

Test of Change for Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme

Report for Fife Council

SUBMITTED BY AXIOM

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1. Background

The Fairer Fife Commission was set up in 2014 to explore the scale, nature and scope of poverty in Fife and the effectiveness of activities aimed at addressing it and to recommend the best way to support people experiencing poverty. It defined a Fairer Fife as:

“A Fife where all residents have the capability to live good lives, make choices and reach their full potential and where all children are safe, happy and healthy.”

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The Commission aims to see Fife being poverty free within 15 years. Its report, "Fairness Matters", published in 2015 lists over 40 recommendations to deliver a "significantly fairer Fife by 2030.", including making Fife poverty free, affordable (particularly for low income families and those seeking work or recently moved into work) and healthier.

In research commissioned by the NEF Welfare Reform and Anti Poverty Group¹ with people with lived experience of poverty in the area, a range of hidden poverty was uncovered in North East Fife including fuel poverty, job poverty and difficulty securing housing and isolation because of lack of money to use public transport. A Rural Poverty Conference held by the NEF Welfare Reform and Anti Poverty Group in Cupar in 2018, also highlighted several factors which contributed to higher living costs including costs of housing, fuel, transport and food.

As part of its commitment to addressing health, social and economic inequalities in Fife, the North East Welfare Reform & Anti-Poverty Steering Group commissioned research exploring the benefits of additional financial support to the unemployed in NEF for bus travel.

The feedback from the participants in focus groups conducted in three locations in North East Fife² suggested that the cost of travelling by bus was having a considerable impact on their lives, particularly those in the East Neuk area and those that live in the villages outwith Cupar and St Andrews. There were several examples where the cost of travel had resulted in people having to reduce their travel journeys which have, in turn, compromised their opportunities to seek employment, attend healthcare appointments and see family and friends. Participant feedback indicated that some residents were incurring costs of up to £239.20 a year in bus fares to attend JobCentres to sign on for their unemployment benefits. There were also examples where travel costs were reducing opportunities to access cheaper food sources or were limiting the amount of food which could be purchased, in one case resulting in a reliance on the local foodbank and on friends for food.

The research highlighted a range of potential benefits for unemployed residents in North East Fife, statutory services and the wider community from a concessionary bus fare Scheme and it was recommended that a pilot Scheme be introduced with a Test of Change to allow fuller examination of how people would use the Scheme, how it could be administered and whether it would deliver the expected benefits to individuals' health and wellbeing being, as well as finances and to the wider community.

¹ Professor (Emerita) K McCardle, University of Aberdeen "A dream place to live for some people"

² L Roddie (Axiom Consultancy Scotland Ltd), Rural Transport Research - Concessionary Bus Fare Scheme

2. Developing the pilot Scheme and research methodology

2.1 Previous research

Research was conducted in 2018/19 with unemployed residents in North East Fife to explore the need for a concessionary bus travel Scheme. The feedback from the research participants suggested that the cost of travelling by bus had a considerable impact on their lives, particularly those in the East Neuk area and those that live in the villages outwith Cupar and St Andrews.

The research highlighted several examples where the cost of travel had resulted in people having to reduce their travel journeys which compromised their opportunities to seek employment, attend healthcare appointments and see family and friends. There were also examples where travel costs were reducing opportunities to access cheaper food sources or were limiting the amount of food which could be purchased, in one case resulting in a reliance on the local foodbank and on friends for food.

In addition to improving access to employment, reducing social isolation from families and friends and improving accessibility to healthcare services and food sources, the research also suggested a likely secondary benefit in terms of increased spend and increased revenue from increased taxation.

The feedback from the research participants suggested that a future concessionary bus fare Scheme in the North East Fife area, should consider ensuring that the:

- Concessionary fares were as flexible as possible in the hours they covered to allow people to access services and make trips for food shopping and to visit family and friends more achievable, as well as more affordable
- The routes on which the concessions were available covered as wide an area as possible to help those in more rural locations, in particular, who have to travel furthest to access affordable shops, health care services and employment. As a result, any future Scheme should cover the whole of the North East Fife area
- The concessions would be available through more than one operator as operators do not offer bus services across the entire North East Fife area
- The level of concession facilitated an increase in disposable income which would be sufficient to allow people to increase their spend on food or to increase the number of trips taken to enable easier access to services.

