




Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer or www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment

<u>Organisation prepared for (mark as appropriate)</u>	 Somerset Council	 NHS Somerset	 NHS Somerset NHS Foundation Trust
<u>Version</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Date Completed</u>	<u>26/04/24</u>
<u>Description of what is being impact assessed</u>			
<p>Following the introduction of the governments’ National Bus Strategy: Bus Back Better, Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) were required to work in partnership with local bus operators to create a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for Somerset which was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) by 31st October 2021. The Plans set out the high-level ambition for public transport across the county and were used by government to determine the first tranche of BSIP funding allocated. At the time of submitting the BSIP, Somerset assessed the bus offer at the time, to identify issues/gaps in provision that were addressed by the BSIP ambition.</p> <p>The DfT are now requesting that LTAs review their BSIPs to showcase the good work to date but to also review and update the future ambitions for 2025 and beyond. At this stage there is no additional funding available, so all aspiration is subject to securing significant additional funding from government in the future. As part of the review, we are taking the opportunity to re-assess the current public transport offer and ensure that the ambition in the BSIP is still striving to address any issues/impacts highlighted.</p> <p>The BSIP contains aspirational actions that will be dependent on the amount of any future funding received from Government to deliver them. If funding is received in the future, the actions within this EIA will be reviewed as to what can be delivered.</p>			
<u>Evidence</u>			

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#), should be detailed here

Age:

The ages of Somerset residents are:

- education or pre-education age (0-19): 120,028 (21%)
- approximate working age (20-64): 309,624 (54%)
- approximate pensionable age (65+): 141,898 (25%)

The overall age profile of residents in Somerset is changing with an increase in elderly retired residents, particularly in West Somerset. These groups will be affected differently depending on services cut, changes to time of service and or routes and price increases.

Older women are particularly affected by a lack of transport, especially if they outlive their partner as they are less likely to drive a car. In Somerset, females over the age of 65 are 3 times less likely to own their own private transport than their male counterparts.

While older people are less likely to have access to private transport if they live in towns, there are nevertheless around 2,700 women and 900 men aged 65 or over living in rural villages with no access to car or van. This can often contribute to increased social isolation and poorer wellbeing.

There has been more than a 50% increase in the number of people aged 70-74 and there are a third more people aged 90 or over, compared to 2011 Census.

Disability:

The number of Somerset residents with a disability in 2021 (106,514) is 6.8% higher than in 2011 (99,664), although as a proportion of the total Somerset population is broadly unchanged. It should be noted that changes to the way this question was asked in 2021

have made it difficult to draw direct comparisons with previous years. Nationally, the proportion of the population with a disability dropped over the same period.

More than 100,000 Somerset residents have their day-to-day activities limited to some extent due to disability or a long-term health condition. This represents 18.7% of Somerset residents, or nearly one in five. These individuals would meet the definition of being disabled under the Equality Act. A further 45,000 Somerset residents (7.9% of all residents) have a long-term health condition which does not limit their day-to-day activities.

Sex:

51.1% of the population of Somerset are female (292,100) and 48.9% are male (279,447). (Based on 2021 census data).

Older women are particularly affected by changes to public transport, especially if they outlive their partner as they are less likely to drive a car. In Somerset, the female to male ratio of non-car ownership for the 65+ age group is around 3:1 across all three rural-urban classifications, with rural towns marginally the higher ratio and urban the lowest.

Race:

The demographic of Somerset consists of:

96% as 'White British',

4.4% as 'White Other' and,

0.4% as 'Other'

Over 96% of Somerset residents class themselves as being from a White ethnic group. This is lower than in 2011 when the equivalent figure was 98%. Within the broader white ethnic group, those from a white British background now account for a smaller proportion of Somerset residents, whilst those from other white backgrounds have proportionally increased. Other white groups now account for over 1 in 20 Somerset residents.

The greatest relative change since 2011 comes amongst those from black ethnic groups, with the number of residents from those groups having more than doubled from 1,013 in 2011 to 2,436 in 2021.

