

Title of meeting: Traffic & Transportation Cabinet Member Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 28th January 2021

Subject: Concessionary Fares Scheme Companion Pass Entitlement Criteria

Report by: Tristan Samuels, Director Regeneration

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

1.1 Following the Concessionary Fares Companion Pass Scheme Entitlement pilot and consultation, this report outlines the pilot consultation results and a series of recommendations for the scheme.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation:

2.1 Notes the contents of this report;

2.2 Approves the revised changes to the eligibility criteria below, following the 12 month pilot for the Concessionary Fares Scheme Companion Pass:

To qualify for a companion pass you will need to provide.

- **War Pensioners Mobility Allowance**

Or

- **A letter from the Department of Work & Pensions confirming that the applicant is currently in receipt of the Higher rate of the care and mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).**

Or

- **Personal independence payment at 8 points or above against either the PIP "moving around" or "communicating verbally" activities**

Or

- **8 points or above against the "planning and following a journey" activity and with enhanced rate of care**

Or

- **Evidence you receive Attendance Allowance at the Higher rate**

And

Additionally to one of the above evidence the below evidence must be provided.

- **Provide a healthcare professional's report e.g. physiotherapist, podiatrist, nurse etc. containing their contact details confirming your disabilities and inability to travel alone.**

2.3 Approves for all existing passholders to be contacted before the expiry of their current pass to ensure that any disadvantages are mitigated where possible due to the introduction of the revised eligibility criteria.

3. Background

3.1 The Concessionary Fares Companion Pass Scheme is a local discretionary enhancement to the statutory English National Travel Concessions Scheme. Qualifying residents are eligible for a Companion Pass, which allows the holder to have a companion travel with them free of charge when boarding buses within the Portsmouth City Council boundary.

3.2 The purpose of the Companion Pass is to aid independence for those residents who are not always able to travel unaccompanied. 324 out of 3,134 Disabled Person's bus passholders in Portsmouth have a Companion Pass.

3.3 There are a number of reasons for updating the eligibility criteria including:

- To reflect the users' needs rather than income levels;
- The withdrawal of government housing benefits previously used in the Companion Pass eligibility criteria;
- Further guidance from the Department of Transport since the scheme was originally introduced.

3.3 The current Companion Pass eligibility were introduced in February 2011 with the following eligibility criteria:

- In receipt housing benefit; and
- have a signed declaration from a doctor confirming they are unable to travel alone

- 3.4 The companion does not receive a bus pass in their own right, so the user is not restricted to a specific companion. The companion may be a child aged 11 or over. The passholder is not required to have a companion with them at all times as some conditions vary from day to day. The passholder and companion must both board and alight the bus at the same bus stop.
- 3.5 The Concessionary Fares Companion Pass Scheme is a local benefit for Portsmouth City Council residents, the companion will need to pay the full fare if any journey starts outside of the Portsmouth City Council boundary.
- 3.6 Universal Credit was introduced in April 2013 and is gradually being rolled out across the UK. This absorbs housing benefit which will no longer be available as an eligibility criteria.
- 3.7 In developing the new criteria, Portsmouth City Council has taken into account the Department for Transport guidance to local authorities on assessing eligibility of disabled people in England for concessionary bus travel 2013. Further details can be found here:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/919050/eligibility-review.pdf
- 3.8 In September 2019 a decision paper was brought to Traffic & Transportation Cabinet meeting to pilot a revised eligibility criteria based on that government guidance. This paper reports the result of that pilot.

4 Revised Scheme Eligibility

- 4.1 The revised Concessionary Fares Companion Pass Scheme criteria for the pilot (see section 4.2 below) were approved for a 12 month pilot period from January 2020. It was agreed that a report would be brought back to Traffic and Transportation Cabinet meeting at the end of the pilot, following consultation with users.
- 4.2 The revised eligibility for a Companion Pass for the pilot, which was consulted on over a 12 month period is outlined below. However, please note that following the consultation this has been amended as outlined in sections 6.2 and 6.3 of this report:

One document with proof of disability/attendance allowance and one letter from a qualified medical consultant.

The documents required for the pilot were as follows:

- War Pensioners Mobility Allowance
- A letter from the Department of Work & Pensions confirming that the applicant is currently in receipt of the **Higher** rate of the **care and mobility component** of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

Or

- Personal independence payment at 8 points or above against either the PIP "moving around" or "communicating verbally" activities

Or

- 8 points against the "planning and following a journey" activity and with enhanced rate of care

Or

- Evidence you receive Attendance Allowance at the **Higher** rate

Additionally to one of the above evidence the below letter must be provided.

- A letter from a qualified medical consultant (not a general practitioner) confirming that the applicant is unable to travel alone on a bus for medical reasons.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 As part of the pilot, consultation on the scheme was undertaken during the 12 month pilot period. This was in two phases with a second survey to further explore points raised in the first survey. The results of the consultation are outlined in appendix 2 of this report.
- 5.2 All 324 residents' who currently held a Concessionary Fares Companion Pass were written to informing them of the pilot and inviting them to provide feedback through the survey. Alternatively residents could input this online through the link provided in the letter and face to face where preferred.
- 5.3 The objectives of the survey were:
- To understand how the companion bus pass was being used;
 - To gain insight into passholders' views on the changes to the entitlement criteria.
- 5.4 On 14 January 2020 existing customers were invited to complete a survey which would enable officers to understand how the pass was currently being used (see first objective - section 5.3). The survey was open for eight months. A second survey, launched on 7 October 2020, focused on the second objective to allow officers to gain pass holders' views on the changes to the entitlement criteria. Both surveys were distributed by post and linked to the council's 'Companion bus pass' web page where customers could learn more about the trial, renewal information and pass usage.

- 5.5 The feedback provided by the passholders has helped to shape the revised recommendations in this report.
- 5.6 The full consultation report is outlined in appendix 4.
- 5.7 The initial survey attracted 90 responses from the 324 passholders. This volume of responses ensures a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of 8.69% which is at the higher end of what is considered to be an acceptable parameter.
- The second survey received 33 responses which ensures a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of 32.89% - results should only be as an indicator of opinion. This lower response may have been because users had said what they wanted to say in the first survey.
- Not all respondents answered every question.
- 5.8 Key points from both consultations:
- 5.8.1 Companion passes were being used frequently for multiple journey purposes prior to Covid-19 and were highly valued by users. 22 respondents (50%) used their pass on a daily basis and a further 17 (39%) used it weekly. Only 2 (5%) of respondents used it monthly while 7% used it 'less often' than once a month.
- 5.8.2 The companion pass has had a big impact on users' lives prior to Covid-19; 35 (79%) either 'agree or strongly agree' that it improved their quality of life (Figure 8). 6 users (14%) 'strongly disagree' that it improved their quality of life.
- 5.8.3 The majority of respondents, prior to Covid-19, used their companion pass to go shopping 36 (82%) with 31 (70%) using it for leisure and entertainment 18 (41%) used it to attend day services, with 6 (14%) using the pass for education/ training and 4 (9%) for travel to work. 24 (55%) said that they were previously unable to access these activities.
- 5.8.4 Users were also invited to provide comments and 36 did so, which has been very helpful in refining the proposals in this report.
- 5.8.5 When asked if respondents agree or disagree with the new companion bus pass entitlement criteria; 35% Agreed with the criteria and 40% disagreed. 10% 'strongly agree' (2) and '25% 'agree' (5). 25% (5) 'disagree strongly' and 15% 'disagree'(3). 25% (5) neither agreed or disagreed (6) (20 Respondents).
- 5.8.6 The eight respondents who disagreed with the entitlement criteria were next asked which element they disagree with - see Table 2 below.

Table 2 - Base: Second survey - Respondents disagreeing with the entitlement criteria (8 respondents)

Criteria	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Officer response
One of the following documents (War Pensioners Mobility Allowance, Letter from the Department of Work & Pensions confirming that the applicant is currently in receipt of the Higher rate of the care and mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal independence payment at eight (8) points against either the PIP “moving around” or “communicating verbally” activities and enhanced rate of care, Personal independence payment at eight (8) points against the “planning and following a journey” activity and enhanced rate of care and enhanced rate of care, Evidence you receive Attendance Allowance at the higher rate)	5	63%	The criteria are those set in government guidance for a disabled person's pass. Portsmouth City Council has discretion to take other factors into account for a companion pass. 8 points has been revised to 8 points or more.
A letter from a qualified medical consultant (not a general practitioner G.P) confirming that you are unable to travel alone on a bus for medical reasons	4	50%	This has been replaced by a healthcare professional to be easier to access for applicants.
Be eligible for concessionary travel pass from Portsmouth City Council (or be eligible for one)	1	13%	See answer above.
Something else	1	13%	

5.8.7 One of the reasons that respondents disagreed with the criteria, was not being able to fulfil the entitlement criteria in order to be able to obtain a companion bus pass, yet still requiring one, for example a child would not qualify for Housing Benefit. However may qualify under the new revised criteria. Many users did not regularly see a consultant and are more likely to see a healthcare professional. Following this feedback a revision has been made to the proposed entitlement criteria as outlined in section 6.

6. Changes to criteria.

6.1 From the feedback provided by the consultations during the pilots, the following changes are recommended to the Portsmouth City Council Concessionary Fares Scheme Companion Pass entitlement criteria.

6.2 Existing criteria wording:

Personal independence payment at 8 points against either the PIP "moving around" or "communicating verbally" activities or 8 points against the "planning and following a journey" activity and enhanced rate of care.

