

Small Vehicle Contracts Drivers Handbook

June 2015



This Guide applies to all drivers contracted to drive small and or accessible vehicles on behalf of Wiltshire Council. It has been written as a guide to ensure that drivers understand their responsibilities within the terms of the contract and to ensure that they, and their passengers, have a safe and comfortable journey.

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Introduction

The Passenger Transport Unit (PTU) has produced this guide to help you maintain good standards of safety whilst operating contracts on behalf of Wiltshire Council.

We know that drivers can sometimes face difficult situations because of the unacceptable behaviour of a minority of pupils on board. Bad behaviour poses a risk to safety as well as being unpleasant for other passengers. Wiltshire Council is committed to tackling this problem and we will support you wherever we can.

If you have any queries or concerns about this guide or about any aspect of transport, you should first approach your supervisor or manager for advice.

We know that transport could not function without the efforts of dedicated drivers. The PTU would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your work on Wiltshire Council contracts.

Driver Expectations

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

All drivers must be DBS checked before undertaking any duties on behalf of Wiltshire Council. The ID Badges issued by Wiltshire Council must be visibly worn at all times.

Confidentiality

A driver may at times, have access to confidential information about passengers. All information must be treated in the strictest confidence and under no circumstances may information about the passenger be given to a third party unless they are in a position of authority (e.g. Police, paramedics or school staff). This must then be reported to your employer as soon as possible who should then inform the PTU.

This is a legal requirement under the Data Protection Act and any loss of data may lead to prosecution and the termination of your contract or employment. Any loss of confidential information **must be** reported to your employer immediately.

Awareness

Drivers need to be aware of the needs of the passengers being transported. The prime concern for all drivers is the safety, wellbeing and comfort of the passengers. Passengers must be treated with dignity and respect at all times, and it is essential that drivers are sympathetic to the problems and needs of passengers.

Professionalism

Drivers are often the most visible part of the service for members of the public. Drivers are expected to drive in a safe and considerate manner, without aggression, and to display a professional and courteous attitude to their passengers and other road users.

The driver

Should be familiar with the workings of the vehicle, and have the necessary training for specific requirements. For example, when using wheelchair accessible vehicles, they must be trained to use the equipment for securing wheelchairs and occupants, also safe operation of the tail lift;

You must carry out the daily checks on the vehicle required by law and where applicable (see Section 4). You are expected to be familiar with, and observe, the Highway Code at all times. Speed must always be appropriate to road conditions and passenger comfort and not exceed the speed limit. Wiltshire Council will take any instances of speeding or reckless / careless driving very seriously.

Health & Safety

Drivers are responsible for the safety, comfort and security of passengers, their equipment or luggage while carried in the vehicle, and while the passenger is boarding or alighting. This includes ensuring that any equipment or luggage does not block gangways or access to seats that are being used, or access to any doors including emergency doors.

You must ask your manager if there is a “site risk assessment” where you are serving a school. Many of our school sites have a specific risk assessment to reduce risk. These assessments identify hazards and how to avoid accidents.

Where carried, Passenger Assistants:

- Are responsible for managing the passengers on the vehicle;
- Must stay on, or within view or earshot of the vehicle at all times. The driver should concentrate solely on driving;
- Should be situated so that they can see all passengers on the vehicle.
- In taxis they should sit in between the two passengers in the back seat, in a minibus preferably they should sit two thirds of the way back.
- If employed to Assist a specific passenger they must sit with them;
- Must not sit in the front passenger seat while passengers are on board the vehicle;
- Must ensure that any passenger who requires a Passenger Assistant sits in the confines of the vehicle and not in the passenger seat next to the driver, unless advised otherwise by the PTU.

Fitness

Drivers must be medically fit to undertake their duties. They must inform their employer immediately if they have any medical condition which will affect their ability to drive. No alcoholic drink is to be taken before or during duty (and at any time beforehand on the same day). This includes drinking without exceeding the legal limit for alcohol while driving. Be aware that alcohol from drinking the day before may still remain in the blood for up to 24 hours, and any alcohol can affect judgement. Drivers must not take, or be under the influence of, any drugs which will affect their ability to undertake their duties. This may include prescribed drugs or medication.

