

**Extension: Public Transport**

## Public Transport

### Overview

Public transport is crucial for many Deaf and disabled people, especially those who may be unable to drive or walk long distances. However, not all public transport is accessible for wheelchair users, with several bus stops in Lewisham (especially around Goldsmiths University) not offering wheelchair access. There are no railway stations in the Borough which offer full step-free access without the need for staff support with ramps (although this is available on the DLR).

Likewise, only five of the twenty stations within the Borough are fully staffed and accessible, allowing wheelchair users to turn up and travel. Of the remaining fifteen stations, three are not wheelchair-accessible at all, and two do not have wheelchair access to all platforms. The remaining ten stations have staffing only part of the time, meaning that disabled people cannot travel at will, and must wait for staff to come and deploy ramps.

The Freedom Pass offers free travel to London public transport for disabled people, but is only valid on National Rail Services after 9:30am, and doesn't offer any form of free travel for carers. This is in contrast with the local bus pass outside London, wherein many local authorities offer a free carer travelling with the disabled person (where this is proven to be necessary).

### Recommendations from the report

Recommendations on improving public transport for Deaf and disabled people were discussed as part of the Borough Access 2030 strategy. The suggestions made included:

- Freedom Passes being usable at any time of the day or night. At present, they are restricted to after 9:30am.
- Free travel for necessary carers accompanying Freedom Pass holders.
- A timetable for adaptations to inaccessible stations in the Borough. This will be agreed with National Rail.

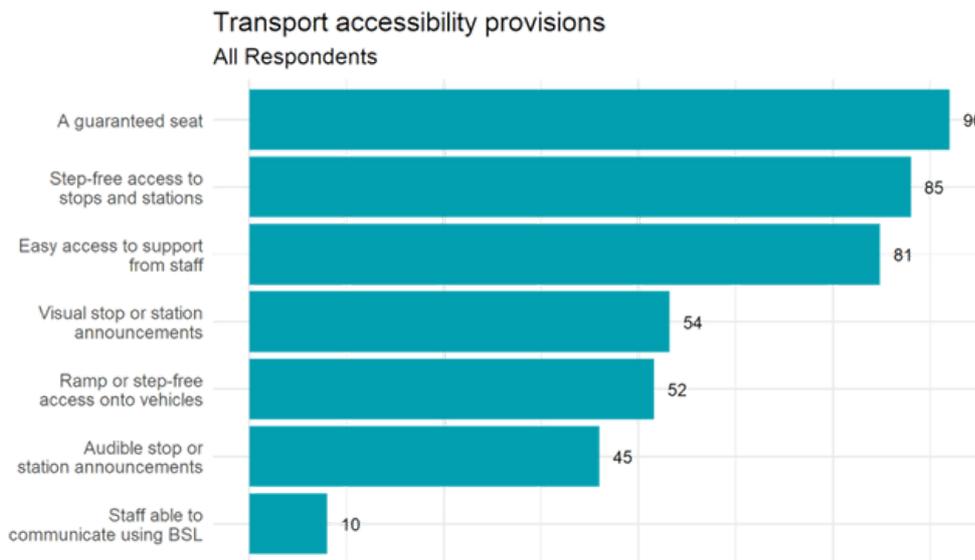
Ensuring that Community Transport schemes are provided for all Deaf and disabled residents who need them. This should include accessible ways of booking.

### Evidence and Reflections

#### *Access provisions required on transport*

There are a range of access provisions required by Deaf and disabled residents. We asked respondents which of the following transport accessibility provisions are necessary for them to travel by public transport:

## Extension: Public Transport



The please offer me a seat badge is designed to ensure disabled people's access to priority seats on public transport. However, even with this measure, respondents who, "*...often can't stand for long periods, e.g., on a crowded bus,*" found that they faced hostility when asking to use one of the priority seats, or that they, "*...often feel anxious about how people will react to my asking for a seat, and avoid taking busy buses.*"

Many people also rely on the presence of visual announcements due to being Deaf, or audible announcements due to being blind or visually impaired. These are not always provided clearly or consistently, which reduces people's ability to travel independently.

While many stations have hearing loops for hearing aid users, there are often non-operational or switched off. There is no provision for BSL signers, and where stations are unstaffed, Help Points rely on auditory communication over a line, which is often unclear.

