents is in line with 2011 census data which records 85% of Bracknell Forests population as white British and 15% of ethnic minority groups. This is considerably lower than the national average. However data from the 2013 schools census shows that 18% of pupils are BME including 'white other'. There is no correlation between ethnicity and the specific bus services referred to in the survey.

6.4 There were 53% of respondents Christian (all Christian denominations), 5% were from other faith groups and 33 had no religious belief; 8% did not state their religion. These results are broadly in line with census data with 60.5% stating themselves as Christian, 4.4% of other faiths and 28.4% stating they had no religious beliefs. Despite some initial concern in the screening stage there is no evidence of a correlation between religious belief and specific services.

6.5 Of those that chose to state their ability status 35% classed themselves as having disabilities or health problems which were expected to last, at least 12 months. In the 2011 census data 12.3% of the population were classed as having limiting long term illness. The high response rate by those with disabilities may reflect the important role that public transport plays for this group.

6.6 The highest number of responses came from residents within the 65-79 year old category with 33% of responses. These residents are eligible to travel free on all local bus services in Bracknell Forest (the concession is available to all those with certain disabilities and some aged between 60 and 65 as well).

6.7 The evidence from the open conversation and stakeholders meetings echoed many of the points raised through the questionnaire; most predominant was the observation that public transport plays an important role in allowing older or more vulnerable people to access key facilities and with any reduction in service leading to a reduction in quality of life.

Responses to Survey Questions

On average how often do you travel in and around Bracknell forest by bus?

	% Total	% Answer	Count
Number of Responses	99	-	191
Daily	43	43.46	83
Weekly	31	31.41	60
Less than monthly	11	10.99	21
Never	8	8.38	16
Monthly	6	5.76	11
No response	1	-	2
TOTAL	100	100	193

What is the main purpose of travelling by bus?

	% Total	% Answer	Count
Number of Responses	94.82	-	183
Shopping	34	35.52	65
Leisure	26	27.32	50
Work	21	22.4	41
Education	9	9.29	17
Healthcare	5	5.46	10
No response	5	-	10
TOTAL	100	100	193

What is your usual means of transport?

	% Total	% Answer	Count
Number of Responses	98	-	189
Local bus	46	46.56	88
Car	29	29.63	56
Walk	16	15.87	30
Cycle	4	3.7	7
Train	3	3.1	6
No response	2	-	4
Community transport	1	0.53	1
Taxi	1	0.53	1
Coach	0	0	0
Private bus	0	0	0
TOTAL	100	100	193

Please let us know your views on the current bus services (ranked score)

	% Answer	Ranked Score
Reliability	18	1495
Frequency	15	1291
Connections	11	907
Fares	9	791
Safety	9	760
Late services	8	715
Passenger information	8	686
Early services	8	659
Sunday services	7	628
Security	7	584
TOTAL	100	8516

Please let us know your views on the importance of the objectives in the draft bus strategy (ranked score)

	% Answer	Ranked Score
Accessible and available to the widest cross section of the population, young and old, to increase bus use	25	606
Offers people (including those who do not have access to cars) more travel choices to access work, services and leisure activities	25	606
Offers affordable fares	18	445
Provides passenger satisfaction with an attractive, reliable and sustainable travel alternative	17	425
Encourages integration with other modes of transport	14	349
TOTAL	100	2431

Please let us know your views on the importance of the Principles in the draft bus strategy (ranked score)

	% Answer	Ranked Score
Supporting younger and older populations	22	698
Quality supported network	21	680
Responsive to commercial bus service changes	16	508
Serving new developments	15	476
Monitoring and performance	14	449
Partnership	13	411
TOTAL	100	3222

Further Analysis

6.8 In order to understand the responses provided by older and younger people, and respondents who stated they have health problems, the questionnaires were analysed further. The results are shown in the tables below.

On average how often do you travel in and around Bracknell forest by bus?

