

Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee



Concessionary Travel Unit – Update on Performance & Summary of Nationwide ‘Young Persons’ Free Bus Travel Scheme’ & Impacts

Date of meeting 18 March 2022

Date of report 9 March 2022

Report by Treasurer

1. Object of report

The object of this report is to update the Committee on SPT’s Concessionary Travel Unit performance and to provide a summary of impacts of the ‘Young Persons’ Free Bus Travel Scheme’ launched on 31 January 2022.

2. Background

The update provided at the previous Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee meeting outlined customer demand, processing times and progress of digital solutions designed to shoulder some of the burden for specific high volume repetitive tasks, such as replacement card requests and basic renewal enquiries. We continue to develop digital solutions to adapt to the changing demands from constituents and we continue to work with external partners including local authorities, the Improvement Service and Transport Scotland to support this.

Digital solutions include interactive voice response systems (IVR) and email auto-responses to provide contextualised information and guidance where appropriate. These solutions enable customers to interact with SPT seven days per week, around the clock and have helped to reduce demand. It is notable that some customers prefer to speak to an advisor and this option remains available.

Since the previous update, the team has increased office based working in line with the relaxation of pandemic restrictions and prevailing guidance. This has allowed greater focus on postal enquiries and has helped to deliver more efficient processing times for postal enquiries.

3. Digital Update

The National Entitlement Card Programme Office (NECPO) introduced a new card management system (CMS) in November 2021. This involved a move to a new vendor as well as a new card production company.

Currently we are experiencing some issues due to a delay in cards reaching new elderly applicants once the application has been processed. These applications are made at local post offices who validate and send applications directly to the card producer. The impacts for SPT are increased enquiries from customers querying where their cards are. Although outside SPT responsibility, we respond to the customer enquiries as they arise. We are highlighting these issues to NECPO who are working with delivery partners to establish the root cause of the issues and the work needed to resolve this.

The Improvement Service continues to develop the online facility, <https://getyournec.scot/nec/> which enables new and existing cardholders to manage their National Entitlement Card online. SPT promote the online service through our own website, email auto-response and other channels. Demand through <https://getyournec.scot/nec/> is growing in all partner authority areas.

The interactive voice response system is reviewed regularly to ensure messaging is relevant and provides appropriate guidance. Email auto-response wording is also regularly reviewed to reflect ongoing development and changes to services provided by external delivery partners.

4. Performance Results

Admin Processing - admin processing times continue to be managed within the normal four-week processing timescale with high priority tasks processed within two weeks.

Call Handling Performance - call volume demand has increased since the previous update provided to the Committee. The Concessionary Travel Unit continues to manage admin enquiries efficiently to reduce the impact of callers chasing progress, as seen in previous years. Call queues are actively managed in real time to move resource from admin tasks to calls as required.

The Concessionary Travel Unit are currently developing performance and trend information in a clear informative format which will be reported to the Committee on a regular basis in future.

5. Impacts of the 'Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme'

The Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme launched on 31 January 2022 extends nationwide concessionary bus travel to Scottish residents aged under 22. Local scheme benefits, including rail and Subway concessions, are not extended to this client group.

As previously advised, the Young Persons' scheme is supported by Young Scot teams within local authorities with additional support provided by The Improvement Service via <https://getyournec.scot/nec/>, schools, libraries and other facilities across the region.

SPT has no active role in the administration of the Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme.

SPT have received in excess of 700 email enquiries specifically relating to the new scheme and between 5% - 10% of daily calls are from constituents on this. Appropriate guidance is provided through email auto-response and IVR messaging providing directions to appropriate support.

SPT have experienced a number of cases where existing disabled cardholders aged 5-22 have applied to the new Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme' scheme though alternative channels. A cardholder is permitted only one concessionary travel product; therefore, this action does cancel the disabled card. This results in further enquiries to SPT.

Although not directly involved in the new scheme, as a supporter of NEC administration services we are in dialogue with the Improvement Service and NECPO on the current issues being experienced with the scheme roll out including the impact on our services noted above.

6. Committee action

The Committee is requested to note the contents of this report.

7. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None at present.</i>

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Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee

For further information, please contact *Tony Jones, Contact Centre Manager on 0141 333 3656.*