

## Buchan Dial-A-Community Bus

### Introduction

Buchan Dial-A-Community Bus is a charitable community transport company based in Maud, Aberdeenshire. They have a small staff team and a pool of volunteers who deliver a range of

community transport services throughout rural Buchan in Aberdeenshire for those who are elderly, disabled or socially excluded in the Buchan area. Much of their target community is in rurally isolated villages, hamlets and farms and the bus services which operate in this area are infrequent. They operate a range of services including door to door services; community group access to transport; patient transport; a car transport scheme and Shopmobility.



### Social accounting and audit

Buchan Dial-A-Community Bus first became aware of social accounting through another local organisation and attended an introductory presentation from a REAP member of staff. They went on to develop their own social accounting process, using the Manual with some external support. They produced their first and only set of accounts for the years 2003/2004, and had these approved by panel in May 2005.

### Benefits and value of social accounting and audit

Rachel Milne, the manager of Buchan Dial-A-Community Bus felt that the social accounting process had been extremely useful in helping them to capture the added value that their services brought to socially and geographically excluded individuals as well as the wider community. Rachel felt that the consultations held with key beneficiaries such as older people had been an appropriate way to engage with people -*"The focus groups worked well as we have a lot of elderly clients. Being in a group helped them to 'spark' off each other and helped to stimulate memories"*.

The social accounting process was led by a volunteer who subsequently went on to become an employee within the company. There was also some external input from REAP (a local support agency who are members of SAN) at the end of the process in relation to the structure and presentation of the draft accounts. The only real problem that Dial-A-Community Bus faced was the time factor and the fact that it *"was very time consuming and hard to fit in"*, although this is seen as being worth it, as in the end it was *"...very rewarding and we will be doing it again."*

## Negatives, problems, snags

Rachel feels that it is important to get more external recognition of social accounting outside of the social economy sector. Rachel feels that the message has got through at the Scottish Government level but that *"... at the local authority level there is very poor awareness of anything other than value for money"*.

## General thoughts on social accounting and audit

Overall the social accounting process was seen as being very positive and was well received by both internal and external stakeholders. Rachel was reassured by the process and said that *"I knew we were 'good' but found being looked at by external process challenging but very useful. It gave us an outside stamp of approval"*.

Since completing their first set of social accounts the charity has grown and has set up a trading arm delivering training services to other transport based charities and social enterprises. Buchan Dial-A-Community Bus were also named Scottish Charity Of The Year 2007, an incredible accolade for a small locally based charity, but evidence of an organisation which is clear about its social purpose and able to demonstrate the added value they bring through their activities.

*Buchan Dial-a-Community Bus/ DAB Plus c.i.c  
Units 7&8  
Community Services Centre  
Old Mart site  
Maud  
AB42 4NS  
Tel 01771 619191*

<http://www.dialabus.org.uk/>