

Car Club Accreditation Criteria

V4
Jan 07



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Consultation process

The following criteria have been proposed as essential for an operator in order to gain accredited status from Carplus. Carplus convened a working group of representatives from local authorities to produce this document. The criteria have been chosen carefully to ensure they are realistic for evolving car club operators to comply with and simple to administer. They are designed to ensure a uniformity of basic standards whilst nurturing the growth of car clubs in the UK. Criteria used in other countries were also a consideration.

Who will benefit from accreditation?

It is anticipated that accreditation will help individuals wishing to join a car club to do so with confidence knowing that the operator is offering a safe, reliable and genuine service.

Accreditation will also provide professional bodies with a set of criteria already met by the operator that they can be sure of before they give away benefits. Likely scenarios include:

- **Parking** – particularly on-street where local authorities need some guarantee of authenticity
- **Tendering** – particularly L.A's and developers seeking car club services
- **Planning** – where the planning authority may request car club provision in a development they may be able to specify an accredited car club
- **Public transport operators** – accreditation is a necessary development if we are to achieve car club integration with trains/buses. These operators need a guarantee on authenticity.

The definition of a car club has been an elusive quest; it seems very difficult to pin down a single definition that encompasses everyone in the field.

Accreditation will provide clarity to individuals and organisations, as well as providing a distinction between other forms of car sharing and rental schemes.

Do all car clubs need accreditation?

It may be that some operators do not want to become accredited, this should not prevent them from joining the Carplus organisation. It is up to each operator to determine the value of accreditation to them.

Not being accredited is not an indication that business is not providing a safe, quality service and fulfilling the desires of its market.

Accreditation scheme

In this document the term operator will be used to cover all types of commercial company, community group, or not for profit organisation that currently operates or wishes to operate a car club.

The accreditation criteria are split into 4 sections, each section contains the requirements needed and a brief explanation of what is included and necessary. The four sections are:

- **Business requirements**
- **Service provision requirements**
- **Safety requirements**
- **Data collection requirements**

An application form is attached to be completed to gain accreditation. This includes a full list of supporting documentation required to be submitted with application.

To gain accreditation it will be necessary for an operator to achieve all the requirements in full. The accreditation process will require operators to apply annually for accreditation from Carplus.

It will be possible for new operators to apply for accreditation before they launch in order to satisfy the demands of the local authority or other body. However if the required standards are not met once the club is launched then accreditation may be removed. See section on Maintaining Standards.

A charge will be levied each year by Carplus to cover the cost of administering the scheme. The fee has been reduced to reflect the reduction in checking needed in the new set of criteria. The price is no longer dependent upon size of operation as the work required would be the same for all.

	Charges for all operators 2007/08 (ex vat)
Initial application	£250
Renewal	£150

A penalty charge of £50 may be made if substantial information is missing on application and a second appraisal is required. An inflation related price rise is planned for 2008/09.

Maintaining standards

Principally the standard of operators will be checked through a renewal of the accreditation status each year. However if operators do not maintain standards throughout the year then a process has been put in place.

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

Data collection

A fourth section has been added in response to feedback. It has been agreed that it would be useful for everyone working in the industry to have access to UK wide statistics on car clubs. Provision of the data in section four will be voluntary in 2005/06 and then reviewed.

All information held by Carplus as a result of applying for accreditation is subject to the Data Protection Act and no company sensitive information will be disclosed to any other operator or third party.

1. Business Requirements

- 1.1 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 not for profit organisations or 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.

- 1.2 The operator must submit an annual report on application and renewal, 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. Published audited accounts or management accounts for the previous year must also be submitted.

2. Service Provision Requirements

2.1 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. The car club must have:

- Prices which vary per mile AND/OR cost 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 hourly segments, for as little as one hour per booking
- 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

2.2 All vehicles used must be under four years old

To protect the image of car clubs as an attractive alternative to private ownership, the best quality of vehicles must be made available to customers.

Vehicle environmental impacts, especially emissions, are of concern to the evaluators of car clubs, particularly transport and environmental professionals and local and national governments. Accreditation aims to ensure that policy and legislative implementers are given a positive image of car clubs, which will help to ensure their future.