Appearance

Drivers are expected to present themselves in a smart and appropriate manner at all times. Appropriate footwear must be worn at all times. For clarification, flip flops or open toed shoes are not deemed appropriate.

Smoking

Drivers are not to smoke at any time in the vehicle, or on any Wiltshire Council premises.

This includes before operating any journey and includes the use of electronic cigarettes.

Food & Drink

No food or drink must be consumed while driving. Passengers are not allowed to consume food or drink on the vehicle unless it is agreed by the PTU due to a medical condition. Passengers should not be given sweets, drinks, presents or gifts by drivers.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones must not be used by drivers at any time while the vehicle is moving. This includes any hands free sets or other hand held devices.

Co-operation with Checks and Inspections

Checks are carried out to ensure that standards are maintained. All drivers are expected to cooperate fully with any instructions given by the Police, VOSA or Wiltshire Council staff. Checks may include random checks on ID badges, passes, loading surveys, and vehicle checks.

Unauthorised passengers and goods

The carrying of unauthorised passengers and goods is strictly forbidden.

Safeguarding of vulnerable passengers

All drivers before working on behalf of Wiltshire Council must first complete the short on line Safeguarding and Child Sex Exploitation training. Your manager will supply you with the details. (introduced 1st August 2015)

This refers to the following groups of people:

- Children (under 18 years)
- Adults with learning difficulties
- Adults with physical disabilities
- Adults with mental health problems
- Older people, including those with dementia.

Drivers must always maintain a strictly professional relationship with the children and vulnerable adults that they transport. Whilst drivers should always be helpful and polite, it is very important that they do not act in any way that could be misunderstood by a child, vulnerable adult, parent, carer or any other observer.

In order to ensure the safety and security of the children and vulnerable adults on transport, and for the protection of the driver, the following instructions must be followed.

These instructions have been written to help drivers understand that their actions, however well intentioned, may be viewed differently by others. It is important to be aware that an allegation made against a driver will result in an investigation by the council and/or police, during which time the driver would have to be removed from providing any transport service to the council that carries children or vulnerable adults.

Drivers should note that some physical contact with passengers may be necessary, such as to:

- assist a person who has difficulty in walking
- help an older person get in and out of a vehicle
- assist someone to put on a seat belt.
- Guidance is available from PTU to minimise contact with passengers when fitting wheelchair seat belts.

Drivers **must** ensure that they ask the person first and keep physical contact to a minimum.

Drivers must not

- hug, hold, cuddle, tickle or have any unnecessary physical contact with a child or adult
- enter into physical play e.g. play fighting with children or vulnerable adults on or off the vehicle
- discuss with Wiltshire Council passengers anything of a personal or intimate nature
- make any personal remark about, or to, a passenger or any other person even if it is complimentary
- call any child or adult by a nickname, pet name or endearment such as love, darling etc
- use bad language (swearing), innuendos or sexual comments in the presence of children or adults
- give children or adults gifts, send them cards, letters or text messages exchange phone numbers, email addresses or personal details with children or adults
- take photographs of children or adults, including pictures using mobile phones
- correspond with children or adults on internet chat rooms or social sites, for example Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Facetime
- look through a passenger's handbag or personal belongings, even when asked to find something
- handle any money on behalf of a child or adult
- enter the home of a child or adult
- have any social contact with the children or vulnerable adults whom they meet as passengers.

This list is not exhaustive, but it illustrates the type of actions that could be misunderstood and must be avoided.

Any information about passengers must be treated as confidential and not be discussed with anyone, such as your family or friends. This also applies to anything that passengers may tell you in the course of conversation; however, if you have

any concerns about the welfare of a child or adult on your transport, this must be reported to Wiltshire Council.

Reporting Concerns around Safeguarding

Please refer to the reporting procedure at the rear of this document

Prior to each journey

Driver Daily Vehicle Checks

Drivers of PCV, Wiltshire Council owned and Registered Section 19 Permit vehicles are required by law to undertake a number of daily checks on the vehicle before driving. Daily vehicle checks include inspecting:

- Engine coolant water level *;
- Engine oil level *;
- Condition of the vehicle bodywork;
- Tyre pressures, condition and wear;
- Wheels for condition and security;
- Brakes for operation (leaks, pressure build up);
- Lights, reflectors, markings and number plate condition and illumination;
- Speedometer and tachograph (if fitted);
- Windscreen wipers and washers including the washer reservoir level;
- Horn and all warning devices, including door warning buzzers;
- Condition and working of seatbelts, including buckles and inertia reels;
- Mirror damage, and that mirrors and windows necessary for driving are clean;
- Fire extinguisher;
- Any required PCV operating licence, permit or taxi licence;
- That all doors are unlocked each time before carrying passengers. For vehicles able to carry more than 8 passengers, failure to do so is an offence.

