



Thinking about Volunteer Driving ? Follow our step by step guide

So you are interested in becoming a volunteer driver ?

Since 1974 our charity has been helping hundreds of people in Newbury and West Berkshire who are unable to go about their simple business. They have mobility problems such that they are unable to use public transport due to an infirmity of some kind just like the lady in the picture here. You and I may take it for granted that we can pop to the shops, doctors, hospital appointments, the opticians and the like.

Volunteer Drivers change the lives of people who otherwise would find it difficult to do those simple things. This step by step guide will answer your questions about how you can go about becoming a volunteer driver, answer your questions on insurance, how much time could you give ? where may I be driving ? what about my fuel costs and parking arrangements and do I have to lift people ?

How many drives did we do last year ?

In the year to 31st March 2011 the Newbury Community Car scheme undertook 2211 journeys all driven and organised by volunteers at Volunteer Centre West Berkshire

Journeys to the following locations

To Newbury destinations	1380½
To Thatcham	216½
To Reading	303
To Oxford	25
To Basingstoke	214
To North Hants	9
To London	1
Other	51
(Client's home to client's home)	11

Destination types

Hospital/Clinic	888
Surgery	209½
Dentist	51
Optician	10
Day centre	472½
Clubs	79
Shopping	132
Relative/Friend	9
Hairdresser	8
Other	341
(Client's home)	11
Total journeys	2211



Did you know ?

- There are 11 independent Volunteer Car Schemes that operate in West Berkshire.
- Newbury
Thatcham
Downlands
Burghfield and Mortimer
Hungerford
Pangbourne
Kintbury
Lambourn
Chapel Row
Bradfield
Hungerford

Around 20,000 passenger journeys are undertaken each year by volunteer car schemes operating in the district of West Berkshire.

How much time do drivers give ?

There is no minimum time commitment. You simply advise us from the outset what days and times that you are usually free, this information including our holiday list is kept on our computer system in the office, so you won't be bothered for a Friday morning job if that is the day that you have a regular commitment. We realise that

your circumstances may change and we can make changes to our system very easily.

We do not expect you to be waiting by the phone for your jobs, we try to give at least 3 days notice of a job sometimes much more, occasionally we have an urgent request. So if you are not in when we call we

will try again.

The volunteer office team are in from 10 am to 1pm Monday to Friday.

So you advise us whether you would be interested in doing a morning, a day or two days or whatever. We receive very few requests for weekend work.



What about my vehicle insurance ?

It is usually the first question that potential new drivers raise. Our charity needs to be sure that you have fully comprehensive insurance. Nearly all insurance companies do not charge an extra premium if you advise them that you wish to become a volunteer driver 'on a not for gain or

reward basis.' We issue you with a simple form that you send to your insurance company, they then sign it or stamp it and sometimes email you to say that they have noted your volunteer driving under your policy. We need to see proof that this is the case. It is rarely any problem.



Can I claim for my fuel and running expenses ?

Yes, we do not wish you to be out of pocket for your driving, the cost of fuel and running your car is significant. We provide you with a monthly claim form that records your mileage to and from your home to the client then to their appointment and to your home again. The current maximum

that you are able to claim is .45 pence per mile. Most drivers make the claim, some don't and that is your decision. Your claim will be paid by cheque very swiftly by our volunteer book keeper each month.



Do our clients pay for the service ?

When our clients (your passengers) contact our charity we advise them that we operate a contribution system that helps to ensure that the charity can provide an affordable service as well as being able to reimburse our drivers mileage. Our office volunteers advise the client of the appropriate contribution

for each journey. You as a volunteer driver do not have to negotiate the contribution. You simply pass to them a small brown contribution envelope for them to put their money into. This is either a cheque, cash or travel tokens. Occasionally we have clients in financial hardship, and from time to time we waive any

contribution, we will have agreed this with them in advance and advised you that a contribution is not required. If there are any doubts always check with the office.



Will I need to lift a client ?

Plain and simple **no**. As a matter of policy we do not allow you to lift passengers. At the time of accepting a client we ask if they have sufficient mobility such that they are able to walk albeit on an arm sometimes. If they are a wheelchair user, they must be able to self transfer from chair to car and

vice a versa. We don't want you to injure yourself trying to lift someone and equally we would not want you to drop a client either. Sometimes clients become less mobile and don't tell us. Therefore we rely on you to advise the office if you feel that the client has greater physical support needs than we

are able to offer. You may also become aware of other issues that you feel we should be aware of. Please tell us and we can take the necessary steps.



What are the parking arrangements at hospitals ?

We regularly arrange trips to West Berkshire Community Hospital, The Royal Berkshire Hospital, Oxford Hospitals and others.

If you accept a drive to a hospital we will issue you with the appropriate pass in advance. As we are only issued with a limited number of passes

you then drop it back to us when you have used it. You will also receive a Volunteer Centre Window sticker, however this does not get you out of jail or let you off parking fines !!!

If you decide to park in an illegal place we are unable to pay parking fines! For some locations we may not have a

pass so we would ask that you pay for the parking, keep the receipt and claim it back on your monthly claim form.



