

Age Cymru is the leading national charity working to improve the lives of all older people in Wales. We believe older people should be able to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, have adequate income, access to high quality services and the opportunity to shape their own future. We seek to provide a strong voice for all older people in Wales and to raise awareness of the issues of importance to them.

We are pleased to respond to The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's inquiry into the Welsh Government's plans for the next Wales and Borders Rail Franchise and the next stage in development of the South Wales Metro.

- 1. The effectiveness of the Welsh Government's approach to the development, procurement and delivery of the rail franchise and South Wales Metro, including key risks and how they can be mitigated; and**
- 2. Priorities for the franchise specification and Metro delivery to ensure rail services meet the needs of current and future travellers throughout the franchise area, and deliver value for money for both passengers and the taxpayer.**

2.1 Integrated transport network and access to services

Public and community transport are vitally important in helping older people to maintain independence and well-being. Such transport networks can ensure communities are well-connected and that services, facilities and amenities are accessible to older people. Without these, there is an increased risk that isolation and loneliness will impact upon people's well-being.

2.2 We believe a fully integrated sustainable transport network, with trains and buses linked to other forms of transport including pedestrian and cycle routes should be developed, with better integration between transport and key services. The needs of those individuals without access to a car should be addressed by transport providers.

2.3 Demographic factors

We believe that it is important to take into account demographic factors and the likely impact of an ageing population in the design of rail services and facilities, and we have highlighted some issues below.

2.4 Accessibility

Improvements in accessibility in getting to/from railway stations, being able to move from one platform to another (without barriers such as stairs) and getting on and off the train should be a high priority. Accessibility problems at some railway stations include physical barriers such as stairs to platforms, a lack of lifts, and difficulties in negotiating the gap between the train and the platform edge. Such barriers in the built environment may prevent some older people from being able

to use rail services. We believe that wherever feasible, lifts should be available at all stations to enable passengers to cross from one platform to another.

2.5 Infrastructure at stations

Older people who can and want to use trains require reliable rail travel supported by station facilities and infrastructure that enable passengers to be able to wait in comfort, such as seating and shelter on platforms and accessible toilet facilities in stations.

2.6 Reliable rail travel is very important. However, in the event of service disruption passengers should be kept informed and updated. The impact of service disruption would be made worse by poor facilities for those waiting (e.g. no accessible toilets, not enough seating and shelter) and a lack of accessible and updated service information.

2.7 Priority seating on train services

Some older people are unable to stand unaided or for long periods, hence standing on train journeys would not be an acceptable way to travel. It is important that sufficient priority seating is available on all trains so that people who are unable to stand on journeys can be seated at all times during their journey.

2.8 Toilet facilities on-board trains

In addition to the provision of toilet facilities at stations, we believe it is important that toilet facilities are provided on-board all train services.

We believe that the provision of toilets for public use is vital to enable older people to maintain their dignity and to be able to participate fully in public life.

2.9 Provision of information

Many older people are not able to access online information, so it is essential that information about public transport services is accessible in various formats, including printed timetable information in a sufficiently large font size. Services provided online need to be high quality and easy to use, whilst offline services should be of equal quality and fully accessible. Service providers must ensure that the provision of online information is not to the detriment of the provision of information in other formats.

2.10 Staff training

It is important that staff at railway stations and on-board trains understand the needs of older passengers, and we would wish to see training in equalities incorporated into staff training.