



Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
Health and Social Care Trust



VOLUNTARY CAR SERVICE TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service recognises the important role that voluntary assistance plays in complementing its staff and supports and encourages the efforts of the voluntary sector. The purpose of voluntary services is a two way process; that of helping to meet and enhance the care of patients, their relatives and carers and to provide an avenue for members of the community to offer their services.

Volunteers have traditionally fulfilled an important role within the provision of Health and Social Care services in Northern Ireland. The contribution made by volunteers is wide and varied. In the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service this is carried out by volunteers driving patients to and from Healthcare facilities to receive various forms of treatment.

The Voluntary Car Service is a purely **voluntary** scheme which operates under the auspices of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health & Social Care Trust (NIAS) who maintain a register of the volunteer drivers. People who volunteer to join this service are **NOT** employees. The service is provided by volunteers who, using their own private vehicles, transport patients from their own home address to and from Healthcare facilities.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

Before an application can be considered, there are several basic requirements which must be met:-

1. Driving Licence

Volunteers must hold a current unrestricted and unendorsed driving licence.

2. Vehicle Type

The volunteer must own the vehicle, which is to be used whilst they are registered with the Voluntary Car Service. All vehicles must be of a 4/5 door design, to allow free and easy access, to and from the rear seats. All vehicles must be kept clean and roadworthy at all times.

3. Telephone/Mobile

Volunteer drivers must have access to a telephone either in their own home or have a mobile. It is not acceptable to quote a neighbour, friend or relative's telephone number.

4. Physical Fitness

All Voluntary Car Service drivers must be physically fit and may be required to undergo a medical examination, carried out by the Trust's Occupational Health Department.

5. Availability

Volunteers will be asked to nominate at least one fixed day per week (Monday – Friday) when they will be available for Voluntary Car Service duties. The hours assigned per day vary, however they will generally fall between 8am and 6pm.

6. Road Fund Licence (Motor Tax) and Insurance

All vehicles must be taxed and insured with comprehensive cover or at least 3rd party Class A, which includes "business use" and "social, domestic and pleasure" cover. It is the volunteer driver's responsibility to ensure that they are fully covered by insurance in respect of claims

arising as a result of accident or injury to passengers whom they are asked to convey or third parties.

All voluntary drivers must ensure that NIAS is fully indemnified by their (i.e. Voluntary driver's) motor insurance in respect of all claims arising whilst in the course of this voluntary service. Drivers must inform their insurance company of this requirement and satisfy themselves and the Trust by providing written evidence that they are fully covered. They must provide to the Non-Emergency Services Manager:

- 1. Sight of their Certificate of Insurance**
- 2. Details of the Insurance Company**
- 3. Policy Number**
- 4. Renewal date in respect of the vehicle used**

7. Declaration of Criminal Convictions/Cautions/Road Traffic or Motoring Offences

Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) Order Northern Ireland 1979, the Northern Ireland Health and Social Services are included in the list of excepted authorities. As such, **all** criminal convictions/cautions/road traffic or motoring offences regardless of when they occurred **must be** declared at the time of applying and subsequently any convictions/cautions/road traffic or motoring offences received whilst engaging as a Voluntary Car Service driver should immediately be brought to the attention of the Non-Emergency Services Manager.

8. AccessNI Checks

The Trust will carry out an AccessNI vetting check on all those who register to join the Voluntary Car Service. Failure to complete the appropriate vetting forms will result in the application being rejected. Any information received in connection with the vetting will be discussed with the applicant and a decision made as to whether or not they can join the Register.

9. References

The Trust will seek two references in respect of the volunteer. These references must be deemed to be satisfactory before a person can be placed on the Register and will be held on the volunteer's file.

STANDARDS OF DRIVING

The Trust relies upon the co-operation of Voluntary Car Service drivers to ensure that clients are conveyed to and from Healthcare facilities as effectively and as comfortably as possible. Volunteer drivers are expected to maintain a high standard of mechanical efficiency in all cars registered with the Voluntary Car Service. Patients, probably already apprehensive concerning their condition, are liable to considerable mental and physical discomfort from inconsiderate driving, hard braking, excess speed etc. Safe driving standards are vital at all times and inspire confidence.

It is a condition of registration as a Voluntary Car Service driver that any disability which affects driving ability and as a consequence may subject a patient to risk whilst in the driver's car, should immediately be reported to the Non-Emergency Services Manager.

CONVEYANCE OF PATIENTS

Journeys are arranged so far as may be reasonably convenient for clients and drivers to convey more than one client per car to save unnecessary duplication of mileage and expense. Escorts may only be conveyed where specially authorised. No other passengers should travel as any spare seating may be required for additional clients on return journeys.

Animals and pets (with the exception of guide/assistance dogs) must not be carried.

CARE OF PATIENTS CONVEYED BY VOLUNTARY CAR SERVICE

The Voluntary Car Service is for patients who are unable, for medical reasons to travel by public transport and have to attend a Healthcare facility for treatment. Volunteers must be considerate to patients at all times. They must help them to enter and alight from cars and see them safely into the Healthcare facility and comfortably settled into their own home upon return.