Happy Drivers

The Volunteer Centre has around 60 drivers on our books at any time. Brian Philips is one of them and he writes here.....

I started driving for the Volunteer Centre 8 years ago. Having retired, I was looking for an opportunity to use some spare time constructively, and driving for VCWB is just that. It is flexible...days to suit me, local or long distance. I meet people.... a complete cross section of the Newbury community, both young and old. And I never fail to be impressed by the fortitude and resilience of those less fortunate than myself, and of the stories they have to tell! It is rewarding.....sometimes I am the first person a client has spoken to in a week or more, and frequently our journey to hospital is the first time they have been outside the house for several weeks! I get instant feedback on my performance....people really do appreciate what we do for them, and it is good to know that a little effort on my part can make such a big difference to someone's life. Why do I do it? It has become a part of my life, it is great fun and very rewarding. And who knows, hopefully at sometime in the dim and distant future, someone may care enough to do the same for me when I need a hand!



Brian Phillips

What about CRB checks and references ?

Once you decide that you wish to become a volunteer driver the office will take up two references, one must be an employer or former employer and another a personal referee. But not a family member. It could be a colleague, long term neighbour or a good friend etc. We will then at the same time seek a CRB check this will not be at any cost to yourself. The process is not invasive and we only seek basic ID such as passport, drivers licence, utility bills etc. The outcome of any CRB check remains confidential and once we have received it we record the number, you retain the copy and we destroy the record. The process is straight forward and simple and we advise what ID you need to bring in and when. We also need a passport size photo so that we can issue you with a Volunteer driver ID Card. Once all the references and CRB forms are returned and we have the OK from your insurance company you will be ready to go ! 3-4 weeks is the norm to get people on the road. We do have the one or two drivers that have a minor criminal record, typically they will have been minor misdemeanours from their youth, so reformed characters are very welcomed !

What other services does Volunteer Centre West Berkshire provide ?

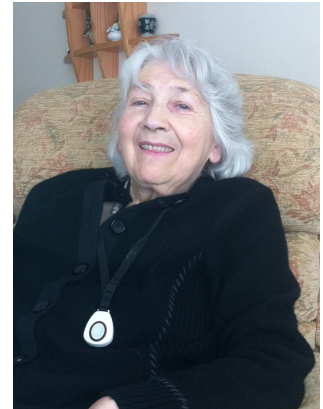
The Volunteer Centre was established in 1974. Our primary role is to provide free information advice and guidance about volunteering in West Berkshire. We refer around 1,500 volunteers per year to other voluntary groups and charities throughout the district call 01635 49004. In addition to the community car scheme we also operate **Newbury Handybus** a service that provides mini bus transport to groups of people to attend regular shopping activities, clubs and societies. Tel 01635 37111. Our charity also provides **Newbury Shopmobility** a service that enables people with permanent or temporary mobility problems to go about their business using electric scooters and wheelchairs. Tel 01635 523854

Happy passengers

Mrs Alvera Pottinger of Newbury is just one of the hundreds of people that the community car service supports. We went to visit her at her home and she had this to say.....

"I would be lost without the Volunteer Centre, not a week goes by when I don't need the service of the voluntary car service. My arthritis means I am never out of pain but all the drivers are so kind and helpful to me"

Alvera Pottinger
Newbury



What should I do next ?

Fill out this contact sheet and we will be in touch

First Name.....Surname.....

D-O-BAge today.....

Address.....

Post Code.....Telephone number.....

Mobile Telephone number.....

Referee Number 1

NameAddress.....

Post Code.....Relationship to applicant.....

Referee Number 2

NameAddress.....

Post Code.....Relationship to applicant.....

office use only

Name of driver
Date of interview.....

Make and Type of car.....Registration No.....
Colour of car for identification purposes.....
Number of doors.....
Will it take a folding wheelchair yes / no
Will it take a frame yes / no

Days driver usually available (please circle all that apply)

Mon AM /PM Tues AM/PM Wed AM/PM Thurs AM/PM
Fri AM/PM Sat AM/PM Sun AM/PM

Happy to drive to. Please circle all that apply

Newbury , Thatcham, Reading, Oxford, Basingstoke, Swindon or
Anywhere

Licence seen and checked by
Any comments.....
Date references applied for..... Date received No 1
No 2.....
Insurance checked

Date CRB completed and applied for.....
Date CRB check received

Date commenced driving.....

Other comments
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Volunteer Centre West Berkshire is a registered operational name of Newbury Volunteer Bureau registered with the charity commission number 285937. Registered office 1 Bolton Place, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 1AJ

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Chairman of Trustees Mr. Tim Barton



The charity is governed by a board of trustees who serve on a voluntary basis. The charity employs a Director, one assistant and a voluntary office team of 23 who oversee the day to day activities of the charity's work. We receive the help of many individuals through their in kind support or financial assistance. In addition we receive the generous support of West Berkshire Council and Newbury Town Council as well as other trusts and funds that enable us to achieve our charitable aims.

