

Car Club Accreditation Criteria

Full, Provisional and Basic Standard
Accreditation

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Introduction

The car club accreditation scheme has been set up for the benefit of public bodies, and it was designed with their input. The aim is to provide a tool for organisations that helps to assess operators when deciding who should be invited to submit proposals, supported or chosen for a contract.

The scheme is valuable for local authorities who are increasingly supporting car clubs with funding and provision of on-street parking. Planning authorities requesting car club provision in a development as well as public transport operators working on joint promotions and discounts will also benefit from the system.

Why be accredited?

Car club operators benefit from using the accreditation logo in their marketing, but with a charge for administering each approval, not all clubs will want to apply for accreditation. This does not mean they are not bona fide clubs. Indeed many smaller community based clubs will not face the situations where accreditation is needed, although some will find it useful to prove and to have proof that they meet other minimum standards such as safety and service standards.

Section 1. Developing Accreditation for a changing market

Carplus reserves the right to update the accreditation criteria and application forms to reflect changes in the car club market and new models of car clubs that are emerging. Any updated versions will be published on the Carplus website and circulated to all accredited operators.

There are two standards of accreditation available, full and basic, both of which are available on a provisional and location specific basis.

1.1 Full Accreditation

Full accreditation will apply to operators who are already established and have a scheme that has already been launched. Full accreditation requires operators to meet all of the requirements set out in the Full Accreditation application form (see below)

Some operators may find it appropriate to apply for full accreditation for some of their locations and basic accreditation for others, depending on the standard and age of vehicles being provided. This can be accommodated – please speak to the Carplus team for further details.

Some car club operators who are new to the market may wish to work towards full accreditation as their operations move past the launch phase. In these circumstances provisional full accreditation may be appropriate (see above).

1.2 Provisional Full Accreditation

Local authorities entering into agreements with operators need to have assurances that they can deliver what they claim, but at the same time, new entrants to the industry may wish to apply for tenders prior to having all operational elements in place. It is difficult for Carplus to give the necessary assurances without the applicant being actually operational and proving what they can deliver. Provisional full accreditation may now be especially important to encourage new entrants to the market outside of London.

Provisional full accreditation will only be awarded on the basis that the operator provides Carplus with written details of a set of milestones leading up to a launch date and evidence at each stage they are achieved. If significant and repeated delays occur, provisional status will be removed until the launch programme is back on track.

1.3 Location Specific Accreditation

Some operators with basic accreditation may wish to apply for full accreditation for certain locations where, for example, the local authority requires it for access to on-street bays. In this instance it may not be possible for all of the operator's locations to meet the criteria, specifically the minimum standard for car age. These revised criteria allow the local authority to specify what level of accreditation they require for that location and for full accreditation to be awarded for that area.

1.4 Basic Accreditation

Smaller community-based car clubs have not previously required accreditation status or been able to meet the criteria, in particular the age of vehicles. A number of stakeholders have raised the issue to Carplus that it would nonetheless be useful for these clubs to prove and to have proof that they meet other minimum standards such as safety and service standards. Local authorities issuing tenders would still require full accreditation status but those providing small scale grants to community clubs and its members could have basic reassurances.

Specific criteria have been developed in order to enable appropriate clubs to be awarded "basic accreditation" from Carplus. The criteria have been chosen carefully to ensure they are realistic for this sector of car club operators to comply with and simple to administer whilst still being meaningful. They are designed to ensure a uniformity of basic standards whilst nurturing the growth of car clubs in the UK.

Section 2. Accreditation Scheme

The criteria for the basic standard and full accreditation are split into four sections; each section contains the requirements needed and a brief explanation of what is included and necessary. The four sections are:

- **2.1 Business requirements**
- **2.2 Service provision requirements**
- **2.3 Safety requirements**
- **2.4 Data collection requirements**

The differences between the basic standard and full accreditation are highlighted in each section. All other standards apply to both levels.

To be awarded accreditation each operator will need to complete the appropriate application form and provide the appropriate supporting documentation outlined in the application form.

To be awarded accreditation it will be necessary for an operator to achieve all of the requirements in full. The accreditation process will require operators to renew their accreditation on an annual basis.

The charge for accreditation is comprised of a Carplus membership fee and a per vehicle levy. Car club operators with less than 10 vehicles will be charged a lower membership fee rate and no vehicle levy. The table below illustrates the fees to be paid from 1st April 2017.

A penalty charge of £50 may be made if substantial information is missing on an application and a second appraisal is required. Price rises may be applied each year at the AGM. Each renewal year runs April to April regardless of when a club is approved. Pro-rata charges will be applied when an operator applies for accreditation part way through a year.

Payment structure from 1st April 2017 (prices exclude VAT)

- £750 membership fee, (£250 membership fee for less than 10 vehicles); and
- £3 per vehicle levy (based on the number of cars at 1st April each year and no levy charged for under 10 vehicles);

2.1. Business Requirements

2.11 The operator must have a formal constitution and/or be a limited or public liability company

Car club operators will be required to show that they have a formal organisational structure in place. Limited companies must produce foundation documents and demonstrate that they have a formal management structure in place, such as a board of directors.

