



West Sussex

Bus Strategy

2018-2026



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Foreword

Every day, thousands of people across West Sussex use buses to get out and about. Buses help us get to school and college, to work, the shops, our medical appointments and social activities. They allow our residents and visitors greater opportunity to live more active lives, combating social isolation and having a positive effect on our health and well-being. Bus travel is also a key factor in supporting an active and vibrant local economy, as well the role it plays in reducing pollution.

Most bus services in West Sussex are operated on a fully commercial basis by bus companies with no financial support from the county council. However, bus companies face a number of challenges in delivering their services, such as congestion and ageing infrastructure. There is also a general perception that buses are either an expensive option or only for school children, older people and people who cannot afford a car. Buses are for all of us and should be considered a viable option when we cannot walk or cycle to get to our destinations.

With this in mind, we have developed a Bus Strategy which sets out the county council's aims and objectives for local bus and community transport in the years ahead. It explores the ways in which we can work with bus companies and other partners to help sustain the commercial bus network and help it to flourish. It outlines the key challenges we face, such as influencing travel behaviour and removing the barriers to improving bus services; and identifies new opportunities to work with our stakeholders and local communities to help us achieve this.

Roger Elkins

Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure



1 Introduction

Buses play an important part in many lives across West Sussex, providing travel for thousands of residents and visitors in the county. They have a vital role in reducing social isolation for older, disabled and other vulnerable people who, without local bus or community bus services, would not be able to get out and about seeing friends and family and accessing important services. Research has proven that the costs to society if these services couldn't be accessed would be extreme and have a large impact on the local economy.



Modal shift from private cars to buses reduces traffic congestion and improves journey reliability, thereby reducing carbon emissions linked to climate change. Nearly 27 million passenger journeys are carried out on the bus network across West Sussex each year, with 85% of the bus mileage delivered on a fully commercial basis by the operators.

Bus services have changed dramatically since they were deregulated in 1986¹ bringing both the both the benefit of commercial investment and the challenge of public sector support, and it has been some time since we last reviewed our approach.

Bus patronage has risen in West Sussex with large scale commercial investment by national bus companies alongside local authority investment in infrastructure. The relationship between the bus companies and the County Council is seen as very positive.

West Sussex has an aging population with a higher than average number of residents living on the coast. Many of these residents are entitled to free off peak bus travel, that has led to a 'second peak' after 9.30am which has a positive impact on the residents' lives and helps to alleviate social isolation and loneliness.

¹ Transport Act 1985 OGL Crown copyright 1985

1.1 The need for this strategy

The purpose of this document is:

- To clearly state the County Council's aims and objectives for local buses and community bus transport between 2018 and 2026
- To determine the County Council's priorities for funding, reflecting its overall passenger transport aspirations
- To provide guidance in support of prioritising bus infrastructure in new developments
- To provide a framework through which local interest and community groups can assist in the development of passenger transport improvements
- To support interested parties in securing additional funding where available
- To provide fit for purpose services and infrastructure supporting those services
- To determine which opportunities within the Bus Services Act 2017 are supported

This strategy explains how the County Council will prioritise funding and support for local buses and community transport. This may be direct funding for non-commercial services, investment in infrastructure, promotion of the bus and community transport network and use of internal resources where the market cannot provide a sustainable service.

In addition, it will outline the County Council's approach to the Bus Services Act 2017, the Total Transport initiative and the wider challenges presented through ongoing pressures on local authority funding.

1.2 Strategic context

[The West Sussex Plan](#) sets out how the County Council will shape its services during 2017-2022.

It explains how we will focus on:

- Giving children and young people the best start in life
- Ensuring West Sussex is a prosperous place
- Community will be strong, safe and sustainable
- We will support you in later life to remain independent
- We will be a council that works for our communities

The West Sussex Plan contains our vision for West Sussex and what we are trying to achieve for our residents and for the county. A bus review has been undertaken to ensure we align with those principles to take us forward.

