

Welcome to the second issue of **News On The Move**, a quarterly update from the **Healthy Futures Transport Action Group**.

It's vital that efficient transport services are in place to help you access hospitals and other healthcare sites. The Transport Action Group is there to make sure that transport remains a key priority in local NHS plans for the future.

This issue features updates on: hospital car parking; access to bus lanes; field research; the Independent Reconfiguration Panel; travel training; traffic at Fairfield Hospital; transport plans for new health centres; on-site signage; and the hospital travel costs scheme.

Hospital car parking

Car parking is a problem at every hospital in the country—nobody likes paying to park and it can sometimes be hard to find a space. This causes particular problems for people who are sick or have difficulty walking.

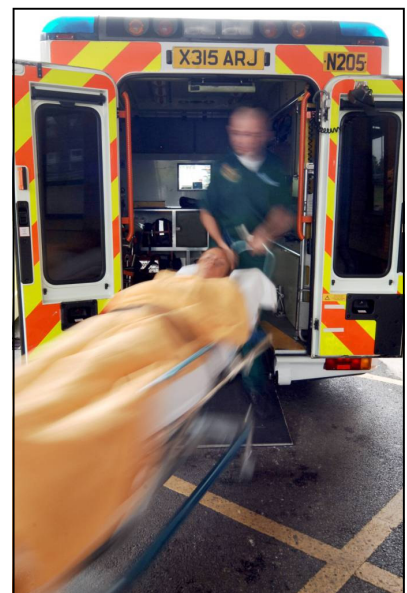
But Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust (which runs Fairfield, North Manchester, Rochdale Infirmary and the Royal Oldham) and the Transport Action Group are working on ways to take the pain out of hospital car-parking.

They have just completed a detailed audit of parking at all four hospitals so they have concrete data on the numbers of staff, patients and visitors using the car-parks each day at various times. This information will be used to reorganise car-parking arrangements—for instance, allocating separate areas for staff and patients/visitors, with clear signage to help people find a convenient space. The proposals are expected to take a few months to develop. More details will be announced as soon as they are available.

Meanwhile, Rochdale Council has announced plans for residents-only parking on the streets around the Infirmary. The move should ease congestion near the hospital, which has long been a problem. Transport Action Group members attended a local residents' meeting to discuss the issue and pointed out that more needed to be done. Transport Action Group member David Cartwright said: "We must be mindful that unless we take public transport seriously it won't just be side streets that end up being used as car parks—it will be the main roads, too."

Bus lanes

Many people use community transport (e.g. Ring and Ride) or the ambulance service's Patient Transport Service to get to



hospital appointments. But at the moment these vehicles aren't allowed to use bus lanes. That's why the Transport Action Group is campaigning to give them access. The group is drafting proposals to allow community transport operators and the North West Ambulance Service to access bus lanes by microchipping their vehicles in return for a small annual licence fee.

Local authorities are also looking at ways to standardise the way bus lanes work across Greater Manchester—a move that would make it much simpler to understand for transport operators from different towns.



Field research

Transport Action Group members headed off to Nottingham on 15 May to pick up tips and share their experience with similar projects across the UK.

The Success Through Partnership conference at Nottingham University aimed to promote sustainable transport within the health sector—for example, encouraging staff, visitors and patients who are well enough to use public transport for trips to hospital. Nottingham is seen as a centre of excellence on the issue, thanks to the work that has been done by Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust and the local authorities.

The conference enabled Transport Action Group members to hear what has worked well in Nottingham and to find out what's happening at the national level from groups such as NHS Estates.



Independent Reconfiguration Panel

Transport was one of the key issues raised by Patients' Council members during their recent meeting with the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP). They told the IRP, which is reviewing the Healthy Futures and Making It Better plans to reorganise local health services, that staff, patients and the public had stressed the need for effective hospital transport services in their responses to last year's public consultations.

