

A PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT THE PARISH OF WHITTLEBURY

AIM:

To enable the community to access the essential services needed and allow independence



Prepared by Lynn HINCH
Contact Details lynn.hinch@abilitycic.org.uk
Phone 0370 3341508
Website www.abilitycic.org.uk
Registered Office 15 Whitegates, NORTHAMPTON NN4 9XA

“When we lost our bus service, I didn’t know how I would manage. Thanks to the ABILITY bus I can get to town, meet friends on the bus and keep my independence”
Hackleton Resident (Jan 2019)

Who we are?

ABILITY (Northants) cic is a social enterprise formed to reduce **social isolation** and **loneliness** in the rural and urban areas of Northamptonshire. A **volunteer led, not for profit organisation** it provides personal transport services for those who are unable to access public transport

ABILITY Community Transport operates a demand response minibus transport scheme in the South Northants area. The service is to provide a once a week bus service taking residents to town and/or a local supermarket to enable them to live at home independently whilst reducing social isolation and loneliness.

We operate on a customer centric business approach, ensuring that our customers the get highest standards of care, support and attention from our team of skilled and highly valued volunteers

Why is it needed?

Many areas have no bus service or only peak hour services which are unsuitable for a number of residents, others face a long walk to access the nearest bus route which is difficult when carrying shopping or you have mobility problems.

With the ageing population (1 in 5 in South Northants are over 65), loss of a partner or losing confidence or for medical reasons are unable to drive a car, leaving people isolated and reliant on friends and family to assist them. Closure or lack of local amenities means they must travel greater distances to get the essentials to live.

Who can use it

It is open to everyone as it is a public bus service, they must be registered with us to comply with legislation and all bookings are made in advance. We are unable to transport passengers who just turn up. Registration can be done online or by completing and returning a registration form

Where can I go?

Initially we will develop our services to enable people to get to the nearest town (Brackley, Towcester or Northampton) once a week at a pre-agreed day and time

How does it operate?



The service is run on a demand responsive basis, which means journeys are booked 24 hrs in advance and the bus is scheduled to collect passengers en-route. It is not a linear service and will travel from one pickup to the next and will drop off at the pre-booked nominated points. This can allow passengers to gain access to other bus services.

ABILITY “PLUS Services”

We offer several registration levels from a basic which is free of charge. The popular “Silver Service” gives the flexibility of being picked up at a convenient pre-agreed point. The “Gold Service” offers a home pick up and drop off service, assistance with boarding the bus and taking the shopping to the door.

A payment of an annual fee provides additional benefits, assistance and discount of leisure trips and outings. See details in Appendix 1

How much does it cost the passenger?

The fares are agreed with Northamptonshire Highways and charged as single journeys. They are benchmarked against other similar services and based on distance travelled

Those passengers with a valid concessionary bus pass are entitled to travel **FREE** after 09:30 weekdays.



How is it funded?

As a Not for Profit voluntary organisation we are reliant on several sources of funds

- A match funding grant from South Northants District Council
- Reimbursement of Concessionary Bus Pass fares from Northamptonshire County Council
- Registration fees and donations from users, fare paying passengers
- Grants from a variety of organisations including Parish Councils, Tesco, Waitrose and other national grant awarding bodies.
- General fundraising activities

PROPOSED SERVICE

We will collect passengers from the local bus stops or agreed pick up points and take them to TOWCESTER

- The service will operate on [Monday; Tuesday; Wednesday; Thursday; Friday] TBA
- Departs from first pick up point at [09:30 or 13:30] allows 1 ½ to 2 hours before the return journey. TBA
- Drop off Points identified are
 - TESCO, ALDI, WAITROSE
 - [Name of town centre location] TBA
 - [name of retail park] TBA

"It's like a social club on wheels! We get to chat to each other on the journey, meet friends and get out and about. Otherwise it's like being a prisoner in your own home and the TV is your best friend"

Request for contribution from the Parish(es)

To commence the service on behalf of the parish we ask for a one off **£500** contribution from the Parish Council to cover the initial set up of the service.