Daily checks marked * are required to ensure that the journey is operated reliably. All defects must be reported to the employer immediately.

School Bus Signs

Vehicles able to carry more than 8 passengers must display school bus signs while the vehicle is being used to convey school children between home and school. At all other times school bus signs must be folded up/covered.

Wiltshire Council Vehicles

Drivers of Wiltshire Council vehicles must complete the drivers log book before and after each journey.

Refuelling

The driver must ensure the vehicle has enough fuel to carry out the journey. **Never refuel with passengers on board.**

Cleaning

The vehicle must be kept in a reasonable condition of cleanliness inside and out. Vehicle interiors should not be dirty prior to starting any journey.

The Journey

Door-to-Door Transport

Where pick-up and drop-off points are at premises/home addresses you must stop at the nearest and safest practical vehicular access.

On **School Transport** it is the responsibility of the parent or responsible adult to bring the passenger to and from the vehicle. It is the driver and Passenger Assistant's responsibility to ensure that passengers get on and off the vehicle in an orderly manner. They should assist passengers on and off the vehicle where applicable. At no time should any passenger be lifted **unless in an emergency**. In the event of an emergency the vehicle evacuation plan should be used. Passengers should be safely secured in their seats before the vehicle pulls away. All passengers, including the Passenger Assistant, should remain seated whilst the vehicle is in motion. Drivers are also responsible for securing car seats in the vehicle and ensuring that child door locks are activated. Passengers should be ready at the notified pick-up time. On occasions when they are not, the vehicle **should not wait any more than five minutes beyond the stated pick-up time**. If a parent/carer persistently does not have their child ready, or there are any other concerns, this should be reported to the PTU. For **Adult Social Care** transport, you may be requested by the service user to assist them between the vehicle and property. If this is requested of you, speak to your employer in the first instance, as this is not the role of the driver. Wherever possible, door-to-door transport should load/unload on the left (nearside) of the road and on the same side of the road as the premises. If this is not possible please contact the PTU for advice. Passengers should not have to cross roads unless it is unavoidable. Only accessible vehicles using the rear doors (solely for ramp/ tail lift access) may stop on the right (offside) of a one way street to access premises.

Pick-Up Points/Bus Stops

On contracted transport (i.e. not a public transport route) only the designated pick-up points should be used. Approach all stops slowly, smoothly and with care and do not brake sharply. Be aware that as you approach a bus stop some passengers may stand up before the vehicle stops. Look out for any latecomers running for your vehicle from any direction. When pulling into a bus stop always try to stop parallel to the carriageway so that the rear of the vehicle does not prevent traffic from passing. Do not move off until alighted passengers are well clear of the vehicle. Passengers must wait and cross the road after the vehicle has moved off. Before moving away check the door and use the mirrors to ensure that no coats, bags, scarves, etc. are caught in the door. Pay particular attention to nearside mirrors when moving away. Watch out for children rushing towards the vehicle.

Drop-off/Collection at school/centre

If the vehicle arrives early at a school/centre, the passengers should be kept on the vehicle, until ten minutes before the opening time, unless permission for an early arrival is given. If timings of the route need to be amended please contact the PTU. School/centre staff are responsible for the passengers' safety on site and drivers and Passenger Assistants are not expected to supervise them once they are safely on the premises. Staff should normally collect service users who have a Passenger Assistant from the vehicle. However if no other passengers are left on the vehicle,

Passenger Assistants can take passengers to reception as long as they do not take more passengers than they can manage (recommended guidelines are two passengers per Passenger Assistant). Passenger Assistants should not leave any passengers unattended (including in the care of the driver) on the vehicle. However, if the vehicle cannot drop off on site, the Passenger Assistant should ensure the passengers are assisted into the school/centre grounds and taken to reception.