2.2 Overview of the pilot Scheme

Following the research, the decision was taken to pilot a bus travel Scheme which offered 100% discount on bus travel to a sample of residents in North East Fife. Bus travel in the area is provided by two bus operators, Stagecoach and Moffat & Williamson.

The North East Fife Community Development Team liaised with the local bus operators to agree the most effective means of delivering subsidised bus travel for the pilot, enabling eligible residents to access bus routes across North East Fife and into Dundee. To

accommodate the differences in ticketing systems between the two bus companies, it was decided to use paper vouchers for the pilot, which would be sourced by Fife Council.

The paper vouchers were based on the ABC multi-operator bus ticket Scheme which allows people to travel on all bus companies across Dundee and East Fife with one ticket. The ticket is based on the Day Rider ticket which covers three ticket zones and is valid for unlimited daily travel. The coverage of the voucher is illustrated below. Page | 3



Participants in the pilot Scheme were to be given a total of 25 vouchers over the course of the pilot. The Community Development Team arranged for vouchers for up to 50 people to be printed, together with stationary wallets to store the vouchers and documentation at a total cost of £9,543. The vouchers were broken down as follows:

- Stagecoach Day Rider Tickets - 40 people x 25 vouchers each x £8.20 Day Rider Ticket
- Moffat & Williamson Day Rider Tickets - 10 people x 25 vouchers each x £5.00 Day Rider Ticket.

A greater number of Stagecoach vouchers were printed to reflect the larger number of bus routes offered by the operator, compared to Moffat & Williamson.

A range of local partner services and agencies were invited by the Community Development team to suggest clients who would be willing to pilot the concessionary bus vouchers. The partner organisations were:

- ABE - Adult Learning
- Castle Furniture
- Children & Families Team

- Family Support Service
- Fife Voluntary Action
- Home-Start East Fife
- Housing Management
- Supported Employment Service
- Tayview Medical Practice
- Welfare Support.

A book of vouchers was issued to each of the partners. It was originally planned that they would issue vouchers to participants in batches of 7 or 8 up to a total of 25 vouchers per person. In return for the vouchers, participants would agree to completing a Record of Journey form (see Appendix 1) which recorded how they had used the vouchers and any issues which had arisen from their use. This was to be returned to the partner agencies on the completion of each batch of vouchers and would trigger the release of additional vouchers.

A delay in the printing of the vouchers meant that the pilot Scheme did not start until December 2019. The pilot was to continue to April 2020.

In March 2020, the UK went into a period of lockdown due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Government guidelines were issued regarding social distancing and people were advised to stay home, only go out if absolutely necessary and avoid visiting other households. Rather than issue the vouchers in batches as planned, the decision was taken to issue individuals with all vouchers so that they could travel if required.

2.3 Methodology

It had been intended to conduct an assessment of the bus voucher Scheme through:

- An analysis of the Record of Journeys returned by each of the participants
- Focus groups with participants to explore their experiences of the pilot in more depth and to establish any benefits arising
- Telephone discussions with the partners to explore their experiences of how the pilot had been implemented and to establish any benefits arising.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic and the issues with social distancing, discussions with participants were conducted by telephone rather than by focus groups.

Feedback from the participants has been compared with the expected use identified from the previous needs assessment to explore Test of Change.

3. Profile of participants

Individuals were selected by partners to participate in the pilot on the basis of the following agreed criteria:

- They were unemployed
- Resident in North East Fife
- Aged 16 and over
- Not eligible for the National Entitlement Card (NEC) disability concession - this allows people with a diagnosed mental health condition or a substance dependency who are attending drug and alcohol addiction services, support groups, community mental health services, hospital appointments or clinic appointments free bus travel for a period of 6 months.

Forty five people (45) were put forward for participation by the partners. These included 28 females and 17 males. Just over half (25 people) were aged between 30 and 39, 7 were aged 50+ and 9 were under 30. The ages of 4 participants are not known.

The sample of participants included:

- Parents of children and young people
- Parents of accommodated and looked after children
- Kinship carers
- People in education and training
- People living on their own
- People living with another adult and/or children
- Unemployed.

The participants resided in a range of wards in North East Fife:

- Anstruther/St Monans/East Neuk (14)
- Auchtermuchty (1)
- Cupar (8)
- Howe of Fife (5)
- Newburgh (2)
- St Andrews (7)
- Taybridgehead (8).

