

Adult Services Transport Consultation Report

Period of Consultation : 2 November 2010 – 31 January 2011

Summary of Responses

Background

Within a challenging financial context the council is faced with maintaining statutory provision to meet critical or substantial care need, reviewing discretionary provision and addressing the national directive of personalisation, developing the market place to provide greater choice, flexibility and control for customers in meeting their care needs through personal budgets. The national directive for Local Authorities is to provide services in the community in a personalised way, offering this choice, control and flexibility to customers from a range of traditional and innovative services – every Local Authority is required by the Department of Health to offer community care services in a personalised way to all customers by 2012.

In the current economic climate, all local authorities in the UK are experiencing severe and increasing budget pressures. Cheshire East Council are dealing with a reduction in grant funding from the government, a higher than average growing elderly population, more demands for social care and an over-spend projected at £9.2 million in Adult Services alone for 2010/11.

Cheshire East Council is committed to developing services that are flexible and suitable for all and aims to bring control and choice to adult transport arrangements. Those who can travel independently will be supported to, and those who need to remain travelling with the same level of service and support because of their critical or substantial needs will be given the option of equal and alternative transport arrangements to meet their assessed mobility needs in order to access care services.

Summary

Adult Services transport budget is £1.4m (2010/11) and is used to deliver transport to 420 adults across East Cheshire to and from their day care provision using fleet transport vehicles (43 mini-buses) or hired transport.

As a discretionary service, the current cost per one way trip to the council is £9 and the cost to the transport user is £2. One of the proposals to the Transport Consultation is to reduce the gap between the cost and charge of transport services.

This consultation aims to involve the views of service users, carers, key external stakeholders, representative bodies, voluntary organisation and the wider public ensuring that these are taken into account when exploring a number of options and proposals of meeting the Personalisation agenda and budget challenges.

The consultation period should be seen as a process of dialogue and debate; and an opportunity for people to ask questions and offer their views and opinions for consideration.

This document summarises the feedback received through the consultation processes evidencing the key themes from the public meetings, other open comments and the statistical feedback from the Transport survey.

Consultation Process

The consultation period originally ran between 2nd November 2010 and 31st December 2010. However, following feedback it was decided to extend the formal period for consultation around Transport until 31st January 2011, (and to add another public meeting date) and so the date of the cabinet decision was put back to March, 2011 respectively.

Throughout the 3 month consultation period, numerous steps have been taken to involve and inform those who will be affected by changes to Transport provision, including service users, carers, families, and organisations representing the former groups.

Below is a list of the methods used to provide information about the proposals to Adult Services Transport and the opportunities in which people were given to have their say;

- Public Meetings (listed below)
- Transport questionnaire; Online and accessible (paper copy with assistance to complete offered by Day Centre Staff)
- Website information
- Presentations
- Facilitated meetings at all day care centres (listed below)
- Consultation specific e-mail account for feedback and responses
- Postal address for open comment and letters
- Individual meetings and telephone conversations
- Poster campaign
- Discussion and engagement with third sector and support groups
- Individual responses to letters of concern
- Briefing of Over-view and Scrutiny Committee
- Briefing of Link, Learning Disability Partnership Board and Forums, Older People Network, Carers Interagency Group, Central and Eastern Primary Care Trust.
- Meetings with Drivers and Attendants
- Liaison with Unison and Transport Services Management

Public consultations (N = number of attendees)

1 st December 2010	Transport Consultation 1	Middlewich	N = 23
1 st December 2010	Transport Consultation 2	Middlewich	N = 7

21 st January 2011	Transport Consultation	Knutsford	N = 9
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The consultations followed a set format with presentations from senior officers on specifics of the consultation and Personalisation. There was variation within each meeting depending on the number of attendees and whether it was suitable to have group discussions around tables before the question and answer session. Questions and comments from the meetings were recorded and these will be fed into the report.