Recommended that this section is changed to:

Personal independence payment at 8 points *or above* against either the PIP "moving around" or "communicating verbally" activities or 8 points or above against the "planning and following a journey" activity and enhanced rate of care;

6.3 Existing criteria wording:

A letter from a qualified medical consultant (not a general practitioner) confirming that the applicant is unable to travel alone on a bus for medical reasons.

Recommended that this is changed to:

You will need to provide a healthcare professional's report e.g. physiotherapist, podiatrist, nurse etc. containing their contact details confirming your disabilities and inability to travel alone.

6.4 It is recommended that all existing passholders will be contacted before the expiry of their current pass to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by the revised eligibility criteria.

7. Reasons for recommendations

7.1 Under the existing scheme, eligibility for a Companion Pass is met by those people who are eligible for Housing Benefit, along with a letter from a qualified medical practitioner stating that they are unable to travel alone. Housing Benefit is being replaced by Universal Credit, therefore this cannot be used as a criterion going forward. Government guidance has been introduced since the scheme was last updated in 2011.

7.2 Guidance to local authorities on assessing eligibility of disabled people in England for concessionary bus travel, Department for Transport (DfT) 2013, recommends that, where available, the most robust way of assessing eligibility is likely to be via other relevant existing state benefits. Eligibility for a concessionary travel pass may be considered "automatic" (not requiring further assessment) where a person is in receipt of any of the following state benefits, which link eligibility to receive the benefit to the ability to walk or, in the case of PIP, to communicate orally, provided that the person is of fare paying age and that the award of the benefit has been for at least 12 months or is expected to be for at least 12 months: a. Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance; b. Personal Independence Payment (PIP), where the applicant has been awarded at least eight points against either the PIP "Moving around"

and/or "Communicating verbally" activities; c. War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement. This guidance has been used as the basis for the revised criteria.

- 7.3 The DfT Guidance to local authorities on assessing eligibility of disabled people in England for concessionary bus travel adds 'Using an applicant's GP to verify that an individual meets the criteria for a concessionary travel pass is regarded as an unsatisfactory'. This prompted Portsmouth City Council to request a medical consultant's letter.
- 7.4 During the pilot it was established that many residents who would be eligible for a companion pass are not under or have not been under a medical consultant, therefore this wording has been revised and amended as below.
- 7.5 Portsmouth City Council consulted with other local authorities including Southampton City Council and Hampshire County Council, to understand their eligibility criteria. This proposal brings our scheme in line with Hampshire County Council criteria which also follows government guidelines. "You will need to provide a healthcare professional's report e.g. physiotherapist, podiatrist, nurse etc. containing their contact details confirming your disabilities and inability to travel alone".
- 7.6 During the consultation it was found that the wording in section 6.2 did not allow for applicants who had more than 8 points "planning and following a journey" activity and enhanced rate of care to be eligible. For this reason, a change of wording is proposed in the recommendations.

8. Integrated Impact Assessment and Full Equality Impact Assessment

- 8.1 The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is attached as a separate document to this report.
- 8.2 The IIA identified under section A5-Equality & Diversity, that there was a requirement to undertake a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 8.3 A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken during the review of this pilot and is attached as a separate document to this report.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 As stated in the report, the issue of companion passes is a discretionary enhancement to the mandatory statutory travel concessions which the Council must provide under the Transport Act 2000, as amended. Accordingly the Council is able to decide whether or not to provide this enhancement out of its own funds and, if so, to determine the eligibility criteria.

9.2 Any discretionary concessions extend only to the Council's own administrative area unless a cross-border agreement has been reached with a neighbouring authority.

9.3 In reaching a decision on this matter the decision maker must:

- Have regard to the Council's duty under section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 (the Public Sector Equality Duty) and in particular to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and
- Consider and take into account the consultation responses received.

10. Director of Finance comments

10.1 The cost of trips made by users on the Concessionary scheme are met from the Council's cash limited budget. The effect of the recommendations within this report of changing the criteria for eligibility to companion passes is not anticipated to be material. This will be reviewed at the end, and during the 12 month pilot and if this assumption is untrue then the Council will need to identify additional funding to meet this increased cost should it arise.

10.2 An appraisal that sets out the cost of this change will be bought back to this committee in January 2022.

.....
Signed by:

Appendices:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

Title of document	Location
Review of Companion Pass Entitlement 2019	https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=176&MID=4361#A112082
Guidance to local authorities on assessing eligibility of disabled people in England for concessionary bus travel	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/919050/eligibility-review.pdf

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

Appendix 1. Proposed New Criteria

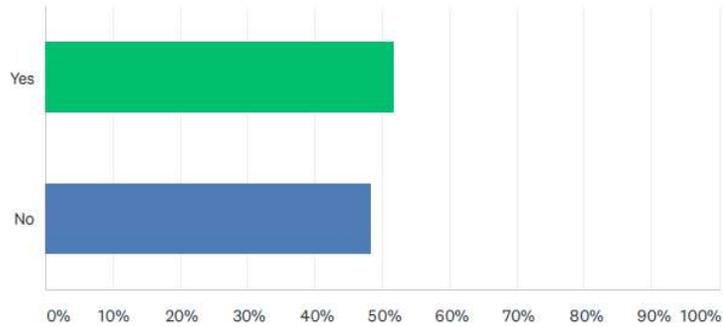
- **Personal independence payment at 8 points or above against either the PIP "moving around" or "communicating verbally" activities or 8 points *or above* against the "planning and following a journey" activity and enhanced rate of care;**
- **You will need to provide a healthcare professional's report e.g. physiotherapist, podiatrist, nurse etc. containing their contact details confirming your disabilities and inability to travel alone.**

Appendix 2. Survey 1

Companion bus pass survey

Q1 Did you hold a companion bus pass prior to 20th January 2020?

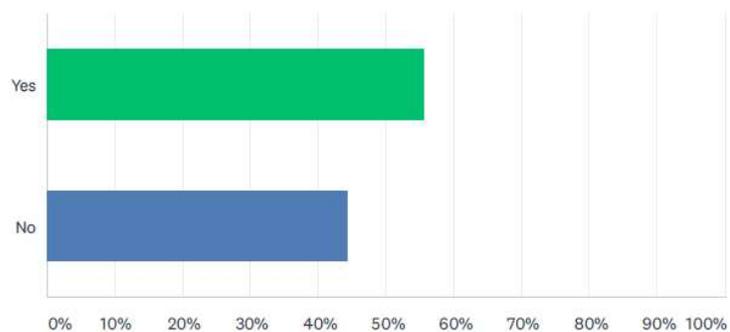
Answered: 89 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	51.69%	46
No	48.31%	43
TOTAL		89

Q2 Do you use a companion bus pass?

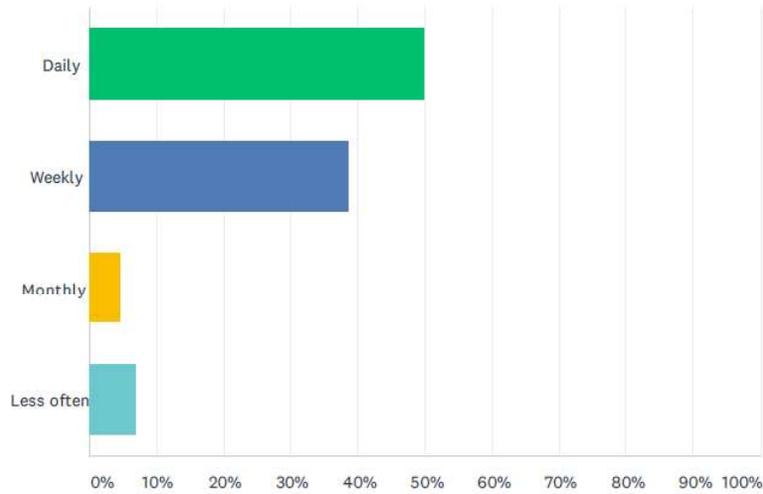
Answered: 90 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	55.56%	50
No	44.44%	40
TOTAL		90

Q3 How frequently do you use your companion bus pass?

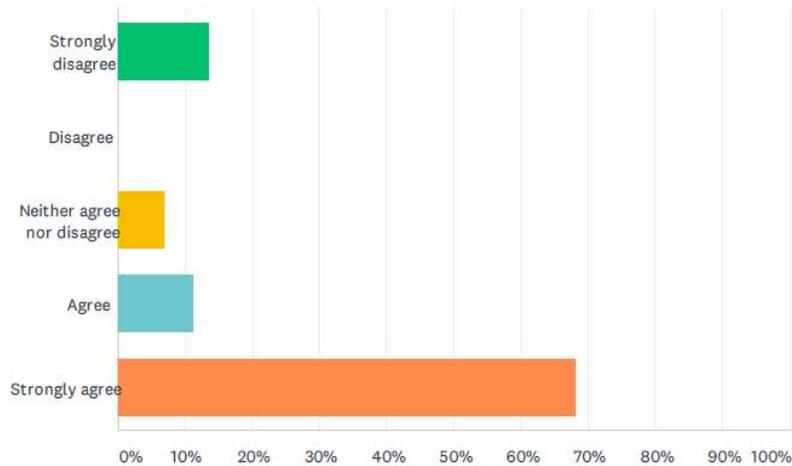
Answered: 44 Skipped: 46



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	50.00%	22
Weekly	38.64%	17
Monthly	4.55%	2
Less often	6.82%	3
TOTAL		44

Q4 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the companion pass has improved your quality of life?

