

Section 1 – Service Details and Summary of EIA Activity

Title of activity:	Concessionary fares (Bus Passes) reduced to statutory requirements only. – Ceasing Disabled Companion Pass Entitlement
Lead Officer responsible for this EIA:	Dave Winstanley – Assistant Director – Transport and Capital Projects
Telephone:	(01325) 406618
Service Group:	Economic Growth
Service or Team:	Transport and Capital Projects
Assistant Director accountable for this EIA	Dave Winstanley
Who else will be involved in carrying out the EIA:	Andrew Casey, Head of Network Management Sue Dobson – Sustainable Transport Manager Gill Hutchinson – Sustainable Transport Officer Mary Hall and Deena Wallace

What stage has the EIA reached?		
This table provides a 'cover note' of progress to be maintained as the EIA is developed over time.		
Stage	Date	Summary of position
Stage 1: Initial Officer Assessment. Whole Population likely to be affected identified	23 July 2015	Identified as part of the initial Chief Officers Executive Report. Initial Screening assessment undertaken in developing the MTFP proposal (Form W15).
Stage 2: Further Assessment. Target Population likely to be affected identified		Identified as part of the initial Chief Officers Executive Report. Initial Screening assessment undertaken in developing the MTFP proposal (Form W15). Target population are those individuals who currently have a Companion Pass, their carer or those applying for a Companion Pass between now and the date of any decision on changing the policy. In addition Companion Pass holders from other boroughs that have a reciprocal agreement with DBC for the use of the passes (Tyne & Wear - Nexus, Northumbria, Durham).
Stage 3: Further Assessment. Individuals likely to be affected identified	July 2015	A report was run to identify the number of individuals affected i.e. those that currently have a Companion Pass. In July 2015 this is 635 individuals. This information forms the basis of the officer assessment. When the consultation was undertaken in 2016 in line with the MTFP process a new report was run from the Customer Management System using up to date information. A letter was

Stage 4: Analysis of Findings	May 2016	<p>sent to all 665 Companion Pass holders.</p> <p>83 responses were received to the consultation letter from pass holders and carers. In addition there was feedback from the People's Parliament and Darlington Association on Disability. There were numerous impacts and these are summarised as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact on health, well-being, social inclusion and independence (as disabled people who can't travel unaided, wouldn't be able to make the same number of journeys as do currently which will limit their access to services.) - Increased financial pressure on Benefits and individual budgets. - Many companion pass holders are unable to make journeys unaided, especially those with visual impairments and learning disabilities. - The companion pass holders carer would have to bear the cost of journeys, and would impact on their Carer's Allowance. - Certain companion pass holders would no longer be able to leave the house without the aid of companion due to the above. - If Darlington were to withdraw from the North East reciprocal arrangement, this may have a negative effect on the number of people travelling into Darlington. <p>Further analysis of the most recent and accurate figures from the regional concessionary fares system shows that the number of trips is lower than originally stated and the potential financial saving is lower.</p> <p>Some client groups may also be affected by other DBC proposed changes that impact on disabled people such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Sensory Impairment Service at Vane House. • C8 Cease funding to Aspire Service for school leavers with learning difficulties. • C2 Review of Statutory Minimum Service Costs. • W20 Blue Badge parking • S13 Removal of Social Fund Budget. • C5 Cease contract which provides support to vulnerable people aged 25+ who are homeless or at risk. • C6 End Drug and Alcohol Floating SupportS9 Reductions to Obesity funding. • C9 Cease funding for Information Co-ordinator provided through DAD. <p>The impacts identified in this proposal have been added to the cumulative impact assessment.</p> <p>The proposal will not help to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Some disabled people may make</p>

		<p>more trips alone if the pass is withdrawn and without a companion they may be more at risk from discrimination, harassment and victimisation by other members of the public.</p> <p>The ENCTS is a statutory scheme applied across England, providing the same opportunities to disabled people, in terms of eligibility. However the companion pass ensures that those disabled people who are unable to travel alone are also able to use their opportunity to travel by public transport. Withdrawing the pass would reduce choice and opportunity for this group of disabled people, unless they have the financial ability to pay for a carer/companion to travel.</p> <p>The proposal will not foster good relations with Companion pass holders.</p>
Stage 5: Sign-Off		Completed June 2016
Stage 6: Reporting and Action Planning		<p>Once any decision is made in respect of the companion pass its effects should be reviewed by officers on an annual basis.</p> <p>A number of options were suggested as part of the consultation process and these with others have been used to consider an options appraisal.</p> <p>It is recommended that further work is carried out to investigate options to retain the Companion Pass on the basis of:</p> <p>Developing Option 4 which is a combination of a more robust criterion and assessment for entitlement and an annual charge at a level to be determined.</p>

Section 2 – The Activity and Supporting Information

Details of the activity (including the main purpose and aims)

1. The Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007 gives authorities the duty to provide the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS).
2. The Transport Act 1985 and related legislation* also gives local authorities the power, at their discretion, to offer discretionary enhancements to the statutory scheme, such as free travel before 09:30 or travel by other modes. (*Transport Act 2000 as amended by the Concessionary Bus Travel Act of 2007 and Travel Bedford Borough Equality Analysis 3 Concessions (Eligible Services) Order Act 2009)
3. In addition to the statutory ENCTS, Darlington offers (but has no legal duty to), the facility for pass holders unable to travel independently to be accompanied on their journey by a companion (carer) at no charge. This enhancement is limited to bus journeys made within Darlington, Co Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. The pass holder is not required to have their companion with them for every journey, as this depends on the nature of their condition. Darlington Borough Council pays for journeys that start within the Borough in line with the statutory scheme.
4. There are therefore two types of Disabled passes:
 - (a) Disabled – single person use.
 - (b) Companion – Disabled person plus companion.
5. Discretionary services are under review as part of the current MTFP process. The proposal considers the removal of this discretionary companion pass from Darlington's Concessionary Travel Scheme as one element of managing demand and significant costs associated with the scheme..
6. Companion entitlement is currently assessed on an individual basis, with the applicant required to obtain a statement from a medical professional, during the application process, as to why they require a companion to accompany them. The entitlement is usually granted to people with severe disabilities.
7. There are currently 635 disabled companion passes (July 2015) in Darlington (When the consultation was carried out in April 2016 there were 665 companion pass holders):

