

Community Transport Briefing



What is Community Transport and who uses it?

Community Transport is about providing flexible, accessible and responsive solutions to unmet local transport needs, and often represents the only means of transport for certain user groups.

Community Transport benefits those who are otherwise isolated or excluded, enabling people to live independently, participate in their communities and access education, employment, health and other services.

Across Scotland a recent Community Transport Association survey showed that older and disabled people are by far the biggest users of community transport. The following figures show the user groups that community transport operators serve (respondents were able to select more than one option):

- Older people 85%
- Disabled people 53%
- Children 16%
- General public 12%
- Teenagers 7%

The term 'community transport' covers a range of services, in Edinburgh that include:

Group transport: Community Transport groups provide accessible minibuses with drivers (sometimes volunteers) to organisations who are the customers of the service. The organisations deliver services such as lunch clubs, registered day care, activity groups and pick up local people from their neighbourhood to take to a building based service or activity.

Group transport self-hire: community transport groups hire out accessible minibuses and sometimes drivers to take the members of voluntary groups on trips. Alternatively, voluntary groups can use their own drivers (often volunteers).

Dial-a-Ride services: these are services for individuals who can't, or find it difficult to, use or access mainstream transport services. People are usually picked up from their homes and dropped off at their destination such as the doctor or the shopping centre. Each vehicle will carry several passengers going to and from different places.

Dial-a-Bus service: similar to Dial-a-Ride, however, these services operate an advertised route on a specific day e.g. Cameron Toll shopping centre every Tuesday from a route covering nearby neighbourhoods.

Benefits of Community Transport

1. **Prevention:** Investment in CT is a classic form of preventative spend: it reduces the (high) cost of social isolation and loneliness and, by helping to keep vulnerable people active in their communities, it helps reduce the need for expensive residential (or nursing home) care.
2. **Accessibility:** Most transport in Edinburgh is from a fixed spot such as a bus stop or for taxis from the kerbside – however, many disabled and older people simply cannot get to that spot to access a vehicle. Community Transport therefore is unique in that operations are often door-to-door or door-through-door with passenger assistants and drivers going into people's homes to assist with mobility. This nuance is an essential recipe for success for providing transport for some of our most vulnerable people who would otherwise be likely stuck at home.
3. **Enabling:** The use of Community Transport enables people to participate in their Communities.
4. **Cost Effectiveness:** Indicators tell us that there is between a £3 to £8 return for every £1 invested in the charity sector.

How is Community Transport organised in Edinburgh?

Five operators provide the majority of Community Transport services:

- NE Edinburgh – Lothian Community Transport Services (LCTS)
- NW Edinburgh – Pilton Equalities Project
- SE Edinburgh – SEAG (South Edinburgh Amenities Group)
- SW Edinburgh – Dove Centre
- City wide – Handicabs (HCL)

Traditional charitable organisations, with Boards made of both professionals and local people, these organisations are good examples of local communities solving a local problem.

The five operators come together to pursue common interests and share knowledge and information in **Edinburgh Community Transport Operators' Group** which is independently chaired by Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council (EVOC). Operators have common standards for their operations and work together to ensure city-wide equitable coverage based on localities.

Working together with City of Edinburgh Council

City of Edinburgh Council make an annual investment in the five operators. This helps the CT operators to provide affordable transport solutions for local people and local third sector and charitable organisations, to enable those organisations to continue to provide their services for people in our communities. This, in turn, helps to sustain the organisations in the sector, all of which helps to create vibrant communities, improve health and wellbeing, as well as helping to reduce inequalities and levels of loneliness and isolation.

Since 2016 operators have worked with the Council using the Public Social Partnership (PSP) model to redesign services, with the aim of increasing business in the third sector, improving quality and promoting sustainability.

Opportunities

1. To achieve, through the PSP, a long term strategic partnership with Edinburgh Council, which will provide a high quality, cost effective and reliable Community Transport service which will meet the future demographic needs of the people in our Communities.
2. To work with members and other stakeholders of the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board to ensure they are aware of the role Community Transport providers can play in helping to prevent the use of front line health and social care services.
3. To work with Transport for Edinburgh partners to ensure awareness of the role community transport providers can play in future transport plans for Edinburgh.
4. To continue to provide Community Transport services to help sustain local third sector and charity organisations.
5. To continue to gather feedback from our passengers, their carers, communities and local third sector and charity organisation managers to ensure Community Transport services evolve continuously to meet their needs.

Contacts and further details

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