There are 14,544 households in Somerset comprised of residents from different ethnic groups. This represents 8.4% of all Somerset households with more than one resident and is an increase of over 5,000 households since 2011, when the proportion was 5.7%.

Religion:

Around half of the Somerset population now identify as Christian, with 4 in 10 not identifying with any religion. There have been increases in the number of Somerset residents identifying with other non-Christian major religions since 2011, although these groups remain a small proportion of the Somerset population.

There has been a large increase since 2011 in the number of Somerset residents with no religion, and a corresponding decrease in the number of Christians. This reflects a similar national trend.

The Somerset population as a whole is less likely to identify with a religion than the population of England and Wales (52% in Somerset as no religion or not stated, vs 56.8% nationally).

Some of the highest individual concentrations are found in urban areas, particularly parts of Bridgwater and Yeovil.

Social Economic:

23.3% of households in Somerset, have no car or van.

Although 76.7% of households in Somerset have a car/van, in most cases the main wage earner uses the vehicle to access employment. Therefore, public transport is relied on by the other members of the household to access services. (2021 Census)

There are now over 134,000 retirees in Somerset, representing 28% of the population aged 16 and over. Conversely, the proportion of the Somerset population who are economically active has decreased significantly since 2011, from 70.8% to 58.9% in 2021.

Rurality:

Around 48% of Somerset's population is classified as 'rural' and 52% 'urban'.

Broadly, around 50% of Somerset is classed as 'Urban City and Town'; 20% are 'Rural Town and Fringe'; and 30% are Rural Village and Hamlets'.

1 in 9 rural households do not have access to a car (or van).

Somerset is one of the most rural counties in England. Its population density of 1.5 people per hectare is well below the England average of 4.1 per hectare. In particular, West Somerset's density of 0.5 per hectare is one of the five lowest of any local authority in England. 48 of Somerset's 138 council wards have a population density of under 1 per hectare, including representatives of all five districts. (Somerset Intelligence)

A document by Rural England in 2016 called "State of Rural Services" states that 88% of the mileage by those living in smaller rural settlements in England, is made by private van or car, with only 2% of mileage done by local bus in comparison to 5% in urban areas.

88% of Somerset's roads are categorised as 'rural' (3,714 miles), compared with 78% in the whole South West region and 64% in Great Britain.

Those aged 65 or more living in rural areas are only half as likely as those in the same age group in urban areas to use public transport at least once a week.

Older women are particularly affected by a lack of transport, especially if they outlive their partner as they are less likely to drive a car. In Somerset, the female to male ratio of non-car ownership for the 65+ age group is around 3:1 across all three rural-urban classifications, with rural towns marginally the higher ratio and urban the lowest (see table below)

While older people (and those of other ages, too) are less likely to have access to private transport if they live in towns, there are nevertheless around 2,700 women and 900 men aged 65 or over living in rural villages with no access to car or van, which can often contribute to increased social isolation and poorer wellbeing.

Older people living in rural areas do not use public transport because it is less convenient, infrequent, does not go where they wish or is simply not available. In contrast, amongst older urban residents, poor health and mobility are more likely to be barriers than problems with frequency, availability or destinations.

Social Isolation:

The availability of affordable, accessible and safe transport has been identified as having a huge impact on social isolation and loneliness. Poor transport can restrict access to opportunities such as further education, training, employment, as well as access to health facilities, shops and amenities (Clarke, 2014). Therefore, reducing barriers to local public and community transport should be a top priority for local authorities looking to combat social isolation.

The 2014/15 Community Life Survey showed that the Southwest has the highest rate of formal volunteering of any region in England.

Carers:

There are over 58,300 carers in Somerset, which constitutes 11% of the total population.

There were around 50,000 Somerset residents who were providing unpaid care to a friend or relative at the time of the 2021 census. Of those, 26,000 – or 30% - provide more than 50 hours of care each week. (Census 2021).

Military Covenant:

There are 4,670 Ministry of Defence personnel working in Somerset (as of Oct 2017).

The armed forces population was much younger than the general population; almost 64% were in the 16-34 age group and only 7.5% were aged 50 or more.

