



Information on Membership and  
Services

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## **Introduction**

Hounslow Community Transport (HCT) is a longstanding registered local charity that was founded in 1984 with the launch of its Group Transport service. In 1993, HCT set up its Furniture Recycling Project and in 2002 took over the Shopmobility service in Hounslow which was very near to being closed down due to lack of resources.

There can be very few groups in the London Borough of Hounslow which are better positioned to provide services on an equal basis to every community and ethnic group in the borough. Almost all voluntary groups in the London Borough of Hounslow use our services which are in turn an integral part of the services that they provide to their respective members.

HCT believes that the services it provides are highly valued by its customer organisations and individuals in the London Borough of Hounslow, offering what is needed in an affordable way.

### **Group Transport**

The Group Transport service provides safe, accessible and affordable transport to community and ethnic groups of every kind in the London Borough of Hounslow. HCT makes a meaningful contribution to reducing social exclusion and increasing access across Hounslow and places beyond that residents of Hounslow wish to visit. 5 of the 7 vehicle fleet are wheelchair accessible. HCT provides opportunities for young people in Hounslow to undertake community service by helping to clean our vehicles.

### **Furniture Recycling Project**

The Furniture Recycling Project provides good quality furniture on a low cost basis to residents in the London Borough of Hounslow that are considered to be in need and who have been confirmed as such by eg Social Services, the borough's Homeless Persons Unit, local charities and church welfare groups. HCT is an active member of the London Recycling Community Network which is dedicated to the twin aims of providing affordable furniture to people in need and in maximizing the volume of furniture that can be recycled. In addition, the Furniture Recycling Project, in conjunction with the Hounslow Probation and other similar services, provides opportunities for people to undertake community service working for the project.

## **Shopmobility**

A wide range of battery-powered scooters and wheelchairs can be hired at affordable prices by residents of the London Borough of Hounslow of all ages with mobility problems and thereby provide for them access that they would not necessarily have had to central Hounslow for shopping and other visits. The Shopmobility service is now based in the new Blenheim Centre and when the development is completed it is anticipated that the demand for scooter and wheelchair access will rise considerably. Shopmobility is staffed entirely by volunteers.

## **MiDAS Training**

HCT provides affordable Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS) accredited training to individuals and organisations in the London Borough of Hounslow so that they can hire HCT or similar vehicles provided for hire by other organisations, or their own vehicles, for trips to be undertaken by residents of the borough.

## **Becoming a Member of HCT**

### **Eligibility**

If your group is a bona fide community group or a not for profit organisation based in the London Borough of Hounslow and surrounding areas and serves the needs of the residents, then you can register with us to access our services.

### **Membership and Affiliation**

If you wish to apply for membership please complete the enclosed application form and return it to HCT with the appropriate fee. Details of current fees are included on the application form.

### **Our vehicles**

We currently operate a fleet 7 minibuses, 5 of which are wheelchair accessible. The minibuses range in size from 12 up to 16 passengers plus driver. If wheelchair passengers are carried this will reduce the overall seating capacity. The number of wheelchairs that can be carried varies from bus to bus and depends on the size and type of wheelchair. Scooters may also be carried. However, some scooters and wheelchairs may not be suitable for carriage in a minibus.

HCT accepts no responsibility for damage to scooters and wheelchairs when carried.

## **Who can drive a HCT minibus?**

When an organisation becomes a member of HCT it should arrange for one or more MiDAS qualified volunteers to be available to drive the minibus when required. If you do not manage to find a driver then HCT will endeavour to provide a driver for you at an hourly rate.

HCT has to abide by a code of practice that applies to all Community Transport organisations. Authorised drivers of HCT minibuses must be between 21 years and 70 years and have held a full UK driving licence for at least 2 years. The driving licence should ideally be without endorsements although certain minor offences are allowable. In any case, there should be no prosecutions pending.

All drivers of HCT minibuses must hold a current MiDAS certificate.

All MiDAS qualified drivers must be registered with HCT or another registered Community Transport organisation or a Youth or Community Service recognised by HCT

Under no circumstances can anyone convicted of a drink or drug related driving offence within the past 10 years drive HCT vehicles. This also applies to such prosecutions that are pending.

Drivers must advise HCT of any endorsement incurred or any accident involved in over the past 5 years. HCT will do its best to negotiate insurance cover for drivers with minor endorsements or drivers that have been involved in accidents but this may take a few weeks to organise. No driver with an endorsement or accident record is allowed to drive a HCT vehicle until insurance cover has been confirmed. HCT will need to inspect drivers' licences every 6 months.

Drivers must be able to produce their driving licence for checking from 1<sup>st</sup> April each year and report any changes in their circumstances that could affect their right to drive a HCT minibus. These requirements are to ensure that HCT can comply with the terms of their insurance cover.

## **Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS)**

MiDAS is a scheme developed by the Community Transport Association to increase the competency of minibus drivers. It provides a nationally recognised standard for minibus drivers.

HCT runs on a regular basis MiDAS training courses. Visit the HCT website for the dates of MiDAS courses and the fee for attending, or contact HCT directly.

## **Drivers**

Most groups usually provide their own driver. However, if you cannot find a suitable person HCT will endeavour to provide a MiDAS qualified driver.

## **Booking a minibus**

Bookings need to be made between 8:30am and 4:30pm Monday to Friday. Bookings cannot be made by fax or ansaphone.

Groups can book a minibus as and when required or on a regular basis. In all cases bookings will be accepted subject to availability of a suitable minibus to meet your needs.

To avoid disappointment it is always best, if possible, to make your bookings with as much advance notice as possible. However, we will always do our best to respond to bookings that are made at short notice.

You can hire HCT minibuses for anything from a minimum booking period of 3 hours to several weeks.

