
North & West Taxi Proprietors Ltd

2023 Annual Return [Covering period 1st February 2023 – 31st January 2023]

Trustees Report

Charity Name: North & West Taxi Proprietors Ltd

Charity Registration No: NIC107310

Company No: NI040029

Address: Rath Mor Centre, Bligh's Lane, Derry, BT48 0LZ

Trustees:

Andrew McCartney

Terrence Page

Introduction

This report outlines the activities, financial position, and operational highlights of North & West Taxi Proprietors Ltd for the period from February 1, 2023, to January 31, 2024. As a community group dedicated to supporting individuals in becoming self-employed, especially as taxi drivers, we aim to provide essential training, support and services that empower our clients to achieve economic independence.

Our Aim

North & West Taxi Proprietors runs an Advice & Support Centre that provides advice, help, training, support, technical assistance, and advocacy support to people who are unemployed, self-employed, and economically inactive with a view to helping them into self-employment and sustaining their self-employment. We also deliver wellbeing programmes when funding is available. We also deliver community support to other areas of need: knee & hip replacements, blue badge applications and a range of other issues.

Strategic Priority 1 – Run an Advice & Support centre

- Deliver advice, help, training, support, technical assistance and advocacy to the self-employed, unemployed and others needing our support with a view to helping people into work and to sustain their work.
- Deliver technical support to people who struggle with IT issues (online issues)

Strategic Priority 2 – Deliver Self-employment support services

- Develop & deliver support services to help people sustain their self-employment
- Develop and deliver training & support services that assist people into self-employment
- Deliver advocacy services on behalf of stakeholders

Strategic Priority 3 – Deliver Back to Work Plan

- Develop training and programmes that assist people back to work
- Network with partners to create employment opportunities
- Develop the provision of personal development programmes and plans to assist

people getting back to work.

Strategic Priority 4 – Look after the wellbeing of stakeholders

- Develop programmes that look after the wellbeing of stakeholders
- Develop programmes that look after the wellbeing of our community
- Network with other city stakeholders on wellbeing, community safety, nighttime economy, purple badge and other relevant issues.

Specific Programmes include:

- **Advice & Support Programme** – Helps people explore opportunities, check benefit calculators and get help with employment, unemployment and related issues.
- **Self-employment support services** – Helps people with HMRC and other related issues. Helps people to sustain their self-employment and keep their responsibilities. Helps people who fall ill and need assistance with benefits.
- **New Taxi Driver Training** – Helps people to pass the taxi theory & driver tests and become taxi drivers (there is currently a lack of taxi drivers). This programme is supported by Jobs & Benefits, Success NW, Causeway Coast & Glens Council and others.
- **Back to Work Programme** – which works creatively to assist people overcome the hurdles in getting back to work. This programme is supported by Jobs & Benefits and others. We have a specific taxi version also for those entering the taxi industry.
- **Returning to work after a medical incident** – a support and advocacy programme that assists people through a process when returning to work (heart attack, TIA & other)
- **Taxi Training** – Taxi training to help improve taxi services locally and keep taxi drivers safe.

Operational Overview

During the past year, we have made significant strides in supporting our community:

- **Advice & Support Programme** – Our drop-in centre continues to be a vital resource to our community; we have a heavy footfall which indicates that there is still a huge need within our community. We have completed over 2,000 face to face appointments and answered over 2000 phone queries in this timeframe. Although we specialise in self-employment, unemployment, and back to work schemes, we have dealt with a wide range of issues: Knee & hip replacement schemes, blue badge, insurance, DVA & HMRC compliance and other.

- **Self-employment support programme** – We successfully assisted over 70 individuals in becoming self-employed, with 60 of those entering the taxi industry. Our bespoke training programs and advocacy services have been pivotal in this success. We have also supported over 300 people with issues helping them to sustain their self-employment. We have helped over 60 people with unemployment issues. We have developed a good working relationship with Jobs & Benefits offices in the Northwest and take their referrals. We have also started working with Success NW getting referrals.
- **New Taxi Driver Training** – People struggle to pass the new taxi theory & driver tests and become taxi drivers (there is currently a lack of taxi drivers). Our bespoke training is working successfully, and the results are good. 60 people passed in this period and became taxi drivers. The programme is supported by Jobs & Benefits, Success NW, and others.
- **Back to Work Programme** – We have assisted 70 people to overcome the hurdles in getting back to work. This programme is supported by Jobs & Benefits and others.
- **Returning to work after a medical incident** – Our support and advocacy programme has assisted 10 people through a process when returning to work after a medical emergency (heart attack, sleep apnoea, TIA & other)
- **Taxi Training** – 200 Taxi drivers availed of our training to help improve taxi services locally and keep taxi drivers safe. We have dealt with PSNI, DVA, CCI, council and others regarding passenger safety, night-time economy, purple badge for the city, and some specific incidents. We continue to be a conduit between the local taxi industry and local authorities. We also network with the regional taxi industry.

We have had a lot of requests to help people with online issues. Taxi Licensing, HMRC and Universal Credit is all done online now and we find a lot of people struggling and afraid to make mistakes. They are also afraid of online scams. We are also helping people with a range of other issues, Entrance and repute issues in the taxi industry, Blue Badge applications, advice on knee & hip replacements, insurance issues and benefit & pension issues.

We have dealt with many people needing advice, help and assistance with the closure of Working Tax Credit and the move to Universal Credit.

Despite reducing operational hours, we maintain a high footfall, demonstrating the ongoing need for our services.

Community Impact:

- Feedback from our stakeholders indicates a strong demand for our advice & support services. We are committed to ensuring that our resources are utilized effectively to address the needs of the community.

Financial Overview

1. Funding Sources

- We received grant funding from the Big Lottery totalling £31,859.00 in restricted funds, which contributed to our operational costs. The funding from the Big Lottery was aimed at helping us to become more sustainable.
- Additionally, we generated £31,112.00 in unrestricted funds, showcasing our ability to diversify funding sources despite the challenges faced.

2. Expenditure

- Our spending included £31,825.00 of restricted funds and £26,812.00 of unrestricted funds on agreed costs, aligning with our budgetary plans and the objectives set out in our grant agreements.

3. Current Financial Status

- As of the end of this reporting period, we currently have no active funding but continue to operate with the support of dedicated volunteers and two self-employed personnel. This model allows us to remain flexible and responsive to the needs of our community.

Challenges and Adjustments

- **Reduced Funding:** The lack of ongoing funding has necessitated a reduction in operational hours. However, we remain focused on delivering high-quality support within these constraints.
- **Volunteer Reliance:** Our reliance on volunteers is crucial. We continue to actively engage and recruit volunteers to ensure that we can meet the needs of our stakeholders without compromising the quality of our services.

Future Outlook

- **Funding Strategy:** Moving forward, we are exploring new funding opportunities and partnerships to sustain and potentially expand our services. We aim to apply for additional grants and engage with local businesses and organizations to create collaborative initiatives.
- **Service Expansion:** We are assessing ways to enhance our training and support programs, particularly in response to feedback from our clients regarding the services they find most beneficial.

Conclusion

- Despite the challenges posed by reduced funding, North & West Taxi Proprietors Ltd remains committed to serving our community. The support we provide is critical in helping individuals navigate the complexities of self-employment and improve their livelihoods. We are grateful to our stakeholders, partners, and volunteers for their unwavering support and dedication.

Recommendations

The board is encouraged to explore additional funding avenues and community partnerships to ensure the continuity and enhancement of our services.

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