Marnhull Village Care

A warm welcome to the Village & Support in our Community

VOLUNTEER DRIVER GUIDELINES (Nov 2025)

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Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to be a driver with Marnhull Village Care (MVC). You provide a very important service for the community.

Please familiarise yourself with these guidelines, prepared in accordance with MVC's duty of care to our passengers and to yourself, and aligned with Dorset Council's 'Good Practice Guidelines for Voluntary Car Schemes'.

In case of any doubt, please call the MVC car service coordinator on 07777 559076.

Your commitment

You will be contacted by an MVC car service coordinator from time to time to see if you can give someone a lift; usually to a medical appointment. You should not worry about declining the request if you need to. There is no obligation on you to accept.

Nor should you hesitate to tell the coordinator if you cannot provide a lift previously agreed - because you are unwell, for example. We would appreciate as much notice of this as you can give; but we do not want you to drive if you are not fit to do so.

If you are unable to provide a lift over a period of twelve months we will contact you to discuss whether you wish to remain on our list of volunteers. If we are unable to contact you, or if you resign, we will delete your personal information from our records and cancel your hospital parking permit (see 'Parking' below).

For ease of communication we use WhatsApp group messaging (see below). You are not required to join the WhatsApp group if you do not wish to do so.

Volunteer Driver Information Form

We ask you to complete an information form when joining the MVC car service, and to update it as necessary.

The form has two parts. The first part gives us the information we need to contact you and records any general restrictions on your availability. It also asks for your car registration number(s) so that we can arrange hospital parking permits for you.

In the second part we ask you to confirm that you and your car(s) are fit to provide this service, in accordance with Dorset Council's guidelines and MVC's duty of care.

If something happens which means that you would be unable to complete the form - your car fails its MoT test, for example, or you are medically advised not to drive for a period - please let us know. We cannot ask you to drive for us again until the issue has been resolved.

The contact and car registration information contained in the first part of the form is transferred to a spreadsheet shared by the MVC car service coordinators. It is also available to the MVC committee.

The information contained in the second part of the form is held in strict confidence by the MVC committee member responsible for the car service overall.

When you retire as an MVC volunteer driver both parts of your information form will be deleted / destroyed.

How the service works

Someone needing a lift - usually to a medical appointment - contacts MVC on 07777 559076. This phone is held by one of our car service coordinators, on a rota basis. The coordinator takes the details, including the passenger's name, address and phone number and the appointment date, time and location. The coordinator should also ensure that the passenger is aware that there is a charge for this service, payable in cash: see 'Car service charges' below.

The coordinator contacts our drivers either by WhatsApp group message (see below) or direct, seeking a volunteer able to make the requested trip. If you accept, the coordinator gives you the details and asks you to contact your passenger to confirm a pick-up time.

You pick up your passenger as agreed and take them to their appointment. Usually you wait until they are ready to be taken home. For very long appointments another driver may be asked to do the return trip; but this is unusual.

Arrange with your passenger how they will let you know when they are ready to go home. They may ask you to accompany them to, and back from, a reception desk, waiting area etc, but you are not required to stay there. It is best to give them your mobile phone number so that they or a member of staff can call you when ready.

Your passenger will pay you the MVC fee and, in some circumstances, any parking charge you may have incurred. Please see below, 'Parking' and 'Receipts'.

The MVC WhatsApp group

Most of our drivers are in an MVC WhatsApp group. When a request is received, the coordinator will usually send a message to the group, with the trip's date, time and destination. If you would like to do the trip, reply to the group message accordingly. The coordinator will then contact you direct to pass on the passenger's details.

You do not have to be in the WhatsApp group. The coordinator can use other means to contact you direct (phone, text, email etc) if you prefer.

Changes to trip details, cancellations etc

The coordinator will tell you if trip details change. If your passenger contacts you direct to cancel or re-arrange a trip, let the coordinator know so that we can amend our records.

Holidays etc

Please let the coordinator know if you will be unavailable to drive for a period.

Risk assessment

We do not conduct formal passenger risk assessments. We rely on the passenger to notify the MVC coordinator of any special needs when asking for a lift.

In practice, however, you naturally carry out an informal risk assessment when you pick the passenger up. If you have any doubts at that stage you should call the coordinator for advice, on 07777 559076.

Confidentiality

Please regard all details of MVC runs - who, where to, etc - as confidential between yourself, your passenger and the MVC coordinator. Respecting confidentiality also extends to information the passenger may volunteer during the journey.

