
Imtac Annual Report 2011



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August 2011

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.

About this report

The Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS) requires Imtac to produce an annual report with details of our achievements over the previous year. We 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.

Chairs message

The last ten years have seen remarkable changes in the accessibility of the transport system in Northern Ireland. Legislation and investment by Government has transformed the accessibility of public transport. This has been supplemented by investment in other services such as door2door and rural transport.

Despite undoubted progress many disabled people and older people still find it difficult to get around. Many barriers to travel still remain including the design of services, the lack of information about services, the cost of services and the confidence of people about using services. As well as this many people will not make a journey unless all aspects of the journey are accessible – the travel chain. Too often there remain gaps in the travel chain that make travelling difficult or impossible for disabled people and older people.

The financial situation means the years ahead will be difficult. However I believe a renewed focus on addressing specific barriers experienced by disabled people and older people can help maximise the investment already made in services here. As an organisation of disabled people and older people Imtac has a key role in helping to develop understanding of the barriers that make travel difficult and assisting policy makers and service providers develop solutions.

Much of the work of the Committee over the past year has focused on specific barriers that make travel difficult for disabled people and older people. I would like to thank members for their hard work in attending meetings and helping to develop papers. I would like to pay special tribute to William Stewart, the Vice Chair of Imtac, who stepped down from the Committee this year.

Frank Caddy
Chair

Achievements in 2011/12

Addressing barriers in the pedestrian environment

Nearly every journey involves using the pedestrian environment. Barriers on our pavements and crossings can make journeys difficult or impossible for disabled people and older people. During the last year Imtac completed the following tasks:

- We worked with others to develop a report highlighting barriers in walking routes around Belfast City Centre
- We advised DSD on design aspects of the Streets Ahead scheme in Belfast City Centre
- We worked with DSD and others to progress the pilot of the React wayfinding system in Belfast
- We worked with disabled people and cyclists to develop a paper on safe and accessible cycle and pedestrian routes
- We developed a checklist to assist Roads Service in assessing the impact of shared pedestrian and cycle paths
- We advised Roads Service about arrangements permitting access for vehicles to pedestrian zones
- We assisted Roads Service to develop a leaflet highlighting what has been done to make pavements and road crossings better for people with a visual impairment

Addressing barriers to using the car

Many disabled people and older people use the car to get around. Barriers such as not being able to get parked can limit the benefits of having a car. During the last year Imtac completed the following tasks:

- We developed a paper recommending better enforcement of the Blue Badge Scheme
- We worked with Roads Service and others to ensure that parking for disabled people and older people was included in plans for Belfast City Centre
- We advised Roads Service about access for Blue Badge holders to pedestrian zones

Addressing barriers to air travel

Despite rights under European Regulation disabled people and older people can find travelling by air an uncomfortable and unpleasant experience. During the past year Imtac completed the following task:

- We worked with the Consumer Council to organise site visits to local airports for disabled people and older people

Addressing barriers to using public transport

Despite improvements to public transport, statistics show that usage by disabled people in particular is low. Much of the work of Imtac highlights the barriers that prevent disabled people and older people from using public transport. During the past year Imtac completed the following tasks:

- We advised DRD about the development of Rapid Transit in Belfast and plans to reform the way public transport is organised here
- We gave evidence to the Regional Development Committee at Stormont to influence the Transport Bill that was passed during the year

- We gave evidence to the Regional Development Committee inquiry into Sustainable Transport
- We published a paper highlighting the specific barriers that make travel difficult for people with a learning disability
- We worked with the DRD and others to progress a pilot of audio and visual information systems on buses
- We advised Translink on the design of new trains
- We helped Translink launch an Access Guide to their services
- We advised DRD on measures that could improve access to the Concessionary Fares Scheme
- We developed a paper highlighting how taxi ranks can improve travel chains
- We developed a paper recommending changes to the eligibility criteria for the Door2door service

Addressing barriers around information

Not being able to obtain accurate and accessible information can often prevent people from travelling. During the past year Imtac has completed the following tasks aimed at improving access to information:

- We developed a paper recommending some changes to the NI Direct website
- We assisted DRD revise the Travel Safe Guide for people with learning disabilities

- We worked with Guide Dogs, the Consumer Council and Equality Commission to organise 6 meetings across Northern Ireland where disabled people could find out about services and their rights
- We helped Translink finalise and publish an Access Guide
- We developed a paper setting out changes we plan to make around how we provide information and who we talk to

Plans for 2011/12

Imtac will continue to work hard over the next year with all our partners to continue to obtain improvements in travel choice for disabled people and older people. We have agreed a Work Programme with the DRD for the coming year which is available on our website via the following link – <http://imtac.org.uk/publications.php?pid=192> . Alternatively hard copies and copies in other formats are available by contacting us at our office.

