



Produced by

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Devon Access to Services would like to thank the members of the Devon Car Forum for their help developing these Top Tips for Drivers. This is an ongoing process and suggestions for further additions are welcome.

Please feel free to adapt these notes for your own use, giving credit to North Devon Voluntary Services

To find out more about the work of Community Car Schemes please contact us at Devon Access to Services.

Photos by Tim Lamerton Photography

January 2018

Top Tips for Community Car Scheme Drivers



These tips are designed as quick reference sheets guiding you to current 'best practice' for Community Car Scheme drivers, especially those new to the role.

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Appropriate Behaviour

- Keep the following pointers in mind

- Protect the reputation of your car scheme
- Consider the interaction with your passenger - be polite friendly and helpful - avoid politics and religion
- Use formal names until invited to do otherwise, avoid terms of endearment
- Remember, your passenger's life experience may be very different from yours
- Be careful with the use of humour, your intentions may be good but you do not know what might be sensitive or upsetting.
- Only ever touch to assist and only with the passenger's permission
- Do not accept personal gifts that can be considered to have any monetary value
- Be mindful of the limits of your role
- Keep your passenger's confidences and try not to get too personal about yourself
- Drive well, keep full records and avoid becoming their personal taxi.

Wheelchair Assistance

- You should only have to offer minimal assistance, a steady push.
- Put your safety first...always.
- Then the safety of your passenger
- Then the safety and reputation of your car scheme

Safe Assistance

- Don't attempt this for the first time without being shown how. It is very easy to get wrong.
- Check the wheelchair tyres are inflated and the brakes work
- Pick a safe route, well lit, solid ground, no steps, gentle slopes, wide enough for the wheel chair
- Ask what assistance they would like. Do not offer to push the wheelchair unless they ask you to and keep chatting about what you are doing. Don't go down kerbs forwards or reverse back up a kerb.

When you get to the car

- Hold the chair steady close to the car seat and let them transfer by themselves
- Ask if they would like any assistance, seat belt, help with feet etc
- Remember your training when folding and stowing the wheelchair

Getting out of the car

- Let them transfer back into the wheelchair by themselves

Any concerns?

- Don't take a chance, consider your options and consult with your co-ordinator immediately.

Walking Assistance

- You should only need to offer minimal assistance, a steadying arm
- Put your safety first...always
- Then the safety of your passenger
- Then the safety and reputation of your car scheme

Safe Assistance

- Pick a safe route, well lit, good ground etc
- Ask if they would like assistance
- Offer to give a supporting hand under their elbow
- Walk to the side of them and go at their speed

When you get to the car

- Let them get in by themselves
- Ask if they would like help, for example, in getting their feet into the car
- Ask if they would like help with the safety belt and give them lots of space

Getting out of the car

- Let them get out by themselves, ask if they need assistance etc

Any concerns?

- Consider your options and consult with your co-ordinator. If they need more than a steadying arm you may not be able to offer a lift

Dealing with complaints

- They happen, sometimes things go wrong and if it is an obvious mistake, just say sorry
- Respect the right of the person to make a complaint, don't dismiss it, make sure they know you are listening to them
- Often the way a complaint is handled can have a greater positive long term effect than the reason for the complaint itself

Your reaction

- Don't take it personally. This could impede your ability to drive safely.
- Try not to get defensive as this could potentially make a difficult situation worse
- Listen to what the person is saying (try to see beyond any heat of the moment language/emotion) You do not, however, have to accept abuse
- If you are not sure of the situation you can say "I am sorry you feel like that", this does not admit any fault
- Write down what has happened as soon as you can. Try just to state the facts as you see them
- Say what you will do next, for instance reporting the issue to your co-ordinator or Management Committee
- Don't make promises you are unable to keep or commit the scheme to any action

Next action?

- Report the complaint to your co-ordinator or Management Committee as soon as possible

Confidentiality

By confidentiality we mean not telling anyone outside of your car scheme and/or surgery, including your spouse or partner, anything personal you have discovered in the course of a journey, including who you are transporting, unless you have their permission.

- It is about protecting the reputation of your car scheme
- It is also about protecting your own privacy.

Personal journey information

- Keep booking information only for as long as you need it.
- Do not share personal information without permission.
- Never leave information in view
- Destroy it when you no longer need it (including emails)
- Keep your passenger's confidences to yourself
- Be mindful of the limits of your role and follow your scheme's policies.
- Report any safeguarding concerns to your co-ordinator immediately.

