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# Driver's Handbook

A guide for all drivers on Bath and North East Somerset Home to School and Social Services contracts.

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**Bath & North East  
Somerset Council**

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# Driver's Handbook

## For drivers of Small and Specialist Vehicles

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# 1. The driver

Drivers are the face of their Company, the Passenger Transport Team and Bath and North East Somerset Council, and therefore should maintain their professionalism whilst carrying out Bath and North East Somerset Council contract work. The overall responsibility of the vehicle and its passengers rests with the driver.

## Drivers must:

- ✓ wear their ID badges at all times. When working with wheelchairs or passengers with challenging behaviour, it is advised that ID badges worn around the neck are removed and placed in your pocket; you may also consider exchanging the neck strap for the badge with a clip.
- ✓ have received clearance from Passenger Transport to work on Education and Social Care Council contracts and have obtained an enhanced CRB clearance.

**Please note:** Receiving a Hackney/Private Hire Licence **does not** automatically entitle you to work on a Bath and North East Somerset Council contract. Drivers who wish to undertake such contracts will also have to be vetted by the Passenger Transport team

- ✓ be smart and tidy in appearance
- ✓ be polite and courteous to passengers, council officers, school and college employees, parents and guardians of pupils travelling and other road users
- ✓ drive in a considerate manner at all times and avoid sharp braking, fast cornering and harsh acceleration which can be unnerving for passengers
- ✓ inform their employer and the DVLA if they have any medical condition that may affect their ability to drive (in accordance with the Road Traffic Act 1988).
- ✓ High Visibility Vests should be readily available in the event of hazardous situations (loading or unloading Passengers) or emergencies.

## Drivers must not:

- χ Swear or make remarks that are personal, sexual, racist, or which could be judged to be offensive in any way.
- χ Smoke, or allow any other person to smoke in the vehicle at any time, or outside the vehicle whilst loading/unloading passengers.
- χ Consume **any** alcohol before or during contracted journeys, or at any time beforehand on the same day, including drinking without exceeding the legal alcohol limit for driving. It should be noted that alcohol from drinking the day before can remain in the bloodstream for up to 24 hours, and that any alcohol can affect concentration, reaction times and judgement.
- χ Drive whilst under the influence of any drugs which may affect driving ability, including prescription drugs when advised it is not safe to do so by the GP
- χ Manhandle any passenger or act in a manner that may be misconstrued, for example by giving gifts.

## 2. Protection of children and vulnerable adults

This refers to the following groups of people:

- Children
- 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:

### 2.1 Conduct

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 may 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 the Passenger Transport Team 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

- χ hug, hold, cuddle, tickle or have any unnecessary physical contact with a child or vulnerable adult
- χ enter into horseplay with children or vulnerable adults, on or off the vehicle
- χ discuss anything of a personal or intimate nature with passengers
- χ make any personal remark about, or to, a passenger even if it is complimentary
- χ call any child or vulnerable adult by a nickname, pet name or endearment such as love, darling etc
- χ use bad language (swearing), innuendos or sexual comments in the presence of children or vulnerable adults
- χ give children or vulnerable adults gifts, send them cards, letters or text messages
- χ exchange phone numbers, email addresses or personal details with children or vulnerable adults

- χ take photographs of children or vulnerable adults, including pictures using mobile phones
- χ correspond with children or vulnerable adults on internet chat rooms or social sites, for example Facebook
- χ look through a passengers handbag or personal belongings, even when asked to find something
- χ handle any money on behalf of a child or vulnerable adult
- χ enter the home of a child or vulnerable adult
- χ have any social contact with the children or vulnerable adults whom they meet as passengers, unless they are already a family friend and have the consent of the parents or carer.

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 vulnerable adult on your transport, this must be reported to Bath and North East Somerset Council.

## 2.2 Hidden disabilities/difficulties

When a person is using crutches, is in a wheelchair, or has an obvious physical impairment, it is easier for drivers to anticipate what additional and specific needs the person may have. However, many children and vulnerable adults may have difficulties that cause specific issues which may or may not be diagnosed.

The list of medical conditions that may be regarded as hidden disabilities is very long and the effects of these different conditions are many and varied. It can include people with autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, mental health problems, reduced vision or hearing, epilepsy, diabetes, sickle cell condition, chronic fatigue syndrome or ME, cystic fibrosis, cancer, HIV and AIDS, and heart, liver, neurological or kidney problems.

The conditions may be

- short term or long term
- stable or progressive
- constant or unpredictable and fluctuating
- controlled by medication or another treatment, or untreatable.

The information below has been provided to give drivers some details on just a few of the hidden disabilities/difficulties that may affect passengers.

