



Making journeys possible

ECT Charity Social Impact Report 2025



www.ectcharity.co.uk



“We aim to make a positive social impact in each community where we work.”

Welcome

ECT Charity believes in the power of community transport to make a real difference to people's lives – connecting our communities, taking down the barriers to access for older and disabled people and tackling issues of loneliness and social isolation. We aim to make a positive social impact in each community where we work.

It has never been more important for charities in general and community transport operators (CTs) in particular to demonstrate that we are making a difference, that we are delivering on our social mission, and that we are positive stewards of our resources – demonstrating value for money in straightened times. To that aim, I would like to welcome you to ECT Charity's Social Impact Report for 2024/2025.

ECT Charity has long been a pioneer in rigorously demonstrating our social impact. We developed the original CT Social Value Toolkit, launching in 2018, helping us to calculate the Social Value of our work. The Toolkit was shared widely with our sector, helping CTs to communicate the difference they make.

Last year, we completed a major project to update the Toolkit, thanks to support from The Motability Foundation. This report uses the new Toolkit, which explores a dozen additional dimensions – including the environmental and economic impacts of our work – amongst a host of other measures.

The Toolkit is not for ECT Charity alone; it exists to support the whole CT sector. We have been working tirelessly alongside partners, such as Motability Foundation and the Community Transport Association, to promote the Toolkit to our peers. To date, 98 organisations have taken up licences – already more than the total number of organisations who used previous versions of the Toolkit.

In addition, the new Toolkit can aggregate the results gathered from across the country, enabling a true picture of the impact our sector makes. At a time when CTs face unprecedented pressures, we hope this data will provide fresh evidence for the campaign to place our sector on a more sustainable footing.

Even as we look to support the broader sector, the focus of this report is on ECT Charity's own work. The report presents data from the Toolkit and other sources that sets out the difference we're making in our communities, tells the stories of some of our service users and explores how we're making journeys possible.



John Chesters
Chief Executive, ECT Charity



“...safely providing almost 451,000 passenger trips for our communities each year.”



Introduction

About ECT Charity

ECT Charity is one of the UK's leading providers of community transport, safely providing almost 451,000 passenger trips for our communities each year. We operate a wide variety of services, each based on a particular local need: from minibuses for community groups to transport for children with special educational needs and disabilities, from door-to-door services for older and disabled people to buses tackling rural isolation – and many more.

We've been providing people who struggle with mainstream transport with safe, accessible journeys since our foundation as Ealing Community Transport in 1979. Now, as ECT Charity, we operate community transport services in the London Borough of Ealing, Cheshire and Dorset. Much of our work is delivered on behalf of public sector commissioners and partners – including Local Authorities and the NHS.

As a charity, much of our transport is designed in response to unmet need – and is often the only means of transport for many vulnerable and isolated people, who are frequently older or disabled. Our transport aims to tackle loneliness and social isolation, poor access to services and, where relevant, issues of rural isolation.

Measuring Impact

We believe that measuring our social impact is an essential part of our accountability. It demonstrates how well our services lead to positive change in people's lives and whether they provide value for money. It also helps us to communicate our public benefit and informs our decisions as we develop what we do. The mainstay of our social impact measurement is calculating our Social Value using the Social Value Toolkit.

Social Value is a useful measure as it allows us to quantify our social impact. It is straightforward to understand, in abstract terms, how transport that addresses social isolation or poor access to services can support people's independence and wellbeing. Social Value calculations also help us understand and rigorously measure our impact in terms of its economic benefit to society – for example, through savings in long-term care or healthcare costs.

To build on the insights from our Social Value calculations, we use additional methods to deepen our understanding – informal feedback, focus groups and discussions, passenger trip data and beneficiary surveys that explore how people's lives have changed or improved as a result of our services.

What we do

ECT Charity provides a wide variety of services across its three regions. Each service is designed to address a specific transport need in the community. Passenger figures are for financial year 2024/25.



PlusBus

39,692 passenger trips

Door-to-door journeys for people unable to use mainstream public transport due to mobility or other difficulties, or because ordinary public transport is not available.

 CHESHIRE DORSET EALING

Group Transport

43,671 passenger trips

A low-cost alternative to minibus hire for voluntary and community organisations including charities, social groups and schools, helping their members to travel together for their shared purposes.

 DORSET EALING

PlusBus for Health

6,230 passenger trips

A service that helps patients travel between their homes and GP surgeries. Commissioned by North West London ICB, it aims to reduce the number of GP house calls and missed appointments.

 EALING

Adult Day Centre

35,098 passenger trips

Commissioned services taking adults with a variety of needs to day centres, each of which provides a vital service to their users.



CHESHIRE EALING

Home-to-school

270,954 passenger trips

Commissioned services that transport hundreds of pupils to mainstream and special educational needs and disabilities schools.



CHESHIRE DORSET EALING

PlusBus Direct

217 passenger trips

A door-to-door service supported by the Heathrow Community Trust that brings older and disabled people together to access specific local amenities on a particular day of the week.



EALING

Local bus services

11,831 passenger trips

Commissioned bus services that otherwise would not run, helping to tackle rural social isolation.



DORSET

Dial-a-Ride

42,960 passenger trips

Delivered on behalf of Transport for London, these services provide door-to-door transport for people who cannot use public transport.



EALING

Training services

139 people trained

We deliver training for MiDAS and PATS – the national standards for minibus drivers and passenger assistants and training for MiDAS Trainer/Assessors.



EALING

£1,256,350

Our total Social Value for 2024/25 shows the additional value our services are creating for our economy and communities. These services are providing not only a real social impact, but also a strong level of public benefit and great value for money for commissioners.