Facilitated meetings at Day Care Centres (N = number of attendees)

7 th December 2010	Hollins View,	Macclesfield	N = 5
13 th December 2010	Peatfields,	Macclesfield	N = 6
13 th December 2010	Cheyne Hall,	Nantwich	N = 4
7 th January 2011	Mount View,	Congleton	N = 15
11 th January 2011	Redesmere Centre,	Handforth	N = 33
13 th January 2011	Carter House,	Congleton	N = 30
17 th January 2011	Hilary Centre,	Crewe	N = 35
19 th January 2011	Mayfield Centre,	Macclesfield	N = 11
24 th January 2011	Stanley Centre,	Knutsford	N = 30
24 th January 2011	Macon House,	Crewe	N = 20
25 th January 2011	Salinae House,	Middlewich	N = 30
25 th January 2011	Hilary Centre	Crewe	N - 20

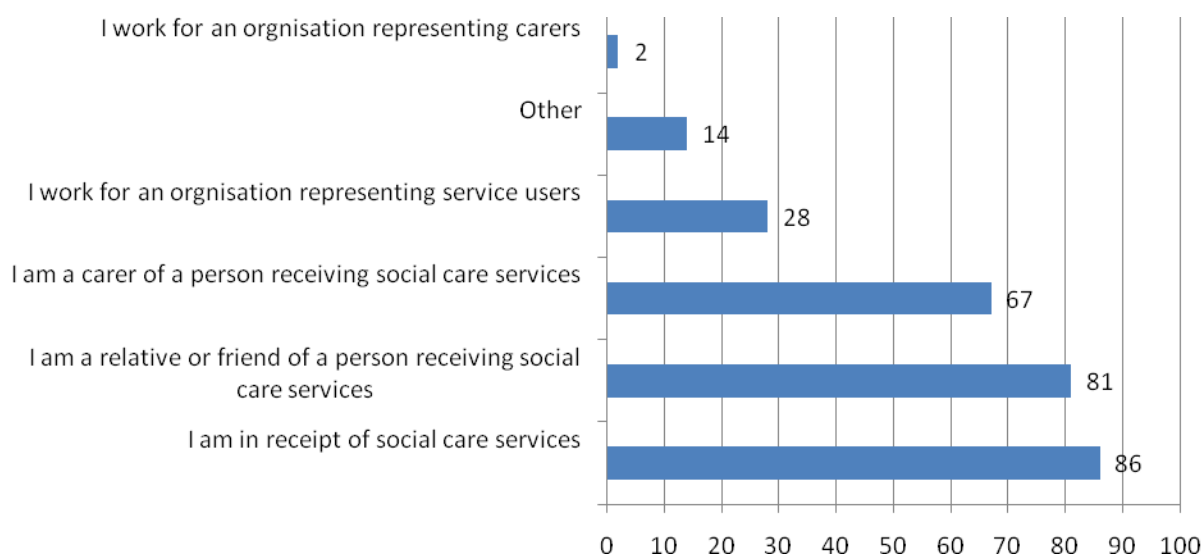
Discussions at Day Care Centres were approached in an informal manner to give service users and their carers an opportunity to absorb the information and to ask questions and give feedback; notes were taken from each of these discussions and are fed into this report.

Responses to the Transport Questionnaire

A total of 250 questionnaire responses were received during the consultation period (2nd November 2010 – 31st January 2011) via the online survey and the accessible (paper) version of the survey. These responses have been evaluated and summarised, along with the additional comments received from this feedback method.

Question 1

Which of these statements best describe your situation?

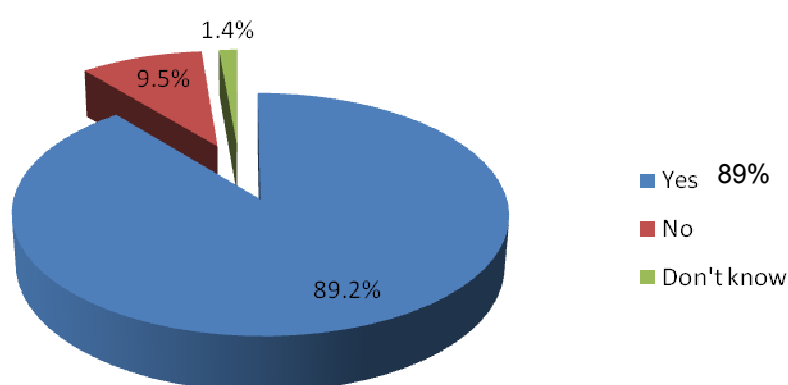


Additional comment;

Respondents were able to choose more than one option here, so the results are presented as numbers and not percentages. The chart shows that the greatest level of response was received from those receiving social care services or from those who are related to or friends with those receiving care services.

Question 2

If you are in receipt of social care services, do you also use the Council's fleet mini-bus transport service to get to and from day care?

