Community Car Schemes - Drivers' Handbook

Care Network Cambridgeshire supports communities to set up and sustain local volunteer led car schemes
Welcome

As a volunteer driver for your Community Car Scheme, you are providing a lifeline for mostly elderly, isolated or vulnerable people who would otherwise find it difficult to get to medical appointments or to get out and about.

This leaflet is designed to give you support, hints and tips on how car schemes work as well as things you need to consider and what to look out for.

Hopefully you will find your new role both rewarding and fulfilling and if you have any concerns or questions, please don’t hesitate to ask your coordinator.

This booklet has been produced by Care Network Cambridgeshire, who support over 50 Community Car Schemes across Cambridgeshire.

Your Role and Responsibilities

When you first join the scheme, your coordinator will need to check that your car is taxed, insured, has a valid MOT certificate (if required) and serviced regularly.

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) will provide you with additional public liability, loss of no claims bonus, excess protection and personal accident insurance (the latter for drivers under 80).

When a potential passenger wants to make use of the scheme, they will always contact the scheme coordinator first. The coordinator will then take all their details before contacting you to see if you are available to undertake the journey, thereby avoiding direct contact between you and the passenger at the booking stage.

If you have made holiday arrangements or you are simply unavailable, it would be helpful if you could let your coordinator know.

Sometimes a passenger might share personal information with you, so confidentiality is key, and any such information should only be shared with the coordinator if you feel that’s necessary or appropriate.
Helping your passengers

Your coordinator will let you know of any special needs the passenger has told them about. In turn, please inform the coordinator of any concerns that have been brought to your attention through your conversations with the passenger about their needs and preferences.

For passengers with walking difficulties, it’s best to allow them to move at their own pace and encourage the use of their own walking aids. You can offer your arm for support but don’t allow your passenger to hold onto you. Also take extra time and care in difficult conditions such as rain and if it’s icy underfoot.

For passengers who have difficulty getting in and out of the car some drivers find it helpful to have an aid such as a handy bar but, again, avoid providing physical help to assist.

We recommend that you sign up for one of the community car scheme workshops which are run by Care Network and CCC around the county. You will meet drivers and coordinators from neighbouring schemes, get lots of useful tips and there are also discussions around relevant topics. Please contact 01954 211919 for dates and enrolment.
The Journey

Please make sure you arrive at the agreed time and reassure the passenger by showing your ID badge to identify yourself. They may well be a bit distracted by the journey ahead, so it’s good to make sure their door is properly locked and that they have their keys and all the things they need for the trip, e.g. appointment letter and/or card, medication, blue badge and personal belongings.

Once they are settled and secured in the car seat, you might need to adjust the heating and the radio control to make sure they are happy and comfortable.

Remember not to use mobile phones whilst driving unless you have a hands-free set and there is now also a legal requirement preventing you or your passenger/s smoking in your car whilst on a car scheme journey.

If you have agreed to carry a pet, make sure it is either secured in a pet carrier, a harness or behind a dog guard.

At the end of the journey, collect the payment and see your passenger to the door ensuring they have all their belongings and are safe and happy with the service. If you have any concerns about their wellbeing, let the coordinator know so they can alert the appropriate people.
Health, Safety and Welfare

Although your role as a volunteer driver does not expose you to undue danger, it is always a good idea to be extra vigilant, looking out for such things as uneven or slippery pavements and situations that could distract either you or your passenger from noticing potential hazards.

If you have agreed to make a journey and you don’t feel well on the day, it’s best if you give yourself time to recover and thereby also avoid exposing your passenger to possible infections. Just notify your coordinator as soon as possible so that someone else can cover for you.

If your passenger is unable to get in or out of a car independently the coordinator will either recommend alternative transport or make sure they provide an escort.

Finally, if the client asks for help with tasks other than driving, you can refer them to Care Network Cambridgeshire's Help@Home service or Community Navigators (see General Enquiries on contact page).

Practical Tips

It is best to:-

• carry a mobile phone if you have one, pre programmed with important numbers
• be a member of a recognised breakdown service and have their details to hand
• carry a First Aid kit
• carry a map and/or satellite navigation system
• avoid refuelling your vehicle whilst carrying car scheme passengers
• display any parking badges or permits where appropriate
• park in a recognised parking space where possible
• park with the passenger door by the side of the kerb
• give your passenger plenty of time.
Money Matters

In your volunteering role, you generously give your time free of charge, but you will be reimbursed for your expenses to ensure you won’t be out of pocket as a result of offering this valuable service.

The way it works is that the passenger makes a contribution towards the cost and pays you on completion of the journey. The scheme coordinator will have explained to the passenger how much the journey is likely to cost at the time of booking. You then calculate the exact mileage during the journey. CCC subsidises the journeys to make up the balance of the current figure fixed by the Inland Revenue, and their contribution is claimed periodically through the scheme who in turn reimburse you. Many schemes also have a minimum charge which reflects the additional running costs per mile on very short journeys.

Some passengers may be eligible for a refund of their journey costs and if so, they will ask you to give them written details of the journey.

Free parking permits for hospital parking are provided for most hospitals. However, if you do incur parking charges it is the passenger who should pay.

Drivers should not accept personal tips but donations can be received on behalf of the scheme and handed to the coordinator.

Dealing with Emergencies and Unexpected Situations

If your passenger is not well enough to travel, ask if they want their doctor, relatives or neighbours to be informed. Also alert the coordinator and anyone expecting them at their destination.

In case of an accident, stop in a safe place, secure your car and remove the keys from the ignition. If anyone is injured, call 999. Exchange names, addresses and insurance details and get the names and addresses of any witnesses. Report the accident to your motor insurance company and your coordinator, who will try to arrange alternative transport if required. The police will need to be informed if someone has been injured.

All accidents and incidents must be fully recorded as soon as possible after the event according to your scheme’s procedures. If you wish to claim on the CCC policy you also need to inform them of the accident.
Equal Opportunities
While you are free to refuse any specific request, schemes do not exclude passengers on the grounds of their age, gender, race or beliefs.

Complaints
These are very rare and most passengers are grateful for the service you provide for them. However, should you receive a complaint about yourself or any aspect of the scheme, make a note of what is said and report it to the coordinator.

Hopefully you will be able to resolve any issues by simply listening and responding sympathetically without making specific comments on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the scheme. If appropriate, explain that the scheme has a complaints procedure and if they wish to make a formal complaint they must put it in writing to the coordinator.

Resignation
There may come a time when you no longer want to continue as a volunteer driver. It would be appreciated if you could return your ID badge and parking permit to the coordinator.

Bear in mind that you can be both a volunteer driver and a user of your local car scheme and hopefully one way or another you will remain a part of this valuable community service.
Useful Contacts

Scheme mobile number

Scheme Coordinator

Local surgeries and clinics

Your personal useful numbers

Addenbrooke's Hospital: 01223 245151
Doddington Hospital: 01354 644299
Hinchingbrooke Hospital: 01480 416416
North Cambridgeshire Hospital, Wisbech: 01945 488088
Papworth Hospital: 01480 830541
Peterborough City Hospital: 01733 678000
Princess of Wales Hospital, Ely: 01353 652000
Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn: 01553 613613

General Enquiries

Care Network Cambridgeshire: 01954 211919
Cambridgeshire County Council Transport Officer: 03450 451151