

# Driver & Passenger Assistant Guidance Notes



*The information enclosed is aimed at passenger assistants (PAs) on home to school or adult social care transport and drivers who do not have a passenger assistant on board the vehicle.*

*Drivers & PAs play a vital role in supporting service users travelling on vehicles contracted to the county council and provide an important link between the child's home and school life.*

*The rules we put in place are to ensure that passengers and drivers / PAs are safe during duties on transport.*

## **Key Points to remember whilst working on TCC contracts:**

- **All drivers / PAs must carry their TCC Authorised Identity Badge (AIB) and be able to produce it on request. The badge should be in the correct operator name and in date. Drivers must also carry their Private Hire / Hackney Carriage license whilst on TCC contracts.**
- **If safeguarding concerns are raised, the guidance on page 4 should be followed and concerns reported to operator and TCC immediately. Operators or the TCC should be contacted if safeguarding training is required.**
- **In cases of accidents / incidents on the vehicle, the correct accident procedure should be followed. Please see full code of conduct for details. Incidents and ongoing behavior issues should be logged and passed to the operator who should contact the TCC for advice.**
- **The driver is responsible for the safety of the passengers in his vehicle. As such he/she is responsible for ensuring ALL passengers (including themselves and the PA) wear a seat belt, and the passengers are in the correct car seat. Please see page 10 for car seat guidance. If there are concerns, or differing advice from parents / school, then please contact the TCC.**



- Whilst working on TCC routes, drivers / PAs are expected to be professional and polite with everyone they encounter and give the passengers being transported their full attention.
- Drivers / PAs must hand over passengers to responsible adults at school and at home time. If no one is present to hand over to, the operator should be contacted and the code of conduct referred to for process to follow.
- Changes to the route / Passengers should only be accepted from express permission from the TCC. Similarly, if passengers stop transport, the TCC should be informed straight away.
- The TCC have a contract management process in place to monitor and address issues that arise on transport. A performance points system is in place to grade issues in terms of severity, and these points are then issued to drivers / PAs.
- When a driver / PA accrues 12 performance points over a rolling 2 year period, their badge will be removed and they face a 2 year suspension from working on TCC contracts. Please see the code of conduct for more details



## TEN KEY POINTS to follow if you have safeguarding concerns:

1. Always stop and listen straight away to someone who wants to tell you about incidents or suspicions of abuse.
2. Write brief notes immediately after speaking to a child, not while a child is talking to you. You need to pay full attention to what they are saying. Make sure you include the date, time, place and your signature on the notes.
3. Never promise that you will keep what is said confidential or secret. If you are told about abuse you have a responsibility to report it so that action can be taken. Reassure the child that you will tell only those who need to know.
4. Do not ask leading questions that may give your own ideas of what may have happened (e.g. did he/she do x to you?) – Just ask ‘What do you want to tell me? Or ‘Is there anything else that you want to say?’
5. Do not give the child the impression you don’t believe them – remember you may well be the first person the child has spoken to about this. Whether you believe them or not isn’t the issue – you must report their concern.
6. Immediately tell the TCC so that they can pass the information on to the Safeguarding team. Do not tell anyone else what you have been told.
7. Discuss with the person in charge whether any steps need to be taken to protect the person who has told you about the abuse.
8. Never try to investigate suspected or alleged abuse, for example, by interviewing people – Social Services and police staff are trained to do this. You could cause more damage and corrupt possible criminal proceedings.
9. As soon as possible (and certainly the same day) the person in charge should refer the matter to the local social services department helped by your notes. Follow their guidance on what to do next. They have a legal duty to start any necessary investigations, and they can advise you. Make time to discuss with your manager or a colleague how you are feeling.
10. Never think abuse is impossible or that an accusation against someone you know well and trust is bound to be wrong.

## Mobile Phones and Social Networking:

You should not use any mobile devices whilst on duty and our advice is that all mobile communication devices are put away whilst with the passengers.

You should not contact any of the clients using social networking sites (including accepting friend requests and online gaming), texting, and calling whilst you are working with them and even when they have left the service. We also recommend that you review your privacy settings and consider what you put on your social media site.

You should have very clear boundaries with the passengers and not become too involved or let them know personal information.

Do not contact the clients directly, if you suspect that the parent/carers has given your number to the children, please make the TCC aware as this could result in a serious safeguarding enquiry.

Do not let the children play with your phone, they may access personal information and see things on your phone.

Do not take any photos whilst on transport. This includes pretending to take photos, or taking photos using a passenger’s phone.

# **Your role as a Driver or PA**

## **Transporting children to school:**

A driver / PA accompanies children to and from school on taxis, buses or coaches. The children may have physical disabilities, hearing or sight difficulties, learning difficulties or behavioural problems. They may also have a range of conditions such as Autism, Asberger Syndrome, ADHD, or Epilepsy.

## **Transporting vulnerable adults:**

Vulnerable adults are aged from 19 upwards and may have similar additional needs to the children, additionally, older adults may have additional requirements as a result of conditions such as Alzheimer's disease.

