

## Position paper on transport

Ecas has recently taken an increasingly active role in campaigning for improvements to transport provision for those with a physical disability. This has included trains, coaches, buses and through-door-to-through-door transport for those who cannot get to a bus stop, or who for any reason cannot use a bus.

Campaigning for improved transport is not new for Ecas – indeed, Ecas started the taxi card scheme in Edinburgh. However, the more active campaigning in 2006/7 is a resurgence of activity. The reasons for this are:

- Ecas' Memorandum of Association states that Ecas is established to "aid all disabled persons requiring assistance."
- Ecas' mission states "Ecas promotes equality, choice and integration for physically disabled people. We promote opportunities for physically disabled people to be self-fulfilled and to participate in all aspects of society. We also work to promote disability equality throughout society."
- Much good work has been, and is being, done to make buildings and activities more accessible. Through effective campaigning, through legislation and through education of the general public, attitudes, buildings, sports and work places are becoming more accessible.
- However, there is still much to do, because:
  1. Without adequate transport virtually all other initiatives by the Council and the voluntary sector to provide support to people who are socially excluded due to severe mobility impairments are doomed to failure. No matter how good and cheap the activity, how accessible the building or how important to the individual the activity is, without suitable transport the severely mobility impaired cannot attend.
  2. Whilst making buses, coaches and trains accessible is essential, it is not the whole answer. There are many people who are mobility impaired, some in very complex ways, to the extent that they cannot use buses for one or more reasons. Many people are becoming increasingly isolated in the community because of the limitations of through-door-to-through-door demand responsive transport.
  3. As an example, Ecas runs classes and physical activities for those with physical disabilities. A recent survey showed that 50% of those who rely on community accessible transport are unable to get the transport they need when they need it and they either have to pay for taxis or miss the class. Sadly, many are missing the classes as they cannot afford the taxis – the poorest suffer.
- Although there are a number of groups campaigning for improved transport for those with physical disabilities, they are, in general, concentrating on mainstream public transport. Those involved in providing through-door-to-through-door transport are campaigning for the badly needed funds to enhance their services, but their impact can be reduced as they have a vested interest.
- Ecas is financially independent of the government and council, and is thus in a position to lobby hard for change from an apolitical perspective. Given the mission statement and the remit in Ecas' memorandum we are duty bound to put forward the case for ensuring that all people have transport, whatever their impairment and however difficult or expensive it may be to provide transport for that individual.