

Who are the Community Transport Association?

The Community Transport Association (CTA) are a national charity supporting, not-for-profit organisations, community groups and charities across the UK to provide community transport solutions. CTA has a large presence in Northern Ireland, servicing approximately 90 CTA members. Our mission is accessible, inclusive, and sustainable transport for all.

What is Community Transport?

In Northern Ireland, it consists of organisations that are grant-funded by the Department for Infrastructure, as well as small charities, schools and churches which are not funded, but also deliver transport for those excluded from conventional transport networks.

It offers modal shift from private cars to shared transport through demand-responsive services, such as dial-a-lift and volunteer social car schemes. These services target those most likely to be underserved or excluded by mainstream transport. The majority of Community Transport vehicles are wheelchair accessible, and drivers are professionally trained to assist passengers with health or mobility issues.

The sector is dealing with a lot of big challenges, including an increase in demand for services as the population ages, a massive increase in demand for health-related journeys, inflationary price rises including exponential rises in fuel which is squeezing already tight budgets and is now making it a challenge to recruit and retain volunteers.

Accessibility, inclusion, and sustainability are at the heart of Community Transport. Our members are practical and passionate problem solvers who deliver services which fight poverty and inequality; tackle social isolation and loneliness and reduce carbon emissions.

As we recover from COVID-19, Community Transport is more important than ever!

What can you do?

Support Sustainable and Multi-Year Funding

- Support fair and adequate funding for the Community Transport sector in Northern Ireland as the needs for the services which community transport provide will continue to grow as our population ages. 35% of the population live in a rural areas, so for the rural population, transport is key. If there is no access to suitable and accessible transport, this impacts the quality of an individual's life increasing the likelihood of suffering loneliness, developing a mental health condition, and experiencing multiple morbidities when unable to access basic services for example getting to a shop or a GP appointment.
- Provide multi-departmental funding to reflect community transports contribution to outcomes across a wide range of departments, community transport doesn't just support the needs of the DFI but also support responsibilities in the areas of DoH, DfC, DoE and DAERA. Community transport providers want to work with these departments as a helpful and collaborative partner to deliver for the needs of the people and communities across NI.

Champion and Invest in Transport to Health and Social Care

- Ensure that community transport is included and integrated into planning and delivery of health services. Transport to health & social care is a major focus for community transport. Many operators support older people, disabled people, and those with chronic conditions to access GPs, hospitals, dentists and pharmacies but are not fully funded to deliver all of these services. During the pandemic, they have gone above and beyond to help vulnerable people to get shopping, tested, vaccinated, and boosted.
- Community Transport wants to be a helpful partner in the transformation of the Health and Social Care services across NI but to be able to do that, we need to ensure we are being included and integrated into the planning and delivery of health services. Community Transport has demonstrated this capability and capacity during Covid-19 by stepping in to support and cover the reduction in NI Non-Emergency Ambulance Service capacity as a result emergency demand. When services are cut and transport needs have to be met it is community transport which is looked upon to be the safety net. To allow us to continue to do this and to grow there needs to be adequate funding put in place to be able to deliver these services effectively so no one gets left behind.

Find out more:

Find out more about Community Transport, or connect with your local provider, by visiting www.ctauk.org, following us @CTAUK1 or contacting Noeleen Lynch, our Director for Northern Ireland via noeleen@ctauk.org.

Address Poverty and Prevent Loneliness

- Community Transport, whether located within urban or rural settings is a key enabler in terms of addressing poverty, social exclusion, and vulnerability. Each and every day it engages with the most marginalised and vulnerable within our communities right across Northern Ireland. Issues of 'Transport Poverty' and 'Poor Accessibility' contribute immensely to the lived experience of the many individuals and communities who find themselves left behind or trapped. Appropriate, accessible, and affordable transport is vital to helping these individuals and communities to live well, gain agency and independence and to access the many interventions and services which are vital in supporting individual needs.

Collaborate with Community Transport to Deliver Net Zero

- Elected representatives and policy makers must recognise Community Transport as a key partner in delivering their carbon reduction targets. The sector is already leading the way to reduce carbon by reducing private car use through shared transport services and reducing carbon emissions through zero-emissions vehicles which supports the low carbon and active travel agenda as a shared mobility mode. However, there is a lot more the sector can do if investment is made for it to be achieved.
- Support the extension of permit legislation to enable community transport operators to run scheduled minibuss services for the general public in areas where no public bus services exist and would not be viable.
- Ensure that green funding and infrastructure is equally available to the community transport sector and appropriate for accessible vehicles operating in rural areas with the infrastructure to match it. Commercial charging ports will not be as readily available in rural areas but that does not negate the need for them. If MLA's are serious about reducing carbon emissions investment in this infrastructure is needed now.

What Next?

Shape your manifesto

Shape your local election manifesto to ensure your party is committed to working with Community Transport and giving the sector the support, it needs - and deserves.

Social media Pledge:

Show your support for Community Transport by sharing our #CTpledge on social media:

I believe in sustainable and accessible transport for all. That's why I'm pledging to support #CommunityTransport to help #Fermanagh #ruralcommunities #stayconnected, tackle inequality and deliver #reducedcarbonemissions if elected on 5th May. @CTAUK1's #CTpledge #AE22

I am asking my local MLAs elected on May 5th to support #CommunityTransport to help #fermanaghcommunitytransport #ruralcommunities #stayconnected, tackle inequality and deliver #reducedcarbonemissions. Will you support Community Transport and help unlock its full potential? @CTAUK1's #CTpledge #AE22