



Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations
Cymdeithas Mudiadau Gwirfoddol Powys

PAVO Community Transport Report - September 2026

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1. Introduction and Context

- **Purpose of the report**

This report provides a comprehensive overview of Community Transport (CT) provision in Powys. Its purpose is to inform commissioning, funding, and strategic planning by evidencing the current scope of services, the populations served, delivery capacity, pressures and challenges, and the impact achieved during 2024–25.

The report also explores how Community Transport aligns with wider transport provision, community insight, and existing data collection processes, identifying opportunities to improve integration, reduce duplication, and support sustainable service delivery across Powys.

- **Definition and role of Community Transport in Powys**

Community Transport (CT) meets the transport needs of communities where these needs are not or cannot be adequately met by public and/or commercial transport.

CT activity can range from providing accessible door to door transport for people with mobility problems, to helping the social inclusion of a wide range of people who otherwise would not be able to participate in the normal activities of everyday life, accessing social, education and training opportunities and employment. In rural areas CT can lessen the effects of geographical isolation by giving better access to local and regional centres.

CT is an essential part of an integrated transport system feeding into and out from the main public transport corridors and interchanges. In Powys there are many successful CT schemes in operation. The majority have developed to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups especially older and disabled people.

Community transport isn't just a separate "backup" service — it's considered an **integral part of the wider transport system in Powys**.

2. Overview of Community Transport Provision

Dial-a-Ride Schemes

These schemes are community based and are run by voluntary organisations. They own their own vehicles, either minibuses or 'people carriers', and the majority of these vehicles are accessible to people using wheelchairs or having difficulties using steps. On average they provide a service covering a 10-mile radius from their base town.

These schemes are membership based. In the majority of schemes membership is restricted to people in the scheme area who through old age, disability or a mental or physical condition find it difficult to use existing means of transport. Newer schemes extend eligibility to anyone who has a transport need. There is an annual membership fee.

Members book journeys in advance and fares are charged at a rate which varies according to distance travelled. The service will take the member from door to door. The schemes use both paid staff and volunteers to provide the service and all drivers are specially trained.

Community Car Schemes

The schemes recruit volunteer drivers who use their own car to provide door-to-door transport. The schemes are open to people who do not have reasonable access to other forms of transport. In Powys the priority for transport is for health appointments, but also includes journeys that meet every day needs.

The drivers are paid expenses to cover the mileage they incur up to 45p per mile. Users are asked to meet some or all of the costs, but additional funding is needed to meet the full costs of operating the service.

Taxi Card Schemes

All the schemes operate in a similar way; the Voluntary Group raises funds from a variety of sources and uses this money to subsidise taxi journeys made by its members. Members are issued with tokens of 50p each up to a total of £50 or £100 for those living in remote areas. These tokens can then be used for half of the cost of a taxi journey, e.g. a journey normally costing £2 would cost only £1 and 50 of these journeys could be made throughout a year.

Taxi firms are able to claim back the value of the tokens from the Voluntary Group and those firms wishing to participate in the scheme have to enter into an agreement with the Voluntary Group.

In the majority of schemes membership is restricted to those people who are elderly, disabled or suffer from a mental or physical condition which makes accessing normal forms of transport difficult.

Community Buses (Section 22)

In Powys, Section 22 buses refer to community transport schemes operated under the Transport Act 1985, which allow community groups to provide local bus services for the public. These are distinct from commercial or council-contracted routes and are often used to address rural isolation. To access these services, you must generally contact the specific community transport scheme in your area directly to register as a member.

Community Transport Schemes in Powys 2026			
Name of Organisation	Service Offered	Geographical area covered	Legal Structure
Brecon & District Dial A Ride (including Crickhowell Dial A Ride)	Dial a Ride	Brecon, Crickhowell, Talgarth, Sennybridge, and their surrounding villages	Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Community Transport Schemes in Powys 2026			
Builth Community Support	Community Car	Builth Wells, Llanwrtyd, Erwood, Newbridge, Llandewi'r Cwm, and other nearby locations such as Cilmerly, Aberedw, and Llanelwedd.	Charitable Company
CAMAD (Community Action Machynleth and District)	Community Car	Machynlleth, Corris, Dinas Mawddwy, Llanbrynmair, areas of Ceredigion	Registered charity
Crickhowell Volunteer Bureau	Community Car	Crickhowell, Llanbedr, Llangynidr, Bwlch, Llangattock Glangrwyney and Gilwern.	Unincorporated association with registered charity status
Hay on Wye Dial A Ride:	Dial A Ride	Hay, Boughrood, Bredwardine, Brilley, Brobury, Bronllys, Clifford, Clyro, Cusop, Dorstone, Erwood, Felindre, Fforddlas, Ffynnongynydd, Glasbury, Glascwm, Letton, Llanigon, Llowes, Moccas, Monnington, Painscastle, Rhosgoch, Talgarth, Three Cocks, Whitney on Wye, Willersley and Winforton. You can still join if you live within a 9 mile radius of Hay-on-Wye.	Charitable Company
Knighton Area Community Transport Service*	Community Car	Knighton and Area	Unincorporated association, looking at registration as charitable incorporated organisation
Llanidloes Community Transport	Community Car / Dial a Ride	10 mile radius of Llanidloes	Unincorporated association

