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Our Reference: 202400421333

Your Reference: Public Transport and Health Services (Case Ref: KB3259 )

29 July 2024

Dear Keith,

Thank you for your letter dated 26 June 2024 about public transport links to healthcare. I am replying as bus services and community transport fall within my portfolio responsibilities.

I am sorry to hear about the issues with bus services currently being experienced by your constituents in the Muckhart area, particularly in relation to transport to healthcare provision. However, I am pleased to hear that Glenfarg Community Transport (GCT) are considering if they can extend their services to the area. I recognise the important role community transport services play as part of the transport network in Scotland and the major part they play in providing transport services for those who have no private transport, are unable to access conventional bus services or where suitable services are limited. I will be visiting GCT on 1 August and looking forward to hearing more about their services and the challenges faced by the community transport sector in Scotland.

As you will be aware, the majority of services in Scotland operate in an open de-regulated market and the provision of local bus services is a matter for individual bus operators who use their own commercial judgement on service routes, frequencies and vehicle types. Scottish Ministers have no powers to intervene in these matters. Under the Transport Act 1985, local authorities have a duty to identify where there is a social need for particular bus services and can subsidise these at their discretion. This procedure allows local transport authorities to influence the frequency, routing of services or vehicle types used however this is entirely a matter for the local authority to consider and action. Funding to local authorities for bus service provision is included in the General Revenue Grant with responsibility for decisions on how best to deliver services in communities resting with locally elected representatives.

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Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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In relation to access to healthcare, The Scottish Government recognises that Transport plays an important role in supporting patients' health journeys. Removing transport and other barriers will help ensure that patients across Scotland are able to access the right care, in the right place and at the right time.

All Health Boards should consider patient transport needs when they plan and deliver services and must ensure patients have access to all information on any relevant patient transport (including community transport) and travel reimbursement entitlement. Boards are expected to support patients to identify and access support available, taking account individual circumstances and ensuring patient care is at the centre of all decisions. Financial support for travel is available for patients and authorised escorts, according to eligibility criteria and medical requirements.

The Scottish Ambulance Service Patient Transport Service (PTS) supports those patients who have a medical or mobility need for transport to be able to access scheduled hospital appointments. When patients contact SAS to request support from PTS, Scheduled Care Coordinators will ask a number of questions, this is part of a Patients Needs Assessment (PNA) to determine whether the patient has a clinical need for assistance from skilled staff. The Patient Transport Service can be contacted on 0300 123 1236.

Going forward, the Scottish Government recognises that more work needs to be done to bring transport planning and health service planning together. We will shortly publish the Transport to Health plan and have been engaging with Health Boards, Regional Transport Partnerships and other partners to take forward a range of commitments to improve joined up working on transport to health.

While I am not able to intervene in this case, I would like to reassure you that the Scottish Government is committed, in conjunction with operators and local authorities, to improving services to ensure everyone has accessible public transport regardless of where they live.

Yours sincerely



**JIM FAIRLIE**

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