

Vocal

VCSE forums facilitated by
Salford CVS

VCSE Transport Workshop



Date: Wednesday 16th October

Time: 10.00am – 12.30pm

Venue: Elm Bank Event and Conference Centre, Eccles

Number of people registered: 16

Speakers

Callum Liburd – Northern Care Alliance

Dave Williams – Northern Care Alliance

Mike Corrigan – Northern Care Alliance

Cathy Starbuck – Salford City Council

Sean Ray – Community Transport Association

Salford CVS staff present:

Bruce Poole (Chair)

Michelle Warburton (facilitator)

Andy Mossop (facilitator)

Helen O'Brien (minutes)

The theme for this Forum meeting: VCSE Transport

Bruce Poole, Salford CVS, welcomed everyone and asked the attendees to introduce themselves.

There has been an issue with community transport in Salford for several years as there used to be a service which was decommissioned some time ago. Organisations from the VCSE sector have had their own transport offers and services. There is need for community transport solutions in services such as Adult Social Care, hospitals, and Children's Services.

Adult Social Care

Callum Liburd, Dave Williams and Mike Corrigan from Northern Care Alliance shared their thoughts on the current transport offer and future potential ideas.

Callum began by expressing the desire to move away from the current deficit model and move towards a more strengths-based approach for transport. This would

involve looking into how to promote a person's independence, rather than just providing transport. Support would include early intervention into encouraging independence – including in transition periods and working closely with Children's Services, travel training, and promoting sharing transport with other people in the community. This also means looking into more depth as to what other transport support is currently available across Salford.

Dave stated that decades ago, traditional "white buses" were used to transport people across Salford. This service was removed which meant that people were stuck between other services, such as underused mobility schemes. Adult Social Care started to investigate how some people were using public transport and why others weren't, and if that is due to safety issues and vulnerability etc. This provoked thinking towards how to achieve an aspirational model for the citizens of Salford and looking into barriers which restrict activities such as limits with taxi services. It is important to give the people more freedom to move around and this perhaps lies with travel training and encouraging independence. Services such as Ring and Ride are a good thing, but they have limitations with people having longer journey times due to being the last person to be dropped off. Dave added that he believes that we can think creatively across systems to come up with a solution which is affordable for the system as well as the people using it.

Mike specified that he thinks that Salford needs to get to a place where transport isn't a function but is instead an opportunity to becoming more independent. It should be about moving in and out of people's lives to support them. Mike suggested that collectively, the sector could fund transport together and think about using budgets differently, with the intention of transport not just being a service, but a door to freedom.

The scale of the transport need changes daily. Mike said that a six figure sum is spent on transport with a lot of this money spent on assessment and not independence. Mike expressed the need for a cultural change. It is a function of getting someone from a to b that is commissioned rather than supporting someone to be part of their community, to grow and learn and build relationships with people. The process is more transactional rather than encouraging independence. Mike added that being open about the differences in the support needed, such as electric wheelchairs needing specific transport, normalises it. "Specialised" transport should become "appropriate" transport, the language needs to change.

Dave explained that roughly £100,000 is spent per year (not including staff budgeting) and asked, how do we use technology to advance the current offer? Perhaps we should be looking into things such as using apps to book vehicles and using rating systems, rather than having a staff member in the vehicle. This would encourage freedom of choice and control of where and when they want to book a vehicle. Travel training will help overcome certain challenges.

Mike suggested that there is an expectation that only vehicles can be used and said

that it is okay to walk or cycle places too. How do we make transport a societal thing for people who are supported by care and how do we do this differently?

There is also a need around patient transport. It costs on average £250 for an ambulance transfer for journeys home, whereas it could cost £10 for a taxi for someone who is able. These requests rise in the winter. How can we use what we've got, better?

Children's Services

Cathy Starbuck from Salford City Council shared a presentation.

Children's Services has similar aspirations to Adult Social Care in the way of supporting independence in children and young people. There are statutory duties when children meet a certain assessment threshold that they have to be offered transport. Examples of this include children that are given a school place that's over a certain distance are given a bus pass to cover travel costs. School transport costs around children with special education needs (SEND) are offered by way of a personal budget to cover the costs of a family member driving the child, a bus pass, or whatever the family needs to support transporting the child to school.



The School Transport Service employs six full time employees and in the 2022/23 financial year spent £7.23million on school transport services. A small amount of this covers staff costs, and the majority is spent on provision of transport and passenger assistants. There are currently 75 permanent and 68 casual passenger assistants. This spend increases by around £1million each year.