Transferring Passengers from Feeder Journeys

Where feeder arrangements exist (i.e. when passengers transfer from one vehicle to another) passengers should not be offloaded and left unattended. If the other vehicle does not arrive, passengers must be kept on board and your employer contacted. If they are unavailable contact the PTU for advice. If this results in the vehicle running late to a following job, you will not be penalised. All transfers should take place on the nearside of both vehicles to avoid passengers stepping into or crossing the road.

Dropping off Passengers Door to Door Transport

On arrival parents/carers should collect passengers from the vehicle. It is the driver's responsibility to unload passengers in wheelchairs and (where carried) the Passenger Assistant's responsibility to see passengers safely off the vehicle. If the vehicle cannot stop directly outside it may be necessary for either the driver or the Passenger Assistant to leave the vehicle briefly, in order to alert the parent/carer that the vehicle has arrived. The parent/carer should then come to the vehicle to collect the passenger. The Passenger Assistant should always remain within view or earshot of the vehicle. They should ensure that passengers are handed over to a responsible adult. If the parents/carers are not at home on arrival, you should wait no more than five minutes. A note should be put through the door and continue on the route keeping the passenger on board. If you return to find that the parents/carers are still not at home, you should notify the PTU who will contact the appropriate authorities. Once told of a place of safety a message should be put through the door to indicate this. If it is out of office hours and you cannot contact the PTU you should contact MASH who will advise where to take the passenger. Their number can be found on the back of this document.

The passenger may be anxious about being driven away. When the journey continues please reassure them and ensure all passengers are made aware of the circumstances. You should not take a passenger home with you under any circumstances, but you should stay with them until handed over to an authorised adult. If this is a regular occurrence the PTU should be notified. The PTU must receive written permission from the parent/carer before any vulnerable passenger is left unattended or with a minor. Authorisation must also be obtained from the PTU before any alterations to a route is made.

For **Adult Social Care** many elderly people live alone. If previously agreed by the PTU, a Passenger Assistant can support a passenger into their home. This may involve helping a client into a chair in their lounge but the Passenger Assistant should do no more than this (e.g. make a cup of tea) and must be conscious of the driver and other passengers waiting. If you arrive at a property and there is an emergency (e.g. no heating or electricity) do not leave the passenger unattended. Notify the PTU who will contact the appropriate authorities and advise you what to

do. If it is out of office hours you should contact the emergency duty service who will advise where to take the passenger. Contact details can be found on the back of this document.

Dropping off Passengers at the home address

Vehicles WITH a Passenger Assistant on board; must be met at their destination by the parent/carer. If the parent/carer is not at the destination when the vehicle arrives the passenger must not be left unattended.

Vehicles WITHOUT a Passenger Assistant on board; the passenger must not be left unattended. Drivers should contact their company or the PTU to seek advice and inform them that the journey will continue with the passenger on board. At the end of the journey the vehicle should return to the drop off point for the passenger. If there is no responsible adult for the Passenger Assistant passenger, the driver or Passenger Assistant will be given instructions from the PTU where to take the passenger. If it is out of hours contact the emergency duty service.

Drop-off/Collection at school

If the vehicle arrives early at a school, the passengers should be kept on the vehicle, until ten minutes before the opening time, unless permission for an early arrival is given. If timings of the route need to be amended please contact the PTU. School staff are responsible for the passengers' safety on site and drivers are not expected to supervise them once they are safely on the premises.

Dropping off Passengers at a Pick-up Point (not home)

When arriving at the destination, if the driver is aware that passengers are normally met at their destination by parents/carer, but when arriving there is no one to meet them, the passenger must not be left unattended. Drivers should contact their company or PTU to seek advice and inform them that the journey will continue with the passenger on board. At the end of the journey the vehicle should return to the drop off point for the passenger. If there is no responsible adult for the passenger, the driver will be given instructions from the PTU where to take the passenger. If it is out of hours contact MASH for instructions.

Reversing

If you have to reverse at a pick-up point, always do so once passengers have boarded and not before, to avoid the risk of colliding with pedestrians. When reversing a vehicle, always use the reversing horn if fitted (subject to legal restrictions, i.e. not between 2300 & 0700). Take particular care when reversing at schools, remembering to follow any site risk assessments.