4. Record of Journeys

Feedback forms were received from 36 out of the 45 participants. Difficulties in contacting some individuals during the Covid 19 lockdown has meant that it has not been possible for partners to obtain the remaining forms. In addition to this, feedback from Children and Families has been provided in relation to parents where there has been a legal order in place setting out contact requirements for visiting their children and family members who have been looking after children in place of their parents.

During the Covid 19 lockdown, all healthcare and dental appointments were cancelled, Job Centres and Job Clubs were closed, as were leisure facilities and all non-food related retail. Visits to other households were also restricted. As a result, much of the information analysed relates to journeys made in a 16 week period pre-lockdown.

However, the feedback from Children & Families covers 29 journeys which have been made by parents during the lockdown.

4.1 Number of Journeys Made

A total of 440 journeys were recorded from the 36 participants. 411 of these journeys were made over the four month period, prior to lockdown. Not every participant used the vouchers each week, as they were used for a range of reasons, as detailed in sub section 4.3.

4.2 Bus Routes Used

Whilst vouchers have been created for Moffat and Williamson buses, to date the majority of the vouchers have been used on Stagecoach buses. The routes on which the vouchers have been used are outlined in Table 1 below:

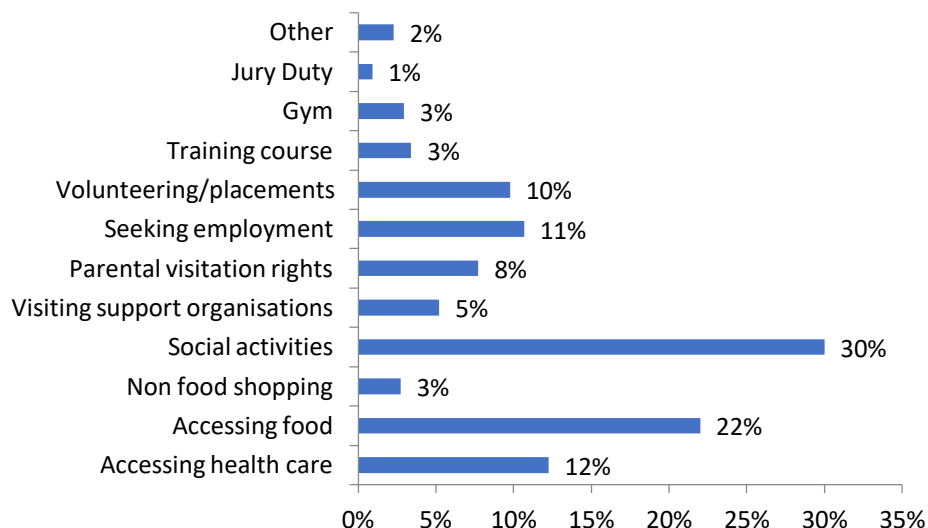
Table 1: Routes taken

From	To
Auchtermuchty	Cupar
Bulmullo	Cupar
Cambo	Anstruther, Cupar, Leven & St Andrews
Ceres	Leven
Crail	Anstruther, Glenrothes, Leven & St Andrews
Cupar	Dundee, Glenrothes, Leven, St Andrews
Dairsie	Cupar
Guardbridge	Cupar, St Andrews
Kettlebridge	Glenrothes
Kingskettle	Cupar, Glenrothes &, St Monans
Ladybank	Cupar
Leuchars	Cupar & St Andrews
Newburgh	Auchtermuchty & Springfield
Springfield	Cupar, Glenrothes & St Andrews
St Andrews	Cupar, Crail, Dundee, Kirkcaldy, St Andrews Community Hospital, Tayport & Town Service
St Monans	Cambo, Cupar, Elie & Leven

4.3 Reasons for Journey

The participants used the vouchers for a range of journeys, as illustrated in Fig 1 below.

Fig 1: Reason for journey



The most common use of the vouchers was related to social activities just under a third (30%) of journeys used to visit family and friends and to take children out on day trips. In addition to this, 8% of the journeys were made by parents to visit children where there were custody arrangements made by the courts.

Accessing food was the second most common reason for the journeys, with just over 1 in 5 journeys (22%) made. This includes food shopping (20%) and visits to foodbanks (2%).

