



Shopmobility South Gloucestershire Chair's December 2021 Report

We hope people have been remaining well and safe as we hopefully ease our way out of the pandemic.

We have been able to operate 2 days a week since April 2021 and utilized furlough as a means of conserving our limited finances.

As of writing our service is being used 50% less people in comparison to pre-Covid levels.

We have been operating 3 days a week since October 2021 in the hope people may start to feel more confident about going out.

We are celebrating 15 years of service and during that time we have supported over 1900 people with a disability over this period.

Brief History

Shopmobility (South Gloucestershire) was constituted in November 2004 and started operating and managed by Sheridan in April 2006 who remains with us today.

Our initial base was a small enclosed area at the side of the library and we were able to secure garage space within the shopping centre to store and charge our mobility scooters.

We soon employed an additional worker having purchased a van to transport mobility scooters to trial various satellite sites in Thornbury, Staple Hill and Bradley Stoke.

It became apparent that these satellite sites were not attracting sufficient people to our service and we identified a variety of reasons for this. This related to poor access to shops, busy side roads, location and demography in addition to other factors.

It became evident that continuing our trials was becoming too expensive to fund and our van was subsequently sold and our Project Assistant was able to secure employment elsewhere.

We moved for a short period to a location on North Parade whilst the library was being redeveloped but the cost of renting was adding to the financial cost on the charity.

We were provided accommodation at our current location within the library at a significantly reduced rent once the redevelopment was completed.

We focused on developing our service solely within Yate shopping centre as its location was more ideally suitable for people and extended our opening times.

The increase in number of mobility scooters we had acquired enabled us to offer a longer-term hire for those with mobility problems within South Gloucestershire.

Once our funding from the lottery came to an end, we were able to obtain a service level agreement with South Gloucestershire Council but this funding came to an unexpected end in early 2018.

We had seen a steady increase in people using our service and encouraged people to obtain their own until the pandemic arose.

Current situation

The pandemic has resulted in a loss of income coupled with the aforementioned reduction of our funding led to financial uncertainty.

We have been heavily reliant and grateful to the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) In continuing to reimburse us from bus pass holders based on 2019 figures

We are most grateful to the variety of grant providers. These include Tesco, Co-op Sobell Trust, funding from Councilors, Sovereign Housing, Area Wide forum, Lottery Grants and funding from local towns and parishes.

We are approaching WECA to establish whether they might be prepared to replace the aforementioned funding as part of their transport review.

People currently using our service continue to derive benefit from being able to get out, particularly when the weather is favorable.

We are aware that some people without internet access may be unable to connect with others or may have lost confidence that might be creating social isolation.

We recognize that access to our service may often be dependent on being able to drive or being transported by car. We have been making tentative approaches with various bodies about the possibility of allowing larger mobility scooters on public transport that might enable wider travel to visit family, friend and other places.

We continually advertise our service via the press, resident handbooks and most recently on community transport buses as a means of promoting the service for those without internet access who might be unaware of our service.

Our Project manager has compiled and hoping to undertake an online survey early next year that should make completing much easier and save us considerable time and money.

We would be most grateful if people could complete the survey as it provides invaluable evidence about our service which is important when applying for funding.

The survey may for example help establish whether people remain cautious about venturing out or establish how many may have decided to purchase their own mobility scooter due to restrictions from both lockdown and our opening hours. It is unclear how many members may have decided to start having their shopping delivered by ordering online instead of using a mobility scooter.

We are continually on the search for volunteers to cover a Saturday between 09:30 and 14:00 that would avoid lone working. People would need to be reasonably fit to deliver and store mobility scooters and importantly have a friendly personality.

I would like to thank Yate library for accommodating us and making us feel welcome, Yate shopping centre for accommodating our mobility scooters and Pearce Brothers Mobility for undertaking our scooter servicing at a much reduced cost.

I would like to thank Martin Monk who will be stepping down as a Trustee at our next AGM that will take place in March 2022.

Martin has provided invaluable leadership having served as Chair for several years and was a founding member.

Martin was always prepared to cover annual leave and had a good overview of the charity and good insight of the issues faced by people with disabilities. Sheridan would like to personally thank Martin for his support over the years.

I would like to thank our trustees both present and past for all the work that has been undertaken to support and develop our service over the last 15 years.

I would like to thank both Dick Whittington our Project Advisor and David Bell our Deputy Chair who will be our only remaining founding members of Shopmobility once Martin Monk retires from his position.

We welcome Christine Howard who has agreed to join as a Trustee several months ago, having initially served as a Doddington representative on our committee.

We continue to seek people to serve as Trustees with an understanding of issues faced by those with physical disabilities and those who provide a caring role.

Our AGM has once again 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 Gloucestershire