Our Social Value

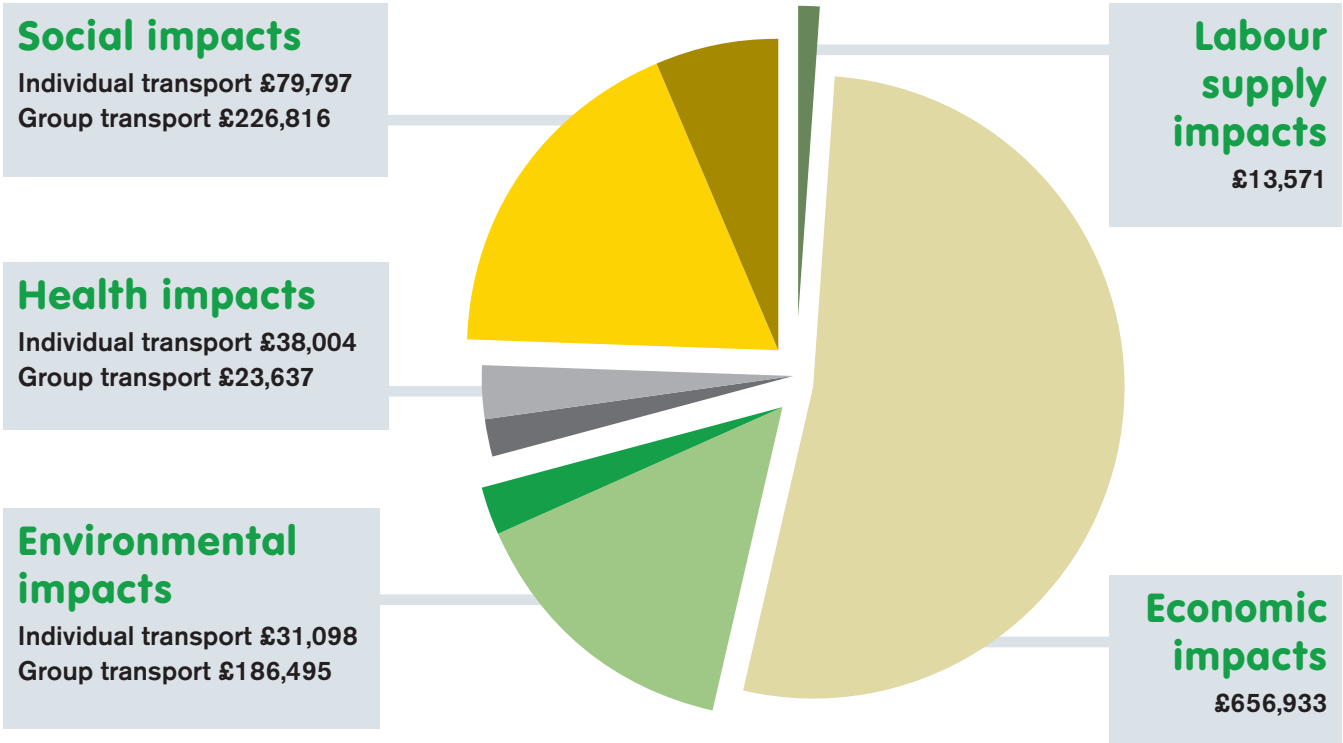
The new Toolkit

Our data on Social Value has been generated by our new Social Value Toolkit, which captures more of our Social Value than ever before. The new model combines all that the sector has learned from five years of using the original model with updated methods and values from the latest Social Value research. Its scope is greatly expanded, including 22 outcome metrics compared to the 10 used in the previous Toolkit. This includes entirely new areas of interest, exploring the positive environmental and economic value created by community transport. However, the new model is sufficiently different to make year-on-year comparisons with previous results impractical.

Exploring our Social Value

Calculations for the 2024/25 financial year show that the total Social Value of our charitable operations was £1,256,350 – a figure which represents significant, positive change in the lives of our service users.

For those dimensions of Social Value most aligned with our mission, the single largest contributor was from the social dimensions of Social Value – supporting service users to get out and about and participate in activities – preserving independence and the savings generated for our Group Transport members. The data also reveals the significant positive impact we have had on the environment and in our role as participant in our local economies.





“The bus gets me out – it’s marvellous.”

Mark's story

Mark uses our PlusBus service in Cheshire to access a day centre and visit the shops. He is an ex-serviceman living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder who is partially-sighted and uses a wheelchair.

"I used to use cabs to go shopping but they stopped picking me up" said Mark. "They said it was because they didn't take wheelchairs and because it was only a short distance I wanted to go. I was trapped in the house. I had to phone up my doctors and tell them I was starving. They put me in touch with Trinity Church who delivered food for me.

"I moved into assisted living after Covid, but if I wanted to go out to get a haircut or go shopping I had to wait sometimes 2 hours for a taxi. It was then I started using PlusBus more regularly; I'd used the old Dial-a-Ride service occasionally – it ran one bus a week from Ellesmere Port town centre to Chester.

"The bus gets me out – it's marvellous. I use the bus to take me to Pathways (a Mental Health Resource Day Centre) and sometimes I go shopping. I can get the bus on my own to where I want to go, nobody questions you. I feel independent and it has improved my life. If the service wasn't there? Put simply, it would be disastrous."





“...the basic elements of living independently, central to our quality of life.”

Social impacts: our Social Value

The Toolkit measures the social dimensions of our impact from improving the accessibility and affordability of travel, such as preserving people's independence, improving people's wellbeing and reducing costs for individuals and groups through travelling together.

Our quality of life

The best services in the world are next to useless if you can't get to them. We rely on our ability to go to the shops, the post office, to participate in sport or recreation – or access cultural activities. These are the basic elements of living independently, central to our quality of life.

Older and disabled people face significant barriers to accessing these services. This has a real impact – 30% of disabled people say that difficulties with public transport have reduced their independence¹ and, as a consequence, disabled people take 38% fewer trips than non-disabled people². In London, 31% of people over 70 report difficulty walking or using buses³.

When people are able to come together, the benefits to their wellbeing are clear. For example, recent research into regular access to cultural activities amongst older people has revealed significant positive impacts on depression and anxiety⁴. Many of these activities are provided by a hard-pressed third sector, with 32% of charities forecasting a negative financial picture for 2025⁵.

What we do

Our services aim to remove the barriers faced by the most vulnerable in our society. Our PlusBus and PlusBus Direct services take users to the places that matter most to them – from shops to leisure centres, from town centres to community centres, from cultural activities to social catch-ups. Our local bus services are connecting communities facing issues of rural social isolation.

These services not only preserve the independence of older and disabled people – or those experiencing rural social isolation – they also have significant wellbeing effects by bringing people together to travel. There is also an economic dimension – our survey data reveals that for some service users, the only realistic alternative would be to pay for a taxi (49%) – or not travel at all (40%).

Our Group Transport services are also facilitating the work of community groups and charities in our areas of operation. By providing a low-cost alternative to minibus hire, we are supporting them to make their work more impactful and reach more beneficiaries for less.

