

Note regarding English national bus pass holders with discretionary companion passes (17 May 2010)

We have had a number of complaints from English concessionary bus pass holders (who have a companion discretion added to their pass) that they have been asked to alight from a bus service or pay full fare because their companion is not accompanying them. It is thought that this is occurring because bus drivers are acting on advice from the local authority in which they operate. It is the Departments view that this situation should not be happening.

A concessionary pass holder is eligible for free local bus travel during the legislated hours whether travelling with or without a companion; the pass holders right to free travel is enshrined in Primary Legislation.

If the holder of the a national English bus pass gets on an eligible bus service, anywhere in England, during the legislated hours, without being accompanied by their companion then they will still be allowed to travel for free; the bus driver should be checking that the pass has the English concessionary travel branding/logos/holograms etc to ensure that the pass is eligible for free travel.

If a concessionary pass holder (with a companion discretion added to their pass) is able to travel unaccompanied then this could imply that the pass holder does not require a companion discretion. If this is the case then local authorities should consider reviewing it policies and procedures regarding eligibility for companion passes. However, they should not be denying eligible pass holders free travel when not accompanied by a companion.

Policies for discretionary travel concessions offered by local authorities are a matter for them but it is recommended that they seek their own legal advice when creating, withdrawing or amending such polices.

Local authorities have clear powers to implement discretionary concessions to enable them to manage their changing priorities and resources. However, they should be mindful of the impact that any changes to the concessions on offer may have on their residents and other stakeholders and keep them appropriately informed during the process.

**Concessionary Travel Policy
Department for Transport**