# Transport to Health

Getting to and from a hospital, GP surgery, pharmacy or other healthcare setting should not be a barrier to receiving care. Yet our Transport to Health programme shows that, for many in South East Scotland, access to healthcare is still heavily influenced by transport availability and journey times. People without access to a car, disabled people, older people and those experiencing transport poverty often face the greatest challenges, making this not only a transport issue, but also an equality and social inclusion issue.

We are working with healthcare partners across the region to better understand these challenges and develop solutions. By bringing together NHS Boards, local authorities, transport providers and community organisations, we aim to create a more joined-up approach that improves access to healthcare and delivers better outcomes for patients.

**RTS objectives:** 1, 2, 3 and 4

**RTS actions**:

- Support the delivery of bus services and infrastructure measures which ensure access to healthcare for all.

Our Transport to Health programme moved forward at pace during the year. In the first quarter, we published a Literature Review to establish the evidence base and better understand the challenges patients face when travelling to healthcare appointments.

We then worked closely with NHS Borders, NHS Fife, NHS Forth Valley and NHS Lothian to develop a comprehensive Case for Change. This included detailed analysis, stakeholder engagement and a six-week public consultation. More than 1,500 people shared their experiences through the consultation, alongside focus groups, pop-up engagement sessions and discussions with healthcare professionals and community organisations.

The evidence highlighted common challenges across the region, including longer and more complex public transport journeys, increasing travel distances to specialist services, accessibility barriers and gaps in transport provision. By the end of the year, the first draft of our Case for Change had been completed, providing a strong evidence base for action and setting the foundations for a regional Transport to Health Strategy that will help reduce inequalities, remove barriers to care and ensure that accessing healthcare does not depend on access to transport.

One respondent to our public consultation commented about the difficulty of getting to appointments:

**"Having to go to a hospital can be problematic, nearest hospital is over 20 miles away but sometimes you need to go to a city hospital which is much more challenging. The time taken to do this makes an appointment a whole day event. It also means additional costs."**