



Shopmobility South Gloucestershire Chair's August 2023 Report

Dear Member

It was with sadness that our previous volunteer James passed away unexpectedly earlier in the year and will be missed by all who knew him. James provided Sheridan significant support and was able to cover some annual leave to ensure the office remained open.

We have been advertising heavily in the press and local handbooks and now have posters in the underground car park near the disabled parking bays to alert people to our service.

We also have a large additional poster at the bus station at Yate shopping centre that was kindly undertaken by the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) at no cost to ourselves.

There has been a gradual increase in people requiring our service, particularly those wishing to hire from us on a longer-term basis, but we remain well below pre COVID levels. This has caused us some concern as we need to evidence that people require our service to maintain operational.

We have received the support of a volunteer who has agreed to open on a Saturday for a trial period between 09.30 and 1pm during October and November.

We have recently been able to extend our opening hours from 2pm until 4pm on a Thursday subject to the continued availability of volunteers. We have been closed on a Saturday as a means of conserving our funding given the reduction in people using our service.

We remain grateful to WECA who have continued to reimburse us on funding based on pre Covid levels until March 2023, additional to a small grant from them until March 2024. This has enabled us to liaise more closely with WECA on wider transport issues and promote more inclusive transport on buses for those with limited or no access to a car.

We continually apply for funding from a variety of grant providers and are most grateful to those who have agreed to financially support us. This includes funding from local towns and parishes, money held by councilors via MAF (Member Allocated Funding) and other external sources.

Securing funding remains challenging, particularly given the current cost of living difficulties many are facing that grant providers are presently focusing on.

Concerns about finances may partly explain why people are not using our service as much as before and unfortunately COVID has not gone away.

You may have received an online survey that should make completing it much easier whilst saving us considerable time and money.

If you have not completed one may I urge you to do so as the completed questionnaires provide invaluable evidence about our service which can strengthen our grant applications. Contact Sheridan if you require a paper version or require a further link to the questionnaire.

Our last questionnaire has highlighted the value of mobility scooters and the ability to meet up with friends or family members and undertake activities together and socialize in a different environment.

Many people have subsequently decided to obtain their own mobility scooter who might have otherwise been reticent about doing so.

Those living in rural communities may unfortunately not have the option of acquiring their own mobility scooter due to lack of pavements or distance required to travel to services or social activities.

We acknowledge the significant support family members and carers provide in transporting people to our service and supporting people who may feel anxious or require assistance.

We likewise recognize those without such support who may be isolated and lonely due to long periods of confinement.

The impact on mental health and well-being due to social isolation caused by lockdowns has been well documented. These impacts may be more acutely felt by those who were confined to the home without access to a car.

I would like to thank our trustees, council representatives and project advisor in supporting and developing our charity who possess a good understanding of issues faced by those with physical disabilities and those who provide a caring role.

We welcome Linda Banister as representative of Sodbury Town Council who has played an active role with a good understanding of disability issues.

We have obtained the support of a Marketing Student from UWE and have valued the support he has provided us in seeking more effective ways to promote ourselves emphasizing the health benefits derived from using a mobility scooter.

I would like to give my customary appreciation to Yate library, Yate shopping Centre and Pearce Brothers Mobility for their support

Our AGM will be held on Thursday 13th OCT at Yate library commencing 2.15 pm and we are intending to have a speaker from the re-ablement team to talk about the services they provide.

If you are unable to attend, could you indicate either in the questionnaire or by email that you are happy to give me a proxy vote as we need a certain number to agree for the meeting to be quorate

Janet Biggin

Alderman J. Biggin
Chairman Shopmobility
South Gloucestershire