School Transport was provided to 1,150 school and college students each day, in 2022/23. The costs are broken down below:

	Mainstream Primary	Mainstream Secondary	Special	Post 16	Post 19	Outside district
No of Pupils	93	95	677	106	26	152
Cost	£482,610	£327,617	£2,955,260	£222,127	£211,000	£1,440,756
Average daily cost per pupil	£27.31	£18.15	£22.97	£11.03	£42.71	£49.89
Average Annual cost per pupil	£5,189	£3,449	£4,365	£2,096	£8,115	£9,479
Number of routes	27	26	82	17	17	76

In Salford there are a lot of enhanced resources, where specialist support can be offered to give children with educational needs time in mainstream schools. There are many journeys in the Salford boundary, for example there may be a child living in Broughton who goes to school in Swinton. The procurement costs of taxi companies are increasing as they are aware of the need and demand for their services.

Since 2013/14 there has been an 80% increase of children with SEND requiring transport to school. The available budget for school transport in 2022/23 was £4,296,773 and resulted in an overspend of £2.9million. The forecast overspend for 2023/24 is £3.81million.

There is an opportunity to think differently about the journeys in Salford, perhaps piloting something with special school provision in Irlam and Swinton.

The challenge around school transport is that it needs consistency such as the same driver where possible to reduce stress on the child. The procurement process needs commitment of 190 days a year from organisations. There can be flexibility of how the transport is procured but the children need consistency, and the process must be resilient.

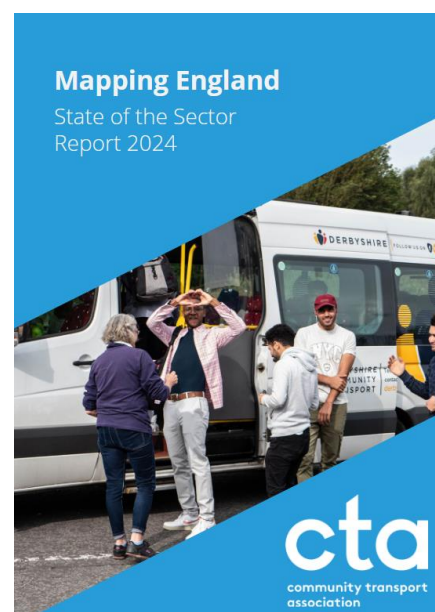
Work was done to simplify the procurement process. Once on the system, the registered provider is there for ten years without having to re-register. Workshops to encourage registration can be run for organisations by Salford Council. The Council also offer travel training and personal transport budgets. It's a long process for families to feel comfortable. Salford Council are keen to see if there are opportunities with VCSE organisations to have a different approach, especially when thinking about the green agenda and reducing transport journeys.

Community Transport Association

Sean Ray from Community Transport Association shared a presentation.

Community Transport Association (CTA) are a membership body who provide support for accessible and inclusive transport including volunteer car services, minibus membership services, and bike services. Their vision is a world where everyone in their communities can access transport that meets their needs. They also provided 1-2-1 development support for members, represent the sector at national and regional levels, create and collate research, and provide resources.

The CTA is a designated body and provides support with Section 19 permits. These permits allow your organisations to buy vehicles and run services. Members can purchase permits for £11 each.



Permits for smaller vehicles are permitted as valid transport for smaller groups.

Research is undertaken by the CTA on behalf of members to support the sector and are advocates at a regional and national level. They have relationships with key partners such as the Department of Transport. The research conducted can be viewed via their website: <https://ctauk.org/policy-research>

Tackling Loneliness was a Department of Transport run project, which used £500,000 to fund groups in the network in England. The CTA engaged with these groups to fund new year-long projects focusing on post-pandemic work.



The projects were for social isolated groups to be able to link in with different organisations. All 18 of the originally funded groups are running new projects or an extension of their funded projects. They have developed these programmes from their learning to provide important and vital work to their communities.



Age	
16 - 29	13%
30 - 49	16%
50 - 69	19%
70 - 89	48%
90 +	5%

2171 People were supported

1995 accessed transport

181 Volunteered with CT services

65% were female
35% were male

Supporting those most at risk of loneliness

- Older people, disabled people and people with long term conditions
- People with learning disabilities
- People with dementia
- Care home residents
- Veterans
- Younger people living in rural areas
- Carers
- People from BAME backgrounds

Many young people are not aware that community transport is aimed at everyone, they believe it is aimed at older people. Working in community transport is a great career pathway for young people, it is not just a volunteer-based organisation. Across England there is a programme called ConneCTing England and involves regional forums for peer support. This encourages people to get together to talk about their experiences. Shared experience can help find solutions to barriers. There are also monthly community building sessions with groups for members across the UK.

