

BSWB 19 - Evidence from: Dial A Ride Denbighshire Ltd

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Bil Gwasanaethau Bysiau (Cymru) | Bus Services (Wales) Bill

1. What are your views on the general principles of the Bill, and is there a need for legislation to deliver the stated policy intention?

Dial A Ride Denbighshire is in support of this policy, We are based in a coastal town but also cover many rural villages. These villages can have little or no public provisions available to them, The current legislation has isolated many residents of rural villages from main stream towns this can become expensive, and inaccessible leaving many people unable to connect with the people and the places they love. We welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to a network that puts people before profit, and securing accessible and affordable transport for all. We feel that being involved in this planning stage is vital for our existing and future service users.

2. What are your views on the Bill's provisions (set out according to Parts below), in particular are they workable and will they deliver the stated policy intention?

▪ Part 1 - Key concepts and general objectives (sections 1 to 4)

Dial A Ride Denbighshire Ltd. (DAR) is a community transport service for anyone that is unable to access public transport due to but not limited to the following: disability/vulnerability/capability/poverty/rural poverty and or have no means of transportation available through no fault of their own.

Providing our members, a service that will encourage independence, inspire confidence to leave their homes attend social groups, medical appointments, hair appointments, go shopping, visit friends and family or just a day trip out to the countryside, whilst promoting social inclusion in today's society.

Community Transport must be thought of through this process as for many people living in rural settings this is their only means of transportation. The service

provided has been identified as an essential part of the communities transport provisions following discussions with our local social services, Hospital Passenger transport, existing members, local support groups, social clubs, charitable forums and other organisations, which clearly provides evidence that there is a substantial gap in current transport provisions, which has led to social exclusion, and rural poverty.

3. What are your views on the Bill's provisions (set out according to Parts below), in particular are they workable and will they deliver the stated policy intention?

- **Part 2 - Functions of the Welsh Ministers relating to local bus services (sections 5 to 20)**

DAR provides transportation services for people who are living with any disability or impairment that they are either unable to access conventional public bus services/transport or those who struggle through no fault of their own. We are a lifeline to many rural members that have no access to any form of public transport, or minimal options due to poor timings of provisions.

We cover rural villages that have a minimal transport service, this enables members to attend social groups, medical appointments and exercise/physio classes on a regular basis.

We have numerous members that are located with assess restricting semi-rural and rural properties, where conventional bus services are unable to access, meaning without our service they would be confined to their homes.

We speak with local councillors regularly regarding their local constituency and the need for a door to door service, rural communities can find it difficult to access bus service as they are unable to get to the bus stop in the first place, with this said, this is why we feel that Community Transport operators need to be fully involved with the process as we are already providing this service quite successfully. Change to how we already run our services could have a detrimental effect on the service we provide and the service users using the service.

4. What are your views on the Bill's provisions (set out according to Parts below), in particular are they workable and will they deliver the stated policy intention?

- **Part 3 - Restriction on providing local bus services (sections 21 to 24)**

No comment.

5. What are your views on the Bill's provisions (set out according to Parts below), in particular are they workable and will they deliver the stated policy intention?

- **Part 4 - Information and data (sections 25 to 31)**

It is important that community transport providers supplying a service under Sec 19 is included in the say of how and what information will be collected as the service we already provide is vitally important and runs on low staffing numbers because of funding shortages, we will need to be fully informed what information will be asked for and how often it will be required. As a not for profit organisation this will have a huge impact on staff hours if the data required cannot be pulled from our online booking system already in use. We pay a lot of money per year for our booking system but all organisations use different systems how would this work with the information you will require? We can create and supply a lot of data from the system we use but if you require different data then the package might not be the best one to have, so we would then have to look at a bespoke one at a cost to the organisation.

It would also help if funding being allocated each year could be finalised by the end of March before the new financial year starts. This would help when trying to do your yearly budgets, as of yet we still do not know what we are receiving this financial year. Would the BSSG be applied for straight from Welsh Government?

Would the information needed from small organisation be different to what is needed now when applying for BSSG?

Would there be additional training needed for the staff and would the cost of this training be able to be added to the already stretched pot of money allocated to the BSSG?

6. What are your views on the Bill's provisions (set out according to Parts below), in particular are they workable and will they deliver the stated policy intention?

- **Part 5 – Local authority powers and duties (sections 32 to 34)**

We have provide a free shopping service to members of the community in our local area paid for by local authority for over 13 years this was ended in January because of cuts. How will local authority be able to help the community transport sector if cuts are still being made to their budgets? DAR has now carried on this contract the individuals now pay for the service, we could not see these people losing a service that the relied on we in week out.

7. What are your views on the Bill's provisions (set out according to Parts below), in particular are they workable and will they deliver the stated policy intention?

- **Part 6 – Miscellaneous and general (sections 35 to 44)**

DAR welcomes the protection in law of worker's rights. We have no further comments on this section.

8. What are the potential barriers to the implementation of the Bill's provisions and how does the Bill take account of them?

DAR can see gaps in the transport provisions in our area. Fully accessible travel is a vital part of our community the work we do is totally different to commercial operators. As a not for profit organisation we rely on grants and funding streams along with donations from our members. We need to be able to keep our most vulnerable services users in our communities included. If we had to bid for contracts this could have financial impact on the service we provide, leading to less availability or even having to stop some services we provide in the future.

9. How appropriate are the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the Explanatory Memorandum)

No comments for this section.

10. Are any unintended consequences likely to arise from the Bill?

DAR currently does not run Sec 22 but if we had to change the way we operated this worries us about the time it takes to get a Sec 22 and register the route etc. This would have an impact again on the service users that use us on a daily weekly basic.

11. What are your views on the Welsh Government's assessment of the financial implications of the Bill as set out in Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum?

Very expensive but hopefully will help with the long term investment to the transport sector.

12. Are there any other issues that you would like to raise about the Bill and the accompanying Explanatory Memorandum or any related matters?

DAR provides more than a transport service to many of our users and their families, we are a regular voice on the end of the phone a regular face at the door to pick them up. We are in close contact with families letting them know if their loved ones are ill or not quite themselves today when we went to pick them up, we have sat with people for hours waiting for an ambulance because when we got there they were on the floor and couldn't get up. We can't put a monetary value on these kind of things as we do it because we care about them and the community we live in.

DAR service users often mention that the worry if able to use public transport that if they are waiting at a bus stop in there wheelchair and the bus arrives with the space for a wheelchair already occupied there is nothing they can do apart from wait for the next available bus this could be an hour or more and still no guarantee there will be available space when the next one arrives. This can be very

stressful for the user and what happens if that was the last bus of the day. A taxi can be too expensive for someone living on a low income.

We provide risk assessments on all wheelchair/scooter aids before a service user joins the service making sure that the aid is suitable for onward travel or do they have to transfer to a seat this is all recorded on their membership details and all drivers can see what is recorded when traveling.

All our drivers are MiDAS trained by our in house MiDAS DA this again is all expenditure that our charity has to find to train the staff member in their role as a driver.

We have to think of the age of our service users they would not be able to use an app or mobile device to arrange a pickup they like to call you and speak to a member of staff and know that the booking has been made. We recently did a questionnaire asking members how they would like to be contacted and most of the replies was by phone or post again this has cost implications.

Thank you for taking the time to read our replies.