This review of our approach to buses also supports the [West Sussex Transport Plan 2011-2026](#) objectives. The Transport Plan (also known as the Local Transport Plan or LTP) is the County Council's approach to integrated transport policies and plans. It includes four key priorities that guide our approach to maintaining, managing and investing in transport, and meeting the main objective of improving quality of life for the people of West Sussex:

- Promoting economic growth
- Tackling climate change/air quality issues
- Providing access to services, employment and housing
- Improving safety, security and health

1.3 What will be achieved?

West Sussex will be a place where:

Bus services² are punctual, reliable and accessible

Bus users can plan, book and pay for travel using the latest technology

Bus services give people a viable alternative to being a car owner

Bus services allow older people to continue to live independently

Bus operators and their services give a consistently good level of quality for users across the county

Bus travel is affordable for users

Air quality is better as a consequence of investment in cleaner buses as opposed to cars

² Includes conventional and community local bus services operating to a published timetable as well as demand responsive bus services operated by West Sussex County Council and community transport organisations.

This means we will:

Prioritise investment in good accessible bus infrastructure for bus users

Where possible, give buses priority over other travel modes when congestion occurs

Work with all tiers of Local Government in seeking funding for prioritised local services

Implement cross ticketing and easy payment systems

Use the latest clean engine technology

Work with property developers to design developments to incorporate buses as a priority with suitable infrastructure

Explore whether it makes sense to use our own vehicles to provide services working with community transport where appropriate

Work with bus operators to provide affordable fares for young people



2 Discussion

To achieve the future state as outlined in the statements above we must identify the current state and see what the gaps are. From that we can see what the challenges are and how the Bus Services Act gives us opportunities to close that gap.

2.1 Gap analysis

The current ways the County Council supports bus and community transport are outlined in Appendix 1. In summary funding is provided for:

- Conventional bus services that are not commercially viable but deemed socially necessary, meaning a reasonable proportion of residents may become socially isolated if they were not available.
- Community transport schemes who can apply for grants from the Forum for Accessible Transport. This includes community bus services that are open to the public.
- To reimburse bus companies for revenue they forego by providing free off-peak bus travel for older people and disabled people at any time.
- School transport via season tickets on commercial and supported bus services.
- Developer (Section 106) funding is used to pump-prime new services and to develop local bus infrastructure.

The County Council also co-ordinates roadside bus infrastructure such as bus stops and bus stands. We liaise with district and borough councils on the delivery of bus shelters and co-ordinate provision of real time passenger information screens throughout the county.

Analysis of the statements in 1.3, and especially what we will do, helps us to identify the gaps between that 'future state' and the 'current state' to enable us to determine what needs to be tackled.

2.2 Challenges

The challenges are:

1. Bus service punctuality is being impacted by **congestion** – the County Council has proactively tackled urban congestion through major schemes (such as Fastway in Crawley³). However, most work has been to prioritise buses at junctions through signals linked to transmitters fitted to the buses. The downside is that the buses still have to sit in the traffic until they reach the traffic signals. Congestion continues to grow in most of the urban areas where commercial bus services operate more successfully.
2. To improve public transport **cross ticketing and easy payment systems** – the Discovery ticket covers most of the South East, facilitated by councils. However, take up is small and operators prefer to push their own products. Take up of the PlusBus ticket for bus/rail is patchy, though good in some towns such as Crawley. We need to challenge residents' views of their local bus services and use of them to get to the train station. Products are needed that the public recognise and are attractively priced. In addition, technology has made great advances for passengers. However, the application of easy payments and bus pass solutions isn't universal. Contactless payments might be available via larger operators but not the smaller firms who provide valuable in-filling bus services. The County Council has much to gain from working across the industry to gain good quality information about bus use as well.
3. To put buses at the forefront in use of **clean technology** – buses have a reputation of being high polluters when in fact they can be lower than cars based on a per passenger calculation, especially with the latest Euro 6 engines. However, there remain many older vehicles used to cover secondary services and school transport that do produce high pollutants. We need to work with bus and coach operators to replace or retrofit their vehicles to reduce this. There is more to be done together to promote the fact that choosing a clean bus contributes to improved air quality leading to better life outcomes. In addition, new technology such as electric and hybrid vehicles will be explored.

³ Fastway is a major scheme including a guided bus way constructed by WSCC to allow buses to be separated from traffic. Buses are also prioritised at junctions and roundabouts through signalling improvements leading to a step change in bus services. The local bus company Metrobus introduced new buses and put on high frequency services for the town and Gatwick Airport as the main local employment location.