Journeys related to unemployment and seeking employment accounted for just over 1 in 10 journeys (11%) with volunteering and placements also amounting to 1 in 10 journeys (10%).

Just over 1 in 10 journeys (11%) were related to accessing healthcare. This included:

- Dentist (12 trips)
- Pharmacy (9 trips)
- GP appointments (8 trips)
- Hospital appointments in St Andrews and Dundee (8 trips)
- Community Psychiatric Nurse (3 trips)
- Optician (2 trips)
- Orthodontist (1 trip)
- Physiotherapist (1 trip).

Participants seeking the support of third sector organisations amounted to 6% of the journeys. These included visits to HomeStart, Women's Aid and the Citizen's Advice and Rights Fife (CARF).

Other reasons for journeys related to training courses (4%), visits to the gym (3%) and jury duty (1%).

5. Feedback from participants

In addition to the Record of Journeys, telephone in-depth interviews were conducted with 18 participants who had provided their contact details to enable the follow up discussion. The purpose of the interviews was to explore people's experiences of using the vouchers and to establish what difference they had made to people's lives. The discussion explored:

- Ease of using the voucher
- Reason for journeys
- Benefits from the vouchers.

5.1 Ease of Use

The flexibility of the voucher which could be used between operators and also the ability to undertake multiple journeys in the same day was highlighted by the interviewees as being of particular benefit. Many of the participants had to make journeys which required multiple buses, particularly those who lived in the Howe of Fife and the East Neuk of Fife areas. Others also used the voucher to cover a number of visits in the one day, as these interviewees commented:

"I quite often went to see my mum and then did a shopping on the way back. Being able to take more than one bus was really helpful. I would have had to do this in two trips before"

"We took the opportunity to visit the children's friends who they don't see very often on one of the days I was going into Cupar to go to Lidl's. It meant changing buses which usually would be far too dear".

In general, participants found the vouchers easy to use. Aside from one instance, participants have not reported any difficulties in using the vouchers on Stagecoach buses for their travel. Stagecoach already operates a range of concessionary tickets and it may be that their drivers are more familiar with the process of concessions. Previous discussions with Stagecoach management also indicated that there is a training programme in place for their drivers to make them aware of concessionary travel and passenger eligibility.

In the case of one individual travelling by Stagecoach, an error in issuing the voucher by one of the pilot partners had resulted in a misunderstanding with the bus driver, where an individual presented a booklet of vouchers instead of one voucher. This took place prior to the Covid 19 lockdown and all partners were reminded to issue the vouchers in batches of 7 per person only. No other issues with Stagecoach travel were highlighted by participants.

Feedback from participants did suggested some issues with people using the vouchers on some of the Moffat & Williamson routes. The bus company has a different approach to ticketing and it would appear that some drivers were unaware of the pilot and in some cases refused to take the vouchers or issued people with the wrong ticket after being given the voucher. Whilst contact was made with Moffat & Williamson to ensure all drivers were familiar are familiar with the pilot, the issues continued on some routes, particularly those from the Springfield area.

5.2 Reasons for Journey

The interviewees had used the vouchers for a number of different reasons, including accessing healthcare, accessing food

Accessing healthcare

Most of the participants interviewed has used the vouchers either to get to a GP appointment or to attend appointments at Ninewells Hospital in Dundee, either for themselves or for their children.

"I have a heart condition so I have to see my GP for check-ups fairly regularly. The cost mounts up and I often have to cut down on my other costs to pay for it - I don't go out much because I can't afford it and I have to watch what I am spending on food".

The participants also indicated that, in addition to making the trip to health care appointments easier, the savings made enabled them to use the money for other things which they could not normally do, as one interviewee explained:

"I have to make regular trips from St Andrews to Ninewells hospital in Dundee for one of my children. Using the voucher means I save money on my fare which means I can give her a wee treat afterwards. I can't afford to do this normally".

There were also a few examples where the voucher had been used to pick up medication from a pharmacy for themselves or for a member of their family.

"My dad is housebound - I try to help him as much as I can but I live a wee bit way from him. I need to help him but it does cost a bit to get there. It's been great for him that I have been able to get his prescription from the chemist - it's less worry for me and less worry for him".

Accessing food

The interviewees indicated that they had used their vouchers to travel to larger towns where there is a greater choice of food and where prices are cheaper than local convenience stores.

