

Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment v3 - originator review

Reference: ECIA540918815

Submitted: 11 October 2023 08:27 AM

Executive summary

Title of policy / decision: ENCTS reimbursement payments to bus service operators 2024/2025 FP/168/06/23

Policy / decision type: Cabinet Decision

Overview of policy / decision: To authorise the issuing of a default scheme to reimburse bus operators for concessionary bus pass fares on 1st December 2023 for the 2024/25 financial year, to authorise the Executive Director for Climate, Environment and Customer, in discussion with the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport and the Section 151 Officer, to undertake negotiations with bus operators over the shape of a final scheme and to authorise the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Travel to agree the issuing of a final scheme which meets agreed scheme parameters.

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: To meet our statutory obligation to have a final concessionary bus pass (ENCTS) fare reimbursement scheme for bus operators in place for April 2024. This decision improves resident's (principally older people and people with disabilities) life outcomes across Essex by improving access to key services and by encouraging the use of public transport instead of car journeys, contributes toward reducing transport emissions, helping mitigate climate changes.

Executive Director responsible for policy / decision: Mark Ash (Climate, Environment and Customer Services)

Cabinet Member responsible for policy / decision: Lee Scott (Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport)

Is this a new policy / decision or a change to an existing one?: New policy / decision

How will the impact of the policy / decision be monitored and evaluated?: Through the operation of the scheme over the financial year 2024/25 and through the Department for Transport (DfT) guidance for ENCTS schemes.

Will this policy / decision impact on:

Service users: Yes

Employees: Yes

Wider community or groups of people: Yes

If the policy decision impacts on employees, provide details here and include potential impacts on identified groups later in the form: Employees with disabilities or who qualify on grounds of age will continue to be able to use a bus pass to obtain free travel during the hours of operations.

What strategic priorities will this policy / decision support?: Strong, Inclusive and Sustainable Economy, High Quality Environment, Health, Independence and Wellbeing for All Ages, A good place for Children and Families to Grow

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Economy?: Levelling up the economy

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Environment: Net zero, Green communities, Levelling up the environment

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Health: Healthy lifestyles, Promoting independence, Carers, Levelling up health

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Families: Family resilience and stability

What geographical areas of Essex will the policy / decision affect?: All Essex

Digital accessibility

Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?: No

Equalities - Groups with protected characteristics

Age

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Disability - learning disability

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Disability - mental health issues

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Disability - physical impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Disability - sensory impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Sex

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Gender reassignment

Nature of impact: None

Marriage / civil partnership

Nature of impact: None

Pregnancy / maternity

Nature of impact: None

Race

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Religion / belief

Nature of impact: None

Sexual orientation

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: This is a technical paper allowing the County Council to meet its statutory obligation to have a scheme in place for April 2024. By having the scheme in place it allows concessionary bus pass holders (older people and people with disabilities) to continue to make use of their free bus pass on local bus services in Essex and operators to be properly compensated for allowing them to travel at no fare. This helps improve resident's life outcomes and by encouraging the use of public transport instead of car journeys contributes toward reducing transport emissions, helping mitigate climate change. As overall it has a positive impact on effected groups, but as it allows for the continuation of a scheme already in place for a number of years and therefore having been built into peoples life choices, the benefits of the scheme are considered to have a low impact.

Analysis:

Older people As of 1st July 2023, 271,051 pass holders resident in Essex hold ENCTS bus passes, of whom 254,587 (93.92%) hold the pass on the grounds of age - that is being above the national retirement age. When introducing the scheme in 2007, the Government recognised the higher-than-average propensity of older people to rely on bus travel and relatively high costs of travel as a proportion of their income. By offering free bus travel, the scheme reduces their cost of living and increases their opportunities for independent living within the community.