## **Your responsibilities:**

You are responsible for the supervision and care of children whilst they are in the vehicle and until you can hand them over to a responsible person such as a teacher, parent or guardian. When there is no PA the driver will need to take on that role. The PA should always travel in the back of the vehicle with the children that they are accompanying. If seating arrangements will not allow for this ask the TCC for advice.

When you start a new school run the TCC will send a route manifest to your employer together with the names and addresses of the children, where you pick them up and drop them off and any other information that you need to know. If we have it, there may be some information regarding the need of individual passengers.

If you are notified that a new child is joining your school run, you or your company should contact the parent/guardian to find out if there is anything else you need to know about the child.

When there is a PA, the children on transport are their responsibility, not the drivers. The children must never be left on their own.

You should never leave the vehicle with children on board unless there is an emergency. The parent/carer is responsible to ensure that their child boards and disembarks the vehicle safely, but if they don't you need to raise this with the TCC. You may need to make a clear decision about the risk, i.e. where you are parked (crossing a road), being able to see the child enter the house safely and that someone is there to meet them.

Think about the passenger's needs and your surroundings at all times to make sure that it is safe.

When dropping at a school or centre you should be allowed to park on the school premises and the school staff should collect the children from the vehicle. If not please contact the TCC. It may be necessary for you to consider whether it is safe for you to escort the children into the school. Take the children to reception and hand over to a member of school staff. If you have any problems/doubts please call the TCC for advice.

Some schools will have their own systems to load and unload passengers which you must follow, this may include a lock down of the car park, the school staff bringing the passengers to your vehicle, etc. We expect you to be polite, courteous and respect the schools policies.

## **Collection & Drop Off Points:**

If a child meets or leaves transport at a pick up point (e.g. a bus stop) rather than their home address, it is still important that their parent or guardian is there with them. If a parent doesn't meet their child you must not put the child at risk by allowing them to make their way home unsupervised. Some children can make their way to and from a pick up point if written agreement has been received from their parent or guardian. The TCC can confirm if a child has permission to do this.

Children who are picked up and dropped off at their own homes must never be left alone unless the TCC has written agreement from the child's parent or guardian. Parents or guardians are still responsible for bringing their child to the transport and collecting them from the vehicle.

## **Waiting time:**

Parents should be advised of the time of the home pick up by your manager and it is their responsibility to be there at the agreed collection time. If the parents are not waiting with their child when you arrive at their home, you should only wait 5 minutes. We expect some common sense to be extended though, especially in cases involving children with Special needs. It can be quite an effort to get a child ready for an exact time. If you are having difficulties please contact the TCC.

## **Emergencies:**

In an emergency where a child could be at risk you must stay with the child until you are sure that he or she is safe. Do not take any risks or put the child in danger.

## **Drop Off:**

If a parent or guardian is absent at the child's regular drop off point, call the TCC for advice,. You may be asked to continue the route with the child on the vehicle and drop off the other children. The parent may be present by the time you return the child as the last drop off. Contact the TCC for advice if the parent is still absent.

If unable to contact the TCC contact the nearest social services office or the police for assistance.

If a parent asks you to pick up or drop off anywhere other than the designated point you must contact the TCC before doing so as any changes must be agreed and confirmed. Changes of address must also be authorised by the TCC before changes can be made to the child's journey.

You should never hand over a child to a different adult or sibling unless you have been authorised of this change by the TCC, the parent or the school.



# Communicating with special needs passengers

To continue to improve the quality of the service we provide to children with special needs, it is important to understand how to communicate with children with disabilities. Below is a simple set of guidelines for communicating with children both verbally and non-verbally.

## Appropriate language and behaviour:

Always behave in a mature, respectful, safe, fair and considered manner to all staff, pupils, vulnerable adults, parents and guardians. This includes using appropriate language at all times, remember the children in your care are likely to be very aware of your speech and actions even if they appear disinterested and you may find that comments you make in the vehicle will be repeated outside including any inappropriate language that you may use. Be particularly careful therefore not to use any swear words or other inappropriate language and simply treat all concerned in a professional manner. Also make sure to dress appropriately. From the first journey keep a calm atmosphere in the vehicle including keeping the volume of any music low.

## Communicating with a child who is blind:

Introduce yourself clearly, tell them when you are moving away, don't leave a child talking to an empty space.

Offer them your arm to hold if you are guiding them, then walk at a steady pace and try not to push or pull them.

If there are steps, tell them whether to go up or down.

Remember that guide dogs (and other assistance dogs) are working dogs and should not be fed, patted, or distracted whilst they are working.

## Communicating with a child who has speech difficulties:

Concentrate on what is being said and if you need more information break down your questions into individual points.

Be patient and don't try to guess what the child is trying to say.

If you don't understand what they are trying to say, don't pretend that you do.

Try other forms of communication if necessary (e.g. write things down on a note pad, use flash cards, etc).

Remember slowness or impaired speech does not reflect on a person's intelligence.

## Communicating with a child who has a learning difficulty:

Be patient.

Be prepared to explain something more than once.

Concentrate on using simple language and avoid jargon.

Speak to the child as you would to anyone else.

