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Our community connected

Westway CT annual review 2024



“ We believe in the power of transport to bring our community together ”

Our community connected

Welcome to Westway CT’s Annual Review for 2023/24. This report explores our work to connect our communities, sets out data about our services and tells the stories of some of the groups and individuals who rely upon them.

At Westway CT, we believe in the power of transport to bring our community together; connecting people with one another and with all the things needed to lead a full and independent life. We hold that these connections are an essential thread in the fabric of our society, vital for all – and even more important for those who need extra support to get out and about. Transport is the great enabler; you can have the best services, the most welcoming clubs and the closest friends, but it means nothing if you cannot get to them.

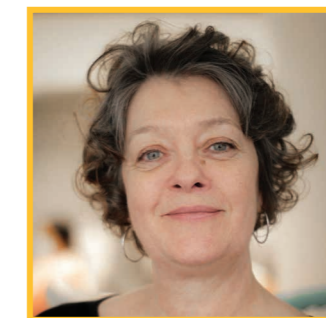
Westway CT was founded on these beliefs over 30 years ago, emerging as a response to the transport needs of our community in West London. Like many parts of the capital, our home borough of Kensington and Chelsea is one of contrasts, where the span of half a mile can represent an almost twenty-year difference in life expectancy¹ for its residents. In bringing our community together – working with members, partners and funders – we can help to narrow this social divide and jointly, by degrees, help to close it.

¹ ‘A deepening divide’ (2024), The Kensington + Chelsea Foundation

If we make bold claims about the impact of Community Transport, we must also prove that this is true. This year, Westway CT has been using the latest version of the Community Transport Social Value Toolkit, developed by fellow community transport operator ECT Charity. The Toolkit helps us quantify the impact of increased access to services, improved wellbeing and reduced healthcare costs – amongst a range of other measures – in economic terms. Early calculations suggest that our non-contract services generated an additional Social Value of £1,568,066.

Each passenger trip is also more than just a saving for the public purse. Each one represents a truly human story – a community group bringing its members together, an older person maintaining their independence, a friendship maintained or made.

This is the power of Community Transport; our community connected.



Kathleen Lyons
CEO Westway CT

Community matters, and Westway CT ensures that everyone has the chance to be part of theirs.

Colin Simmons,
Westway CT Chair



Introduction

About Westway CT

Westway CT is a Community Transport organisation, providing tens of thousands of socially driven passenger trips on our vehicles every year, serving our communities across Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster, and Hammersmith & Fulham. We provide a range of services – from minibuses and safety related training for community groups to door-to-door services for older and disabled people, which include Dial-a-Ride, shopper buses, excursions, and a volunteer car scheme. Westway CT has played a vital role in connecting our communities for over 30 years – providing appropriate, affordable travel for those who cannot use public transport, whether they be individual members or the beneficiaries of the extraordinarily diverse range of groups and organisations that deliver amazing work in our community.

We are deeply-rooted in the communities where we work, with a strong sense of place in everything we do. This ensures that our services are not just delivered to people, they are developed with them, helping us to collaboratively address unmet needs.

Making a difference

At Westway CT, we are strongly committed to making a difference everywhere we work – and across every service. This means we must always ask the question ‘did we, in fact, make a difference’ – and this report is our latest response. We believe that exploring this question and presenting our answer is not only important for accountability to our stakeholders, but it also helps us to learn and improve what we do.

We use a variety of means to understand our impact that go beyond the needful accounting of passenger trips. These include surveys and focus groups, applying user-led service design, consultation with our membership and the work of our management committee – our governance model ensures direct user representation.

Increasingly, we are looking to more formal approaches for understanding our impact. As set out on page 3, we are an early adopter of the new Social Value Toolkit for Community Transport, allowing us to put an economic value on the difference that we make.



What we do

Westway CT provides a variety of transport options based on the needs of our communities and members. We also deliver some services under contract where the work is either in line with our social mission or, as a social enterprise, makes a valuable contribution to our other work.

