



Shopmobility South Gloucestershire Chairman's December 2020 Report

The ensuing pandemic has created significant difficulty for our members who have understandably been reluctant to venture out due to their vulnerability to the COVID virus.

The subsequent reduction in hire revenue would have significantly impacted our finances had it not been for the financial support provided by the West of England Combined Authority (WECA).

WECA agreed to reimburse us on the amounts received each month last year from bus pass hire which is our main source of income.

Our surveys have shown that an important aspect of our service is to help with social engagement which creates the very environment that the COVID virus exploits.

We were able to utilize the furlough Scheme during the first and second lockdown which made a significant difference to ensuring we had enough revenue to remain financially viable.

We were able to open the service from August for 2 days a week with the lifting of restrictions to make the service available to those needing to reach services and desperate to get away from the home environment.

Our Project Manager provided information to our members on support services available that people could access and directly contacted those who he felt might be most vulnerable during lockdown. We liaised with Community transport in particular for those requiring deliveries of shopping.

We feel that our service goes much wider than providing hire of mobility scooters and wheelchairs and our service provides a resource to people requiring additional support.

We were continuing to see an increase in hire from people living in rural area prior to lockdown and for many the day spent on a mobility scooter may be the only time they are able to get out as they do not own their own mobility scooter,

People living in rural areas seem to be most affected given lack of pavement, hazards of using a mobility scooter on the road. Limited battery capacity may make it impossible to travel the distances required to access services that tend to be located in more urban areas.

We recognize there may be significant transport and access barriers for mobility scooter users who might be unable to access buses.

We are mindful that many people with a disability might be living alone and feeling isolated requiring additional support to facilitate access to our service and other services.

We have therefore started liaising with a social prescribing group who may be able to identify through GP practices those people who may require additional support with anxiety issues to access our service.

We have gratefully received £245.00 in donations between Aug 2019 and Nov 2020.

We are grateful once again to the Co-op Community Fund who provided funding of over £1,800.00

We also obtained £4,000.00 from the Lottery Community Fund

We have advertised local resident handbooks within South Gloucestershire and beyond to promote the service and reach those without access to the internet who might not be unaware of our service.

We have also recently advertised on 2 local community transport buses to promote the service.

It is with sadness that our Treasurer Granville Olive recently passed away soon after retiring from the role. Granville had supported our project since its inception and was a tremendous asset and very dedicated to ensuring our finances were robust and in good order.

I would also like to thank our main volunteer James Wiltshire, who after 10 years of supporting our Project Manager decided it was time to retire. James selflessly gave his time to supporting others and was always available to offer his time on a voluntary basis as and when required.

It has become more important that we obtain volunteers ideally from the same household to assist us given current COVID measures and need to avoid lone working.

We continually seek Trustees with an interest in supporting people with physical disabilities and impact of a disability on their carer and can spend time helping to develop the project.

I would like to thank our Project Advisor (Dick Whittington) for the significant support he has undertaken for us over 15 year and to the Trustees and committee representatives for their ongoing support and engagement.

We will be celebrating 15 years of service in April 2021 and we envisage our service will be needed as much in the future as it has been since we started operating.

Our AGM has been deferred given the current COVID climate and this report has been produced to accompany our accounts.

Janet Biggin

Alderman J. Biggin
Chairman Shopmobility
South Glos.