The Patients' Council has representatives on the Healthy Futures Transport Action Group (TAG) and told the IRP about TAG's work to ensure people would be able to get to

Transport Action Group Chair Paul Mainwaring explains why bus lanes are important:



“Allowing some of the vehicles taking patients to hospital to use bus lanes would make a big difference.

“It would encourage more of them to use community transport, rather than travelling by car, which would ease congestion.

“Travelling can also cause some patients severe physical pain. Anything that cuts their journey time can only be a good thing.”



and from hospitals and other health-related sites. They also pointed out that moving some services into the community would save many patients from having to travel to hospital.

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Travel training

The Transport Action Group is working with GMPTE to develop a public transport training package for NHS staff and patients. By informing people who frequently make health-related journeys about public transport options and ticket prices, it is hoped that more NHS staff, patients and visitors will make the switch to green travel. This will reduce congestion and ease pressure on car-parking, ensuring that spaces are available for those people who really cannot use public transport.

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Traffic at Fairfield

A one-way system is being introduced at Fairfield Hospital site in Bury to ease congestion. It will come into effect in the next few months. Paul Howarth, Pennine Acute site manager for Fairfield Hospital and Rochdale Infirmary, said: "The Fairfield site has some very narrow roads and experiences frequent snarl-ups which make it very difficult for ambulances, buses and other vehicles to get to their locations. The one-way system will help traffic flow much more easily through the site." Pennine Acute's travel and access manager, Barry Waterhouse, is also looking at whether one-way systems could help at other hospital sites.

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Transport to new health centres

Every primary care trust in the Healthy Futures area plans to develop new community-based health centres over the coming years; there will also be major improvements to some existing centres.

The Transport Action Group is making sure that travel arrangements to and from these new centres are at the top of the planning agenda. Members recently met the Eric Wright Group, which is developing the centres planned for Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale. They stressed the im-

A word from the Chief Executive:

"A good transport system is critical to providing high-quality and convenient health-care.

"If patients, visitors and staff have problems travelling to hospitals and health centres, their NHS experience won't be as good as it should.

"And when people are sick, that can make a stressful time even more difficult.

"That's why the Transport Action Group's work is so important."



**Trevor Purt,
Lead Chief Executive for
Healthy Futures**

importance of thinking about transport right from the start of the project so that efficient systems would be in place when the new centres opened. The group plans to hold similar meetings with the contractors for Bury, Oldham and North Manchester's new health centres.

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On-site signage

The Patients' Council has advised the Transport Action Group that people who use services at more than one hospital often have difficulties finding their way around because the signage is different at each site. To make life simpler, the Council asked the Transport Action Group to work with Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust on developing consistent signage and symbols across all four hospital sites. Patients, staff and transport operators could then be guided to their destinations by easy-to-follow signs that would be the same at each hospital in the north east of Greater Manchester. Work on the signage will take some time to develop. It is hoped it will be rolled out in phases, with a goal of having fully consistent signage across all Pennine Acute hospital sites.

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Hospital travel costs scheme

The Transport Action Group has responded to a government consultation about the hospital travel costs scheme. The scheme reimburses patients on low incomes for travel to hospital appointments, but there have been problems because different hospitals administer the scheme according to different criteria. This means that a patient might be reimbursed at one hospital but told they are not eligible at another.

The Transport Action Group recommended that the scheme should be administered through GP surgeries, as GPs know more about their patients' circumstances and have more contact with them. It also recommended that GPs should be able to give out day tickets for public transport—some patients currently miss hospital appointments because they do not have the money for their bus fare.

The consultation ran from 19 January to 13 April and the Department of Health will respond later this year. Email paul@healthy-futures.co.uk or call 0161 763 5644 for a copy of the Transport Action Group's response.

Who are we?

A transport system can only ever run smoothly if all the relevant partners work together.

That's why the Transport Action Group brings together transport operators, service users, local authorities and NHS bodies.

It includes patients, staff representatives, bus operators, community transport operators, the ambulance service, primary care trusts, Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, local councils and the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPTX).

You can contact us by emailing paul@healthy-futures.co.uk or calling 0161 763 5644.