Things to take with you

- Your mobile phone
- Pen and paper
- Cash, including change for when your passenger pays you
- Your parking permit (see 'Parking' below)
- A credit / debit card for emergencies

Car service charges

MVC charge fixed rates for all destinations: please see your MVC car service rate card. The charge is payable in cash. If you are asked to take a passenger to a destination not on the card the MVC coordinator will tell you what the fee should be.

Our charges are based on HMRC-approved mileage allowances and do not need to be declared as income for tax purposes. They are intended to cover your costs for the return trip. No allowance is made for waiting time.

You are asked not to waive the charge: this can create confusion. However, if a passenger expresses concern about the cost you can draw their attention to the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme, under which they may be able to reclaim the fee if they are on benefits. They should search for 'healthcare travel costs' on the NHS website, www.nhs.uk. See also 'Receipts' below.

If a passenger cannot pay on the day please notify the MVC car service coordinator.

Parking

Facilities for volunteer parking vary between locations. For hospitals please refer to your copy of NHS Dorset's 'Guide to Hospital Parking for Volunteer Drivers'. Most doctors' and dentists' surgeries etc provide free parking.

MVC administer the permit you need to display if using a designated hospital volunteer parking space: this is why we ask for your car registration number(s). The permit will need to be replaced periodically and if you change your car. It must be returned when you cease to be an MVC volunteer driver.

At some locations numberplate recognition technology allows free access: but do refer to NHS Dorset's Guide, as details vary. Please notify the MVC coordinator if you experience difficulty with these systems.

Try to find free parking elsewhere if you cannot park for free on-site.

If you have to pay for parking you have a number of options. If shopping, for example, while waiting for your passenger please cover any parking charge yourself. If simply waiting you may choose to add a parking charge to the mileage charge paid by the passenger, or you can apply to MVC for recompense.

Blue Badges

If you or your passenger have a Blue Badge you may use a disabled person's parking bay, displaying the badge as required: the badge refers to the holder, not the vehicle. Note that it does not necessarily exempt you from a parking charge: check the signage!

Receipts

We do not usually offer receipts for the MVC car service charge. However, your passenger will need one if applying under the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (see 'Car service charges' above) and may request one in any event.

Blank receipt forms are provided when you join MVC: ask for more as necessary.

Fines and penalties

Neither your passenger nor MVC can accept responsibility for fines or penalties which you may incur during the journey. However, please let the coordinator know if you incur a penalty charge at a hospital site. In some circumstances these can be refunded.

Over-payments

Some passengers may wish to pay you more than the set rate for the journey. If they insist please advise them that this will be treated as a donation to MVC (to avoid infringing HMRC rules), and pay the surplus into the Marnhull Village Care bank account by BACS when convenient. The sort code is 30-99-50 and the account number 61749368. Please add the reference 'donation'. Thank you.

Insurance

Your ordinary vehicle insurance should cover you and your passengers. MVC do not have or require any special insurance arrangements.

We advise you to notify your insurance company that you are participating in a voluntary car scheme exempted under the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981, and that you receive only a mileage allowance for this in accordance with HMRC guidelines. There should be no effect on your social, domestic & pleasure cover or premium.

Please note, however, that if a passenger contacts you direct and you charge for the trip but do not notify the MVC coordinator, there may be a risk that you are invalidating your insurance. Always ensure that the coordinator is aware of trips you charge for.

Note too that if you accept more than the standard fare and do not pass the surplus to MVC you may be seen as operating a commercial service. Besides the tax implications this too might invalidate your insurance.

No smoking

Although vehicles used primarily for private purposes are not covered by no-smoking regulations, MVC has a no smoking policy for drivers and passengers. This includes drivers not smoking in their vehicles on the way to pick up a passenger or whilst waiting in the car. This is to protect people with possible respiratory conditions. If you smoke, thank you for abiding by this policy.

Seat belts

Drivers and passengers must normally wear seat belts. If your passenger has a Medical Exemption Certificate stating that wearing a belt could worsen their medical condition, it is best for the passenger to sit unbelted in the rear seat on the passenger side, with no-one sitting in the front passenger seat.

Children must use a child car seat if under 12 years old or 135 cm tall. You should only transport children if the accompanying parent or guardian provides and fits the seat. Never place a rear-facing child restraint in a seat with an active airbag in front of it.

Requests for additional assistance

Your passenger may ask you for additional assistance. What you do about such requests is largely up to you. You may or may not be able to call at a shop, for example, during the journey. You can agree to take the passenger on future trips, so long as you inform the MVC coordinator that you will be doing so (if the trip is to be paid for).