Other operators, such as community groups should have, as a minimum, a formally adopted, written constitution. These groups should also have an elected body that form an operational committee; these should include a Chair, Secretary, Treasurer as a minimum.

2.12 The operator must submit an annual report on application, unless they are not yet operational in which case they must submit a similar publicly available statement of how the club will be operated

In all cases the report should include details of current number of vehicles and members, pricing structures, location(s) of operation, and operational methods. It should also include a statement on company procedures should the operator cease to operate in a particular area, close operations or be taken over. Published audited accounts or management accounts for the previous year must also be submitted.

On renewal, it is the duty of the operator to make Carplus aware of any new documentation or changes to operating conditions that have an impact on their accreditation status (for example new operational locations that are to be included in the accreditation). Carplus reserves the right to request updated documents on renewal of accreditation (such as published accounts for the most recent year).

2.2 Service Provision Requirements

2.21 The operator must offer a pay-as-you-drive car club service

To be accredited the car club operator must provide a service that conforms to ALL of the criteria listed below. As a response to the emergence of flexible and point to point operators we have made minor amendments to this section to make the accreditation criteria more accommodating to 'new models' of car clubs including flexible and one way.

The car club must have:

- Prices which vary per mile AND/OR per time booked.
- Customers should pay according to a fixed price structure.
- Pricing must be available to customers at the time of booking and include all aspects of vehicle usage (e.g. insurance, tax, fuel etc).

- A recognised booking system (e.g. telephone and/or internet) accessible to all their customers.
- Vehicles available to be booked in time segments, for example by the hour or by the minute.
- Vehicles available to customers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This rule allows for block bookings by corporate members.
- A system by which the customer will not sign a new hire or rental agreement contract with each booking.
- Vehicles which are accessible at the time of the booking commencing without assistance from a member of the car club staff.
- Vehicles which are located within residential or commercial areas close to a cluster of members.

2.22 All vehicles used must be under four years old

Full accreditation requires that vehicles should be less than four years old to protect the image of car clubs as an attractive alternative to private ownership, and ensure the best quality, lowest emission vehicles are made available to customers. **For the basic accreditation this is extended to eight years to make allowances for reduced resources and lower utilisation and thus wear and tear.**

2.23 Vehicles should be kept clean and tidy at all times

To protect the image of car clubs as a professional service, as seen by potential and actual customers, all vehicles available for use by customers should be kept clean and in good order. As part of the application for accreditation, operators must outline their checking procedures which should include cleaning and checking each vehicle:

- at least every two weeks for full accreditation
- **or four weeks for basic accreditation**
- or when a complaint is received, whichever is sooner.

2.24 Operators must be contactable by telephone

In order to deal with member's problems operators must be contactable by telephone between reasonable hours.

Full accreditation:

Ideally, 24 hours cover but a minimum of 7am to 10pm plus system to deal with out of hours queries as soon as possible via a 24 hour message retrieval system

Basic accreditation:

From 8.30am to 6pm plus system to deal with out of hours queries as soon as possible via a 24 hour message retrieval system

In order to reduce the number of out of hours' queries systems should be put in place to deal with non-serious matters. Members should be informed of the procedure in the case of:

- A parking space being taken on return with the vehicle (where relevant)
- Not being able to access the vehicle
- A vehicle being returned late (where relevant)
- Damage being discovered on the vehicle before driving
- A vehicle breaking down or being involved in an accident.

2.25 In the event of a withdrawal of operations, operators must have an appropriate procedure in place

In the event that an operator ceases operations or withdraws services from a specific area, operators should aim to give their members two months' notice if this is practicable. They should also consider offering members the option to transfer to another car club for a nil or nominal charge. We request that operators advise Carplus of their intention to withdraw services or close as early as possible. Operators may also seek advice from Carplus on an appropriate closing down procedure.

3.0 Safety Requirements

- 3.1 All vehicles available for hire must be covered by comprehensive insurance. This could include operators self insuring their vehicles.

To protect the safety of users and their property, to protect the safety of other road users, property and vehicles and to protect the operator, ALL vehicles must be covered by comprehensive insurance that protects against passenger injury, third party injury and damage to the vehicle being driven, regardless of who was at fault. (It is standard for policies not to compensate the driver for their injuries if they are at fault).

All insurance certificates and details of cover should be available to customers within three working days of the request being received.

3.2 Deposits (which should be fully refundable) and excess payments taken by the operators must not be unreasonable

To protect the operators from insurance excesses and unpaid penalty charges it may be necessary to request a deposit from the customer. In all cases the deposit must not be in excess of the excess required from the insurance broker. Members should be made aware of what excess will be payable in the event of an accident which is their fault.

All deposits must be returned to the customer within 60 days of termination of the service contract, any deductions must be itemised and supporting documentation and/or receipts provided.

