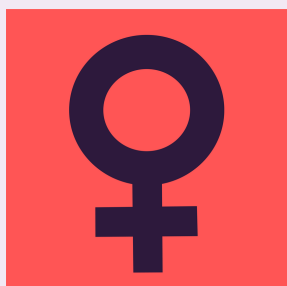


// WOMEN AND TRANSPORT



ABOUT REPRESENT WOMEN

Represent Women is a representative and advocacy organisation for the women and girls' sector, in the North East.

Our aim is to influence and inform decision makers with evidence led approaches to improve the lives of women and girls.

Women-led charities and women-only support services are crucial in the North-East due to their unique ability to address the specific needs and challenges faced by women.

The women and girls sector face many disproportionate barriers and discrimination. Lack of funding, unrealistic funding criteria and a lack of representation.

We are a **courageous, collaborative and committed voice for women and girls in the North East**

WOMEN AND TRANSPORT



This briefing draws on a survey of women across the North East and focus groups carried out with a diverse group of women in Northumberland, South Tyneside and Gateshead. It aims to provide insights into women's opinions and feelings about public transport.

SUMMARY

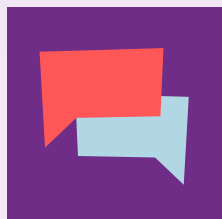
It's essential to consider public transport through a gendered lens, as women use it differently than men. They are less likely to be primary car users and tend to make more frequent, shorter trips. Women are often the primary caregivers for young children, those with additional needs, and the elderly, and they need safe, affordable and accessible transport options. Women who are accessing support or statutory services are often dependent on public transport and availability, cost, safety concerns and unreliable services can be a barrier to accessing necessary or mandatory services.

Women told us they were concerned about, safety, unreliable services, confusion over different operators, poor seating in waiting areas, and inadequate facilities for feeding infants. They also highlighted the lack of space and accessibility for those care responsibilities. Women in rural areas felt overlooked with unreliable services, lack of connections and poor coverage leading to long journey times.

The Women in Transport Equity Index (2023) states, '...women remain underrepresented in the transport sector accounting for only 26 per cent of workers'. Increasing the number of women in transport roles can support a more equitable work force which then impacts on the service experienced by the public.

This briefing paper provides evidence from North East women, offering ideas and solutions based on their experiences. Some recommendations may fall outside the remit of the North East Mayor and NECA officers, NECA has the capacity and influence to collaborate with other stakeholders to implement solutions.

Learning from other cities that prioritise gender mainstreaming, such as Vienna, could improve services. Sustrans' former director stated, "places designed with women's needs and travel habits in mind are places for everyone."



We asked: Do you think local public transport meets the needs of women and girls? (buses, trains, metros)

14%

Yes

44%

Sometimes

11%

Unsure

31%

No

75%

of respondents mentioned the words unsafe, vulnerable, concerned or intimidated. The qualitative responses reiterated this with numerous examples of not just feeling unsafe but experiencing violence, intimidation and abuse.

// WOMEN TOLD US:

‘a few months ago a drunken man sat opposite me and kept putting his hands on my knee. There was no one to ask for help’

‘I wouldn’t go on public transport alone after dark as I don’t feel safe’

‘...a number of buses just didn’t come. I ended up crying and scared, it was awful, and it took me nearly three hours to get home’

‘I don’t like it when men sit next to me on buses and sit too close, their leg against mine etc, I feel uncomfortable!!’

‘It is often dark in the areas around bus stops and can be worrying for women and girls at night.’

‘The last time I got the metro home at night it was full of drunk people, no staff to monitor anything. I couldn’t wait to get off and get home. It was frightening, I won’t do it again’

‘I wouldn’t let my daughter go on public transport without me because of her ethnicity and special education needs which means she’s at most risk of being targeted and abused’

WHAT WOULD MAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORT BETTER?

Ticketing and fairs

Public transport is too expensive for many women to access appointments with women's services. Women's organisations can often reimburse women, but many women do not have the funds upfront to pay for public transport.

- Create a scheme for women experiencing crisis to access concessionary travel when
- Put trust in the hands of women's organisations to distribute vouchers or funds to support women attending appointments

Safety

- More of a staff presence in stations, bus shelters and onboard
- Culturally sensitive staff training and clear expectations on the roles of staff members to identify and alleviate risk to women and vulnerable others
- Better lighting and CCTV in stations, bus shelters and onboard
- Provide more transport at rush hour. crowded metros at rush hour force passengers into close proximity. This can be uncomfortable and high risk for women and girls.
- Targeted campaigns and awareness raising of dangerous and inappropriate male behaviour on and around public transport
- Larger seating areas to increase personal space and reduce risk

Service Quality

- Suitable seating for parents who are carrying or breastfeeding infants. Slanted/high seating or seating with no back rest is not suitable.
- Provide more pram, accessibility scooters and wheelchairs space
- Practical and accessible changing facilities with better signage facilities.
- Accessibility equipment to be kept in good working order.

FURTHER RECCOMENDATIONS

- Create a funded, intersectional and inclusive women and girls transport panel to influence the design of transport services and infrastructure, (Vienna model)
- Explore ways of encouraging more women employed in the transport sector, specifically, leadership roles and front facing roles with customers
- Ensure rural women are consulted to identify gaps in the transport network

In response to the delivery Plan 2027

- Consider an earlier assessment at the end of 2025 to help inform transformation and development plans.
- Include the women and girls transport panel in the accessibility review and employ a gender sensitive approach

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