

HOW TO ENCOURAGE CAR SHARING AT YOUR WORKPLACE



A strong business case

There is strong academic consensus on the proven benefits of increasing the number of employees sharing lifts to and from work:

- reduced parking demand
- reduced vehicle miles and congestion; operations less vulnerable to road network disruptions
- reduced CO² emissions and air pollution
- employees benefiting from less driving related stress and fatigue, saving money and sharing journeys with colleagues

Whats involved?

Successfully promoting car sharing requires a combination of:

- helping staff find colleagues with compatible journeys
- providing incentives for staff to try it out
- providing support and motivation to continue
- thorough, targeted and persuasive promotion
- consistent engagement over a long time period

Car sharing should be supported as part of a wider package of flexible, sustainable mobility measures for employees.

Choosing the right approach

Evidence shows that successful car sharing schemes do not look the same in every organisation. Choosing the right approach for your workplace will depend on size, context and culture. Each workplace has a unique set of opportunities and barriers.

This guide will give you an overview of the type of support you can provide and how to overcome common barriers.



Types of scheme

Acquaintance vs Organisational

Acquaintance (or 'Informal') schemes focus on facilitating car sharing relationships between existing networks of colleagues, friends or family members. They tend to employ relatively informal means to match car sharers such as in person networking events and word-of-mouth advocacy over technological or digital means.

- ⊕ lower cost, quick to implement, strong user trust
- ⊖ less matches, more manual, less monitoring ability

Organisational (or 'Formal') schemes are designed to enable people to find suitable journey matches amongst a wider set of people than their existing networks. They tend to utilise digital tools such as databases or online platforms and often involve third party providers.

- ⊕ wider set of matches, more automated, ability to monitor
- ⊖ higher cost, more technical to implement, less personal

Open vs Closed

Open schemes allow staff to find matches outside of their organisation as part of an area wide or even national database. This increases the number of possible matches available to users but increases barriers around data security, parking management and trust.

Closed schemes only facilitate matches within the user's own organisation. This limits the pool of possible journey matches but significantly increases trust and acceptance rates amongst users and simplifies parking management issues.

All schemes, regardless of structure, will require the same level of promotion and incentives. Most workplaces will of course require a mixture of elements and combine approaches to fit their context.

THE 4 BIG CHALLENGES



1. Flexibility

The perception that car sharing is **too inflexible to fit in with busy and unpredictable schedules** has emerged in research as the most commonly cited barrier by commuters, and as the key reason why people stop car sharing once started.

Supporting flexibility

The challenge for employers is to support their car sharers to be able to travel as flexibly as if they were driving alone. Sharers must always feel confident they can easily travel when and where they need to, regardless of short-notice changes to their plans.

Guaranteed ride home

Offer a guaranteed ride home in the event of a driver going home unexpectedly or the need to collect an ill child from school. The assurance of being able to make an emergency trip at short notice is a vital confidence builder. Nevertheless, case studies show the offer is only very occasionally required. Budget for £100 per year. Commonly the problem is solved by fellow car sharers willing to help out with lifts, but back up is essential.

Encourage people to find more than one car share partner

Most travellers will want some flexibility in journey times or routes. Inflexible parking access systems that require sharers to always arrive with the same partners are perceived as too rigid and can lead to sharers returning to driving alone when they want route or timing flexibility. Actively encourage sharers to form multiple and varied links and ensure they can always access parking.

Flexible start and finish times

Allowing staff to be flexible with their start and finish times enables them to fit in more easily with the routines of fellow sharers, accommodate childcare, school runs, and other responsibilities.

Allow occasional 'solo' parking permits.

Occasionally car sharers will need to drive in to work alone due to an unexpected change of plans with too short notice to arrange an alternative journey. Allocate sharers a limited number of days on which they are permitted to park alone. If you have parking restrictions in place you will need to consider how to monitor and enforce the allocation in line with your policy.



2. Relationship building

As simple as sharing a lift with a colleague sounds, in reality it involves **initiating, building and maintaining real-life relationships**. A lot of focus tends to be given to matching journeys, yet potential car sharers face an equally - or even more - daunting task getting to know new sharers and ensuring they feel comfortable. This is especially true for those using organisational and open schemes.

Supporting successful car share connections

Facilitating matches online

Online car share platforms offer a wonderfully effective method for identifying feasible matches as long as there are a large number of travellers registered. Regardless of whether you are using an open or closed system it is vital to promote only one database for staff to register on in order not to split potential matches. A common concern is personal data security, especially with third-party providers, so work closely with your provider on data issues and where possible align the platform with your organisation's corporate identity to build trust.

Manual matching

For smaller organisations with close staff networks a manual approach to matching may be more appropriate. Research shows that simple word-of-mouth referrals remain a powerful way of finding suitable matches. A noticeboard map of the region with pins for home locations and pens to draw on preferred routes is a really simple but effective offline tool. Inviting staff living in similar areas along to meet over a lunch break, with some free food and snacks thrown in, helps find matches and builds familiarity too.

