

# **CONCESSIONARY FARES SCHEME**

## **OPERATOR SCHEME NOTICE**

**From 01 April 2026**

**WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL CONCESSIONARY FARES SCHEME**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

This document describes the West Berkshire Council Concessionary Fares Scheme (“the scheme”) and is issued pursuant to the requirements of Sections 93 and 95 of the Transport Act 1985, the Travel Concessions Schemes Regulations 1986, the Travel Concessions (Eligibility) Act 2002, the Travel Concessions (Extension of Entitlement) (England) Order 2005 and the Travel Concessions (Eligibility) (England) Order 2010. The scheme complies with the requirements of the Transport Act 2000, as modified by the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007, in respect of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS). The Scheme also takes into account all current guidance issued by the Department for Transport (DfT).

## **2 CHANGES TO SCHEME**

The Scheme continues to be enhanced to allow for the reimbursement to operators for concessionary passengers boarding registered demand responsive local bus services in West Berkshire within the statutory minimum times. Such routes may wholly or partially be within West Berkshire.

The Scheme is similarly enhanced to allow for free travel to concessionary bus pass holders boarding West Berkshire Council’s registered in-house demand responsive bus service in Tadley, Hampshire.

For the avoidance of doubt;

- The times that pass holders can present their pass for free travel remains at the statutory minimum times.
- Passes are not accepted for travel on Section 19 services (including West Berkshire Handybuses and Readibus).
- Companion Passes are not accepted for free companion travel.

The above applies to all bus passes, regardless of the issuing authority.

West Berkshire Council would implement any amendments to the national minimum scheme specified by the Department for Transport.

Operators have the right to decline to participate in any discretionary enhancements to the West Berkshire Operator Scheme. This must be done in writing to the Council’s Senior Transport Officer, whose address is shown below, within 28 days of either publication of the scheme or any notice or variation of the scheme.

## **3 CONCESSION TO BE PROVIDED BY PARTICIPATING OPERATORS**

The scheme allows the statutory Minimum Requirement to provide all ENCTS pass holders with free travel on any local bus service within England at any time on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays, and between 0930 and 2300 on other days.

## 4 PERSONS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE CONCESSIONS

Persons permanently residing in the West Berkshire area that meet the following criteria are eligible to an ENCTS pass:

Residents of eligible age:

A person is eligible for concessionary travel by virtue of reaching the state pensionable age.

- People born on or before 5<sup>th</sup> April 1960 are eligible for concessionary travel from their 66<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- People born between the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1960 to the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1961 will become eligible for concessionary travel between their 66<sup>th</sup> and 67<sup>th</sup> birthday. Their precise age of eligibility (66 years and one month / two months / three months etc) will depend on their individual date of birth.
- People born on or after the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 1961 will become eligible for concessionary travel when they reach their 67<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Details on the calculator can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/calculate-state-pension>.

Disabled bus passes are available to people aged five and over who either have a permanent disability or a disability lasting at least 12 months.

People are eligible if their disability falls into one of the following seven categories:

1. Is blind or partially sighted;
2. Is profoundly or severely deaf;
3. Is without speech;
4. Has a disability, or has suffered an injury, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to walk;
5. Does not have arms or has long term loss of the use of both arms;
6. Has a learning disability, that is, a state of arrested or incomplete development of mind that includes significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning;
7. Would, if they applied for the grant of licence to drive a motor vehicle under Part III of the Road Traffic Act 1988, have their application refused pursuant to section 92 of the Act (physical fitness) otherwise than on the ground of persistent misuse of drugs or alcohol.

In all cases the definitions shall be as used within Section 93(7) of the Transport Act 1985, the Transport Act 1985 (Extension of Eligibility for Travel Concessions) Order 1986, the Travel Concessions (Eligibility) Act 2002 and the Travel Concessions (Eligibility) (England) Order 2010 and applicants will be required to produce written evidence of entitlement.

The Department for Transport has produced guidance to local authorities on assessing the eligibility of disabled people which can be seen at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-local-authorities-on-eligibility-for-disabledpeople>

## **5 AREA OF VALIDITY**

All ENCTS passes are valid for travel on local bus services anywhere in England between 0930 to 2300 Mondays to Fridays and at any time on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays. Claims for reimbursement against West Berkshire District Council should only be made for trips originating within the West Berkshire District Council boundary.

## **6 ADMISSION DATES**

Admission dates for new operators to the scheme shall be the first day of the months of January, April, July and October, in any year.

Exceptionally, in the event that operation of a service already included within the scheme passes to another operating company by virtue of company take-over, award of contracts by a local authority or similar reason, that service may be immediately admitted to the scheme should the new operator or the Authority awarding the contract so request.