Community Transport Schemes in Powys 2026			
Llanwrtyd Wells Community Transport	Community Car / Dial a Ride	Abergwesyn, Beulah, Cefn Gorwydd, Cilmeri, Garth, Llandrindod Wells, Llangammarch Wells, Llanwrtyd Wells, Tirabad, and other small communities in the area.	Limited company
Newtown and District Dial A ride	Dial A Ride	15 mile radius of Newtown	Unincorporated association with registered charity status
Pontheadren (formerly North Montgomeryshire Volunteer Bureau)	Community Car	835 Square miles of Montgomeryshire	Charitable Incorporated Association
Oswestry Community Action	Community Car / Dial A Ride	10 mile radius of Oswestry	Charitable Company
Presteigne Community Support	Community Car	Presteigne and Norton as well as their surrounding rural hamlets and villages	Unincorporated association with registered charity status
The Arches Rhayader and District Community Support	Community Car / Dial a Ride	LD6 area	Charitable Company
Welshpool Taxi Card Scheme	Taxi Card Scheme	10 mile radius	Unincorporated association with registered charity status
Ystradgynlais Community Car Scheme	Community Car	10 mile radius	Unincorporated association with registered charity status

*previously CT services were provided by Knighton and District Community Support

A note about legal structures:

The majority of schemes have registered charity status - this is not a legal structure in its own right, but sits alongside the structure, with the exception of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation. A Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) is a corporate legal structure designed specifically for charities in England and Wales providing limited liability without registering with Companies House. CIO's are regulated by the Charity Commission.

Having registered charity status allows organisations to apply for charitable funding from a variety of sources. They are regulated by the Charity Commission and are subject to reporting requirements on an annual basis.

Incorporation with Companies House provides limited liability protection for trustees, and a separate legal identity for the organisation that enables simpler entry into contracts (e.g. leasing property, employing staff etc). Limited companies are subject to reporting requirements with Companies House on an annual basis.

An organisation that is a limited company with registered charity status has to submit returns to both Charity Commission and Companies House, as they are registered with both regulators.

3. Overview of Needs

- What does this tell us about coverage, consistency, and gaps across Powys?
- Where is CT critical due to limited or no public transport?

Community Transport Clients

Clients are predominantly over the age of 60, or are disabled (this can be of any age). Clients are usually unable to access any other form of transport, (including public transport), and will not have access to a local support network or family members where they live who are able to provide transport.

Recent times have seen a change in demographic wishing to access services, with an increase in younger people and those with mental health or social anxiety requiring access to services. There is also a need for community transport outside of the regular operating hours of 9 till 5, including evenings and weekends.

Is current capacity sufficient to meet demand?

This is mixed across the board. Some are not currently advertising their services, because they cannot meet the demand they currently have. Some organisations have capacity, as the levels of demand pre-Covid have not materialised following the end of the pandemic. Some

organisations are at capacity as they have insufficient levels of volunteer drivers. Funding levels are also critical in ensuring services can be delivered.

Pressures, Challenges, and Responses

- Operational and financial pressures

Core funding is scarce, and this is what is required to enable CT schemes to continue to deliver what they do in a time of rising costs. Project funding is available but that often means reinventing the scheme as a new project, which is time consuming and capacity hungry in terms of developing, writing and submitting applications.

Rising fuel costs are and will impact on all community transport schemes. The Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) for volunteers was at 45p per mile¹ up until recently, and had not seen an increase in 12 years. Following this having been escalated nationally to Government by the Community Transport Association, and David Chadwick MP for Brecon and Radnorshire recently highlighting this:

“Those services are under real pressure. They are often volunteer-led, operating on tight budgets and now facing rising fuel costs that they struggle to absorb.” Mr Chadwick later went on to say: *“.... services are still being asked to do more with less, and the consequences are stark. If community transport begins to struggle, people do not just lose a lift; they lose access to their community, their support networks and, in many cases, their independence and ability to get to healthcare appointments.”*

The AMAP rate was increased in June 2026 and applied retrospectively to 6th April 2026.

The CT schemes receive around £1600 each on an annual basis from Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB) through their service level agreement with PAVO for delivery of non-emergency patient transport.

The CT schemes also receive a small amount of annual funding from Powys County Council, which they are monitored on. The onus therefore is for schemes to generate the vast majority of income to cover their running costs. This is done through membership fees, charging clients for services, and other fundraising mechanisms.

Supporting WAST with transportation of patients

Providing transport for Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust can generate an income for community transport schemes. However, schemes have reported ongoing operational challenges, particularly relating to requests being made at very short notice, often less than 24hrs. This makes it very difficult to find a volunteer driver, resulting in occasions where support for patients for patients cannot be provided.