ENCTS Disability Companion pass holders	No
Blind or partially sighted	51
Has a learning disability	176
Long term disability/injury preventing ability to walk	326
No arms or lack of use of arms	0
Not further specified	17
Profoundly or severely deaf	11
Unfit to drive	49
Without speech	4
Total	635

8. In 2014/15 there were 500,400 journeys made by Darlington disabled pass holders, of which approximately 92,000 journeys were made by pass holders with the companion entitlement.
9. Approximately half of all journeys made by disabled companion pass holders were made without a companion. The cost of providing free travel for the companions of disabled companion pass holders in 2014/15 was approximately £87,000.
10. These figures have been reviewed using 2015/16 data supplied by the North East Smart Ticketing system (NESTI) in May 2016.
 - DBC Companion pass holders made approximately 52,000 journeys in 2015/16.

- 20,000 of these journeys were made by the pass holder without a Companion. These journeys will still be paid for under ENCTS and there would be no financial saving.
- 32,000 journeys were made with a Companion. The journeys made by the pass holder will still be paid for under ENCTS, therefore 16,000 trips can be associated to the companion. These would then either be a) not made at all; b) the Companion would pay the commercial fare; or c) the Companion would use their own pass. The financial saving would equate to approximately £18,572 in options a) and b) and less under option c). Not all of this saving would be secured. See section 5 for further information

Consideration of Removing Companion Passes from the Darlington Scheme

11. The current proposal as part of the MTFP is that any disabled person with a pass would still be able to travel for free but the companion would have to pay. The Council does not know what % of companions also have an ENCTS pass and would therefore still be eligible for free travel, or may be apply for a pass in their own right if the companion enhancement was no longer available. Any potential saving is also dependent on the agreement with bus operators for reimbursement in 2017/18, therefore the full amount may not be realised. Negotiation of the 2017/18 scheme starts in the autumn of 2016 and is undertaken for the whole of the Tees Valley by Stockton Borough Council under the new Combined Authority arrangements and for efficiency reasons.
12. Consideration will need to be given to how any change to the companion entitlement will affect the reimbursement arrangements with bus operators and how the scheme will work in practice. The other 4 Tees Valley authorities do not have a companion pass system in operation.
13. Other local authorities in the region that provide reciprocal arrangements with DBC will also need to be consulted i.e. Durham, Northumberland and Tyne & Wear (Nexus). These authorities also allow companions travelling with a Darlington Companion pass holder to travel for free, and in return Darlington pays for companions accompanying their pass holders to travel for free from the borough. This proposal will therefore impact on residents in other local authority areas with whom we have reciprocal arrangements.
14. This proposal and the recent changes to the assessment process, customer management system and 'hotlisting' to be introduced shortly aim to reduce the numbers using the scheme to the statutory minimum and help reduce fraudulent use as part of the series of measure being proposed to help manage demand and the costs associated with this scheme.

Who will be affected by the activity?

Whole population

All bus pass holders issued with a Darlington disabled companion bus pass under the Darlington Concessionary Travel Scheme.
 Any other disabled people who may be eligible but have not applied for a companion pass to date.
 Carers/companions/family members who currently travel with the disabled person.

Target population

Directly - the existing disabled companion pass holders; and
 Indirectly their companions.
 Plus anyone who applies during the consultation period.
 In addition Companion Pass holders from other boroughs that have a reciprocal agreement with DBC for the use of the passes (Nexus, Northumbria, Durham).

Individuals

There are currently 635 disabled companion passes (July 2015) in Darlington (665 as of April 2016). The proposal will impact on the pass holder and their companion/carers. The breakdown of pass holders is below:-

What data, research and other evidence or information is available which is relevant to the EIA?

National guidance on the assessment process is provided by the Department for Transport in its document: 'Guidance to local authorities on assessing eligibility of disabled people in England for concessionary bus travel; 8th April 2013'.

Information from other local authorities on the impact of removing this discretionary element from the Darlington Scheme (see page 27).

Data on the current use of the Companion Pass by existing pass holders – use/no use; frequency of use; accompanied or not.

Section 3: Officer Assessment

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable			Potential level of impact				Summary of Impact														
	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil															
Age	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	<p>Anyone aged 5 or over can apply for a disabled bus pass. Therefore, pass holders are all ages, (unlike the bus pass for older people which is only available to people of state pension age).</p> <p>40 of the 635 companion passes are issued to people aged 16 and under.</p> <p>50% of pass holders are aged between 17 and 50 with a further 40% aged 51-67.</p> <p>Analysis of age profile of companion pass holders:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age</th> <th>No of pass holders</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0-16</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>17-33</td> <td>159</td> </tr> <tr> <td>34-50</td> <td>160</td> </tr> <tr> <td>51-67</td> <td>241</td> </tr> <tr> <td>68-84</td> <td>58</td> </tr> <tr> <td>85-101</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age	No of pass holders	0-16	40	17-33	159	34-50	160	51-67	241	68-84	58	85-101	6
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0-16	40																					
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51-67	241																					
68-84	58																					
85-101	6																					
Race	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	There is no identifiable impact on race.														
Sex	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	51% of companion pass holders are male and 49% are female.														
Gender Reassignment	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	There is no identifiable impact.														
Disability (summary of detail on next page)	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	<p>Potential that 635 pass holders in total will not have funded transport for companions/carers.</p> <p>Pass holders may be required to fund via other sources having a financial implication.</p> <p>The proposal does not impact on the pass holder's eligibility to travel as they will still receive a concessionary pass. However, it may impact on the companion/carer who will have to pay to accompany the pass holder. This could have an impact on the Disabled person if the carer/companion is not able to fund the travel costs.</p>														