Admission will normally be made in respect of all eligible services provided by the applicant within the area of validity.

Modification or addition of eligible services within the area of validity by a participant operator will not require re-application.

## **7 ELIGIBLE SERVICES**

An eligible service is a scheduled public bus service, where members of the public can pay for any journey.

The following services are not eligible:

- Services on which the majority of seats can be reserved in advance of travel, with the exception of demand responsive local bus services registered with the Traffic Commissioner (this being an enhancement to the West Berkshire Operator Scheme).
- Services that are intended to run for a period of less than 6 consecutive weeks.
- Services operated primarily for the purposes of tourism or because of the historical interest of the vehicle.
- Bus substitution (rail replacement) services.
- Services where the fare charged by the operator has a special amenity element.

Generated journeys, i.e. the proportion of concessionary journeys that are made purely because of the concession, will not be funded.

## 8 STANDARD METHOD OF REIMBURSEMENT

The Council uses the Basket of Fares method of reimbursement.

The rationale of the Basket of Fares method is set out by the Department for Transport (DfT) in their guidance document entitled Concessionary travel for older and disabled people: guidance on reimbursing bus operators (England). This can be viewed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-reimbursing-bus-operators-forconcessionary-travelconcessionary-travel>.

The DfT have produced a Basket of Fares reimbursement calculator which the Council shall use to determine the reimbursement due to each Operator for participating in the scheme. The calculator can be viewed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/concessionary-bus-travel-reimbursement-calculator>.

The guidance sets reimbursement factors that are calculated automatically through the calculator with default values. The calculator allows flexibility to insert local information. For the avoidance of doubt, the Council's intention is to reimburse operators for revenue foregone and marginal operating costs as estimated by the DfT's calculator (which may be periodically updated by the DfT), wherever appropriate. Any request for changes of any default values by either the Council or an operator must be supported and justified with evidence. Claims for reimbursement for administration costs, marginal capacity costs and costs relating to peak vehicle requirements will be considered. These must be supported by evidence.

Calculations relating to the average fare will be made on an operator by operator basis, using the approach outlined in the DfT's guidance. Operators are asked to provide a representative sample of adult ticket sales data for a minimum of one month up to a maximum of twelve months from within the most recent twelve months. Types of adult ticket sales are set out in the DfT guidance; adult cash fares such as singles, returns and carnets, day tickets and weekly tickets. This data will enable calculation of each operator's average fare. Data is required on a route by route basis. Data should be provided as a report from the operator's electronic ticketing system.

Changes to fares may affect average fare calculations. Operators should therefore advise the Council of changes to their fares within seven days of such changes taking place. If requested by an operator or the Council, the average fare will be recalculated in June each year so that any changes can be implemented for the reimbursement commencing in the following month of July. In exceptional circumstances the Council or operator may request a review is done in another month. The Council will not back date any changes in the reimbursement rates that may have arisen from the review. Should a review be necessary, the operator is required to submit all the necessary information on ticket sales for each route.

The number of Observed Concessionary journeys entered on the start page of the DfT reimbursement calculator is the number of concessionary journeys claimed by the operator for the relevant services for the previous scheme year, rounded, or updated to account for the likely passenger journeys where evidence suggests.

Reimbursement will be made on observed journeys commencing within the boundaries of West Berkshire on a calendar monthly basis.

## **9 EXCEPTIONS TO THE STANDARD METHOD OF REIMBURSEMENT**

Where the total annual mileage of an operator within the scheme area is likely to be less than 100,000 miles the values attributed to the reimbursement formulae, or the total amount payable in any year, may be determined by local negotiation.

For local bus services which operate infrequently, for example, only on one or a few days of the week, the total amount payable in any scheme year may be determined by negotiation.

Where a bus service is operated under contract to another local authority and concessionary fares reimbursement for the service is retained / payable to the other local authority, then upon agreement of all parties concerned, payment for concessionary fares will be made directly to the other local authority. The reimbursement will be calculated in the same way as if payment had been made direct to the operator.

The Council reserves the right to reimburse operators at a different rate to the standard method of reimbursement in the following circumstances where operators can justify the need for this:

- Due to the impacts of an epidemic or pandemic
- Where fare promotions result in temporary changes in passenger numbers and revenue.

## **10 PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

Each participant operator shall provide details of the total number of concessionary pass holders boarding within West Berkshire for each eligible service which they provide in respect of each calendar month of operation, in a manner agreed with the Council. Such information shall be submitted to the Council, no later than 14 days after the end of the month to which it relates.

