



Guaranteed Ride Home - information

Description

Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) schemes provide an occasional subsidised ride to commuters who use alternative modes - for example, if a bus rider must return home in an emergency, or a carpooler must stay at work later than expected. This addresses a common objection to the use of alternative modes. GRH programmes may use taxis, company vehicles or rental cars.

GRH trips may be free or they may require a modest co-payment. The cost of offering this service tends to be low because it is seldom actually used. Although it is sometimes called "Emergency Ride Home", it is most effective if requirements are not restricted to "emergency" trips. For example, a commuter may need a ride to participate in an unplanned social event that is not an emergency, but can still affect their decision whether or not to drive.

How it is implemented

Guaranteed Ride Home is typically service managed by the community administrator. A GRH procedure should specify the following:

Who is eligible. The policy could cover all employees, or only those who use alternative modes for a specified portion of commuting.

What trips are eligible. The procedure could cover any trip, or it could be limited to unexpected business appointments, employee or family member sickness.

Maximum number of uses allowed during a certain period, maximum miles within a period, or maximum cost per trip.

Which staff or department is responsible for implementation.

Procedures for using the GRH service.

Appropriate forms (e.g. registration and reimbursement vouchers).

Benefits and Costs

Benefits include increased commuter security, flexibility (employees who use alternative modes can stay late when they are needed at work, which addresses a common employer concern), and participation in travel plan schemes. By supporting use of alternative modes, GRH helps achieve all travel plan objectives.

Costs include administration and the costs of subsidising trips. A recent "ACT TravelWise" survey showed these were generally very low - typically less than £300 per annum.

Tax Implications

The IR176 from the Inland Revenue states as following:-

Employees will not have to pay tax or NICs if their employer provides alternative travel arrangements when employees cannot car-share as usual due to exceptional circumstances.

e.g. if an employee has to go home because of a domestic emergency. It does not apply if the circumstances could have been anticipated and planned for. This concession applies to a max of 60 journeys per employee in a tax year.

Barriers to Implementation

The main barrier is simply establishing an appropriate travel plan that can provide services such as GRH. Some employers may hesitate to provide GRH due to the possibility of high costs or liability exposure, but experience indicates that costs are usually low, and that GRH procedures are a very cost effective way to encourage reductions in car commuting.

Best Practices

A written policy should identify GRH eligibility and procedures.

Maximum number of trips, mileage and costs should be specified.

Requirements should not be overly restrictive (non-emergency trips should qualify).

Users should be involved in planning the procedure.