

Imtac Annual Report 2015

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July 2015

Making our information accessible

As an organisation of and for disabled people and older people Imtac recognises that the way information is provided can be a barrier to accessing services and participation in public life. We are committed to providing information about our work in formats that best suit the needs of individuals.

All our documents are available in hard copy in 14pt type size as standard. We also provide word and pdf versions of our documents on our website – www.imtac.org.uk. In addition we will provide information in a range of other formats. These formats include:

- Large print
- Audio cassette or CD
- Daisy disc
- Braille
- Electronic copies on disc or via email in PDF or word
- Easy read

We will also provide information about our work in other languages if you require this.

If you would like this publication in any of the formats listed above or if you have any other information requirements please contact:

Michael Lorimer
Executive Secretary
Imtac
Titanic Suites
55-59 Adelaide Street
Belfast BT2 8FE

Telephone/Textphone: 028 9072 6020
Fax: 028 9024 5500
Email: info@imtac.org.uk

About Imtac

Imtac is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including key transport professionals. Our role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

Our aim is to ensure that older people and disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Imtac receives support from the Department for Regional Development (DRD).

About this report

The Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS) requires Imtac to produce an annual report with details of our achievements over the previous year. The Committee are also required to identify key issues that we would advise the Department for Regional Development (DRD) to address in the coming year and submit these to the Minister.

Chairperson's Message

This year has been another busy year for Imtac. I would like to thank all members for their contribution and commitment. I would like also to express my gratitude to Observers from our partnership organisations for their contribution and help. Last but not least, I would like to record my thanks to all the officials from DRD and other Departments who have supported our work during the year.

I would like to particularly thank our retiring members, Ann Gamble, Francis Hughes and David Mann, for their contributions during their time with Imtac. I would like to welcome Samantha Browne, Ursula Marshall and Paul McCloskey as new members of Imtac. I am sure Imtac will benefit greatly from their knowledge skills and experience.

As Chairperson I would like to pay tribute to hard work of our Executive Secretary, Michael Lorimer. Members consider Michael to be the "foundation stone" of Imtac and to be an expert in the area of travel and transport and disabled and older people.

This year Imtac undertook a landmark survey on behalf of DRD into the attitudes of disabled and older people to public transport. I would like to thank all those organisations and individuals who helped make the survey the success it was. The findings of the survey show that progress has been made over the past decade, with undoubted contributions from Imtac members past and present. Despite this older and disabled people are still a considerable distance from being able routinely access and use the transport system in Northern Ireland.

The development of a new Accessible Transport Strategy in 2015 is an opportunity for Government to renew a commitment to address the outstanding barriers to equal access for everyone to the transport system. Imtac is enthusiastic and keen to engage in a genuine partnership with DRD in this process. My colleagues and I look forward to working with our partners in Government and transport in the year ahead.

Like many organisations Imtac is facing major challenges in the coming year due to reductions in funding imposed on all Government Departments. I firmly believe that Imtac is a valuable resource to Government and already offers excellent value for

money. As such Imtac cannot take further funding reductions. As Chairperson I am determined to minimise the impact of current funding reductions, maintaining a strong voice for disabled and older people in developing and implementing necessary changes in transport policy and services.

G Max O'Brien

July 2015

Achievements in 2014/15

In developing a Work Programme Imtac seeks to assist Government reduce the barriers to travel experienced by disabled and older people. In doing so the Committee seek to advise Government in meeting it's obligations under the Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS), the Disability Strategy and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities [disabled people] (UNCRPD).

The following outlines the contribution Imtac has made in the past twelve months towards a more inclusive transport system.

1 Statistics and data collection

It is essential that more information and evidence is gathered about what makes travel difficult for older people and disabled people . During the past year Imtac has undertaken the following:

- Worked with organisations of and for older and disabled people and with others to undertake a survey into attitudes of disabled and older people to public transport. The survey attracted over 600 responses and the report into its findings will be used by the DRD to inform the new Accessible Transport Strategy 2016-2025.
- Examined evidence from Great Britain and Ireland about the impact of changes to the Blue Badge Scheme and developed a report highlighting the potential impact of these changes for Northern Ireland.