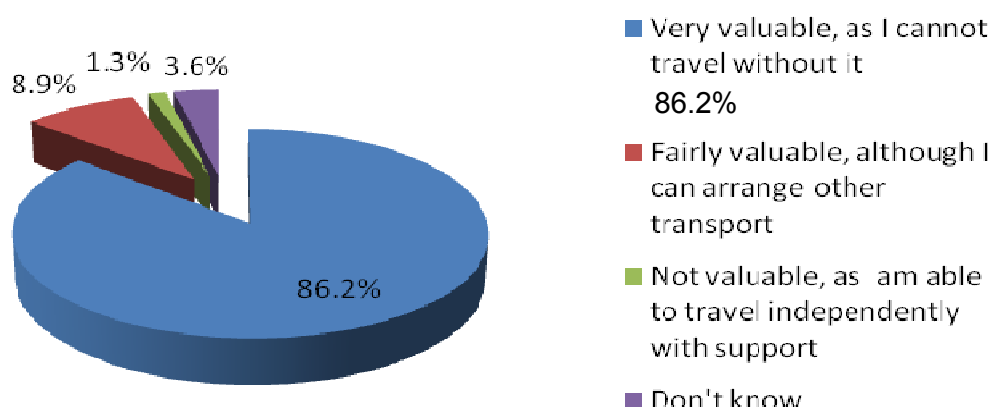


Additional Comment;

There were 222 responses to this question. This chart shows the great proportion of respondents who use (or are representing a service user who uses) the fleet transport service to travel to and from their day care provision (89%).

Question 3

How valuable is the social care fleet mini-bus service to you?

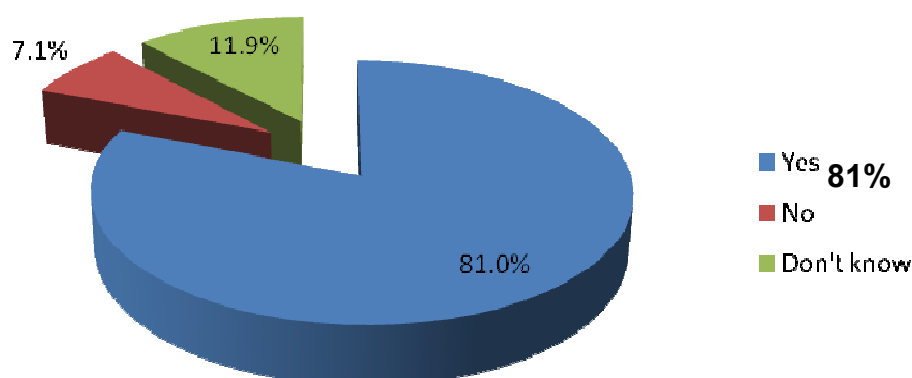


Additional Comment;

There were 224 responses to this question. The vast majority of responses indicate that respondents find the transport provided by the council very valuable and are as are unable to travel independently (82.6%)

Question 4

The Council is currently reviewing the way it provides its minibus service which gets people to and from day care. Options being considered instead are offering people dial-a-ride, specialist taxis or providing a bus pass for a carer in order for them to travel with you (the cared for). Do you think these changes would have a major impact on you?

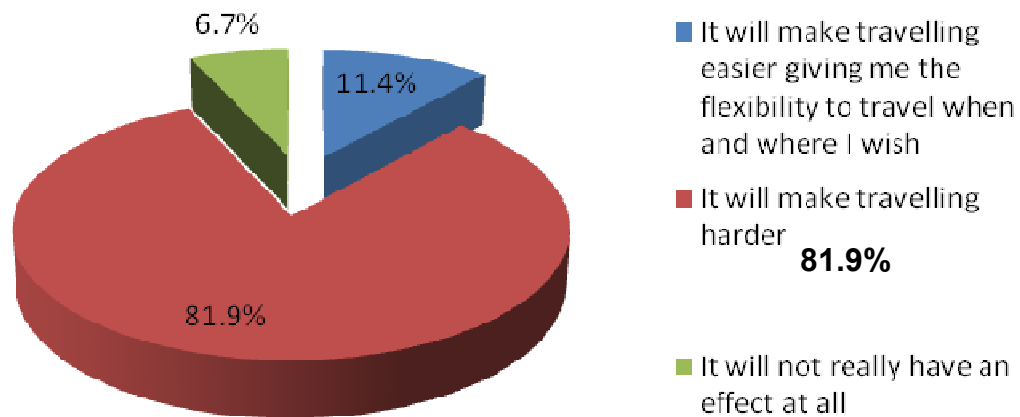


Additional comment;

There were 210 responses to this question. The chart shows the high proportion of respondents who felt the changes to transport provision would have a major impact to them and their lives (81%).

