

Imtac Annual Report 2013

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.



July 2013

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 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.

Chairperson's message

This year has been another busy and productive year for Imtac. I would like to put on record my thanks to all our members for their commitment and contribution over the year. In particular I would like to thank Kellie Armstrong, Elizabeth Black, Etta Mann, Norma Moore and Ronnie Patterson who all stepped down from the Committee at the end of this year after serving two terms. I would also express my gratitude and thanks to Government officials and other observers for a healthy working relationship.

Imtac is in many ways a unique body in Northern Ireland. I believe the work of Imtac has a broader impact than solely addressing key issues that make travel difficult for older people and disabled people. Imtac provides a rare opportunity for disabled people and older people to participate directly in policy and service development and more broadly in public life. In doing so the Committee brings together a variety of interests and develops through consensus inclusive advice based on best interests of disabled people and older people as whole rather than promoting sectional interests. By working directly with policy makers, service providers and other Imtac members have the opportunity to challenge the attitudes and stereotypes that are so often encountered in our society by older and disabled people.

As Chairperson I am proud of the work that Imtac does and the contribution made by dedicated members and staff. In the coming year our members will continue to work with our partners in Government and the transport industry together with organisations of and for disabled and older people. I believe that our work will continue to contribute to the development of a more inclusive and accessible transport system and reinforce the benefits of the direct participation of disabled and older people and will promote positive attitudes towards older and disabled people.

G Max O'Brien
Chairperson

Achievements in 2012/13

Despite progress over the past decade disabled people and older people still experience difficulties getting around. Many of these difficulties are caused by barriers created by the design of services, infrastructure and the wider environment. Through our work Imtac seeks to highlight these barriers and promote practical solutions working in partnership with policy makers, service providers and organisations of and for disabled people and older people. The following is a summary of how the work of Imtac in the past year has contributed to a more inclusive transport system.

1 Developing an inclusive pedestrian environment

Every journey we undertake involves using the pedestrian environment. Poor design and provision as well as other physical barriers on our pavements make journeys difficult or impossible for many disabled people and older people. Evidence shows that barriers in the pedestrian environment impacts on how difficult disabled people and older people find it to use public transport.

Developing a more inclusive pedestrian environment is a key priority for Imtac. In the past year Imtac has undertaken the following activities to promote this priority:

- We published a report highlighting the main barriers in the pedestrian environment based on the experiences of disabled people and older people.
- We published a report on barriers in the pedestrian environment on key walking routes in Belfast City Centre.
- We carried out walking audits which will contribute to reports to be published on the pedestrian environment on key pedestrian routes in Lisburn and Derry/Londonderry.
- We worked with Guide Dogs to organise a series of workshops with practitioners responsible for the design, development and maintenance of the pedestrian environment aimed at promoting inclusive design.

- We worked directly with Roads Service and DSD to ensure that changes to the pedestrian environment as a result of the Belfast on the Move and Streets Ahead projects are delivered with maximum benefit to disabled people and older people.

2 Developing an inclusive public transport system

Over the past decade there has been significant investment to improve access to the bus and train services in Northern Ireland. Despite this investment evidence shows that disabled people in particular are still less likely to travel by public transport. This is in part due to the additional barriers encountered by disabled people and older people other than physical access to vehicles and infrastructure.

Imtac believes that increasing access to and the accessibility of public transport for disabled people and older people is crucial to developing a more inclusive society. Over the past year we have undertaken the following activities to promote more inclusive public transport:

- We published a report highlighting the progress made in improving accessibility of public transport as well as outlining remaining challenges and issues.
- We published a report highlighting how travel training programmes can improve access to public transport.
- We published revised guidelines on how transport providers can provide appropriate training to staff around making services accessible to disabled people.
- We undertook an audit which will contribute to a report to be published on training currently undertaken by transport providers funded by DRD.
- We published a report highlighting how different approaches to demand responsive transport can improve access to public transport.
- We gave evidence to the Regional Development Committee Inquiry into the Better Use of Public and Community Sector Funds for the Delivery of Bus Transport in Northern Ireland
- We worked with the Translink Marketing Team to revise and update the current Access Guide.

- We agreed with Translink interim measures to address difficulties caused by the absence of audio information at bus stations.
- We worked with Translink to develop a policy for the use of mobility scooters on buses and trains.
- We organised a meeting with Translink officials to demonstrate in a practical way the limitations of bus design.

3 Supporting alternative transport solutions

Unfortunately there will always be some older people and disabled people who cannot use public transport. This could be because of the design of the service or the distance involved in reaching the service from home is too great. Imtac recognises the need for high quality accessible alternatives to public transport. Over the past year we have undertaken the following activities to promote better or alternative solutions:

- We advised DRD in relation to proposals to change the Door2door transport scheme.
- We assisted officials in DoE to develop a research project around improving access to taxis.

4 Supporting access to the private car

Many disabled people and older people rely on the car to get around, either as a driver or passenger. Government provides significant support to make this easier through programmes such as the Blue Badge Scheme, Motability and a free medical assessment process in relation to driver licensing. Imtac believes it is essential that we make it easy for disabled people and older people to travel by car by tackling barriers, such as illegal parking, that make this difficult. Over the past year we have undertaken the following activities:

- We published a paper highlighting future challenges to driver licensing connected to an ageing population. We discussed our findings and recommendations with officials within DoE.
- We published a report highlighting the extent of Blue Badge use in Belfast, Ballymena, Bangor and Lisburn. The report showed that Blue Badge usage was higher in locations where there is a charge for on-street parking.

- We worked with Disability Action, Shopmobility NI and Disabled Motoring UK to revise the Good Practice Guide to Providing Accessible Parking.
- We worked with Roads Service officials around a number of events highlighting good practice in relation to enforcement of the Blue Badge Scheme.