PAVO's Community Connector Service regularly receives referrals linked to these issues and subsequently signposts individuals to the relevant local community transport scheme. Examples of referrals received:

Case Study 1:

"M phoned for help with transport following NEPT cancellation.

M was due in Stafford Hospital today to meet with his MND coordinator at 1.30pm.

At 1.15pm yesterday, NEPT rang to cancel - they did not give M a reason but when he booked 3 weeks ago he said they did warn him they might cancel the day before. He explained to them that he is not mobile so unable to use other methods of transport.

After they cancelled he contacted his MND coordinator who he says was not happy with the situation and contacted NEPT, she informed M that they may phone him to offer transport following her call but he has heard nothing yet.

M has an appointment in Telford next Wednesday but is concerned that NEPT will cancel transport again so rang to ask for other numbers to put something in place in case there is a cancellation.

Signposted M to North Montgomeryshire Volunteer Bureau for Community Transport."

Case Study 2:

"I had feedback from P and their mother regarding NEPT. At the beginning of January, P shared that the hospital kept rearranging the appointments and when PLWC contacted NEPT, they were advised if they cancelled again, they would not offer transport.

On speaking with the mother of P this week, she shared that P was late for appointments due to the NEPT. I am not sure of the details why they (NEPT) were late. Going forward, P and mother are concerned that if they use NEPT, P will be late for treatment and miss appointments.

P travels from Llanidloes to Shrewsbury.

With this case, the mother lives in Shrewsbury and after first treatment, P stayed with her, as treatment was 8 hours, finishing 7.30/8pm. Due to P staying at mothers, NEPT cannot transport home the next day.

Mother had been in contact with Macmillan SaTH, who have a Voluntary Transport that can possibly take home, but cannot collect."

PAVO escalated these concerns to PTHB to outline the significant impact these last minute cancellations are having on service users, both in terms of anxiety and disruption, and the added pressure this is placing on family, unpaid carers, community transport and third sector providers who are often asked to step in at very short notice.

PTHB Head of Commissioning has responded to these concerns and raised them with Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust. WAST, who provide non-emergency patient transport services, have acknowledged they are experiencing significant challenges, including: increased complexity of patient needs, longer journey requests which reduces capacity and the frequent journey cancellations for operational appointments due to these and other challenges.

PTHB also informed PAVO that last minute cancellation of patient transport has been reported as a common issue across all health boards. WAST are now giving a caveat when transport is being booked by informing patients that transport cannot be guaranteed and may be cancelled. They are hoping this will enable the patient to plan alternative provision as a back-up just in case.

Workforce and volunteer challenges

Volunteer recruitment is a key challenge for nearly all community schemes, and is a nationwide issue, not purely for transport. The pandemic had an enormous impact on volunteer recruitment. Many volunteers were in the 'at risk' age group, and following intensive periods of activity transporting clients to vaccination appointments, were tired and burned out. Volunteers who had been furloughed, returned to their day jobs, and were no longer able to assist. Due to the cost of living crisis, people, especially women are working longer. Families are looking after grandchildren, as child care is so expensive, so there is less free time available for volunteering. Fewer individuals are retiring earlier.

Administration requirements of schemes and monitoring are heavy, and capacity intense. Many bookings are made by phone, requiring phone lines to be open at regular times. This is important as it is the preferred choice of customers, who are predominantly elderly and lack confidence to use other systems. Powys is a deeply rural areas and many people experience poor digital connectivity and lack of mobile phone coverage.

Solutions, adaptations, and areas of good practice

Some CT organisations are actively looking at adapting governing documents to widen their remit and be more inclusive so that services can be expanded in terms of clients who wish to access services, and also widening the geographical area that they can deliver within.

4. Consolidated Audit Data (2024–25)

Powys County Council requests audit data from each scheme operating in Powys. It is important to note that the authority, whilst there is a budget for supporting community transport they are not the major funder for the schemes (typically less than 10% of the running costs) with most having to make up the shortfall through various fundraising strategies which vary between schemes, in addition to the provision of contracted and passenger paid for journeys.

The audit data is provided over six monthly periods and there is a significant amount of detail requested. Not all schemes have completed the audit for 2024-25. There are a total of 15 schemes represented on the consolidated audit responses sheet provided to PAVO by Powys

County Council, however 5 schemes have not submitted a return at all, and a number of those that have, did not submit complete data sets. As a result, the data presented below significantly under-reports to a level of almost 50% for some data sets. The contribution of community transport to public travel around Powys is considerably more than what has been presented.

