

Case Study

Accessible Caring Transport

Accessible Caring Transport (ACT) are a community transport charity based in Mountain Ash, South Wales. They enhance public transport services by providing an accessible minibus/car scheme, door to door, for individuals and groups of vulnerable people with priority given to older people, people with disabilities and people living in isolation in the Cynon Valley, Rhondda and Merthyr Tydfil areas.

The initial service was set up in 1989 to meet the needs of elderly and disabled people living in the Cynon Valley and surrounding areas. In 1998 the organisation became a charity, and Accessible Caring Transport expanded to develop new projects with and for people living in isolation, young people journeying to training and work and a Dial-a-Ride service across the Cynon and Rhondda valleys. With group and individual member numbers growing annually, ACT have an enormous impact on their community. Of the 500+ individuals they support each year, many of them are isolated and have health and/or mobility issues and would be housebound without ACT's support. With no regular buses around the area, ACT provide essential transport to appointments, social events, day trips and visiting friends to help people remain active and engaged in their local community.

Supporting Health Services

In addition to the regular Dial-a-Ride services individuals pay for directly to access GP, hospital, or other health appointments, ACT offer a range of health-related services which are very important to both residents in the area and the Cwm Taf Health Board.

ACT were approached in August 2015 to discuss providing transport for the Wales Ambulance Service Trust, to pick up patients from their homes and convey them to Merthyr Renal Unit (MRUM) for dialysis treatment. With approximately 54 patients being transported every week between home and hospital, this service runs six days a week and is instrumental in ensuring these patients have an accessible and supportive transport service to get to and from these essential appointments.

Dialysis has a range of side effects following treatment. Fatigue, dizziness, and muscle cramps are very common, even for those who have been renal patients for some time. ACT provides extensive support and training for their drivers and passenger assistants to ensure that these patients are supported to travel safely. Not motivated by profit margins or cutting journey times to increase capacity, ACT are valued highly by their partners in the Health Board for their ability to provide safe and caring transport that is needs-led and patient focused.

Without this essential support, the Wales Ambulance Service Trust would struggle to meet the needs of patients accessing the MRUM which would mean significant health deterioration and increasing care needs. ACT's service is pivotal in ensuring these patients remain at home and active in their communities, rather than stuck in hospital at risk of increasing complications.

ACT also provide an evening service from the Cynon Valley area to Prince Charles Hospital for evening visiting. Passengers can use their concessionary pass, or if not, there is a small charge of £3.75. This service provides transport Monday – Saturday and needs to be booked in advance, with at least 24 hours' notice. The service has been running for several years and is part funded by Rhondda Cynon Taff Council, transporting an average of 10 people per day.

Due to the location of the hospital and no public transport in the evenings, without a friend or family member who can provide transport the only alternative for a non-driver would be a prohibitively expensive taxi fare. For many of ACT's passengers this would mean they would be unable to visit the hospital as often if at all – this would have a detrimental effect on both the patients and the visitors¹.

Community Transport is an essential part of the transport mix which tends to be less visible and well-known to the general public. For those with additional mobility needs or on low incomes, or for people living in communities which have limited public transport networks, community transport becomes fundamental in ensuring that people are able to remain healthy, well, and active in their communities. Accessible Caring Transport want to raise the profile of their organisation so they can grow and serve more residents of the Rhondda and Cynon Valleys, continuing to deliver accessible and inclusive transport services as they have been for the last 30 years.

¹ https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/hospital-patients-never-have-visitors_uk_5d78b17ee4b09342507becec?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xllmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAFPrLlnAnKU-Nldrw6BEog_PcGAVRwJ4Icz8TkV0e3CWSYKYFtLZwUk5k2fi_3PyoD3tcmOOLVbIT4BwHHL6qPzsDQ9id12vZb3q5Q8mUSJEsLJfY6jJBwApJqQvXBQhD9Pv8Y5eSBbltnGkCmilZiW9zNOrhL7zd3HVKaA1K0