Religion or belief	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	There is no identifiable impact.
Sexual Orientation	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	There is no identifiable impact.
Pregnancy or maternity	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	There is no identifiable impact.
Marriage/ Civil Partnership	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	There is no identifiable impact.

Section 3: Officer Assessment - continued

<p>Mobility Impairment</p>	<p>P</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>nil</p>	<p>If the Companion Pass is not available, it may not be possible for a carer/companion to travel with the disabled person. This may negatively affect those with mobility issues who aren't able to mobilise to a bus stop or board/alight the bus without the aid of their companion. This will be specifically relevant to those people in manual wheelchairs and those who have multiple disabilities.</p> <p>This may result in the disabled person not being able to make the journeys that they need to make and reduce access to health services, shopping, personal business, work etc.</p> <p>The companion would need to pay for the journey in their own right (unless they also have a bus pass). This may have to be funded by the disabled person, creating additional cost to the disabled person. Or the cost may be borne by the carer/companion. In either case this may result in a reduction in the number of trips that can be made by the disabled person. This could affect their access to other services and reduce their ability to lead an independent life. It could also mean they are more isolated and lead to mental health issues.</p> <p>Of the July 2015 baseline of 635 passes there are 326 people who currently have a disabled companion pass on the basis of mobility impairment.</p>
<p>Visual impairment</p>	<p>P</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>nil</p>	<p>If the Companion Pass is not available, it may not be possible for a carer/companion to travel with the disabled person. This may negatively affect disabled people with visual impairments who aren't able to distinguish which service is arriving/departing from a particular bus stop. Those with visual impairments may also require assistance in getting to a particular</p>

								<p>bus stop.</p> <p>This may result in the disabled person not being able to make the journeys that they need to make and reduce access to health services, shopping, personal business, work etc.</p> <p>The companion would need to pay for the journey in their own right (unless they also have a bus pass). This may have to be funded by the disabled person, creating additional cost to the disabled person. Or the cost may be borne by the carer/companion. In either case this may result in a reduction in the number of trips that can be made by the disabled person. This could affect their access to other services. It could mean they are more isolated and lead to mental health issues.</p> <p>Of the July 2015 baseline of 635 passes there are 51 people who currently have a disabled companion pass on the basis of being blind or partially sighted.</p> <p>There are 49 people who currently have a disabled companion pass on the basis of being unfit to drive pursuant to section 92 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. This may include those with a visual impairment (specifically restricted visual fields/unable to read a number plate from 20.5m).</p>
<p>Hearing impairment</p>	<p>P</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>nil</p>	<p>If the Companion Pass is not available, it may not be possible for a carer/companion to travel with the disabled person. This may negatively affect those disabled people with a hearing impairment who have difficulty in distinguishing traffic noise, and require assistance with asking for a ticket from the driver.</p> <p>This may result in the disabled person not being able to make the journeys that they need to make and reduce access to health services, shopping, personal business, work etc.</p> <p>The companion would need to pay for</p>

								<p>the journey in their own right (unless they also have a bus pass). This may have to be funded by the disabled person, creating additional cost to the disabled person. Or the cost may be borne by the carer/companion. In either case this may result in a reduction in the number of trips that can be made by the disabled person. This could affect their access to other services and reduce their ability to lead an independent life. It could mean they are more isolated and lead to mental health issues.</p> <p>Of the July 2015 baseline of 635 passes there are 11 companion passes issued to people with a hearing impairment.</p>
<p>Learning Disability</p>	<p>P</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>nil</p>	<p>If the Companion Pass is not available, it may not be possible for a carer/companion to travel with the disabled person. This may negatively affect disabled people with significant learning disabilities who aren't able to give instruction to the bus driver as to where they wish to travel to and who require help in getting to the relevant bus stop. There may also be those who require support with learning unfamiliar routes and who rely on their companion to assist them either some or all of the time.</p> <p>This may result in the disabled person not being able to make the journeys that they need to make and reduce access to health services, shopping, personal business, work etc.</p> <p>The companion would need to pay for the journey in their own right (unless they also have a bus pass). This may have to be funded by the disabled person, creating additional cost to the disabled person. Or the cost may be borne by the carer/companion. In either case this may result in a reduction in the number of trips that can be made by the disabled person. This could affect their access to other services and reduce their ability to lead an independent life. It could mean they are more isolated and lead to mental health issues.</p>