Despite the shortfalls in reporting, the significance of the sector in both travel provision and social return on investment is considerable. A staggering 29,305 journeys were undertaken by 9 schemes. The volunteer time reported would be worth £209,474 should that be paid at the national minimum wage for the reporting period, this would not include on costs such as NI and pension so its value is more than this. A rough calculation of cost avoidance for trips to clinic appointments and primary care which might well otherwise have become missed appointments amounts to £932,160 for secondary care appointments and £218,250 for primary care appointments. If clients had been unable to attend day centres the cost avoidance would be between £9,600 and £48,000 depending on the cost of provision. People being unable to access essential facilities and preventative services such as education, employment and shopping would lead to spiralling costs in terms of welfare and social care provision as needs increase. (Note: All NEPT transport provision was ignored for the cost avoidance calculations since this is an NHS contracted and paid for service. Cost avoidance figures used in the calculations were derived from the Kent Academic Repository – Unit Costs of Health & Social Care Manual 2024).

5. Impact and Outcomes

What difference does CT make to people's lives and communities? (Case studies at end of report.)

Community transport services in Powys provide low cost, reliable door to door assistance for clients to access essential services. However, the value of community transport extends far beyond simply providing journeys

Given the rural nature of Powys, drivers are often among the only regular points of contact some individuals may have. Through regular interaction, drivers develop trusted relationships with clients and are frequently able to recognise when someone may be struggling, unwell, or in need of additional support. As a result, a community transport organisation plays an important role not only in transport provision, but also in supporting the wider health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.

Community transport staff and volunteers regularly provide reassurance, informal welfare checks, and signposting to wider support services, including advice relating to benefits, bills, and other practical needs. For many individuals, CT services represent a vital lifeline that enables continued access to healthcare, services, and community life.

There is also a significant social benefit. Community transport enables people to attend social activities, maintain connections with others and reduce social isolations and loneliness. These

trusted services help individuals feel safe and supported, while also prompting independence by reducing reliance on family members, neighbours and friends for transport journeys.

6. Alignment with strategic priorities

Community transport plays a vital role in supporting the strategic priorities across Powys, aligning closely with both Powys County Council's '*Stronger, Fairer, Greener* Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan (2023-2027) and the joint *Healthy Caring Powys* priorities.

Community Transport contributes to these priorities in several key ways:

- Supporting sustainability goals by reducing carbon emissions through shared journeys and the increasing use of hybrid and electric vehicles.
- Enabling residents to access local shops and services, helping to retain spending within local communities and support the local economy.
- Improving access to health and care services, supporting earlier intervention, prevention, and reduced missed appointments.
- Promoting wellbeing and independence by helping residents to “start well, live well, and age well” within their own communities.
- Reducing loneliness and social isolation by enabling people to remain socially connected and active.
- Supporting equality of access for individuals living in rural communities or experiencing transport barriers due to health, disability or age.

7. Community Transport in the Wider Transport System

After an extensive programme of engagement and consultation, in autumn 2025, Powys County Council made a substantial financial commitment and updated local bus schedules and routes. These changes reflect feedback from residents and are designed to create a transport network that is more effective, accessible, and environmentally responsible.

The enhanced network supports the Sustainable Powys goal of linking communities and settlements to their key towns within a one-hour journey. It also improves longer-distance travel across the county and provides better connections to larger towns and cities beyond Powys, enabling residents to access health care, education, and other essential services not available locally.

<https://www.haveyoursaypowys.wales/powys-local-bus-network-consultation>

Powys also benefits from **regional bus services (like TrawsCymru)** which provide longer-distance links across Wales, replacing some older route numbers with new ones for improved regional coordination.

Where does CT complement or substitute public transport?

Community Transport often fills gaps where conventional public transport services are limited, unavailable, or inaccessible. This includes:

- Providing door-to-door transport for individuals who are unable to access fixed-route bus services due to mobility, health, or geographic barriers.
- Supporting access to healthcare appointments, particularly in rural areas where public transport connections are infrequent or non-existent.
- Enabling travel at times or on routes that are not commercially viable for mainstream public transport providers.
- Assisting vulnerable individuals who may require additional support, reassurance, or flexibility during journeys.
- Providing transport for social, wellbeing, and community activities, helping reduce isolation where public transport options are limited.
- In many rural communities, CT services effectively act as a substitute for public transport, ensuring residents can continue to access essential services and maintain independence.

What opportunities exist for better coordination or planning?

There are many opportunities to strengthen coordination between Community Transport, statutory services, and the wider transport network to improve efficiency and outcomes for residents. Potential areas include:

- Improved communication and joint planning between CT providers, local authorities, health services, and public transport operators.
- Better alignment of non-emergency patient transport arrangements to reduce short-notice requests and cancellations.
- Greater integration of transport information and referral pathways, enabling professionals and residents to more easily identify suitable transport options.
- Collaborative route planning and shared use of vehicles where appropriate, helping maximise capacity and reduce duplication.
- Increased investment in sustainable and accessible transport solutions, including hybrid and electric vehicles.
- Development of longer-term funding and strategic planning to support the sustainability and resilience of CT services.

8. Data, Evidence, and Intelligence

Data on gaps in transport services identified through PAVO projects.

