

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on PE2028, Extend the concessionary bus travel scheme to include people seeking asylum in Scotland, submitted by Pinar Aksu on behalf of Maryhill Integration Network and Doaa Abuamer on behalf of the Voices Network

Background

Scottish Ministers can establish national concessionary travel schemes under powers granted by Section 40 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005. Scottish Ministers have the power to define who is an “eligible person” for the purposes of any such concessionary travel scheme.

The Scottish Government currently operates [two national concessionary travel schemes](#), these provide free travel on local bus and scheduled coach services within Scotland for residents aged under 22, aged 60+, or who are disabled.

People seeking asylum in the UK are usually ineligible for most welfare benefits. This is referred to as having ‘no recourse to public funds’. Paragraph six of the introduction to the [UK Government’s Immigration Rules](#) lists the benefits it considers ‘public funds’. If a benefit is not on the list, then it is not considered to be ‘public funds’ and asylum seekers are able to claim, if they meet the eligibility criteria.

Scottish national concessionary travel schemes are not on the list, meaning eligible asylum seekers (those aged under 22, 60+ and disabled people) are already able to benefit from free bus and coach travel in Scotland. Disabled asylum seekers aged between 22 and 59 may experience some issues in accessing the current concessionary travel scheme, as their eligibility may be dependent on the receipt of certain UK welfare benefits – which asylum seekers cannot access.

There would appear to be no legislative barrier to the Scottish Government establishing a new national concessionary travel scheme that applies specifically to asylum seekers.

[Home Office statistics](#) show there were 5,323 asylum seekers resident in Scotland on 30 June 2023, of which 4,694 (88%) live within the Glasgow City Council area.

Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government has not previously considered the creation of a national concessionary travel scheme for asylum seekers.

Scottish Parliament Action

The Scottish Parliament has not previously considered the creation of a national concessionary travel scheme for asylum seekers.

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25 August 2023

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