2 Accessibility

Despite improvements disabled and older people still experience significant physical barriers to accessing transport and the pedestrian environment. During the past year Imtac has undertaken work on the following:

- Produced a report highlighting common barriers in the pedestrian environment based on seven audits undertaken by Imtac in cities, towns and villages across Northern Ireland.

- Worked closely with DSD officials on proposals for the next phase of the Belfast Streets Ahead project. As part of this work the Committee undertook a pedestrian audit of the streets around the Cathedral Quarter area of Belfast.
- Developed and published a position paper on the use of kerbs in the pedestrian environment.

3 Awareness raising

The ATS, Disability Strategy and the UNCRPD all highlight the importance of challenging perceptions amongst the general public about disabled people. During the past year Imtac has:

- Organised a workshop involving disabled people, older people, their organisations, policy makers and transport providers to discuss future training requirements. Presentations on the day promoted the use of Disability Equality Training, designed and delivered by disabled people.

4 Access to information

Difficulties accessing information can be a barrier to travel. To promote better solutions in this area Imtac has:

- Published a report assessing the current provision of information about transport services against the policies contained in the ATS. The report contained a series of recommendations for improvement.

5 Participation

Involving disabled people and older people in the design of transport policies and services is an essential part of developing an inclusive transport system fit for purpose and fit for all. Imtac seeks to ensure this happens through wider work with partners in Government, transport and the voluntary and community sectors. During the past year Imtac progressed this by:

- Organising a public meeting in Derry, attended by around 40 older and disabled people, to discuss travel and transport issues.

- Meeting with officials providing comment and advice on key projects / issues including DRD Integrated Transport Project, DRD Belfast Rapid Transit Team, the roll out of AV information on buses, DoE/DVA officials about Taxi Reform including periodic training for taxi drivers.
- Continuing to be represented on important forums and Committees including the DRD Integrated Transport Stakeholders Group, DRD Belfast City Centre Change Working Group, the DoE Bus Forum and DoE Roads Safety Forum and various All Party Working Groups at Stormont.
- Taking part in visits organised by the Consumer Council to Belfast City and Belfast International airports.
- Responding to a number of key consultations including the OFMDFM Active Ageing Strategy and the DRD Bicycle Strategy.

Our Plans for 2015/16

Over the next twelve months Imtac will seek the further development of an inclusive transport system by engaging and listening to disabled people and older people and working with and advising policy makers and transport providers. Imtac has published an agreed Work Programme for 2015/16 that details tasks that will be undertaken in the next twelve months. Imtac will:

- Support the development of the new Accessible Transport Strategy. The Committee will provide DRD with recommendations arising from the results of the attitudinal survey and potential indicators for measuring the success of the future ATS.
- Produce a template designed to improve engagement by Government and others with disabled and older people around transport and travel issues.
- Continue to work towards a more accessible pedestrian environment by developing better links with the eleven new local councils.
- Work with DRD and Translink to improve information provision about the accessibility of public transport.
- Work with DRD to ensure that new projects such as Belfast Rapid Transit are fully inclusive.
- Examine how to make Imtac a more effective and sustainable organisation in the future.

Our advice to Government

The priority for Government in the next year should be the development of the new Accessible Transport Strategy. Excellent work has already been undertaken by officials in DRD to compile information from which to identify key elements that should be included in the new ATS. This has been achieved through the attitudinal survey and engagement with organisations of and for disabled people and older people. Imtac is confident that this level of engagement will be maintained during the development of the new Strategy.

Imtac has already outlined to Department the key strategic priorities it believes must be incorporated into the new ATS address. These include:

1. Improved public transport and pedestrian infrastructure
2. Strengthening other transport services
3. Improved information provision
4. Improved customer/individual experience
5. Improved engagement and participation with disabled and older people

Budget reductions means that DRD faces significant challenges in the coming years. Reduced funding for public transport and other services particularly impact on disabled people and older people, making achieving a more inclusive transport system more difficult. Given the current financial climate Imtac believes that it is imperative that opportunities to make services more accessible are maximised when scarce resources become available

In discussions with DRD and others Imtac has advised that a transport system can only be accessible and inclusive if it is step-free. The Committee understands that achieving this is a major challenge, particularly when working with older infrastructure, but we strongly believe that new projects and new investment must incorporate step-free design. It has been a major disappointment to Imtac that recent investment in both infrastructure and vehicles has not been step-free, meaning the design of transport services continues to build in unnecessary barriers for many in our society including older and disabled people.