								Of the July 2015 baseline of 635 passes there are 176 people who currently have a disabled companion pass on the basis of a learning disability.
Mental Health	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	<p>If the Companion Pass is not available, it may not be possible for a carer/companion to travel with the disabled person. This may negatively affect those with severe mental health conditions, who may have memory and behavioural issues and require the support of a companion to travel independently.</p> <p>This may result in the disabled person not being able to make the journeys that they need to make and reduce access to health services, shopping, personal business, work etc.</p> <p>The companion would need to pay for the journey in their own right (unless they also have a bus pass). This may have to be funded by the disabled person, creating additional cost to the disabled person. Or the cost may be borne by the carer/companion. In either case this may result in a reduction in the number of trips that can be made by the disabled person. This could affect their access to other services and reduce their ability to lead an independent life. The potential to increase their isolation in the community may exacerbate their mental health issues.</p> <p>There are 49 people who currently have a disabled companion pass on the basis of being unfit to drive pursuant to section 92 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. This may include those with a specific relevant mental health diagnosis.</p>
Long Term Limiting Illness	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	<p>If the Companion Pass is not available, it may not be possible for a carer/companion to travel with the disabled person. This may result in the disabled person not being able to make the journeys that they need to make and reduce access to health services, shopping, personal</p>

								business, work etc. The companion would need to pay for the journey in their own right (unless they also have a bus pass). This may have to be funded by the disabled person, creating additional cost to the disabled person. Or the cost may be borne by the carer/companion. In either case this may result in a reduction in the number of trips that can be made by the disabled person. This could affect their access to other services and reduce their ability to lead an independent life. It could mean they are more isolated and lead to mental health issues. Those who qualify for a disabled person's bus pass must have a long term disability; therefore many companion bus pass holders will have a specific relevant long term limiting illness.
Multiple Impairments	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	There is no evidence on the numbers of people with multiple impairments as the applicant only needs to provide evidence for one disability.
Other - specific categories in the ENCTS guidance i.e. without speech, no arms/lack of use of arms	P	N	NA	H	M	L	nil	Of the July 2015 baseline of 635 passes there are 17 companion passes issued where no further detail has been specified. 49 issued to people unfit to drive - pursuant to section 92 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 4 issued to people without speech

Cumulative Impacts	
Change activities	Potential cumulative impacts
This proposal should be considered in	There are 375 people within the 635 existing pass holders that

conjunction with the recent change to the assessment process for those applying for a disabled bus pass, as well as the re-assessment of existing disabled pass holders. This change only applies to those who apply/have applied under category **D** (has a disability, or has suffered an injury, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to walk) and **G** (would, if he or she applied for the grant of a licence to drive a motor vehicle under part III of the Road Traffic Act 1988, have his/her application refused pursuant to section 92 of the Act (physical fitness) otherwise than on the ground of persistent misuse of drugs or alcohol) of the ENCTS.

The client groups affected here will be affected by welfare reform and other DBC charging and criteria changes.

Some client groups may also be affected by other DBC proposed changes within the MTFP that impact on disabled people such as:

- Review of Sensory Impairment Service at Vane House.
- C8 Cease funding to Aspire Service for school leavers with learning difficulties.
- C2 Review of Statutory Minimum Service Costs.
- W20 Blue Badge parking
- S13 Removal of Social Fund Budget.
- C5 Cease contract which provides support to vulnerable people aged 25+ who are homeless or at risk.
- C6 End Drug and Alcohol Floating Support
- S9 Reductions to Obesity funding.
- C9 Cease funding for Information Co-ordinator provided through DAD.

were issued a pass under categories **D&G**. The cumulative impact may be the loss of the companion disabled pass and a reassessment which results in the loss of the disabled pass as well.

Ability to fund additional costs for a companion to travel with them. This may increase the costs associated with activities.

Locations where services are delivered may change and this may change the travel requirements for certain client groups. This may increase the use of bus travel or make bus travel more complicated if clients have to change buses. This may reduce access to services.

Personal budgets will be affected if companion bus pass holders have to start paying for their companion to travel with them. Dependency on formal care services may increase.

Those who use their companion pass to remain in the community may be impacted if both services cease.

Independence may decrease further if service users rely on their companion bus pass and can no longer make those journeys.

If have a companion pass due to health conditions associated with drugs and alcohol, their ability to travel independently would decrease further.

Those who have mobility issues due to obesity and require assistance to travel may be impacted/future applications will not be possible.

Reduction in advice available to disabled people on how to travel to and access services with assistance, without companion entitlement.

The impacts identified in this proposal have been added to the cumulative impact assessment contained within the overall MTFP report.

Section 4: Engagement Decision

The decision about who to engage with, and how and when to engage, is the key to effective EIA. Please see Annex 2 of the Equality Scheme for guidance on the engagement decision.

Is engagement with affected people with Protected Characteristics required, now or during the further development of the activity?	Yes / No
If YES, proceed to the next section. If NO, briefly summarise below the reasons why you have reached this conclusion.	
n/a	

Section 5 – Involvement and Engagement Planning

Has the assessment shown that the activity will treat any groups of people with Protected Characteristics differently from other people? Yes/No

If yes, please state which groups and how

The ENCTS companion pass operates for the benefit of the disabled and their companions and helps to provide protected groups access to facilities therefore promoting equality of opportunity. Consequently, the proposal to withdraw funding for the companion pass will affect the disabled and potentially their carers. Further, analysis has shown that 305 of the 635 holders of the companion pass holders are aged 51 or over.

Will the differential treatment advance equality for people with Protected Characteristics? Yes/No

If yes, please state which groups and how

Will the differential treatment cause or increase disadvantage for people with Protected Characteristics? Yes

If yes, please state which groups and how

Disabled people who have a companion disabled bus pass.

The disadvantage is financial i.e. the disabled person can continue to travel for free in line with ENCTS but their companion must pay.

The impact of this may be that it reduces their independence, affects their health & wellbeing and reduces their access to services.

Involvement and Engagement Plan

Which organisations, groups and individuals do you need to involve or engage and how?

