Setting Up Your Own Project

Introduction

The purpose of the tackling loneliness campaign is to reduce people's feelings of isolation and loneliness – connecting people together and making valuable services accessible to them, through the provision of community transport. Usually, when people think of Community Transport (CT), they assume it's only for the elderly and disabled. However, CT caters to a wider range of people.

The Tackling Loneliness project aims to improve social inclusion and mobility for people who may be isolated or disadvantaged in their access to transport. There are in fact many community groups that CT as a lifeline— not just for the social value, but to help them get to essential medical appointments, and visit friends. CT plugs in the gap left by commercial transport that is inaccessible to millions of people across the UK.

The Tackling Loneliness project was funded by the Department for Transport and their research revealed that the following groups are disproportionately affected by loneliness –

- Older people
- Young people (16-24)
- People with long-term health conditions
- BAME communities
- LGBTQ+ people
- Disabled people
- Carers

Since May 2022, CTA has supported 18 pilots through the Tackling Loneliness through CT project to develop an evidence base for how transport policies can reduce the number of people feeling lonely in communities across England. The learning from the project could also help CT operators across the UK to unlock further resources from funders in the future to continue to help tackle loneliness.

We've been amazed by the profound stories from passengers and volunteers who have benefited from the Tackling Loneliness campaign. Beneficiaries have shared stories of how the scheme has helped reduce social isolation, promote independence, and improve access to services and activities.

Here are strategies that CTA deployed to support the funded pilots and ensure a successful outcome for the project.

Supporting Organisations:

- CTA provided practical organisational development and project support to the operators.
- The Tackling Loneliness Coordinator and Administrator created templates for Pilots to record activities and share data collected on the field.
- We also shared templates for project spending and case studies, as well as some basic outputs.
- We organised regular 1-2-1 meetings with pilots to get project updates, and challenges and discuss potential solutions.
- Introduce themes that help Organisations look at a wider picture and reflect on the impact of their service on their beneficiaries.

Organising a Peer Network

CTA brought the pilot project operators together on a regular basis to share updates and we identified key areas of training for further workshop sessions –

- Funding bid application and fundraising
- Volunteer recruitment and retention
- Data collection and analysis
- Marketing and social media training
- Safeguarding
- Action Learning – they were given specific scenarios to discuss in smaller groups which provided the opportunity for them to brainstorm and come up with creative solutions.
- Sustainability – an opportunity for them to discuss ways to continue their pilot projects once CTA had stepped back at the end of the grant funding period.

These sessions were a great opportunity for everyone to share ideas, challenges and lessons learnt.

Knowledge Building Sessions

An opportunity for CTA and the pilot project operators to contribute towards resources and a training module on the CTA website, that would sit alongside a project evaluation report to advise and influence the wider community transport network throughout the UK on tackling loneliness through community transport.

As part of this, the operators completed baseline and follow-up surveys with their beneficiaries to establish the impact and benefit of their service on individuals' feelings of loneliness and isolation – the results were then analysed. The operators also answered specific questions about how they would identify and support those at risk of isolation and loneliness. We collated all the responses to produce a resource document to highlight some of these things and provide practical suggestions for supporting community transport service users.

Regardless of which route you chose to go down, as a community transport provider, **you will need to ensure that you have the relevant permits, licenses, and policies in place** – for advice and support, contact our advice team at advice@ctauk.org.

Whether you are a government institution, a charity organisation or an individual, the strategies below can serve as a guide for setting up your own Tackling Loneliness Project.

Before setting up a project, ask these crucial questions first.

- What are your objectives?
- How do you plan to achieve them?
- Which community groups are you realistically able to support?

What to Consider when setting up your project

- **Project aims** – what do you want your project to achieve?

  o You may want to extend your reach to groups at risk of loneliness whom you don't currently support (as listed above)

  o You may want to expand your services to deepen the impact on your existing service users by running more activities and trips or by providing a befriending service.

  o You may want to create volunteering opportunities by recruiting people at risk of social isolation and loneliness demonstrating the value of CT in supporting volunteers as well as passengers.

