

Community Car Schemes - Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What checks should be made before approving a driver to volunteer for the Scheme?

A. All drivers should complete a driver's registration form. This needs to include the driver's name and contact details as well as information about their availability, type of car and preferred type of work. In addition regular checks need to be made of the driver's licence and whether they have any medical condition, or take any medication that may affect their ability to drive or assist passengers.

The driver should also sign that they agree to notify you of any change to their medical condition or endorsements on their licence that may affect their suitability to drive for you. You may also wish to ask for character references and where the driver will be having contact with children and/or vulnerable adults it will be necessary to undertake a CRB check. Some organisations have chosen to observe the driving of their volunteers and provide additional training (see below).

You should also make some checks concerning the car(s) the driver intends to use in their volunteering. You need to satisfy yourself that:

- The car is suitable for the carriage of your passengers.
- The car has a current MOT certificate (if applicable)
- The driver performs regular walk around checks and maintenance on the car.
- Appropriate insurance is in place (see below)

Q. What insurance should be in place?

A. Car insurance – The minimum insurance a driver must have, by law, is third party. Virtually all private motoring insurance policies contain a clause stating that the policy is not invalidated when car sharing is taking place providing that no profit is made. All drivers should, however, be required to notify their insurers that they are undertaking this voluntary work and ask for written confirmation that this is acceptable to the insurance company. Some insurers may insist that the driver upgrades their insurance to include business use.

Other insurance – It is essential that you make sure you are insured against any claims that can be brought against your organisation or its trustees. You should consider the following:

- Public Liability (essential)
- Employers' Liability
- Personal Accident
- Buildings
- Contents
- Fidelity Guarantee
- Money
- Directors' and Officers' Liability / Trustees Liability

Q. What training and/or assessment should we be providing for our drivers?

A. It is good practice to provide classroom based training and observe the driving of volunteers before they start taking passengers out, and to provide training appropriate to the transport you provide and the needs of the client group.

- Defensive driving
- Legal responsibilities of drivers
- Passenger safety
- Passenger awareness
- Child passenger safety
- Manual handling awareness
- Health and safety awareness
- Emergency procedures
- Personal safety for drivers

Q. Do we need to obtain Section 19 permits or private hire licences for the driver's vehicles?

A. Where volunteer drivers are using their own cars to transport passengers and receiving reimbursement not exceeding the vehicles running costs (see below) then the operation will come under car sharing legislation. Section 19 permits or private hire licences are therefore not required.

Section 19 permits may be appropriate only where cars or MPVs are owned by the organisation.

VOSA's guide '[Passenger transport provided under Section 19 or Section 22 permits](#)' gives detailed information about when permits are required.

Q. How much can we reimburse our drivers?

A. The driver can be reimbursed for the running costs of their vehicle. HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) have established an Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) rate of 45 pence per mile for the first 10,000 miles then 25 pence for every mile thereafter. In addition the driver can receive a further 5 pence per mile per passenger when the passengers are carried as part of their volunteering. The total received, however, must not exceed the running costs of the vehicle. Alternatively it is possible for the driver to keep records of actual motoring expenses and to claim their actual volunteer costs. This method, however, is a lot more work for the driver.

It is not advisable to pay the driver more than the AMAP because any payment over this amount would be considered to be profit and subject to tax. It may also invalidate the driver's insurance and take the car's operation outside car sharing and into private hire legislation.

HMRC web site has detailed information about volunteer driver expenses at <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/mileage/volunteer-drivers.htm>. This includes details of how to calculate actual motoring expenses.

Q. How much can we charge the passengers?

A. The fares set for the passengers should not exceed the vehicle running cost for that journey. This suggests that fares would not exceed the mileage rate set by HMRC. You can, however, include the driver's dead mileage. Consideration will need to be made for dealing with situations where two or more passengers travel together so that the total of the fares paid do not exceed the vehicle running costs. Adding an administration charge to the mileage rate is not recommended. If you do need to charge passengers a sum to cover administration then a flat rate booking fee, separate from the pence per mile rate would be better.

Some car schemes have opted to use a zone system for fares. Again this should be done with caution as some shorter journeys could potentially be costing the passenger more than the vehicle's running costs for the journey.

If the organisation is VAT registered VAT will be chargeable on fares to car scheme passengers. In this case it may be worth considering setting up the driver as the final recipient of all fares.

Q. Is it better for the passengers to pay the driver or make payment direct to the organisation?

A. This will depend upon what works best for your organisation and passengers. Whether the driver is collecting fares, or if the organisation is billing passengers, receipts must always be given. If the organisation is VAT registered and they invoice the passenger for travel then the invoice must include VAT. VAT would not be applicable where the organisation acts solely as a contact point to match passenger to driver and the driver takes complete responsibility for the expenses paid to them by the passenger.

Q. What rules should the driver understand with regard to seatbelts?

A. It is best to operate a 'no belt, no trip' policy. The only exception may be where a passenger has a medical exemption certificate from seatbelt wearing. Where children are being transported it is necessary for appropriate child restraints to be provided and for the driver to understand how to correctly fit them. Exemptions that apply to taxis with regard to child restraints do not apply to car schemes. The driver is responsible for ensuring that children under the age of 14 wear a seatbelt and/or, an appropriate child restraint as applicable.

Q. We have some drivers who can only volunteer in the evenings because they work during the day. Are there any additional considerations we need to make?

A. It is unsafe for anyone to be driving when they are tired. Therefore expecting an individual to drive a long distance after having done a day's work, may not be appropriate.

Q. One of our passengers has an oxygen cylinder. Can we still arrange for them to be transported?

A. Yes, but precautions should be taken. Ideally the oxygen cylinder should be secured into the boot of the car (but not left there for long periods), however, where it is needed for use during the journey this may not be possible. In order to prevent the cylinder from becoming a missile it is essential that it is secured within the vehicle. A no smoking policy should be strictly enforced and a warning sign indicating that the vehicle is carrying oxygen should be displayed in the window. In addition it is sensible to keep a window open for ventilation so that oxygen does not accumulate in the car and avoid using a fuel station while the oxygen is in use. It may also be advisable to inform the vehicle insurance company.

Q. Some passengers have heavy shopping bags. What special arrangements should we be making for the drivers concerned?

A. Lifting bags of shopping, wheelchairs or walking aids in and out of the boot of a car or fitting a child's car seat are all manual handling tasks that have a certain degree of risk associated with them. Your organisation should consider

doing risk assessments for the tasks to be undertaken, providing manual handling training for the drivers and asking the drivers to confirm that they do not have any medical conditions that may prevent them from giving this kind of assistance.

Q. Can we insist that volunteer drivers do not smoke when volunteering for us?

A. In the interests of health and safety volunteer drivers should not smoke while they are driving for your scheme. Passengers should also be asked to refrain from smoking whilst being transported.

Q. Where can I get more information about operating a Community Car Scheme?

A. For a more information you may wish to join to the Community Transport Association (CTA) which can provide its members with detailed documents on setting up and running a car scheme.

Information regarding membership can be found at www.ctauk.org.

The CTA is a national charity giving voice and providing leadership, learning and enterprise support to member organisations, which are delivering innovative transport solutions to achieve social change. The CTA promotes excellence through providing training, publications, advice and information on voluntary, accessible and community transport.