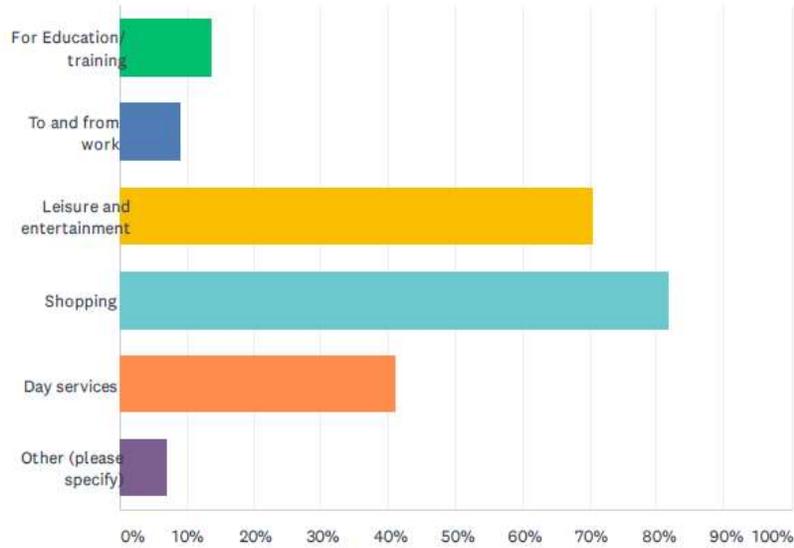
Answered: 44 Skipped: 46



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly disagree	13.64%	6
Disagree	0.00%	0
Neither agree nor disagree	6.82%	3
Agree	11.36%	5
Strongly agree	68.18%	30
TOTAL		44

Q5 What do you use the companion bus pass for? (tick all that apply)

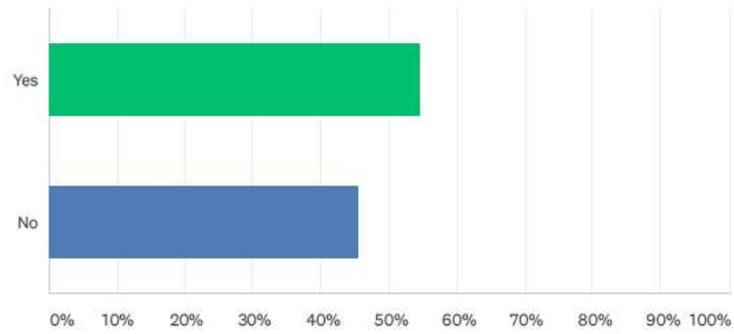
Answered: 44 Skipped: 46



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
For Education/ training	13.64%	6
To and from work	9.09%	4
Leisure and entertainment	70.45%	31
Shopping	81.82%	36
Day services	40.91%	18
Other (please specify)	6.82%	3
Total Respondents: 44		

Q6 Were you able to access these activities before you had a companion bus pass?

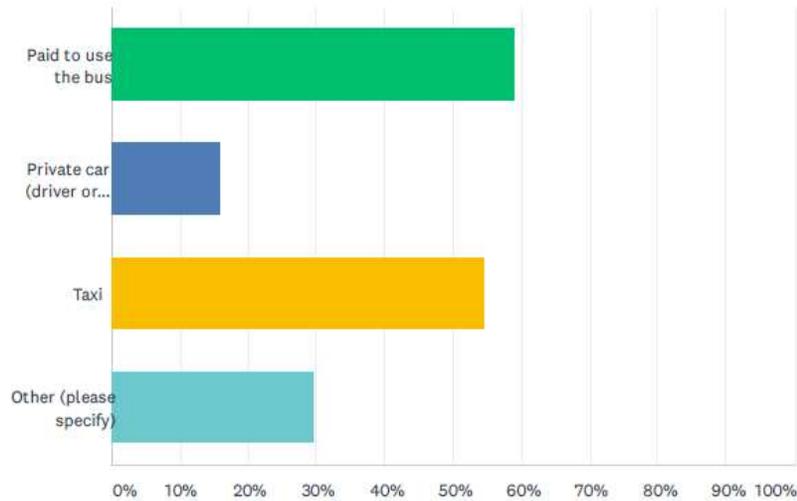
Answered: 44 Skipped: 46



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	54.55%	24
No	45.45%	20
TOTAL		44

Q7 How did you access these activities before you had a companion bus pass? (tick all that apply)

Answered: 44 Skipped: 46



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Paid to use the bus	59.09%	26
Private car (driver or passenger)	15.91%	7
Taxi	54.55%	24
Other (please specify)	29.55%	13
Total Respondents: 44		

Q8 If you have any other comments to make about the companion bus pass, please share them with us in the box below.

Answered: 27 Skipped: 63

The companion bus pass is a beautiful thing for us and other people. Thank you very much
Its a very good idea and it allows me to do things and have some motivation.
As I am in a wheelchair I wouldn't be able to do the things I do without my carers.
It is a great help for me to go out with my Mum
"The companion bus pass allows me to get about helping my mental and physical well being. No other transport available.
NOTE FROM CARER - Who would other than a GP, confirm that the holder was unable to travel alone on a bus for medical reasons. Unreasonable requirement if all other criteria reached. Not on email or internet"
Does not always register on buses
I need assistance at all times
I live in 24/7 supported living and need to be supported to access community and travel at all times
"My son has disabilities and also underwent chemotherapy so the pass came in handy for appointments. When I have to collect him from school for appointments or days out. As his carer I don't work and without this we were struggling to get to these before.The companion pass I only use when I am with him, he is and still at school. It would be useful if I could use this when he is not with me as I have to collect him from school for his appointments. When he was on chemotherapy we had to be at the hospital 3 times a week so it made a huge relief to us financially."
It should be available to any level of disability
It's greatly improved my life and independence.
Brilliant idea
My bus pass stolen November 2019 when handbag stolen now have ordinary one! still in date - rarely used I need a companion
I would be unable to use bus without the companion bus pass as I do not go out on my own.
I think its a good idea
If I use the bus before 9.30 I have to pay for my wife and I need her to help me.
Yes I really need my companion bus pass, as my son is my carer and I need to go to hospital appointments with him.
No
Within using travelling with my companion, I could never go to visit my family or children as the pass only took me as far as Farlington.
It should be available at any level of disability, not just certain rates.
"I didn't know this was available and have spent years travelling on buses and requiring accompanying often and my paying for their fares which become costly.
"
Very difficult to apply for

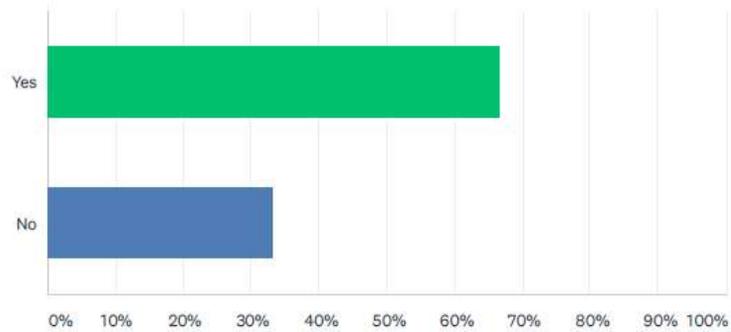
Wife disabled wheelchair bound 15 years carer. Hearing aids user hard of hearing
I would like to see the companion bus pass rolled out for all carers with disabled children. I'm currently in the process of applying for my son's disability pass but becomes costly as we have to keep getting off of busses due to his disability and although we can get an all day ticket it become very expensive for short trips and stressful.
It would be very useful to a wheelchair user.
only the photo.
What do I do if I don't see any consultants

Appendix 3. Survey 2.

Companion Bus Pass - Follow-Up Survey

Q1 Do you have a companion pass?

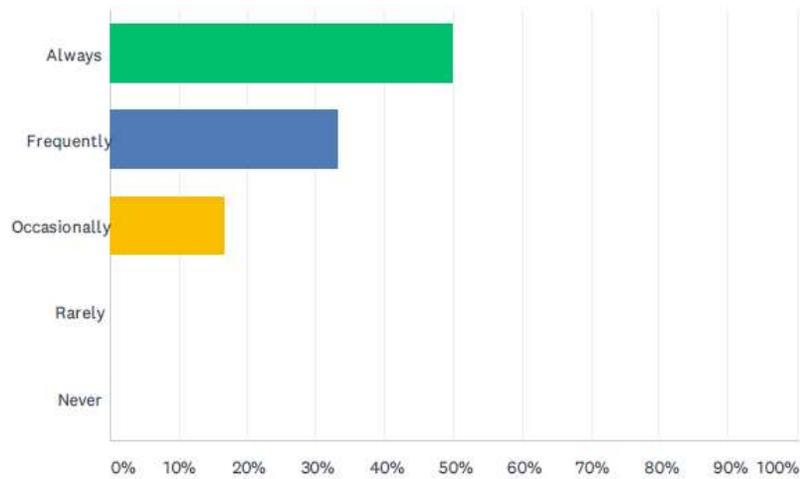
Answered: 36 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	66.67%	24
No	33.33%	12
TOTAL		36

Q2 How often do you use your companion pass?

