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# Transport poverty

a Policy Review Summary Briefing

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# Transport poverty: a policy review

## Summary briefing

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## Why Transport Poverty matters

Transport affects health both positively and negatively. Sustainable transport provides opportunities for physical activity and reduces the harms to health caused by motorised vehicles in car-dominated environments, such as pollution and injury from collisions.

Transport poverty is 'a lack of transport of options that are: Available, Reliable, Affordable, Accessible and Safe that allow people to meet their daily needs and achieve a reasonable quality of life'. Populations most at risk of transport poverty include low-income people, women, disabled people, rural communities, children and young people, older people, and ethnic minority groups.

Transport poverty exacerbates each of the three drivers of child poverty:

- Cost of living - Affordability of transport is an important component of the cost of living.
- Income from employment - Transport poverty can affect parents' access to education, training and employment. It can also affect parents' access to childcare to allow them to work.
- Income from social security - Transport poverty can affect parents' ability to meet conditions of some benefits, for example to attend job centre appointments, leading to sanctions and reduced income.

Actions that effectively reduce transport poverty can support all four of the strategic priorities in the National Transport Strategy:

- Reducing Inequalities - Reducing transport poverty is central to this priority.
- Take Climate Action - Actions to reduce transport poverty include reducing car dependence and supporting modal shift from private cars to active and public transport.
- Deliver Inclusive Economic Growth - Transport poverty is an important reason that many people cannot access education, training or employment.

- Improves Health and Wellbeing - Reducing transport poverty can improve access to building blocks of good health, improve access to healthcare, reduce financial strain, increase community engagement and reduce exposure to transport-related health harms, such as pollution and injury from collisions.

## Recommendations

- Bus concessionary schemes should be maintained as a priority intervention to improve transport affordability. This recognises the importance of bus services to low-income populations and others at risk of transport poverty. Universal age-based schemes are not stigmatising and encourage higher overall bus patronage, helping to sustain services.
- Scottish Government should consider ways to expand bus concessionary schemes, prioritising those most in need of free bus travel. Priority should be given to other populations in or at risk of financial poverty, such as low-income workers and parents in the child poverty priority families.
- It is important to address other dimensions as well as affordability, to reduce transport poverty for rural populations and people with accessibility needs or safety concerns. Interventions should include both active travel infrastructure and interventions, and support for public transport services to improve their availability, reliability, accessibility and safety. This will bring multiple benefits in relation to transport poverty, financial poverty, health and sustainability.
- Further policy development is needed to improve physical, sensory and cognitive accessibility of public transport for people with mobility and other needs, and to improve personal safety for active travel and public transport.
- Further work should assess whether transport infrastructure and service provision are matched to transport need. This could include public transport

services, and distribution of shared ownership and hire schemes as an alternative to bike and vehicle ownership.

- The reach and distribution of policies should be evaluated more routinely. Some of the policies had evaluation data available but many did not. In particular it would be helpful to evaluate the uptake and use of free bus travel for under 22-year-olds among children and young people in the child poverty priority families.
- Indicators for each transport poverty dimension are being developed by the Public Health and Sustainable Transport Data and Evidence group. These should be integrated into the NTS monitoring framework and used to monitor progress in reducing transport poverty in Scotland.

## What we did

A small group of members of the Public Health and Sustainable Transport Partnership completed this policy review. We worked with Transport Scotland policy leads to identify the national transport policies that they considered to be the most likely to reduce transport poverty. We carried out qualitative analyses on these policies to determine whether they were likely to have a population level impact on transport poverty in Scotland and their likely impact on inequalities. We applied criteria to assess whether they were likely to have a population level impact on transport poverty. Based on the scores we applied an overall rating of High, Medium or Low for population level impact. The criteria included whether the policies were:

- Systematically applied
- Scaled up appropriately
- Resourced over the long term
- Evidence based – including evaluation

We also assessed their inequalities impact by considering whether it was voluntary or mandatory for the transport operator to offer each intervention, any barriers to uptake including cost, their reach (national or subnational), whether they were an individual or environmental/legislative intervention and, for individual interventions, whether they were delivered universally, targeted or proportionately universal.

It is important to note that transport policies may have aims other than reducing transport poverty. For example, their primary aim may be to achieve modal shift, safeguard sustainability of services, support economic or social development. This review only considers their potential to reduce transport poverty and is not an assessment of their effectiveness in meeting their primary aims or of the overall value of the policies.

## What we found

Transport Scotland team leads prioritised twelve policies for review, which addressed either affordability, accessibility or safety of transport. The Table below shows the policies assessed with their overall score for population level impact.

Although evaluation data were not available for all policies, eight of the twelve policies were assessed as having a high likelihood of population level impact, three medium and just one low likelihood. Most of the policies benefit one or more populations at risk of transport poverty, have limited or no barriers to uptake and are universal or environmental legislative interventions. Overall, they would be expected to have a broadly positive inequalities impact.

Eight of the policies were concessionary travel schemes. Seven were universally available within an age group or geographical area, or for all disabled people, and one was targeted to job seekers. Some required payment for a railcard, which may be a barrier for some passengers. We identified the bus concessionary schemes as particularly important to help address transport poverty by improving bus affordability.

The Thistle assistance card was the only policy judged to have low impact because, at the time of the assessment, uptake was low and feedback suggested low awareness.

Of the three environmental interventions, Low Emission Zones are only applied in the cities and both 20 mph speed limits and pavement parking bans require local implementation. However, they all have an evidence base, are scaled appropriately, and have long term commitment so achieved a high rating for their likely population level impact in the relevant locations.

This review did not assess policies addressing the availability or reliability of transport options. However, it is important to adopt policies that address each of the transport poverty dimensions, as addressing each dimension in isolation is not sufficient.

**Table: Reviewed policies with overall rating for population level impact**

Policy	Overall rating for population level impact
Free bus travel aged <22	High
Concessionary bus travel aged ≥60	High
Concessionary bus travel for disabled people	High
Kids for a Quid	Medium
Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card Scheme	Medium
Disabled Persons Railcard	High
Road Equivalent Tariff	High
Air discount scheme	Medium
Thistle Assistance Card	Low
Pavement parking ban	High
Low Emission Zones	High
20 mph speed limit	High