How to set up a community bus service

What is a community bus service?

A community bus service is a local bus service you run with a minibus.

- A not-for-profit village bus service
- Runs under a Section 22 Community Bus Permit
- The timetable must be registered with the Traffic Commissioner
- You can charge fares and accept concessionary bus passes
- Passengers do not need to book in advance to use the service

To see the difference between running a minibus under a Section 22 Community Bus Permit and the Section 19 Standard Permit for pre-booked group travel please click here.

When is a community bus service suitable?

- Your service will be available to everyone (local people, walkers, tourists)
- Passengers do not need to pre-book their journey
- You want to offer free travel to people with concessionary passes
- You will have enough passengers to make the journey worthwhile. If you are replacing a commercial bus service, find out how many passengers used it

If you only want to provide transport for registered passengers in your community, see how to set up a regular minibus service.

Resources

- A minibus (bought or hired) – see how to buy or hire a minibus
- Drivers (paid/voluntary) – a pool of volunteer drivers will make your service more cost-effective
• A treasurer
• Someone to decide routes and organise the driver rota

Typical costs

General costs

• Buying or hiring a minibus
• Insurance
• Fuel (if not included in the hire charge)
• Registration costs for the services you will run
• Promotion
• Administration

Buying your own minibus

• MOT
• Insurance
• Road tax
• Regular safety inspections
• Servicing and repairs
• Future replacement costs

Sources of revenue

• Fares
• Concessionary fare reimbursement
• Reclaiming tax on fuel through the Bus Service Operator’s Grant

Additional sources of revenue

• Running one-off, pre-booked trips (e.g. to the seaside or cinema)
• Hiring the minibus to other local groups

Next steps

• Identify potential demand (number of people, journeys needed)
• Calculate likely costs, budget and funding sources
• Draw up and agree timetable and route
• Register the timetable with the Traffic Commissioner
• Buy or hire a minibus
- Recruit drivers (paid or volunteers)
- Trial the service
- Monitor the route, timetable, passenger numbers