Your privacy

- Be careful about what you share, including your phone number.
- If the passenger wants to contact you, ask them to do so via the co-ordinator

Any problems?

Not sure your passenger's data is safe? Do you have any concerns about their safety? Tell your co-ordinator

Visual Impairment

- Put your safety first...don't take risks by being over helpful
- Then the safety of your passenger
- Then the safety and reputation of your car scheme

General advice

- Pick a clear, well lit (for you) and safe route for your passenger, avoiding steps if possible
- Ask what help they would like, they will know what suits them best.
- Remember: You are offering guidance rather than direction and support.

Walking Assistance

- Let them rest their hand on your elbow or arm or shoulder as they wish.
- Walk by the side and slightly in front of them
- Inform them of changes in conditions, doors, kerbs, path surface
- Let them know in good time, eg. "coming to a flight of steps going up"
- When going into single file, through a door or narrow path, let them know in good time and move your guiding arm behind you as you step forward.

Not confident all is well?

- If they need more than minimal assistance you should not be giving them a lift, however a little practice may be all you need.
- Tell your co-ordinator as soon as possible if you have concerns ...and no-one else. Remember, this is personal confidential information

Safety

- Put your safety first...always
- Then the safety of your passenger
- Then the safety and reputation of your car scheme

Consider

- Are you fit to drive? Tired? Alcohol the night before? Prescription drugs? Feeling ill? Do you have a valid driving licence?
- Is your car safe and legal to drive? Do you have a valid MOT, road tax and insurance? Have you done a walk around check? What about tyre pressures? Washer bottle?
- Have you ensured you know the route prior to starting the journey?
- Is your passenger fit enough to be driven in a car by you?
- Can they get in to and out of the car with minimal assistance?
- Does your passenger need extra assistance? Can they or your scheme provide this or an escort if you feel they need it?

Then

- Are the weather conditions safe?
- Is the route to the car safe and suitable for your passenger?
- Remember to always turn the engine off, put the handbrake on and park with the passenger door next to the kerb

Happy and confident about all of the above?

If not, consider your options and consult with your co-ordinator

Falls

- Put your safety first...always
- Then the safety of your passenger
- Then the safety and reputation of your car scheme
- Assist your passenger safely so they can never pull you down with them

If they are falling

- Do not try to stop the fall
- Do try to slow the fall and or protect their head if you can do so safely

If they have fallen

- Are they injured, unconscious (even for a moment) or confused? Dial 999 immediately
- Keep them warm and dry
- When they are ready to get up, let them get up in their own time and by themselves using, for example, a chair if available
- Let them rest as they wish to
- If they are in any pain, confused or dizzy dial 999
- Only carry on with the journey if and when you are confident they are able to do so

After a fall

Tell your co-ordinator all the details as soon as possible...and unless you have your passenger's permission...no-one else

Coping with Grief

There may be times when your passenger receives bad news about their own or a family member's health and you may be the first person they see.

- How you react can have a positive effect on how they feel
- Remember your priority is their and your own safety during the journey and your emotional wellbeing afterwards

If they talk to you first

- It is fine to say "I am really sorry to hear that"
- Ask if they would like to talk about it

If they are obviously upset, but not talking

- It is fine to say "I can see you are upset, is there anything you would like to talk about?"

General advice

- They are unlikely to expect you to have any answers or even to want them, they may just want to talk to a friendly familiar person
- If the chat becomes very emotional offer to pull over so you can listen
- Don't worry about using the "wrong" words, they are more likely to remember the emotion behind a sympathetic non-judgmental response
- Try not to get too involved, or to try to sort out their problems
- If they start giving details that worry you, you must tell them "I am very happy to listen, but I will have to pass on my concerns to my co-ordinator"

Feel they need signposting to other services?

- Let them know your co-ordinator may be able to help with options for them eg anxiety or depression services or befriender schemes
- Tell your co-ordinator all the details as soon as possible, no-one else at all. Remember this is personal, confidential information

Safeguarding

What is safeguarding?

It is protecting vulnerable people from abuse

- Respect the confidentiality of your passenger...but,
- Please don't be the person who remains silent...however,
- Only ever talk about any concerns you have with your co-ordinator

What might be signs of abuse?