### Asthma

Asthma causes the airways in the lungs to become inflamed and narrow, making it difficult to breathe. Sudden narrowing produces what is usually called an asthma attack, but lesser or more persistent narrowing leads to symptoms such as a persistent cough, wheeze and difficulty in breathing. Asthma sufferers may use inhalers to assist with their condition.

In the case of an asthma attack:

- ✓ encourage the passenger to sit upright or lean slightly forward and breathe slowly and deeply
- ✓ loosen any tight clothing around the neck
- ✓ ask the passenger if they have a reliever with them that they normally use
- ✓ report the attack to the establishment you are going to
- ✓ Call an ambulance if:
  - i. the passenger has used a reliever and this has had no effect after 5 to 10 minutes
  - ii. the passenger becomes distressed or unable to talk
  - iii. the passenger is getting exhausted
  - iv. you have any doubts at all about the passenger's condition.

**Do not** administer **any** medication unless you are trained to do so. However, you may pass the sufferer their inhaler/reliever for them to use.

#### **Learning difficulties**

This term is used to describe intellectual difficulties that are present from birth or that arise in early years. A proportion of the population have some degree of learning difficulty and some of those have profound difficulties, usually with additional disabilities – hearing loss, restricted vision, restricted speech and language skill and physical mobility problems.

#### **Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)**

ADD is sometimes called Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) or Hyperkinetic Syndrome. It is often linked with some other forms of developmental delays such as language difficulties, behavioural problems, or clumsiness. It is not merely naughty behaviour, but is a serious condition where a person cannot calm down or pay attention and may have difficulty in concentrating and subsequently in learning. They may be impulsive, boisterous or even aggressive. The exact cause is unknown, but it may be an inherited condition, or caused by brain damage. Medication is available which can help some people control their symptoms.

To communicate effectively with a person who has ADD:

- ✓ use their name to attract their attention
- ✓ be calm and positive when giving instructions
- ✓ avoid shouting or speaking in a high pitched voice as this may distress them
- ✓ be prepared to repeat what you have said until it is clear they have understood.

#### **Autism: Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

People with autism have significant difficulties relating to other people in a meaningful way. Their ability to develop relationships is impaired, as is their capacity to understand other people's feelings and the social rules of communication. Some may appear to behave in strange and puzzling ways.

Everyone with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder has difficulties in three main areas. These are known as the 'triad of impairments':

- Social interaction – difficulty understanding social 'rules', behaviour and relationships.

For example: often appearing aloof and indifferent to others or not understanding how to take turns.

□ Social communication – difficulty with verbal and non-verbal communication.

For example: not fully understanding gestures, facial expressions or tone of voice. They may find eye-contact difficult.

□ Rigidity of thinking and difficulties with social imagination – difficulties in the development of pretend play and use of imagination. They may like routine and get distressed when there are changes, for example when the taxi takes a different route and may develop obsessions, strange patterns of behaviour and have seemingly irrational fears.

**Asperger's Syndrome (AS)** is a form of autism.

Asperger's Syndrome is mostly a 'hidden disability' as you can't tell that someone has the condition from their outward appearance. Although AS is a form of autism affecting people at the higher functioning end of the autistic spectrum, they still have difficulties with the three main areas listed above.

Most children with AS attend mainstream school. They may speak fluently, but may not take much notice of the reaction of people listening to them. They may talk on and on regardless of the listener's interest and may appear insensitive to the feelings of others.

Despite having good language skills, people with AS may sound over-precise or over literal and not always understand jokes, exaggerated language, turns of phrases or metaphors.

Due to their literal understanding, they can be frightened by phrases like '**she bit my head off**'. What may seem like a simple comment to you could be very disturbing to someone with ASD who may not recognise the nuances of jokes, or turns of phrase.

To help them understand, keep sentences short, clear and concise.

People with AS may appreciate it if you:

- ✓ give warning of a change of route/routine.
- ✓ If change is unavoidable try to ensure that parents or heads of establishments are aware of them and have an opportunity to prepare the service user as it may help relieve their stress level.
- ✓ keep sentences short
- ✓ use concrete language, without sarcasm.
- ✓ Be careful not to rely on facial expressions or body language to communicate.
- ✓ Use plain language, speak clearly, calmly and positively and use their name to get their attention e.g. "**Matthew, fasten your seat belt.**"
- ✓ appreciate their need for sameness, perhaps being able to sit in the same seat if possible
- ✓ understand their need for special interests/obsessions, especially in order to alleviate anxieties
- ✓ Keep Calm!

As autism is a spectrum disorder, the needs of each individual can vary greatly. A person who has classic autism will have differing needs to that of an able person with Asperger's Syndrome. Talking to parents and Guide Escorts about how to help reduce the user's level of anxiety may be appropriate.

## □ Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a physical illness and not a mental condition. During an epileptic seizure there is an abnormal burst of energy in the brain which causes the body to react automatically to try and correct the imbalance. This sometimes results in unconsciousness, shaking, spasmodic movement, etc.