People with disabilities:

As of 1st July 2023, 16,464 (6.8%) of pass holders resident in Essex held ENCTS bus passes on grounds of qualifying disability. This was spread across 7 categories which are set out in the legislation (The Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007, as amended):

Inability to walk; 5,236

Without the use of both arms; 12

Profound hearing loss; 1,020

Profound learning disability from Childhood; 6,381

Blind or partially sighted; 1,282

Unable to drive on medical grounds (other than through persistent mis-use of alcohol or drugs); 2,522

Unable to speak; 11

For people, with very severe disabilities Essex offers a voluntary pass upgrade to allow one additional person (unspecified) to accompany the pass holder to assist them with their journey at no charge. As of 1st July 2023, 6,747 people (40.98% of disability-based pass holders), held companion passes. When introducing the scheme in 2007, the Government recognised the higher-than-average propensity of people with disabilities to rely on bus travel to access work, shopping, education, leisure and medical facilities and the relatively high costs of travel as a proportion of their income. By offering free bus travel, the scheme reduces their cost of living and increases their opportunities for independent living within the community.

Sex

As of 1st October 2022, there were 152,625 female pass holders, 118,426, male pass holders and 407 pass holders for whom no sex was specified. This suggests a more positive impact for women, However, prior to the equalisation of pensionable ages there were differential age requirements for men and women so some asymmetry in number is to be expected. This said, the degree to which the difference exists (128% more female than male pass holders) is above what might be expected on that basis alone and reflects broader demographic trends such as differential rates of driving licence holding, retirement incomes (historic reasons around working patterns and NI contributions led to women tending on average to have lower retirement incomes than men).

Another factor is that women on average live longer than men and therefore are likely to hold passes for longer. Overall, this means that the availability of free bus travel offer a net positive impact to women.

Race

Studies (for example: Transport for London -Understanding the travel needs of London's diverse communities - BAME April 2012 TfL number: 10038) have suggested that people from ethnic minority backgrounds are statistically more likely to use bus services than other groups, largely due to socio economic-factors and health outcomes. This indicates that there is an additional small positive benefit for people from ethnic backgrounds in the continuation of the the Essex ENCTS scheme. However, as the ENCTS process does not require people to record their ethnic background during the application process, there is no statistical data relating directly to Essex available to allow a more detailed analysis to be undertaken.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: There are no negative impacts associated with this decision

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: The County Council has used its discretionary powers to extend the times and provide a companion pass.

Levelling up - Priority areas & cohorts

Children and adults with SEND, learning disabilities or mental health conditions (taking an all-age approach)

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Children on Free School Meals

Nature of impact: None

Working families

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Young adults (16-25 who have not been in education, training or employment for around 6-12 months)

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Harlow

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Residents of Jaywick and Clacton

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Residents of Harwich

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Residents of Basildon (Town) housing estates

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Residents of Canvey Island

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Residents of Colchester (Town) - Housing Estates

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Residents of Rural North of the Braintree District

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: This is a technical paper allowing the County Council to meet its statutory obligation to have a scheme in place for April 2023. By having the scheme in place, it allows concessionary bus pass holders (older people and people with disabilities) to continue to make use of their free bus pass on local bus services in Essex and operators to be properly compensated for allowing them to travel at no fare. This helps improve resident's life outcomes and by encouraging the use of public transport instead of car journeys contributes toward reducing transport emissions, helping mitigate climate change. As such it has a positive but low impact as it does not change the current situation. Losing the service would have a negative impact on these groups by raising the cost of travel on public transport

Younger people with disabilities:

As of 1st July 2023, 716 persons resident in Essex up to the age 18 held ENCTS bus passes on grounds of qualifying disability. 1,246 were aged between 19 and 29. Younger people with disabilities are often in longer term education and have disproportionate challenges in obtaining work. As a result, they tend to fall into lower income brackets. As there is no lower age for the bus pass on disability grounds, it can also help reduce transport costs for their families, who are also often in lower income categories. The companion pass allows those with severe disabilities to make use of the bus network. Passes also offers the opportunity for those with less severe disabilities to develop independence. Working families. No data is held on the employment status of pass holders. However, by extension of the benefits to younger people, working families of disabled people or carers for older people should benefit from the availability of the bus pass.