4. To improve journey experience by prioritising investment in modern suitable **bus infrastructure** – where partners have done this there has been step changes in bus use (such as in Crawley). We are always competing with other road users, many of whom prefer to use the car for their travel needs. Buses have a large part to play so there is the need to convince hearts and minds of both users and funders to prioritise spending as an investment in the network.
5. To ensure the **design of new developments** incorporate buses as a priority – more can be done across the County Council, and with our district and borough council partners, to ensure new developments are designed with the bus at its centre, along with walking and cycling. Too many developments have been built with access and facilities for bus use as a secondary consideration. We want developers to promote greater bus use by new residents.
6. Funding pressures mean that we will have to **prioritise funding** for bus services that contribute to the West Sussex Plan – requiring changes in the criteria used to determine bus support and grant funding for community transport. Rural access is a growing issue with transport solutions being expensive and sometimes difficult to achieve.
7. Public sector funding varies across West Sussex – by working with other **public sector partners** such as district, borough, parish and town councils, as well as the NHS, we want to provide equitable funding for services across West Sussex.
8. Young people can struggle to access their local services such as **learning and work opportunities** – the cost of public transport can be a barrier therefore we will concentrate on working with partners to seek reduced fares and other solutions.



2.3 Opportunities

The Bus Services Act 2017

The basis of the Act is to give local authorities a new toolkit to enable improvements to be made to bus services in their areas. It provides a number of options (tools) that can be adopted including:

- Strengthened arrangements for partnership working between bus operators and local authorities in England, introducing new Advanced Quality and Enhanced Partnership schemes;
- Bus franchising powers to replace previous Quality Contract Schemes;
- Modernised ticketing legislation; and
- Powers necessary for a step change in the information available to passengers through audio and visual on-board information and through the provisions of open data on timetable, fares and bus services arrival times (in England).

Further details of the opportunities within the Act can be found at Appendix 2.

Of interest to us are the potential benefits from Enhanced Partnerships and Advanced Ticketing Schemes. Enhanced Partnerships present greater opportunities than Advanced Ticketing Schemes.

The Act can be used to achieve three main categories of outcomes:

- Better Journeys
- Better Places
- Better Value

An Enhanced Partnership (EP) is an agreement between a local transport authority (such as the County Council) and the majority of local bus operators to work together to improve local bus services. It includes a clear vision of the improvements that the EP is aiming for (known as an EP plan) and the accompanying actions to achieve them.⁴

⁴ The Bus Services Act 2017 – New powers and opportunities OGL Crown copyright 2017

Community Transport

West Sussex has many community transport groups and schemes operating in local communities. Many choose to operate in a specific area only as they have been developed by residents to meet a local need. Some groups have grown to cover wider areas and tend to provide more services such as minibus operations, be they demand responsive or timetabled bus services.

There are six community bus schemes operating weekly services from villages to shopping in larger towns for residents who don't have a local accessible conventional bus or train service. These services provide a valuable link to those communities but rely on the goodwill of volunteers to sustain the service. Many older people rely on these services and can travel using their free bus pass.

Other larger community transport groups operate demand responsive services in both minibuses and cars to vital public services. Some use volunteers and others have paid staff, with the latter often competing for County Council school and day service transport contracts to support their wider service.

Community transport often leads a fragile existence in West Sussex, competing for local authority grant funding and contracts. However, they provide valuable services that greatly contribute to the West Sussex Plan. In addition, minibus licensing is open to refreshed guidance from Government that could have a negative impact on their cost base.

We will work to have a more co-ordinated approach to community transport across all the public partners (including county, district and borough councils and the NHS). We will work with bus operators and community transport operators where joined up solutions can be found to help fill some of the gaps.



Total Transport

In 2015, the Government awarded top tier councils funding through the Total Transport Pilot Fund to help them improve passenger transport by meeting challenges and delivering change through greater integration of resources. It was recognised that transport can be fragmented, particularly impacting rural areas with a variety of public sector funded transport services that cater for a range of transport needs. These included:

- Non-emergency patient transport
- Adult social care transport
- School bus services
- Community transport services
- Subsidised local bus services

The County Council was a partner to a consortium of local councils including Surrey County Council and East Sussex County Council that bid for funding. They were successful in being awarded £497,000 for several initiatives across the tri-county area. They have worked with Brighton and Hove City Council and other partners to understand the value of community transport, sought closer working with the NHS and established joint contractual approaches to supported conventional and school transport. However, further work is needed to realise the potential of close partnership working. These areas feed into the challenges and opportunities outlined in 2.4.