Date of plan entry	Organisation, Group or Individuals	Date of event or activity	Type of activity – venue, channels, method and staffing
07/08/2015	Gordon Pybus, DAD	07/08/15	Meeting to discuss the proposal and approach to EIA in terms of involving disabled people.
	Darlington Residents	Feb 2016	Publications of MTFP proposals and Consultation period
	Neighbouring Local Authorities	March 2016	Discussions and emails with Durham, Tyne and Wear and Northumberland (also wider area through relevant community on the Knowledge Hub).
w/c 11 th April 2016	Darlington Association on Disability	w/c 11 th Apr 2016	Letter outlining proposal and inviting comments on Impact
	RNIB	w/c 11 th Apr 2016	Letter outlining proposal and inviting comments on Impact
	Guide Dogs	w/c 11 th Apr 2016	Letter outlining proposal and inviting comments on Impact
	DBC Health and Social Care	w/c 11 th Apr 2016	Letter outlining proposal and inviting comments on Impact
	Every Companion Pass holder	w/c 11 th Apr 2016	Individual letter sent to every companion pass holder outlining proposal and inviting comments on the impact this will have on them personally. This was a total of 665 letters . For breakdown by eligibility criteria see Table 1 below. (36 were aged 16 and under)
	Darlington Residents	w/c 11 th Apr 2016	Concessionary Travel Website
	New Bus Pass applicants	w/c 11 th Apr 2016	An insert is in the bus pass application forms for disabled people to gather impacts of new applicants who may also be affected.
	Darlington Councillors and Residents	14 th Apr 2016	Special Place Scrutiny Committee on MTFP Proposals – Including W15
	Talking Newspaper	27 th Apr 2016	Details of proposal included in weekly recording and sent to Northern Echo regular distribution list of people with visual impairment.
	Other Local Authorities in the North East Reciprocal arrangement	April/May 2016	Correspondence

	Other Authorities further a field	April/May 2016	Correspondence
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Table 1

Disability	Number
I am registered blind or partially sighted	97
I am profoundly or severely deaf	8
I am without speech	0
Long term disability affecting ability to walk	297
I do not have the use of my arms	0
I have a significant learning disability	200
I am unable to drive due to a medical condition	61
Not further specified	2
TOTAL	665

Section 6: Engagement Findings

	Date/summary of engagement carried out	Summary of impacts identified
Age		N/A
Disability	Consultation Letter (April 2016)	<p>83 responses to the consultation letter were received. (48 from the pass holder themselves and 33 from their carer/family)</p> <p>The impacts identified by pass holders, are set out as below, by number of comments received:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Impact on health, well being, social inclusion and independence (as wouldn't be able to make the same number of journeys as do currently) – 56 2. Benefits will be affected/financial pressures felt – 52 3. Couldn't go out unaided - 41 4. Carer's allowance/carers would have to bear the cost of their journeys – 9 5. Would be housebound – 7 6. No longer require companion entitlement – 6 7. Ability to travel won't be affected as travel with a pass holder - 1 <p>Letter received from DAD – see Appendix 1</p> <p>Letter received from a constituent via Jenny Chapman MP – see Appendix 2</p>
Mobility Impairment	Consultation Letter	<p>33 responses received – 97 pass holders (24 from pass holder and 9 from carer/family):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Impact on health, well being, social inclusion and independence – 24 2. Benefits will be affected/financial pressures felt – 22 3. Couldn't go out unaided – 12 4. Would be housebound – 6 5. Carer's allowance/carers would have to bear the cost of their journeys – 4 6. No longer require companion entitlement – 2
Visual impairment	Consultation Letter	<p>15 responses received – 97 pass holders (7 from pass holder and 8 from carer/family):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Couldn't go out unaided – 10* 2. Impact on health, well being, social inclusion and independence – 9 3. Benefits will be affected/financial pressures felt – 9 4. Carer's allowance/carers would have to bear the cost of their journeys – 4 5. Would be housebound – 1 6. No longer require companion entitlement – 1 <p>*Comments included not being able to see which bus is arriving at the bus stop without a companion, and</p>

	Consultation Letter	<p>needing help to board and alight the bus.</p> <p>Letter received from resident – see Appendix 3.</p>
Hearing impairment	Consultation Letter	<p>2 responses received – 8 pass holders (1 from pass holder and 1 from carer/family):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Impact on health, well being, social inclusion and independence – 1 2. Benefits will be affected/financial pressures felt – 1 3. Couldn't go out unaided – 1* 4. No longer require companion entitlement – 1 <p>*Comments included being unable to hear the traffic, needing an interpreter as uses sign language, and needing help with day to day activities when out and about.</p>
Learning Disability	<p>Consultation Letter</p> <p>People's Parliament (25 April 2016)</p>	<p>23 responses received – 200 pass holders (9 from pass holder and 15 from carer/family):</p> <p>The impacts identified by pass holders, are set out as below, by number of comments received:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Impact on health, well being, social inclusion and independence – 17 2. Benefits will be affected/financial pressures felt – 14 3. Couldn't go out unaided – 11* 4. Carer's allowance/carers would have to bear the cost of their journeys – 1 (parent) 5. No longer require companion entitlement – 2 6. Ability to travel won't be affected as travel with a pass holder - 1 <p>*Comments around not being able to identify which bus to get, relying on the Aspire team and the companion entitlement when needing to learn a new bus route, unable to tell the time or read a bus timetable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a direct payment and employ's a PA uses the companion pass. SR will have to cut something else back if companion free travel stopped, I won't be able to afford to go out as much. • It's a big impact as although his Direct Payment is provided it is unlikely to be enough to cover all travel costs and therefore SR won't be able to achieve what the Direct Payment is meeting the need of – social interaction and social inclusion. • Its going to impact on a particular group of disabled people, those who require support to travel will be impacted. In effect it is taking away their right to free travel if they have to pay for their companion personally. How was