Question 5

How will moving from Social Care fleet mini-bus to another suitable form of transport affect you?



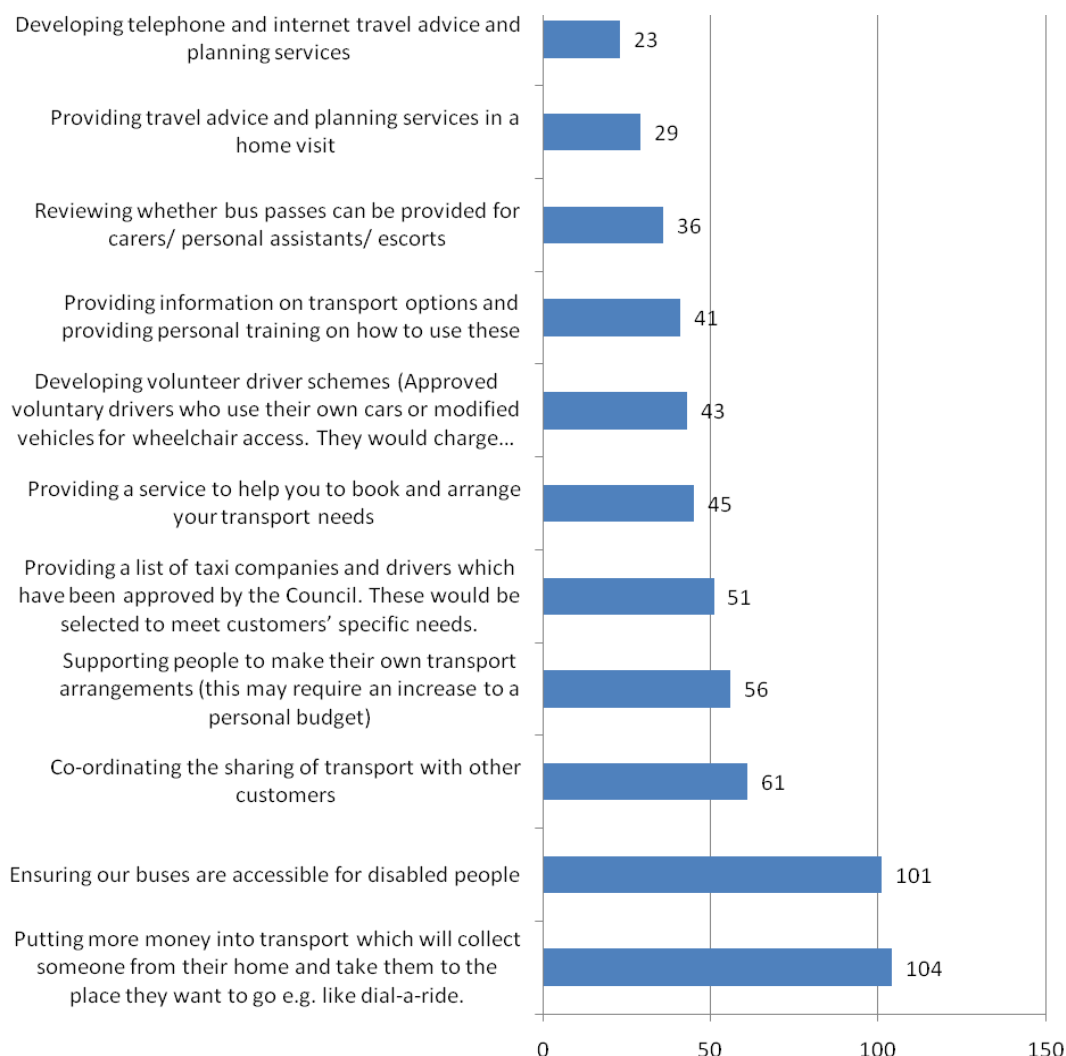
Additional comments;

There were 210 responses to this question. A small percentage of respondents (11.4%) indicated that moving away from fleet transport would make travelling easier for them and increase their independence and flexibility to travels when and where they want. An even smaller percentage (6.7%) reported that moving away from fleet transport would have virtually no effect on them, while a great proportion of respondents reported that moving away from fleet transport arrangements would make travelling harder (81.9%)

