



CTA Manifesto 2024

Discussion Paper #2

**Improving Access to Health and
Social Care**

February 2024

www.ctauk.org

Improving Access to Health and Social Care

National Challenges

Access to transport is fundamental to a happy, healthy life and a happy, connected community. It is an essential enabler of social interaction and mobility, which tackles exclusion, isolation and loneliness, as well as access to health and social care facilities and services, especially for older people and disabled people or low-income and rural households.

Community Transport helps people to live well for longer. It contributes to happier, healthier and more independent lives for [people living in their own homes and communities](#). It delivers a higher quality of life and better outcomes for individuals and their families. It helps people of all ages to stay active and connected, boosting their physical and mental health and wellbeing. 93% of passengers said participating in a Community Transport project [reduced their feelings of isolation and loneliness](#).

Moreover, **Community Transport also saves large amounts of taxpayers' money through prevention and early intervention.** Through social prescribing or community referral and through non-emergency patient transport, it offers a [cost-effective, community-based alternative](#) to more costly medical interventions and to the ad hoc use of expensive taxis for supporting NHS patients.

Around [one in four Community Transport operators are volunteer or community car schemes delivering non-emergency patient transport](#) to support people to get to GP surgeries, hospitals, hospices, vaccination centres and care homes. Accessible 'door-to-door' or 'door-through-door' services by Community Transport make thousands of health and social care appointments possible every year and save millions of pounds through preventing missed appointments, delayed discharges and longer waiting lists.

Yet there is a chronic lack of investment in these services from either the NHS or the public sector as a whole. With an [ageing population](#), the need for non-emergency patient transport is only increasing, with much of our sector unable to meet higher levels of demand. **Existing statutory ambulance services are unable to offer the capacity required**, underlining the need for closer partnership working with Community Transport.

There is also a lack of clear referral pathways, joined-up patient information and secure revenue funding, which is leading to short notice service withdrawal; fragmentation and inequality of provision; expensive fares for patients travelling often/over long distances; negative experiences when requesting/booking journeys; [missed appointments](#); and deterioration of conditions leading to increased clinical need.

Each missed appointment costs an average of £30, putting the total cost to the NHS in England alone at [more than £216m](#) on top of the disruption for staff and fellow patients.

There is a need for a truly integrated and seamless approach to non-emergency patient transport, which puts the needs of communities and patients at the heart of services and maximise the use of assets and resources. This should be backed by long-term planning, stable public funding and

genuine partnership working across all statutory and non-statutory providers. It should be supported by a network of Transport Coordinators in the NHS who support operators engaging with and navigating the organisation; [build collaborations with the community and voluntary sector](#); work with clinicians and administrators to improve signposting to services and support; and work with patients to ensure everyone has affordable, fair and sustainable access to NHS sites.

Moreover, **Community Transport has an essential role to play in tackling delayed hospital discharges**. The significant number of [people stuck waiting for discharge](#) represents a huge additional spend for the NHS, exacerbating pressures on the services and leading to poorer outcomes for individuals, including the deterioration of physical and mental health, loss of mobility, and increased likelihood of mortality.

Existing ineffective hospital discharge spend needs to be diverted to successful community-powered hospital discharge services, which provide an invaluable referral pathway and support to enable patients to get home from the hospital. **Projects bring together a network of third-sector partners that wraps around the patient**, providing a 'step down' support beyond transport that can encompass occupational health, installing supports and more, enabling a safe and smooth reintegration into life at home.

Community Solutions

We're calling on the next UK Government to work with the NHS and social care providers to:

- ✓ **Deliver a more joined-up, strategic approach to non-emergency patient transport and hospital discharge**, which is backed by long-term planning, genuine partnership working and statutory public funding for the Community Transport sector.
- ✓ **Create Transport Coordinator roles in the NHS to work with patients, communities, operators and partners to remove transport barriers** and ensure everyone has affordable, fair and sustainable access to NHS services and sites.
- ✓ **Expand social prescribing within Community Transport** to tackle exclusion, isolation and loneliness and improve mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Join the Campaign for Change

Make Your Voice Heard

Visit www.ctauk.org/manifesto2024 to learn more about how you can be part of our campaign for change.

Show Your Support

Spread the word and show your support for our Manifesto by sharing it on social media. Remember to tag us [@CTAUK1](https://twitter.com/CTAUK1) on X (formerly Twitter) and use the hashtag [#CommunitySolutions](https://twitter.com/CommunitySolutions).

Get In Touch

If you'd like to talk or collaborate, email us at policy@ctauk.org to arrange a conversation with one of our team about how we can work together.

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