Group Transport: We support a wonderfully diverse range of community groups, clubs, societies, charities etc. with a subsidised, accessible alternative to commercial minibus hire, helping these groups to do their vital work and extend their reach.

Shopper services: Semi-scheduled door-to-door routes to different supermarkets for older people with mobility difficulties, providing in-store assistance and help with shopping bags or trolleys.

Volunteer car scheme: A one-to-one assisted door-to-door service delivered by volunteers driving their own cars or Westway CT's accessible car/MPVs. Often used for non-medical appointments, allowing visiting friends and family, or attending well-being classes.

Excursions programme: A popular regular offer of different outings and destinations, as chosen by and for our shopper and volunteer car users. Designed to reduce loneliness and bring joy, drivers and passengers have fun, are introduced to new places and have a great day out.

Dial-a-Ride: We deliver high specification, demand responsive, door-to-door Dial-a-Ride services for very elderly and disabled passengers on behalf of Transport for London in a number of London boroughs.

Van hire: Sometimes, our Group Transport members need to transport things rather than people – be that equipment, donations, goods or food. Our goods van enables short hires at subsidised rates.

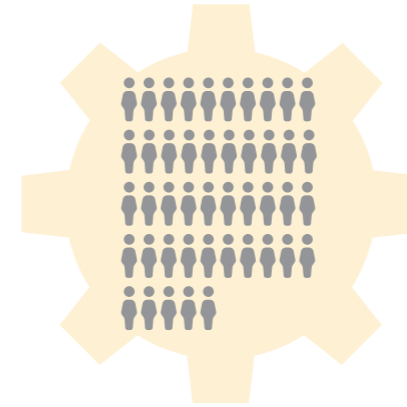
Training services: We deliver the Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS) training programme – the nationally recognised standards for minibus driving, enabling our Group Transport members to reduce costs by safely driving our vehicles themselves.

Whole Systems: Delivered on behalf of the NHS, we provide accessible MPV transport for vulnerable patients to help them access medical appointments and patient care.

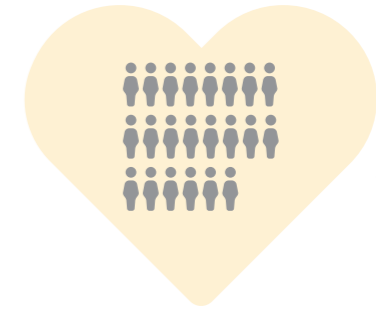
Home to School services: We provide mainstream home-to-school transport in West London on a commercial basis as a social enterprise. This not only contributes to our other work, but also reduces the environmental impact of the school run.

Our operation in numbers

45
Employees



22
Volunteers



12
Standard/semi-accessible
17 seat minibus



9
Accessible 17 seat
minibus



6
Low floor accessible
15-seater minibus



7
31-seater accessible
midi-coach



2
Accessible MPV



1
Accessible car



2
Standard car



1
Goods van



Fun 4 Over 50s, a Group Transport member organisation on a day out

Group transport

A rich fabric

The power of community

A core part of our work is supporting community groups and charities who improve the health, well-being and educational opportunities of disadvantaged residents. From children's play schemes to over 60s' social clubs, from faith groups to sports teams, from disability charities to non-statutory day centres and classes, delivering essential services and life enhancing activities, they are the warp and weft of our social fabric, bringing people together.

The impact of these groups is vast. In 2021 the voluntary sector in the UK delivered over £15bn of public services². The sense of connection created by these groups matters – people who feel a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood 'not at all strongly' are five times more likely to also report chronic loneliness³.

Bringing people together

Group Transport – the subsidised minibus service for community groups – has been a mainstay of our work since we began operations in 1991. Groups that join Westway CT as members can hire 15-17 seat standard or accessible minibuses to meet their transport needs. The vehicles can be hired with a driver, or we can train a group member to the MiDAS standard to join our driver pool to help them save money.

By supporting our groups to do what they do, we are helping them to achieve their goals. As such, we become a part of their story, enabling and magnifying their impact. Many of our groups tell us they would be less effective and inclusive without the type of vehicles and drivers we provide at non-commercial rates.