Data collected through the SPF Community Conversations project, Community Connector service and locality network meetings identified a range of consistent issues relating to community transport across Powys:

- Lack of community transport services/ dial a ride / taxi
- Lack of community transport options to Supermarket/town.
- Rurality issues
- Lack of volunteer drivers and chaperones
- Funding issues
- Lack of patient community transport or taxis to access health services
- Limited out of county transport
- Limited out of routine office hours' transport

It has also been identified that there are service area gaps with hospital transport and shopping trips.

- Community Transport was identified widely across Powys as a gap in service in all datasets.
- The majority of findings evidenced gaps in hospital transportation in regards to community transport.
- Identified gaps included:
 - o lack of volunteer drivers,
 - o appointment times (too early/too late),
 - o unable to cover out of county travel
 - o service users home was out of catchment.
- Shopping trip was identified as current gap in Community Transport Services
- Locality Network Community Transport representatives identified the need for 'assisted shopping buddy' to be implemented alongside Community Shopping Transport,
- Lack of community and public transport is found to restrict people from attending work, education, and other leisure/social activities.
- Evidence that the gaps in Community Transport services (and public transport) has a dire effect on the elderly; those that live in rural locations; and those that cannot drive.

The gaps identified can be viewed graphically on a map [HERE](#) if required.

Community Conversations Survey Report findings - Report created by Barry Farrell, independent analyst - March 2026

Barry Farrell (organisational psychologist and renowned social scientist) carried out an analysis of the above project survey for PAVO. The quotations below are taken directly from his report. The full report is available from PAVO.

Transport and connectivity stand out as the most persistent and far-reaching concern. Problems with transport are repeatedly associated with access to healthcare, employment, education, shops, and social activities. For many respondents, transport is not experienced as a minor inconvenience but as a condition that shapes independence, participation, and quality of life.

Transport, health and well-being services, social connection, and economic pressures are highlighted across all geographic areas, but their relative prominence varies depending on local assets, service access, and local circumstances.

The largest importance–use gaps were observed for youth services or youth clubs, public transport, community transport, and local schools or childcare, where just over half of respondents reported that the service was important but not used.

The least favourable pattern was observed for public transport links, where a majority of respondents reported disliking this aspect and only a small minority reported liking it. This contrasts with most other aspects of community life, where positive responses were more common than negative ones.

Transport issues affect access to healthcare and opportunities for community participation

Transport and connectivity stand out more clearly than any other area of concern in the survey. This issue appears repeatedly as a source of dissatisfaction in the closed-ended responses and as a priority for change in the open-ended responses.

Most importantly, transport is rarely described as a minor inconvenience. Respondents associate it directly with access to healthcare, shops, social activities, education, employment, and community participation. For older residents, transport affects independence and social contact; for younger people and families, it shapes access to services and opportunities.

Seen in this light, transport is not simply another service; it is a condition that underpins access, participation, and connection across many areas of life. Therefore, problems with transport have detrimental ripple effects that undermine economic activity, social inclusion, and community resilience.

Respondents often consider services to be important even if they do not use them personally. This reflects a broader concern for how those services support the community as a whole.

In their written responses about transport services, services for children and young people, and community facilities, respondents consistently emphasise the wider role these services play in sustaining community life.

Transport stands out as the most persistent challenge shaping daily life and opportunities.

Make transport and connectivity central to decisions about community services and access.

Transport and connectivity stand out as the most persistent concerns raised in the survey. Respondents consistently associate transport with access to healthcare, shops, employment, education, social activities, and participation in community life. Problems with transport are not

described as isolated inconveniences, but as barriers that affect independence, opportunity, and social connection.

For this reason, transport should not be treated as a standalone service. Decisions about transport should be considered alongside decisions about health, employment, education, and community services. Transport plays a key role in whether people can access what they need in daily life.

When transport is built into planning and investment decisions across these areas, services are more likely to work as intended. Where connectivity is poor, even well-designed services can become difficult to reach, reducing their value and weakening the resilience of communities.

9. Other narrative data (source PTHB)

Transport comments / feedback from 2023-2025

Positives

- Use of and appreciation of community transport services/volunteers which support people in their travel to hospital appointments
- Use of and appreciation of NEPT when accessed/used by residents. Some instances where service was considered poor though.
- A recognition, acceptance and a willingness by many to travel long distances to access the best care/treatment possible re- specialist consultants / operations needed to improve their health
- The strength of community and the willingness of people in their community to support family members/friends and neighbours and get residents to appointments out of county when working/with their own family responsibilities
- The role that unpaid carers play in advocating re- travel plans/arrangements/needs of loved ones

