Restarting your services
Guidance for community transport operators

This document was last updated on 27 July – the information contained may be superseded by the most up to date guidance at ctauk.org/covid19-guidance/.

This document contains information on:

- **Social distancing**
- **PPE and face coverings**
- **Putting together a comprehensive risk assessment**
- **Training**
- **Looking after staff, volunteers and passengers**
- **Your vehicles**
- **Car schemes**

Guidance from the UK Government, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive no longer states that public transport should only be used for essential journeys, as has been the case up until now. The Welsh Government however still states individuals should only travel for essential journeys.

Whilst people are still encouraged to limit their use of public transport, and that individuals should walk, cycle or drive wherever possible, this does give more scope for community transport providers in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to gradually re-introduce more services that they wouldn't have previously been able to run. Please note that this does not apply to car schemes, as shared car journeys are still only allowed for essential travel.

The guidance below looks at our recommendations of what you need to consider when running any services in the near future.

Carrying passengers during the COVID-19 crisis is essentially a health and safety concern and as a CT operator you should work within your existing H&S framework. Your designated H&S representative should ensure that they are familiar with the range of government & official guidance that has been issued, and keep abreast of the frequent updates – these sources are listed below. You should ensure that at least one person is delegated this role, and that they have sufficient authority to enforce measures if needs be.

Advice and restrictions are changing on a day-by-day basis. we will endeavour to keep this document updated as government advice changes, however you should check the current position and advice in your area.

General information and guidance

The COVID-19 crisis is a constantly changing situation, which means that you'll need to review your organisation's circumstances weekly, if not daily, based on the new information emerging and your own operational experience. You should also consider the local perspective, which may differ from the national one. Here's some actions you should put into place that'll help you meet those challenges:

- Undertake new risk assessments – these should detail all the steps that you've taken to reduce/eliminate the likelihood of virus transmission

- Update risk registers/documentation

- Ensure that your reporting and escalation systems are responsive and robust

- Your organisation should have a policy on what constitutes an 'essential journey' which will assist your risk management process - but note that government guidance that only 'essential journeys' should be made now only applies to car-sharing. But it still advises that 'public transport' is avoided if possible, and that some people, including those aged 70 or over, should continue to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household, and that people who are vulnerable on health grounds should continue 'shielding'.

- Keep in active, regular and open communication with your trustee board – they should always be aware of new developments taking place in order to make informed decisions

- Keep in active, regular and open communication with stakeholders and funders – they should be aware of your organisation's service levels and changes put in place, and make sure those will not conflict with any contract terms

- Keep in active, regular and open communication with staff, volunteers and beneficiaries – they should always be aware of the steps implemented to safeguard them

- Make necessary adjustments to vehicles, buildings, systems and procedures – this may include an investment in materials that you may not have needed before (e.g. PPE)

- Check all insurances to ensure cover is maintained

- Before putting any changes to services into action, make sure you understand the levels of financial risk you will incur by doing so, and always seek out the various support fund that have been made available

- If offering new types of services, always check your VAT situation

- Wherever possible, maintain any activities that contribute to the safety of your operation (e.g. MiDAS, PATS, CPC, vehicle and equipment inspection and maintenance)

Social Distancing

The principle of social distancing has been the universally adopted measure to contain the spread of COVID-19 with a two metre gap to be maintained where possible between any two or more people who do not live in the same household. All safety measures should embrace this rule but recognising that there are certain situations where this distance is physically impossible to maintain. For England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the governments have altered the rule to either two metres or one metre plus, where the 'plus' means that additional mitigation measures are in place.

In the case of CT operations, in addition to our extra sanitisation procedures these measures should include the use of face coverings by passengers and staff (when not driving). In implementing this relaxation, for example in determining how many seats to make available to passengers in a minibus, each operator will need to balance the needs of its passengers against the compromises that might be necessary when providing journeys. Note that you are concerned with managing risk to a reasonable level, not attempting to eliminate it.

Currently the two metre rule remains in force for Wales. This rule may be reviewed at a local level in England or devolved level across the UK. We will endeavour to keep this document updated as government advice changes, however you should check the current position and advice in your area.