Question 6

The Council is exploring the following range of options to help people with their transport needs. Please indicate which options you feel would help you. You may choose more than one:

The chart shows the number of people who indicated which options they would find most helpful to their situation;



Additional feedback from respondents;

The current system is the best option

Currently not enough public transport links – especially in rural areas

Public transport is expensive

Happy to travel with assistance

New system will lose experienced staff and established relationships with staff

Happy to use taxis

Transport must cater for disability; wheelchair friendly and with escorts

Travel time could be reduced

More flexibility

Could lead to isolation without the same support

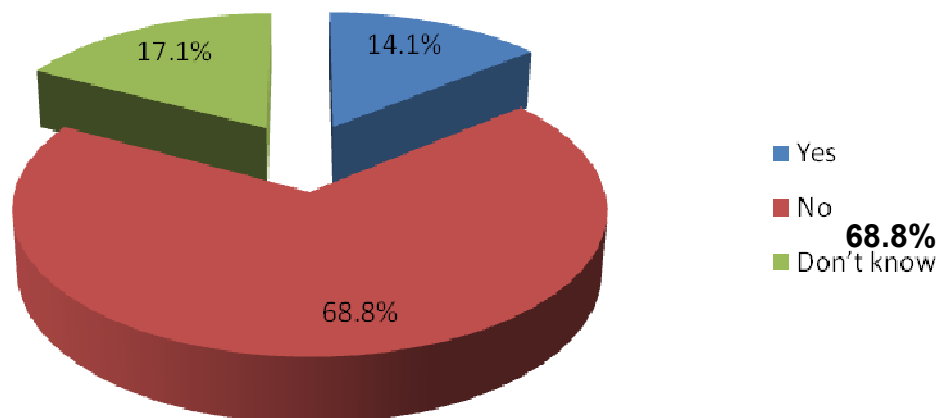
More information is needed

Additional comments;

The greatest feedback was in support of options to put more money into transport provision such as s dial-a-ride, or to improve disabled access to public transport such as busses.

Question 7

If you were supported with information and advice, would you be able to arrange and finance your own transport needs?



Additional feedback from respondents;

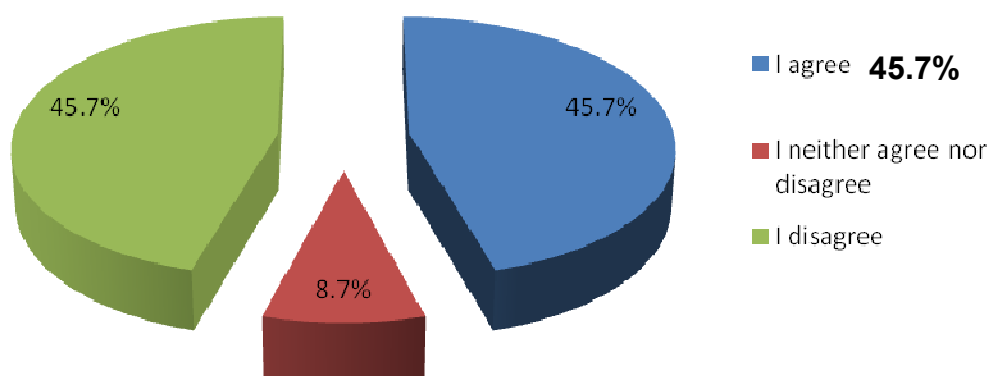
Too costly; cannot afford to pay more
Too confusing
Would prefer to keep fleet transport
Would need assistance
Unable to organise effectively given age and disability/communication difficulties
Suitable for some but not others
Need similar transport arrangements

Additional comments;

There were 205 responses to this question. While the majority of respondents indicated that they would not be able to arrange and finance their transport needs, the qualitative feedback to this question sheds some light on the reasons behind these responses. Some respondents mentioned that they cannot afford to pay more for their transport provisions whilst some mentioned that due to the nature of their disability they would be unable to cope with the task of arranging transport for themselves.