When bookings are made several months in advance the hirer must confirm the booking at least one week before the date of the booking. For regular bookings please make contact a week before to confirm the booking arrangements.

Bookings must be made by authorised contacts only and the following information will be required:

- Name of person making the booking
- Name of organisation
- The seating capacity and number of wheel chairs spaces required
- Date of booking
- Collection and return times
- Destination
- Drivers name

## **Cancellations**

Please give as much notice as possible if you wish to cancel a booking as this could mean that it could be booked by another organisation.

If a booking is cancelled within 24 hours of the agreed start time a late cancellation charge will be payable.

## **Insurance**

All vehicles have comprehensive insurance for drivers, passengers and third parties.

HCT carries full public liability insurance cover for all visitors, volunteers and staff whilst on HCT property.

Vehicles must not be taken outside mainland Britain.

## **Excess Payments**

The HCT insurance covers the hire of the minibus, but the organisation is liable for the insurance excess of £250 if the damage occurs whilst on hire to you.

## **Collecting and using a minibus**

### **Collecting keys and trip sheet**

Any authorised member of your organisation can collect the keys and trip sheet for a booking from the HCT office during normal working hours. They should be familiar with the details of your booking and know the drivers name.

Only the named driver can collect the minibus and he/she must be the driver at all times.

If the minibus is booked for a weekend or for a period outside of HCT's normal opening hours the keys and trip sheet will need to be collected in advance.

### **Setting off**

The driver should arrive at least 30 minutes before the time of the booking to complete the hand-over formalities and to complete the vehicle check list and record the mileage and the start time on the trip sheet.

The driver is responsible by law for the road worthiness of the vehicle they are driving. The check list must be completed before setting off. If for any reason the vehicle has a defect that makes it un-roadworthy the vehicle must not be used. Every effort will be made to replace the vehicle but this cannot be guaranteed.

The check list must be completed and signed for each trip before the journey starts. This is an EU directive applicable in the UK to all vehicles with more than 9 seats. Failure to comply is an offence.



## **Returning a minibus**

Please ensure that the vehicle is parked correctly in one of the parking bays allocated to HCT.

All vehicles must be returned to HCT by the time arranged when booked. Please ensure that you leave plenty of time for traffic on your return trip to the HCT office. If delayed, immediately contact the HCT office as your vehicle might be booked out upon your return by another organisation.

Late return of the vehicle without a satisfactory explanation may incur a fine. and the repeated late return of vehicles could result in membership being cancelled.

The vehicle should be swept out and all debris etc removed. Windows and doors must be locked. The keys together with the completed trip sheet and check list can be returned to the HCT office during normal opening times. Out of normal working hours, the keys, trip sheet and check list can be dropped off through the letter box on the outside wall of the HCT offices.

The trip sheet must be completed on return together with any comments you might have regarding the vehicle. It is a legal requirement that any defect(s) affecting the safety of the vehicle be notified to HCT in the appropriate section of the trip sheet.

## **Fuel**

All HCT vehicles have engines that use diesel fuel. All keys have a diesel fuel card attached. The card can be used to buy fuel at most petrol and motorway service stations in the UK – if you are not sure check with the cashier first. The card has the vehicle registration on it and it must not be used to purchase fuel for any other vehicle. Any misuse of the card will be viewed as fraud or theft and will be reported to the police.

Vehicles must be returned with at least a ¼ tank of fuel.

## **Breakdowns**

All vehicles are covered by a breakdown service and details are contained on the trip sheet.

If the breakdown service is required please notify the HCT office leaving an ansaphone message if necessary. The driver must stay with the vehicle at all times until the breakdown service has arrived..

**Under no circumstances should the vehicle be left unattended at the roadside.**

## **Conditions of use**

### **Authorised use**

- Only fully paid-up members may use HCT vehicles
- Only drivers registered and authorised by HCT may drive the vehicle
- The driver will be responsible for any convictions resulting from the illegal use including vehicle defects
- Authorised drivers must notify HCT **immediately** of any changes in their circumstances that relate to their driving licence, accident record or state of health, which may prejudice their ability to drive
- HCT reserves the right to refuse a registered driver or member organisation the use of HCT vehicles
- Vehicles must not be used for activities other than those permitted by HCT
- HCT accepts no responsibility in the event that a vehicle or HCT provided driver is not available to undertake or fulfill a booking, or part of it, for any reason. However, HCT will always do its best to avoid this happening.

### **When using a minibus**

- Minibuses must not carry more than the maximum stated number of passengers
- If babies or infants are going to be passengers this **must** be mentioned at the time of the booking to ensure that a minibus is booked that has appropriate seating for them.
- Gangways and exits must be kept clear at all times and all doors must be unlocked when the minibus is in motion
- Vehicles must not be used to carry goods, bikes or items that might damage the interior of the vehicle
- Under no circumstances can inflammable gases and liquids be carried on HCT vehicles unless for medical purposes
- HCT accepts no responsibility for any goods, articles or personal belongings carried
- Drivers must have their driving licence with them when in charge of a HCT vehicle
- It is against the law for anyone to smoke in a HCT minibus.

- Drivers must not drive whilst under the influence of drugs, alcohol or medication which may in any way affect their ability to drive, or when advised not to by a doctor
- Organisations are responsible for ensuring passengers are supervised as appropriate at all time whilst on the vehicle
- An appropriate adult traveling in the vehicle must supervise passengers under 18 years
- Seat belts must be worn by all passengers and driver when the vehicle is in motion
- Vehicles must be used for authorised purposes only. Under no circumstances can they be used for party political, trade union or commercial purposes. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in an immediate cancellation of their membership.
- Children must not be seated in a front seat until they are 12 years old or until they are 1.35m tall, whichever comes first.