Risk Assessments

Although risk assessments should always target the specific circumstances of each operation, there is a number of issues that will commonly affect most operators:

- Older people and those with underlying health issues – given that most CT beneficiaries and some staff/volunteers fall into these categories, special attention should be paid to them

- Passengers – ensuring customers' basic needs are met and that they're not at risk of loneliness if unable to travel

- Vehicles – accommodating passengers while keeping social distance (boarding/alighting, seating layout), minimizing direct contact (cash handling, passenger assistance), cleaning and PPE

- Drivers/Passenger assistants – regular monitoring of health and wellbeing, social distance in the office/depot, provision of PPE

With the support of CTA members from across the UK, CTA have produced community transport specific templates and resources relating to COVID-19 risk assessments which CTA members can download from ctauk.org/advice-resources/risk-assessment-and-management.

If you're not a CTA member, you can still access our 'How To' guide for risk assessments, as well as a COVID-19 specific risk assessment template on our main guidance page at ctauk.org/covid19-guidance/. We are making these usually member only resources open access to help get services back up and running. If you're using these resources and aren't a CTA member, you can find more information about CTA membership here.

Use of PPE and Face Coverings

Face coverings are now compulsory on public transport in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

As these regulations include buses, this will be a requirement for those operating community transport services under a Section 22 permit. The requirements do not apply to:

- School transport services (children under the age of 11 are exempt in all circumstances).

- Taxi or private hire vehicles – although a taxi driver or private hire vehicle operator may refuse to accept passengers if they do not wear a face covering.

- Stations, stops and interchanges.

The new rules do not extend to car schemes or those operating under a Section 19 permit; however, it is strongly advised that the same guidelines are followed. There are also circumstances where a passenger may be exempt from the requirements due to a reasonable excuse, which may include:

- Where they cannot put on, wear, or remove a face covering without severe distress or because of any physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability (within the meaning of section 6 of the Equality Act 2010).

- Where they are travelling with, or providing assistance to, another person who relies on lip-reading to communicate.

- Where they remove the face covering to avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to themselves or others.

- Where they are travelling to avoid injury, or to escape a risk of harm, and do not have a face covering with them.

- To eat or drink where it is reasonably necessary to do so.

- Where they have to remove their face covering to take medication.

- Where they are requested to remove the face covering by a constable or other relevant person.

The mandatory requirements do not require staff to wear a face covering. However, the guidance highlights that face coverings offer some benefits in situations where social distancing is difficult to manage, such as when working in passenger facing roles. How you translate this guidance into a policy for your drivers and passenger assistants should be informed by a risk assessment.

It is important to note that a face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used by healthcare workers as part of their personal protective equipment. A face covering covers a person's nose and mouth and can be as simple as a scarf or bandana that ties behind the head. There are useful guides online which show you how a face covering can be made at home. They are now also becoming more commonly available in local shops and supermarkets.

- UK Government guidance on face coverings can be found here.

- Scottish Government guidance can be found here.

- Welsh Government guidance can be found here.

- [Northern Ireland Executive guidance can be found here.](#)

[If you are using any medical Personal Protective Equipment, you can find the UK Government's guidance on PPE use here.](#) It is aimed mainly towards medical professionals, but some elements may be useful for community transport providers running essential services.

Supporting staff and volunteers

Practical measures should be put into place in order to protect staff and volunteers, and you should be proactive in ensuring that those measures are complied with. Here's our recommendations:

- Provide PPE (despite face coverings being optional, these should still be provided, as well as gloves and on board cleaning materials) and adapt vehicles (protective screens)

- Monitor the health of frontline staff/volunteers closely, and (as and when possible) ensure they undergo tests

- Ensure that safety measures are put in place in order to better manage situations where staff/volunteers come into contact with each other (e.g. car sharing, shared office/depot spaces such as kitchens, toilets and break rooms)

- Keep an open line of communication with each member of your team. This will help you assess how comfortable they are in continuing to provide the services, what support they may need from you and if any existing underlying health issues may be a concern (this could extend to their immediate household).

- Evaluate if there's a need to deploy drivers deemed to be at risk due to age (over 70s) and/or health issues – bear in mind that some insurance companies have now withheld cover from drivers over 70 for CT operations.