### Train Travel

While the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) offers full street-to-train accessibility without needing staff support, no train travel in the Lewisham offers this. Railway stations in the Borough have a range of access provisions in place

### Buses

Buses are often presumed to be a fully accessible form of transportation. However, a number of bus stops in the Goldsmiths area do not provide wheelchair access. Furthermore, despite wheelchair users having legal priority to the single wheelchair space available on most buses, this continues to be utilised by people with pushchairs who refuse to vacate it for wheelchair users. This problem is compounded by drivers refusing to enforce the law.

## Extension: Public Transport

“

*...at some times of day, I am completely unable to travel by bus, as the wheelchair space will always be full of people with pushchairs due to school drop-off and pick-up times*

”

For people with mobility impairments, having slow and easy access on and off the vehicle is a necessity. However, this is sometimes made impossible by bus drivers refusing to park nearer the kerb or lower the bus.

For people with mobility impairments, having slow and easy access on and off the vehicle is a necessity. However, this is sometimes made impossible by bus drivers refusing to park nearer the kerb or lower the bus.

“

*I find it difficult to get on and off buses, as most drivers don't lower the bus getting on or off the bus. As I rely on public transport, I don't get out and about often*

”

**Buses**

Buses are often presumed to be a fully accessible form of transportation. However, a number of bus stops in the Goldsmiths area do not provide wheelchair access. Furthermore, despite wheelchair users having legal priority to the single wheelchair space available on most buses, this continues to be utilised by people with pushchairs who refuse to vacate it for wheelchair users. This problem is compounded by drivers refusing to enforce the law.

“

*Please remember disabled and older people in the new plans for Lewisham. We need to be able to access public transport easily and very near to the shops and market*

”

## Extension: Public Transport

### *Freedom Pass*

The Freedom Pass is designed to offer free off-peak travel to London public transport for Deaf and disabled people.

The majority of respondents understood the criteria for qualifying for a Freedom Pass, and the rules around when you can use it.  $\frac{2}{3}$  of people found it easy to apply for a Freedom Pass, but less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  felt that the rules around when a Freedom Pass could be used are fair.

The two main proposals for improving the Freedom Pass scheme for Deaf and disabled people were:

For the Freedom Pass to be available at all times.

For there to be a connected travel pass for carers.

As the Disabled Person's Freedom Pass is only valid on National Rail services at 9:30am, disabled people are prevented from using the pass to attend work, to take children to school, and to attend morning appointments. Likewise, the Older Person's Freedom Pass is not valid during morning peak hours (4:30am-9:00am) on any services, limiting them even further in where they can be used.

In many areas of England, the free bus pass can be extended to cover travel for a carer, but this isn't available in London. This is also contingent on specific evidence, such as an Enhanced Mobility PIP Award, or evidence of a social care package. This means disabled people who require a carer travelling with them pay more to travel (as they must pay for the carer) than those who do not require a carer and travel for free using the Freedom Pass.



## Extension: Public Transport

Station	Step-free access available	Staff assistance with ramp available full-time	Staff assistance with ramp available part-time*
Beckenham Hill	Yes	No	Yes
Bellingham	No		
Blackheath	Yes with interchange via street	No	Yes
Brockley	Yes with interchange via street	Yes	
Catford Bridge	Yes with 250m platform interchange via street	No	Yes
Catford	No		
Crofton Park	Yes with 400m platform interchange via street	No	Yes
Deptford	Yes	No	Yes
Forest Hill	Yes	Yes	
Grove Park	Partial - no step-free access to Platform 1	No	Yes
Hither Green	No step-free access to Platforms 1, 2, 3, and 6, step-free access to Platforms 4 and 5	Yes	
Honor Oak	Yes	Yes	
Ladywell	Yes with step-free interchange via street of 200m	No	Yes
Lee	Yes with step-free interchange via street of 200m	No	Yes
Lewisham	Yes	Yes	
Lower Sydenham	Yes but no step-free interchange	No	Yes
New Cross Gate	Yes	No	Yes
New Cross	Yes	Yes	
St John's	No		
Sydenham	Yes with step-free interchange via street of 500m	No	Yes