Route Schedules

Journeys are required to run on time and to the schedule provided. Running early is never acceptable. If route timings are not realistic please contact your employer, who should liaise with the PTU to ensure that they are amended and passengers and their parents/carers are informed of the change.

Delays and Road Closures

The PTU will work with contractors when informed of planned road closures. If, due to unforeseen circumstances, a road is closed and you are unable to follow the

normal route, please inform your employer or the PTU immediately. Always ensure that safe alternative stops are used if required. Often a “Road Closed” sign means that a road is closed for pedestrians as well as vehicles (e.g. in times of flood). In such circumstances a passenger should not be set down unless you know pedestrians can get through. If necessary take them to a safe point from where telephone calls can be made to parents/carers and make sure they are not left unattended. Where road closures or diversions are known in advance, it is advisable for the driver to prepare passengers.

Behaviour of Passengers

We expect passengers to behave appropriately when travelling. Each child and their parent are required to agree to abide by the conditions set out in the “Safe School Transport – Taking Responsibility” guide. which can be found at;

www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parkingtransportandstreets/transportoperatorsinformation.htm.

This occurs when the parent signs the application form, or sends it back electronically. If a passenger’s behaviour becomes a problem, action will need to be taken. If it is serious, assistance should be obtained to resolve the difficulty. Any behaviour problems must be reported to the school, and to your employer straightaway, who must then inform the PTU. Never leave an incident unreported as this will delay any appropriate action being taken. If you have threatened to report bad behaviour make sure you do so. Disruptive passengers must not be ejected from the vehicle unless somebody in authority is available to receive them (e.g. school staff or parent/carer). Any incidents of bullying should be reported to the school, parents/carers and your employer. If a passenger is putting a driver at risk because of their behaviour, then this should also be reported. The PTU will deal with behavioural issues as required. If it is felt appropriate, Wiltshire Council has the right to exclude passengers from transport.

An **Incident** should be reported to your employer for any behavioural incident as soon as possible after the event, then they should report it to PTU either by phone: 01225 712852 or e mail: educationtransport@wiltshire.gov.uk

If there is any doubt as to how to deal with a situation of aggression or exceptionally, out of the norm behaviour, or the driver or Passenger Assistant requires assistance, then you must contact your employer or the PTU for advice on the action to be taken. The first action to take should always be to stop the vehicle at the nearest safe place. Passenger Assistants should remember that the passengers are their responsibility and ultimate concern, and should therefore stay with them at all times.

If a passenger runs off from the vehicle then the Passenger Assistant has a duty of care to report this to the police and then inform the PTU as soon as possible. Any incidents of bullying should be reported to the school/centre, parents/carers and your employer. If a passenger is putting the driver or Passenger Assistant at risk because of their behaviour, then this should also be reported.

Only Wiltshire Council has the authority to exclude passengers.

Passenger Safety

Seatbelts

Seatbelts, or special equipment (harnesses, child seats, etc.), when supplied must be used at all times. All passengers, including the driver and Passenger Assistant, should wear seatbelts when the vehicle is in motion.

Minibuses

Passengers must be instructed that they are required to wear the seatbelt at all times. Do not move off until all passengers are seated and wearing the seatbelt (or harness if fitted). If necessary remind passengers that they must remain seated at all times.

Cars and Small Vehicles up to 8 passenger seats

All passengers must wear a seatbelt before the vehicle moves off. The law states that any child under 135cm in height and up to the age of 12 years old must use an appropriate child restraint/seat.

Special seats and booster cushions

Any special seats and booster cushions supplied for specific passengers must always be used and correctly secured and adjusted. If they are required, passengers must not be transported without them. When carrying small children or those with special needs, the diagonal part of the seatbelt may be too high, in which case they may require a booster seat or child seat. If these are required but have not been supplied you must inform your employer. If any passenger removes their seatbelt whilst the vehicle is in motion, then the driver must stop the vehicle at the nearest safe place and must not continue the journey until all passengers are wearing their seatbelts. If a passenger will not put their seatbelt on after 5 minutes the driver or Passenger Assistant should contact their employer or the PTU. All such incidents should be reported using the appropriate forms. Passengers carried in wheelchairs must always wear a seatbelt that is also secured to the vehicle.

Seating Capacity

It is a legal requirement that the total seating capacity of the vehicle must not be exceeded at any time. Passenger loading is arranged so that no vehicle should be overloaded. Any additional passengers should not be carried and you must inform your employer or the PTU for instructions.