Negatives

- Concerns also regarding the long distances residents need to travel for planned care appointments when these take place in hospitals out of county that we commission (e.g. Shrewsbury and Telford hospital, Wye Valley Trust (Hereford), Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital (Oswestry), Swansea, Cheltenham, Cardiff, Bronglais)
- The anxiety travel can cause people who may be unfamiliar with the roads outside the county, who worry about getting to the hospital on time for their appointment and then how to navigate the hospital to find appropriate parking on site (or off if no spaces) and use of various payment machines
- The condition of roads travelled – poor maintenance, inclement weather causing flooding/surface water, safety, speeds, night-time driving fears
- Unnecessary travel where a person has got to an appointment which only lasted 10 / 15 minutes and which they feel could have been a simple telephone or virtual consultation especially if there was no physical examination required

- Unnecessary travel where a person perhaps could have been seen closer to home but didn't know and was referred out of county
- The lack of, or difficulties, accessing various types of public transport for people to get to their appointments on time and then back home again (in particular for more vulnerable groups in society who may not drive/have access to a car e.g. carers, disabled residents, neuro diverse citizens, older people, people with chronic / long term conditions)
- Understanding/lack of knowledge around the criteria for non-emergency patient transport, the times this service operates and how this can sometimes be out of synch with hospital appointment times given to Powys patients
- Lack of knowledge of Powys geography by neighbouring health board staff who book appointments for our residents. Often no consideration again of travel times required, no co-ordination/thought re- transport options and how/when these operate and no offer or information provided about these if a person is not able to drive in the appointment letter.
- The cost of travel for ongoing appointments to residents and the knock-on effect re: cost of living/quality of life. *(We heard that a resident who had been discharged from a hospital outside the county in the early hours had had to pay for a taxi to get home and then had no money for food so had visited one of the county's food banks).*
- Fatigue for residents and families having to travel out of county on an ongoing basis for a series of treatment e.g. chemo/radiography/tests etc. (Ageing population)
- The pressures placed on family members/spouses/carers/siblings/others re- getting people to appointments

10. Recommendations

Community Transport is essential infrastructure for Powys

The evidence in this report demonstrates that Community Transport should no longer be viewed as a small, stand-alone voluntary sector service.

It is an essential part of the transport infrastructure of Powys, particularly for people who cannot access conventional public or commercial transport. It connects people to healthcare, employment, education, shopping and community life, while also reducing isolation and supporting independence.

The scale of the contribution is significant. As set out above the cost avoidance to statutory services is considerable, and the volume of journeys completed is substantial.

At the same time, services are facing increasing demand, volunteer shortages, rising operating costs and insufficient core funding. Some schemes cannot advertise their services because they are already unable to meet existing demand.

This creates a strategic risk for Powys.

If Community Transport becomes unsustainable, the consequences will be felt far beyond transport.

PAVO has recognised this and is already working directly with Community Transport Providers via the Powys Third Sector Transport Network. The providers are developing a Theory of Change plan with the Outcome / Impact Statement: *The meeting of the widest range of local transport needs through the provision of a consistent, integrated and Powys wide, voluntary sector delivered community transport service; one that is core funded by a mechanism that recognises the vital role of community transport in enabling social connection, health and wellbeing and the mitigation of climate impacts arising from private car ownership.*

PAVO has invested in increased capacity in Assets / Development support and will be working alongside providers and partners to aspire to the impact statement, and the recommendations below through provision of direct development support and facilitating increased collaboration between organisations, funders and stakeholders.

Recommendations

1. Recognise and Invest in Community Transport as strategic infrastructure

- Strategic bodies should formally recognise Community Transport as part of Powys' wider transport, health and wellbeing infrastructure.
- It should be considered alongside mainstream public transport when assessing whether communities have adequate access to essential services.
- This means Community Transport should be embedded within all aspects of strategic planning.
- Strategic bodies should therefore assess Community Transport investment against its cross-sector benefits, rather than considering only the number and cost of journeys.

2. Put rurality at the heart of transport planning and investment

- Transport planning in Powys cannot be based solely on conventional models of population density, passenger numbers or commercial viability.
- Rurality creates additional costs and different transport needs. Community Transport schemes operate across dispersed communities, often providing relatively small numbers of journeys over significant distances because there is no viable alternative.
- The report identifies rurality, lack of transport options, lack of volunteer drivers and funding as recurring issues across multiple sources of community intelligence.
- Strategic bodies should therefore rural-proof transport investment and commissioning decisions, considering the additional cost required to provide equitable access across Powys.
- Equity should not mean providing the same transport solution everywhere. It should mean ensuring people can access the services and opportunities they need, wherever they live.

3. Create a sustainable funding model for Community Transport

- The current funding model leaves schemes dependent on membership fees, fares, fundraising and multiple small funding streams, while core funding remains scarce. Project funding can also require organisations to repeatedly redesign their services and submit applications simply to sustain existing activity.
- This is not a sustainable model for essential community infrastructure.
- Strategic partners should develop a longer-term funding approach for Community Transport, recognising the need for full cost recovery.
- Funding should reflect the real cost of providing the service, rather than assuming that voluntary effort can continually compensate for underinvestment.
- PAVO to support CT schemes with sustainable funding strategy, efficiency savings and demonstrating cost avoidance for statutory sector partners.

