

East Renfrewshire Relaunches Ride-Sharing



Summary

Local authority: East Renfrewshire Council



East Renfrewshire Council has been a licenced user of 2+ ride-sharing platform “Liftshare” for several years. However, in the period leading up to 2017/18, membership and use of Liftshare services had stagnated. For this reason, in both 2017/18 and 2018/19, the Council applied for Smarter Choices, Smarter Places (SCSP) funding, to enable it to deliver a campaign to tackle this issue.

The campaign comprised two core measures. The first involved commissioning Liftshare to carry out ‘floor-walks’, to engage Council employees in a brief, desk-based conversation about Liftshare. Where this was of interest, Liftshare staff could sign people up to the platform on the spot.

The second strand of the campaign was delivered at the same time and involved offering Council staff a personal travel plan, to help people make a more informed decision about how to get to and from work.

Delivery of these initiatives led to a measurable increase in membership and use of the Liftshare platform. This evidence encouraged the Council to apply for further SCSP funding in 2019/20 to enable ongoing delivery of these measures. The funding will also enable the Council to conduct a staff travel survey that may inform the development of one or more travel plans for key Council buildings. These evidence-led plans will identify effective ways to promote a wider range of active and sustainable modes to commuters, rather than just 2+ ride-sharing.

This project received funding through the *Smarter Choices, Smarter Places* programme, which is administered by Paths for All and funded by Transport Scotland.



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In 2017/18, East Renfrewshire Council successfully applied for Smarter Choices, Smarter Places (SCSP) funding, to enable it to deliver a promotional campaign designed to increase the number of Council staff sharing car-based commuter trips with one or more passengers.

In this case study, this practice is generically called 2+ ride-sharing, but as shared mobility charity CoMoUK¹ points out, sharing journeys in a private car is also known as car sharing, carpooling or lift sharing.

The potential benefits of 2+ ride-sharing include lower journey costs, as UK law allows drivers to charge for reasonable expenses when carrying out journeys involving 2+ ride-sharing arrangements. Other possible benefits include reducing demand for on-site car parking and supporting sustainability objectives.

East Renfrewshire Council has been a licenced user of 2+ ride-sharing platform "Liftshare" for some time. However, in the lead-up to 2017/18, the scheme had not been well promoted and as a result, it had very few active members. On this basis, the Council decided to relaunch the scheme.

The Council's initial ambition was to promote Liftshare services to all c. 4,000 of its staff. Following discussions with Liftshare, this scope narrowed, with promotional activities ultimately targeting around 700 employees at the larger Council offices.

Liftshare's recommended approach to promoting its services was to carry out 'floor-walks'. This approach was adopted and delivered during 2017/18, with Liftshare staff invited into Council buildings to speak with people at their desks. Employees engaged through this process were asked how they usually travel to work, and if 2+ride-sharing seemed to be viable and of interest, individuals had an option to learn more about how the scheme works and to be signed up to the free-to-use Liftshare platform on the spot.

Through the 'floor-walk' process, Liftshare staff were also able to identify people who were already lift-sharing informally, but not yet registered on the site. These people were also encouraged to register on the site, thereby helping to generate additional, verified management information about the number of employees who currently share a lift to get to and from different workplaces.

In addition, employees who were engaged during the 'floor-walks' were offered the opportunity to receive a personal travel plan that identifies the best commuting options available for each participating employee. Branded "myPTP", this Liftshare tool generates public transport, walking, cycling and 2+ ride-sharing matches in one place, to help people make a more informed decision about how to get to and from work.

Staff who expressed interest in receiving a myPTP travel plan were emailed a link to a Liftshare web portal, where they were asked to enter some simple details about their commuter journey. Nearly 300 Council employees chose to do so and in the space of around a minute, were

then sent a personal travel plan that compared journey times, costs, and other impacts (e.g. petrol costs, carbon emissions and calories) associated with different commuter travel choices.

The impacts of Liftshare's promotional activities were monitored in a number of ways. Importantly, a monitoring survey was used to gather views from staff about the effectiveness of the floor-walk process and confirmation about whether they signed up to the Liftshare platform. Respondents were also asked to provide feedback about any barriers to 2+ ride-sharing, as well as the kinds of measures and incentives that would encourage them to share a lift.

Some survey respondents indicated that offering parking privileges, such as priority parking spaces to 2+ ride-sharers would be a particularly effective measure. However, implementing this measure is not without challenges. For example, the Council does not currently have the necessary resources to check that people using dedicated parking bays are actually 2+ ride-sharers or indeed, to manage misuse.

In 2019/20, East Renfrewshire Council plans to use around £10,000 of SCSP funding to carry out a council-wide travel to work survey, to support the development of one or more travel plans for Council sites. These evidence-led plans will identify the most effective way to promote a wider range of active and sustainable modes to commuters, rather than just 2+ ride-sharing. At the same time, a proportion of the funding will be used to support ongoing promotion of the Liftshare platform and generate personal travel plans through the myPTP service.

In this way, the Council aims to help make commuter travel more convenient, sustainable and cost-effective for its staff, whilst at the same time, reducing demand for scarce car parking spaces and supporting staff recruitment and retention goals.

¹ <https://como.org.uk>

“ I had recently transferred from a different department and was sitting at lunch with new colleagues when I discovered that one was travelling by train to work and I passed her door on my way to work. I offered to pick her up and we now have become firm friends. Her daughter now also travels with us in the morning and it's great to hear all her news about activities taking place at her school. Keeps us from talking about office politics! ”

Christine,
East Renfrewshire Council

In numbers



Membership of Liftshare grew by **120%** during the year to March 31st, 2018

293%

increase in the number of **journeys available for sharing** over the same period

145%

increase in the number of **requests to share a lift** during 2017/18



Active Liftshare teams increased from **12 to 15** during 2017/18, with some **teams including up to 4 people**



CO₂ reductions of 16 tonnes generated by **2+ ride-sharing** during 2017/18, as estimated by Liftshare

81,705

reduction in mileage over the same period **due to 2+ ride-sharing**

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“ I started liftsharing towards the end of 2017. Compared to alternative modes of transport for my route it is cheaper, faster and generally a lot more convenient for me. ”

Malcolm, East Renfrewshire Council