Gangways and Access

On minibuses, buses and coaches all luggage and equipment must be secured safely and must not block gangways or access to any door. This is to ensure that every passenger seat has clear access to any doors including emergency exits. This includes wheelchairs. Seats should not be used for passengers if wheelchairs or luggage impedes access to any exit.

Doors

Access on cars should only be via side doors (not rear facing doors or hatch). Access on minibuses and larger vehicles should only be via the main (nearside) passenger door (next to the driver). On all vehicles rear facing doors are only to be used for passengers using the lift/ramps on accessible vehicles. Doors must not be

opened before the vehicle is completely stopped, and must be properly shut before it pulls away. Do not allow any passengers to open or close doors on any minibus, bus or coach. Vehicles able to carry more than 16 passengers must have power doors. Where fitted child locks must be in operation at all times.

Passengers Carried in Wheelchairs

Passengers in wheelchairs

All passengers must be carried in the most appropriate manner, safely and legally. Rules governing the carriage of passengers in wheelchairs are laid down in the government's document VSE 87/1, a copy of which is held by your employer and forms part of the Wiltshire Council conditions of contract.

All drivers who operate wheelchair accessible vehicles must have read and understood the following documents:

Guidance on the Safe Use of Wheelchairs and Vehicle mounted Passenger Lifts – MDA DB2003 (03) March 2003 (Medical Devices Agency)

These documents are available at;

www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parkingtransportandstreets/transportoperatorsinformation.htm.

If you have not seen these documents, and do not have access to the internet, please ask your employer for a copy. Failure to comply with these will be deemed as a breach of Wiltshire Council contract terms and conditions.

Passport 2 Travel Scheme

All wheelchairs transported on behalf of the council are subject to an assessment undertaken by an authorised officer. After the assessment the officer will attach a passport to the wheelchair, clearly outlining both the required wheelchair and passenger restraint for safe transportation.

If a passport is not present, then the wheelchair must **not** be transported and the PTU must be contacted. Authorisation may be granted by the PTU to transport wheelchairs without a passport in certain circumstances.

Before transport for a passenger is provided for the first time, the authorised officer will carry out a risk assessment for travel and instruction should be taken from them. In all events, the following should be adhered to:

- Wheelchairs should be transported facing forward (never sideways). Rearward facing is **only** permitted in certain vehicle types.
- The wheelchair handbrakes must be working and applied during the journey.
- Restrain the wheelchair symmetrically (on 330mm tracking) with the correct restraints as indicated on the P2T.
- The passenger must be secured with a seatbelt attached to the vehicle/tracking (belts integrated to the wheelchair are not sufficient).
This is in addition to securing the wheelchair itself.

- The wheelchair must be positioned to leave adequate space (minimum 400mm) to maintain walking access to all doors, seats and wheelchairs. (This requirement does not apply to M1 rear-facing and most M1 vehicles).

Securing wheelchairs

As the driver you are responsible by law for the safe carriage of all passengers. You must ensure that both the wheelchair and the passenger are secured independently of each other (i.e. a suitable crash-tested passenger restraint for the passenger and suitable crash-tested restraints for the wheelchair). The PTU supplies the correct WTORS prior to the contract commencing (except M1 rear-facing vehicles).

Before embarking you must ensure that all the relevant restraints are in place and in good working order. If they are not, do not transport the passenger and report the problem immediately to your employer, who should contact the PTU.

Under no circumstances should a wheelchair or its passenger be carried unrestrained or incorrectly secured.

If you are unsure how to secure a passenger and/or their wheelchair, seek clarification from either your employer or the PTU.

Using vehicle wheelchair lifts

- All drivers must have received appropriate training in the safe use of the passenger tail lift before operating on Wiltshire Council Contracts
- When using a wheelchair lift, the wheelchair must be facing either forward or backward – your authorised officer will provide advice when carrying out the risk assessment.
- The wheelchair handbrake must be applied whilst ascending or descending.
- The platform safety flaps, front and rear, must be up.
- The passenger assistant or driver should be on the lift with the passenger while ascending/descending whenever possible, except when the wheelchair leaves no space.
- Take extra care to ensure that a wheelchair user is happy to face away from the vehicle (backward), as many find this unnerving.