Include en route stop-off points

Whether using an online or manual route mapping tool, make sure you record the full route each traveller takes, including key places they pass through or nearby, and any stop-off points such as school drop-offs. This will highlight many more matches and can help people with children find matches after the school drop-off.

Building familiarity and trust

Research confirms that even when people have found a good potential match they will inevitably have some social or safety concerns: worries over bad driving, bad time-keeping or even bad music are common!

Online, encourage staff to utilise available feedback and review functions or simply check relevant social media networks to get basic assurance on who they plan to car share with.

But remember nothing beats meeting up in person. Give staff a space and reason to meet (think free tea and cake) to build confidence and explore the practicalities of potential matches.



3. Motivating Incentives

Most people require a mix of **incentives, benefits and information** to nudge them towards a new behaviour. Highlighting the benefits (the relative advantages of one choice compared to another) and adding in some extra incentives can help tip the balance for staff contemplating car share.

Motivating staff to give it a go

Promote existing benefits

Highlight inherent benefits in your messaging such as: reduced congestion; reduced personal travel costs; driving less regularly and reducing stress; zipping past the queues in peak time 2+ priority lanes; spending some social time on your way to work. North Bristol SusCom has created an example benefits poster for ideas.

Priority parking

Guaranteeing car sharers a priority spot in the car park is essential. Reliability is a factor that greatly impacts decisions about travel mode so guarantees can be persuasive, particularly in contexts of

pressurised parking or lots of congestion. Ensure car share dedicated spaces are enforced. If you charge for parking, you can reduce or reimburse fees for car sharers.

'Cash-out' incentives

If no fees are charged then consider a 'cash-out' system whereby you reward a car sharer (along with other sustainable commuters) to a similar value as the costs involved in providing a staff car parking space. When combined with good car sharing infrastructure (priority parking and access lanes) cash out schemes have resulted in up to a 64% increase in car sharing rates.

Rewards

Rewards earned cumulatively the more times people car share are a powerful motivator. A possible method is to allocate points or a contribution towards rewards every time someone car shares. This does however rely on having a monitoring mechanism to accurately track how staff arrive in order to prevent abuse of rewards. Vouchers for in-house or wider retailers are particularly attractive. Discounts are slightly less motivating but can be easier and cheaper to arrange. Simple, instant rewards such as food and drink freebies on site if arriving by car share can also be effective.

Setting the default choice

Consider setting car sharing - and other forms of sustainable commuting - as the default option for staff as they join the organisation. This sets a norm and requires people to 'opt out' and apply for a solo parking permit.



4. Persuasive Communications

Car sharing can be **a difficult thing to communicate** clearly and persuasively but it is vital to promote clear, realistic, relevant messages with staff in order to grow understanding, familiarity and trust over time.

Play the long game

Research shows that users become familiar and comfortable with car sharing over a relatively long period of time. Repetition is key. If messages and promotions are repeated consistently, the level of acceptance - and sign ups - will increase year on year.

Target your messages

Use GIS mapping to discover which residential zones will be best to target for your staff. You can also analyse which routes have the most staff travelling along them. Research suggests three demographic groups are particularly open to car sharing: lower income employees are interested in the cost savings, women are open to the social aspect, and Millennials (ages 16 - 35) are most comfortable with the sharing economy and connecting virtually with people through social platforms. You can adapt messages for each group.

"You do not need to car share every day"

People perceive car sharing as too inflexible to be practical for more than a few days a week. Even if this is ultimately a false perception, it is vital to assure people of flexibility in order to encourage confidence early on in their contemplation.

Make the most of issues and disruptions

A common motivator for staff to consider car sharing is pressure on parking spaces, congestion or any other form of driving disruption. Increased congestion such as road works, or a temporary reduction in available parking can encourage more people to consider and engage genuinely with the relative benefits of car share compared to driving alone. It pays to plan promotions to coincide with - or slightly in advance of - foreseen disruptions and particularly congested times (e.g. back to school or mid-week throughout Autumn and Winter). How you communicate car share as a response to negative issues needs to be carefully considered but it is possible to present it as positive solution as long as it has the corresponding support and incentives in place.

Focus on one or two benefits

Talk to staff to establish which of the benefits of car sharing appeal to them most. This will likely be specific to your organisation and will be impacted by context such as parking pressure and local congestion levels. Focus on one or two benefits. Communicate these clearly and consistently for a good amount of time. Where possible lead your messaging with the benefits - such as 'Anyone fancy an extra holiday?' or 'Get your priority parking permits here' - rather than relying overly on the term 'Car Share'. People who believe car share is not for them will switch off before engaging with any of the benefits.

Keep talking to staff

Involve staff in your planning, ideas, delivery and reviews. A community approach may help you find a particularly resonant message and staff involvement will build up trust.

Involve senior management

Ensure that the scheme is clearly supported by the highest level of management. Ideally get them participating and feeding back through newsletters or social media on their experiences.

Keep it personal

As car sharing involves building personal relationships, promote it in a friendly, approachable way. A series of small, conversational events held frequently and regularly will be more effective in the long term than a large one-off event.

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