² UK Civil Society Almanac (2021), NCVO

³ 'Loneliness – What characteristics and circumstances are associated with feeling lonely?' ONS 2018

Group transport – our year in numbers

Our Group Transport service has seen broadly stable demand over the course of 2023/24, posting a small decrease in passenger numbers (fig.1). This suggests that the recovery from the pandemic reported in 2022/23 has been sustained, which is encouraging, but reflects anecdotal member budgetary pressures. These passenger trips varied by both the type of member group taking them (fig.2) and the reasons for the trip (fig.3).

To understand the impact of our Group Transport service in greater depth, Westway CT held a group member focus session during the year. The focus group allowed us to gain greater insight on what members valued about the service – and what they thought of our performance in terms of value for money, specific requirements, etc. The results are summarised opposite in fig.4.

Fig.1 Group Transport passenger trips



Fig. 2 Group Transport trips by group type

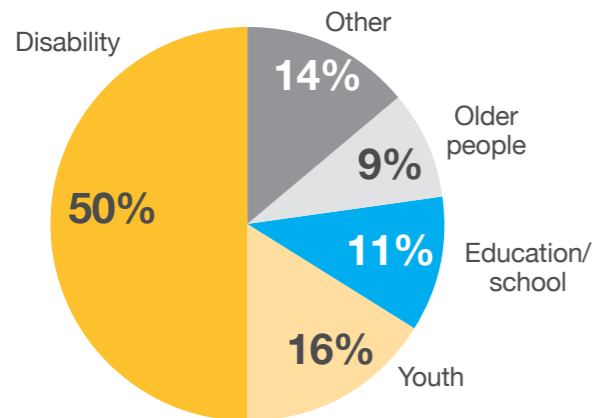


Fig.3 Group Transport trips by trip purpose

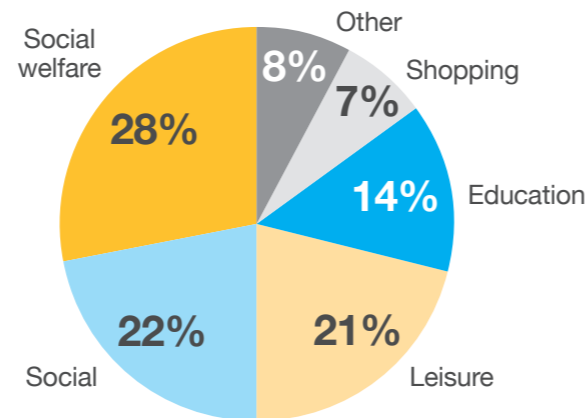
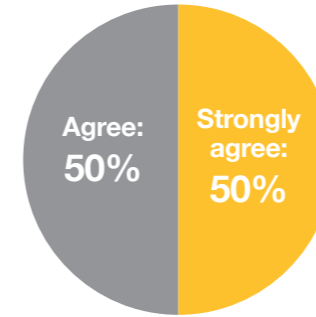


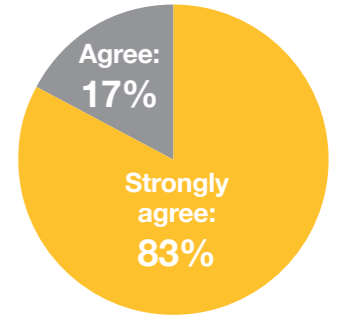
Fig. 4 Our focus group results

Westway CT...

...is essential for supporting vulnerable residents



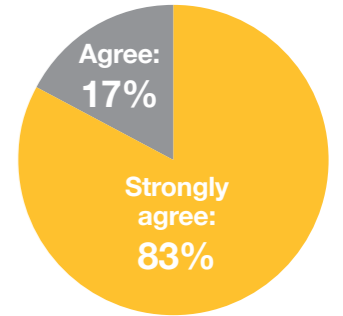
...provides value for money



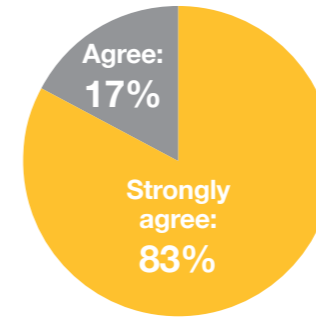
...improves wellbeing by getting people out and about