General points

- Most passengers who require transport in a wheelchair will be able to assist you in some capacity, even if is just verbally.
- Passengers with disabilities should at all times be treated with dignity and respect.
- Communicate directly with the passenger, face to face, not from a standing position – **kneel** if necessary, and **do not** talk through others.
- Work with the passenger assistant, when one has been allocated.

- Take time to get it right – saving two minutes by rushing a job may result in a restraint being incorrectly fitted, rendering it useless and thereby dangerous.

Remember – no two wheelchair jobs are the same. **Think every time**

Definitions of wheelchair accessible vehicle types

- **M1 vehicles:** Vehicles for the carriage of passengers comprising no more than eight seats in addition to the driver.
- **M1 rear-facing vehicles:** Vehicles for the carriage of passengers comprising no more than eight seats in addition to the driver. Wheelchair is designed to be transported in a rear-facing position and utilises a **headboard** to secure the wheelchair.
- **M2 vehicles:** Vehicles for the carriage of passengers with more than eight seats in addition to the driver's seat and having a maximum mass not exceeding 5 tonnes.
- **M3 vehicles:** Vehicles used for the carriage of passengers with more than eight seats in addition to the driver's seat and having a maximum mass exceeding 5 tonnes.

Typical vehicle comparisons

- **M1 vehicles:** Single wheelchair vehicles
- **M1 rear-facing vehicles:** London Cab, Euro Cabs and E7 style vehicles
- **M2 vehicles:** Minibuses.
- **M3 vehicles:** PCV vehicles (coaches).

Rear facing wheelchair transport

Only M1 rear-facing vehicles may transport wheelchairs in the rear-facing position

All other vehicles must transport the wheelchair facing forward.

Reduced capacity M2 wheelchair vehicles to M1 classification

These vehicles follow the requirements of M2 vehicles except the total number of passengers this allows private hire and hackney licensed operators to utilise larger vehicles as M1 vehicles. These vehicles must comply with the access requirements of 400mm placed upon M2 vehicles.

Evacuating Wheelchair Passengers

If carrying passengers in wheelchairs, evacuate all able-bodied passengers first, or let others who are able to do so do this while you are taking those who are disabled out from the rear of the vehicle. This may be best achieved:

- if time allows, by positioning the lift between road and floor level for use as a step with, if possible, another person helping to lift wheelchairs down, or;

- by carrying passengers out from their wheelchairs, remembering to be as careful as possible.

Carriage of Oxygen (O₂)

All passengers transported on behalf of the council that require O₂ are subject to an assessment undertaken by an authorised officer. This assessment will take place before the first journey. After the assessment the officer will contact the appointed operator to ensure all safety precautions are understood and will issue the required signage.

When transporting a passenger with O₂ you must not:

- allow any ignition source (e.g. lighter or matches) onto your vehicle
- smoke near the vehicle or O₂ containers
- transport the cylinder(s) if you suspect a cylinder (or its valve) is damaged, leaking or you can hear a hissing
- attempt any repairs to cylinders
- **leave cylinders freestanding** or unattended, even for short periods of time.

When transporting a passenger with O₂ you must:

- Ensure that two vehicle windows are partially open to allow for air flow through the vehicle. In the case of PCV vehicles two roof vents may be opened.

Driver Training

Driver training

Appropriate training is essential to delivering a safe and appropriate service. All drivers operating Wiltshire Council contracts must have completed the online safeguarding and child sex exploitation training developed by Wiltshire Council. Your manager will explain how to access this. Wiltshire Council will also provide periodic training in the safe fixing of wheelchairs and passenger restraints. You are permitted to commence work on Wiltshire Council contracts before the training has been provided by Wiltshire Council, so long as your employer has given you appropriate instruction.

Disability Awareness

Passengers with disabilities must at all times be treated with dignity and respect. Always listen to what the passenger is saying. Ask the passenger directly if they want to be helped, or how they wish to be helped. Do not ask others around them. Remember, disabilities cannot always be seen.

Accidents, Breakdowns and Emergencies

Making Safe Arrangements

The main concern following an accident or breakdown is to ensure the safety of the passengers. Drivers and Passenger Assistants must give clear instructions to the passengers with this in mind.

