

Guaranteed ride home

Offering people the possibility of a guaranteed ride home can help encourage them to make the move to more sustainable and active travel options.

This toolkit gives comprehensive advice on the implications, benefits and barriers to setting up a guaranteed ride home scheme and offers positive examples of businesses who already offer guaranteed rides home to their staff.

Why implement a guaranteed ride home scheme?

A key barrier and concern preventing employees from travelling more sustainably is how they would get home quickly in an emergency, particularly for those with dependents.

Offering a guaranteed ride home in an emergency provides peace of mind and is an easy way to encourage staff to travel by different modes other than alone by car.

The cost of operating this service has been found to be very low in practice because it is hardly used, but the policy saves the employer much more through staff using more sustainable and active ways to travel.

What is a guaranteed ride home scheme?

If employees walk, cycle, take public transport or car share for their commute to work, a guaranteed ride home scheme ensures a lift home in the event of an emergency or unexpected event.

Examples that qualify include personal or family illness or crisis. You can also consider including non-emergency situations such as unscheduled overtime or someone's car sharing partner being unable to take them home as planned.

In these situations, the employer covers the cost of the employee returning home. The mode of transport to take, depends on the situation and the scheme the organisation runs.

Benefits and costs

Guaranteed ride home schemes can significantly increase the use of alternative ways to travel to work.

Guaranteed ride home schemes usually cost less than most employers initially expect. The main costs are the expenses for program administration and subsidising trips.

Tax implications

The HM Revenue & Customs, 490 Employee travel, A tax and NICs guide for employers states:

Where an employee who regularly travels to work as part of a car sharing scheme finds that due to unforeseen and exceptional circumstances they cannot on a particular occasion get home in the shared car, an employer can pay for the employee's journey home tax-free and NICs-free.

Unforeseen and exceptional circumstances include those where the employee travels home at their normal time but, for reasons beyond their control, they cannot travel in the shared car at that time.

They do not include circumstances where, on any occasion, inability to travel home in the shared car might reasonably have been anticipated before the employee set off for work that day. Nor is this allowed on more than 60 journeys in a tax year. Any journeys that qualify for tax relief under the late night travel rules must be included in working out whether the limit of 60 journeys has been reached.

How is it implemented?

A guaranteed ride home scheme should specify the following:

- **Who is eligible?** The programme could cover all employees, or only those who use alternative modes for a specified portion of commuting.
- **What trips are eligible?** The programme could cover any trip, or it could be limited to unexpected business appointments, employee or family member sickness.
- **Maximum number of uses allowed** during a certain period, maximum miles within a period, or maximum cost per trip.
- **Who is responsible for implementation?** A named member of staff or department should be given responsibility for managing the scheme.
- **Procedures** for using the guaranteed ride home scheme.
- **Appropriate forms** (e.g. registration and reimbursement vouchers).

Your policy should be shared with all managers and staff via various communication channels (e.g. intranet, newsletters, team meetings etc.) to ensure that everyone is aware of the details of the scheme. It should also be introduced to new staff as part of their induction process.

Case studies

Louise Ruscoe – Green Travel Manager from EDF Energy told us:

“We offer a guaranteed ride home policy for all those staff that participate in car sharing. This means that in any emergency we would ensure that all car sharing parties can get home either by arranging for a lift home with another colleague and by this if it was at an earlier time than their usual shift pattern, we would not require them to work the additional time and if we could not identify another member of staff to take them home, then a taxi would be provided at no cost to the employee.

The reason we offer this facility is to remove any potential barrier to those considering car sharing, as it is always a worry when considering how to get home quickly in an emergency, and to do everything to support our staff that make the effort to car share.

I’m happy to say that in the last 7 years the scheme has been running; less than 5 taxis have needed to be provided as in all other cases an alternative lift has been found.”

At the University of Exeter, their Emergency Travel Home (ETH) Scheme will fund/part fund University formal car sharing teams a return journey home should their lift fail in the event of an emergency or unforeseen problem. You can find out more about the scheme on the [University of Exeter website](#).

Further information and support

Want to encourage smarter travel to work at your workplace? Devon County Council can offer support* to organisations who want to enable their staff to travel more sustainably and actively. Please get in touch via traveldevon@devon.gov.uk for more information.

*Support offered will depend on availability of funding and engagement and commitment of your workplace.

This page was last updated February 2023.

URLs

- University of Exeter’s Emergency Travel Home Scheme: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/sustainability/travel/car/carsharing/#tab2>

TRAVELDEVON
Travel toolkit for businesses

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