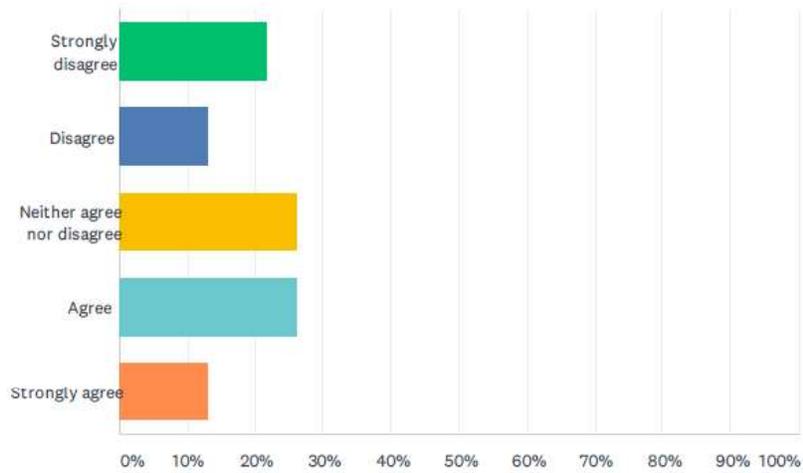
Answered: 24 Skipped: 12



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Always	50.00%	12
Frequently	33.33%	8
Occasionally	16.67%	4
Rarely	0.00%	0
Never	0.00%	0
TOTAL		24

Q3 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the entitlement criteria?

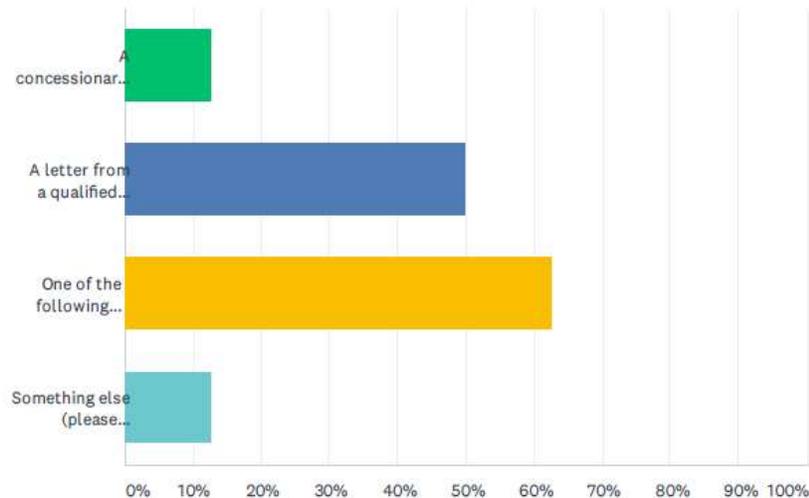
Answered: 23 Skipped: 13



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly disagree	21.74%	5
Disagree	13.04%	3
Neither agree nor disagree	26.09%	6
Agree	26.09%	6
Strongly agree	13.04%	3
TOTAL		23

Q4 Which of the entitlement criteria do you disagree with?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 28



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A concessionary travel pass from Portsmouth City Council (or be eligible for one)	12.50%	1
A letter from a qualified medical consultant (not a general practitioner G.P) confirming that you are unable to travel alone on a bus for medical reasons	50.00%	4
One of the following documents (War Pensioners Mobility Allowance, Letter from the Department of Work & Pensions confirming that the applicant is currently in receipt of the Higher rate of the care and mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal independence payment at eight (8) points or above against either the PIP "moving around" or "communicating verbally" activities and enhanced rate of care, Personal independence payment at eight (8) points against the "planning and following a journey" activity and enhanced rate of care and enhanced rate of care, Evidence you receive Attendance Allowance at the higher rate)	62.50%	5
Something else (please specify)	12.50%	1
Total Respondents: 8		

Q5 Why do you disagree with 'A concessionary travel pass from Portsmouth City Council (or be eligible for one)'?

Answered: 0 Skipped: 36

Q6 Why do you disagree with 'A letter from a qualified medical consultant (not a general practitioner G.P) confirming that you are unable to travel alone on a bus for medical reasons'?

Answered: 2 Skipped: 34

Answers
it will take ages
Because there are varying degrees of why people cannot travel alone personally I have severe anxiety and would not be able to receive a letter to help my case but I cannot travel alone

Q7 Why do you disagree with 'One of the following documents'? (War Pensioners Mobility Allowance, Letter from the Department of Work & Pensions confirming that the applicant is currently in receipt of the Higher rate of the care and mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal independence payment at eight (8) points or above against either the PIP "moving around" or "communicating verbally" activities and enhanced rate of care, Personal independence payment at eight (8) points against the "planning and following a journey" activity and enhanced rate of care and enhanced rate of care, Evidence you receive Attendance Allowance at the higher rate)'

Answered: 2 Skipped: 34

Answers
Someone I know got one , can walk everywhere
My son had autism he had speech and language delay he is years old and I still don't have companion pass for him please tell me how he can travel on he's on....totally not understand

Q8 Why do you disagree with 'something else'?

Answered: 1 Skipped: 35

Answer
All reasonable criteria

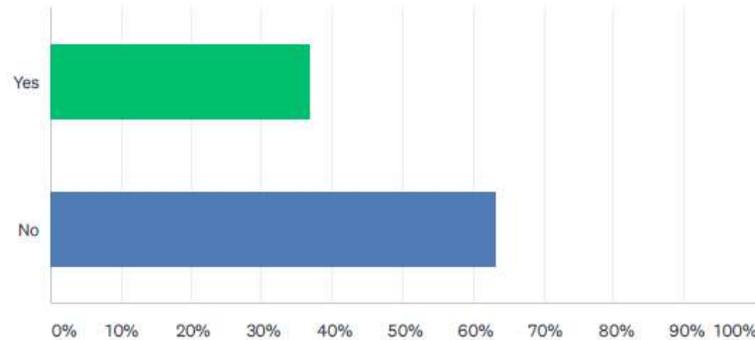
Q9 If you have any comments or feedback on the entitlement criteria please share them with us in the box below:

Answered: 8 Skipped: 28

Answer
Happy with ours, it's essential and appreciated.
I think that being entitled to PIP should be enough to be eligible for a companion bus pass
"deaf people needs help.my wife is in a wheel chair and i cant push her because i am havin problems walking myself
I have learning disabilities and require help and support in the community. This includes going on buses.
I'm really disappointed this service right now my boy is autistic he can't travel on he's on and still don't have companion buss pass for him because he don't have high rate mobility totally disgusting

Q10 Do you believe you will be affected by this change when you come to renew you companion pass?

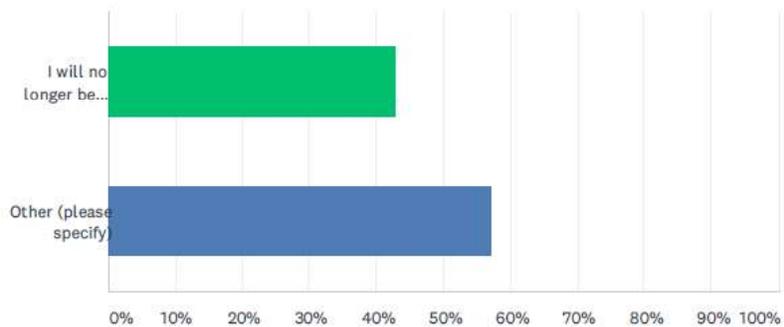
Answered: 19 Skipped: 17



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	36.84%	7
No	63.16%	12
TOTAL		19

Q11 How will the change in entitlement criteria affect you?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 29



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I will no longer be eligible for a companion pass	42.86%	3
Other (please specify)	57.14%	4
Total Respondents: 7		

Department for Transport guidance 2013 (link):

[Guidance to local authorities on assessing eligibility of disabled people in England for concessionary bus travel \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/262222/guidance-to-local-authorities-on-assessing-eligibility-of-disabled-people-in-england-for-concessionary-bus-travel.pdf)

Appendix 4 Survey Report.

Companion Bus Pass REPORT 2020



Contents

1.0 Purpose.....	29
2.0 Background.....	29
3.0 Research.....	29
3.1 Objectives.....	29
3.2 Methodology.....	29
4.0 Response rates.....	29
5.0 Summary of findings.....	30
6.0 Analysis of results.....	30
6.1 Respondent demographic profile (first consultation).....	31
6.2 Use of the companion bus pass (first consultation).....	33
6.3 Change in eligibility criteria (second consultation).....	38

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive summary of feedback on the companion bus pass. Two consultations were conducted that gave respondents the opportunity to provide their views on the companion pass and the change in entitlement criteria.

Background

The Companion Pass is a discretionary enhancement to the English National Travel Concessions Scheme. Qualifying residents are entitled to a Companion Pass, which entitles the holder to have a companion travel with them free of charge when boarding the bus in Portsmouth. In order to be eligible for the original scheme, introduced in 2011, users had to be in receipt of Housing Benefit and have a letter from a qualified medical practitioner confirming that they are unable to travel alone. A 12-month revision of the scheme in 2020 means that it is now based on the service user's need for a companion and not their financial circumstances. This is in line with national government guidance. The aim of these consultations was to gauge response to the entitlement criteria amongst current users, and to gather feedback on the use made of companion passes amongst new users.

Research

3.1 Objectives

- To understand how the companion bus pass is being used.
- To gain insight into pass holder's views on the changes to the entitlement criteria.

3.2 Methodology

A survey was developed which focussed questioning around the first key area outlined in section 3.1. The first survey omitted questions around the second key area outlined in section 3.1, therefore a second survey was developed to cover this aspect. The first survey was launched on 14th January 2020 and was open for eight months to enable as many respondents as possible time to complete it. The second survey was launched on 7th October 2020 and was open for six weeks. Both surveys were promoted through a targeted letter drop to pass holders and were also promoted on the Portsmouth City Council website.

Response rates

The initial survey attracted 90 responses. The "total population" of pass holders in January 2020 when the letters were sent out was 360, this volume of responses ensures a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of 8.69% which is at the highest end of what is considered to be an acceptable parameter.