This covers the production of marketing materials, set up of the routes and passengers on a GDPR compliant IT system, route review and timings, registration of the service with Northamptonshire Highways and agree fare rate and concessionary travel pass reimbursement.

We will jointly promote the scheme with the parish council including attendance at local meetings to encourage usage.

Benefits to the Parish

- Flexible and adaptable approach which is more efficient than traditional buses
- Maintain people's independence and reduces reliance on family, friends and neighbours – reduces social isolation and loneliness
- Allows access to essential services and promotes wellbeing
- Strong and positive engagement with local community

Read the case study at Appendix 2 as to how **Hackleton Parish Council** became the first parish to take up the service.

Due Diligence Information

1. ABILITY Northants cic is a social enterprise formed as Community Interest Company (cic) incorporated on 4th July 2018 and registered with companies house no 11448957. It is a not for profit and asset locked organisation
2. It holds a bus permit issued by the Traffic Commissioner under section 22 of the Transport Act and a flexible registration to operate a public bus service on a many to many points basis.
3. It is registered with Northamptonshire Highways as a Bus service provider and is reimbursed for concessionary travel pass usage at agreed rates
4. It's employees and volunteers are subject to DBS checks
5. It is a member of the Community Transport Association and is accredited to deliver the Minibus Driver Assessment Scheme (MiDAS) training
6. The organisation has a Transport Manager who holds a Certificate of Professional Competence in Passenger Transport to meet article 21 of regulation (EC) No 1071/2009
7. It complies with the relevant legislation; best practice and has £5,000,000 of public liability insurance with Ansvar and motor policies with ERC. (copies available on request)
8. The board of ABILITY (Northants) cic are responsible for the management of the organisation and takes its legal, social and ethical responsibilities seriously
9. It does not receive any direct funding from Northamptonshire County Council.
10. South Northants Council provide match funding to support the scheme across its area



APPENDIX 1 – “Plus Service” Registration

ABILITY Northants - Registration Prices						
As of Jan 2019	Annual Registration Fee £	Pre Booking – Shopper Bus	Pre Booking – Other Journeys	Pick Up & Drop Off Location	Assistance Provided	ABILITY Trips Discount
PLUS SERVICE for that extra help	Gold Single - £36 Joint - £48	Ongoing Booking <i>Call when you don't want to go</i>	Pre bookings up to 5 days in advance	Home Pick Up & Drop Off	On/Off the Bus Shopping carried to the door	10% Off Trips and advance booking
	Silver Single - £24 Joint - £36	Advance Booking Up to 4 weeks in advance	Pre bookings up to 3 days in advance	Agreed Local Pick up point	On/Off the Bus If needed	10% Off Trips
Demand Response Transport	Basic Registration Single - Free	Advance Booking 1 week in advance	Pre bookings up to 1 day in advance	At the Bus Stop	None	Not applicable

Appendix 2 - CASE STUDY

Hackleton Parish Council received little notice that the bus service to the whole parish was to be cut leaving them without the means to travel to Northampton. The parish is made up of number of residential areas and needed to look for a solution. The parish became aware of the service following an interview on BBC Radio Northampton. At the next Parish Council meeting a large number of residents voiced their concerns about the impact it would have on village life.

ABILITY was invited to present its solution, formed a working group with the Parish Council and Northamptonshire Highways to establish three times a week service to Northampton. Communication was essential so meetings were held at coffee mornings, social media and a door to door campaign got under way.

The Service started the day after the main operator finished and its popularity has grown were there are regularly 10 or more people on the bus, additional drop off points have been added at other retail parks and supermarkets along the route. Over 50 residents have registered to use the service and wouldn't be without it.

One lady commented “it's the best Christmas present I could have wished for! It allows me to get into town to shop for my sister and I”