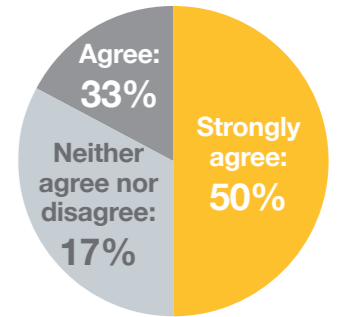
...MiDAS training supports capacity building



...ensures better safeguarding compared to public transport



...helps us continue to deliver our services



Westway CT has become a genuine part of the Full of Life story



Full of Life

Full of Life are a parent-run local charity in Kensington & Chelsea that supports disabled children and young adults with complex needs to live life to the fullest.

“When you’re the parent of a child with complex needs, it can be a bewildering journey” explains Sue Redmond, Chair at Full of Life. “We started in 1994 as a group of parents who were dissatisfied with the lack of information and support that we needed to raise a child with additional needs.

“We’ve grown a lot since then and now support over 750 families who are lifelong carers and live in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. We provide a specialist day centre for young people focussed on communication and personal development – plus comprehensive information, guidance and support for parents and families – amongst a range of other services.

“Getting out into the community, visiting new places and learning new things is vital for the people we work with. Whenever funding permits, we take off on new adventures! This is where Westway CT comes in, providing dedicated accessible community transport with professional passenger assistance to take people to and from the Full of Life centre. Day trips to places like Brighton, London Eye, Thames Valley Adventure Playground, The

London Aquarium and the Southbank are also in the pipeline.

“We believe that a great day out needs a great journey there and back again. Westway CT really understands the needs of the people we work with and treats them as individuals, not just passengers. The drivers and passenger assistants know the people we work with and our staff team well, and everyone works as a team together.

“Over the years, Westway CT has become a genuine part of the Full of Life story. This type of relationship, where there’s a real appreciation for what we do, for the impact our services have on the lives of children with complex needs, along with their parents and siblings, makes a real difference. Westway CT are not just the ‘transport’, they’re a real partner.”



“Our shopper services not only connect older and disabled people with supermarkets - but also bring people together”

Individual transport

The challenge of our times What we do

Year on year, the call to tackle loneliness and social isolation becomes louder and louder as its devastating effect on people’s lives is increasingly well understood. Study after study⁴ has confirmed earlier research on how loneliness can lead to an increase of death, equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day⁵. The risks are not only physical, with 60% of people experiencing chronic loneliness also experiencing mental distress⁶.

Access to local amenities is a simple prerequisite of independence and central to our quality of life. The landmark Food Provision in Later Life study⁷ revealed not only how challenging accessing a large supermarket was for older people, but also how important the journey was – often the week’s only social interaction. Online shopping cannot meet the whole experiential need.

As a consequence, we take the view that social isolation and loneliness, wellbeing and mental health are inextricably linked to accessibility – and that there is no solution that does not have a transport dimension.

Westway CT’s individual transport services aim to address these nested issues; we understand that a passenger trip always represents more than reaching a destination. Our shopper services not only connect older and disabled people with supermarkets – but also bring people together weekly for the journey there and back again, with time in the café; which builds a community of its own on the different routes.

The volunteer car scheme gives our users a supported taxi-type service with the freedom to choose when and where they go – and our committed volunteers know that conversation is a key part of the experience. Our excursions literally broaden horizons and social connections, helping our users to actively enjoy time and different experiences with others. Two of our main contracted services – Dial-a-Ride and Whole Systems – extend and complement the scope of our accessible, door-to-door transport to local residents.

4 <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/health-impact/>

5 Holt-Lunstad, J, Smith TB, Layton JB. (2010) “Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-Analytic Review” PLoS Med 7(7)

6 Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, Investigating factors associated with loneliness in adults in England (2022).