However, please do not commit yourself or MVC to anything more than the car service. If your passenger asks for other help advise them to ring the MVC number - 07777 559076. We will try to put them in touch with a suitable support organisation.

For requests for physical assistance - help in getting in or out of your car, for example - see 'How to help passengers' below.

Transporting pets

MVC do not normally transport pets, but this may be agreed by the MVC coordinator and the driver. In such cases the owner or their representative should always accompany and be responsible for the animal. It should be restrained in a suitable pet carrier and both the passenger and the pet should travel in the back of the vehicle.

How to help passengers

(advice adapted from 'Good Practice Guidelines for Dorset Voluntary Car Schemes')

Always ask the passenger what help is needed: do not presume anything.

You should not lift or take the weight of your passenger, but be ready to assist them into and out of your vehicle if they require it. Mind they do not bump their head.

On leaving their home encourage the passenger to:

- Make sure that their property is secure and they have their keys
- Bring any medication they may need during the trip
- Check they have all they need for the appointment, including documentation.

On returning home:

- See the passenger to their door
- Make sure they are happy and safe to be left
- Notify the MVC coordinator if you have any concerns.

(continued overleaf)

If there is no reply when collecting a passenger:

- Ring the passenger's contact phone number
- Ring the MVC coordinator to check the appointment details
- Make enquiries with neighbours
- In cases of real anxiety ring 999, informing the MVC coordinator that you have done so.

A passenger with hearing or speech problems:

- Always carry a pen and paper so that you can give them information
- Invite the passenger to write down what they would like to say to you
- Remember that kind, clear actions often speak louder than words.

A passenger with sight impairment:

- Always guide the passenger by letting them hold your arm: resist the natural temptation to steer them from behind
- Offer your arm, having asked which arm they prefer to take
- Check that their feet are pointing in the same direction as yours
- As you walk together keep your arm down by your side: their arm should be bent to hold your elbow and they will be walking beside you and half a step behind
- As you walk the natural movement of your body will convey when to stop or turn: it will also help them to gauge the height of kerbs and steps
- Talk to them about hazards ahead
- When approaching stairs it is important to say whether they are going up or down and to make it clear when they are on the last step
- When getting into a car, help the passenger to find the open door and, with their right hand, the car roof so that they can gauge the height of the door. Encourage them to find the seat and get in without your intervention. Watch that they do not bump their head.
- When getting out of the car, it is best to open the passenger's door for them from the outside. Tell them about the position of the kerb.

A passenger who has had a stroke:

- Speak slowly and clearly rather than loudly
- Say a little at a time and be prepared to repeat it if the passenger does not grasp what is said at once
- Allow plenty of time for them to take in what you say and to respond
- Speak simply but not as though they were a child
- Walk at their pace
- Concentrate on one task at a time: talking whilst walking, for example, may be impossible.

Dealing with emergencies

(advice adapted from 'Good Practice Guidelines for Dorset Voluntary Car Schemes')

Always take your mobile phone if you have one, and pen and paper. Some cash and a charge card may also be useful in an emergency.

If you find your passenger unwell at home:

- If the situation is serious, or if you are in doubt, call the ambulance service by dialling 999
- If less serious, ask if they would like you to call their doctor, or NHS 111
- Ask if they would like neighbours or relatives informed
- Notify the hospital, surgery etc where they were expected
- Notify the MVC coordinator.

If your passenger becomes unwell in transit:

- Stop somewhere safe
- Investigate the problem: does the passenger know the cause?
- Seek advice from NHS 111 or, if the situation is serious, call the ambulance service by dialling 999
- Notify the hospital, surgery etc where they were expected
- Notify the MVC coordinator.

If your vehicle breaks down:

- Try to stop somewhere safe
- If this is not possible, switch on the hazard lights and take your passenger to a safe place
- Notify the MVC coordinator, who will try to arrange for a second volunteer to pick your passenger up
- Call your breakdown organisation if you have one. If it is likely that the second volunteer will not arrive for some time, explain that you are carrying a vulnerable passenger as part of a volunteer car scheme.
- Notify the hospital, surgery etc where they were expected.

If you are involved in an accident:

- If anyone is seriously injured call 999
- Take your passenger to a safe place if necessary
- Notify the MVC coordinator, who will take appropriate supporting action
- If another vehicle is involved exchange details as normal
- Call your breakdown organisation as above
- Notify, or ask the MVC coordinator to notify, the hospital, surgery etc where your passenger was expected.