



**WE'RE
VOLUNTEERING**

Volunteer Driver
Manual

Thames hospice

Useful Information

Thames Hospice

Windsor Road

Maidenhead

SL6 2DN

01753 842121

Hospice Outpatient Administrator : 01753 848976

Volunteer Emergency Breakdown number:

Volunteer Breakdown Assistance Policy number:

Charity No. 1108298

www.thameshospice.org.uk



Questions

If you have any questions about volunteering as a Driver or on safe driving practices, please contact the Therapies team.

References

Volunteer Driver's Handbook - The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (Registered Charity No. 207823)

<https://www.rosipa.com/Road-Safety/Resources/Free.aspx>

0121 248 2000

The AA's Winter Motoring Checklist-

www.theaa.com/motoring_advice/seasonal/winter-checklist

Reviewed: May 2025

Claiming expenses

You are entitled to claim back your fuel expenses from the Hospice at a rate of 55p per mile. To do this, please fill out an Expenses Claim Form which can be collected from the Paul Bevan Centre. If it is your first time claiming, then you will need to complete a Bank Details Form too.

Expenses Claim Forms must be completed and returned to the Therapies team by the 2nd of each month. For patient confidentiality, please do not add patient names or address to your expenses form. The postcodes will suffice.

The expenses will then be sent to you via bank transfer as soon as possible.

We recommend that you keep a record of your mileage at the start of your journey and then again when you reach your destination, along with the date of the journey and your destinations. This will make completing your Expenses Claim Form easier.

Arrangements

The Hospice Outpatient administrator will arrange with you when and where you will need to pick up a patient. You will be provided with information regarding mobility and whether nurse attendance on arrival at the hospice will be required. If on arrival at the patients home you have cause for concern please call the hospice to speak to a member of the team. Please ensure you contact the patient the day before to confirm pick up time; some patients also like to have a call on the day. Please note that volunteer drivers must only transport patients to and from the hospice.

Please notify the team of your availability, including any holidays or time away you might have planned, so we can plan accordingly. If you are unable to carry out your driving shift at short notice, for example due to an emergency or illness, please contact the team as soon as you possibly can so that we can make alternative arrangements.

Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to be a driver here at Thames Hospice. You will be playing an important part in ensuring patients can access the services they need.

This booklet offers guidance about our Volunteer Driver policies and general safe driving practices. Please ask a member of the team if you require clarification or further advice.

Many sections have been taken from The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accident's (ROSPA) Volunteer Driver's Handbook and have been adapted to include information specific to Thames Hospice.

Before you start driving

Thames Hospice will need to annually check your:

- Driving Licence
- Current insurance documents
- Vehicle MOT certificate
- Vehicle service documents

Any motoring offences, including cautions, summons or convictions, should be reported to the Hospice. If you are diagnosed with a DVLA notifiable condition then please also inform the Hospice.

If you change your vehicle, please update our records of the above documents.

Insurance

You will need to notify your car insurance provider that you are using your vehicle to volunteer so this can be added to your policy. This should not incur any additional costs. On your policy some insurance providers may list this as 'social, domestic and pleasure'.

Volunteer mandatory driver training

All Drivers will be required to complete e-learning modules before commencing their volunteer Driver role. Volunteer Drivers will be expected to attend Driver training updates as required and complete e-learning modules every two years. You will also be invited to attend Communications training.

Annual driver checks

Drivers are required to complete an annual Driver Check, this consists of:

- Completing a Drivers Declaration Form
- A short meeting with a member of the team to review this declaration form
- Producing evidence of your insurance, MOT certificate, service history and driving licence

You will be contacted when it is time to complete this.

Breakdowns

In the event of a breakdown:

- Move the vehicle off the carriageway (onto the hard shoulder on a motorway) and switch on the hazard warning lights. If this is not possible, move it as far away from moving traffic as you can
- Move passengers out of the nearside of the vehicle and as far away from it and other traffic as possible. No one should stand between the vehicle and oncoming traffic
- On motorways or other busy roads, passengers should be taken onto the embankment or grass margin and as far from the traffic as is practicable. Keep passengers together
- Call the emergency services or breakdown firm, giving them accurate details of the vehicle's location and whether passengers with mobility problems are being carried
- Call the Therapies team to tell them what has happened
- On a motorway, use the roadside emergency telephone as this will allow the Police to pinpoint your location

If you breakdown whilst you have a patient in the car:

- Please ensure you and the patient are in a safe place. We recommend you store the items mentioned previously in this booklet in case you break down in bad weather (eg. Waterproofs/umbrella in case of rain)
- Please call the emergency services or breakdown firm before you call the Therapies team

If you breakdown on your way to pick up a patient

Follow the advice previously mentioned but notify the Therapies team as soon as it's safe so we can make alternative arrangements to pick up the patient.