Of the 4,670 personnel, 92% were male.

For every serving member of the Forces in Somerset there is approximately one spouse and/or child, which in 2012 was estimated to be between 3,300 and 3,900 people, including 1,700 to 2,200 children.

14% of working age veterans in Somerset had a long-term health problem or disability which limited their day-to-day activity. (2011 census)

There is a good deal of evidence that spouses/partners who contributed to the review had found it very difficult to register with a local GP when they moved to a new area. The difficulty in registering with NHS doctors is exacerbated by the relative isolation of some bases. Families might have to travel some distance to see a doctor or dentist, even if they can find one. Since not all non-

serving partners are able to drive or have a car, they are reliant on public transport, which can be poor. – Living in our shoes report 2020.

Public Transport Usage in Somerset:

Based on 2022-23 data, there were 4.4 million adult single passenger journeys made on public transport in Somerset (registered public bus services) of which 1.7 million journeys (39%) were made by concessionary pass holders.

Park and ride patronage between October 2022 - October 2023 was 475,616, this has a daily average of 1,550 journeys a day. Of the 475,616, Concessionary pass holders made 141,199 of these journeys, which equates to 29.98% of the total journeys.

At August 2023, the total number of live concessionary passes issued to senior citizens in Somerset is 98,931, of which 94,684 were age-related and 4,067 disability-related.

At the time of the 2021 census, the government advice was for people to work from home where possible, and to avoid public transport. Of those who were travelling to a place of work, 78.5% were travelling by car or van. Only 2.1% were travelling by public transport, with 17% either walking or cycling. It is difficult to determine the impact of the government advice around avoiding public transport on these figures.

Demand Responsive Transport (SCC Slinky services) – In 2022-23 there were 33,420 single passenger journeys made on Slinky services, with an average of 565 individual passengers utilising the service each month during 2022-23.

In Sedgemoor, only 18% of service users are within 15 minutes of a town centre by public transport, this is within the bottom 20% across local authorities in England.

The DfT Bus Usage survey found that Somerset residents made c6.3 million bus journeys in 2018/19. This averages at 11.3 journeys per capita, the 5th lowest of all English Local Authorities.

Between 2017/18 and 2019/20, total bus mileage in Somerset dropped 15.4% whilst the number of commercial passengers dropped 13%. Our experience shows evening and weekend services are usually first to go.

Expressed as a rate per head of population, Somerset's bus usage was the fifth lowest in England in 2018/19.

Sources of data used:

To inform the above information the below sites were used:

Age - <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/somerset-census-2021.html>

<https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/>

Disability - <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/health-and-disability.html>

Sex - <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/somerset-census-2021.html>

<https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/>

Race - <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-2021-ethnic-group,-language,-and-religion.html>

Religion - <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-2021-ethnic-group,-language,-and-religion.html>

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/religion-and-belief-profiles-for-somerset.pdf>

Social Economic - <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-2021-labour-market-and-travel-to-work.html>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2017>

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1941962904/report.aspx?town=somerset#tabjobs>

Rurality - <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/rurality.html>

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/files/State%20of%20Rural%20Services%20report%202016.pdf>

Social Isolation – <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/social-isolation.html>

Social Isolation and Loneliness in the UK (Hannah Griffiths), Social Isolation in Bristol (2014), (David Clarke)

Age UK <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/loneliness-research-and-resources/loneliness-maps/>

Carers - <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/carers.html>

Military Covenant - <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/armed-forces-serving.html>

Living in our shoes report 2020

Public Transport Usage in Somerset - Somerset Council concessionary fares database,

Census 2021 – Travel to work <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-2021-labour-market-and-travel-to-work.html>

Journey time statistics: data tables (JTS) - GOV.UK <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/journey-time-statistics-data-tables-jts#journey-times-to-key-services-by-local-authority-jts04>

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups and what have they told you? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

Consulted with the Somerset Bus Partnership, the Somerset Bus User and Stakeholder Group, the Somerset Bus Advisory Board and bus operators.

Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teenagers/Young adults who can travel independently but do not drive or have access to a vehicle find it more difficult to access education, work placements or friends and family if they have no other means of transport.	☒	☐	☐

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-School Children in one car households - if working parent/carer takes the car to access work the remaining parent/carer may not be able to take the pre-school child out to access services (libraries, pre-school, toddler groups) if public transport is not easily available. • Working population find it more difficult to access work locations due to the lack of regular bus services. • Retired individuals may be unable to move around Somerset and access services if they are reliant on public transport due to the fragmented network. • Young and Older residents' risk social isolation if they are reliant on public transport to access friends and family due to a lack of public bus services. 			
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities or unable to drive on medical grounds who rely on the public transport network across Somerset to maintain their independence find it difficult to access health & social care services as well work opportunities when public transport is not readily available. 	☒	☐	☐
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People undergoing gender re-assignment treatment will need to attend medical appointments and access support throughout this process and if they have limited options to use public transport and have no other means of travel, they may struggle to access these services due to a lack of public transport. 	☒	☐	☐
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered with no impact highlighted. 	☐	☐	☐

Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pregnant women will have an increased need to access health services and therefore may rely on public transport services rather than driving. They could also find themselves socially isolated if they do not have access to a car or could not drive one due to a medical condition related to their pregnancy if bus services are not available. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race and ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migrant workers may find themselves unable to access work and services if public transport is not available as they are less likely to have access to or be able to afford their own vehicle. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People may be unable to attend weekend or evening services due to the lack of public services available at these times if they do not have access to a vehicle. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Females, significantly single mothers and carers are impacted when there is a lack of public transport services as statistics show that women make the most use of public transport, often completing escort journeys with young children. However, the most trips are made by women in the 17-20 and 60+ age groups with females in the older age group being less likely to have access to a car than their male counterparts. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considered with no impact highlighted. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families and veterans)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are two large armed forces bases in Somerset and this estimates to around 4000 personnel including spouses and children. The bases are more isolated from amenities with many families living off base and therefore one car families can be isolated if there is a poor public transport network, especially as 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<p>the mobility of forces families means that they are away from family networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a many working age veterans in Somerset who have a long-term health problem or disability and they may struggle to get to work opportunities or health appointments because of a lack of public bus services, especially in the evenings and weekends. • Families who live on bases find it difficult to register with GP's when they move to an area, exasperated by the isolation of the bases. This means that families might have to travel some distance to access health services and if they are not able to drive or do not have access to a car, will be impacted if the public transport network is poor. 			
<p>Other, e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</p>	<p>Low Income:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families and individuals who are considered low income find that a lack of public transport service directly affects their ability to access other services including their ability to attend work and interviews to gain employment since they are less likely to have a vehicle. 	<p>☒</p>	<p>☐</p>	<p>☐</p>
<p>Other, e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</p>	<p>Rurality/Social Isolation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those people who live in rural parts of the county are at a higher risk of being isolated than those who live closer to bigger towns or major bus routes, as many rural services are much less frequent with less coverage. • Isolation is likely to affect the younger and older populations who do not have access to their own transport and cannot access public transport services. 	<p>☒</p>	<p>☐</p>	<p>☐</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated older people are more likely to experience health problems because of being isolated. 			
Other, e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	<p>Carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are a high proportion of carers within Somerset communities, with those who fall into the low income and female categories most likely to utilise public transport, so the lack of regular services could affect their ability to undertake their caring responsibilities as well as access other important services. If the person that the carer is responsible for cannot access services via public transport, there will be more demand on the carer to facilitate the transport, adding further pressure on them and the transport network. 	⊗	□	□

Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
<p>Improve access and opportunity to travel by increasing the frequency and provision of bus services across the network to include evening and weekend travel and reducing journey times on key routes. The longer-term aim being to enable more commercially viable services. Activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider whether a core network can be provided from 7am to 7pm – which will provide earlier and later journeys to support people accessing employment, education and other essential services. 	To be determined – in-line with the LTP and future funding			□