The second survey only achieved 33 responses which ensures a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of 32.89% - results should only be as an indicator of opinion. This low response is likely to have been a result of the timing of the survey during the second national lockdown; pass holders were likely to be less engaged, usage levels of the companion pass were low during this period.

Summary of findings

A summary of the analysis undertaken on the data collected from the consultation survey is provided in this section.

Content of this section to be confirmed after draft review.

Full breakdowns are available in the following section of this report.

Analysis of results

The following sections outline the analysis undertaken on the results from the companion bus pass consultations. It is divided into the following three main sections of analysis:

1. Respondent demographic profile
2. Use of the companion bus pass
3. Change in Eligibility criteria

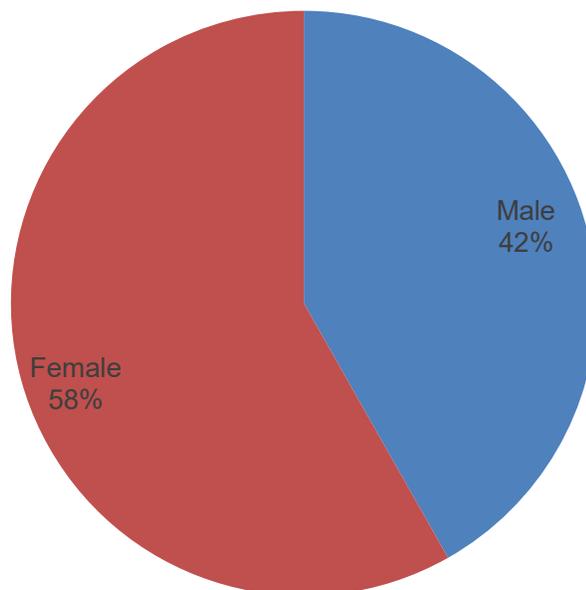
Please note that any discrepancies between the figures reported in the charts and the commentary are due to rounding.

6.1 Respondent demographic profile (first consultation)

This section provides a demographic profile of the respondents that interacted with the first consultation survey - it focuses on the information collected in the demographics section of the survey which included sex, age group, ethnic group, disability and disability type. All questions in the demographics section of the survey were voluntary and included a 'prefer not to say' option, therefore, the base sizes vary from question to question.

There were more females (58% of respondents) in the consultation sample than males (42% of respondents) - see Figure 1.

Figure 1: Sex of respondents



Base: First survey (67)

Figure 2 on the following page shows that respondents from all age groups are represented in the consultation sample in healthy proportions; 26% are aged 16-35, 48% are ages 36-55 and 26% are ages 56+.

Figure 2: Age of respondents

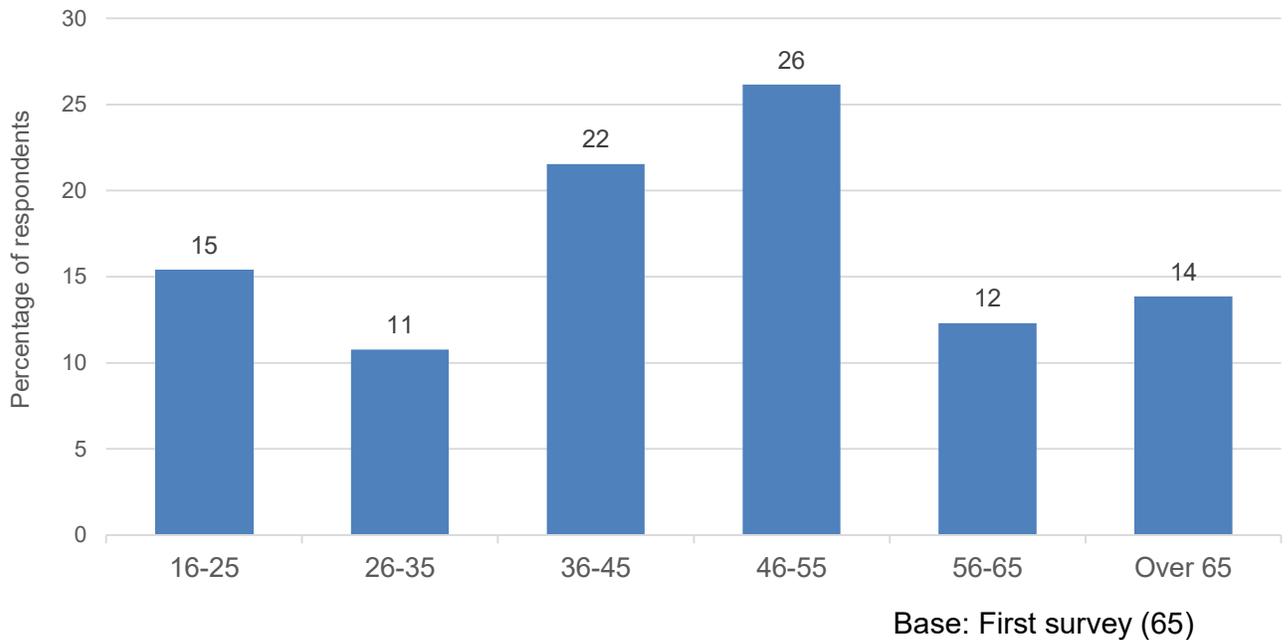
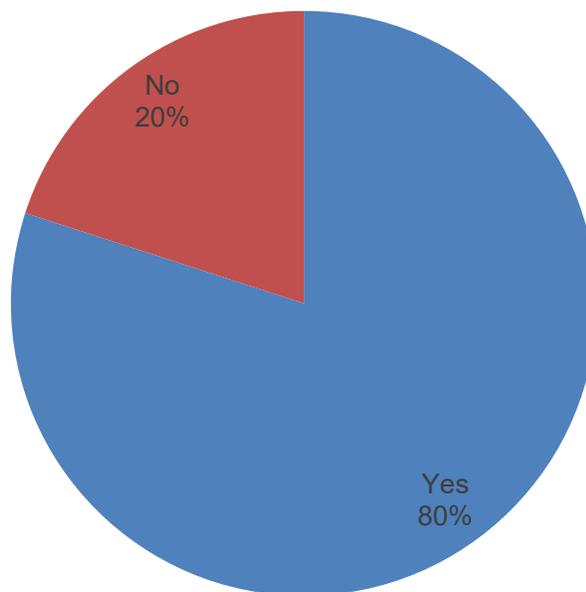


Figure 3 shows that 8 in 10 people in the consultation sample have a disability (80%). It is likely that that the remaining 20% of respondents consist of parents, carers and friends of pass holders completing the survey on their behalf.

Figure 3: Whether or not respondents have a disability

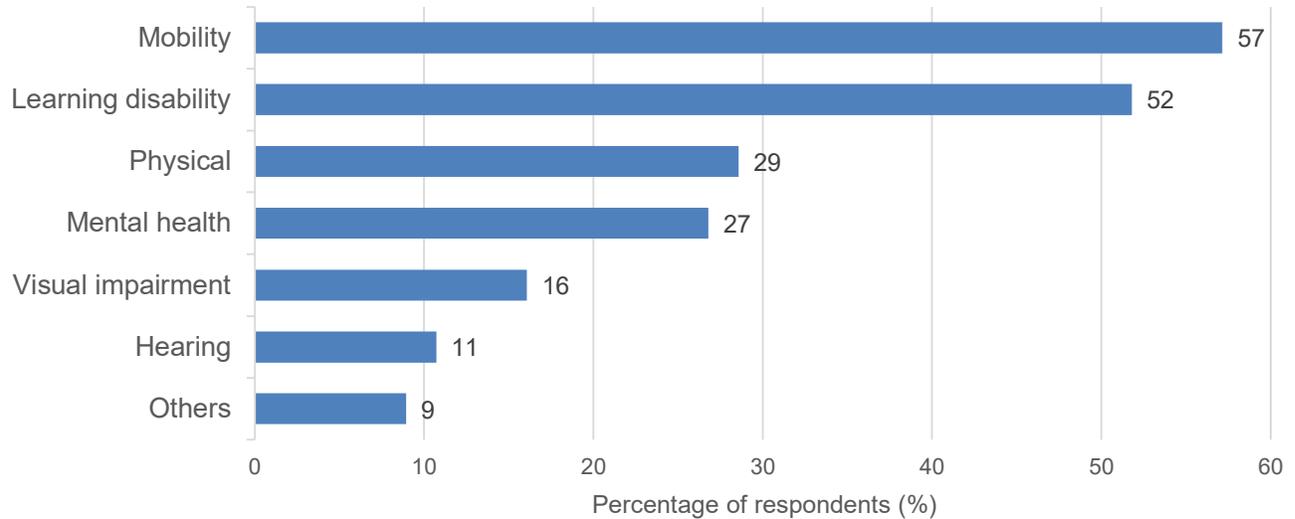


Base: First survey (70)

Figure 4 on the following page shows that the most common disabilities are both selected by a majority of respondents; mobility disability (57%) and learning disability (52%). Fewer

respondents have physical (29%) or mental health (27%) disabilities, and much smaller proportions have a visual impairment (16%) or hearing disability (11%).

Figure 4: Type of disability respondents have



Base: First survey - those with a disability (56)

The majority of respondents live in districts PO1-PO6 (97%), this is in line with expectations given that the companion pass is for Portsmouth residents (see Table 1). The largest proportion of users come from the PO2 postcode district (29%) followed by PO1 and PO5 (both 19%), and PO6 (14%).

Table 1: Respondents by postcode district.

