



PRESS RELEASE

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TRANSPORT TEAM HITS THE ROAD

A group of 'mystery shoppers' will be testing out transport in the north east of Greater Manchester, as part of an in-depth study to see whether new health centres planned for the area will offer easy and convenient access to healthcare.

Ten members of the local Patients' Council and members of Rochdale Age Concern, will travel from their homes in Bury, Rochdale, Littleborough, Moston, Heywood, Middleton, Oldham, Prestwich and Ramsbottom to their GPs' surgeries, hospitals and the sites of the proposed new state-of-the-art LIFT (Local Improvement Finance Trust) centres.

The team will use a range of transport including buses, taxis, cars and community based transport services, to see how long it takes to reach their destination and return home. The research will also concentrate on safety aspects, convenience and potential risk related to certain health conditions.

The study is being taken forward by the Healthy Futures Transport Group (see Note to Editors), which was set up 18 months ago to consider all the implications of changing and developing health services in the north east of Greater Manchester on the existing transport infrastructure.

Chair of the Patients' Council, Paul Mainwaring, says: "It became apparent very early on that transport was a key issue of the Healthy Futures proposals. People are understandably concerned about the impact the changes to health services will have on their ability to get to appointments by public transport.

“The report back from our mystery shoppers is just one of a number of initiatives being spearheaded by the Healthy Futures Transport Group. Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPTE) is leading on the groups transport research and the experiences of our mystery shoppers will feed into their work to ensure there is good access to healthcare as these major changes are introduced.”

GMPTE’s Health and Education Co-ordinator, Beverly Gallier, adds: “GMPTE’s role is to review the public transport services already on offer and consider all the options to ensure we have a solid and effective transport network in place to support the local health service.

“A lot of planning and work has been underway since the beginning of last year. We have worked closely with the Patients’ Council to look at almost 90 bus routes covering the four main hospital sites.

“GMPTE has also carried out a transport study on the four main hospital sites and has produced an action plan of how it proposes to improve access via public transport. We are also working continuously with the North West Ambulance Service to assess the implications of emergency transfers.”

Recent developments within the Healthy Futures Transport Group have seen the formation of two new transport groups. The *Local Area Transport Action Group* has been tasked with finding solutions that can be introduced within the next one to three years, whilst the *Local Area Transport Strategic Group* will focus on the planning, implementation and management of the longer term transport needs of the local health services.

For more information about the Healthy Futures Transport Group and its work, please contact Paul Mainwaring, Chair of the Patients’ Council on 0161 655 1449.

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Note to Editors:

The Healthy Futures Transport Group includes: Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPTE), Ring and Ride, Age Concern and the North West Ambulance Service.

The Healthy Futures consultation sets out three options for improving health services in the north east of Greater Manchester. These options are the result of more than 18 months of work and discussion with patients, healthcare professionals and the wider community.

All three options propose to invest millions of pounds in providing 35 new community based health centres

For further information, please contact:

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