



**The Harpenden Hopper is a community minibus service that has become much more than just a means of getting from A to B. The Hopper is a lifeline for many, a vehicle of inclusion and independence, and a testament to what can be achieved when a community comes together with a common purpose. The Harpenden Hopper community minibus is operated by registered charity, Harpenden Connect Limited.**

#### Our journey so far:

##### How the Harpenden Hopper began

The story of the Harpenden Hopper is one of dedication and collective action. Launched in response to the growing demand for accessible local transport, the service was a project championed by a group of residents, supported by the town council, and made possible through the efforts of passionate volunteers.

The catalyst for the Hopper's inception was the gap in commercial bus services in and around the residential areas of the town. This was leaving many residents, mostly the elderly, struggling to get to shops, GP surgeries, social events, and other essential destinations. Recognising this, a group of local volunteers banded together to create a solution that would keep Harpenden's neighbourhoods connected.

##### How the Harpenden Hopper works

The Harpenden Hopper operates a fixed route around the town, with scheduled stops at key locations such as the high street, community centres, and residential areas. Running every weekday, the service is designed to be as convenient as possible.

Passengers can board at designated stops or request a pickup at specific points along the route, thanks to the 'hail and ride' system. This hybrid approach allows the minibus to serve both central and more outlying areas of Harpenden.

##### The people behind the wheel

One of the cornerstones of the Hopper's success is its team of volunteer drivers - local heroes who give their time to help neighbours stay mobile and connected. Many drivers are retired professionals. For them, driving the Hopper is not just a task - it's a chance to catch up with friends, listen to stories, and contribute to the fabric of community life.



##### More than just a ride

The impact of the Harpenden Hopper extends far beyond transportation. For many the Hopper is a lifeline. It offers independence to older residents who want to visit the shops or meet friends for coffee and has the potential to offer young people safe passage to after-school clubs and sports activities.

What's more, the Hopper has become a social hub on wheels. Regular passengers form friendships and look out for one another, turning ordinary journeys into opportunities for conversation and laughter. The friendly atmosphere on board reflects this.

Moreover, every year the volunteer drivers arrange a summer tea party for the passengers taking place in the gardens of St Nicholas Church Hall. This year about 60 passengers were served tea/coffee and delicious home-made cakes by many of the volunteer drivers who turned out wearing their bright green polo shirt uniforms. And, of course, they all arrived on the Harpenden Hopper itself.

## VOICES FROM THE HOPPER

Take Rita, for example - a long-time resident who credits the Hopper with keeping her active and engaged: "Without the Hopper, I'd be stuck at home most days. It's not just the shopping trips - it's the company and the sense of independence I value most." Stories like Rita's are echoed by many who rely on the service for getting about and social connection.

##### Funding, support, and sustainability

The Harpenden Hopper is funded through a mix of grants, donations, fare income, and sponsorship by local businesses. Harpenden Connect recently received a grant from Harpenden Building Society. As running a minibus service is expensive, the financial support from the Society has helped cover the cost of the insurance.

The Hopper team is exploring greener options for the future, including electric minibuses, to reduce the service's environmental footprint.

##### How to get involved

The Harpenden Hopper thrives thanks to its volunteers and the support of local residents. Passengers are encouraged to provide feedback, and advocate for the service, ensuring the Hopper remains responsive to community needs.

##### Conclusion

The Harpenden Hopper is more than just a minibus. It's a symbol of civic pride, ingenuity, and compassion - a reminder that when a community works together, remarkable things can happen.

So next time you see the cheerful Hopper rounding the corner, give a wave. It's not just a bus - it's the spirit of Harpenden, moving forward, one journey at a time.

[For those interested, information on timetables, routes, and volunteering opportunities are available on the Hopper's website](#)