1 The Transport Accessibility Gap (2022), Motability

2 Ibid.

3 Corran, P., et al (2018) 'Age, disability and everyday mobility in London' Journal of Transport & Health v8.

4 Finn S., et al (2025) 'Longitudinal Associations Between Cultural Engagement and Mental and Social Well-Being' J Gerontol

5 UK Charities Report (2025) Keston Global

Social impacts: our year in numbers

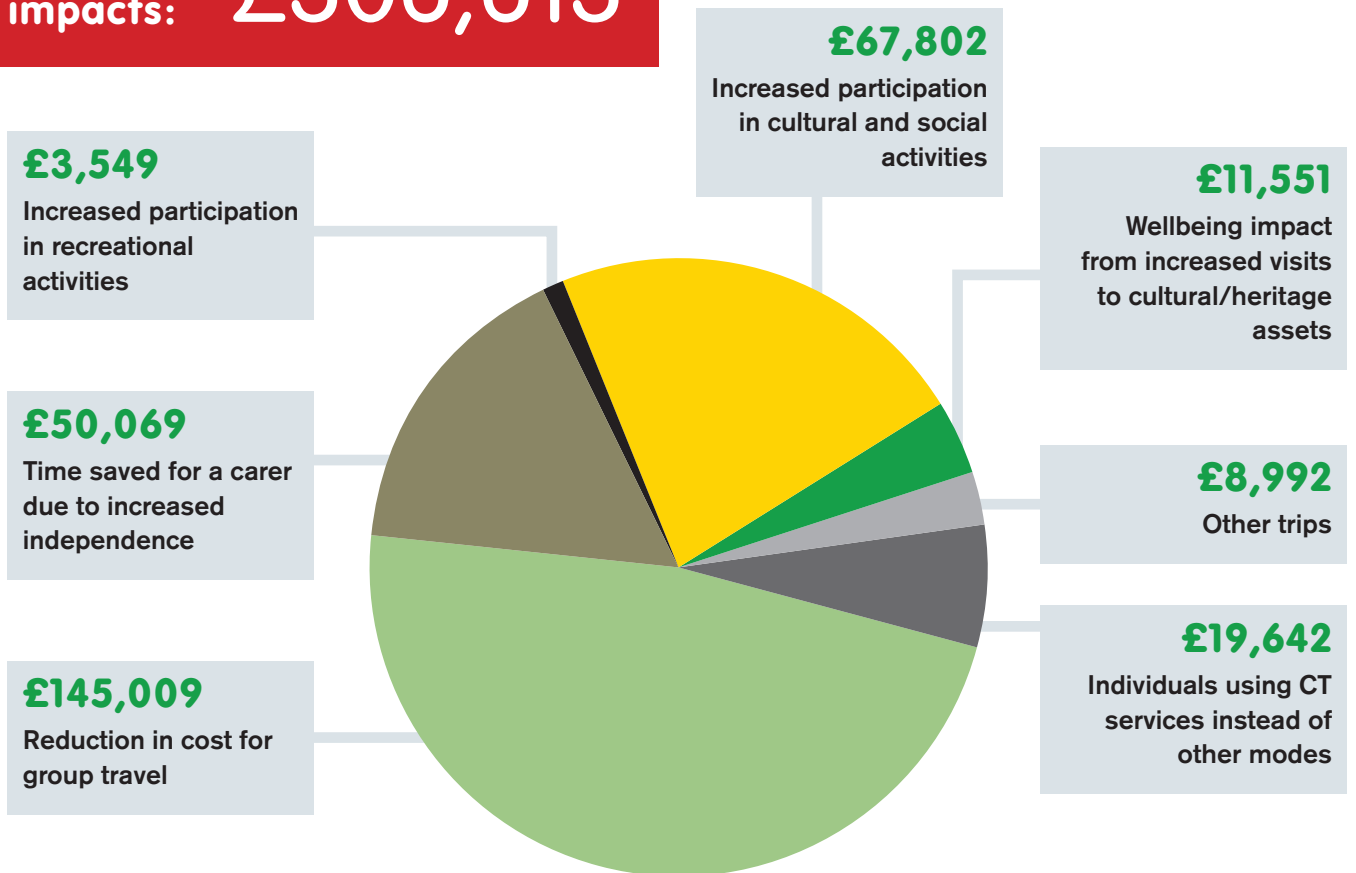
Our Toolkit results for the social dimensions of our work show that our services are making a real difference in the communities where we work. Taken together, these impacts accounted for £306,613 of our total Social Value.

Almost half (47%) of this type of Social Value comes from savings generated by charities and community groups using our Group Transport services, saving money and doing more by travelling together. The next most influential dimension (22%) is from increased participation in cultural and social activities – and trip data from our Group Transport service reflects this, with 70% of all journeys being for this purpose.

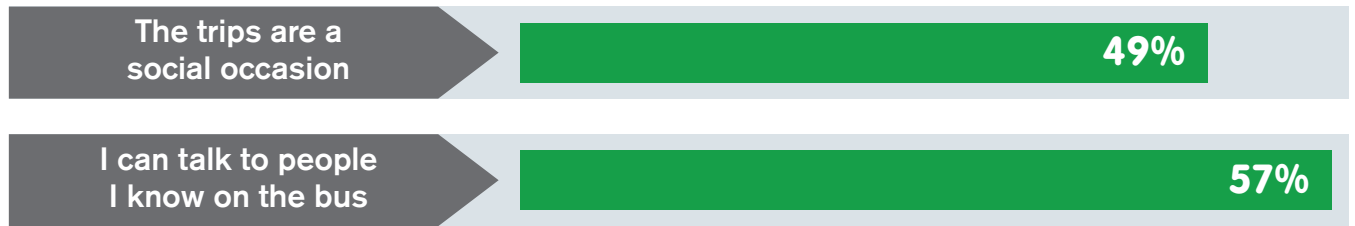
Our passenger survey shows what this means for the people who use our services. The survey reveals that 85% of respondents agreed that their independence had improved – with 62% strongly agreeing. This reflects the Social Value result of £50,069 for increased independence. In addition, nine out of ten respondents (90%) agreed that their ability to access local facilities had improved – with 71% strongly agreeing.

The survey also showed the wellbeing benefits of travelling together, with 49% saying that the trips are a social occasion and 57% saying that they can talk to people they know on the bus.