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key corridors linked to the LTP, where frequency could be improved further, and buses run later into the evening up to 11pm. This will make shift work and accessing evening economy either for work purposes or leisure/socialisation more viable. • Frequency standards could be set across the network in Somerset linked to the LTP and place-based solutions, so everyone knows the level of service they can expect in their area to provide some reassurance on reliability and increase opportunities to travel. • Rolling out Digital DRT across the county, building on best practice and lessons learnt from the Somerton trial. • Introduce feeder routes into the DRT services which link up with the core network from 7am – 7pm at mobility hubs and key interchanges and ensures that those in more remote areas can still access transport for education, employment and other essential services. • Identify areas that would benefit from bus priority measures, which will speed up journey times and address issues with punctuality/reliability. This will aim to make bus travel a more attractive and viable option and reduce social isolation where previously residents wouldn't be able to rely on the bus. 				
<p>Reduce the cost of travel and improve access for young people to education, training and employment. Activities will include:</p>	<p>To be determined – in-line with the LTP</p>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the current ticket options for students and young people (16-25) across the County with the view to introduce an appropriate scheme accepted by all operators across the network that will aim to make travel more affordable and make it easier to travel on different bus services. This will help make the network more attractive to young people and help with their access to services. Review the current public transport network to access FE and employment hubs and ensure that these sites have frequent and connected services to enable young people to access education and work opportunities at appropriate times of the day, evening or weekend. This will include the promotion of alternative public bus services such as Demand Responsive Transport so that those young people in more rural areas have the same opportunities and are less isolated if they are reliant on the bus network. 	<p>and future funding</p>			
<p>Improved co-ordination of bus services and better integration with other travel modes across the whole network. Activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current bus stations and stops/interchanges within the county to make appropriate improvements for passengers to ensure they are in the best locations are well connected by all public transport services. This will include Identifying opportunities for mobility hubs at key locations that will help facilitate transport in more rural locations, where connections to feeder 	<p>To be determined – in-line with the LTP and future funding</p>			

<p>routes can be enabled giving better access to essential services to people in remote areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review access to key locations such as hospitals and employment sites, ensuring there are frequent services at appropriate times. This will ensure those who are reliant on the bus network to access health services or employment are able to do so more conveniently. • Making sure there is earlier consideration of public bus access at the planning stage of developments to ensure that new developments have the appropriate facilities, services and connections, setting up clear requirements for developers. This will improve access for those who are dependent on the public transport network, especially low-income families and single parents, and put less reliance on the car. 				
<p>Make it easier and more convenient to use/access public transport. Activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to public transport information through development of a county wide information strategy. • Exploring the introduction of a multi-operator ticket that can be used across all bus services including DRT, making it easier for passengers to facilitate journeys. This will help rural passengers as they are more likely to have to make service changes. • Introducing real time info at main bus stops to give passengers better confidence and assurance of when busses will arrive/leave. This will also aim to reduce 	<p>To be determined – in-line with the LTP and future funding</p>			

<p>stress for passengers, especially disabled people who may be anxious about travelling.</p>				
<p>Provide a safer and more comfortable environment for bus users. Activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting vehicle standards on key bus corridors to improve passenger facilities and make public transport more attractive to younger users and the introduction of next stop announcements will improve the journey experience especially for those who are blind or visually impaired. • Introduce a standard for new bus shelters and ensure safe waiting areas at interchanges. Better lighting and facilities will improve safety, especially for females and those using the bus service in the evening when it is dark. • Working with disability groups to better understand the challenges faced with using public transport. • Develop an education training package aimed at young people to overcome barriers with using public transport. 	<p>To be determined – in-line with the LTP and future funding</p>			
<p>If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.</p>				
<p></p>				

Completed by:	Nicholas Margison
Date	26/04/24
Signed off by:	Natasha Bates
Date	29/04/24
Equality Lead sign off name:	Tom Rutland
Equality Lead sign off date:	13/05/24
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	Natasha Bates
Review date:	TBC – dependent on future BSIP Review and funding