Question 8

As a result of increasing financial pressures on local authorities, it is unlikely that the Council will be able to continue to subsidise the social care fleet minibuses at the current level. Read the following statement and select the statement which best meets your view. "Given the current financial pressures on national and local government I understand why the charges might need to be increased for my transport services and I accept the situation"

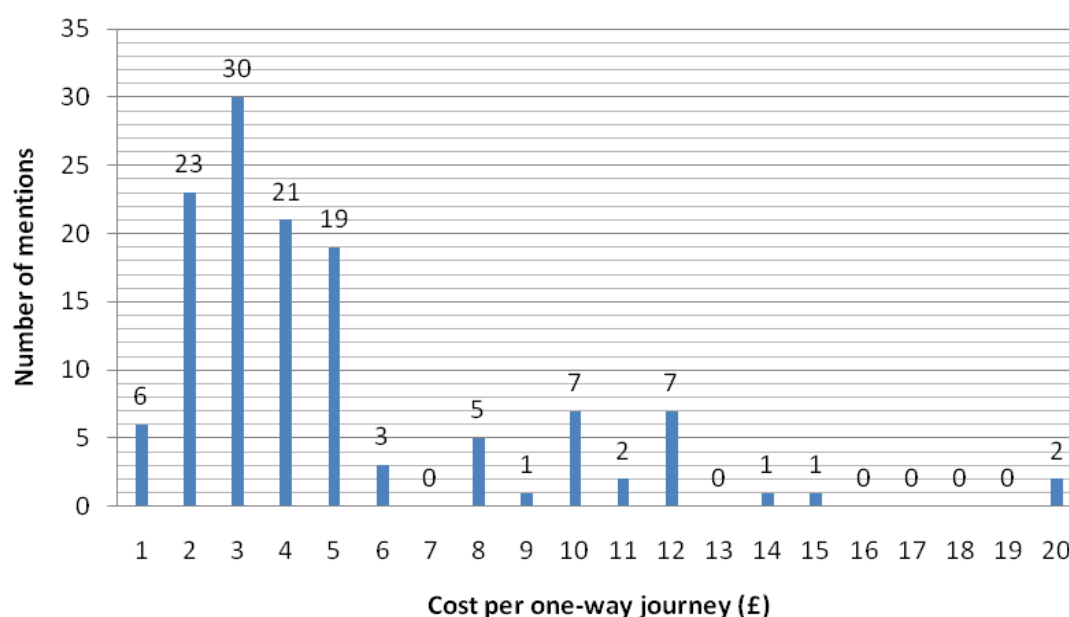


Additional comments;

There were 208 responses to this question. An equal proportion of respondents indicated that they agreed or disagreed with the statement presented.

Question 9

What is the maximum charge per one-way trip that you think is reasonable for using the social care fleet minibus service? Please enter an amount to the nearest pound (£)



Additional Comments;

This is a key question as evidences what people think is a fair price to pay for the transport provision they receive. The graph shows the number of people who indicated what they thought was a fair price for their journey (each way). These figures have been rounded to the nearest pound. The most recurrent cost indicated by respondents is £2 and £3 per one-way journey, while the average cost indicated per one-way journey is **£4.55**.

However many respondents indicated that the length of their journey should be a determinant in the costing of that journey.

Question 10

Please rate the following service in order of priority to you; 1 = Most Important and 6 = least important.

The results have been analysed and here is the ranking for each service;

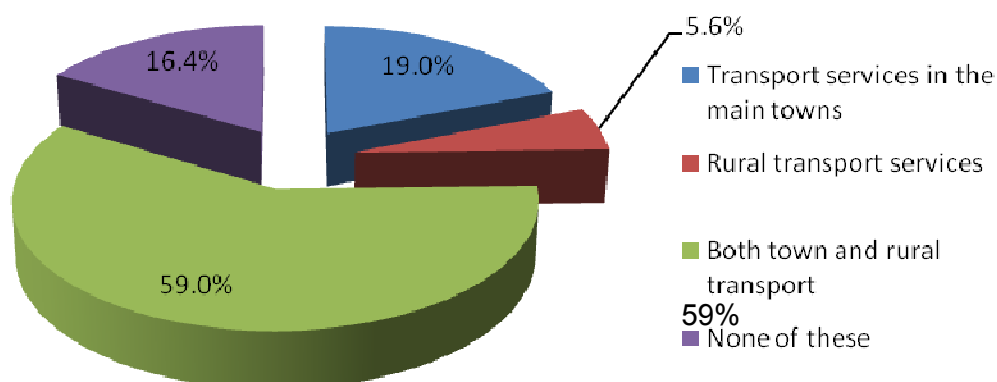
Service	Rank of Importance
Transport	1
Day Care Services	2
Carer Respite Services	3
Home Care Services	4
Family Based Care	5
Reablement	6

Additional comments;

Although the data gathered was not complete enough to allow for statistical analysis, the key message of the information has been represented in the table. Transport and Day Care Services came out as the top most important services to respondents in the survey sample.