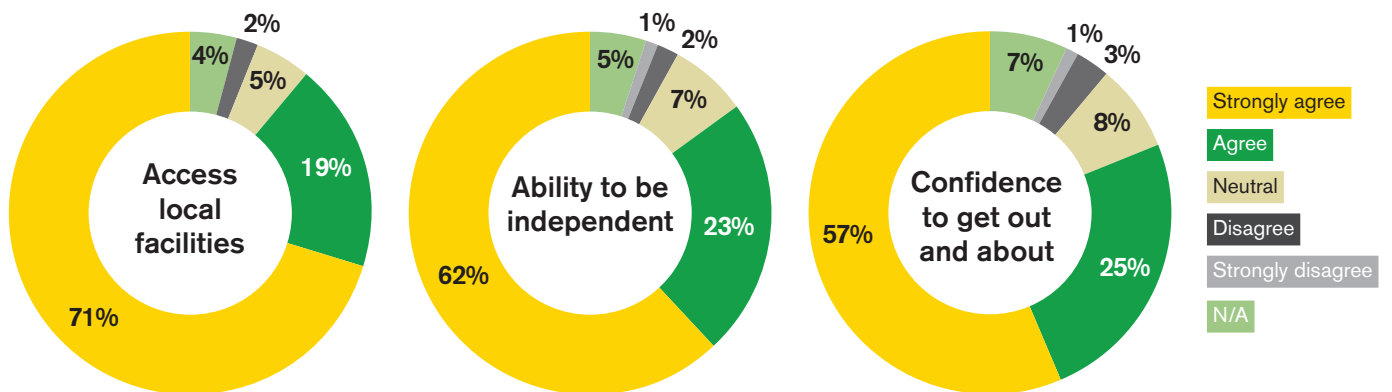
Social impacts: £306,613



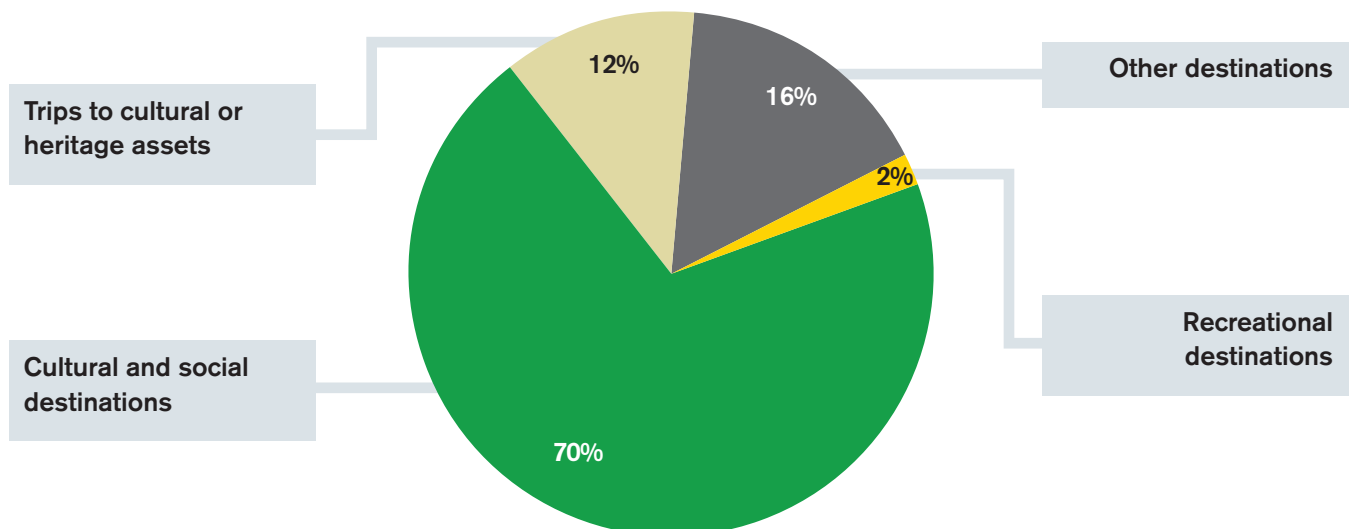
Reasons people use our services



Using ECT Charity transport has improved



Group transport – trip purpose





“... there is a sense of excitement – a trip – an adventure!”

The Remix at Activate Performing Arts

Activate is a leading performing arts organisation in Dorset that promotes, supports and produces performing arts projects across the county. The Remix has been a part of Activate's work since 2007 – an inclusive youth performance company open to young people aged 5-25, both disabled and non-disabled, from across Dorset. Dorset Community Transport (DCT), ECT Charity's operation in Dorset, takes young people to participate in The Remix's Easter and summer schools, to see external performances – and to put on their own.

“For our young people, it's joyous” explains Jude Allen, project manager at The Remix. “A day at our summer school starts with being dropped off by parents or carers at a pick up point. We think that the journey there and back again is an important part of the day. In the mornings, there is a sense of excitement – a trip – an adventure! It's also a time for disabled young people to meet new people and make new friends, which can be hard for some of them. The way home is quieter, a time for reflection on the day just gone.

“Taking part in the performing arts has enormous benefits for young people, empowering them to be positive, confident and independent. Our programme has a strong emphasis on dance and movement, which also has amazing physical and mental health benefits. Coming together as a group also boosts communication skills and the ability to navigate group dynamics, particularly as we have a wide range of communication needs – verbal, non-verbal, sign and so on. A day at The Remix aims to leave our participants feeling good, happy and empowered.

“The performances themselves are really important. It takes a lot of guts, but our young people love the applause and cheering – it makes their hard work worthwhile. This September, The Remix took part in ‘Sonnet of Samsara’ – a part of Dorset's Inside Out festival involving local dance groups and international dance artists. Taking part in performances or seeing something inspiring can ignite a lifelong passion for the arts – up to and including working in the field.

“We rely on fully accessible transport from DCT. If it wasn't available, we would have to ask already hard-pressed parents and carers to bring their young people to our activities. It's also likely that some young people wouldn't be able to take part – or we wouldn't be able to do activities as often. Without travelling together, it wouldn't be the same experience, with the same camaraderie.”

“...our services are providing serious indirect healthcare benefits”



Health impacts: our Social Value

The Toolkit measures the economic impact of supporting the health and wellbeing of service users. This is through transport that either supports indirect healthcare benefits through reductions in loneliness or enables access to healthcare.

A national crisis

Loneliness and social isolation are now recognised as significant issues with a profoundly negative impact on physical and mental health. The challenge is of epidemic proportions – Age UK estimate that 940,000 older people in the UK are often lonely⁶.

The consequences of loneliness and social isolation are now widely understood. A recent major study has shown that these issues are significantly associated with higher risk of ‘all-cause mortality’ – social isolation increases risk by 32%, loneliness by 14%.

Helping people to get out and about makes a difference. Amongst older people, just getting out of the house every day has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of an early death⁷ – and taking part in social activities has recently been shown to delay dementia onset by up to five years⁸.

Transport can impact on health in other ways – including access to healthcare. According to research in the British Medical Journal, 7% of severely disabled people in the UK have an unmet health need just because of transport problems⁹.

