



Improving travel information for older people and disabled people – an update

March 2012

Imtac is committed to making information about our work accessible. Details of how we can do this and how to contact us are included on the next page.

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
Imtac
Enterprise House
10-18 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.

Background to this paper

In 2007 Imtac and the Mobility & Inclusion Unit (MIU) within DRD jointly produced a report¹ looking at improving travel information for disabled people and older people. The report recognised that the lack of suitable accessible information is one of the barriers that make travel difficult for disabled people and older people.

The report looked at information provided by both the DRD and services supported by DRD. The report identified the following key issues:

- accessible design standards not adhered to
- accessible formats not advertised
- no alternative, such as a textphone, provided for people who have difficulties using the phone
- website accessibility limited by poor design and content
- a lack of knowledge about how to provide accessible information, particularly in the community sector
- a lack of accessible information on the Concessionary Fares Scheme

¹ Copies of the report are available on our website via the following link <http://www.imtac.org.uk/publications.php?pid=100>

- a lack of information meeting the requirements of people with learning disabilities.

The report identified a number of key recommendations designed to address these issues as well as suggesting the need for one source of online information. Given the passage of time since publication Imtac has decided to look again at the report. The Committee has sought to make an assessment of progress made in the interim, gaps that remain around the provision of information and opportunities to make further improvements.

Progress to date

There is significant evidence to suggest that awareness of the need to provide accessible information has increased amongst providers and policy makers since 2007.

Imtac has worked with transport providers and policy makers to encourage good practice around providing accessible information. To assist with this we published a Good Practice Guide for Transport Providers.

Translink has published an Access Policy which commits the organisation to producing information about its services in formats that are accessible. This has been recognised in the information provided by Translink with messages about accessible information routinely included. Translink has also produced an Access Guide outlining the level of service available to disabled people and older people.

The DRD has continued to develop its own Guide to Making Information Accessible. These guidelines are reflected in information produced around schemes such as the door2door scheme and during the development of information around rural Dial-a-Lift services in rural areas.

The Department has also looked at improving access to information for people with a learning disability. A number of consultations have been made available in an easy read format. Recently the Department

revised and published a new Travel Safe guide for people with a learning disability. The Department has also looked at other innovative ways to make information more accessible including providing links to audio versions of documents.

The other major development since 2007 has been the development of the NI Direct website. NI Direct offers the opportunity to provide information about the range of services available in one well designed and accessible site.

Gaps in provision

Despite the undoubted progress problems persist in the provision of information about transport services. From the Translink perspective the size of type used in timetables and other publications limits their usefulness to many older people and disabled people. Despite improvements to the website problems persist around the usability of the website (particularly the journey planner) and access specific information around accessibility of services. Worryingly recently published timetables have failed to advertise their availability in other accessible formats. Feedback from disabled people indicates that getting information in the most appropriate formats and in an acceptable timescale can be a problem.

Problems still persist around the availability and accessibility of information about the Concessionary Fares Scheme particularly in relation to disabled people eligible for half-fare and free travel. This has been raised as an issue with Imtac by a number of organisations of and for disabled people and is evidenced by the low uptake of the concession amongst disabled people.

Imtac recently produced a report highlighting some issues around the content of the NI Direct website which limit the usefulness of the website as a single source of information about services.

Whilst awareness and design of information has undoubtedly improved since the initial report was completed in 2007, this is only useful if people have easy access to the information. The dissemination of any information is always likely to be a challenge particularly given the

number of organisations involved in providing services. The feedback we have received from older people and disabled people is that often they have difficulties knowing how to get information about transport services. The clear implication of this is we are not making best use of the undoubted improvements that have taken place. By way of example in compiling this report Imtac checked whether Translink's Access Guide was available in 8 stations. None of the stations had copies of the Guide although some did have posters advertising its availability on-line. Similarly services such as rural Dial-a-lift do appear to actively marketed.

Future Opportunities

Under Public Transport Reform it is proposed that the new Public Transport Agency provide and co-ordinate information about all transport services. This represents an opportunity to ensure that there is information available about all services; there is a consistency in the design and accessibility of all leaflets and timetables, an improved single online resource and better co-ordination and dissemination of travel information.

Building on progress

In a time of severely restricted resources improving access to information is achievable. For example improving the accessibility of leaflets and timetables does not require resource rather adherence to good practice design standards.

In order to build on the progress made to date Imtac is suggesting the following actions:

- Imtac, MIU and Translink identify and agree a number of achievable actions to improve the provision and accessibility of information about Translink services
- Imtac work with MIU and NI Direct around changes to the content of the website, making the site a more effective online resource
- Imtac work with DRD to agree the most effective way of promoting concessionary fares to disabled people

- Intac engage with the Public Transport Reform team at an early stage to ensure opportunities for improving access to information are maximised through the development of the proposed Public Transport Agency
- Intac and DRD to continue to promote best practice in the provision of accessible information to stakeholders and members of staff
- The Department should consider making future consultations routinely available in easy read format and online audio