4. Develop an integrated transport approach

- The current system contains multiple transport offers across public transport, Community Transport, non-emergency patient transport, voluntary transport and other arrangements.
- The distinction between services is often irrelevant. What matters is whether they can get where they need to go.
- The report identifies particular difficulties around hospital appointments, out-of-county travel, appointment times, service boundaries and short-notice cancellations.
- Relevant parties should therefore work towards an integrated transport pathway, with clearer referral routes and better coordination between:
 - Community Transport;
 - Powys County Council;
 - Powys Teaching Health Board;
 - Welsh Ambulance Service;
 - Hospitals outside Powys; and
 - other relevant transport providers.
- The objective should be simple: One transport system from the perspective of the resident, even where multiple organisations deliver it.

5. Make transport a consideration in health and care planning

- The evidence makes a compelling case that transport is a determinant of whether people can access healthcare.
- Community Transport schemes reported thousands of journeys connected to care appointments and hospitals, including journeys outside Powys.
- Community intelligence also identifies problems with early or late appointments, out-of-county journeys, lack of transport information and the mismatch between appointment times and available transport.

- Health and care organisations should therefore consider transport at the point of referral and appointment planning, rather than treating it as the patient's responsibility once an appointment has been arranged.
- A service is not genuinely accessible if people cannot get to it.

6. Address the unintended consequences of short-notice cancellations and service pressures

- The report provides evidence of patients being left without transport following cancellations or changes to non-emergency patient transport. Community Transport and families are then frequently expected to find alternatives at very short notice.
- Strategic partners should develop a shared escalation and contingency approach for transport failures, particularly for vulnerable people and people travelling out of county.
- The principle should be that responsibility for solving a system failure does not simply transfer to unpaid carers or voluntary organisations.

7. Invest in the volunteer infrastructure that makes Community Transport possible

- Community Transport depends heavily on volunteers, but volunteer availability is becoming a significant constraint on capacity. The report identifies recruitment difficulties, changing patterns of work and caring responsibilities, volunteer fatigue and administrative burdens.
- Strategic bodies should recognise volunteer capacity as critical infrastructure, rather than an unlimited resource.
- The sustainability of Community Transport depends on the sustainability of volunteering.
- PAVO to support CT schemes with sustainable volunteering.

8. Establish a shared evidence base for transport need across Powys

- There is already considerable intelligence about transport gaps coming from Community Conversations, Community Connectors, locality networks and the Community Transport audit. These sources consistently identify transport as a significant gap, including transport to hospitals, shopping, employment, education and social activities.
- Strategic partners should develop a shared transport intelligence framework that brings together:
 - demand;
 - unmet need;
 - capacity;
 - geographical gaps;
 - volunteer capacity;
 - journey purposes;
 - hospital and healthcare transport needs;
 - public transport availability (including rail); and
 - Community Transport provision.
- This would need to be proportionate to the value of the funding agreement. Partners need to recognise that often CT schemes do not have additional capacity to complete

extensive monitoring forms. Any data and information that is provided should be valued and used effectively to enable investment decisions to be based on the whole transport picture, rather than individual service datasets.

- PAVO to provide infrastructure support to CT schemes in relation to impact measurement and data collection.

A strategic challenge for Powys

The evidence in this report presents a clear choice.

Community Transport can continue to be treated as a collection of small voluntary schemes, expected to fill gaps through goodwill, volunteers and increasingly scarce funding.

Or Powys can recognise Community Transport for what it has become:

A critical part of the infrastructure that enables people to live well, access services and remain connected to their communities.

The case for action is not based solely on the number of journeys made. It is demonstrated through the consequences when transport is unavailable: missed or threatened healthcare appointments, reduced independence, isolation, pressure on families and unpaid carers, and reduced access to employment, education and community life.

The strategic question is therefore not whether Powys can afford to invest in Community Transport - It is whether Powys can afford the consequences of not doing so.

11. Appendix

Case Study 1

Newtown & District Dial A Ride

Written 18/12/24 This case study is from the perspective of an 81-year-old lady who is a member of Dial a Ride (Mrs X).

She is a widow living in an isolated rural village and has no family living in the area. She kindly allowed me to ask her some questions around Dial a Ride; why she uses us, and what if any impact the service has on life. I have collated her answers using her words where possible and changing only where it makes it easier to read.

“Dial a Ride are so helpful, and always so friendly. I have been using them for a long time and don't know what I'd do without them. I live in a small village about 3 miles out of town [Newtown] and there is only one small local shop. I have to go to town to see the doctor and for my eye appointments and I like to go once a week to do some shopping. It's quiet in but I can go to the community centre if I want when there's something

on, although I don't know so many people anymore, a lot of new people have moved into my village.