- **Project length** – It is important to allow yourself time to prepare, set everything up and get organised so that you can hit the ground running. The project start date should ideally be after this period.

- **Collaboration** - would you be able to provide a bigger impact by collaborating with other CT providers and/or medical and social support services? How will you work together, what expectations, and level of involvement from each party?

- **Number of new or existing beneficiaries that you want to identify and support** – be realistic about this, better to underestimate and excel than over-estimate and overstretch yourselves.

- **Data collection** – during the project set-up, it is vital that you take the time to think about how you want to put your data monitoring form together – what sort of statistics and evaluation you want to be able to capture. If for example, you use an Excel spreadsheet

make sure the headings are clear and can't be misinterpreted – you want the data you collect to be correct and consistent throughout.

What data do you want to collect – make sure this complies with GDPR. If personal data is going into the public domain or is going to be shared, make sure you have the relevant permissions from the people you are reporting on.

To avoid any issues, allocate a reference number to each person to use instead of their name – you can do this by creating an internal 'register' to keep track of who's who. When recording trip data – avoid using the person's whole address and just put the postcode.

Here are some examples of the data you might want to collect on individuals:

- Community Group – if you provide a service to different groups of people you may want to list them separately so that you can measure the impact on each one.

- Date of activity or trip – make sure that the same date format is used on every line or analysing your data can be tricky.

- Age – you can do individual ages, age brackets or both. Age brackets are easier to analyse

- Gender

- Ethnicity

- Do they have a long-term health condition or disability – you may want to create a dropdown list and then have a separate freehand column to note if someone has multiple/other issues.

- Type of trip or activity – again a dropdown list is helpful. Make them fairly general, for example health and medical, day trip/excursion, support/visit family and friends, shopping, social activity/club.

- Accumulated Frequency – if a beneficiary does the same trip 10 times in one reporting period, you won't want to list them 10 times!

- Mileage – make it clear if you want the number of miles shown to be just from pick up to destination or whether you want it to show the complete round trip. If it's appropriate for the type of service(s) you provide have two columns, one for each. If you want to calculate the total mileage based upon the accumulated frequency, then you can add an additional column with a formula to automatically work this out for you.

- Total journey time and (or) trip/activity time – if you want to analyse generally how much time people spent being transported and/or how much time the whole trip or activity took then you can record these as well. To avoid too many different timings, provide a selection to choose from in a dropdown ie <1hr, 1-2hrs, >3hrs

You may also want to record some more general data, for example how many trips in total there were per reporting period, how many people were on the bus for each trip, that kind of thing.

There may be other things unique to your service that you want to record too which is why plenty of pre-project planning is so important – you don't want to overlook anything that may be important.

- **Milestones** – there may be specific stages, events or development that you want to work towards and report against, for example appointing 3 volunteer drivers within the first 3 months or provide 2 case studies per reporting period

- **Project outcomes** – look at what outcomes you want from the project and then report against them each reporting period to make sure that you keep focussed and stay on track.

- **Admin time** – collecting data, doing surveys, reporting on milestones and outcomes, as well as things like budgeting/reporting spend, collecting case studies etc are all time consuming. It is vital that you budget for enough office/admin time to do this. If you need to appoint someone to take care of this, build it into your funding bid – if you don't ask, you don't get!

- **Marketing and social media** – if you don't have a marketing budget, social media is a great way to advertise your project to get more people to use your services. You can also use quotes and photographs from clients (with permission). Hashtags like #tacklingloneliness or #communitymatters can make your posts gain more visibility on social media.

Much of the information above has been inspired by the lessons we've learnt in our Tackling Loneliness through Community Transport Project. If you are considering starting a project of this nature and would like to reach out for some advice, please feel free to contact us via the CTA Website.