

# Progress in Practice

## Nottingham's Medilink Service

Nottingham University Hospitals (NUH) NHS Trust's new, free bus service runs between its two hospitals, helping to reduce private car journeys, save money and benefit the environment and health.

### Summary

Hospitals are major generators of transport. They also have to bear the cost of treating those injured on our roads. In Nottinghamshire, 6,000 people are killed or injured on the roads each year on average, at a significant cost to Nottingham's two university hospitals. In addition, rising costs of running car parks, increased traffic volume and health problems caused by rising emission levels and reduced physical activity are all problematic.

The Government is keen that hospitals take the lead in changing travel habits – and this is what the Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust is doing through its Medilink bus service.



### The Medilink Service

The Medilink is a free, direct bus service operating between Nottingham's two hospitals. At present it operates every 30 minutes using 16-seat vehicles. The next phase of the project (anticipated to start in February 2007) will extend the route, link to the tram system and will operate a 10 minute service. It is used by patients travelling between the two centres, and also by staff and students.

The project began in September 2005 and was made possible by joint input and funding from the Trust and local government. Nottingham City Council generously invested over £1 million, as well as providing infrastructure, and the service is operated and managed by the NUH Trust. After the February expansion, Medilink will make the NUH Trust one of the largest independent bus operators in Nottingham.



**Links and organisations involved:** Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust ([www.nuh.nhs.uk](http://www.nuh.nhs.uk)); Nottingham City Council ([www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk](http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk)); Medilink Website ([www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/cdt\\_medilink.htm](http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/cdt_medilink.htm)).

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## Good corporate citizenship benefits:

The scheme has been successful in meeting its objectives to improve access to services, reduce pollution by taking cars off the road and decrease journey times between sites. Reducing contributions to greenhouse emissions is of particular importance as the area suffers from poor air quality.

The scheme is part of the NUH Trust's overall Sustainable Transport Strategy. Other measures in this framework have included increasing short-stay car parking charges at the hospitals and integrating bus services with the city's transport system. It also shows that a free bus service can actually lead to a reduction in net travel costs to the Trust. It is hoped that these schemes will also lead to a change in attitude of the local population to transport, reducing reliance on the car.



## Key Learning Points:

- Net transport costs can be reduced, even when the service provided is free of charge - the Trust saved at least £180,000 in taxi fares during the project's first year.
- Hospitals can be key in changing people's attitudes towards transport.
- Participation with local councils is highly beneficial in terms of funding and project success.



## Facts and Figures:

- In its first two months passenger numbers on the Medilink buses rose to 2,000 journeys per week.
- Journey times between hospitals have been halved.
- Due to popular demand, since the start of the project, the frequency of the service has doubled and there are plans to increase the service further in 2007.

*"We are delighted to be in a position to expand the Medilink service for patients visitors and staff. We are committed to improving the service further to keep pace with demand and look forward to keeping people informed as the service develops."*

**Joanne Powell, Communications Officer for NUH NHS Trust.**

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