Subject to the prompt receipt of the required information for the preceding period, payment of the full estimated value of reimbursement for each period will be made to each operator within 30 days of the approval of the submitted information and a valid, corresponding invoice.

The Council reserves the right to correct any errors in reimbursements made, either by invoice or the adjustment of subsequent payments.

The Council reserves the right to challenge the validity of data submitted.

Re-submission of claims made in error will be considered on their merit. Resubmissions will not be considered beyond the end of the financial year to which they relate unless extreme circumstances dictate otherwise.

Due to the requirement for the Council to prepare year-end financial accounts etc, actual claims, or a reasonable assessment of likely claim amounts, must be received by 15 April for the claim for March. The same time frame applies to any previous months' claims that may not have been submitted.

At the conclusion of each local authority financial year, the Council shall review all calculations made in accordance with the standard method of reimbursement and shall make any necessary adjustments (whether positive or negative) within 3 months.

Where a local bus service extends into another Council Transport Concessionary Authority area, the operator is responsible for claiming reimbursement from that Transport Concessionary Authority and is subject to their scheme terms and conditions.

The Council will require operators to make facilities available for the proper audit either by the Council's staff, servants or agents, or by an agreed independent qualified person, of all figures supplied in connection with claims for reimbursement. All information so obtained on behalf of the Council shall not be disclosed other than with the consent in writing of the operator, unless the information in question has already become public knowledge otherwise than by an act or omission of the Council.

## **11 DRIVER'S OBLIGATIONS**

If a pass does not scan on an electronic ticketing machine, provided it is otherwise valid for free travel (is not beyond its expiry date and is being presented on a valid journey by the person shown on the card), the driver must allow it to be used as a flashcard and charge no fare. In such cases a manual record should be made of the journey and the pass holder should be informed to report a fault with their card to the issuing authority.

Drivers should not attempt to determine the eligibility of the holder of a pass unless there are good reasons to believe the pass is being used fraudulently, is not genuine or has been tampered with.

Where a driver has undue concerns about a particular pass holder they are asked to report these to their management and the management are asked to pass the relevant information onto the Council. This is to include the name of the pass holder and the number of the pass; the date, time and location where the concern arose. It is not the role of the driver to deny travel to a pass holder and drivers need not place themselves in a confrontational situation.

Drivers may use their discretion to confiscate a pass they believe is being used fraudulently. However, in applying their discretion, they should not place themselves in a potentially dangerous confrontational situation nor refuse travel to potentially vulnerable passengers. Irrespective of whether the card is confiscated or not, whenever possible drivers should report details of the card and its usage to their manager.

Elderly and disabled pass holders may be very vulnerable clients and must be treated accordingly. Care must be taken to ensure they are not left abandoned in a situation where their safety and well-being is compromised.

Passes are generally issued for a five-year period, after which they require renewal. For various reasons this sometimes does not happen on time. In such circumstances the Council may contact operators to ask that an expired pass be accepted for a specified period whilst a new card is processed. The holder of the pass may also have a written statement from the Council to this effect to show to the bus driver.

## **12 OTHER MATTERS**

The Council will require operators to allow their officers, servants or agents to have access with reasonable frequency to vehicles of the operator on which concessions are available for the purposes of:

- Surveying, counting or estimating the number of passengers (whether generally or of any particular description) and the fares paid by those passengers; and
- Obtaining information on other matters relating to the journeys made by passengers entitled to receive concessions necessary for the calculation of reimbursement payments.

Failure by any operator to allow the above to happen may result in any claim for concessionary fares reimbursement being withheld.

All participating operators may be required to display any notices required by the Council (without charge) in or on any vehicle used in connection with the scheme to indicate that relevant pass holders can travel at a concessionary rate or to advise of any future changes to the scheme which may occur.

Issued by:

**Senior Transport Officer  
West Berkshire Council  
Council Offices  
Market Street, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5LD  
Tel: 01635 519663**

**SCHEDULE 1**

**EXAMPLES OF WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL / ENGLISH NATIONAL TRAVEL  
CONCESSION SCHEME**

**SAMPLE OF ELDERLY ENTCS PASS**



**SAMPLE OF DISABLED ENTCS PASS**



**N.B. ALL ENCTS PASSES ARE SMART CARDS AND OPERATORS WITH APPROPRIATE TICKET MACHINES CAN USE AUTOMATED VALIDATION AND RECORDING FACILITIES. OTHERWISE, THE PASS MAY BE VALIDATED BY INSPECTION OF THE HOLDER DETAILS AND PHOTOGRAPH.**