Postcode district	Percentage of responses (%)	
PO1	19	97%
PO2	29	
PO3	8	
PO4	8	
PO5	19	
PO6	14	
PO9	3	3%

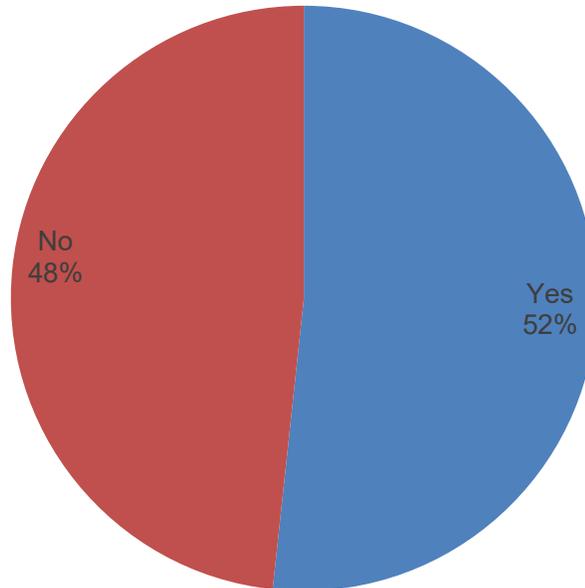
Base: First survey (63)

6.2 Use of the companion bus pass (first consultation)

The following section summarises the results from the questions in the first consultation survey which asked respondents how they were using their companion bus pass; how frequently, for what reasons, and the impact it has had on their lives.

Figure 5 on the following page shows that just over half the sample (52%) held a companion bus pass prior to 20th January 2020, meaning they applied under the original criteria.

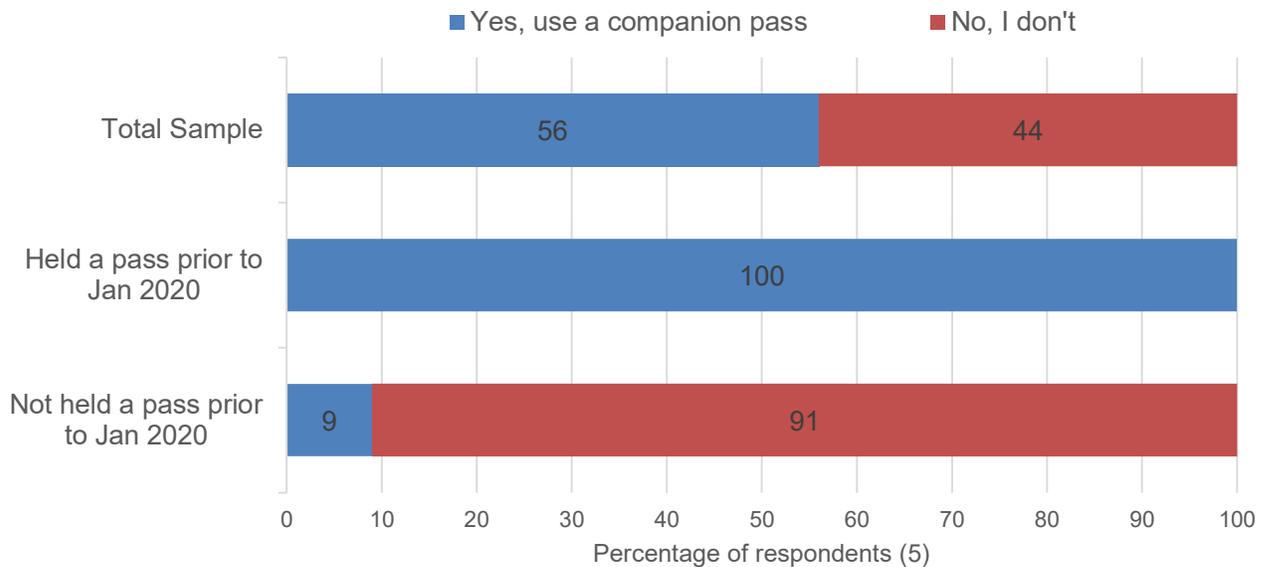
Figure 5: Did you hold a companion bus pass prior to 20th January 2020?



Base: First survey (89)

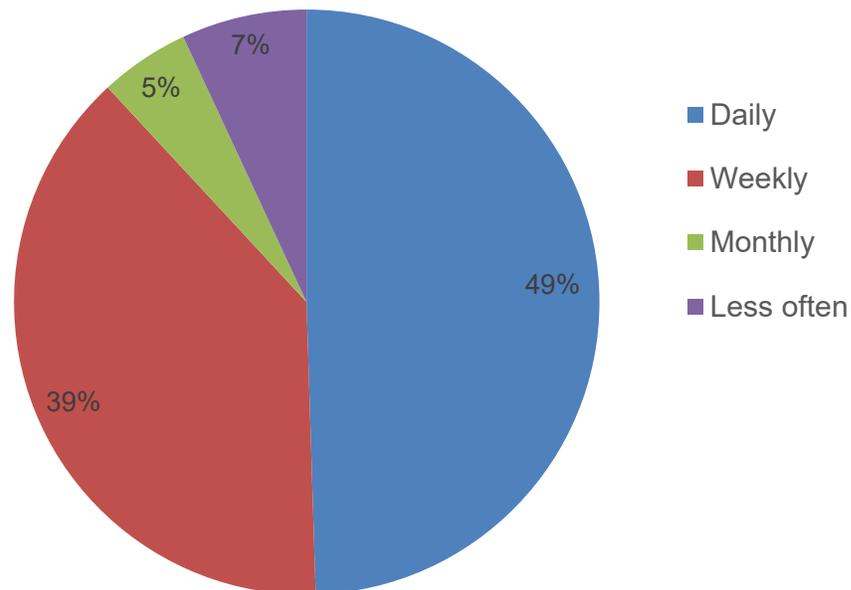
Over half of respondents in the consultation sample use their companion pass (56%) - Figure 6. A cross-tabulation of whether or not respondents held their pass prior to 20th January 2020 and whether they use one was undertaken in order to form an understanding about who the cohort are who do not use a companion pass. Results show that everyone who held a pass prior to 20th January 2020 currently uses it, whereas the majority (91%) of those who did not hold a pass under the original eligibility criteria do not currently use one. The timings of the consultation period crossed-over with the Covid-19 pandemic whereby restrictions were put in place to either stop or restrict travel on public transport - this is likely to have had an impact on responses to this question.

Figure 6: Do you use a companion bus pass? Cross-tabulated with 'did you hold a pass prior to Jan 2020?'



Base: First survey (90) | Prior to Jan (46) | Not prior to Jan (43)

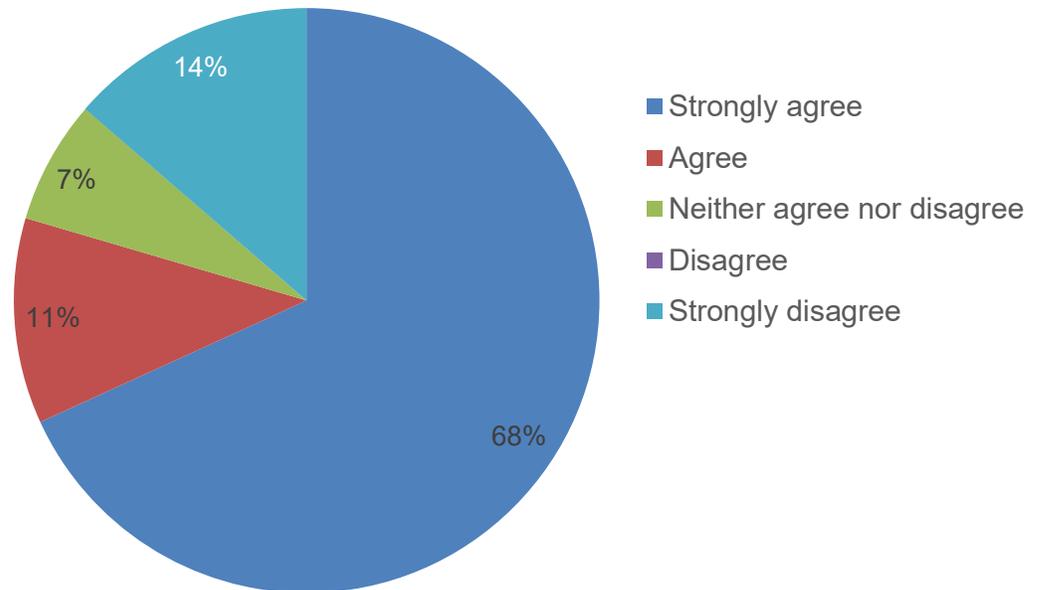
Figure 7: How frequently do you use your companion bus pass?



Base: First survey - Respondents using a companion pass (44)

Companion passes are being used frequently; almost half of this cohort (49%) use it on a daily basis and a further 39% use it weekly (see Figure 7). Only 5% of this cohort use it monthly and 7% use it 'less often'.