Geographical Location.

Geographical location can currently only be reported on at District and County level Harlow. As of 1st October 2022, Harlow had 11,015 registered bus pass holders.

Tendring As of 1st October 2022, Tendring had 35,700 registered bus pass holders.

Basildon As of 1st October 2022, Basildon had 27,045 registered bus pass holders.

Castle-Point As of 1st October 2022, Castle Point had 20,139 registered bus pass holders.

Colchester As of 1st October 2022, Colchester had 30,037 registered bus pass holders.

Braintree As of 1st October 2022, Braintree had 18,832 registered bus pass holders.

There is no income test for pass entitlement, however, given that older people and people with disabilities tend to have lower incomes and face proportionately higher transport costs (as a proportion of their income) the availability of free bus passes can help level up the opportunities for them to access work, education, health and shopping services

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: There are no adverse impacts

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: The County Council has used its discretionary powers to extend pass use times and to introduce a companion pass

Equalities - Inclusion health groups and other priority groups

Refugees / asylum seekers

Nature of impact: None

Homeless / rough sleepers

Nature of impact: None

People who experience drug and alcohol dependence

Nature of impact: None

Offenders / ex-offenders

Nature of impact: None

Victims of modern slavery

Nature of impact: None

Carers

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Looked after children / care leavers

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

The armed forces community (serving personnel and their families, veterans, reservists and cadets)

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

People who are unemployed / economically inactive

Nature of impact: None

People on low income

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Sex workers

Nature of impact: None

Ethnic minorities

Nature of impact: None

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities

Nature of impact: None

People with multiple complex needs or multi-morbidities

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: This is a technical paper allowing the County Council to meet its statutory obligation to have a scheme in place for April 2023. By having the scheme in place it allows concessionary bus pass holders (older people and people with disabilities) to continue to make use of their free bus pass on local bus services in Essex and operators to be properly compensated for allowing them to travel at no fare. This helps improve resident's life outcomes and by encouraging the use of public transport instead of car journeys contributes toward reducing transport emissions, helping mitigate climate change. As such it has a positive but low impact as it does not change the current situation. As noted on previous pages there is no economic test for bus pass entitlement and therefore no direct data is available for it.

However, homeless people (who meet the qualifying criteria and are ordinarily resident in Essex), carers, looked after children (who qualify on grounds of disability), veterans, people on low incomes and people with multiple complex needs or multi-morbidities (whom disproportionately tend to be older people or people with disabilities) all benefit from being able to use a bus pass to travel free to access key services such as health, education, employment and food shopping) as well as allowing them the opportunity to live more independently and enjoy travel for leisure purposes. While this benefit is modest, it would be lost if the scheme did not continue.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: There are no negative impacts

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: The County Council has used its discretionary powers to extend the hours of operation and to introduce a companion pass offer

Equalities - Geographical Groups

People living in areas of high deprivation

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

People living in rural or isolated areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

People living in coastal areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

People living in urban or over-populated areas

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: This is a technical paper allowing the County Council to meet its statutory obligation to have a scheme in place for April 2023. By having the scheme in place it allows concessionary bus pass holders (older people and people with disabilities) to continue to make use of their free bus pass on local bus services in Essex and operators to be properly compensated for allowing them to travel at no fare. This helps improve resident's life outcomes and by encouraging the use of public transport instead of car journeys contributes toward reducing transport emissions, helping mitigate climate change. As such it has a positive but low impact as it does not change the current situation. Its loss would remove these benefits.

Areas of high deprivation

As noted, there is no economic qualification for a free bus pass, so no direct data on use in areas of high deprivation is available. However, we do know that areas with high levels of deprivation do tend to larger number of older people and people with disabilities and that these two factors are linked. For example, Tendring, a district of Essex with high deprivation scores, has a population of 146,561 of whom 35,700 (c24.3%) qualify for and hold bus passes. This suggests a positive impact for continuing to issue bus passes to people in areas of high deprivation as it helps reduce transport costs and makes it easier for them to access key services.