Journey planning

It is important to plan your route before every journey. The more advance planning you can do, the less unforeseen and risky circumstances will arise and you will be better prepared to deal with them if they do.

Avoid driving in poor conditions and check the weather forecast before you set off; especially if there has been bad weather. If the advice is to only make essential journeys, then you should follow that.

Should any adverse weather conditions be predicted, please contact the team for advice before 4pm the day before you are due to drive or that day if unpredicted. If unexpected adverse weather occurs then please contact the team as soon as possible.

Fitness to drive

As a volunteer driver, we need to know that you are fit to drive. Do not drive when under the influence of alcohol, drugs or certain medicines, are affected by illness or too tired to do so safely.

Eyesight: The minimum legal eyesight standard for driving is that you can read a number plate at a distance of 20 metres. If you have to use glasses or contact lenses to do this, then they must be worn when driving.

Please also notify the team should there be a change in the state of your eyesight resulting in you either being unable to drive or requiring glasses.

Alcohol: It can take several hours for alcohol to leave your body and you may still be over the limit, or affected by alcohol the morning after you have been drinking. Even a small amount, well below the legal limit, can seriously affect your ability to drive safely.

Please refrain from drinking alcohol the night prior to driving and on the day you are driving.

Drugs: Do not drive if you have taken any illegal drugs.

Medicines: Check with your GP or Pharmacist whether any medicines you are taking are likely to affect your driving (eg. cause drowsiness). If so, ask for an alternative or avoid driving.

Please notify the team if you are taking any medication that will affect your driving so we can make alternative arrangements.

If you have an accident whilst you have a patient in the car:

- If the patient is not injured during the accident please make sure that they are in a safe place. If you believe the car is in a position that could be open to further accidents from other vehicles, then guide the patient out of the car and find a safe place for them to wait.
- Call the relevant emergency services then, if it is safe to do so, please notify the Therapies team on the numbers in the front of this booklet.
- If the vehicle is not roadworthy as a result of the accident, the Therapies team will send out another driver to pick the patient up and assist you.
- If it is a minor accident, please complete the checks mentioned earlier in the booklet to determine if the vehicle is safe to continue your journey.

If you have an accident whilst you are on your way to pick up a patient Please notify the Therapies team if you will be unable to pick them up. However, please call the relevant emergency services and make sure you are safe first.

Accident, breakdown & emergency procedures

Accidents

In the event of an accident:

- Use hazard warning lights and switch off your engine
- Do not move injured passengers unless they are in immediate danger of further injury from other vehicles, or from fire or explosion
- Call the emergency services immediately: provide them with information about the situation, any special circumstances (eg. carrying oxygen bottles) and if any passengers have special needs
- If the emergency services are called, stay at the scene until they allow you to leave
- Obtain the names and addresses of all independent witnesses (if possible)
- Ensure the vehicle is roadworthy before continuing the journey
- If there is any injury and names of people involved are not exchanged, you must report the accident to the Police as soon as possible or in any case within 24 hours

Illness: Illness can also affect our ability to drive. We can often be tempted to 'solider on' when in fact it would be safer for everyone concerned for us not to drive until we are feeling better.

Please notify the team as soon as possible if you are ill and due to drive; in addition to illness affecting driving, we also have to protect against infection.

Fatigue: Consider whether you are likely to be drowsy or sleepy while driving. Tired drivers are more likely to crash, especially on long monotonous journeys and in the early hours of the morning.

Please do not drive if you are drowsy, instead please call the team as soon as possible.

Vehicle safety

Before you start driving, it is recommended that you carry out checks on your car to ensure it is safe to drive. Please see that:

- Tyres are undamaged (no cuts or bulges), are at the correct pressure and have enough tread depth. 1.6mm is the legal minimum, but above 3mm gives much shorter breaking distances in the wet.
- There are no signs of vehicle damage
- Oil, coolant and windscreen wash levels are correct (check when the car is cold)
- The correct fuel has been used and the tank is at an appropriate fullness
- Breaks are working (not spongy or slack)
- Lights and indicators are working
- Windscreen and windows are not damaged
- Washers and wipers are working
- Mirrors are correctly positioned
- All occupants are using their seat belt and the head restraints are adjusted correctly
- Loads are securely restrained

Oxygen cylinders

Precautions must be taken for patients who are travelling with oxygen. The oxygen cylinder must be stored securely in the boot of the car. If needed during the journey, the cylinder must be secured within the vehicle.