5 Supporting travel outside Northern Ireland

As well as travelling with ease around Northern Ireland disabled people and older people are entitled to same level of access when travelling to and from Northern Ireland by sea or air. European Regulation means disabled people have rights when using these modes of travel. During the past year Imtac has undertaken the following to support this:

- We assisted the Consumer Council develop a guide to the new EU Maritime Regulation for passengers with reduced mobility.
- We advised Stena in relation to preparations for the introduction of the Regulation.
- We advised George Best City Airport on the provision of information about accessible services/accessibility at the airport.

6 Making the connections

Transport and travel is a necessity in modern life, enabling us all to work, learn, access services and take part in social and leisure activities. To achieve a fully inclusive society it is essential that transport and access is considered when designing facilities and services. During the past year Imtac has undertaken the following work to promote the connection between transport and wider access:

- We assisted the Consumer Council and Patient Client Council to develop a report highlighting the connections between transport and access to health services.
- We provided advice through the Inclusive Stadia Advisory Group on the development of the three regional stadia projects.
- We submitted a comprehensive response to OFMDFM's consultation on the draft Disability Strategy.

Our Plans for 2013/14

Over the next twelve months Imtac will seek to further the development of an inclusive transport system by working with disabled people and older people, policy makers and transport providers. We have published a Work Programme for 2013/14 detailing tasks we propose to undertake in the next twelve months. Tasks include

- 1 Assisting DRD deliver actions arising from the Accessible Transport Strategy
 - Complete research into the attitudes of disabled people and older people to public transport
 - Complete research into transport issues for younger disabled people
 - Assist in research to examine extending travel training programmes in Northern Ireland
 - Assist DRD and others to improve information provision for (1) people with a learning disability and (2) older people
- 2 Developing an inclusive pedestrian environment
 - Complete audits of pedestrian routes in a further three towns in Northern Ireland
 - Produce a paper designed to inform proposals to regulate pavement cafes
- 3 Develop other projects
 - Work with partners in the Baywatch Campaign to identify actions that challenge public attitudes to the misuse and abuse of the Blue Badge and accessible parking.
 - Work with others to develop a project that promotes the use of public transport by disabled people and older people using social media and other modern means of communication.

- 4 Provide on-going advice and support in key policy areas including:
- The new approach to Regional Transportation in Northern Ireland
 - Changes to public realm and traffic management in Belfast City Centre and other centres of population
 - The provision of pedestrian facilities including shared space, cycling facilities and active travel
 - The implementation of the Taxis Act 2008
 - Changes connected to Public Transport Reform, Transport Northern Ireland and bus licensing
 - Roads safety and driver licensing
 - Parking enforcement
 - The development of Belfast Rapid Transport
 - Changes to the Blue Badge scheme
 - Audio visual information on buses
 - Flexible transport solutions including door2door transport and rural dial-a-lift
 - The transport and mobility implications of Welfare reform
 - Concessionary fares policy
 - Shopmobility services
 - European aviation and maritime regulations
 - Extending current transport rights legislation

Our advice to Government

Imtac recognises the progress made over the past decade in making the transport system more inclusive. This is in no small part due to investment by DRD and the impact of the Accessible Transport Strategy. Imtac also acknowledges that the current financial climate limits how quickly and effectively remaining barriers can be addressed. However it is essential that we continue to work to tackle these barriers so that disabled people and older people can enjoy society equally.

During strict economic times it is essential that we ensure that disabled people and older people benefit from any investment in transport services. The best way this can be done is through direct engagement with the older people and disabled people who are members of Imtac. Our work during the last year has shown the value of engagement, from consultation to ensure plans for Belfast Rapid Transit build in access from an early stage to ensuring individual crossings in Belfast City Centre meet design standards in relation to accessibility. Both examples highlight that engagement ensures that we maximise the impact of investment.

It is also essential that DRD talk to us whenever changes are being developed for existing programmes and services. This year we talked to officials at an early stage of development of proposals to change Door2door transport and the Blue Badge Scheme. We believe these engagements had a positive impact on the final consultation. It is particularly important that engagement takes place at early stage where changes connected to Welfare Reform impact on DRD programmes.

Imtac would like the Department to consider two specific issues in the coming year. Firstly the Committee welcomed the publication of the positive evaluation report into the pilot of audio visual information systems on buses in the past year. Imtac views the inclusion of AV systems as an essential component of accessible bus travel. The Committee recommends that the Department explore all avenues to fund the progressive roll out of AV systems to buses in coming years. The second issue relates to the Blue Badge Scheme. Whilst Imtac welcomes the many of proposed changes to the Scheme contained in

the recently published consultation we are disappointed there are no detailed plans for increased enforcement of abuse and misuse of the Badge. In light of recent proposals to improve the Blue Badge we recommend that during the incoming year the Department develop detailed proposals aimed at improving enforcement of abuse and misuse of the Blue Badge Scheme.

Imtac members 2012/13

G Max O'Brien MBE (Chairperson)
Bert Bailie (Vice Chairperson)
Kellie Armstrong
June Best (Convenor Information & Training Group)
Elizabeth Black MBE
Ann Collins MBE (Convenor Personal Mobility Group)
Barbara Fleming (Convenor Public Transport Group)
Ann Gamble
Dame Joan Harbison
Francis Hughes
David Mann
Etta Mann
Des McAuley
David McDonald (Treasurer)
Norma Moore
Jim Nash
Ronnie Patterson
Rosemary Patton

Observers

Terry Butler (Translink)
Kevin Doherty (Disability Action)
Olaf Hvattum (Age Sector Platform)
Naomi Roberts (Equality Commission)
Ryan Simpson (Consumer Council)
Keith Walsh (DRD)