



**Comments from Imtac about the Hospitals - Creating  
a Network for Better Outcomes - Public Consultation  
(February 2025)**

Imtac is committed to making information about our work accessible. Details of how to obtain information in your preferred format are included on the next page.

## **Making our information accessible**

As an organisation of and for disabled people and older people Imtac recognises that the way information is provided can be a barrier to accessing services and participation in public life. We are committed to providing information about our work in formats that best suit the needs of individuals.

All our documents are available in hard copy in 14pt type size as standard. We also provide word and pdf versions of our documents on our website – [www.imtac.org.uk](http://www.imtac.org.uk). In addition we will provide information in a range of other formats including:

- Large print
- Audio versions
- Braille
- Electronic copies
- Easy read
- Information about our work in other languages

If you would like this publication in any of the formats listed above or if you have any other information requirements please contact:

Michael Lorimer  
Imtac  
Titanic Suites  
55-59 Adelaide Street  
Belfast BT2 8FE

Telephone/Textphone: 028 9072 6020

Email: [info@imtac.org.uk](mailto:info@imtac.org.uk)

Website: [www.imtac.org.uk](http://www.imtac.org.uk)

Twitter: @ImtacNI

## **About Imtac**

The Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (Imtac) is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including carers and key transport professionals. Its role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of Deaf people, disabled people and older people.

The aim of Imtac is to ensure that Deaf people, disabled people and older people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Imtac receives support from the Department for Infrastructure (herein after referred to as the Department).

## **Our comments**

Transport and travel are vital in modern society to enable all of us to participate in society. Being able to travel with ease facilitates access to everyday services such as health and plays a key role in contributing to our health and wellbeing. For many in society travelling is made relatively straightforward by easy access to a car and driving, but for a significant number of other people accessing any form of suitable transport is difficult or impossible. The absence of suitable transport has been demonstrated to contribute to the social exclusion of specific groups in society and is directly linked to inequalities including health inequalities.

Imtac exists because Deaf, disabled and older people are amongst those in society that experience the greatest barriers to travel in Northern Ireland. Low levels of access to private cars are compounded by the inaccessibility and very limited availability of alternative forms of transport. Often the transport that is available is prohibitively expensive or involves long, often painful and stressful journeys. Despite some improvements in the accessibility of travel in the past few decades, for a substantial number of Deaf, disabled and older people even making short local journeys can be extremely challenging. Many of the barriers experienced here are compounded by the rurality of much of Northern Ireland.

The Committee recognises the need for change and reform within our Health Service. We acknowledge the need to change what our hospitals do and deliver to maximise the best health outcomes to our population. We recognise that change and reorganisation will mean that people may

have to travel further to access the right services. However, whilst we acknowledge the recent statements from Minister Nesbitt about the willingness of many to do this, we are concerned that not enough consideration is being given to the substantial numbers of people in society who will not be able to travel or will find travelling further hugely challenging. If not addressed properly as part of the changes envisaged, we have grave concerns that in implementing the changes the Department will entrench and increase existing inequalities experienced by an already disadvantaged group.

As advisors to Government in Northern Ireland on issues relating to the mobility of Deaf, disabled and older people, Imtac wants to work with the Department of Health as well as other key Departments and stakeholders to ensure that transport and travel options are a key consideration when making the changes envisaged by the consultation. In particular we would like to see a plan developed to ensure that the requirements of people with limited or no travel options are addressed.

While one potential solution can be using technology to reduce the need for travel, the Department should recognise that Deaf, disabled and older people are two of the groups most at risk of digital exclusion. Significant investment is needed across Government here to narrow this divide. Investment is also needed in our digital infrastructure to ensure equitable access to technology for both our rural and urban communities.

Imtac is already working with the Department, Trusts and other stakeholders including DfI and transport providers on a project looking at barriers to travel for people travelling to access health services and working with users of the health service to identify potential solutions. It is essential that this work is built on as part of the delivery of changes proposed in this consultation and that engagement takes place with Deaf, disabled, older people and carers to ensure people are not left behind. Imtac is committed to working with the Minister and Department of Health as well as other stakeholders including the Minister and Department for Infrastructure to ensure this happens.