A no smoking policy is strictly enforced and a warning sign saying that the vehicle is carrying oxygen should be displayed in the car window. The Therapies team can provide a laminated oxygen sign.

Keep a window open for ventilation so that oxygen does not accumulate in the car. Avoid using a fuel station while oxygen is being carried. It may be advisable to inform your vehicle insurance company that you may be carrying oxygen.

Head restraints

Adjust your head restraint correctly and check that every passenger has their head restraint correctly adjusted. Properly adjusted head restraints help to protect against whiplash and prevent long term injuries. The top of the head restraint should be level with the top of your head and as close to the back of your head as possible.

Please assist the patient in ensuring their head restraint is in the correct position before starting to drive.

Occupant safety

Seat Belts – No belt, no trip policy.

The most effective way of protecting people in vehicles is to make sure every occupant always wears a seatbelt on every journey, no matter how short, or where they are sitting in the car.

Please assist the patient should they need any help putting on the seatbelt. Patients who are unable to wear a seat belt due to medical conditions will need to provide a copy of their medical exemption certificate.

Transporting patients

- Volunteers must wear a named Thames Hospice identification badge at all times
- A transport risk assessment will be completed beforehand for patients requiring a volunteer driver or access to our wheelchair taxi service. If you arrive at a patient's house and the information regarding mobility you have been given has changed or you cannot make contact with the patient, please call the emergency contact number. **01753 842121 Ext 309**
- Please note, you must only transport patients between their home and the hospice. You are not able to take them elsewhere (e.g. to a shop).
- Patients who require wheelchair transport to and from the hospice or have complex medical needs will be transported by a reputable taxi company

The AA recommends that you carry the following items in your car at all times of year:

- Fully charged mobile phone and in-car charger
- Sunglasses
- Personal medication
- Warning triangle
- Spare bulbs
- First Aid kit
- Road atlas
- Sat nav, map or printed route for unfamiliar journeys
- Breakdown membership card

During the winter it is recommended that you also carry:

- Blanket, rug or sleeping bag
- Shovel
- Salt, sand or cat litter
- Reflective jacket
- Ice scraper and de-icer
- Torch and batteries
- Tow rope
- Snow chains
- Battery jump leads
- Bottled water and snacks
- Extra screen wash

Safe speed

Always stay within speed limits (including variable limits and temporary limits at roadworks) even if you think the limit is too low.

Speed limits set the maximum speed for that road. But, there are many circumstances when it is not safe to drive at that speed. For example, around schools, on busy, narrow roads, or on bendy or hilly rural roads where visibility is restricted.

We all have our 'speed triggers'- things that make us more likely to speed up and exceed the limit unintentionally. This could be feeling the need to keep up with other drivers, feeling stressed by a driver too close behind, or it could be something as simple as going downhill. Learn to recognise your own 'speed triggers'; this will make it easier to avoid being 'pushed' into speeding and make driving less stressful and more relaxing.

Give yourself time; plan your journey to allow sufficient time to complete it at safe speeds and without needing to exceed speed limits, include rest breaks and take account of foreseeable weather and traffic conditions.

Distractions

Mobile phones: We advise drivers to carry a fully charged mobile phone on them in case of emergency and so you can contact the hospice if needed. However please do not use the phone when driving, even if you are using a hands-free kit, either for calls or texting. Instead, please pull into a safe area to use the phone.

Other devices: Sat Navs can be useful, however we ask that you set the destination before you start driving and ensure that it is secured properly to your car. Should the Sat Nav need to be adjusted, please pull over to a safe space to do so.

Eating or Drinking: We ask that you do not eat or drink whilst the patient is in the car as it distracts you from your driving. Please also be aware that patients may have sensitive food allergies.

Smoking: Please do not smoke inside the car prior to picking the patient up or whilst the patient is in the car. Please be aware that some patients may carry oxygen tanks and smoking near them can be very dangerous. Passengers will also be asked to refrain from smoking whilst being driven.