Question 11

Thinking about transport services in general, which of the following options do you consider to be most important?



Additional feedback;

There were 195 responses to this question. The graph shows that a greater proportion of respondents equally valued the importance of transport services in both towns and rural areas of Cheshire East.

Qualitative Feedback – Key Themes

The feedback gathered from the public meetings, facilitated discussions at the day care centres, and open comments from the surveys and by letter and e-mails have all been analysed together. We have also received responses from organisations supporting service users and their carers and this feedback has also been fed into the qualitative analysis of this report. A more comprehensive response was received from UNISON, and this response has been included as an Appendix document; (see Appendix A).

From this analysis there have been six common and re-occurring themes that encapsulate the opinions and feedback of all the people who were involved in the consultation process.

The key themes are;

1. Safeguarding
2. Support
3. Funding
4. Consultation Process
5. Personalisation
6. Service Availability

Key Theme 1 – Safeguarding

Many people raised concerns over the safeguarding of service users. It was felt by some that the most vulnerable people were being ‘attacked’ in this transport consultation; and that those who are likely to be most affected were unable to speak up for themselves.

Concerns were raised about how particular service users and user groups may be unable to travel independently given the nature of their condition, and about how their safety would be compromised in doing so. It was noted that although the new transport proposals may be suitable for some service users, they would not be suitable for others.

Queries were raised as to how the council would ensure the quality of new transport arrangements. This was focused on whether the staff of bus or taxi companies, would have the correct level of training to enable them to support service users in an appropriate way. Also if these staff would be CRB checked, and if the services they provide would be reliable.

Some quotes:

“You are targeting the most vulnerable in society and their carers”

“Taxi drivers do not have the right training and knowledge i.e. first aid”

“These vulnerable people cannot travel independently”

“Taxi drivers will need CRB checking”

CEC Response/Action;

Officers recognise the need to reassure that vulnerable people will not be left without proper transport provision, the Council proposes developing a range of transport options with transport operatives being accredited to a specific level and trained in the needs of our customers. We recognise that removing cash transactions and introducing concessionary travel for escorts and carers will assist vulnerable people to travel safely. The Council recognises that there will be a number of service users who will require specialised, commissioned transportation.

Key Theme 2 – Support

A large number of people expressed their concerns about the level of support that would be available to services users given the new transport proposals. The main concern was that those who needed an escort to travel would be unable to travel if escorts were not provided. Additional concerns were that service users would lose the door to door support they receive from the fleet bus drivers.

Some people were concerned about the growing level of pressure that transport changes would bring to both service users and carers and whether provisions would be made to support the most vulnerable through these changes.

Some people were concerned for services users who do not have family or friends who could help and support them to find new transport arrangements.

Some quotes:

“People need more care than just a taxi collecting them and delivering them home”

“I wouldn’t get the same help from a taxi driver”

“What about those who do not have family to help them?”

CEC Response/Action;

The Council recognises the valuable service offered by fleet drivers and attendants in ensuring customers are safely escorted to and from the vehicles and into their homes. It is proposed, through accreditation and training that a like for like service is developed.

Key Theme 3 – Funding

Much concern was raised over the cost of the proposed transport services. People felt that they would not be able to afford to pay more for their transport to and from day care. People who already operate tight personal budgets felt that an increase in transport costs would mean that some would be left unable to travel to day care services at all.

While many people expressed that they would be willing to pay more to keep the same transport service they receive now. Or that they were happy to pay more for transport, they just wanted to know how much more it would cost them.

Others wanted to know if they could spend their Disability Living Allowance more flexibly on other services and if personal budgets or mobility allowance would be increased in line with increased travel costs.

Many people commented that they felt cuts should be made elsewhere instead of community transport, which would affect the most vulnerable. There were also suggestions about setting a fixed price based on length of journey.

Some quotes;

“Cuts should be made elsewhere, not the handicapped”

“I believe the contribution I already make to transport is high”

“I’m happy to pay more but I’d like to know how much”

CEC Response/Action;

It is expected that people with mobility income will use that income to meet their transportation needs similarly for those with Motorability vehicles. Where there is a shortfall and a customer cannot afford to meet their critical or substantial care or transport needs the Council has a duty to provide the funding to meet the shortfall.