"I can't afford to shop here – there is only a Co-op and its really expensive. With the vouchers I can go to Aldi. I can get more food now because it's cheaper"

"It's not just food I can get cheaper now, its toiletries as well"

"I can get to Iceland and can afford to do a bigger shop of cheaper food for the freezer. Iceland deliver so I can go to the shop and they will deliver. I couldn't afford to go to Iceland before so it has made a real difference".

One of the interviewees used the voucher to visit the foodbank. They also combined this with a visit to CARF who were helping them with a debt issue.

"You have no idea what a difference this has made to me. I live outside of Cupar and getting to the foodbank was a real struggle. I've been able to get there more often which has meant I have more food available for me."

Trips with family

The interviewees had used the vouchers for a range of family trips, including taking children to see Santa and Christmas shopping and taking children on day trips to St Andrews and Dundee. The feedback from the participants indicated that these journeys were normally out of the question due to cost or were undertaken very infrequently.

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"I am able to get the kids a little something – I can get to Poundland now and buy them a wee toy. There are no shops like this where I stay and there is no way I could afford to buy them anything from our local shops".

"We took the kids away for the day to St Andrews. They loved it and so did we. It's really difficult for us to do anything as a family because it costs so much. Having my bus fare covered meant we could get ice creams. It was lovely".

Social contact

Participants have also used the vouchers to visit family members either on a more regular basis or to see family that they have not been able to visit for some time. Vouchers have also been used to allow people to visit friends who live some distance away and who participants have been unable to keep in contact with on a regular basis.

"I have angina and mobility problems. I can't get into the town (St Andrews) walking so the bus is my only way in. Having the vouchers has meant that I can come into town and visit friends and family."

"I can get out more. I'm unemployed and live on my own. I am stuck in the house a lot as I can't afford to go out. The vouchers have been fantastic as I can go into St Andrews and meet people."

"I can see my son weekly now which I couldn't afford to do before"

There were also examples where the vouchers have been used to enable children to see parents who they no longer live with, as this parent explained:

"I have been able to take my wee boy to see his dad. We broke up and his dad moved away. He isn't working and it has been difficult to keep them in contact. Having the bus ticket has meant I can take him to visit. He has been able to stay over as I have been able to go back for him. There was no way I could have done this before as I couldn't afford to bus trips."

Improving mental health

Two participants had used the voucher to pay for a visit to their Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN). In one case, the person had missed a previous appointment because they were unable to afford the bus fare.

"I just couldn't go and I felt bad about it. I told the receptionist a lie - I said I was ill because I was too embarrassed to say I had no money".

In addition to this, one of the interviewees had used the voucher to pay for a bus journey when they were feeling low.

"I am a single parent and I can't afford to get out much. This has been fantastic. I felt low the other day and I just got on a bus and went into St Andrews. A change of scenery and being amongst people really helped me feel better".

Accessing employment

One interviewee, who had been unemployed, had used their tickets to travel to a new job.

"I am now working. My money was so tight I don't think I could have afforded the travel to work until I got paid so I probably wouldn't have been able to take the job".

5.3 Benefits from the vouchers

Feedback from the interviewees suggested a number of benefits from the concessionary bus fare Scheme, including:

- Preventing missed healthcare appointments
- Making people feel less isolated through increased contact with family and friends
- Enabling family relationships by allowing children to see parents they no longer live with
- Enabling people to access lower cost foods or to overcome food poverty
- Improving childhood experiences through enabling parents to afford activities and trips for their children
- Supporting improved mental health by enabling people to increase social interaction
- Enabling carers to provide ongoing or even increased support to the people they care for, particularly elderly parents.

Many of the interviewees spoke about the difficulties they faced due to lack of income. This often resulted in them having to make choices which impacted not only on themselves but on their families. In some cases the choices were between purchasing food and supporting their families, as these interviewees explained:

"I take my daughter swimming. It costs a lot to go and usually I have to save up for this – I would reduce what I was spending on food. Now I can take her without choosing to go without something "

"We just couldn't afford to do anything. My son's friends go swimming and go into St Andrews. We just couldn't give him the money to go so sometimes we went without a meal. With not having to buy one bus fare, I can give him some money so that he is the same as his friends".