Seat belts must be used by all passengers.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Volunteers must be aware that in the course of carrying out their voluntary work they will have access to and be entrusted with information in respect of the services, business and financing of the Trust and its dealings, transactions and affairs, all of which are or may be confidential.

Volunteers shall not, except in the proper course of their duties, during or after the period of their voluntary work divulge to any person whomsoever or otherwise make use of (and shall use your best endeavours to prevent the publication or disclosure of) any trade secret or any confidential information concerning the business or finances of the Trust or any such confidential information.

All notes and memoranda of any intellectual property or confidential information concerning the business of the Trust which shall be acquired, received or made by the volunteer during the course of their voluntary work shall be the property of the Trust and shall be surrendered by them to someone duly authorised in that regard at the end of their engagement or at the request of the Trust at any time during the course of their engagement.

IDENTIFICATION OF DRIVERS

Identity cards will be issued to all drivers and must be carried at all times whilst on Voluntary Car Service business and shown to a patient or other person who may reasonably request to see evidence of a Voluntary Driver's identity.

SMOKING

Voluntary drivers must bear in mind that some patients find tobacco smoke objectionable and are therefore asked to refrain from smoking whilst conveying patients. Whether or not patients are permitted to smoke is a matter for the driver's discretion. Patients/escorts must not be permitted to smoke when there are other patients/escorts in the car.

WASTED JOURNEYS

When a patient whom a driver has been asked to convey fails to travel the Volunteer Driver must telephone a brief report to the Non-Emergency Ambulance Control Centre at the earliest opportunity.

REIMBURSEMENT

Being on the Voluntary Car Service Register **is not** considered as employment. Drivers offer their services on a **voluntary** basis but will be paid a mileage allowance per mile to cover expenses. Subsistence allowances are paid when the driver is absent from their home for a continuous period of five hours or more.

Drivers also receive reimbursement for telephone expenses incurred while contacting the Non-Emergency Ambulance Control Centre on matters relating to any changes in planned arrangements e.g. where a patient is unable to travel.

DAILY MILEAGE

On return home, the Voluntary Car Driver must ring the Non-Emergency Ambulance Control Centre and inform the Planning Officer or in her/his absence, the Duty Officer of his/her total daily mileage. This is in addition to recording it on the sheet provided for payment purposes.

CLAIMS FOR VOLUNTARY CAR SERVICE DRIVERS

Forms to claim subsistence are obtained from the Non-Emergency Ambulance Control Centre. All forms must be completed fully, giving details of patients' names, addresses, journeys etc, and returned to the Regional Non-Emergency Services Manager by the 20th of each month. All claims forms will be verified and then forwarded to the Finance Department for payment. Any queries will be addressed by the Non-Emergency Services Manager.

TERMINATION OF ENGAGEMENT

Membership of the Voluntary Car Service is entirely **voluntary** and therefore either the driver or Trust may terminate the engagement, without the need to give a period of notice.

REGIONAL NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL DISPATCH CENTRE

The Non-Emergency Ambulance Control Centre will plan and co-ordinate all Voluntary Car Service journeys. A day's journeys are normally planned on the day preceding the journey and it is therefore desirable that those days are kept completely clear of all other commitments if at all possible. At times of sickness or holiday etc as much notice as possible should be provided to the Non-Emergency Services Manager.

Requests for journeys are passed to drivers from the Non-Emergency Ambulance Control Centre (usually the day preceding the journey) however on occasions volunteers can be asked to assist at short notice. If the request is accepted on your behalf by another person eg, a member of your

family, you must phone the Non-Emergency Ambulance Control Centre to confirm your availability to carry out the request.

Requests **must not** be accepted from any source other than Non-Emergency Ambulance Control Centre or in exceptional circumstances the Emergency Ambulance Control Centre.

VISITS TO NON-EMERGENCY AMBULANCE CONTROL CENTRE

An invitation will be extended to all newly registered Voluntary Car Service Drivers to visit the Non-Emergency Ambulance Control Centre to observe how the Voluntary Car Service is co-ordinated in relation to overall ambulance service operations.

STATUS OF VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

Volunteers are **NOT** employees of the Trust and will not receive remuneration although expenses will be paid.

TAX IMPLICATIONS

The Inland Revenue has specific rules for volunteer drivers and a tax liability may arise if the volunteer makes a “profit” (payment received during a tax year which comes to more than the expenses incurred). This guidance is provided to volunteers on a regular basis and they are responsible for calculating any liability and providing details directly to HMRC. The Approved Mileage Allowance Payments rates for volunteers will be changing in this new tax year (2011) and revised rates will be issued to volunteers along with a reminder of potential tax implications and responsibilities.

EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES

Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Exemption Certificates pertain to Voluntary Car work only and do not extend to any other use.

CHANGE OF PERSONAL DETAILS

If a Voluntary Car Service driver changes their car registration details, their insurance or address they must inform the Non-Emergency Services Manager at Non-Emergency Ambulance Control Centre immediately.