

## **Equality Impact Assessment – Changes to Concessionary Travel Administration**

### **Background**

Following an announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in November 2009, Worcestershire County Council will take over responsibility for bus passes and free travel on local buses from District Councils on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. The expectation is that there will be a unified scheme providing the same benefits in all areas of the County from that date.

Previously announced changes to eligibility based on age came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 as the minimum age to qualify for a bus pass on the grounds of age gradually increases from 60 to 65 in line with changes in Female pension entitlement and entitlement for the Winter Fuel Allowance.

Central government will fund the County Council for free travel on local buses between the hours of 09:30 and 23:00 on weekdays and all day on weekends and Bank Holidays.

This funding for free travel currently paid for by District Councils will not transfer to the County Council and we need to understand what would happen if we had to stop providing this part of the Worcestershire Concessionary Travel Scheme. This affects:

- free travel before 09:30 on weekdays in Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch and Wychavon, this will cost up to £500,000 a year to provide across the County.
- free travel is also available to companions of some disabled pass holders across Worcestershire, this will cost £28,000 over a year to provide across the County.
- Provision of bus tokens to defined users by Wychavon District Council and Wyre Forest District Council.

### **Key Facts**

- There were 6.3 million concessionary journeys commencing in Worcestershire in 2009-10.
- Reimbursement of bus operators under cost District Councils £5.6 million in 2009-10.
- There are 101,438 bus passes of which 9,329 are issued to disabled residents.
- 2,160 disabled residents have the right to be accompanied by a companion free of charge

### **The Consultation**

This consultation is to provide information to help us decide whether to provide the additional free travel that is currently funded by District Councils

**A more detailed explanation is available upon request.**