The partners have all expressed a keenness to carry on the work together, having joint procurement solutions already in place. The opportunity is to take this work forward on bus and community transport services to the benefit of all parties. This should be formalised and concentrate on cross county solutions. The pooling of funds should be fully explored.



2.4 Challenges and opportunities

The following table outlines the main challenges and opportunities in respect of buses and bus travel in West Sussex:

West Sussex will be a place where:	Challenge (see 2.2)	Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bus services are punctual, reliable and accessible – Bus operators and their services give a consistently good level of quality for users across the county – Air quality is better as a consequence of investment in cleaner buses as opposed to cars 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How to tackle congestion to improve bus service punctuality 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure all plans and solutions to improve traffic congestion prioritise buses wherever possible, along with other sustainable travel modes 2. Complete Road Space Audits in towns to maximise access for bus services 3. Work with bus operators to share GPS data to see where congestion occurs 4. Identify opportunities for bus lanes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bus users can plan, book and pay for travel using the latest technology – Bus services give people a viable alternative to being a car owner – Bus services allow older people to continue to live independently – Bus travel is affordable for users 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Improve cross ticketing across operators and Easy Payment Systems 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Improve the Discovery ticket offer working across all operators including concentrated marketing to promote it to residents 6. Agree affordable/competitive prices for multi-operator tickets depending on location 7. Consider zoned ticket prices in areas served by multi operators 8. Bus/rail smart ticketing specifically for older people 9. Specify technology for easy payments including smart cards across operators 10. Seek greater use of buses by local employers

West Sussex will be a place where:	Challenge (see 2.2)	Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Air quality is better as a consequence of investment in cleaner buses as opposed to cars 	<p>3. Use of clean technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Promotion of bus use reducing emissions compared to cars 12. Prioritise newer cleaner buses in air quality areas, seek funding for retrofitting clean exhaust filters or new vehicles 13. Work with bus operators on investing in new vehicle technology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bus services are punctual, reliable and accessible 	<p>4. Prioritise investment in modern suitable bus infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Work with partners to improve infrastructure offer for residents including smart shelters 15. Improve bus information sources for modern travellers using the latest technology 16. GPS on all roadside and key locations such as rail stations, shopping centres, major employment zones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bus services are punctual, reliable and accessible – Bus users can plan, book and pay for travel using the latest technology – Bus services give people a viable alternative to being a car owner 	<p>5. Design new developments to incorporate buses as a priority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Seek developers funding for free/low cost bus travel for residents on new housing developments for a period to engender a bus culture 18. Developers to design housing and industrial estates with easy access for buses and modern smart stops and shelters

West Sussex will be a place where:	Challenge (see 2.2)	Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bus services give people a viable alternative to being a car owner – Bus services allow older people to continue to live independently – Bus travel is affordable for users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Prioritise support funding for bus and community transport services that contribute to the West Sussex Plan 7. There are challenges to the use of Section 19/22 minibuses licences for the operation of community transport and internal fleet operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19. Update bus funding criteria to reflect the outcomes in the West Sussex Plan 20. Review use of grant funding for community transport 21. Develop a proposal for partner councils to assist in funding most needed local services 22. Ensure plans for services are rural proofed 23. Develop internal minibuses and transport services to assist in filling some gaps in delivery of passenger transport in partnership with community transport groups particularly in rural areas 24. Provide support to community transport groups should licensing changes be made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bus services give people a viable alternative to being a car owner – Bus services allow older people to continue to live independently – Bus operators and their services give a consistently good level of quality for users across the county 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Public sector funding varies 9. Opportunities to successfully gain agreements for developer funding for enhanced local passenger transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25. Develop an agreement with district/borough councils to provide joint funding with WSCC 26. Develop existing agreements with town and parish Councils to provide funding towards local bus and community transport 27. Formalise agreements across the Total Transport councils to continue to pool funds and joint working on solutions across the region 28. Proactively seek developer funding solutions that favour the use of sustainable modes over the car

West Sussex will be a place where:	Challenge (see 2.2)	Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bus services give people a viable alternative to being a car owner – Bus travel is affordable for users 	10. Bus travel can be unaffordable for some young people	29. Work with bus operators to provide affordable fares for 16-19s in full time education

2.5 Funding

Funding for bus services has been steadily reduced in recent years. Government grants ceased, leading to a reduction in support for conventional bus services though the grants for community transport were ring fenced. When the Government transferred the responsibility for administration of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) in West Sussex from district/borough councils to the County Council, there was a £3m shortfall that we had to fund from elsewhere, putting further pressure on budgets.

