

Practitioner Guide to Transporting Children



This guidance has been written for practitioners when transporting children in any circumstances. It is informed by:

- [Child car seats: the law: Using a child car seat or booster seat - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Carrying other people's children safely \(childcarseats.org.uk\)](https://childcarseats.org.uk)
- [Using communication equipment whilst driving policy \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://leeds.gov.uk)
- [Health, safety and wellbeing toolkit \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://leeds.gov.uk)

There is an online free downloadable presentation which is recommended for all who transport children which can be found here - [Child Car Seat Training Course | Child Car Seats](#)

The key aims of the guidance are to ensure that:

- Practitioners transporting children are aware of their responsibilities in relation to transportation
- Children are transported safely

Best Practice

Anyone transporting children on behalf of the Local Authority must be aware that the behaviour of children regardless of age can be unpredictable and needs to be carefully planned and risk assessed before it occurs. Consideration must be given to the likelihood of predictable difficulties during any journey and the following must be taken into account -

- Passenger safety
- Competence of the driver
- Awareness of driver's hours
- Traffic conditions
- Contingency funds and arrangements in case of breakdown/emergency
- Weather
- Journey time and distance
- Stopping off points for long journeys and toilet breaks - 15 minutes every 2 hours
- Appropriate car seats seat belts or restraints must be used and fastened
- A working mobile telephone should be taken and carried by the person in charge and each member of staff likely to be on their own with the child. **Workers are reminded that mobile phones must not be used whilst driving, in line with legal requirements**
- Before starting any journey, the owner of any vehicle must undertake sufficient checks to ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy

Seat Belts and Restraints

Children must normally use a child car seat until they're 12 years old or 135cms tall, whichever comes first. Children over 12 years old or 135cms tall must wear a seat belt. You can choose a child car seat based on your child's height or weight. [Child car seats: the law \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Children cannot travel in contracted taxis without seat belts or restraints.

Children aged under 8 (or dependent upon developmental age) must not travel unescorted in contracted taxis or with volunteer drivers without an escort.

Practitioners must only use car seats that have been purchased specifically by Children and Families' Services for the transportation of children.

Ideally if a child has a car seat that is appropriate to their size and weight this should be used by practitioners involved in transporting that child. It is when a particular seat is not available for an individual child, that we can use the office store of car seats in line with the age, size and understanding of the child.

The driver is responsible for making sure any passengers use seat belts or child seat/boosters as required. For children who use a seat belt, it is the responsibility of the driver to make the child **aware** of the needs to wear a seat belt/restraint. Where a child refuses to wear a seat belt, then under no circumstance must that child be transported. Discuss this situation with management to try and arrive at a safe resolution.

Maintenance of car seats

Car seats should be stored in an organised and safe manner so that they do not sustain damage. If a car seat is damaged or has been part of a car accident it should be retired/disused. Another car seat will need to be purchased and added to stock and removed from the data base. The practitioner who used the car seat should inform their manager of the issue who will ensure that the car seat is removed from use (if it can't be removed from the office immediately a clear label to inform workers that it is not used as it is unsafe) and a new one purchased.

Practitioners when transporting children in car seats should ensure they are fit for purpose. If they are dirty, they should be cleaned. All contact centres have washing facilities if needed.

Area offices should introduce a twice-yearly audit to ensure car seats are fit and safe for purpose. Workers need to alert managers immediately if there are any issues with car seats.

Expectations when transporting children

Practitioners will be involved in the transportation of children from and to various settings, e.g. school, home visits, activities etc. The business of transporting other people's children should be prioritised and seen as the significant activity it is. It is the responsibility of all managers to ensure that practitioners update changes to their insurance and driving licence and provide evidence of the documents (this is covered in the Supervision Framework). In all circumstances practitioners transporting children should ensure:

- Where a Risk Assessment states that two staff should accompany a child, the child should never be left alone whilst on the activity. In this case, both staff should sit with the child in the rear of the vehicle during the journey
- Under no circumstances must a child be allowed to gain access to vehicle keys. When not in use, vehicle keys must be kept in a safe place. Children may not use the main controls of vehicles, steer cars or use petrol pumps
- All vehicle occupants must always wear suitable seat belts or restraints when in vehicles

- Children, staff/carers and other passengers may not smoke in vehicles during the working day. (Health and Safety (Leeds City Council) advise that staff receiving essential business allowance, are expected to have the vehicle ready and available for work (which includes transporting children) in working hours. Therefore, staff should not smoke in the car within working hours regardless of whether children are in the car or not. They should also be cautious when smoking in the car at other times as smoke can linger and be present later in the working day
- Child locks (Not central locking) to be used **at all times** when driving to provide added safety for the driver and passenger
- Staff should ensure that the car is not cluttered with items that may cause injury if thrown by the child/children or in the event of an accident
- Staff should ensure that they have enough time to safely fit the car seat and be confident in its usage before transporting a child
- If in unusual circumstances there is a known risk to the child or others, e.g. a child's history of violence, the likelihood that the child may go missing or refuse to go, the member of staff should consult their manager for advice on how to proceed but, as a minimum, should ensure the following;
 - The child must sit in the rear of the vehicle, and each child must be supervised by a minimum of one member of staff
 - Staff must be clear when it may be appropriate to use physical intervention and what techniques may be appropriate
 - Children must not sit behind the driver or be able to distract the driver
 - The member of staff must be satisfied that no items which could be used as weapons are available to the child. These could include tools, aerosols, pens etc
 - If it is suspected that the child may have some weapon concealed on their person, this must be discussed with the manager immediately and before the journey commences
 - A plan should be in place for arrival at the destination - Will more staff be needed? Is a room available? Is it easy to get the car close to the destination? Is it possible to avoid other children becoming involved?
 - If the potential risks cannot be managed safely, the journey must not go ahead or continue. If necessary, the Police must be called to assist
- If a child becomes distressed to the extent that the safety of the vehicle or occupants may be compromised, the vehicle must be stopped in a safe and legal manner. The appropriate emergency support service should be summoned if required
- If the safety of the occupants is compromised, with the risk of injury or damage to property, physical intervention may be used. If the situation cannot be managed the Police should be called to assist

What to do if you have a low impact bump or car accident whilst transporting a child

Accidents cannot be predicted, however planning for transport can assist in trying to avoid these. If an accident does occur, then there is a course of action which should be taken –

- Notify the Social Worker/Team Manager, Parent and Carer
- Ensure the child is taken to a medical professional to be checked over
- Complete [Accident and incident reporting form \(CF50 and CF50a\) \(leeds.gov.uk\)](#)
- If Care Proceedings are currently ongoing then the CF50 report should be shared with the legal representative
- Ensure that the car seat is taken out of use and appropriately discarded