		<p>the calculation of the amount of money that this proposal will save arrived at? Some people have said the companions are not always issued with a ticket.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The poor and disadvantaged are being targeted; it feels like you kick the dog that doesn't bark as don't have the powers of redress. Cuts can create stress and mental health issues which then causes further strains on public services/ resources. If people become hospitalised cost more. • Leads to multiple impacts on people, benefits can be stopped, and whilst awaiting appeal can't have free dental care. Obviously, whilst benefits stopped people have little or no money to pay for PA expenses including travel. If the companion element stops this would be a further strain on a person whose benefits have been stopped. Also, if they need support to attend (benefit) meetings again they may be liable for companion bus charges whilst benefit's suspended putting further strain on the person. <p>Letters from People's Parliament – see Appendix 5 and 5a.</p>
	DBC Budget Page	<p>I am emailing you to ask if you can help in not allowing the withdrawal of companion bus passes. Don't know if you remember I have emailed in the past over cuts to services and this is another one. The person I care for is 47 years old and has Downs Syndrome and cannot travel independently so the pass is very important to his wellbeing as it allows him to socialise and visit different places which can only be beneficial to his mental health, also his healthcare services are two bus rides each way. Once again the disabled, vulnerable and low paid are at the front of cuts. I hope I can count on your support in keeping companion passes.</p>
	DAD Young Leaders	<p>Details of impacts received from DAD Young Leader's – see Appendix 4.</p>
Mental Health	Consultation Letter	<p>7 responses received – 61 pass holders (all from pass holder):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Couldn't go out unaided – 7 2. Benefits will be affected/financial pressures felt – 6 3. Impact on health, well being, social inclusion and independence – 5
Long Term Limiting Illness	Consultation Letter	<p>In order to qualify for a concessionary bus pass, the condition(s) must be long term, and or likely to recur; therefore see 'Disabled' above.</p>
Multiple Impairments	Consultation Letter	<p>Many of companion pass holders, by the nature of the pass have multiple impairments. Refer to 'Disabled'</p>

above and the following specific impacts:

"It will mean I won't be able to visit my daughter in Bishop Auckland or go out as I have been in hospital 4 times because I have passed out I have Angina, High Blood Pressure, 3 trapped nerves in my spine, my doctor filled the form in for me to get this pass as I do not feel safe going out on my own and with bus fares going up I wouldn't be able to take anyone with me which would mean me staying in."

"I was with my companion recently and had a very bad angina attack which needed hospital treatment if I hadn't had a companion with me when I did god knows what would of happened..... I have panic attacks too when I'm around people whom I don't know due to a assault... if my companion part of my bus pass was withdrawn I would be housebound completely..... which to be honest is freaking me out now just thinking about it... I know you have to make cut backs and yes I due understand but to cut companion part of my bus pass means I will not be able to go out as that freedom would be taking away from me personally..hoping you find another way to cut back."

"In view to withdraw the companion pass would be a hindrance to myself. I am visually impaired and have multiple illnesses I.e kidney disease, stomach disease to mention a few. I am always going to and from hospital appointments here in Darlington, Middlesbrough and Durham. By withdrawing the companion pass it will make a big difference to me because I need people to take me to these appointments, especially when I have injections in my eyes and I struggle to see. If people had to pay they wouldn't want to take me because it can turn out to be expensive with the amount of appointments I have. This would mean myself paying but because at the age of 47 I have medically retired and do not receive much money the cost would fall on me which would have an impact on my budget. Apart from hospital appointments getting about to do shopping without these people could become a struggle. There are times I travel to town and back myself but that is when I am not shopping or carrying things. I hope you take everything into consideration of my dilemma and of others before you come to the conclusion this concession art pass needs to be withdrawn."

"We are extremely disappointed and saddened to hear of this proposal. Our grandson William Smith came into our care over four years ago and the companion pass has proven itself to be invaluable for us as a family. We (William's grandparents) have had to give up full time employment (both work part time) to care

for William and rely heavily on this pass to take William to various appointments but more essentially to give him access to different environments and experiences to stimulate his emotional and social well being. William is unable to entertain himself and not physically able to walk long distances, Without the companion pass we fear he wouldn't be able to access the things he loves to do, and would virtually become house bound at weekends and school holidays and even some evenings thus affecting not only Williams well being but also us his grandparents. William is unable to go anywhere alone; he has no road sense or stranger danger. Neither myself or my husband drive and we have no family around to help us. Yet again the vulnerable people in our society are losing out."

"As his mother I am writing on his behalf because he is unable to express himself due to his autism, learning disabilities and mental health issues. If his carers/support workers were unable to travel with him for free, then he would have to pay for their fares himself. Therefore creating a barrier financially and his ability to travel freely without restrictions. This would limit his choices and it would affect his well-being and mental health. He would get very anxious if his daily living routines were to change, impacting on his independence and confidence too. The provision of the companion entitlement has helped him to gain independence and confidence, so withdrawing it would impact on him drastically, especially financially as he would have to limit his journeys significantly."

"I am writing on behalf of my son after receiving a letter regarding proposed withdrawal of companion entitlement. This would appear to be one of several consultations we have responded to, all of which will increase the cost of living a normalised life for a disabled person. As a quadriplegic person with learning disabilities, it would be impossible for him to ever travel unaccompanied. The reality is that the cost of a companion to travel with him would always fall on him and as he has no prospect of being able to work, this would have to met from his limited benefit income. This would translate to limiting the times that he could lead a social life, and get out and about for daily living. I have grave concerns that some of the most vulnerable members of society will be hardest hit and yet unable to respond to this consultation through learning or physical disability if they have no one to advocate on their behalf. This would give the Council a false impression that the change will have minimal impact, when the reality would be very different."