During the next year our tasks will include:

- Publish research based on the experiences of disabled people and older people using public transport, air travel and the pedestrian environment
- Publish research around transport issues relevant to younger disabled people
- Promoting the use of wayfinding technology to improve access to the pedestrian environment
- Highlighting the support required to enable disabled people and older people to learn or to continue to drive
- Advise Government to change the law to include audio visual information system on new buses
- Highlight examples of flexible public transport which could be used in Northern Ireland
- Recommend improvements to the way information about transport services is provided
- Research examples of schemes that give disabled people and older people confidence to use public transport

Building on progress – Issues for Government

Budgetary constraints mean that further investment in services will be extremely limited for the foreseeable future. Imtac believes that it is now imperative that Government and society look at how best to use the resources we have and in particular to concentrate on the barriers that prevent older people and disabled people using public transport. From the policy perspective both the current review of the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) and the Public Transport Reform process offer opportunities to consider fresh approaches. In further developing these policy areas Imtac would like the Department to consider the following:

- Ensuring accessibility is built into the future procurement of services including issues such as vehicle and infrastructure design and training for staff
- Explore ways to improve access to information about services
- Review options for providing a broader range of more flexible services
- Examine options to increase access to travel training/mentoring programmes
- Develop an RTS to ensure other Government Departments who are involved in transport services share resources, reduce duplication and encourage innovation
- As many disabled people and older people rely on the car to get around it is vital that the Department also make provision for Blue Badge Holders when considering any future measures to restrict usage of the car and promote use of public transport

Imtac would like the Department to consider two more immediate measures which we believe would improve the mobility of disabled people and older people.

Firstly we would like the Department to consider extending free travel to disabled people currently in receipt of a Half-fare concession. The Department has published plans to reduce the level of subsidy in relation to concessionary fares regardless of the number of passengers using concessionary travel. Extending free travel to disabled people would therefore not require major additional resource, would give disabled people here parity with Great Britain and Ireland and would offer disabled people protection from anticipated fare rises over the coming years.

Secondly we would like the Department to examine the recommendations we have made around extending enforcement of Blue Badge fraud and misuse. Imtac believes that Blue Badge fraud makes day to day life difficult for many disabled people and older people, damages the public perception of the scheme and results in considerable loss of revenue to Government.

Thanks

Imtac would like to thank all those who contributed to our work over the past year including: Stephen Hughes (Roads Service), Orla McCann (Disability Action), Cliff Gill (DRD), Sharon Clements (DoE) Fiona Mark (Consumer Council) and Claire Costello and Valentina Wright (both Translink).

Imtac Members 2010/11

Frank Caddy	Chair
William Stewart	Vice-Chair
Kellie Armstrong	
Bert Bailie	
June Best	
Elizabeth Black	
Philip Blair	
Terry Butler	
Ann Collins	Convenor Personal Mobility Group
Barbara Fleming	Convenor Public Transport Group
Ann Gamble	
Francis Hughes	
Billy McFall	(Resigned September 2010)
Etta Mann	
Houston Marshall	(Resigned January 2011)
Norma Moore	
David McDonald	Convenor Information & Training Group
Andrew Murdock	
Max O'Brien	
Ronnie Patterson	
Laura Slater	

More information on our members is available on our website, visit www.imtac.org.uk.

Observers

Olaf Hvattum	Age Sector Platform
Kevin Doherty	Disability Action
Naomi Roberts	Equality Commission
Ryan Simpson	General Consumer Council
Gavin Hamilton	Mobility and Inclusion Unit (DRD)
Alan Preston	Mobility and Inclusion Unit (DRD)
Janet Watson	Mobility and Inclusion Unit (DRD)
Andrew Adams	Ports & Public Transport (DRD)

8 Contacting us

You can contact us about any aspect of this report or request it in an alternative format at:

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