Much of the discussion with interviewees was the benefit to individuals from having some more money available to them. In addition to the benefits above, in some cases this was stopping people from having to incur debts, as this interviewee explained:

“I use the vouchers to sign on and then take the bus into Glenrothes for shopping. It saves me £7.60 a week. This makes a real difference as it helps my benefit money last until I get my next payment. Before I was having to borrow from people to keep me going”.

6. Additional feedback

Feedback was gathered from clients of the Children & Families Service at Fife Council who received vouchers but wished to remain anonymous.

The Service had been provided with tickets for a single parent, with mental health issues, who had two children. The parent was on a low income and could not afford to provide their children with any activities. The vouchers had enabled the children to go swimming and increase their physical activity.

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The Service was also working with a family where the children were being looked after in the parental home. However, difficulties arose and the children went to live with a grandparent. The grandparent lived several miles away from the parental home and arrangements were made by Social Work for transport for the older child to go to school. The younger child was not eligible for this transport due to their age, even although they attended the school nursery. The grandmother was given vouchers so that she could take the youngest child to the nursery by bus, otherwise they would have missed out on any nursery education.

The Service has a legal requirement to facilitate access for parents who have legal orders relating to contact with their children. This had to be maintained during the Covid 19 lockdown. Some of the parents need to make multiple bus journeys in order to see their children, resulting in a considerable cost to the parents. During the lockdown, parents were waiting to receive benefits and, for some, this was delaying access to their children as they were unable to afford bus fares until their benefit monies had been received.

The bus vouchers have enabled these parents to continue to see their children and maintain family relationships. Social work staff also believed that, through supporting parents at this difficult time, relationships between Social Work and parents have improved.

There are also some individuals who are receiving support through Addiction Services and need to attend their local pharmacy on a weekly basis for their methadone medication (script). During the Covid 19 lockdown, many local pharmacies were closed, meaning that people had to travel further to access their scripts. The vouchers helped keep people receiving their medication by covering the additional travel costs incurred to access pharmacies.

7. Barriers to use

The Covid 19 pandemic resulted in a national lockdown which meant that people were discouraged from using public transport to help reduce the rate of coronavirus transmission in the community. Recognising that this could impact in the longer term on people wishing to use public transport, the evaluation included a survey of participants in the pilot Scheme to determine any issues they might have in using bus travel going forward. Twenty-two (22) people responded to the survey (a copy of the questionnaire is contained in Appendix 2).

The respondents were equally split on whether they had any concerns about travelling by bus when the lockdown restrictions are eased. Half of the respondents (50%) had concerns and half of respondents (50%) did not. Those who were concerned tended to be females and people travelling with children. There were no differences in views between those who travel with Stagecoach and those who travel with Moffat & Williamson.

The key issues amongst those who were concerned about travel on a bus after Covid 19 restrictions eased were:

- People in bus queues being too close to one another (7 out of 11 people)
- Being able to get on and off the bus safely (4 out of 11 people)
- Being able to keep the 2 metre distance from other passengers on the bus (4 out of 11 people).

None of the respondents were concerned about using the paper based travel concession voucher. However, other concerns were raised as follows:

- Worried about the risk of other passengers having coronavirus
- How bus companies would ensure all surfaces were virus free.

The key concern appears to relate to the ability of passengers to maintain social distancing. Parents of young children were especially concerned about this, as this parent commented:

"Young children don't understand social distancing. It's stressful enough travelling with them without trying to get them to keep away from other people"

However, some respondents were also worried about the bus environment, especially in terms of cleaning surfaces, as this respondent commented:

"How will they ensure surfaces are clean. All the info they have on the buses is about face masks, there is nothing about touching surfaces".

8. Test of Change - Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Conclusion

The research conducted previously suggested that the provision of concessionary bus fare vouchers would benefit people in low incomes or unemployed through:

- Enabling access to employment
- Reducing the risk of poor health
- Reducing the risk of social exclusion
- Increasing access to families and social activities.

The feedback from the participants in this pilot has indicated that the concessionary Scheme has delivered these anticipated benefits and more.

Enabling access to employment

There were several examples of people using the Day Rider Ticket to attend local Job Clubs or attend the Job Centres (some of which are several miles from their place of residence). For once individual, the ticket had enabled them to take up employment and were no longer receiving Job Seekers Allowance. This amounts to a **saving** to the Department of Work and Pensions of **£158.70 per month**.