"I am extremely opposed to this, as I would be further limited in getting out and about. I was originally given

the pass due to deafness and mental health issues, however I now have severe mobility problems and can not go anywhere without someone to accompany me. I feel that if this entitlement was removed from my travel pass, I would not be able to travel to get to my medical appointments, to go shopping or visit friends and family, including my newborn Grandson. The only way I would be able to travel is that if I paid for passes for my carer to accompany me, which I will not really be able to afford. This would also mean that my carer would be unable to look after me in the way that my conditions require, as I am unable to propel myself in my wheelchair, and board buses on my own, and shopping would be something of an impossibility, as would medical appointments and social outings. If I were made to pay for their travel my income would suffer tremendously, and this would result in me not going anywhere or getting to see anyone. My thoughts are that yet again the disabled people are being targeted and treated less than fairly with this current proposal. I would only hope that you show some compassion and leave things as they are for the benefit of the disabled. Most services for the disabled have already been cut, and this feels like a final kick in the teeth for disabled people, almost like kicking us when we are down. It is not fair, and it is not right."

"I am deaf and have cerebal palsy and I am also in a wheel chair as I can't walk without assistance and I also talk using sign language and need an interpreter/carere to help me get about my day to day life so if I could not have a companion with me to do day to day life then I could not go into town for shopping or a look out to get me out the house, or to doctors appointments and dentist appointments or to go visit friends and family. If this was to happen the cost of my companion to travel with me would fall onto me and would mean that I would not be able to afford to go out and do the things I would like to do. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to let you know how this would affect me in the hope that this will not go ahead."

"This would affect my ability to travel to hospital appointments, any trips out of town, visit family and friends etc. Reason being I have arthritis in knees, neck and other joints also a lot of pain and dizziness because of this. I am also diabetic Type 2 with heart failure and need support from my wife who is my companion, therefore if the pass was withdrawn at 78 years old I would be restricted quite a lot as I can't walk very far and sometimes suffer with breathlessness, leaving my wife to pay for her own travel."

"If the pass was to stop for my carer, it would mean I

		<p>would not be able to go out as the cost would be down to me to pay and I could not afford it, therefore I would lose my independence as I cannot go out on my own. I am wheelchair bound and I have severe epilepsy. I can take up to 20-30 fits a day, and I have no other family members that can take me as my mother is also in a wheelchair and the rest of my family like my brother and sister take care of me and my mum as best they can. They are not able to travel on a bus with me, so I rely on my carer from Mencap. They take me out 3 times a week. I go into town, meet friends, do my shopping and they take me to doctors appointments and places like that, so as you can see my companion is needed and without it I would have no quality of life at all as my benefits only stretch so far. I have not wrote this letter myself my niece has written it for me as I cannot write."</p> <p>"My family would urge that this entitlement is retained for those most in need and with severe disability. The pass holder is wheelchair bound and has learning difficulties, and lives with her 79 year old mum who has limited vision and they rely on a family member to escort them with any trips out of the home. The family member, who is an older sister, is on the minimum wage and has financial difficulties under normal circumstances. The withdrawal of this entitlement will lead to the pass holder and her mum not able to go out as often due to not being able to afford additional bus fares. Please can the Cabinet consider retaining this vital entitlement for those in most need and not dilute the quality of life for the pass holder and her mum."</p>
Other - Specify		
Race		
Sex		
Gender Reassignment		
Religion or belief		
Sexual Orientation		
Pregnancy or maternity		
Marriage / Civil		

General comment received through DBC budget micro site:

This proposal seems to impact on the most vulnerable people in Darlington. If you have already assessed a person as needing a companion bus pass, surely this shows that without the pass, they will then not be able to use their free bus pass.

For anyone who drives, it is hard to imagine relying solely on public transport, let alone if a person also needs a carer to use this public transport; it is taking away their total ability to be a citizen and take part in their community.

When making the tough decisions that the council has to make, this group of people must be a priority. If you can not travel into the town centre facilities such as the library and market place become little use.

Feedback from the local authorities in the North East reciprocal agreement:**Durham County Council**

- Darlington would be standardising with the rest of the Tees Valley, but that is out of line with the majority practice in England.
- Anecdotally, attendees of the DCC 'Disability Parliament' express a strong appreciation of the companion entitlement and a wish that it was valid across the whole TV region. At present people who travel into Teesside are often confused as to why they can't board in the same way as they do the rest of the North East.

Nexus

- This will have little or no impact on Tyne & Wear reimbursement. We have 99.9% agreed 2 year fixed deals with our three large operators. It would seem unlikely that this proposal would significantly reduce the number of people boarding in Tyne & Wear.

Feedback was also gathered from local authorities further afield, which can be found below:

Staffordshire County Council	Our criteria is Higher Rate Care of DLA or 12 points on PIP for mobility, wheelchair bound or has a reason why they cannot travel alone (medical evidence is required). We allow companion passes for both disabled and older persons.
Devon County Council	<p>We've gradually tightened up on the eligibility criteria to restrict applications to those whose ability to access travel is severely restricted and would be virtually impossible without a companion. A lot of work has gone into educating our learning disability teams across the county and also working with certain schools and colleges to ensure we get genuine applications.</p> <p>We don't issue passes to children under secondary school age. This is in line with other DCC transport policies.</p> <p>We don't issue companions for travel training; one of the usual requests we get from enablers and support workers.</p> <p>As one would expect, those with severe disabilities simply don't travel very much so paying for the companion for those people doesn't cost a lot.</p>
East/West Sussex and Kent	We try to only issue to the most vulnerable clients who need support. We are lenient to those using it for travel training, as long as it is clear they wouldn't be able to travel without support; however we try to only issue 1 year passes if we think they should be travelling without a companion in future once successful.