- Your passenger seems worried, or concerned about money disappearing
- You think you have noticed signs of physical abuse
- You think you have noticed signs of psychological abuse /bullying
- You think you have noticed signs of controlling/coercive behaviour in your passenger's carer/escort

What should you do if the passenger confides in you?

- Listen to them, be kind by saying things like "I'm sorry you feel this is happening", but please do not offer advice

What should you do if you notice signs that might be abuse?

- Write down what you have observed, or been told, as soon as you can, including date, time and people involved
- Never confront a potential abuser or try to think of a solution yourself
- Do nothing other than tell your co-ordinator all the details as soon as possible, even if the passenger has told you in confidence. This is not breaching your confidentiality policy.

Do not stay silent

Mobility Aids

- Drivers with a non-adapted vehicle may be able to help people who use mobility aids to travel. They should need only minimal assistance.
- Put your safety first...always
- Then the safety of your passenger
- Then the safety and reputation of your car scheme

General advice

- Park your car passenger side to the kerb, but not too close, handbrake on, engine off
- Pick a clear, well lit and safe route for your passenger
- **Ask what help they would like, they must be able to walk by themselves, with the help of their mobility aids.**

Mobility Aids

- Let them use their mobility aids, e.g. walker, sticks, rollator
- Go at their speed, help by carrying bags, check route is safe etc
- Let them rest as they wish to
- Ensure you can fold and store the mobility aid safely

Not confident all is well?

- If they need more than minimal assistance you should not transport them
- Tell your co-ordinator all the details as soon as possible ... and no-one else. Remember this is personal and confidential information

Hearing Impairment

- Put your safety first... do not take risks by being over helpful
- Then the safety of your passenger
- Then the safety and reputation of your car scheme
- Pick a clear, well lit and safe route for your passenger
- Ask what help they would like, they will know what suits them best
- Even when someone is wearing hearing aid/s it does not mean they can hear perfectly and it is possible that they also lip read.
- It is best to get people's attention before starting to speak, if necessary by tapping them on the arm or shoulder, or waving.
- Look directly at them when you are speaking and try not to mumble or cover your mouth
- Speak clearly but not too slowly, and don't exaggerate your lip movements or shout – this can make it harder to lip-read and be uncomfortable for hearing aid users
- If someone doesn't understand what you've said, don't keep repeating it. Try saying it in a different way, perhaps using fewer words (or write it down)
- Make sure they have heard you, and are not saying yes out of embarrassment
- If you are using a sign language interpreter, always remember to talk directly to the person you are communicating with, not the interpreter.

Not confident all is well?

- Tell your co-ordinator all the details as soon as possible... and no-one else

Memory Loss

- Put your safety first...always
- Then the safety of your passenger
- Then the safety and reputation of your car scheme

You can make a difference

- You may be the first to notice a change in behaviour - if you do, tell your co-ordinator
- People with memory loss are sensitive to (and remember) emotions - be friendly, relaxed and positive
- Be prepared to repeat yourself as if it's the first time – every time
- Contradiction causes confusion, enter into their world, accept and enjoy it
- Choice and questions can cause confusion - give positive instruction and information, e.g. "Let's go this way to the car"
- Their balance and confidence walking may be poor. They may try to hold on to you and risk pulling you over – give them something to hold such as their appointment letter
- Their perceptions might be different to yours - describe where you are walking – “step on that doormat” (they might think it's a puddle or a hole)
- If you feel they need an escort to help, ask for one
- Consider seating them in the back seat of the car with the child locks on

Happy and confident about all of the above?

- If not, consider your options and consult with your co-ordinator.

Mental Health

- Protect the reputation of your car scheme
- Consider your interactions with your passenger; kindness will go a long way to making them feel more comfortable
- Consider your passenger's interactions with you, for instance they may not want to make eye contact. That is about them and not your feelings

Consider

- One in four people will have problems with their mental health at some time in their lives
- Just booking the journey may have been very stressful, so be on time
- Listen to what they want from you (it might be silence)
- Let them sit where they feel comfortable, but preferably not directly behind you. That could be where their escort sits?

If something unexpected happens

- Be calm, accept the situation, be patient and don't pressure them
- Be kind and non-judgmental, remember that the vast majority of people with mental health problems are not dangerous to anyone but themselves
- Be mindful of the limits of your role
- Considered interaction will encourage the same from your passenger
- Drive well, keep full records and avoid becoming their personal taxi

Any problems?

If you have concerns always consult with (and give feedback to) your co-ordinator