7 Wills, W., & Dickinson, A., (2016) ‘Improving food shopping for older people: Research briefing’ University of Hertfordshire

Individual transport – our year in numbers

In the 2023/24 financial year, we have grown passenger trips for our communities by 9.9% (2024: 70,357, 2023: 64,038). This encouraging result is mostly due to an expansion of our Transport for London (TfL) commissioned Dial-a Ride services, whose ridership has grown by well over a third (36.7%). This has been supported by organic growth in passenger trips on our Shopper Services (growth of 7.3%) and our excursions (growth of 6.8%). We have also seen our Volunteer Car Service passenger trips grow by a quarter (25%), a testament to the commitment of our volunteers.

Taken together, we are heartened to be reaching and helping more people across our communities. It is a part of the challenging, ongoing, yet essential work of rebuilding our services post-pandemic, supporting our service users to increase their travel confidence, rebuild their connections and preserve their independence. Growing the reach of our services, particularly during a cost-of-living-crisis, is a real achievement.

Fig.5 Total individual transport passenger trips



Fig.6 Shopper services passenger trips



Fig 7. Volunteer car scheme passenger trips

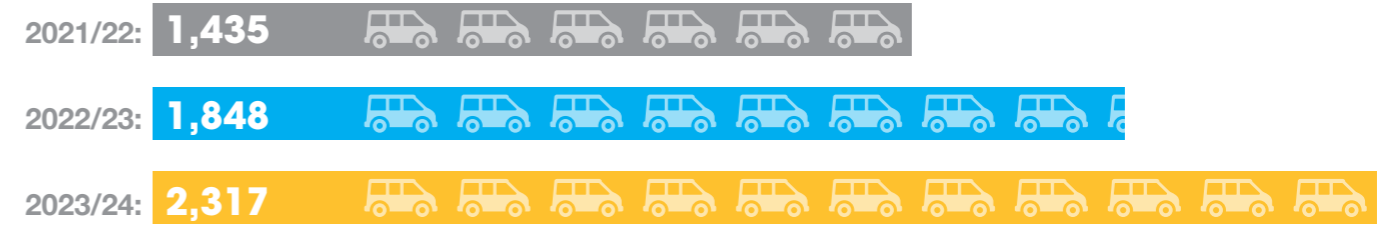


Fig. 8 Excursions passenger trips



Fig.9 Dial-a-Ride passenger trips



Fig. 10 Whole Systems passenger trips





“There’s nothing nicer than going out with your friends, rather than sitting at home, lonely”

Esther, George, Glenda, Jackie and Jessie

“There’s nothing nicer than going out with your friends, rather than sitting at home, lonely” explains Glenda, who along with Esther, George, Jackie and Jessie use our individual transport services to get out and about. Travelling together is an added bonus. These neighbours in sheltered housing began using Westway CT after outings organised by their block social committee became less practical. Jessie and Glenda cannot get on the mainstream buses (“Well, I can get on – but I can’t get off again!” clarifies Glenda), so these services have become a lifeline.

Accessing larger supermarkets is important. “We went to Morrisons, which is the only place that has fresh fish, a deli and a butcher” said George. “If you go to the shop yourself, not online, you can pick what you actually want, not what someone else picks for you”. Jessie adds “It’s got a ramp – and a good café. If the shopper bus didn’t exist, I’d have to take a taxi.”

These users also take advantage of the excursions’ programme. George prefers trips to garden centres, Glenda prefers trips to the pub, but in all cases, says George “As soon as the list of destinations comes out, we’re booking our trips.”

The excursions enable lifelong friendships to continue. “I’ve known Jessie since we were 15 years old” said Esther. “With these trips, we’re still able to go out and have a laugh, same as then.” It also helps to make new friends met along the way. Jackie said “on the trips we meet other lovely people.”

This focus group is absolutely clear on what this means to them. “Using your services keeps me out of the doctor’s surgery” said Jessie. “I was married for 60 years and, having lost my husband, I feel loneliness and isolation even more if I have nothing to do. Without Westway we’d be trapped indoors.”