3.3 All vehicles available for hire must be roadworthy and regularly serviced and maintained

To protect the customer's health and safety all vehicles offered for hire must comply with all national legislation regarding roadworthiness.

Manufacturer's service requirements must be adhered to in full. All servicing should only be undertaken by a qualified mechanic and service history records kept up to date.

Regular maintenance checks should be undertaken by the operator to ensure compliance with legislation and the Highway Code. All maintenance checks should be recorded and any repairs or adjustments recorded.

3.4 All vehicles available for hire must be covered by a national breakdown and recovery programme.

To protect the customer's health and safety whilst driving the vehicle, all vehicles that an operator has available for hire must be covered by a national breakdown and recovery company (e.g. AA, RAC, ETA, Green Flag). This must offer roadside assistance, vehicle recovery and return to home for the customer.

3.5 All operators must provide a handbook to members on joining and in each vehicle

To ensure that members are aware of how to operate the vehicle and how to deal with emergencies and breakdowns, a handbook or pack of information must be available within the vehicle. This can be provided electronically through an in-car system. This should include all telephone numbers that may be needed should any problem arise from hiring the vehicle or in-car method by which the operator can be contacted.

3.6 All operators must have a complaints policy

Operators should have a procedure with which members can raise complaints which should be made available to members.

Section 4. Data Collection

The criteria outlined below are those agreed with all operators and local authority representatives for those with full accreditation status. **Carplus welcomes all basic accreditation operators to join in this process for the benefit of themselves and their supporters. Carplus will provide any required web system for the online surveys which will be suitable for any operator to use.**

One of the aims of this process is to avoid having different reporting requirements in different local authorities. This does not mean that local authorities cannot make additional requirements in their tenders but these should be avoided or kept to a minimum. Some aspects may be particularly commercially sensitive and hence may need to be disclosed directly without being included in this process. Secondly it should be noted that the data criteria will have to be reviewed annually and there will be an opportunity for revisions and additions at this point.

The data will be collated into the following reports:

1. **The Carplus Annual Survey** - an annual survey of private and corporate car club members and corporate car club administrators, that collates information on car club membership, usage and customer satisfaction. It also measures the impact of car clubs on travel habits, corporate policy and the environment. There is a slightly modified version of the survey issued to private car club members who have joined a car club within the three months prior to the survey. This captures information about their joining experiences and the early impacts that car club membership has had on their travel habits which can be different to those of more established members. The corporate surveys are tailored to gather relevant information on car clubs in a business context.

Operators are asked to distribute web links to the various surveys to the appropriate target members on our behalf. The data is collated by an independent, managing consultant.

The members and joiners surveys run between October and December. The results are published in the Carplus Annual Survey reports in April/May. Three regional versions are published – London, England & Wales (excluding London) and Scotland.

2. **Operators Survey** – this runs concurrently with the annual survey of car club members and the results are included within the Carplus Annual Survey report. It asks operators to provide data on the profile of their car club membership and the general usage of their car club vehicles by members.
3. **Emissions Analysis and Profiling** – this is carried out once a year and provides an insight into the impact of car clubs on air quality. It requires car club operators to provide a list of the vehicle registration marks (VRMs) of all of the vehicles on-fleet as at 1st November each year for analysis against DVLA and manufacturer datasets. The results of the emissions profiling forms part of the Carplus Annual Survey.
4. **Quarterly report** on number of members¹, parking bays (where relevant) and vehicles broken down by village, town, city or London borough. For point to point and flexible operators we ask that you provide an average number of vehicles within an agreed zone.

To view a sample copy of the Carplus Annual Survey, including the Operators Survey and Emissions Analysis report, please go to our web site:

<https://www.carplus.org.uk/tools-and-resources/annual-survey-of-car-clubs/>

All information held by Carplus as a result of applying for accreditation or participating in the Carplus Annual Survey and other data collection exercises is subject to the Data Protection Act and no company sensitive information will be disclosed to any other operator or third party. Where data is reported publicly as part of the Carplus Annual Survey or in monthly reports to our funding partners, the data will be presented anonymously.

Please note that Carplus reserves the right to withdraw an operator’s accreditation if they consistently refuse to cooperate with requests for the data outlined in this document.

Section 5. Maintaining Standards

Principally, the standard of operators will be checked through a renewal of the accreditation status each year. Carplus reserves the right to randomly check the quality of service being provided by each operator. If operators do not maintain standards throughout the year then a process has been put in place to review their continued eligibility for accreditation as outlined below:

1. Carplus will write to the operator detailing the areas which are thought to need improvement.

¹ A member is defined as: *“Someone who has completed all the necessary procedures, and is currently authorised by the operator, to access and use a car.”*

2. The operator has three months to challenge the claims and /or make necessary improvements.
3. If the standards are still not met after this time Carplus in conjunction with the relevant local authority or other key partners will look to remove the accreditation status.
4. If an operator has not paid the renewal fee due for the whole of the fleet by the 60th day after the renewal invoice is dated, the accreditation will be removed.