What we do

Our services explicitly aim to tackle loneliness and social isolation. Our PlusBus and PlusBus Direct services are actively bringing people together for social activities. Our Group Transport services enable community groups and third sector organisations to travel together for their common purposes, supporting their work and creating bonds between people.

Community transport is also a noted ‘third place’, where people can come together. When we provide individual transport of any kind, for any reason, we understand that the journey there and back again is an important part of the day. This understanding holds true even for the contracted services that we do not count towards our impact measures.

Taken together, by supporting people who would otherwise find it very challenging to get out and about, our services are providing serious indirect healthcare benefits.

We also support direct access to healthcare in Ealing through PlusBus for Health, which helps patients travel between their homes and GP surgeries, aiming to reduce the number of GP house calls and missed appointments.

⁶ ‘You are not alone in feeling lonely’ (2024) Age UK

⁷ Jacobs JM et al (2018) ‘Frequency of leaving the house and mortality from Age 70 to 95’ J Am Geriatr Soc

⁸ Chen Y., et al. (2025) ‘Late-life social activity and subsequent risk of dementia and mild cognitive impairment’ Alzheimer’s & Dementia Journal

⁹ Sakellariou D and Rotarou ES (2017) Access to healthcare for men and women with disabilities in the UK, BMJ Open

Health impacts: our year in numbers

Our Toolkit results for the health dimensions of our work show that our services are a part of the solution to loneliness and social isolation in our communities. Taken together, these impacts accounted for £61,641 of our total Social Value.

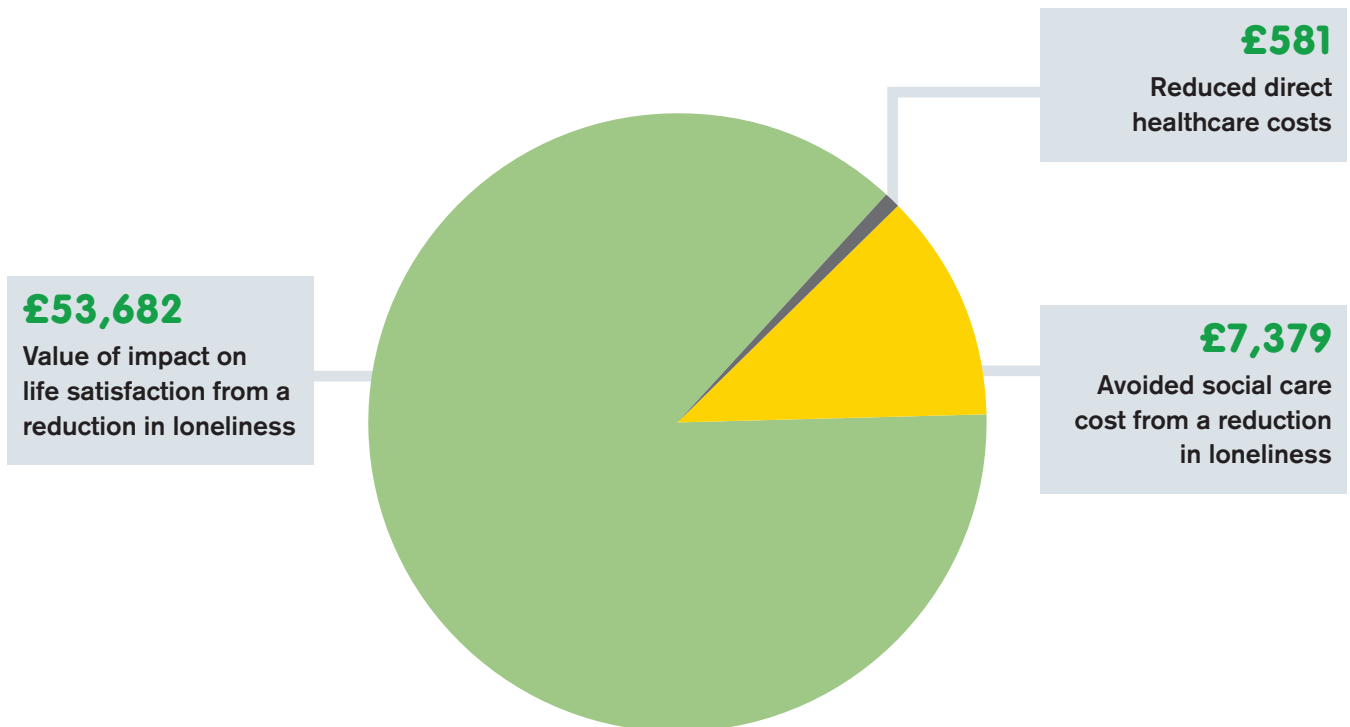
A decisive majority (87%) of our Social Value comes from the well-established link between reduced loneliness and life satisfaction – along with the indirect health benefits this brings. A further 12% comes from avoided direct social care costs otherwise associated with loneliness. We also see some direct healthcare cost savings from improved access to healthcare.

Our passenger survey supports our Social Value data, with 78% of respondents agreeing that using our services had made them less lonely – with 43% strongly agreeing. This pattern of improvement continues across connected measures – life satisfaction (79%) and being sociable (76%). Nearly three-quarters (74%) agreed that they felt healthier.

