

18 November 2010

**Equality and Human Rights Commission
Disability-Related Harassment Inquiry**

SATA Evidence

SATA's role and functions

The aim of SATA is to work for the provision of accessible transport in Scotland as a basic right for all people. This includes working not only for the provision of vehicles, vessels and rolling stock which are accessible but also for the provision of an integrated system of public transport, affordable services, accessible information and appropriate support services.

SATA provides the major inclusive forum in Scotland on transport issues of concern to disabled people. It works by enabling groups and individuals to share information about current developments in transport, as well as carrying out research and identifying gaps in provision. This allows SATA to press for changes to transport services. Regular meetings are held where transport providers and users discuss policy and service issues and identify action to be taken. Speakers are invited and information shared.

Currently SATA has some 60 corporate and 20 individual members working in the public, private and voluntary sectors across Scotland.

Key areas identified by the Inquiry for discussion

- **Transport providers' responses to equality duties of public bodies in commissioning of transport services**

We have no evidence to present on this.

- **Transport providers' activities in promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life**

The Scottish Government has a National Transport Strategy which has a clear objective to promote and achieve social inclusion (see supporting paper 1). It is also committed to addressing inequalities and encouraging involvement in decision-making.

Some transport providers are more active than others in promoting positive attitudes and encouraging participation. First ScotRail is outstanding in carrying out its responsibilities under its franchise and in accordance with government regulations eg in producing a Disabled Persons Protection Policy (DPPP), consulting and updating it annually. Rail industry representatives take part in Transport Scotland's Scottish Rail Accessibility Forum (SRAF) meeting quarterly.

Transport Scotland has a Roads for All Forum addressing the need for improvement in the transport environment and involving local authority and road user organisations including disabled people.

However there is no such forum to engage bus and coach operators and local authority representatives. Matters to be address should include issues to do with the Scotland-wide Free Bus Travel Scheme, supported services especially in rural areas, access and use of vehicles, driver training, etc. The need to re-instate the Thistle Travel Card should also be addressed.

The following public transport providers are currently members of SATA and send representatives to quarterly meetings and/or engage in regular dialogue on specific issues directly or through forums of their own:

Rail - East Coast Trains, First ScotRail, Network Rail,
Bus - First Aberdeen, Lothian Buses, Stagecoach,
Ferries - CalMac, NorthLink Ferries
Taxis - London Taxi Company, Scottish Taxi Federation
Local authorities - Aberdeen City, Highlands,
Regional Transport Partnerships - SESTRAN, SPT, TACTRAN

- **Transport providers' action in relation to disability related harassment**

Some examples:

First ScotRail has had issues with access to its trains by scooter users which it has attempted to resolve within the regulations.

Lothian Buses has had issues with competing access to spaces on its buses by wheelchair users and mothers with prams/pushchairs which it has attempted to resolve by redesigning some of its vehicles to accommodate both.

Blind and deaf people have particular difficulties using buses and trains (see supporting document 2)

Taxi users have had issues with taxi drivers unwilling to accept disabled passengers and use the ramps etc provided.

- **Transport providers' involvement of disabled people**

In addition to the regular involvement with SATA mentioned above, many

transport providers involve disabled people at a local or regional level through forums and access panels.

Some examples of projects on which there has been recent consultation:

First ScotRail on opening the Airdrie to Bathgate line

Network Rail and East Coast Trains on improvements to stations eg Waverley and Dunbar

SPT on improvements to the Glasgow Subway

Transport Scotland and First ScotRail on improvements to stations through the Access for All and other programmes

There has been local consultation by local authorities on recent cuts in local transport services but insufficient debate or assessment on the overall impact of these and other measures across Scotland. SATA has circulated a resolution on the matter (see supporting document 3)

- **Transport providers' role in promoting community safety of disabled people**

We believe that providers have a crucial role in promoting safe and reliable transport for disabled people. But more could be done.

Some examples:

First Bus has produced a Safe Journey Card to help passengers with special needs but this only relates to its own services. It is not a sufficient replacement for the Thistle Travel Card which after 7 years was discontinued in 2009 for lack of public funding. Some 280,000 cards have been issued and are used by an estimated 120,000 people with communication and learning disabilities many of whom are also excluded from the Scotland-Wide Free Bus Travel Scheme (see supporting paper 4).

There are continuing issues with scooters, prams and buggies on public transport and these are sources of conflict and harassment.

Improvements in audio and visual announcements on transport are crucial for people trying to negotiate the transport network.

Good staff training and retraining are essential. Fare concessions for companions would help disabled people to be assisted by people they know and trust.

- **The effectiveness of joint working**

SATA has provided a means by which disabled people can work jointly with

transport providers

SATA and transport operators have cooperated on projects eg the design of stations and facilities

SATA has responded to numerous government consultations

SATA's role needs to be more widely recognised and supported.

Supporting documents

1. Scotland's National Transport Strategy - SATA's response (June 2006)
2. Experience of deaf people using buses and trains
3. SATA Emergency Resolution on Cuts in Public Funding
4. SATA Briefing on Thistle Travel Card and Scotland-Wide Free Bus Travel Scheme