Cost of membership:

- Depending on the income of your organisation, the price of membership changes.
- Membership is free for those with an income of less than £25,000
- £50.00 / Between £25,000 and £50,000
- £80.00 / Between £50,000 and £100,000
- £120.00 / Between £100,000 and £250,000
- £215.00 / Between £250,000 and £500,000
- £320.00 / Between £500,000 and £1 Million
- £400.00 / Over £1 Million



Q&A

The attendees were invited to ask questions.

Q – Do the Children's Services figures incorporate respite care?

Cathy – No, just travel to and from school. This is a separate budget for school transport.

Q - Do Children's Services offer any training or way to upskill taxi drivers/minibus drivers to reduce the need for passenger assistance?

Cathy – It's based on assessment and need; this tends to be children who have medical needs or needs for additional support. It would be rather difficult to do.

Q – Is it possible to make the passenger assistant role voluntary?

Cathy – It could be - but you need someone to commit for the 190 days a year and is about the consistency for the child. You could run it on a voluntary scheme but there is risk of someone not turning up as they are not paid to do it.

Sean – It's always a possibility. I know from services that we work with that there are a hybrid of paid and volunteer workers. The volunteer car schemes have little downtime to deliver. It's being honest and making sure people are aware of how that conversation goes. Volunteering doesn't necessarily mean it's not reliable in that way.

Michelle Warburton – I was involved in the volunteer driver scheme in Rochdale and many of the drivers wanted to drive the same person every day because they had built the relationship, and it was very rare to substitute an individual for that service. It was only due to unforeseen circumstances. It's a challenge but don't rule it out completely, some volunteers want that input.

Group discussion

The attendees split into two groups and were asked to discuss and feedback on the following questions.

If any, what does your organisation currently provide in terms of transport?

Group One

- Transport with life limiting conditions for all ages to appointments (Volunteer Car Services)
- Transport for Sick Children (car service to hospital)
- Provision of bus tickets

Group Two

- Volunteer drivers, driving clients by support staff to appointments/groups, coach transport, travel expenses to session/appointments (HIV Charity)
- Support people and escort service to activities (Aspire)
- To and from day centre, escort services morning and evening (chargeable), hospital appointments, after care staff support, meals (Age UK)

What would a good community transport offer look like in Salford?

Group One

- Multi-modal – volunteer car service, minibus, public transport, cycling, walking etc
- Supported by travel buddies – travel training
- Multi-person travel
- Technological support – digital inclusion, technically enabled (Uber model)
- Partnership approach to delivery – consortia/relationship with schools and trusted organisations. Could start with first year rather than change existing. Building trust with children, young people and families
- More cost effective model – flexibility
- Feedback loop – outcomes for users

Group Two

- People working together
- Restrictions
- Pool cars that could be tapped into
- Pool of drive4rs to be supporting in the cars
- Individual budgets
- Informal volunteering

- Community access
- Communication
- Positive approach

What do you see as the main barriers to achieving that community transport offer?

Group One

- People not buying into it – staff and users
- VCSE provider infrastructure isn't there yet – not current core business for current providers
- Needs resourcing – to pilot
- Not going to be resolved overnight – longer term
- Capacity limited
- Culture shift – behaviour change for users and staffing
- Marketing the use of digital and community transport
- Linking up with other city initiatives – digital inclusion

Group Two

- Risk evasion
- Communication
- Culture – we have always done it this way
- Organisation trust
- System of understanding of needs and priority
- Policy barring common sense
- Regulations with tap
- Scale of needs
- Access of vehicle

What support do you think we need from our public sector colleagues?

Group One

- Partnership – how can we work together
- Understanding how systems work
- Pooling resources e.g. VCSE and school minibuses – VCSE purchasing into system e.g. Loaves and Fishes – needs brokerage
- System needed – coordinator, ICT booking etc
- Resources are needed - finance
- Flexibility – for considering invest to save

Group One – Next Steps

- Check existing provision – capacity
- Check appetite from other VCSE organisations for usage
- Check sustainability for a Community Transport Scheme

Group Two

- Information of what is available – learning
- More access to the public

- IT interface
- More processes to support with transport
- Capital accessibility to buy vehicles to support

Next steps

Bruce suggested that the next steps are to operate within frameworks which currently exist, taking note of loopholes and stairs that need to be climbed etc. There is an appetite to do things differently. It would be good if those organisations who want to drive this forward to have a follow up meeting to this. In the background, we need to work with public services to understand the data and finance. We would like to consider a variety of approaches to responding to the needs of the city, including a collaborative or a consortium style approach.