

An update for 2011 on your door-to-door Community Links service for residents 'stuck for transport'

## Facts and Figures



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## Changes to Fare Charges

Some of our long-standing passengers will know that it is now more than three years since there has been an increase in the fare charges for passengers using Community Links.

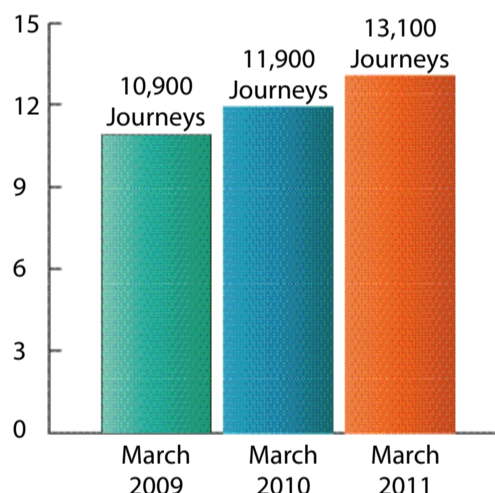
The Management Group which oversees the service has, reluctantly, agreed however that, with effect from Monday 3 October 2011, they will approve a small increase to £1.50 for a single journey and £3.00 for a return (formerly £1.30 and £2.60 respectively).

We hope that you still consider this to be good value for money and will continue to make use of this service.

Did you know that, from April 2010 to March 2011, the Community Links transport service.....

- Completed 13,136 passenger journeys!
- Travelled 89,822 miles!
- Provided 676 days service, by three operators?!

The graph on the right shows how the use of Community Links has increased over the past two years. The figures provided are to the nearest thousand.



## Why do people Use Community Links?

From the information we have received from our passengers in the Customer Feedback Questionnaires, which many of you have kindly returned to us in previous years, we are able to discover the main reasons why people use Community Links. The chart below shows you the results of this feedback:



Interestingly, we have had an increase in transporting customers to visit relatives and partners in nursing homes and also to relatives in their own homes across the district. These journeys would probably be far less frequent or, not possible at all, without Community Links. There has also been an increase in taking passengers from more rurally isolated villages into town, due to the loss of some public bus services. Many of our customers have made friends with the people they travel with regularly and are now asking to go on the same vehicle with them.

Please note: We have decided not to send out a questionnaire for 2011, but may be organising a number of face to face focus groups in the future so that we can hold proper discussions with some of our passengers about the service.

## ? Why not.....

....recommend the Community Links transport service to a friend or neighbour?

We find that word of mouth and personal recommendation are always the best way of attracting new passengers. If you would like us to send a leaflet to someone you know, who you think may benefit from using Community Links, then do let us know – but please ask them first as we don't want to offend anyone!

## Keeping you Young at Heart?!

Amazingly, of the regular passengers on Community Links, we now have:

- 64 customers aged 90+
- Several customers who are approaching 100
- 3 customers who are over 100!

So, we are beginning to wonder whether travelling on this community transport service helps to keep people 'young at heart' and actively out and about in their local community!

Working in Partnership



# 01789 264491

## Who answers this Telephone?

We thought that you may like to put faces to names and so when you next book a journey with Community Links you will have a picture of who you will most likely be speaking to!

### Gill (left on the photo)

I am married with a grown up son and daughter and three grandsons. My spare time is taken up with keeping my husband happy (!), running a local Girl Guide unit and belly dancing.

I cannot believe that I have now been working for Community Links for 4 years. The time has flown by and I have come to know some of our customers well. I really enjoy the job, even though some days I do get frustrated when I cannot fit everyone in how they wish; but most of our customers are happy with what we can provide for them.



### Louise (right on the photo)

I am married with 2 teenage daughters, one of whom is at university studying French and Spanish. In my spare time, I enjoy tap dancing and am learning Spanish. I am also a volunteer for a charity called Pets as Therapy, which involves me taking one of my dogs into a residential care home for residents who have dementia, and also into an "extra care" establishment for older people.

It is now almost 18 months since I joined the Community Links team and the job, which I enjoy, is generally very rewarding. Our passengers enjoy the telephone and face-to-face contact with all the Community Links team and on occasions they freely share information (medical or otherwise) with us that they don't share with anyone else - not even their family. The quality of service provided by Community Links allows people to feel that they still have some degree of independence and that they really do matter.

## COMMUNITY LINKS OPERATORS

### Who are They?

#### Back & 4th

B&4th is a community transport scheme operating in South Warwickshire. We are a not for profit organisation and have been in existence since 2002. We aim to serve people who are unable to access conventional transport means. This could be due to being disabled, elderly or rurally isolated. We have a fleet of minibuses that have full disabled access and have been designed with easy access for those with mobility problems. Our vehicles are available to hire with a volunteer driver for social and community organisations to access a range of services and facilities. All drivers are MiDAS trained and have undergone an enhanced CRB check.

B&4th operate a number of transport contracts on behalf of Warwickshire County Council, mainly transporting disabled children to and from school as well as helping to operate the Community Links Scheme.

#### Coachlinks

Hello, my name is Elaine Dunn and my Company, Coachlinks, operates four of the community links vehicles. Regular service users will know my drivers; Pete, Andrew, Sue, and Darren and some will have met me or my husband Tom when we cover holidays. Today was one of those days and I was driving the Town Trust vehicle, which is part funded by Stratford Town Trust, and transports people living within the Stratford Town area. Sometimes this vehicle carries out 16 passenger journeys on any one day and the regular driver, Pete, is adored by his clients; especially 'Mrs B' who feeds him up with homemade crumbles or sausage rolls or cakes every time she sees him!

It is good to meet our clients to hear their thoughts on the service and today was no exception and all comments were positive. You have to do this job to realise just how much people value the Community Links service. I know that every one of my drivers strive to preserve the independence of the people we transport for as long as possible, working hard to overcome difficulties clients might face within the boundaries of the service. I am very proud of all of them all.

#### Clarkes of Shipston

Clarkes of Shipston are a family run business in the south of the County who have provided transport for over 30 years. We have operated Community Links from the introduction of the scheme and with our caring and enthusiastic drivers have played a lead role in developing the service into the success it is today. Many of our customers count on the service as a lifeline including a lady we took right at the beginning who had not been out of the house for 10 years. We know many users who have gained independence and friendships through Community Links.

## What do Passengers say about the Service?

Below are some of the very positive comments which we have received recently from passengers about the Community Links service:

*"I feel I must say 'thank you' to you all for your kindness, courtesy and efficiency. I think it is a terrific service and it is making quite a positive difference to my life."*

*"It is a great service. Being picked up and dropped off at your own door reduces the amount of walking to and from the bus stop. This is very useful to me as I have osteoarthritis in my knees."*

*"My husband and I are without transport and both have some disabilities and so the Community Links service has enabled us to go swimming weekly. We have made new friends at the pool and also with other passengers who use the bus."*

We hope that you feel able to send in any compliments or complaints that you may have about the service as this enables us to continue to improve and develop whenever possible. Please use the special cards to provide this feedback and if you need more copies please phone: 01789 260108



## Volunteer Car Driver Scheme

If you are without transport and have a genuine need to attend health related appointments to, for example:

- \* Hospital
- \* Dentist
- \* Clinics
- \* Doctors
- \* Optician

the volunteer transport service, managed by Voluntary Action Stratford-on-Avon (VASA), will do their best to help you.

VASA require at least three working days notice and make a mileage charge of 45 pence per



mile for your journey to cover the cost of petrol.

**Please phone: 01789 262886 for further information.**