People living in urban areas

Encouraging people in urban areas to use public transport for journeys rather than use cars can help improve air quality, congestion and the general street environment. The continued availability of free bus passes in these areas does therefore create benefit residents above the economic ones set out for the less well off.

People living in rural areas.

Free bus passes can help increase access to key services and by reducing reliance on car travel reduce emissions, on top of the positive economic impacts of being able to access free travel

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: There are no negative impacts

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: The County Council has used its discretionary powers to extend the horus of the scheme and to introduce the companion pass offer.

Families

Family formation (e.g. to become or live as a couple, the ability to live with or apart from children)

Nature of impact: None

Families going through key transitions e.g. becoming parents, getting married, fostering or adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities, onset of a long-term health condition

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Low

Families before, during and after couple separation

Nature of impact: None

Families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: :This is a technical paper allowing the County Council to meet its statutory obligation to have a scheme in place for April 2023. By having the scheme in place it allows concessionary bus pass holders (older people and people with disabilities) to continue to make use of their free bus pass on local bus services in Essex and operators to be properly compensated for allowing them to travel at no fare. As such it has a positive but low impact as it does not change the current situation. Not issuing bus passes would have a negative impact.

Families going through key transitions:

The availability of free bus passes in and companion passes to older people and people with disabilities can help families going through transitions (such as taking on a carer role or dealing with new long term health issues) by making it easier and more affordable for them to access key services and amenities, such as health services, employment, education, shopping and leisure activities.

Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities:

Similar to the above the availability of free bus passes can have a small but noticeable beneficial outcome by allowing family members to either develop or continue their independence, reducing the cost of travel and allowing easier access to key services.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: There are no negative impacts

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: The County Council has used its discretionary powers to extend scheme hours and to introduce the companion element to the scheme

Climate

Does your decision / policy involve development or re-development of buildings or infrastructure?: No

Does your decision / policy take place in, or make use of, existing buildings or infrastructure?: No

Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to transport, travel or vehicles? This includes travel needs / requirements of both service users and staff (including staff you're planning to recruit): Yes

Where are staff or service users coming from and how are they travelling?: Service users will be enabled to continue to use free bus passes to travel by bus.

If car travel is unavoidable, are you specifying electric cars and vehicles?: Yes

Are you undertaking a procurement exercise?: No

Does your decision / policy involve the purchase of goods or materials?: No

Will any waste be generated by this decision? This includes waste from construction, waste generated by service users / staff, and waste generated by replacing existing products / materials with new: No

Nature of impact

Built Environment / Energy: None

Sustainable Transport / Travel: Positive

Waste: None

Extent of impact

Sustainable Transport / Travel: Medium

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Offering free travel (albeit outside the morning peak) to holders of concessionary bus passes, influences pass holders (including ECC employees) to make use of public transport rather than car journeys, thereby helping to reduce emissions. The increased adoption of flexible working practices assists this by reducing the importance of the morning peak to pass holders travel needs. There are no specific statistics regarding the impact of pass holding on car use in Essex per se, but the current DfT default national assumption is that the impact of having a free pass doubles the number of bus journeys pass holders undertake. The impact is rated as low because this scheme is already available and because of the relatively small number of ECC staff affected.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: There are no negative impacts

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your ECIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: No

Details of person completing the form

I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance: I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

Date ECIA completed: 23/08/2023

Name of person completing the ECIA: Richard Gravatt

Email address of person completing the ECIA: richard.gravatt@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Climate, Environment and Customer Services

Your service area: Highways and Transportation

Your team: Integrated Passenger Transport Unit

Are you submitting this ECIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?: No

Email address of Head of Service: helen.morris@essex.gov.uk