- For those volunteer drivers deemed at risk due to age and other health issues, find other volunteering opportunities such as administration they could do at home or a befriending service.

Resource: Guidance for community transport drivers

We have put together a checklist to give to drivers which we recommend they read and sign to show they understand your responsibilities and their responsibilities, when operating a service.

[Download the resource here.](#)

Resource: Start of shift checklist for drivers

We have also put together a daily checklist to give to drivers which we recommend they read and sign to indicate that they have taken the necessary safety precautions ahead of their journey.

[Download the resource here.](#)

Resource: how to guide – supporting volunteers as services restart

This how to guide looks at how to support your volunteers as services re-start including information on volunteer safety and training and supporting vulnerable volunteers.

[Download the resource here.](#)

Volunteers over 70

When considering how you want to manage volunteers returning, you should be aware that there is a possibility of some individuals being classed as [clinically extremely vulnerable](). This is the category which will have received a letter from their GP advising them to shield. The guidance if you are in this category is that *'you're strongly advised to stay at home as much as possible and keep visits outside to a minimum (for instance once per day).'* Please also see the specific guidance for [Northern Ireland](), [Scotland]() and [Wales](). It would not currently be advisable for anyone in this group to return to a driving role. However, they may be able to offer support in other ways, such as telephone befriending.

For volunteers who are over 70, the current UK Government guidance defines them as [clinically vulnerable](). "*This means that you are at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. You are advised to stay at home as much as possible and, if you do go out, take particular care to minimise contact with others outside your household.*" Again, please also see specific guidance for [Northern Ireland](), [Scotland]() and [Wales]().

As the guidance is not as prescriptive for this group, we have heard of some individuals feeling that they would be happy to return to volunteering despite being at a higher risk. If this is something which you are considering, we would advise extreme caution and to ensure that you complete a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. It may not be helpful to create a blanket policy about whether to allow older volunteers to return or not. Instead, it may be more appropriate to consider each volunteer individually, the role they are volunteering for, and to create a specific risk assessment for each one. Although this process may be time consuming, it may help both you as an operator and the volunteer to feel more confident.

Where possible you should first consider offering volunteering roles which can be done from home. You could also consider offering roles where maintaining social distancing is easier, such as making deliveries. Where social distancing is not possible you will need to carefully assess what control measures you can put in place and whether you are then left with an acceptable level of risk. It may be worth discussing this with your insurers to understand what cover you have in place regarding volunteers.

NCVO have produced some guidance about [insurance for volunteers]() and have also shared a useful webinar about Covid-19 and [managing risks]().

Training

All frontline staff/volunteers should be given COVID-19 training on newly implemented operational procedures and safety measures. It is also important that you communicate the risk scenarios identified to your staff/volunteers and provide them with training on how to deal with potential occurrences (e.g. contact with persons showing symptoms, lost property, queues at shops).

Regular weekly briefings are recommended, especially with frontline staff. Make sure you keep records of all communications, as well as training provided.

If more specialised knowledge is required, always seek guidance and training input from the relevant experts.

Vehicles

Vehicles are a fundamental component of the whole CT operation, and you should be very thorough at assessing potential risks. When implementing safety measures, consider the following:

- Cleanliness – sanitized wiping of all contact surfaces (seats, handles, grabs, seatbelts, wheelchair handles) between each passenger, deep cleaning after each shift

- Internal arrangements – where possible, fitting of protective screens between the passenger and driver[1], and for the passenger seating areas, removal (or cordoning out of use) of seats or spacing out of seats that are left in use

- Minimising/eliminating cash handling – this may mean using a credit/account system or adding facilities for receiving contactless card payments

- Always consider if any changes you have made will impact on accessibility levels (e.g. emergency evacuation procedures)

- Car schemes have very limited ability to meet social distancing requirements; however cars should be subject to sanitised cleaning and, where possible, passengers should be seated in the rear nearside seat. Training should be provided to volunteer drivers using their own vehicles on how to safely and effectively clean their vehicle.

Car Schemes

Whilst the guidance in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland no longer states that public transport must only be used for essential journeys, this is not the case for guidance on car sharing - **the 'essential journey' qualification is still in place for car-sharing guidance**, though not in taxi guidance.