Glenda concludes “If someone was hesitating about joining and using the service, I’d say ‘Don’t be silly, stuck indoors getting depressed when you could be out with us having a good time!’”



“Travelling together means no one misses out on the banter”



“I am housebound and haven’t been out of the house for years... This has been such a wonderful day”

“It has made an enormous difference to my life”

“We would have to buy a minibus”

“We couldn’t have grown our service without Westway CT”

“The respect these drivers show us, we could be their grandmother”

“There’s nothing nicer than going out with your friends, rather than sitting at home, lonely”



“We’ve increased participation in the community”

“Using your services keeps me out of the doctor’s surgery”

“Without this service we’d be stuck indoors”

“Without transport... some people wouldn’t be able to attend”



Engaged, responsive, accountable

A Registered Society

Westway CT is proud to be a Registered Society, which means that we are mutually ‘owned’ by local community organisations and are accountable to them through our membership. This legal form ensures that our members have a voice, that we can take decisions together and that those decisions come from a profound sense of place.

Unlike the majority of transport providers, we are democratically oriented rather than profit- driven. In a very practical sense, being accountable in this way to our members shapes everything we do. It affects how we work, how we engage with our stakeholders and how we respond to our communities’ needs.

It means we approach all our relationships in a spirit of partnership – with our members and users, the wider voluntary sector, commissioners and funders, and other supporters. This, in turn, means our services are developed and refined through co- production – such as establishing new routes and vehicle specifications based on user feedback, or swiftly helping to address emergency situations.

Our Governance

We not only listen to our community, we are accountable to it directly through our governance. Our Management Committee – which has broadly the same responsibilities as a charity board of trustees – is made up of our members and is democratically elected by the shareholding membership.

We’d like to thank our Management Committee for their work and support across the year: Ximena Chiesa (Age UK – Kensington & Chelsea), Pepe Francis (Ebony Steel Band Trust), Mark Kitchen (I&UCL Sailing Club), Abdurahman Sayed (Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre), Bee Burgess (Open Age), Hamida Diriye (Royal Parks), Colin Simmons (Rugby Portobello Trust), Ed Simpson (The Harrow Club), Pattrina Quashie-Ferguson (The Venture Centre), Liz Greeley (Westway CT Individual Services Member), Henry Bacon (Westway CT Treasurer Co-optee), who took over from Nicholas Steventon-Pell last September and Tim Sai Louie (Westway CT Volunteer Team).



“With Westway CT, we travel as a team”

Minds United FC

Minds United FC is an England-Accredited Football Club providing football opportunities for people with mental health issues and disabilities.

“Minds United has grown significantly since we started in 2019, when we had just one community pitch” explains Tarik Kaidi, Minds United CEO. “We now have a full community programme at Westway sports centre, we’re in three leagues and have two female teams and two male teams. We couldn’t have realised that growth if it wasn’t for Westway CT.

“We can do more for the players with Westway CT. We’ve been able to help increase participation in the community for football. We can get to our games, go to events, tournaments, and when the women’s team went to meet England player Jill Scott, Westway CT got us there.”

For Minds United, Community Transport means much more than simple logistics. “With Westway CT, we travel as a team” continues Tarik. “This is a way to help our members who struggle with their mental health, who benefit from having travel organised for them, or struggle with travelling alone.

“Travelling together means no one misses out on the banter and enjoying the pre-game atmosphere – it’s more inclusive. It’s nice that we can all have a good chat before the game, checking on each other’s well-being and just being able to socialise and bond before the game is really important.

“Without the service, some people wouldn’t be able to afford to attend, we would have to find other ways of travelling which might not be comfortable for people with different needs and issues or we would have to buy a minibus.”

The impact of Minds United on its team members is extraordinary. “It’s helped me a great deal” said Myra, Goalkeeper. “I used to be housebound, because I have bipolar and stuff. A good friend told me ‘come on down to the club’ and as soon as I started, I absolutely loved it. I can talk to people there because they’re going through stuff like me. We’re all excited on the bus, having a laugh and everyone’s hyped up, but there’s always someone by your side if you need anyone.”

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