Some people in the village say they get lonely, I do too but not as much as some. I keep myself busy, I always find something to do so I don't get bored or miss being around people. I like to be independent; I like to do my shopping and I read a lot. When I am in town, I go to the butchers and the local green grocers. I think the food is fresher there than in some of the supermarkets. I like to go to the charity shops too, they have lots of cheap books so I usually find something good to read. I go to town regularly at least once a week on a Tuesday [market day]. I sometimes see people I know, although less so now, I don't recognise many people these days. Market day isn't like it used to be. Even if I don't see anyone that I know I like to be around all the people, it's busier on Tuesdays, it feels livelier. Mrs ['Y'] from my village goes to town on the bus [Dial a Ride] with me and we have a good chat on the way there and back. When we are ready to go home, we meet at Dial a Ride's office and have a chat and a laugh with Michele while we're waiting for the driver.

I also use Dial a Ride to access all of my appointments with my GP and the hospital. At my age, I have quite a few of those. I wouldn't be able to go to town or get to and from my doctor's without Dial a Ride. I don't have any family who can drive me anywhere, my son lives abroad and there isn't anyone else near me. I have a mobility scooter as I can't walk very far. I can use this to get from my house to the local shop in the village as I am quite close and it's flat but it's not good for going to town when I need to. I don't use the local bus, they don't run much and even if I caught the bus to town, how would I get about when I am there without my scooter? I need it so I can go where-ever I want. Dial a Ride picks me up from my front door and they take my scooter on the bus so I can use it when I get there. They take my shopping into the house for me too. It's so convenient for me. Because of them [Dial a Ride] I can do things for myself and I don't feel so isolated."

Case Study 2

Hay & District Dial A Ride

MM has lived in the area for 55 years. Before retiring she was a trained laboratory technician. After her husband passed away 8 years ago, she now lives alone in Hay but with family nearby.

How did you first hear about Dial-a-Ride?

M knew about Dial-a-Ride from the very beginning and remembers when it first started up. She became a member in due course.

What was life like for you before you started using the service?

M didn't use it too much at first but when her husband died and she gave up driving herself she started to become a more regular user.

First Impressions**Do you remember your first trip with us? What was that experience like?**

One of her first trips with us was to Elan Valley near Rhayader. She remembers it as a great day out- enjoying a lovely lunch and the wonderful views of the dams.

Practical Impact**How does Dial-a-Ride help you with day-to-day life?**

Although M doesn't need the service to help with day to day shopping, she says it's comforting to know Dial-a-Ride is there to get her to medical appointments if she needs it.

What types of journeys do you usually make with Dial-a-Ride (e.g. shopping, medical appointments, social visits)?

She recently requested transport to an appointment at the weekend and one of DaR's community car scheme volunteers took her there and back. Managing without the service in these instances would be difficult- it's peace of mind for M to know it's there.

Emotional & Social Benefits**How does the service make you feel – before, during, and after a trip?**

M always looks forward excitedly to trips she's booked with us. DaR has definitely made her feel more connected to the community.

Have you made any friendships or had interesting chats along the way?

She's met lots of people and made many friends just through getting out and about with us on our buses.

Volunteers & Staff**What's your experience of the drivers and staff like?**

M says all the staff and volunteers are lovely. She specifically mentions community car driver Bob who has often taken her to medical appointments as particularly kind and helpful. She also mentions drivers Adam and Tracie, who were the volunteers on a super recent trip to Aberystwyth, and her PA as being wonderful too.

Personal Reflections

What does Dial-a-Ride mean to you personally?

For M, DaR is a service that enables her to enjoy great days out and gives her something to look forward to. She would highly recommend it to anybody else and has done so on numerous occasions.

If you could say one thing to someone thinking about using the service, what would it be?

M says that the DaR service helps her and others get out and about to places they normally wouldn't be able to get to. It helps combat loneliness and is invaluable in particular to those without family nearby.

Advocacy

Would you recommend Dial-a-Ride to others in your situation?

Yes.

What would you say to someone who might be nervous about trying it for the first time?

Should there be anyone nervous about trying the service for the first time, M says not to be as it's a very positive organisation to join, with wonderful volunteers and comfy buses.

Case Study 3

Llanwrtyd Wells Shopping Bus

<https://lwct.org.uk/en/rise-of-the-community-bus-one-year-of-service-and-its-going-strong/>

Llanwrtyd Wells Community Transport were successful in their bid to the Social Value Fund to develop a Shopping bus service. The link above provides an in depth report on how well the service has been received and the plans the organisation has to sustain it once the current funding comes to an end. General Manager Laura Burns explained how well the service has been received: *I have been delighted with how quickly the bus has grown. The users are all so lovely and look after each other, it has become a real little community in itself. I wanted to develop a service that is led by the users. Once the foundations were laid, that is exactly what it has become. It is the users that say how long we stay at each location, and they come up with ideas for days out. Seeing the change in the users from when they first start using the service is amazing, they grow in confidence, their mental and physical well-being improves, and they all say how much they look forward to getting on the bus.*