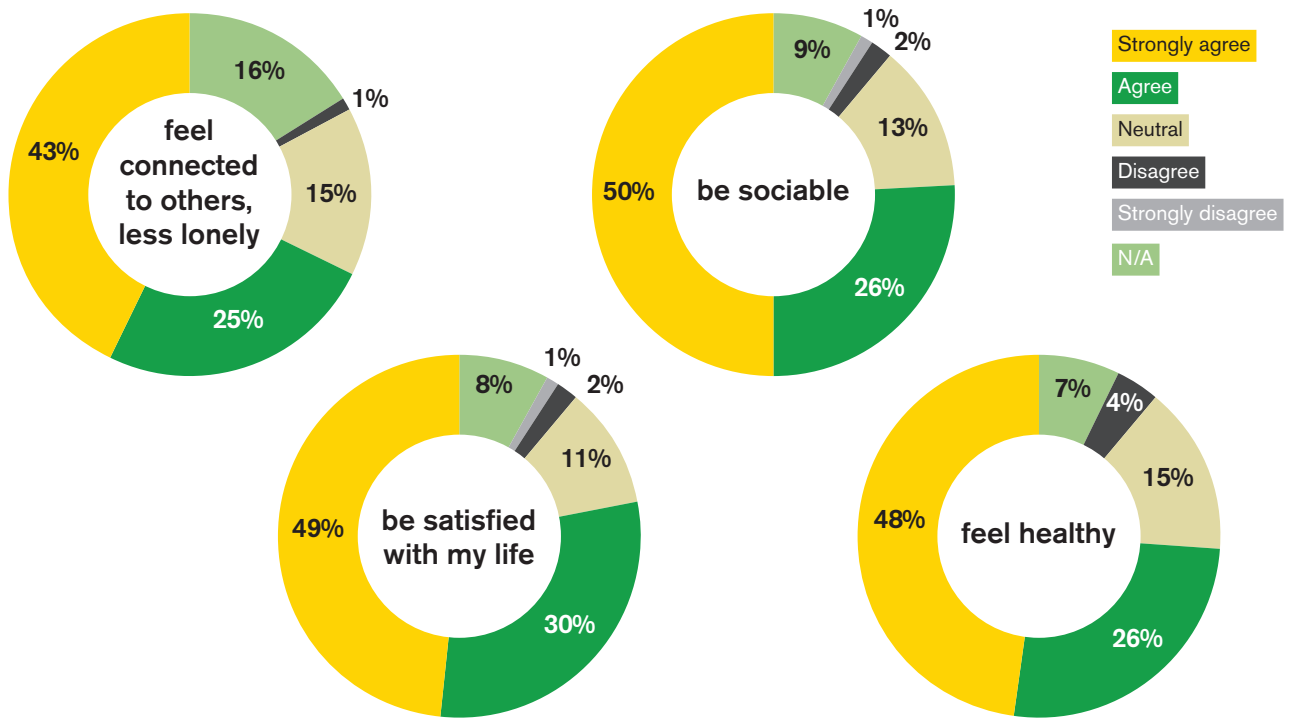
The survey also shows some of the barriers our service users face in getting out and about. A clear majority (70%) say that they use our services because they are elderly, with 53% saying they have difficulty walking. A further 53% say that public transport is not available to them at all.

Health impacts:

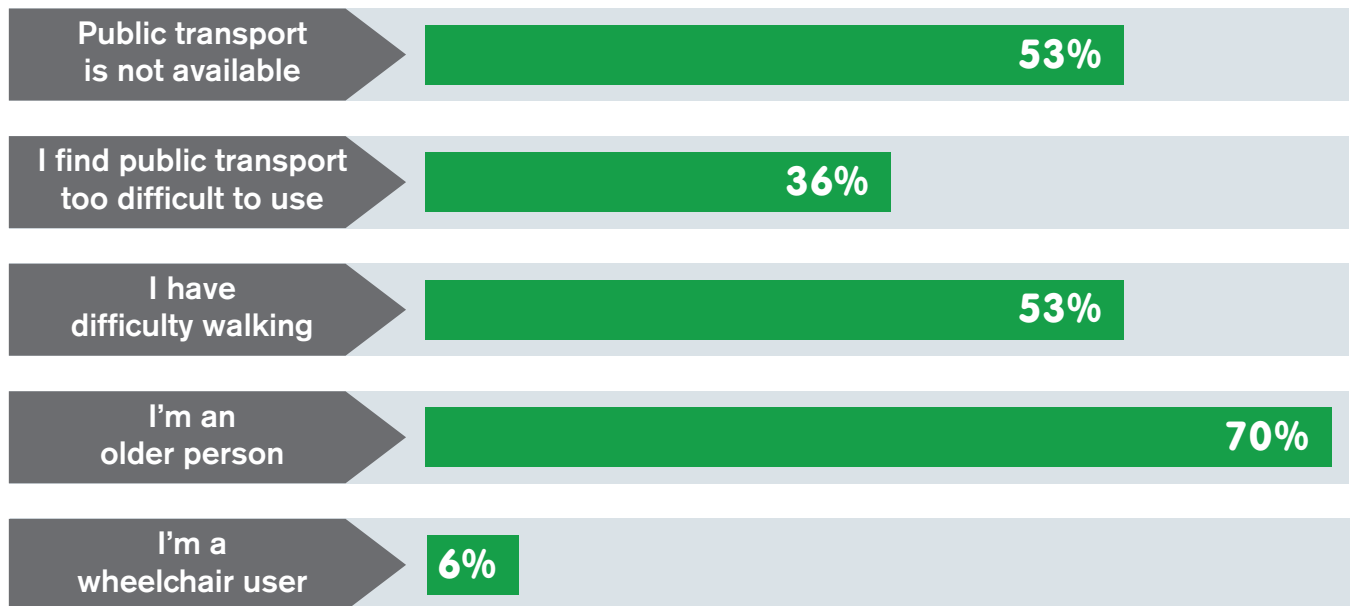
£61,641



Using ECT Charity transport has helped me



Reasons people use our services





“It makes me feel like I’m living...”

ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

- Old Man 500ml £4.95
- Pilsener 330ml £4.45
- Prosecco 300ml £3.95
- White 180ml £4.95
- Wine 180ml £4.95
- Sparkling 200ml £4.95
- Mixables £4.95
- Smoothies £4.95
- Just carbon £1.30
- Fruit Smoothie | Glass of milk £1.40
- Salt | Sparkling water £3.40
- Apple Juice £2.25
- Orange £2.95
- Apple £3.20

Expresso 33.5ml £1.95
Double espresso 33.5ml £2.45
Port of English breakfast tea 33.5ml £2.45
Port of tea for two 400ml £2.40
Milkshake with 400ml £2.75
Coffee 33.5ml £2.45

Jackie's story

Jackie started using our PlusBus for Health service in Ealing this year to access healthcare appointments, but soon added trips with PlusBus and excursions with PlusBus Direct.

"I need to use a mobility scooter to get around and cannot use public transport" said Jackie. "I don't feel safe, the drivers are not friendly and passengers will not give up their seat for someone elderly.

"To get to the GP, I was using taxis or Uber. I was paying £20 minimum for a return trip to my GP – or I had to ask friends. If I got delayed at the GP or took time to come out, they would start to charge me for waiting time, which meant the cost would rise to £40 at times. The drivers weren't friendly, they didn't care. Now I'm using PlusBus Direct, the drivers are more helpful and caring – and the cost-saving helps too.

"It has been great getting out on the day trips (PlusBus Direct), they have been wonderful. I know all the ladies that go on them, we speak to each other regularly but didn't often get to see one another. More, more, more day trips!

"The day trips give me something to look forward to, otherwise I'm stuck indoors every day. It makes me feel like I'm living – I tell my friends they need to sign up for PlusBus!"



“We believe that we have a genuine responsibility to the natural environment.”



