

# Devon Community Car Schemes: Social Kindness in Action

## In Devon in 2018-19.....



**1,900  
Volunteer  
Drivers**



**141,000  
Car Journeys**



**60  
Independent  
Car Schemes**



**Over 1.5 Million  
Miles**



**134,000  
Volunteer  
Hours**



**68%  
Journeys  
to Health  
Appointments**

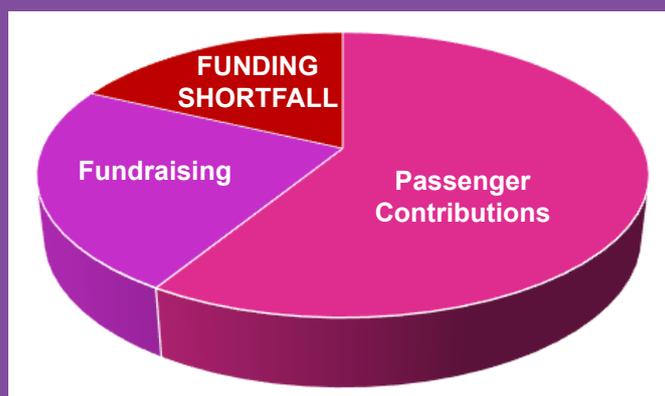
**Transport is an often-forgotten essential link to health care.**

Community Car Schemes are reporting that passengers are becoming frailer and hospital journeys more stressful. The offer, however, is still a simple one; the passenger makes a phone call to ask for a lift, the scheme matches the request to a volunteer driver, and the journey takes place.

It is vital that Clinical Commissioning Groups and Senior NHS Managers collaborate with Car Schemes to create a mutually beneficial relationship.

## Cost to provide these services in 2018-19 was £1.1 million

- There is a persistent belief that volunteering is free - it rarely is.....
- Schemes spent £576,797 in 2018/19 to provide their services, which rises to more than **£1.1 million** when drivers' expenses are included
- Passengers contributed a very generous £655,439 with other fundraising totaling £260,510
- **This left a worrying £199,980 shortfall**
- Schemes helped eligible passengers reclaim the costs of 6,000 journeys using the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS)
- We estimate that by using Community Car Schemes instead of taxis this saved the NHS HTCS budget at least £229,000 over the year



**In preventing missed appointments (or DNAs) Devon Car Schemes saved the NHS an estimated £4.8 million last year**

## An Opportunity to Work in Partnership

Devon Access to Services (DAS) collects car scheme data from across Devon, conducts research, facilitates meetings with the network of 60 schemes and helps them with training, advice and support. To find out more and request a copy of the full 2020 Social Kindness in Action Report please contact: [dasadmin@ndvs.org.uk](mailto:dasadmin@ndvs.org.uk)

*“A simple act of social kindness helps reduce loneliness and isolation for the passengers - and often drivers and coordinators as well. They enjoy the journey - happier people stay well and active for longer and recover from illness sooner.”*

## County Car Forum Report 2020

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## Elsie's Journey

Elsie was in her sixties when she retired with her husband Henry to an idyllic Devon village. They had an active life with many friends and both drove. Now in her 80's, Elsie is no longer able to walk very far and had to give up driving. Henry died a couple of years ago and her world has narrowed to the house, the bit of the garden she can reach and watching TV.

Over the years the friends who used to give Elsie a lift have gradually moved to care homes or died and the bus no longer stops in the village. She books a taxi to go to the shops and doctors, unfortunately because of the cost she must prioritise only the most urgent journeys. Elsie is lonely and isolated and becoming very scared about her future.

Elsie sees a poster advertising a local Car Scheme offering lifts to the GP surgery and hospital appointments. After some initial nervousness, Elsie booked her first health journey appointment and is now a regular user of the car scheme. She can now afford to go to all her medical appointments and to local social events where she has made many new friends.

## Bill's Journey

Bill took early retirement with his wife and moved to the same Devon village as Elsie. Like Elsie they had a lovely time and were very much part of the local community. Unfortunately, his wife became unwell and after a long illness died, leaving Bill feeling lost and lonely and his reaction to grief was to shut himself away. He started having hip problems and was in a lot of pain and withdrew further into himself.



One day a worried friend suggested he become a volunteer driver and eventually Bill did just that. Though he was not motivated to go out for himself, he felt that if he was asked to drive people to appointments he would say yes.

Gradually as he met people through the driving, he felt better about himself. Now he enjoys helping people like Elsie because they are similar ages and "she talks about things I understand". He finally had his hip fixed and returned to the hobbies he had when his wife was alive, for example he loves a round of golf! Bill has found becoming a volunteer driver has given him a purpose in life; he feels wanted and likes the routine. It gives him a reason to get up in the morning and gave him his life back. Bill said "You don't have to feel alone in old age".

### What is important to Elsie?

- Help is a phone call away
- The scheme gives practical help to reclaim her travel costs to NHS appointments
- The driver befriends Elsie for the duration of the journey, they have a laugh and it relieves some of her isolation and loneliness
- It widens Elsie's social horizons, she regains her confidence as the scheme has quietly helped change her life
- She goes to see the doctor less often than she used to

### What is important to Bill?

- The journey gives him company and he enjoys the conversations
- He feels valued for giving his time, it is time well spent and he likes the routine
- He has the coordinator of the scheme to ask for help if he is worried about a passenger
- The mileage expenses help keep his car on the road

*Please Note: These are fictionalised case studies based on several very real people.*

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