Given our clear advice on this matter Imtac formally requests that the Department make a commitment to making step-free access a requirement of any future investment in transport services where public monies are spent.

Imtac Members (July 2015)

G Max O'Brien (Chairperson)

Max was appointed to his second term as Chairperson of Imtac this year. Max is a retired civil servant and trade unionist. He has also held a number of other public life positions with the Mental Health Commission and University of Ulster.

Bert Bailie (Vice Chairperson)

Bert is into his second term as an Imtac member. He is a retired civil servant and transport professional having previously worked for Roads Service. He is an active member of the local branch of the Parkinson's Disease Society.

Sam Bell

Sam is serving his first term as Imtac member. Sam is a retired engineer. Sam has a daughter with a disability and has served on the Boards of Mencap in Northern Ireland and Carers NI.

June Best

June is into her second term as an Imtac member and is Convenor of the Information and Training Working Group. June has a visual impairment and is a guide dog owner. June is User Representative for Guide Dogs locally and is the Northern Ireland Ambassador for the Office of Disability Issues.

Samantha Browne

Samantha joined Imtac as a member for the first time this year. Samantha is deaf and has a visual impairment and has been active volunteer for Sense NI, an organisation that represents people who are deafblind.

Vivien Blakely

Vivien is serving her first term as an Imtac member. A power chair user, Vivien is a member of the Omnibus Partnership and involved with the MS Society in Northern Ireland.

Nan Carville

Nan is serving her first term as an Imtac member. Nan is retired. As a person living with hearing loss Nan is an active volunteer with Action on Hearing Loss.

Moira Heap

Moira is serving her first term as an Imtac member. Moira is a power chair user. Since retiring as a solicitor Moira has been active on a number of groups in the Craigavon area.

Dame Joan Harbison

Joan was appointed to her second term as an Imtac member earlier this year. Joan has significant experience of public life positions including as Chief Commissioner with the Equality Commission and as the interim Older Peoples Advocate .

Joe Kenny

Joe is serving his first term as an Imtac member and Convenor of the Public Transport Working Group. Joe is blind and works for the RNIB in Belfast.

Peter Livingstone

Peter is serving his first term as an Imtac member. Peter is a strong advocate for people with learning disabilities and has been an active volunteer for Mencap in Northern Ireland.

Ursula Marshall

Ursula joined Imtac as a member for the first time this year. A wheelchair user, Ursula is an active member of her community involved with organisations including Mid Ulster Seniors Network, Disability Action, Womens Aid and Cookstown Police and Community and Safety Partnership.

Henry Mayne

Henry is serving his first term as an Imtac member. Henry recently retired as from working as a social worker with the Belfast Trust. Henry is a blind and has a range of interests including cycling.

Paul McCloskey

Paul joined Imtac as a member for the first time this year. A disabled person, Paul is currently Chairperson of the North West Forum of People with Disabilities. Paul is also a volunteer car driver for his local Rural Community Transport Partnership.

Eimear McCracken

Eimear is serving her first term as an Imtac member. Eimear currently works for Belfast City Centre Management.

David McDonald

David was recently appointed to his second term as an Imtac member and is the current Treasurer to the Committee. A powerchair user, David is Chairperson of the Omnibus Partnership. David has worked with a number of Government Departments on key projects.

Sheelagh McRandal

Sheelagh is serving her first term as Imtac member. Sheelagh is a retired engineer and active in a number of organisations in her local community including the Womens Institute.

Jim Nash

Jim is into his second term as an Imtac member. A disabled person, Jim is actively involved in a number of organisations in his local city of Derry / Londonderry including the RNIB and the Cedar Foundation.