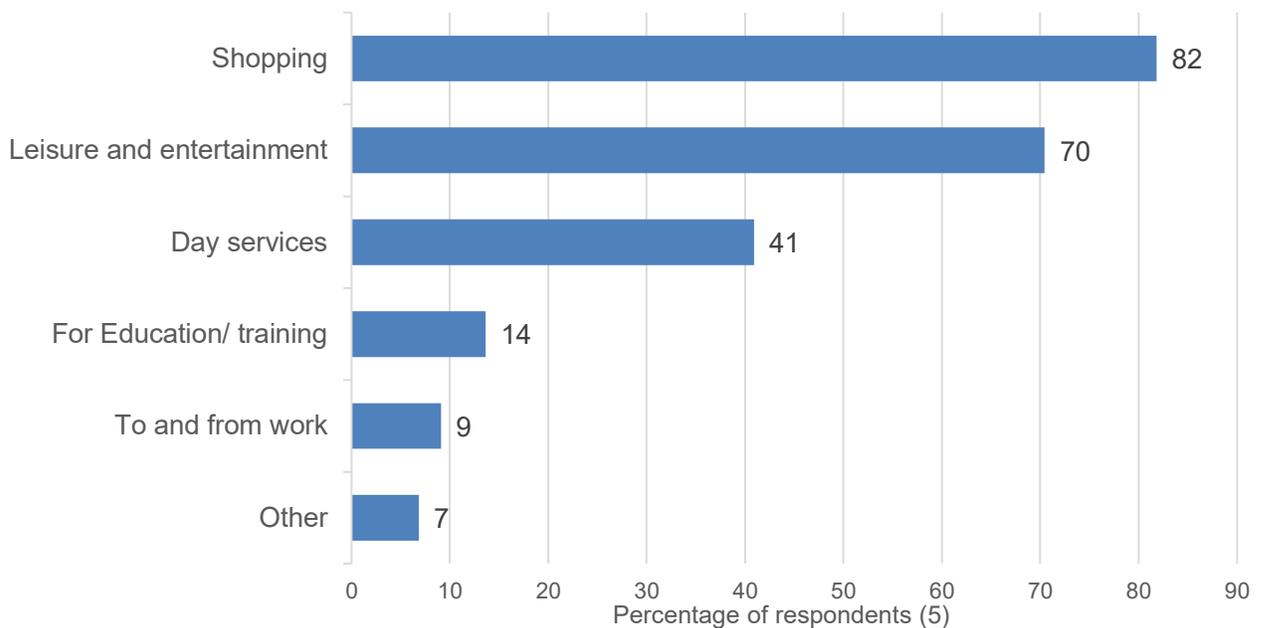
Figure 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the companion pass has improved your quality of life?



Base: First survey - Respondents using a companion pass (44)

The companion pass is having a big impact on users; 68% 'strongly agree' that it has improved their quality of life and a further 11% 'agree' (Figure 8). 14% 'strongly disagree' that it has improved their quality of life.

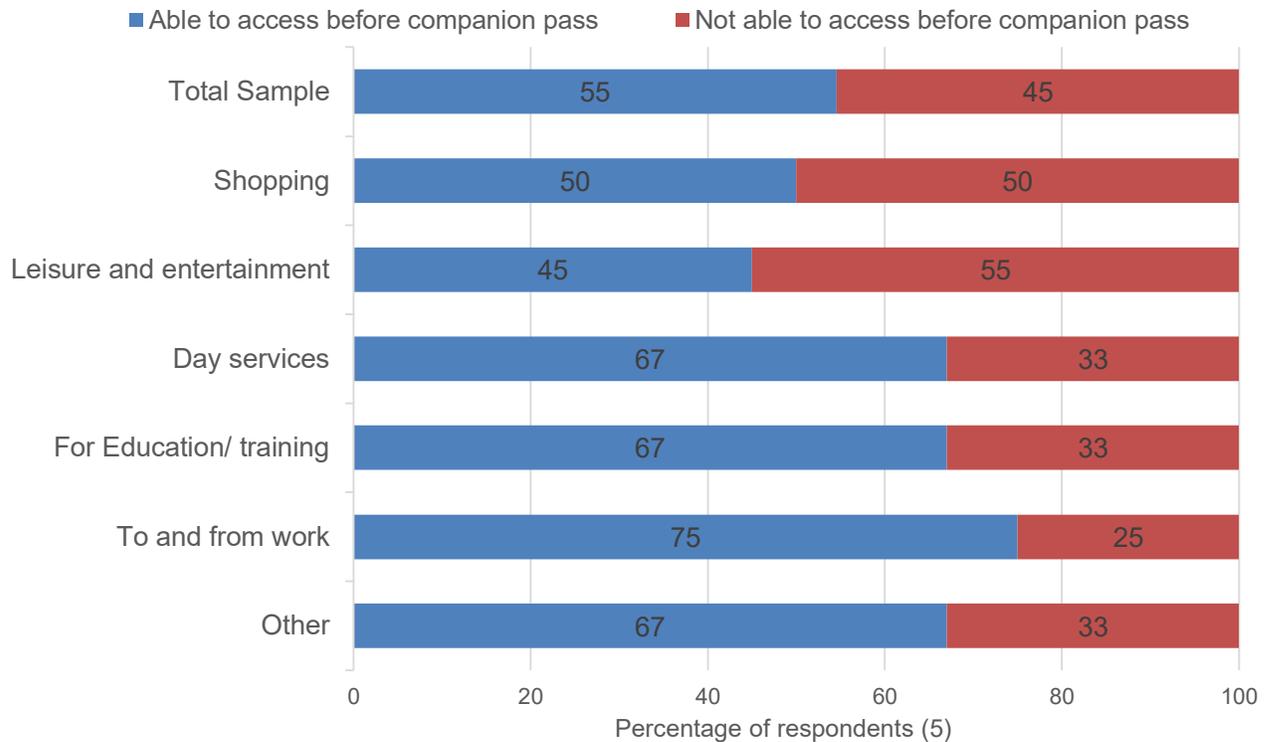
Figure 9: What do you use the companion bus pass for?



Base: First survey - Respondents using a companion pass (44)

Figure 9 shows that the vast majority of respondents are using their companion pass to go shopping (82%) and a large proportion use it for leisure and entertainment (70%). Less than half of respondents (41%) are using it for day services, and smaller proportions are using it for education/ training (14%), commuting for work (9%) and for 'other' reasons (7%).

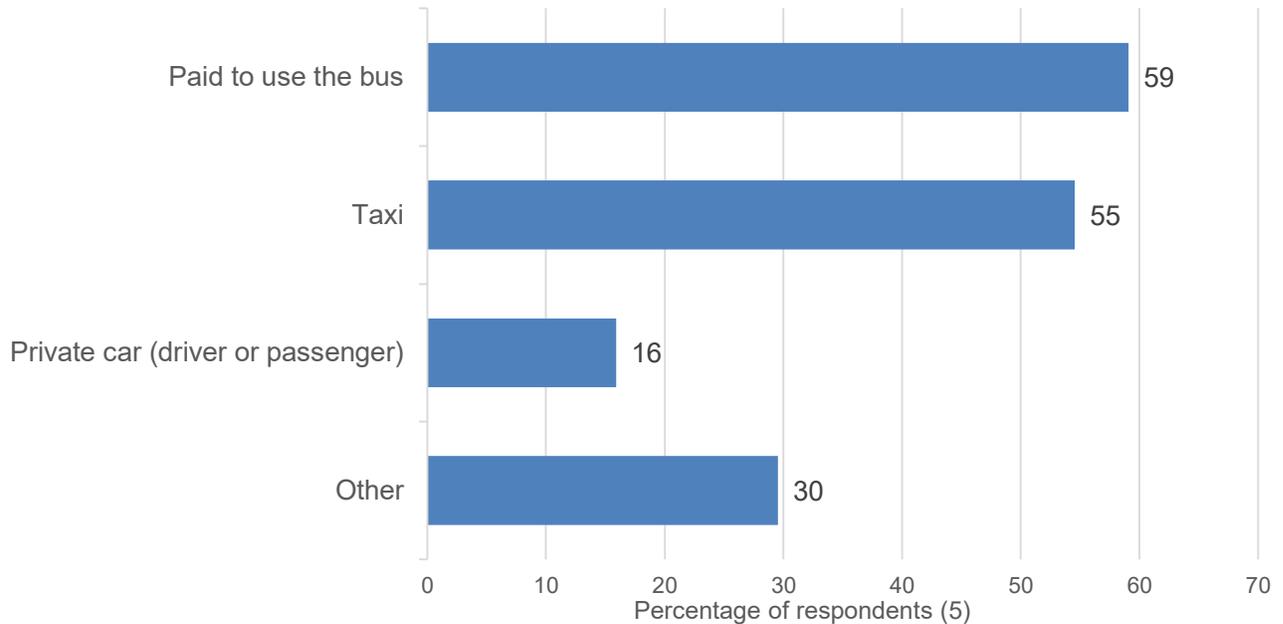
Figure 10: Were you able to access these activities before you had a companion bus pass?



Base: First survey - Respondents using a companion pass (44)

Just under half of respondents (45%) were not able to access the activities they are using their companion pass for before they had their pass (Figure 10 on the previous page). The companion pass has enabled more pass holders to access the most popular activities; 50% could not access shopping and 55% could not access leisure and entertainment prior to having a companion pass.

Figure 11: How did you access these activities before you had a companion bus pass?



Base: First survey - Respondents using a companion pass (44)

Figure 11 shows that respondents were most likely to have paid to use the bus (59%) or to get a taxi (55%) in order to access activities that they now use their companion bus pass for. 16% would have used a car (either as a driver or passenger) and 30% would have done something else. Qualitative analysis of the open-ended responses to those selecting 'other' reveals a selection of responses, from respondents who simply did not access the activities at all, to those that used a different bus pass (i.e. disabled bus pass) and those that walked, or used an electric wheelchair to make those journeys.