## Communicating with a child who uses a wheelchair:

Don't talk down to the child – try to ensure that your eyes are at the same level as theirs.

Do not lean on the wheelchair – it is annoying and it is part of their personal space.

Ask them if they wish to be pushed (especially older children) – don't just assume that they will.

If a conversation involves the child, make sure that it is being held where they can join in.

For example don't chat behind their chair.

### Communicating with a child that is deaf:

Look directly at the person. Do not turn your head or cover your mouth as this will prevent lip reading.

Avoid standing in front of a window, bright sunlight, or spotlight as this will cast a dark shadow again preventing lip reading.

Try to keep sentences short and simple making it less likely for the deaf person to confuse words or their meanings.

Avoid shouting and try not to exaggerate your mouth pattern as this will distort the shape of your mouth making words more difficult to understand.

Check regularly that you have been understood.

### Communicating with a child who has a facial disfigurement:

Like any disability, disfigurement does not mean that the child is any different.

Make eye contact as you would anyone else.

Do not stare, smile if you would for someone else.

Listen carefully and do not let the person's appearance distract you.

### If in doubt please ask!

If you require further information or advice about how to communicate with children with special needs, what language to use, and how it relates to the service we provide please call 0208 5417667. We can often set up training to help you to understand the children's needs.

## Managing challenging behaviour

Children with learning disabilities may appear younger than their actual age but they are encouraged at school to learn appropriate behaviour for their age group.

### Physical contact:

To avoid misunderstandings the TCC expects you to act in a professional manner at all times, do not encourage physical contact such as hugs, cuddles and kisses with children.

This may be difficult as some of the children are very affectionate. If you require help please contact the TCC or the child's school office for advice as quickly as possible.

If you have problems with children displaying challenging behaviour, contact the TCC, the parent, or the child's school for advice. Never drop a child off at an unscheduled point on your journey because they have been behaving badly in your vehicle. If a child informs you that they do not need transport for the afternoon or the following morning always advise and confirm this with the school office/parent.

***“You must never smack a child in your care”***

### Alternatives to physical restraint:

Distract the child's attention or talk to the child.

Give clear spoken instructions to stop dangerous or threatening behaviour.

If you have to use physical restraint as a last resort, it must not be deliberately painful or dangerous to the child. Always try and hold the child's clothing rather than his or her body.

If you have used physical restraint on a child you must inform the child's school and the TCC and make a written report of the incident.



## Your legal position:

The Criminal Law Act (1967) allows any person to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent an offence being committed such as:

Stopping someone assaulting another person.

Stopping someone greatly damaging property.

Under common law you may also have a duty of care to apply a reasonable force towards an individual to avoid them injuring themselves or others. What is 'reasonable' must be a matter of personal judgement. For example it is not 'reasonable' that if a child hits you, that you should hit them back. If however a member of staff has clearly neglected that duty of care and the use of force was unreasonable or excessive, he or she may be liable to disciplinary action, civil or criminal proceedings.

You must also never touch children in a manner which is gratuitous or would be considered sexual, threatening or intimidating, however it is acceptable to hold a child's hand, or hold or support a vulnerable adult's arm when, for instance, crossing a road, or car park. It is also acceptable to 'steer' a child by placing your hand(s) on their shoulder(s). Clearly you will want to prevent passengers from hurting themselves, but do report any service user in your care that appears to need a lot of physical intervention from you as soon as possible.

It is important that you notify the TCC if you had to use restraint on a child during the journey. You will be asked for a brief report, which will be kept on file. This is to justify your need to use restraint whilst working as a school passenger assistant, similarly, please also contact the TCC for advice if you, or anyone else has been injured.

## Child Protection Awareness

All adults who come into contact with children and families in their everyday work have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As a driver or PA, you are likely to come across some kind of child protection problems in the future.

***“Never think that abuse is impossible”***

# Child Car Seats

Every child under 12 years old or 135cm MUST be in the appropriate child car seat. These are supplied by TCC. If additional equipment is required, please contact the TCC.



## Evolva 1-2-3

0-12 Years Old = Evolva 123  
(car seat evolves and goes up  
to age 12 or 135cm)



## Hi-Liner

4-12 Years old = Hi-Liner  
(car seat goes up to age 12  
or 135cm)



## Booster

Only to be used for  
passengers over 22kg AND  
125cm, but under 135cm

Child seats need to be fitted correctly, please see  
<http://www.britax.co.uk/customer-service/support>  
or call the TCC for advice.



**Transport Co-ordination Centre (TCC) contact details:**

**Transport Co-ordination Centre  
Surrey County Council  
County Hall  
Penrhyn Road  
Kingston-Upon-Thames  
KT1 2DN**

**[tcc.enforcement@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:tcc.enforcement@surreycc.gov.uk)**

**Delivery Team - 0208 5417667**

**Contract Team:**

**Keith Baxter-Russell – 0208 5418749**

**Gavin Marks – 0208 5417242**

**Jacqui Smith – 0208 5418734**

**Mark Hopkinson – 0208 5419598**

**Robert Thornhill – 0208 213 2862**

**Heidi Marie – 07580 822670**