Age (%)	Under 18 yrs	18-34 yrs	35-49 yrs	50-64 yrs	65-79 yrs	Over 80 yrs
Daily	35	60	31	43	41	0
Weekly	6	5	27	25	51	0
Less than monthly	29	20	9	18	2	0
Monthly	24	10	6	3	3	0
Never	6	5	24	11	3	0
No response	0	0	3	0	0	0
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	

6.9 This shows that people in the older age group (65-79 yrs) use the bus more often than any other age group – 92% use the bus at least once per week. The people in the younger age group (under 18 yrs) use the bus least (41% at least once per week).

On average how often do you travel in and around Bracknell forest by bus?

	With Health Problem (%)	No Health Problem (%)
Daily	43	43
Weekly	40	27
Less than monthly	9	12
Monthly	4	7
Never	4	11
No response	0	0
TOTAL	100	100

6.10 This shows that a higher percentage of people with health problems use the bus more often than people without health problems – 83% use the bus at least once per week.

What is your usual means of transport?

Age (%)	Under 18 yrs	18-34 yrs	35-49 yrs	50-64 yrs	65-79 yrs	Over 80 yrs
Walk	35	5	16	14	14	0
Cycle	6	10	9	0	2	0
Local bus	30	45	28	36	62	0
Community Transport	0	5	0	0	0	0
Private bus	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coach	0	0	0	0	0	0
Train	0	5	3	11	0	0
Car	29	30	44	39	22	0
Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0
No response	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	

6.11 This shows that the bus is the most usual means of transport for people in the older age group (65-79 yrs) – 62% and the 18-34 yr age group (45%). For people in the younger age group (under 18 yrs) walking is the most usual means of transport at 35%.

What is your usual means of transport?

	With Health Problem (%)	No Health Problem (%)
Walk	20	14
Cycle	1	5
Local bus	55	42
Community Transport	0	1
Private bus	0	0
Coach	0	0
Train	1	4
Car	22	34
Taxi	1	0
No response	0	0
TOTAL	100	100

6.12 This shows that more people with health problems use the local bus as their usual means of transport – 55%.

Equalities Information

Gender	% Total	% Answer	Count
Number of Responses	94.3	-	182
Female	54.4	57.69	105
Male	39.9	42.31	77
No response	5.7	-	11
TOTAL	100	100	193

Age	% Total	% Answer	Count
Number of Responses	94.3	-	182
Under 18 years	8.81	9.34	17
18-34 years	10.36	10.99	20
35-49 years	17.1	18.13	33
50-64 years	14.51	15.38	28
65-79 years	32.64	34.62	63
80 years+	10.88	11.54	21
No response	5.7	-	11

TOTAL	100	100	193
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Ethnicity	% Total	% Answer	Count
Number of Responses	93.26	-	180
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Ireland/British	82.9	88.89	160
No response	6.74	-	13
Any other White background	5.18	5.56	10
Irish	2.07	2.22	4
Chinese	1.04	1.11	2
White and Asian	1.04	1.11	2
Indian	0.52	0.56	1
Any other Asian background	0.52	0.56	1
TOTAL	100	100	193

Health Problem or Disability	% Total	% Answer	Count
Number of Responses	96.37	-	186
No	61.14	63.44	118
Yes	35.23	36.56	68
No response	3.63	-	7
TOTAL	100	100	193

Day to Day Activities Limited	% Total	% Answer	Count
Number of Responses	32.64	-	63
No response	67.36	-	130
Yes	19.69	60.32	38
No	12.95	39.68	25
TOTAL	100	100	193

Religion/belief	% Total	% Answer	Count
Number of Responses	91.71	-	177
Christian (all Christian denominations)	53.37	58.19	103
None	33.16	36.16	64
No response	8.29	-	16
Other	3.11	3.39	6
Buddhist	1.04	1.13	2
Hindu	0.52	0.56	1
Muslim	0.52	0.56	1
Jewish	0	0	0
Sikh	0	0	0
TOTAL	100	100	193

