

News story: Free bus passes for older and disabled people protected for the future

Disabled and older people in England will continue to benefit from free off-peak bus travel for the foreseeable future, keeping them connected with their local towns and cities.

Bus passengers aged over 65 or with a disability have been entitled to travel free of charge on any off-peak local service in England since 2007, thanks to the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme.

The government has now amended legislation to protect the scheme in its current format, so that it can continue for years to come.

Buses Minister Nusrat Ghani said:

Being able to get out and about is hugely important for older and disabled people to keep their independence and play a role in their local community.

Buses help connect people, homes and businesses and nearly 10 million people in this country are already benefitting from free off-peak bus travel.

The legislation underpinning our important bus pass scheme is now set for the future, meaning this group will be able to access their local services and amenities.

The legislation behind the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme has been amended so that it no longer needs to be reviewed every 5 years. New regulations will ensure millions of older and disabled people up and down the country can continue to make use of buses to go about their daily lives.

In addition to the bus pass scheme, the government provides £250 million every year for bus services in England, £40 million of which helps to fund routes that may not be commercially viable but which are considered socially necessary – ensuring people are connected with their local services and communities.

Francesca Di Giorgio, Inclusion Policy Manager at RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People) said:

Blind and partially sighted people rely on bus services to get to work, visit friends and family, and be part of the community. Buses are a vital lifeline bringing independence to many people with

sight loss.

We are really pleased that the concessionary bus pass scheme will continue to run, guaranteeing free off-peak bus travel for people registered blind and partially sighted.

Dave Bracher, Campaigns Manager, Spinal Injuries Association said:

Buses provide a lifeline to many of our members, enabling them to be active in their local communities, commute to work, visit family and friends and undertake a host of other activities.

We know that having a spinal cord injury, like any disability, attracts significant additional costs – and this initiative helps people financially and to lead active, engaged and fulfilled lives.