

Community Transport Sussex (CT Sussex) is one of the main Community Transport Operators across West Sussex. It provides traditional community transport for people who struggle to access mainstream public transport, the majority of whom are elderly, disabled or have long term health conditions.

In 2023 CT Sussex the Housing & Wellbeing Committee approved and adopted the Arun Community Transport Plan that was written by CT Sussex who then developed an action plan which provides a focus for work in Arun on the following priorities:

- Building Evidence of Need.
- Addressing gaps in service provision.
- Develop an integrated community transport network across Arun that links into neighbouring districts and boroughs.
- Pilot innovative community transport initiatives.
- Secure sustainable funding.
- Promote volunteering across the community transport network.
- Zero emission.

Across the Arun district, for the year June 23 -June 24, CT Sussex supported 188 people on 8727 journeys. The age range of these passengers were between 4-100 years of age.

- 47 children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) are transported to their schools every day of the school term.
- 112 of these passengers are 65+ and use the dial-a-ride service to take them to medical appointments, social activities as well as shopping and other trips.

As well as delivering transport, CT Sussex supports other Community Transport Operators across Arun through their infrastructure support. Through this, CT Sussex provides support to these operators around regulatory & compliance advice, fleet management support, bid writing and grant applications advice & support, access to training and opportunities to do more in the community and generate more funds for their operation. This is done through 1-2-1 meetings with the Operators and through an Arun Community Transport Forum (the next one is planned for November 24.)

The Arun Community Transport Forum is a good opportunity for all Community Transport Operators across Arun to share their work and help each other with any issues they are experiencing. The upcoming forum in November will consider data on CT Sussex's recently completed Transport Surveys in Bognor and Bersted, details of the new Book-a-Bus service and how the community will benefit from the service, local data that will support funding bids and funding opportunities.

As an ongoing project of gathering evidence of need, CT Sussex has completed 5 Transport Surveys in Angmering, Arundel, Rustington, Bersted and Bognor Regis, these will be shared within the community to provide evidence for service planning and for the group to look collectively how to bridge gaps in provision.

Since June 24 CT Sussex has been operating the 97 Flex Book-a-Bus service on behalf of WSCC in and around Arun. This is a fully flexible bus service within the defined area meaning people can book travel from and to any location in the zone and a timed service route between Barnham train station, Walberton and Slindon, allowing rural areas to connect to commuter train times. More information on the Book a Bus service can be found [here](#).

Since the beginning of 2024, we have been working with Chichester Festival Theatre (CFT) to deliver free transport to and from CFT to people that wouldn't normally be able to get there. 3 organisations involved across Arun and Chi.

Challenges:

Since our last Arun Community Transport Forum, the challenges that CT Operators raised were volunteer drivers & office staff recruitment as well as access to replacement vehicles, training, delays in getting DBS certificates completed in good time, medical appointments being cancelled last minute and funding. CT Sussex is working with the Forum members, District Council officers and other community groups to address these issues.

What next?

CT Sussex will continue to work with the other CT Operators across Arun to address local challenges (identified above) and work towards developing an integrated community transport network.

Working in partnership with organisations to help improve the overall connectivity between individuals and activities run within the community.

Other priorities include securing sustainable funding (though grants and involvement in section 106/CIL considerations), piloting innovative community transport initiatives and zero emissions.

Case Study:

Mr S is an 86-year-old gentleman with declining health, he lives on his own, his wife lives full time in a care home having also had declining health issues and is now almost totally immobile due to a degenerative health condition. He was her carer 2 years prior to her going into a care home until his own health conditions meant he couldn't care for her any longer when he went into hospital for a short period. They have 2 children but neither live locally, his daughter does get try to visit every 1-2 weeks. Mr S was previously an electrical engineer and retired at 60 enjoying bowls weekly but that was some time ago. He gave up his driving licence when his ill health made it too hard for him to drive.

Mr S's daughter found out about Dial-A-ride when visiting the care home Mrs S is living in after a conversation with staff about helping her dad visit her mum.

Prior to Dial-A-Ride Mr S was only able to visit his wife when his daughter could get down to visit possibly once every 1-2 weeks, So, he spent a lot of time alone with no visits, sometimes up to 2 weeks or more as he doesn't go out to go food shopping (his daughter gets it delivered) and he doesn't attend any social clubs. He doesn't feel confident to use public transport and would struggle to walk to the nearest bus stop.

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Now Mr S get to visit his wife every week and this is supplemented with visits with his daughter when she can help. He enjoys the engagement from the drivers, he knows all their names, he like to know what's going on in their lives and reminisces about his past. He says he now has something to talk about when he sees his wife.

Mr S says "Dial-A-Ride has been a god send to me."

October 2024