Key Themes 4 – Consultation Process

Whilst most people felt the consultation was an important opportunity to find out more about the proposed changes to Transport provision, there were concerns about the integrity of the consultation process. Some viewed the process and associated proposals as a *fait accompli*.

Comments were also made concerning the timing and location of the public events. More specifically, some had difficulty locating the venues and the events were scheduled to occur at the same time the fleet buses would be dropping off service users.

Others reported a lack of publicity and communication, with their attendance being attributed to ‘word of mouth’. Others deemed the distribution of invitation letters via service users for their parents and carers to read as inappropriate.

Some also expressed their disappointment at the absence of an elected member to participate in the discussions. Although attendees felt they had the opportunity to express their views, there was some scepticism as to what, if any, impact they would make.

Some quotes:

"It looks quite obvious that the outcome is a foregone conclusion but yet again people in offices are making decisions which will drastically affect the lives of service users".

"This consultation is meaningless, we won't be listened to."

CEC response/action:

Cllr Domleo, Portfolio Holder for Adult Services approved a consultation process with decisions to be made by Cabinet following full consideration of the views of the public. The Council has attempted to provide a range of opportunities for people to have their say and can demonstrate 359 people have attended consultation events, 220 have submitted completed questionnaires, the Council has received 33 letters on the subject along with 11 emails.

Key theme 5 - Personalisation

Some were sceptical about the motives for implementing Personalisation, perceiving it to be a cost cutting exercise, with the authority relinquishing their responsibility for care and support (including transport provision) onto the service user, their families and carers. Others questioned why service users had to consider Personalisation if they were happy with the traditional services currently received. Some felt that the quality of life of some service users would be negatively affected by the personalisation agenda and the concept of giving more choice and control, when routine and consistency were of paramount importance to them.

Questions were also raised relating to the number of service users who were using the Empower Card and its suitability and appropriateness. Concerns were raised relating to the Empower Card and Personal Budgets, with some feeling they were not appropriate for many services users, their families and carers. One issue of particular note, was the perceived increase in the administrative burden on families and carers.

Some quotes:

"The Empower Card and personalisation is useless for my son – he cannot manage this himself".

"What is a Personal Budget?"

CEC response/action:

Personalisation is a national directive from the Department of Health which requires all Local Authority social care to be offered in a personalised way by 2012. The Council has developed an innovative system to deliver personal budgets in a cost effective way in the Empower Card which is continuing to be developed. There are a range of options available to individuals in the way they operate the Empower Card system – a personal Empower Card, a companion card which can be operated by a carer or relative, a managed account with a care provider or a virtual account managed by the Council. It is felt that these options will enable most of our customers to benefit from the programme.

Key theme 6 - Service Availability

There were concerns that the proposed transport options would not be available in all areas of Cheshire East, with particular concern being raised by those living in rural areas and those residing close to the border with the neighbouring authorities. There was also concern that there was already a lack of suitable local private transport alternatives which were accessible with adequately trained staff and escorts to accommodate the diverse needs of those individuals requiring adult social care transport.

The future of Cheshire East Councils Day Centres was also raised with attendees feeling that the proposed transport changes would have ramifications on the future of day care services. There was real concern that Day Care Services would be next to face cuts.

Concerns were also raised about the potential environmental impact of an increased number of taxis, minibuses and private cars which would be required to transport service users to and from day care if the fleet transport service ceased to exist.

Some quotes:

“You listed Dial-A-Ride but when I have contacted them they said they could not provide a service at the same time on a daily basis”

“Families are concerned that this is the start of cuts to services such as Day Care.”

CEC response/action:

The Council recognises that the transport market needs to develop to meet the needs of all social care customers and that the provision is not there currently. Considerations to a range of services to meet a variety of needs across the Cheshire East footprint have been identified. The consultation process has not highlighted any further options which the Council feels it has not already captured.

Reviewing transport does not mean that Day Care services are at risk, however as personalisation rolls out people may opt to have their care needs met in a different

way and if this happens in numbers then building based provision would need to be reviewed.

Next Steps

Cheshire East Cabinet will consider a report from Adult Services on 14th March 2011, once the recommendations have been agreed by Corporate Management Team and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

An Equality Impact Assessment will accompany the decision making process as well as this summary report and example correspondence.

This summary document will be posted on the Cheshire East Council website together with full comments from consultation and the summary report will be distributed to those people who have provided contact details.