For more information on what you need to consider when running car scheme journeys, take a look at our more detailed guidance for community car schemes below.

Download our community car scheme guidance.

Passengers

It is imperative that operations are planned and delivered with the safety of passengers in mind. This means following strict social distancing and hygiene protocols. Here's our advice on keeping passengers safe when resuming services:

- Regularly communicate with passengers by informing them of your organisation's newly implemented measures – this includes the requirements that they must meet in order to be carried and that the service will be declined if a person (or anyone else in their household) is showing symptoms

- Taking account of government advice, make clear which kinds of journey are deemed allowable or essential and only agree to provide these services – this may vary depending upon the vehicle used and which part of the UK you are operating in. For example, a long journey in a car involves proportionately

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[1] Driver screens are intended to create a barrier against directly expelled droplets from coughs and sneezes or face to face conversation. They are not intended to encapsulate the driver or prevent all air flow.

greater risk (to driver and passenger) of infection than a shorter journey in a minibus. But it will be reasonable (provided you have put in place the preventative hygiene measures identified above) to undertake the car journey where, for example, this is to facilitate a health appointment because the health risks from missing the appointment are likely to be greater than the minimal risk that arises from making the journey. Both driver and passenger should understand the risk and be making that journey on a voluntary basis.

- If you're obliged (section 22 services or instructions from your commissioner) or have decided to insist on passengers covering their faces while travelling, it is a good idea to have a stock of these on the vehicle

- Where passengers require assistance, ensure that you understand what this will involve and that drivers agree to provide it. Alternatively, check if the passenger can be accompanied by another member of the household to provide any physical assistance

- For passengers who need a high degree of physical assistance, use of a wheelchair to get them into and off the vehicle may be safer, as the person is facing away from the driver/assistant and physical contact is limited. This may need to be approached sensitively with the passenger.

Resource: Information for passengers

We have put together information for passengers which we recommend they read to show they understand your responsibilities, and their responsibilities, on board a service.

Download the resource here.

The latest guidance from the UK and devolved governments

In recent weeks, the UK Government has updated its coronavirus guidance to ease certain aspects of the lock-down. The devolved Governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have also made changes to their lock-down guidance, which members in those nations should follow. You can always find the most relevant and up to date guidance in the following places:

England

Staying alert and safe (social distancing): https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing-after-4-july

Safer Travel Guidance for Operators: including guidance on conducting risk assessments: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators

Safer Travel Guidance for Passengers: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers

Confederation of Passenger Transport – has a range of guidance material on risk assessments and safe operation of bus services: http://www.cpt-uk.org/

DVLA – licence renewals: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/dvla-coronavirus-covid-19-update#renewing-a-driving-licence

Face coverings: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/592/contents/made

<u>Northern Ireland</u>

Vehicles & Driver Licensing: https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-and-motoring

General Updates on NI Measures: https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/news/executive-daily-update-initiatives-deal-coronavirus-12-june-2020

General Travel Advice: https://www.translink.co.uk/covid19update

<u>Wales</u>

General Travel Advice for Passengers: https://tfwrail.wales/covid-19 and https://gov.wales/travelling-safely-coronavirus-guidance-public

Guidance for Transport Operators: https://gov.wales/restarting-public-transport-guidance-operators)

<u>Scotland</u>

Guidance for Transport Operators: https://www.transport.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/transport-transition-plan/guidance-for-transport-operators/#

Advice on How to Travel Safely: https://www.transport.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/transport-transition-plan/advice-on-how-to-travel-safely/

Further information

You can find CTA's main coronavirus guidance page at https://ctauk.org/covid19-guidance/ and if you have any further questions you can contact the CTA Advice Service.

CTA Advice Service: The CTA team are currently working remotely, so to ensure you speak to the right person first time, please email advice@ctauk.org to receive a call back for advice and support. Our advice service operates 10-4pm Monday-Friday.

Advice Service Drop-in: due to the changing nature of the situation, our advice team will be holding a weekly online drop-in where members can join a video call to talk to the team and each other about the latest guidance and ask any questions. You can find a recap of the latest session, along with details of our next call on our main guidance page.