Sexual orientation	% Total	% Answer	Count
Number of Responses	87.56	-	169
Heterosexual/straight	75.13	85.8	145
No response	12.44	-	24
Prefer not to say	8.81	10.06	17
Gay man	2.07	2.37	4
Bisexual	1.04	1.18	2
Lesbian/gay woman	0.52	0.59	1
TOTAL	100	100	193

Summary of other consultation responses

6.13 A number of forums and community groups were consulted, and their comments are summarised below:

Stakeholder Groups

6.14 The key headlines from discussions with stakeholder groups are set out below:

Youth Services Manager (August 2013)

- Highlighted their response to the 2012 bus service consultation which focussed on the need for supported bus services to provide access to youth clubs and centres

- Youth Services also agreed to raise awareness of the Draft Bus Strategy with the Bracknell Youth Network and Connections

Federation of Community Groups (August 2013)

- Highlighted their response to the 2012 bus service consultation which focussed on providing access to key services and facilities

Access Group (October 2013)

- Highlighted their response to the 2012 bus service consultation which focussed on the importance of bus services for younger and older populations
- Highlighted the need to provide accessibility to facilities in the town centre for residents in the Parishes
- Need to improve access for wheelchair users on/off and within bus – particularly when using ramps to get on/off
- Bus shuttle service should connect places like South Hall Park/Coral Reef/Town Centre
- Need to provide accurate information about bus services

6.15 BFVA hosted an ‘open morning’ on 9th September 2012 to raise awareness of a number of activities including the draft Bus Strategy consultation. Representatives from Age Concern and the Over Fifty’s Forum attended.

7. Next Steps

7.1 The Council should take this full Equality Impact Assessment and the consultation results into account when the proposed Bus Strategy is presented to the Executive in January 2014.

7.2 This EIA report is a key consideration for the Executive when determining the proposed Bus Strategy.

8. Publication of Equality Impact Assessment

8.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 aims to make public authorities more transparent, accountable and increase public debate and involvement. Under the Act the council makes available to the public a vast amount of information via its Publication scheme. All completed EIA’s are published. The EIA’s are published to <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/your-council/yc-community-cohesion/yc-equality-impact-assessments.htm>.

9. Conclusions

9.1 It is clear that most of the consultation respondents are older people (46% of the respondents were aged over 65 years, with less than 9% aged under 18 years). The age category was identified in the Equalities Impact Assessment screening stage.

9.2 The consultation also received responses from people who identified themselves as having a Health Problem or Disability (37% of respondents). The disability equality was also identified in the screening stage.

9.3 The consultation results demonstrate that:

- Older people (aged over 65 yrs) use the bus most often – 92% at least once per week
- Younger people (aged under 18 yrs) use the bus least often – 41% at least once per week
- A higher percentage of people with a health problem use the bus more often than those without – 83% at least once per week
- The bus is the most usual means of transport for older people (aged over 65 yrs) – 65%
- The bus is the most usual means of transport for only 30% of younger people (aged under 18 yrs)
- The bus is the most usual means of transport for people with health problems – 55%

9.4 These conclusions highlight the importance of local bus services to the older population and people with health problems. The conclusions support the proposed objectives and principles set out in the draft Bus Strategy. These should have a positive impact on older people and people with health problems, and also have the potential to encourage more young people to travel by bus.

9.5 The relevant objectives (see 'Vision' paragraph 7.2) are:

- Offer a quality service that provides accessibility to the widest cross section of the population, particularly for the young and old, to increase bus use
- Give people more travel choices to access work, services and leisure activities
- Offer and promote affordable fares and multi-operator ticketing

9.6 The relevant principles (see Section 8 'Principles') are:

- Principle 2 – Quality Supported Network (Affordable, Acceptable, Accessible, Available)

Principle 5 – Supporting Young and Older Populations

10. Monitoring Arrangements

10.1 If it is considered that the future bus network operations have an adverse impact on travel for older/disable people, then the Council will identify a monitoring process to better understand and manage these issues.

10.2 The Council will continue to monitor travel by the over 65s via regular returns from local bus operators.