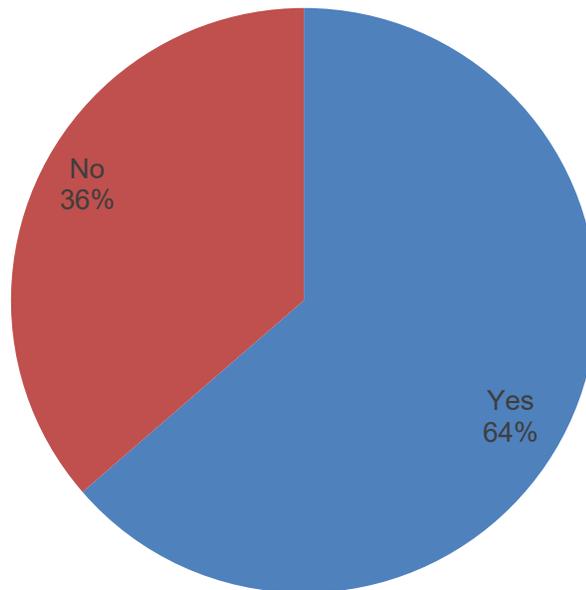
Next, respondents were asked if they had any further comments about the companion bus pass. A thematic analysis of the 27 open-ended comments was undertaken. A third of these comments were respondents explaining that they cannot travel without assistance and so a companion bus pass is vital for them. A quarter of them showed general support and appreciation for the scheme, for example saying it is a 'brilliant idea' and a 'great help'. A few respondents commented that the companion bus pass should be available for all carers with disabled children, and to people with any level of disability. Finally, one respondent noted that the pass was very difficult to apply for - they did not expand on this comment.

6.3 Change in eligibility criteria (second consultation)

The following section summarises the results from the questions in the second consultation survey which focused around the new eligibility criteria; what respondents think about it and what, if anything, they disagree with about the criteria.

It is worth noting the small base sizes in this section - findings provide an indication of trend rather than forming statistically robust data from which to draw stronger conclusions from.

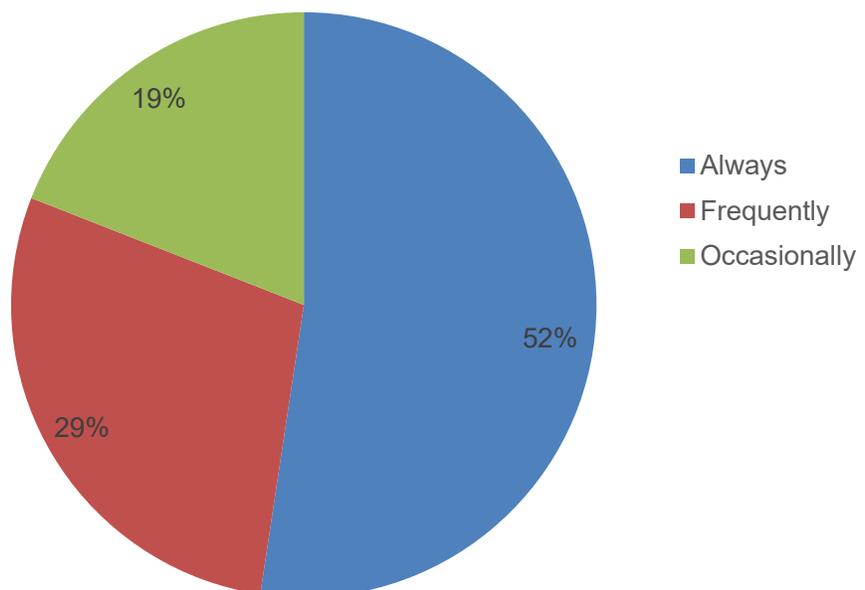
Figure 12: Do you have a companion pass?



Base: Second survey (33)

Figure 12 shows that almost two-thirds of respondents (64%) who responded to the consultation currently have a companion bus pass.

Figure 13: How often do you use your companion bus pass?

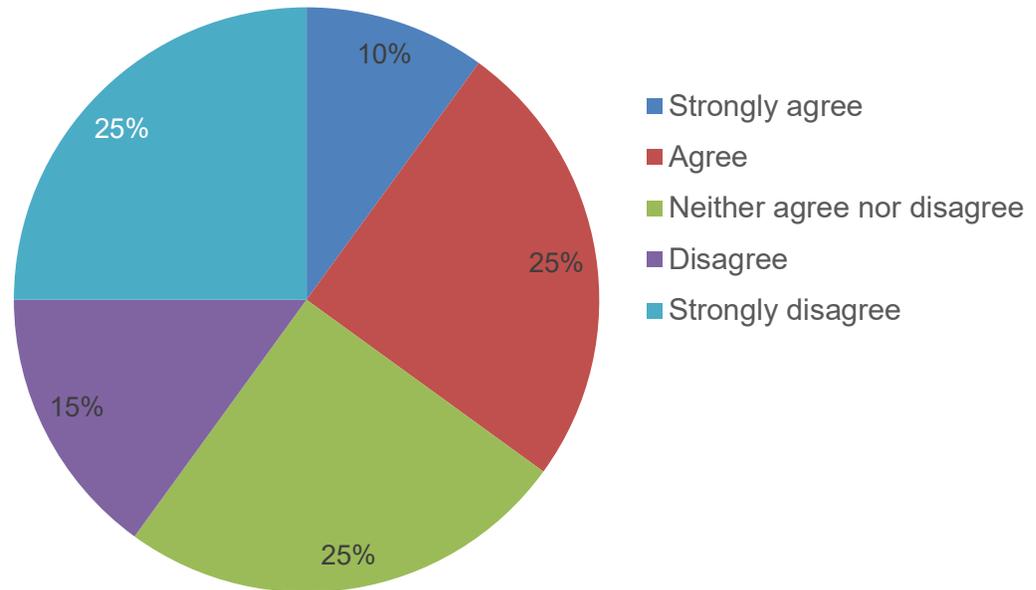


Base: Second survey - Respondents with a companion bus pass (21)

Respondents are using their companion bus pass frequently; 52% are using it 'always', 29% are using it 'frequently' and 19% 'occasionally' - see Figure 13. These results are in-line with

the first consultation which saw 49% using their pass on a daily basis and 39% using it weekly (see Figure 7).

Figure 14: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the entitlement criteria?



Base: Second survey - Respondents with a companion bus pass (20)

Figure 14 shows that over a third of respondents with a companion bus pass agree with the entitlement criteria; 10% 'strongly agree' and '25% 'agree'. (40%); a quarter 'disagree strongly' and 15% 'disagree'.

The eight respondents who disagree with the entitlement criteria were next asked which element they disagree with - see Table 2 below.

Table 2: Which of the entitlement criteria do you disagree with?

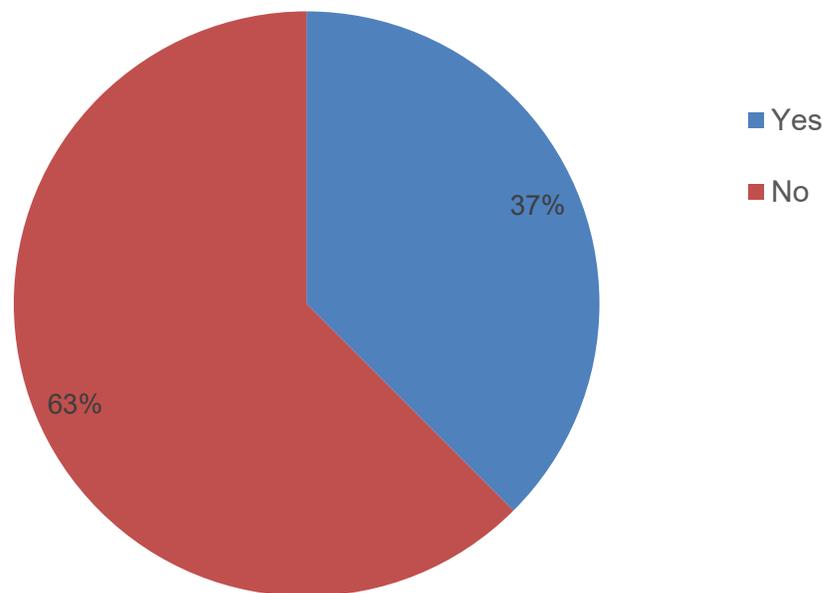
Criteria	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
One of the following documents (War Pensioners Mobility Allowance, Letter from the Department of Work & Pensions confirming that the applicant is currently in receipt of the Higher rate of the care and mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal independence payment at eight (8) points or above against either the PIP “moving around” or “communicating verbally” activities and enhanced rate of care, Personal independence payment at eight (8) points against the “planning and following a journey” activity and enhanced rate of care and enhanced rate of care, Evidence you receive Attendance Allowance at the higher rate)	5	63%
A letter from a qualified medical consultant (not a general practitioner G.P) confirming that you are unable to travel alone on a bus for medical reasons	4	50%

A concessionary travel pass from Portsmouth City Council (or be eligible for one)	1	13%
Something else	1	13%

Base: Second survey - Respondents disagreeing with the entitlement criteria (8)

The reasons for disagreeing with the criteria focus around not being able to fulfil the entitlement criteria in order to be able to obtain a companion bus pass, yet still needing one, for example a child with autism being unable to travel alone or someone with severe anxiety not being able to receive a letter but needing a companion to travel with.

Figure 15: Do you believe you will be affected by this change when you come to renew your companion pass?



Base: Second survey - Respondents with a companion bus pass (16)

Figure 15 above shows that almost two-thirds of respondents do not think they will be affected by the change in eligibility criteria when they come to renew their companion pass (63%).

Respondents who will be affected by the change when they come to renew their companion pass were next asked how they think they will be affected. Respondents talked about no longer being eligible for the companion bus pass, not being able to go out, or the inconvenience of having to obtain more letters from the doctor. Portsmouth City Council will work with these users to make sure they are not disadvantaged when it comes to renewing their companion pass.