The trend of lower revenue funding availability is set to continue for some time, so the County Council has to take steps to account for it. We have to be realistic about what can be done with less funding but to pursue opportunities to enhance the current commercial network and work hard with partners where there are gaps. This may mean very difficult decisions and a lot of work with local communities to find affordable alternatives to conventional bus support. New services are unlikely unless they are supported through greater use by fare payers from new developments. It is essential that bus companies work hand in hand with local councils and developers to tackle travel behaviours to ensure residents choose the bus in place of the car.

It is notable that commercial bus patronage across West Sussex has been steadily increasing and seen as a success story. The bus operators have told us this is partially down to how we have worked together supporting some services where needed, but also in the delivery of much needed infrastructure and information about their services. Funding from infrastructure improvements has come from various sources including WSCC Highways, Section 106 developer funding and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) funding for growth.

Capital improvements can be considered through the Strategic Transport Investment Programme (STIP) where the scheme cost exceeds £1m or smaller (less than £1m) programmes such as the Local Transport Improvement Programme (LTIP). Both programmes have potential schemes evaluated against set criteria as funding has to be prioritised. Work on LTIP has been progressed at pace leading to a number of improvements with officers working with bus companies.

Other opportunities can be explored with the Total Transport Fund partners, notably the use of community transport and the internal fleet.

3 Delivering the Strategy

The Bus Services Act outlines the powers and opportunities that local authorities can use to improve bus services to support the economy and connect communities to the workplace and vital public services.

Whilst funding remains challenging there are opportunities explored in 2.5

Given ongoing funding constraints, the Strategy does not contain specific targets. The proposed delivery plan is set out below. We will work with all relevant partners to deliver the Strategy which will benefit the residents and economic vitality of West Sussex.

Action 1: We will strengthen relationships between the county council and its key stakeholders including bus and community transport operators, public sector partners and the LEP. We will put in place governance arrangements to oversee the delivery of the bus strategy, monitor and report on progress.

Action 2: We will enter into an Enhanced Partnership arrangement under powers within the Bus Services Act 2017 with the Bus Operators and other partners seek to actively achieve better bus services used as a travel more of choice over the car where appropriate. This will include how the partners work together to combat congestion through road reallocation and other bus prioritisation solutions.

Action 3: We will ensure our approach to reviewing use of road space and developing highways and transport schemes fully considers how buses can be prioritised over cars.

Action 4: We will ensure the Local Transport Plan 2011 to 2026 is reviewed to align with this Bus Strategy.

- Action 5:** We will formalise our partnering arrangements with Surrey County Council, East Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council developed through the Total Transport initiative, and work together to pool resources where appropriate.
- Action 6:** We will ensure that new developments are designed to accommodate buses and that developer funding is ring-fenced to fund low cost bus travel.
- Action 7:** We will take forward the delivery of bus infrastructure through the Local Transport Improvement Programme (LTIP).
- Action 8:** We will review supported bus services and community transport funding to prioritise where they mostly contribute to the West Sussex Plan.
- Action 9:** We will develop a joint plan with bus operators to prioritise the use of clean vehicles in Air Quality Management Areas.
- Action 10:** We will, through the Enhanced Partnership, improve multi-operator and multi-modal travel by reviewing the tickets and products allowing this. This will include seeking to have fares structures aligned across operators on an easily understood basis and the increased use of easy payments solutions enhancing the experience for users.
- Action 11:** We will, through the Enhanced Partnership and other partnerships, support investment in clean bus technology solutions and new vehicles in areas where congestion occurs and Air Quality Management Areas. In addition, we will support the use of new technologies including hybrid and electric vehicles.
- Action 12:** We will, through the Enhanced Partnership, work with bus companies to provide lower cost fares for young people and other incentives for their use and to build commercial patronage.
- Action 13:** We will work with district, borough, town and parish councils to jointly contribute to the cost of supporting non-commercial bus and community transport services.
- Action 14:** We will work with our partners seeking alternative sustainable provision in rural areas where conventional buses are not suitable. In particular, we will explore co-ordinated use of our own fleet along with community transport partners.
- Action 15:** We will measure the success of actions above through a developed robust set of key performance indicators.
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APPENDIX 1

1. Existing Approach

1.1 Conventional Bus Services

The County Council spends £1.8m on directly supporting conventional timetabled bus services that are not commercially viable. In addition, income from developer contributions, Gatwick Airport, other large employers and some town and parish councils increases the expenditure on supporting bus services to £3.4m. This approach has been used for many years following the deregulation of bus services in 1986. The amount has reduced since central Government ceased substantial funding to local authorities for rural transport (the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant).

