

Keeping up with the changes in concessionary travel

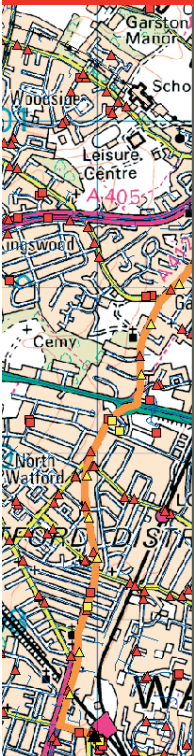
The Chancellor's announcement in the 2006 Budget that free concessionary bus travel will apply across England brings arrangements into line with existing practice in other parts of the UK.

The challenge ahead

Scottish and Welsh residents aged 60 or over and Northern Irish residents aged 65 or over enjoy free bus travel throughout their respective areas. From 1 April 2006, everyone in England aged 60 or over is entitled to travel free of charge on their local bus services. From 2008, the English free travel concession will be extended to cover all bus travel throughout England. This change will involve a major overhaul of existing arrangements for concessionary travel in England.

How we can help

- understand the issues facing national and local authorities and operators at national and local levels;
- advise on reimbursement, data and information systems, technology, and practical implementation;
- provide systems to manage and process reimbursements;
- help avoid unintended consequences, and achieve smooth transitions;
- devise and deliver robust implementation plans, efficient information management systems and equitable reimbursement processes.



Reimbursement advice

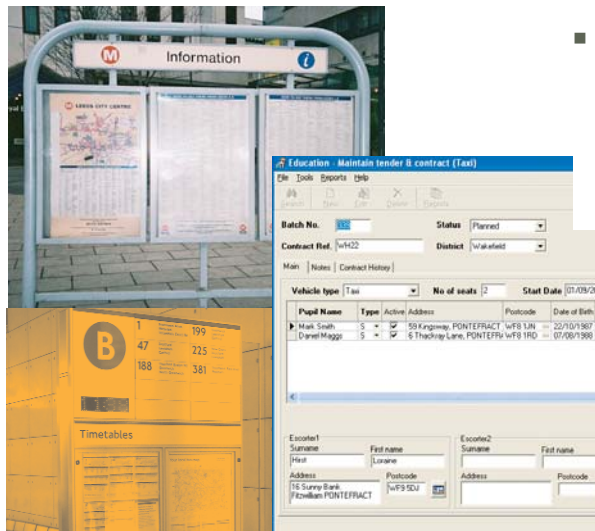
For many years, we have advised clients throughout the UK on reimbursement systems to meet the needs of a wide range of concessionary travel schemes. This has given us in-depth understanding of the financial issues, for both scheme promoters and bus operators.

- we have experience of situations where free travel was withdrawn (Lothians, Tyne and Wear), and where it has recently been introduced (Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland);
- we have many years experience with existing free travel schemes (London, West Midlands);
- we have worked with operators of all sizes, understand the significance of concessionary reimbursement to their business;
- we have carried out original research Government, drawing together the findings from a range of areas.

Public transport information systems

We developed an extensive range of software for the use of public transport managers and administrators such as METRO and Hertfordshire County Council. Of particular relevance for concessionary travel are modules which can:

- import, analyse and map data from electronic ticket machines (ETMs) and smartcards;
- plan, store and manage surveys and other information flows required for operator reimbursement and monitoring;
- produce and manage concessionary travel passes;
- accurately calculate reimbursement to individual operators.



Smartcards

Our experience implementing smartcard ticketing systems spanning multiple authorities and operators gives us an unrivalled understanding of the practicalities involved and the pitfalls to be avoided. We work closely with scheme promoters, operators and suppliers to specify the best solution in terms of kit specification and back-office systems.

- the Smartcard system we are implementing in Scotland has to be capable of handling a wide range of local add-ons to the national free bus travel concession at a very local level, eg free ferry travel for residents of specific island communities;
- we worked for central government and stakeholders on the migration of the Oyster Smartcard infrastructure to accept ITSO cards from other systems;
- we advised on the design, funding approval, specification and implementation of the Northern Ireland smartcard scheme which has been the exclusive means of concessionary free travel claims for several years.

Project implementation advice

The change management process for existing concessionary travel schemes will be complex, and many aspects of the eventual outcome will take time to emerge. We can provide a team with the full range of skills required (project management, reimbursement, smartcards, data management and analysis) to ensure a smooth transition.

- we were the external project managers for the Scottish national concessionary travel scheme, translating the policy objectives into practical reality;
- we understand how all key stakeholders have to be involved in the process, and how to run and coordinate tasks to devise and deliver a seamless project plan.

