Increase Transport Accessibility to the Edinburgh BioQuarter

What will we do:

1. The Students’ Association to lobby relevant university departments responsible for transport to:
   a. Provide shuttle buses to transport medical students to and from George Square Campus to the Edinburgh BioQuarter (previously Little France), leaving every 20 minutes from 8:00am to 9:20am and 4:00pm to 5:20pm, with stops at Marchmont, Newington and Pollock Halls of Residence
   b. Provide discounted bus fares for medical students on Lothian buses.
   c. Ensure the cycle routes to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (RIE) are well maintained.

2. The Students’ Association to conduct research, if necessary, into how many people use the shuttle bus at different times in order to effectively lobby for a sufficient number of buses to be provided to meet student demand. Using this research, implement more bus services if there is demand for these between the times of 10:00am and 4:00pm.

Background to this:

1. The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (RIE) at the Edinburgh BioQuarter is the main campus for all clinical years (years 4-6) within Edinburgh Medical School and is located 3 miles south of the Old Medical School. Preclinical students also have many of their lectures taught at the RIE (years 1-3)

2. More teaching will be taking place at the RIE, in the Edinburgh BioQuarter, in the next few years – many students, including Biomedical Science students as well as medics will soon be expected to attend classes there and a shuttle bus is therefore, all the more necessary.

3. If a lecture is lead by a senior clinician who works at the hospital, such as a consultant, it is easier for them to lecture at their place of work, to suit their timetable/be available on call. As a result, many lectures are taught at the RIE, in addition to clinical skills sessions (which are compulsory) and clinical attachments in the wards.

4. Until 2017, an hourly shuttle bus was provided by the NHS for medical students to get to their places of study. However, it has since been terminated due to lack of government funding. As a compensatory incentive, the medical school provides preclinical students with £50 per academic year, and clinical students with £125-£350 per academic year, to cover transport costs to the BioQuarter, Western General, and peripheral placements. Intercalating students (of which many have their course taught at the medical school) receive no funding whatsoever despite intercalation being a compulsory component of the new 6-year MBChB curriculum, as of 2018.

5. Common scenarios where students have struggled to access transport are:
   a. Not enough spaces on the public Lothian buses, as many members of the public are also travelling at peak traffic hours to attend routine appointments at the
hospital. This is a particular issue for students in Marchmont/Bruntsfield (where the majority of students live), where only one bus service exists to the RIE.

b. The public buses not arriving at suitable times for lectures starting, resulting in students being too late, especially with crowded or indirect bus routes.

c. Students having to queue for long periods, and this is difficult in cold weather, especially in the mornings for those with clinical attachments as early as 7am. Furthermore, it is unjustified to expect the alternative of walking in the dark at this time – it is an issue for student safety.

d. Many students find it unjustified to have to pay £3.40 (standard return fare) if there is only one lecture at the RIE – this often results in empty lecture theatres, and given many of our lectures cannot be recorded due to confidential discussions/images of patients, students miss lots of essential learning material. Furthermore, many students who do attend find they are making a 2 hour round trip for 1 hour of material.

e. The money given by the medical school barely covers the first few trips of the semester, with 53% of medical students voting it being only “somewhat helpful” and 29% voting it being “not helpful at all” (145 responses to survey sent out to students via Learn).

f. Medical students have huge transport costs because of their numerous placements around the city of Edinburgh and beyond (including, but not limited to Fife, the Borders and Fort William), however given the RIE is a central hub for teaching adequate transport should be available. This would allow the funding provided by the medical school to go further, for other places of teaching aside from the RIE. Additionally, a reduction on Lothian bus fares would allow for money to go further, which will in turn increase student satisfaction.

g. Cycling routes, although available, can be unsafe on the busy roads en route to the hospital – the road conditions are poorly maintained.

6. When asked about what students’ priority is for change in transport, 61% said cost and 33% said a shuttle bus service (145 responses to survey sent out to students via Learn)

Beliefs and Motivating Actions:

1. The University has a duty to provide appropriate infrastructure, as they present in their advertising. To facilitate learning for students in the Medical School, transport between both campuses should be a priority.

2. All students should be able to arrive on time to their lectures, seminars, tutorials and clinical attachments at the RIE, without having to wait for long periods to ensure a space on the bus, or having to walk/cycle in poor weather conditions/unsafe times.

3. Students at Pollock Halls of Residence and Marchmont/Newington will benefit greatly from having a bus stop near their place of residence, to facilitate transport to their studies.

4. Students will rely less on private transport such as cars, which are detrimental to the environment, and so public transport should be more accessible if the University is to focus on reducing its carbon footprint.
Submitted with 20 Student Signatures.