	What is very clear is that this scheme could be part of an overall care package provided by the County Council. I believe it could reduce other transport budgets for adults and children by increasing the provision to all day, but we would need appropriate funding allocation to do so. If the scheme was to be reviewed I would strongly support a more joined up approach to how we use the concessionary bus pass and try and treat it more as a part of the care package instead of just another benefit.
Essex County Council	We follow the first principle of independent living; if someone needs to use something or someone to enable independent living, they should not be penalised for that requirement. Companion passes are designed to offer people with disabilities so severe that they are not able to travel without an accompanying carer (either all or some of the time) the ability to make use of their pass. The Companion Pass therefore gives an equal opportunity to make use of public transport. A person qualifies for the companion add-on to their pass where they can show that they are not able to travel alone, either all the time, or on a regular basis.

Companion pass usage and cost - 15/16

In 15/16, approximately 52,000 journeys were made in Darlington by companion bus pass holders and their companions:

This figure is journeys made by DBC issued pass holders only. It does not include those people who come to Darlington using a Companion pass from outside the Borough; Darlington are required to pay for those people with whom we have reciprocal arrangements for their return journey from within Darlington

	Number of Journeys	Estimated Journey Costs	Estimated cost to DBC if Companion pass withdrawn
Journeys made by companion pass holder travelling unaccompanied	20,000	£23,216	£23,216 ¹
Journeys made by companion of pass holder travelling accompanied	32,000, therefore 16,000 journeys being made by the companion of the pass holder.	£37,145 ²	Minimum £18,572 ³

The approximate cost was £60,361. However 38% of these trips were by pass holders travelling without a companion and therefore there is no reason why these journeys would not continue going forward, with or without the companion pass. Therefore this element would not generate a saving.

The approximate cost of issuing free travel to companions in 15/16 was £18,572, i.e. 50% of £37,145. If the companion pass was withdrawn then there would be a change in travel behaviour amongst these pass holders. It is difficult to determine from the feedback what the reduction in trips would be or whether companions would opt to pay a commercial fare or use their own bus pass if they had one. However, 71% of pass holders make some trips on their own and they may opt to make more trips on their own, reducing the amount of saving that would be made.

¹ assuming pass holders continue to make same number of journeys

² Total ENCTS reimbursement/total ENCTS journeys in 15/16

³ Assumes that pass holders make same number of journeys and companions pay. This does not include those people from outside Darlington who make return trips from Darlington with companion passes.

386 companion passes were used in 2015/16 of which:

Type of travel	Number of passes
Never travelled without companion	80
Only used without companion	31
Travelled both with and without companion	275, of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 109 travel for over 50% of trips without companion.• 158 travel for over 50% of trips with companion.• 6 have equal number of trips with companion and without companion.

Concessionary fares negotiation

As part of the move to the Combined Authority the Tees Valley Councils have a joint approach to the concessionary negotiation with the bus operators, which is led on our behalf by Stockton Borough Council. The payments are negotiated and agreed each year for the statutory scheme and any local enhancements. Any unexpected in year savings (or additional costs), due to significant changes affecting the scheme, are split between all 5 Tees Valley authorities, sharing the risks/costs as well as any savings/benefits. Therefore, the full saving may not be realised by DBC. The reduction/growth in trips and management of demand will be reflected in future year's settlements for the scheme.

The cost of replacing 665 companion bus passes with disabled bus passes will be £1,543 (plus administration time in ordering the passes/organising a bulk renewal of passes). This one-off cost will also offset any potential saving.

Section 6: Engagement Findings – Continued

a) How will the proposal help to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?

The proposal will not help to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Some disabled people may make more trips alone if the pass is withdrawn and without a companion they may be more at risk from discrimination, harassment and victimisation by other members of the public.

b) How will the proposal help to advance equality of opportunity?

The ENCTS is a statutory scheme applied across England, providing the same opportunities to disabled people, in terms of eligibility. However the companion pass ensures that those disabled people who are unable to travel alone are also able to use their opportunity to travel by public transport. Withdrawing the pass would reduce choice and opportunity for this group of disabled people, unless they have the financial ability to pay for a carer/companion to travel.

c) How will the proposal help to foster good relations?

The proposal will not help to foster good relations as it could potentially mean that those who can no longer travel with a companion become more socially isolated and/ or are unable to attend meetings/ appointments/ community groups, etc. Companions who used to travel for free in Darlington with a companion pass issued by a neighbouring local authority, may complain to their council if they can no longer travel for free in Darlington, this does not foster good relations.

During the engagement process were there any suggestions on how to avoid, minimise or mitigate any negative impacts? If so, please give details.

Suggestions received from companion pass holders as below:

- “How about a companion fare - £1 return anywhere in Darlington and £4 return anywhere in the North East (day ticket). This would enable visits to other hospitals and occasional days out to continue.”
- “Just a thought about withdrawing the companion pass, why not have senior pass holders pay 10 pence per journey I think they could afford that.”
- “Solutions I would like to put forward:
 1. Possible £20/£30 year charge so the companion could travel free.
 2. Target people with Blue Badge holders half can move/walk very well and use public transport I see it every day.
 3. Means test the elderly most I know could use buses i.e. not cars and don't even use the bus passes they have and could easily afford to pay for the bus pass.”