
Imtac Annual Report 2012

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



September 2012

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:

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About Imtac

Imtac is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as 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. 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

This is my first report as Chairperson of Imtac. I think it is fitting and proper to start by paying tribute to my predecessor Frank Caddy who stepped down this year after over 10 years chairing the Committee. During this period Frank showed great commitment and leadership both in developing Imtac and in seeking positive changes to improve travel choice for older people and disabled people. We all wish him well for the future.

I hope in my time as Chair to build on the hard work of Frank and all the other Imtac members. Imtac offers many older people and disabled people a unique opportunity to actively participate in public life through direct discussions with a range of stakeholders around policy and service developments around key accessibility and transport issues. As Chair I am keen to ensure that more disabled people and older people have the opportunity to participate in the work of the Committee.

The next few years will be difficult for everyone in Northern Ireland. Many difficult decisions will have to be taken that will directly affect the day to day lives of disabled people and older people. It is important that disabled people and older people have a say in these decisions and Imtac is one way Government and others can help do this. I hope during my time as Chair to build on relationships to continue to work well with our colleagues across Government, the transport, community and voluntary sectors.

G. Max O'Brien
Chairperson

Achievements in 2011/12

Over the past year Imtac has carried out a range of tasks around some of the barriers that make it difficult for disabled people and older people to get around. The following is a summary of the key areas where the Committee has made a difference this year.

Promoting an accessible walking environment

Nearly every journey involves using the pedestrian environment but barriers on our pavements and crossings often make journeys impossible for disabled people and older people. During the last year Imtac undertook the following work:

- We talked to over two hundred disabled and older people about their experiences of the pedestrian environment
- We looked at barriers in the pedestrian environment in two locations – Belfast and Lisburn City centre
- Based on the evidence we have gathered we are developing a report on the key barriers in the pedestrian environment with recommendations for improvements

Promoting an accessible public transport system

Statistics show that disabled people in particular use public transport less often than non-disabled people. This is despite significant investment by Government here. More work is required to find out why this is. Over the last year Imtac has undertaken the following work:

- We have talked to over 150 disabled people and older people about their attitudes to public transport – we plan to use this information to develop a report highlighting issues that make using public transport difficult
- We have looked at experiences of operating demand responsive transport in Great Britain and Ireland and developed a report highlighting the potential lessons for Northern Ireland

- We have looked at how travel training programmes have helped disabled people and older people use public transport and developed a report with recommendations
- We have worked with officials to ensure that issues for older people and disabled people are factored in to proposals for Public Transport Reform and Belfast Rapid Transit
- We worked with the DRD and others to promote the pilot of audio visual information systems on a bus route in Belfast

Promoting better taxi services

Statistics show that disabled people and older people are more likely to rely on taxis to get around. Despite this many disabled people and older people experience difficulties accessing taxi services. Over the last year Imtac has undertaken the following work:

- We have contributed to a stakeholder event at Stormont held by the Environment Committee looking at the implementation of the Taxis Act
- We have worked with and advised officials from the Department for the Environment around the implementation of the Taxis Act including responding to consultations on operator licensing and the regulation of fares

Promoting access by car

For many disabled people and older people the car is the only realistic way to get around. Government provides support and benefits to assist people to use their car but sometimes these benefits can be limited through for example inconsiderate or illegal parking. Over the last year Imtac has undertaken the following work:

- We have looked at the support available from the Driver Vehicle Agency (DVA) to enable disabled people and older people to continue driving and developed a report with recommendations for improvement

- We have worked with officials from Roads Service to look at how measures to prevent Blue Badge misuse and fraud can be improved
- To inform our discussions on Blue Badge misuse/fraud we published a report on findings of surveys of Blue Badge use in Belfast City Centre

Promoting better access to information

Not being able to access accurate and accessible information can often be a barrier to travel. During the last year Imtac has undertaken the following tasks aimed at improving access to information:

- We published a paper recommending improvements to the NI Direct website and met with officials to discuss implementation of our recommendations
- We looked at how difficult it was to obtain accurate and accessible information about transport services and developed a report with recommendations for improvements
- We assisted DRD with the publication and distribution of the Travel Safe Guide for people with learning disabilities

Promoting good training for staff

Often the attitudes of transport staff can make the difference between a good and bad journey. Good staff training is essential in providing better more accessible services for disabled people and older people. Over the past year Imtac has undertaken the following work to improve training:

- We have reviewed and revised our Good Practice Guidelines for Transport Providers around providing Disability Equality or awareness training

Promoting equitable access to Belfast City Centre

The past five years has seen significant changes to Belfast City Centre. Throughout this period Imtac has worked with all the agencies involved to ensure access to the city centre for disabled

people and older people remains a priority. Over the past year Imtac has undertaken the following work:

- We have advised the cross-departmental City Centre Change working Group on the implementation of the Access & Mobility Study for Belfast City Centre
- We have worked directly with officials from DSD and Roads Service around public realm improvements and changes to traffic management in the City Centre
- We published a report examining whether “mobility hubs” should be developed in Belfast City Centre

Promoting Good Governance

Following a review of the work of Imtac the Committee made the following changes this year aimed at improving governance and how we work with our stakeholders:

- We worked with officials and agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with DRD
- We agreed a Code of Conduct for members
- We agreed to reduce the size of the Committee from 21 to 18 members
- We agreed to limit tenure on the Committee to two consecutive terms after which members must step down for one year before reapplying for membership

Plans for 2012/13

Over the next twelve months Imtac will continue to seek to improve travel choice for older people and disabled people through our work with Government Departments, transport providers, organisations of and for disabled people and older people and others. 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=222>. Hard copies and copies in alternative formats are available by contacting our office.

During the next year our tasks will include:

- Producing reports about barriers in the pedestrian environment in a number of towns and cities in Northern Ireland including recommendations for improvement (we will produce 5 reports by March 2013)
- Revising our Good Practice Guide aimed at improving the provision and enforcement of accessible parking by December 2012
- Producing a report looking at Blue Badge use based on surveys in Belfast and a number of other locations
- Producing a report assessing the improvements made to public transport here over the past decade and highlighting challenges for the future (we will produce a report by December 2012)
- Working with Translink to improve the provision of audio information at stations here
- Working with officials from NI Direct to improve the content of the website
- Working with Translink, DRD and others to improve information about transport services including reviewing and revising Translink's Access Guide by March 2013
- Producing a report by December 2012 with recommendations for improvement following an audit of

training currently provided by key transport providers around disabled and older passengers

- Completing research into disabled and older people's attitudes by December 2012 to public transport and transport issues for younger people by March 2013

Maintaining progress – our advice to Government

There is no doubt that significant progress has been made over the past decade in improving travel choice for disabled people due in no small part to significant investment by Government here. Imtac recognises that because of budgetary constraints further investment in services will be limited. We also recognise that difficult decisions will have to be taken about existing policies and services as illustrated by the recent debate about future funding for public transport here.

In the current economic climate our key advice to Government is the value of engagement with disabled people and older people through Imtac. We believe that positive engagement can ensure that Government and other bodies make the best use of resources that are available through:

- Ensuring that accessibility for older people and disabled people is built in to any new investment
- Ensuring that the impacts on disabled people and older people are fully considered when looking at decisions around existing policies and services
- Communicating the rationale for difficult decisions
- Discussing alternative ways to make better use of existing resources even where this discussion is difficult or uncomfortable for disabled people and older people

One issue of great concern to many disabled people and older people is changes connected with Welfare Reform. The current benefit system is linked to other important concessions connected to travel and mobility including the Blue Badge Scheme, the

Motability Scheme, the Concessionary Fares Scheme and eligibility for Door2door Transport. Imtac believes it is important that Government in Northern Ireland fully considers the impact of Welfare Reform on the travel and mobility of disabled people and older people and how they will ensure ongoing accessibility to essential services. We believe where necessary Government should introduce proposals which mitigate against any negative impacts around changes to benefits.

Despite the difficult economic climate there have been positive developments in the past year. One of these developments was a successful pilot of audio visual information systems on a bus route in Belfast, undertaken by DRD, Guide Dogs and Translink. Imtac welcomes these developments but recognises that finding the resources to further extend the provision of AV systems will be challenging. Given these restrictions Imtac suggest that DRD and DoE should review the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations in Northern Ireland to require the provision of audio and visual information systems on any new bus or coach in the future

Finally Imtac asks that Government consider two further specific measures proposed recently by the Committee. The first is the formation of a Demand Responsive Transport Forum to look at what role flexible transport solutions can play in meeting our future transport needs in Northern Ireland. The second is the formation of a Travel Training Forum to look making Travel Training more widely available to disabled people, older people and others to enable more people to travel independently. Both measures involve cross-departmental/agency working and the sharing of existing resources.

Imtac Members 2011/12

Frank Caddy	Chair
Bert Bailie	Vice-Chair
Kellie Armstrong	
June Best	Convenor Information & Training Group
Elizabeth Black	
Philip Blair	
Terry Butler	
Ann Collins	Convenor Personal Mobility Group
Barbara Fleming	Convenor Public Transport Group
Ann Gamble	
Francis Hughes	
Etta Mann	
Norma Moore	
Des McAuley	
David McDonald	(Resigned June 2011)
Andrew Murdock	
James Nash	
Max O'Brien	
Ronnie Patterson	
James Watson	

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)