Environmental impacts: our Social Value

The Toolkit places an economic value on our environmental impact. It balances out our own negative contribution as a transport provider against the positive impact of encouraging modal shift and the subsequent reduction in emissions and pollution.

A global crisis

The climate crisis is a reality, one that is already affecting communities across the globe. People around the world suffered an average of 41 extra days of dangerous heat in 2024¹⁰, with impacts on healthcare, economies, agriculture and wider ecosystems. Atmospheric CO₂ levels are at record highs¹¹, more than 50% above pre-industrial levels and increased at their fastest rate in 2024¹², contributing to record high annual average temperatures¹³. It is clear that governments, organisations and individuals all need to play their part in addressing the issue.

In the UK, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero data for 2022 shows that the single largest source of emissions is from transport – 28% of the total – overtaking electricity generation in 2014¹⁴. Cars and taxis are responsible for more than half (53%) of these emissions and, in London, it is estimated that congestion is responsible for 15% of all transport emissions in the capital¹⁵.

Each car passenger trip avoided is a positive step – travelling together can make a real impact. The Energy Saving Trust estimates that leaving the car at home can reduce an individual's carbon emissions by 39%¹⁶.

What we do

We believe that we have a genuine responsibility to the natural environment. Our individual transport and Group Transport services aggregate passengers' trips, reducing private car and taxi use. We also provide MiDAS training at our Ealing depot, which includes instruction on driving in an environmentally friendly manner.

Even as our transport has a part to play in reducing emissions, we operate a fleet of 140 vehicles across the country and they still burn fossil fuels. We have a number of rolling programmes, policies and projects, each aimed at providing incremental positive changes to our work as community transport operators.

The most significant of these is our fleet renewal programme, which is replacing older, more polluting vehicles at the Euro 4 and Euro 5 standard with greener, Euro 6 models. This represents a significant step forward as Euro 6 provides an 68% reduction in NO_x emissions. Other measures include MiDAS training for all drivers, use of telematics to reduce engine idling and logistical planning to maximise occupancy and reduce dead mileage.

¹⁰ worldweatherattribution.org

¹¹ climate.gov

¹² [ibid](#)

¹³ un.org/sustainabledevelopment

¹⁴ gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-and-environment-statistics-2024

¹⁵ london-tv.co.uk/tomtom-traffic-index-congestion-responsible-for-15-of-londons-road-transport-emissions

¹⁶ energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/shared-travel-options

Environmental impacts: our year in numbers

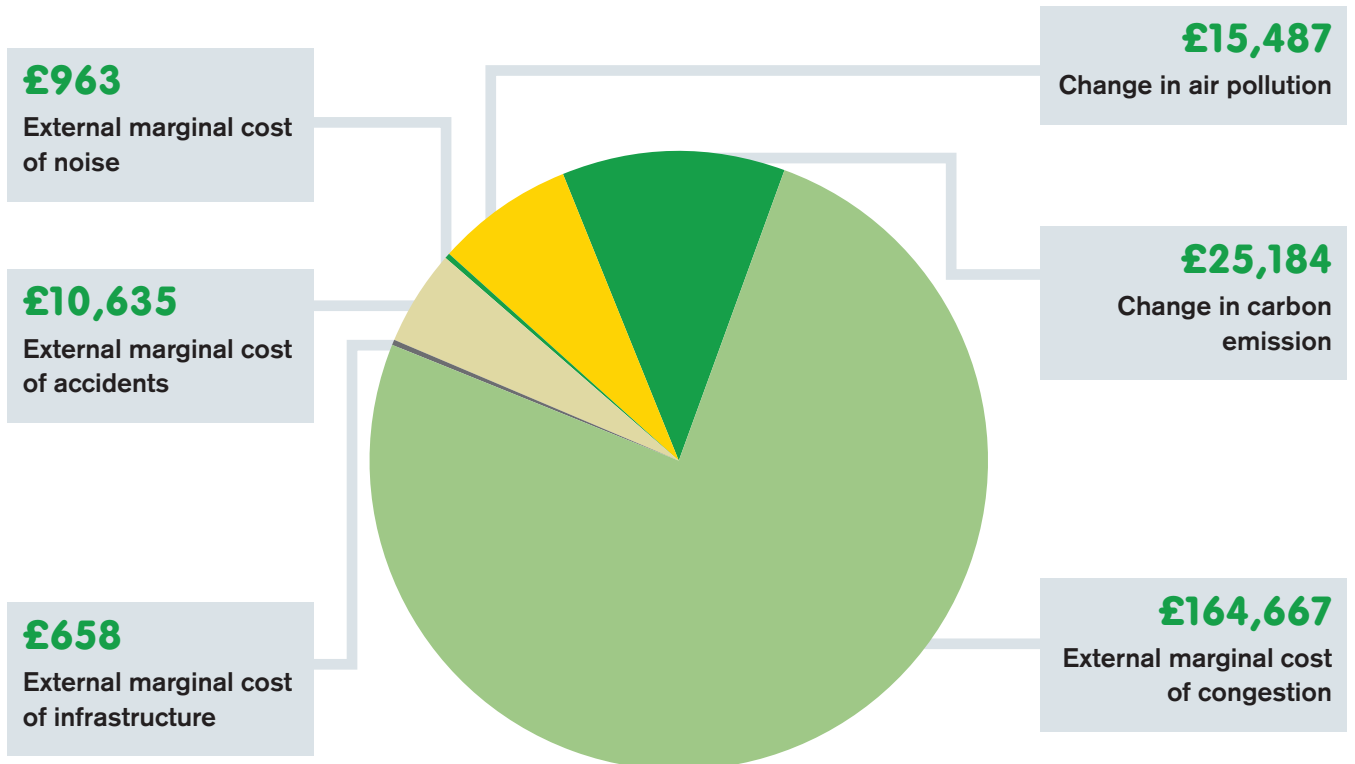
Our Toolkit results for the environmental impact of our work show that we are playing our part in reducing the impact of transport on the environment – although much remains to do. Taken together, these impacts accounted for £217,592 of our total Social Value.

The majority of our Social Value (76%) comes from our impact on congestion – bringing people together for travel and reducing car and taxi use. This contributes to a reduction in carbon emissions and pollution, even after our own emissions are taken into account providing 19% of our total Social Value.

Results from our fleet renewal programme are also promising. Since 2021, we have moved from a slim majority (53%) of vehicles at the superior Euro 6 standard to these forming the mainstay of our fleet (86%). We have almost entirely retired (1%) the most polluting Euro 4 vehicles from service. As Euro 6 vehicles are also significantly more fuel-efficient – our kilometres per litre have increased from 7.73 in financial year 2024 to 8.10 in year to March 2025 – a 5% improvement in fuel efficiency.

