

December 2010

CONCESSIONARY BUS TRAVEL – BULLETIN #27

Revised Reimbursement Guidance

On 29th November the Department for Transport (DfT) published the final revised DfT Reimbursement Guidance and the Reimbursement Calculator, along with the Interim Consultation Response and Impact Assessment.

The consultation documents can be found at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/closed/>

The guidance and calculator can be found at:
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/buses/concessionary/informationlocalauthorities/reimbursementappeals/>

The guidance is intended for use in devising reimbursement arrangements for schemes from April 2011. The guidance and calculator are not statutory and merely represent the DfT's preferred approach for calculating reimbursement. Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs) are free to use the methodology of their choice in estimating reimbursement but have a legal obligation to compensate bus operators fairly for taking part in the scheme e.g. such that their local reimbursement arrangements meet the 'No Better and No Worse Off' principle.

Queries relating to the new guidance or calculator can be emailed to:
concessionaryfares@dft.gsi.gov.uk

The final consultation response will be published early in the New Year.

Regulations relating to reimbursement are due to be amended and take effect from April 2011, subject to the Parliamentary timetable.

Administrative Reform

County Councils are encouraged to engage with the relevant district authorities as soon as possible to ensure a smooth handover of statutory and discretionary concessionary travel schemes from April 2011.

DfT have published a guidance document which is designed to assist TCAs in administering the England National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS). The guidance provides details of the key information that all TCAs need to know about in administering the ENCTS and provides links to other guidance documents issued by the DfT in relation to the scheme. The latter section of the guidance focuses on the shift in responsibility for administering the scheme from lower tier local authorities to upper tier local authorities and provides advice on how to handle a number of specific transitional issues. The guidance can be found at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/buses/concessionary/informationlocalauthorities/>

ISL have also issued a guidance document which outlines important technical administrative changes required prior to the changeover. Topics covered include Operator Identification details, supporting bureau provisions, stop/hot listing procedures, changes to contact details and contract amendments. A copy of this document is available on the ISL Website - www.itso.org.uk - under 'Documents and Links'.

If you have any immediate questions relating to this document, or if (as an incoming upper-tier authority) you are unfamiliar with ISL and the service it provides to TCAs, please contact Ant McLaughlin by email or phone: ant@itso.org.uk / 0121 634 2757.

Funding

Quarter 4 special grant allocations will be paid to Travel Concession Authorities on 18 February 2011. Please refer to Bulletin 22, at the following [link](#), for details of the allocations as per the Special Grant Report No 130. No special grant payments will be made after this date since all funding for the statutory scheme will be subsumed into Formula Grant from April 2011 onwards.

DCLG recently consulted on how the transfer of responsibility for concessionary travel (from lower tier to upper tier authorities) will be taken into account in authorities' funding allocations from 2011/12. This was an opportunity for local authorities to influence decisions on the final distribution method. DCLG published an analysis of the outcome of this consultation alongside the draft Local Government Finance Report for 2011-12 and 2012-13 on 13 December. As is required by the Local Government Finance Act 1988, DCLG are currently consulting on the determinations relating to the Revenue Support Grant. The deadline for responses is 5pm on Monday 17 January 2011.

Documents concerning this consultation can be found at the following link:
<http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/1112/grant.htm#con>

Changes to State Pension Age

It was announced in the Spending Review 2010 that the Government plans to speed up the alignment of the pension age so that the pensionable age for women will now reach 65 by 2018 instead of 2020 as previously planned. Furthermore the pensionable age for both men and women will now rise to 66 by 2020. The age of eligibility for concessionary travel will increase in line with these and any other future changes to the pensionable age for women.

These proposed changes to the state pension age timetable are not yet law and still require the approval of Parliament. Further details can be found at the following link: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/SpendingReview/DG_192159

Concessionary Travel for Service Personnel and War Veterans

In the Ministry of Defence's Service Personnel Command Paper published by the previous Government in July 2008 the following commitment in respect of concessionary travel was made:

"By 1 April 2011, the statutory bus concession in England will be extended to include Service personnel and veterans under the age of 60, who were seriously injured in service and who are resident in England. A similar scheme already exists in Northern Ireland. Scottish Ministers will consider by April 2009 how to take forward this proposal as part of the three year review currently being carried out on the Scotland-wide Free Bus Scheme for Older and Disabled People. The Welsh Assembly Government is also undertaking a review of its concessionary fares scheme and this will include plans to extend eligibility to concessionary bus travel for Service personnel and veterans who were seriously injured in service."

DfT, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Government are considering exactly how to take forward the spirit of the commitment with regards to concessionary bus travel. The plan remains for this to be taken forward in England, Wales and Scotland by April 2011.

It is likely that the broad aims of the previous Government's commitment in this respect will be met by including automatic eligibility for seriously injured veterans and service personnel who have been awarded a guaranteed income payment for tariff levels 1-8 under the 2005 Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and who fall within the categories of disability set out in the Transport Act 2000 (and equivalent legislation in Scotland).

As eligibility will still be linked to the existing disability criteria there should be no additional funding implications for local authorities. The aim will be to reduce the assessment burden on veterans and this may even reduce costs for authorities if they don't need to undertake separate medical assessments.

DfT plan to amend their disability eligibility guidance in the New Year to reflect this change. DfT will inform local authorities in England of how the commitment is to be taken forward via one of these bulletins as soon as all practical implementation issues have been resolved with the Ministry of Defence.

Concessionary Travel Online Community

If you would like to discuss the issues raised in this bulletin or anything to do with concessionary travel, with others working in this area then CTOC (the Concessionary Travel Online Community) is the place to go. The community is a forum for partners involved in delivering the concession, including local authorities and bus operators, to share best practice, ideas and practical tips. Follow the link below to sign up:

<http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/c/844620/home.do>

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