Nearly 27 million passenger journeys are undertaken across all timetabled bus services in West Sussex each year. The majority of these are on services operated commercially with no support from the County Council. Approximately 13.5 million bus miles are undertaken across the network.

The current criteria for prioritising services are based on the following:

- Cost per passenger subsidy
- Wider economic impacts provided by service location/type
- Patronage trends – likelihood of increase leading to commercialisation
- Resource options – likelihood of attracting alternative funding
- Option value – whether there are alternatives for residents to access
- Interchange possibilities
- Contribution to Land Use Policy

Weightings to the criteria were added when reviewing supported services in 2011. This allowed exploration of service frequency reductions as opposed to full funding withdrawal where possible enabling some residents to still have a service in some cases.

The County Council works with local bus operators and other partners such as district/borough councils and developers in the commissioning of bus infrastructure such as bus stops, shelters and real time passenger information (RTPI). This is via capital funding and developer (Section 106) contributions.

1.2 Community Transport

The County Council provides grant funding to community transport schemes who apply via the West Sussex Forum for Accessible Transport on an annual basis. This is to support schemes providing community buses that are timetabled services operated by voluntary organisations where conventional bus services wouldn't operate, notably in rural areas. In addition, it supports demand responsive schemes such as dial-a-rides, voluntary car schemes and shopmobility services. The total annual budget for the grants is £160k.

1.3 English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS)

ENCTS provides free off-peak bus travel for people who have reached the national retirement age and people of any age with registered disabilities. The national scheme is administered locally by the County Council who has decided to subsidise free bus travel for people with disabilities at any time.

The County Council reimburses bus journeys made by pass holders on registered timetable services starting in West Sussex. If the service returns from within another unitary authority's area they reimburse the return journey. Scheduled coach services are not included; only local bus services. If the number of passengers regularly causes the buses to overload the operator has to put on additional capacity and the County Council is duty bound to fund it.

It's a common misconception that the County Council is supporting the local bus services themselves through the national scheme. The payment to bus operators is reimbursing the pass holders travel and not paying for the running of the bus itself.

The national scheme isn't fully funded so the County Council has to fund any shortfall from within its own budget. The overall cost of the scheme is approximately £11.5m per annum. The approximate number of bus journeys undertaken by pass holders is 9.9m (2016/17). The number of journeys has been falling in recent years mainly owing to the increase in eligibility age for older people. However, this still represents about 37% of all bus journeys undertaken by non-paying passengers.

1.4 Home to School Transport

The County Council has a statutory duty to provide free school transport for entitled pupils attending their nearest suitable school based on meeting walking distance criteria. Approximately 7,000 pupils receive transport that can be via local bus services, trains, coaches

and taxis. The latter are generally used for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who are unable to travel on conventional public transport.

The County Council spends approximately £12.5m on home to school transport through purchasing season tickets, contracting coaches and taxis, as well as via its internal fleet. The costs are met through the home to school transport budget that is held by Education & Skills.

1.5 Health and Social Care

The County Council arranges transport for residents eligible for day and/or residential services depending on criteria. Numbers of service users travel to and from day services via internal minibuses operated by the County Council. Others use local public transport using their ENCTS pass for free travel on conventional buses. In some cases this follows use of Independent Travel Training commissioned by Adults' Services.

Travel to health care is made in various ways including by:

- Conventional bus services – that often include the local hospital in their routing. Older passengers may be able to travel free off peak via ENCTS, disabled pass holders can travel anytime for free and can have a companion.
- Community transport – residents can access local schemes, some of which specialise in travel to medical appointments and provide companions to help them when at the hospital or other medical facility.
- NHS Patient Transport Services (PTS) – for eligible people with a diagnosed health care need who travel funded by the NHS using cars and accessible minibuses.

The County Council has worked with local bus operators and the NHS to divert services into hospitals as well as providing travel information screens in the reception area.

