

Community transport concessionary fares initiative

Since 2005, the Welsh Government has given nearly £4million to an innovative project to give access to concessionary travel for severely disabled people in Wales who are unable to use traditional public transport. The initiative covers both the medical model of disability and transport related social exclusion issues.

The aim of establishing the 15 demonstration projects was to test and evaluate the practicability, cost and relative value for money of CT schemes providing limited access to free travel for this client group. The information gathered was meant to assist the Welsh Government to consider the potential for funding an expansion of such schemes on a more widespread basis in future. The scheme is managed by CTA Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government.

The pilot schemes are:

- Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Youth and Community Project (Dial-a-Ride & group hire)
- Accessible Caring Transport (Dial-a-Ride/Minibus service in the Mountain Ash area)
- Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations (Taxi-card)
- Conwy CT (Dial-a-Ride in the Dulais, Neath and Afan valleys)
- Dial-a-Ride North Denbighshire Ltd
- Dulais Valley CT (Dial-a-Ride in the Dulais, Neath and Afan Valleys)
- Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations/Monmouthshire County Council (Dial-a-Ride and group hire minibus service)
- Llanwrtyd Wells CT (volunteer car and Multi Purpose Vehicle)
- Neath Port Talbot CT (minibus services)
- Neath Port Talbot CVS (taxi-card scheme)
- Pembrokeshire Association of Transport Organisations (umbrella group for Town Rider, County Cars services)
- Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (umbrella group providing central administration for 15 schemes, including taxi-card, Dial-a-Ride and minibus services and community car schemes)
- TraVOL CT (Dial-a-Ride in the Rhondda & Taff-Ely valleys)
- VEST CT (Dial-a-Ride & Minibus services in the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan areas)
- Welsh Border CT with Estuary Cars (minibus and car services)

The scheme was evaluated during 2008 by external consultants, Capita Symonds, and their final report was submitted to the Welsh Government in December of that year.

On the 10th of March 2009, Ieuan Wyn Jones AM, Minister for the Economy & Transport announced that CTCFI would continue for the existing schemes for a further three years, to March 2012, and asked CTA Wales to continue as project managers. However, the scheme criteria has been revised, and the Welsh Government wish to see a move from funding service delivery to funding passenger journeys, in an attempt to bring the scheme in line with the all-Wales "free fares" initiative.

CTA Wales is disappointed that other operators have not had the opportunity to join the scheme in this second phase, although in response to queries, the Welsh Government has said that there may be opportunities for expansion at some future stage.