Our MiDAS training programme is also having an impact. In 2024/25, we trained 139 Group Transport members to drive in an environmentally friendly manner.

Environmental impacts: £217,592



139

People trained to drive in an environmentally-friendly manner (MiDAS)



Euro emissions ratings change between years

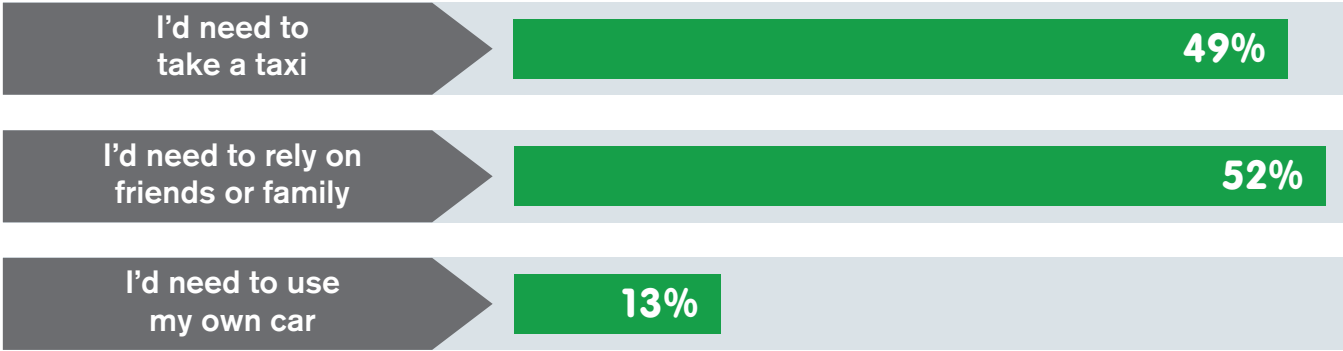
	2021	2025
Euro 4	10%	1%
Euro 5	34%	14%
Euro 6	56%	86%

circa
5%

Our fuel consumption has improved circa 5% as a result of a more modern fleet

Driving modal shift – private car or taxi use avoided:

If ECT Charity’s services were unavailable, how would you travel?





“ECT Charity does not simply provide services to its community, it is a part of it as well”

Economic and labour supply impact: our Social Value

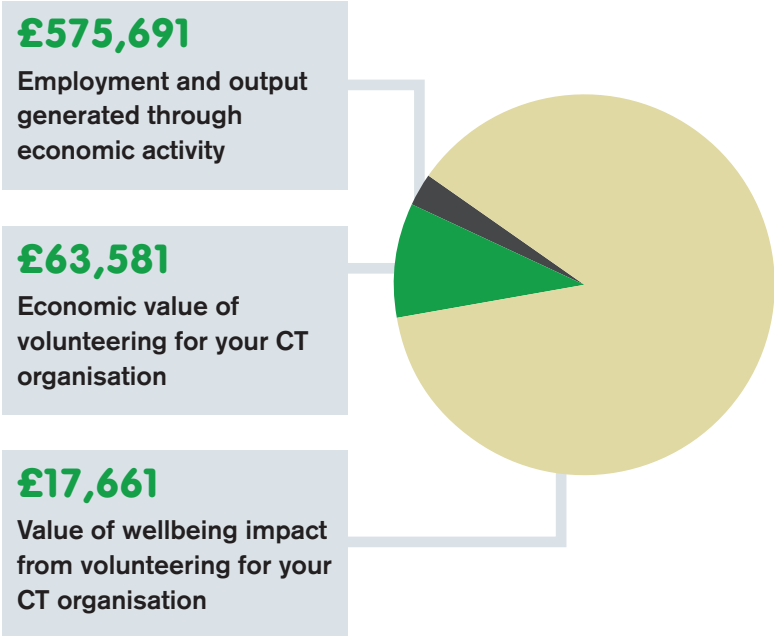
The Toolkit assesses our contribution as an economic entity – as an employer and provider of volunteer opportunities and as an economic actor. It also evaluates labour supply measures, including the value of training provided.

An important question

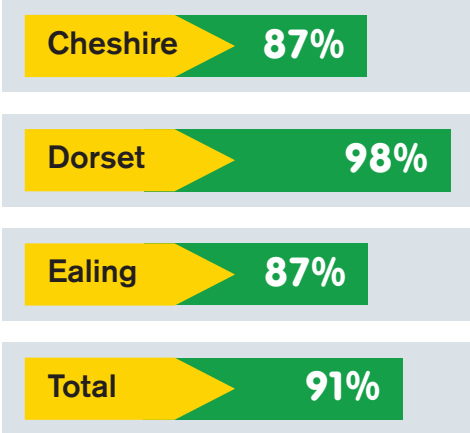
ECT Charity does not simply provide services to its community, it is a part of it as well. This means we have an impact as a local employer, as a supplier of services and as a customer of other organisations. This role is significant and too often overlooked – for instance, during 2024/2025 we had an average of 218 employees.

Our economic impact

The Toolkit shows that a significant part of our Social Value comes from our actions as an economic entity and provider of volunteer opportunities – £656,933 over the year. This is reinforced by our approach of hiring and buying local wherever possible as a means of broadening our impact – 78.5% of our total spend, including wages, takes place within the communities where we work.



% of employees who are local residents



“Listening to our service users is at the heart of what we do.” – John Chesters, Chief Executive, ECT Charity



“...we have chats and a lot of smiles and care between us all”

“If I couldn't use this bus I would be very isolated. The bus is a lifeline for me”

“...it keeps me in contact with the world”

“...makes me feel confident and independent”

“...without this service I would lose my independence; miss the friends I have made”

“I would be stuck in the house without you”

“I would miss socialising with others and enjoying the countryside”

“...the other passengers have become friends over the years and it is a lovely environment”

“Life wouldn't be worth living; I have no other way to get out”

“The service is my only chance of getting to my GP appointments”

About ECT Charity

ECT Charity is one of the UK's leading providers of community transport, safely providing almost 451,000 passenger trips for our communities each year. We operate a wide variety of services, each based on a particular local need: from minibuses for community groups to transport for children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, from door-to-door services for older and disabled people to buses tackling rural social isolation – and many more.

As a charity, our transport is designed to make a positive difference in the communities we serve – currently Cheshire, Dorset and Ealing, West London.

www.ectcharity.co.uk



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