Reducing the risk of poor health

There were several examples where participants had used the vouchers to attend healthcare appointments or to collect prescriptions from their local pharmacy. In particular, one individual was able to keep an appointment with their Community Psychiatric Nurse which they had been unable to afford to attend and two individuals were able to obtain their methadone scripts. There were also others who had been able to attend their GP appointments.

Whilst there are considerable benefits to individuals from keeping healthcare appointments, there is also a cost benefit to statutory services. Each missed appointment **costs** NHS Fife **£150 per appointment** and, should any individual have required to be hospitalised as a result of repeatedly missing appointments, it would **cost** NHS Fife an average of **£3,210 per person per week** to provide them with care.

Reducing the risk of social exclusion

Social exclusion is also a determinant in poor mental health. Thirty (30) out of the 36 participants who feedback their experiences in this pilot used vouchers to keep in contact with family and friends. Almost all of them making journeys which they would otherwise have been unable to afford. In addition to this one individual, who has issues with depression, used the vouchers to get out of the house and be amongst others.

Increasing access to families and social activities

Participants also used the vouchers to take their children out to activities and on trips which they otherwise could not have afforded. In addition to this, the vouchers also enabled parents to maintain their contact with their children following a relationship breakup,

including children who were the subject of legal orders. In these cases the children often lived a considerable distance from one of their parents, incurring high travel costs to maintain contact. The bus vouchers allowed parents, who were on benefits, to make several journeys in the same day, reducing their travel costs considerably. In the case of parents of children on legal orders, the vouchers prevented any delay in contact which would have arisen had parents needed to wait until they had received their benefits before being able to afford the bus fares.

Additional benefits

Literature reviewed as part of the research conducted previously to determine a need for the concessionary Scheme highlighted the difficulties faced by people with low incomes living in rural communities in accessing affordable food. The feedback from the participants in the pilot has indicated that the vouchers were often used to enable people to travel to towns where there are food retailers whose prices are lower than those in food shops in their local communities. Accessing food was the second most common reason for using the bus vouchers, including accessing local foodbanks.

In addition to this, the vouchers were also used in ways which had not been anticipated from the initial needs assessment, namely in supporting carers in delivering their caring responsibilities. Benefits included:

- Enabling carers to provide ongoing or even increased support to the people they care for, particularly elderly parents
- Supporting kinship carers to maintain their grandchildren's access to nursery education which was provided some distance away from the carer's home.

8.2 Recommendations

The feedback from the participants in the pilot suggests that the additional income arising from the provision of the concessionary bus fare vouchers has benefited not only the individual recipients but also their families and, in some cases, statutory services.

One key aspect of the pilot which has benefited people, and which should be considered for any future Scheme, has been the flexibility in when participants could use the vouchers. The provision of vouchers in batches, with no restrictions on how many journeys could be made each week using the vouchers, has meant that people could choose how to use the vouchers which best met their travel needs and which provided them with the greatest value, economically, socially and in terms of health and wellbeing.

Overall, the voucher Scheme was simple to use, however there two issues with its implementation which should be addressed going forward. These were:

- Awareness of bus drivers of the Scheme
- Covid 19 concerns.

Awareness of bus drivers

There were some issues with Moffat & Williamson passengers during the pilot, generally related to a lack of awareness of the Scheme amongst the operator drivers. Whilst Stagecoach have a training programme for bus drivers on their concessionary Schemes, Moffat & Williamson do not. If the Scheme is to be extended, it would be beneficial for the Community Development Team to liaise with the operator to provide a training package for drivers to ensure they are fully up to speed with the concessionary and how it is to work.

Covid 19 concerns

Feedback from some of the participants suggested some concerns going forward about travelling on buses as a result of Covid 19, particularly in relation to maintaining social distancing whilst waiting for and getting on and off buses and in sanitising the surfaces in the bus. If the Scheme is extended, it would be beneficial for the Community Development Team, in conjunction with the bus operators, to conduct a communications campaign to advise passengers of how ongoing Covid 19 restrictions will be adhered to for passenger safety.

Appendix 1: Record of Journey

Pilot of Concessionary Bus Fare Scheme

Record of bus journeys (for each journey made)

Date of journey	Bus route	Reason for journey	Comments