Please ensure wherever possible that:

- The vehicle stops in a safe place. If there is a risk of fire or a risk to life then evacuate passengers to a safe place away from any danger from traffic or other potential hazards. If this is not possible due to the needs of passengers being transported and the vehicle has stopped in a dangerous position where there is a risk to life, the driver must phone the emergency services so that they can assist by coning off the vehicle, while the driver and Passenger Assistant moves the passengers to the safest part of the vehicle.
- Providing the vehicle has stopped in a safe place and the driver and or Passenger Assistant has a signal on their mobile phone, they should call for help. Only leave the vehicle to summon help if there is a Passenger Assistant present, or there is no other way to do so. Where there is no Passenger Assistant present drivers should instruct passengers that they must not leave the vehicle; drivers must take the vehicle keys with them and if appropriate appoint an older passenger to take responsibility. **Wherever possible** avoid leaving children unattended on a vehicle.
- Before leaving a vehicle or the driving seat for any reason, park safely (unless the nature of the breakdown/accident prevents this), and immobilise the vehicle – switch off the engine, park in gear and take the ignition key out (if there is one).
- If safe to do so, passengers should be instructed not to leave the vehicle and keep them informed that help is on the way.
- Do not allow passengers to push a broken-down vehicle.
- Passenger Assistants must alert the PTU as soon as they are able if there is a breakdown, emergency or accident. Contact details can be found in Section 10

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an accident the driver should notify their employer immediately. The driver and contractor must follow this up with a written report to the PTU as soon as possible

In the event of Fire

- Stop the vehicle immediately and switch off the engine
- Get the passengers off the vehicle and away from any danger from fire or traffic
- Where fitted, switch off the fuel cut-off switch and do not open the engine compartment;

- Call the emergency services;
- If there is time, remove ignition key, switch off battery isolator switch;
- Do not tackle the fire unless it is safe to do so;
- Evacuation from a vehicle must be done in an orderly manner, ensuring that passengers are taken a safe distance away from the vehicle and other traffic;
- When emergency services arrive, inform them if there is a hazardous load on board, e.g. gas canisters, oxygen bottles, wheelchair batteries.

Adverse Weather

In extreme weather conditions, the final decision as to whether the journey can be operated safely or not, must rest with the driver and their employer who is best placed to assess the local conditions. The decision should be made taking into account that if passengers are transported into a school in the morning, it is the responsibility of the contractor and Wiltshire Council to ensure their safe return in the afternoon. If only part of the journey can operate, this should be done and the PTU must be informed. If, after the outward journey, the return journey may not be operated safely unless it runs early, the PTU should be notified. If the morning journey is not operated but conditions subsequently improve, the PTU should be consulted to see if the return journey is required. Schools may decide to finish early during the day. Contractors must keep in touch with the PTU and the schools they serve to keep up to date with any changing circumstances. Drivers and their employers should view the Councils webpages for up to date information on school closures.

Summary of issues that must be reported to Wiltshire Council

- Concerns around the welfare of a young person or vulnerable adult
- Accidents when someone has been injured or near misses when someone could be injured if it happened again
- An accident involving the vehicle
- Serious incidents of unacceptable conduct by passengers.
- Times when the timetable is difficult to maintain.
- Passengers who refuse to wear a seat belt when they are required to do so either by law, or in accordance with the contract specification.

Safeguarding Reporting Procedure

What to do if you are concerned that a child or adult is being abused

If a child or adult with care needs is at immediate risk or needs medical attention, contact the police or call an ambulance on 999;

Always address immediate risks first before referring to Wiltshire Council

To report your concerns to your employer or Wiltshire Council

During office hours 8:30- 17:00:

CHILDREN:

If you are concerned about a **child** or a disclosure is made to you

- If you are a contracted taxi, bus or volunteer driver for the Passenger Transport Unit you should report your concerns to the PTU on **01225 713580**
- Or consult with/refer to children's social care based in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) during office hours – **0300 456 0108**
- Also inform your manager without delay

ADULTS:

If abuse of an **adult** is discovered/suspected or a disclosure is made to you

Call the Wiltshire Council adult social care customer advisors

Tel: **0300 456 0111** Text phone: 01225 712501

OUT OF OFFICE HOURS - children and adults

(Including weekends and bank holidays)

Call the Emergency Duty Team **0845 607 0888**