To this end all vehicles must not be older than four years from registration date at the time of application or renewal. Operators can apply to Carplus for an exemption to this clause in exceptional circumstances.

2.3 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 each vehicle at least every two weeks or when a complaint is received, whichever is sooner.

2.4 Operators must be contactable by telephone

To protect the image of car clubs as a professional service, as seen by customers, operators must be contactable by telephone 24 hours a day to assist in any queries that may arise during the hire term or booking process. This might involve a member of staff answering calls on a mobile telephone out of office hours.

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
- Not being able to access the vehicle
- A vehicle being returned late.
- Damage being discovered on the vehicle before driving

3. 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 3 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 31 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.

Manufacturers 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 customers 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 should include all telephone numbers that may be needed should any problem arise from hiring the vehicle.

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 have been agreed with all operators and local authority representatives consulted as the standard data collection criteria for the Carplus Accreditation Scheme.

One of the aims of this process is to avoid having different reporting requirements in different boroughs. 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 should be collated into the following reports.

1. An annual report to collate information on environmental impact and customer satisfaction. (March)
2. Quarterly report on number of members and cars. (March / June / Sept / Dec)

Summary of criteria – notes below

Source	Local Auth	Carplus	Quarterly Report	Annual Report
Operator systems	√	√	Membership numbers total	
Operator systems	√		Membership numbers by authority boundary	
Operator systems	√	√	Car numbers total	
Operator systems	√		Car numbers by authority boundary	
Operator systems	√		Utilisation rates for cars	
Operator systems	√	√		Ave miles / member / year
Operator systems	√	√		Ave miles / trip
Standard survey	√	√		No of members who joined in last 12 months that have given up or deferring car purchase.
Standard survey	√	√		Customer satisfaction
Standard survey	√	√		Frequency of trips / mode / split by in town / out town

Section A - Quarterly report

Frequency: March / June / Sept / Dec

1. Membership numbers
 - Membership numbers broken down by local authority boundaries – to each authority
 - Total membership numbers for the UK including those using off street bays– to Carplus and authorities

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. No of cars
 - broken down by local authority boundaries – to each authority
 - total for the UK including off street bays – to Carplus and authorities

The cars must meet the criteria set in the previous sections of the accreditation scheme regarding age, location and accessibility.

3. Percentage of the chargeable day the car is busy on average over a monthly period

This information is deemed commercially sensitive but was requested by the majority of authorities. LA's should confirm with their operators if they require this data and then send it to them directly, and not to Carplus.

Section B: Annual Report

Frequency – every 12 months

Sample size – 25% of all members

The survey should include the Carplus questions in the exact wording format but can obviously include extra questions that the operator would like to add. The survey should log the location of the club they are a member of and the number of months they have been a member to compare travel differences over time.

From operator systems

1. Aggregate figures on average miles driven / member / year. Calculated as total number of miles driven over 12 months divided by total members (as defined in section 1).
Optional: Average miles / member / year - broken down by number of years as a member of the car club.
2. Aggregate figures on average miles driven / hiring for data collected over the 12 month period.

From standard on-line survey

The following data will be collected by the operators using an on-line survey emailed to a sample of 25% of members. The results will be collated automatically and forwarded to Carplus for amalgamation into a national survey. Carplus can help in producing this survey via an on-line site such as Survey Monkey.

There are two versions for new joiners and members who are being surveyed after a year or more since joining. The former omits the customer satisfaction question and the car club as a mode of travel when asking about travel behaviour.

3. Number of members who joined in last 12 months that have given up or deferred a car purchase as a percentage of total new members in this period.
4. Customer Satisfaction – “What is your overall satisfaction with the current service?” (Very good / good / average / poor / very poor).
5. Modal Split * - see table below

The data outlined below will provide information on modal split (difference between members and non members) and shift (differences brought about due to joining) through comparison with:

A: A comparison of data from newly joined members on their behaviour prior to joining with those of membership of more than a year.

B: A comparison of travel habits of members for one year with those having been members for 2 or more years.

C: Collective results for each mode compared to the National Travel Survey results.

I certify that the information provided in this application form is a true representation of the car club for which we seek accreditation

Signed

Print name

Dated