If a child or vulnerable adult has been diagnosed as epileptic, you will usually have a Guide Escort on board, who will take control of any incident that may occur. However, if a service user has a seizure whilst on transport you must assume that it is not a diagnosed condition and should follow the guidelines below:

- ✓ Stop the vehicle, but do not remove the passenger from their seat, or undo the seatbelt. Place something soft between their head and the side of the vehicle if necessary.
  - ✓ Call an ambulance.
  - ✓ Keep calm and reassure other passengers.
  - ✓ If the service user is outside the vehicle and falls to the ground, move them **only** if they are in immediate danger from traffic, etc. and place something soft under the head.
  - ✓ Remove any objects in close proximity that could cause injury.
  - ✓ Loosen tight clothing around the neck, gently explaining what you are doing to the service user.
  - ✓ Stay with the service user and keep the surrounding area as quiet as possible to promote recovery
  - ✓ Give plenty of reassurance throughout the episode; be understanding and patient.
  - ✓ Report the incident to the Passenger Transport Team.
- χ **Do not put anything in the person's mouth** as you may cause damage to teeth and soft tissue and restrict their breathing. You may also end up with bitten fingers.
- χ **Do not** administer any medication.

## 3. The journey

### 3.1 Vehicle check and route planning

- ✓ Check your vehicle to ensure that there are no defects and that the vehicle is maintained, licensed, equipped and operated as required by current legislation.
- ✓ Ensure that any special equipment, e.g. harnesses, child safety seating, Wheelchair Tie-down and Occupant Restraint Systems (WTORS), tail lifts/ramps are in good working order and, where necessary, fitted correctly.
- ✓ Vehicles should be clean and drivers should make sure that there is no litter in the vehicle, or inappropriate objects that could be picked up by a child.
- ✓ Plan your journey and ensure that you are familiar with the route and any special requirements of the passengers, giving due regard to the safety and suitability of the route.
- ✓ Check the fuel level – drivers must **not** refuel the vehicle while there are passengers on board and this includes a Guide Escort if one has been provided.
- ✓ If bad weather conditions are likely and there is a risk of extreme weather conditions it is recommended that you keep a de-icer, scraper and blanket in the car. If weather conditions are adverse, please consider whether it is safe to carry out the journey – listen to local radio, check the Bath and North East Somerset Council website and speak to the Passenger Transport team.
- ✓ Check that you have a record of the appropriate telephone numbers to be used in case of breakdown, accident or delay.
- ✓ If a Guide Escort is required, then they should be picked up first and dropped off last – unless specifically requested by the Passenger Transport Team.
- ✓ Drivers must carry both parts of their driving licence; also all PCV drivers must carry their digital tachograph card if held and, with effect from January 2014, a valid CPC card. These are to be presented on request to any authorised B&NES officer.

### 3.2 Pick up and drop off points

- ✓ Approach each stop slowly and with care – do not brake sharply.
  - ✓ When setting down passengers, ensure that the stopping point used allows passengers to alight safely from the vehicle.
  - ✓ Ensure that the area where passengers alight from the vehicle is safe and of sound footing. This is especially important when transporting elderly or frail passengers.
  - ✓ Keep all doors closed until you have brought the vehicle to a complete standstill.
  - ✓ If you need to reverse, complete the manoeuvre whilst passengers are in the vehicle.
  - ✓ M1 wheelchair-accessible vehicles with demountable ramps should ensure that ramps are secured to the vehicle correctly and are **fully** extended.
  - ✓ Where possible, when using demountable ramps, they should be positioned on top of a kerb to lower the angle of the ramp. This lessens the effort you are required to exert to load a wheelchair.
- χ Children must not be seated in the front seat of a taxi or minibus unless authorisation has been given by Passenger Transport.
- When picking up and setting down at school:**
    - Follow any instructions issued by the school.
    - **Do not** obstruct other vehicles.

- Observe all road signs and markings.
- Avoid reversing and, if essential to do so, ensure somebody is guiding.
- Unless instructed otherwise, when picking up pupils from school, arrive before the school finishing time so that your vehicle is already parked up when the pupils finish their school day.

### 3.3 Door-to-door transport

- ✓ Drivers of door-to-door transport should load and unload on the left (nearside) of the road and on the same side as the premises. If this is not possible and a Guide Escort is not provided and there are other passengers aboard, please seek advice from the Passenger Transport team.
- ✓ Only accessible vehicles using the rear doors (solely for ramp/tail lift access) may stop on the offside of a one-way street to access premises.
- ✓ Before pulling away, personally make sure that all the doors are properly closed and check that no passengers or their belongings are caught in the mechanism either inside or outside the vehicle.
- ✓ Ensure that all passengers are seated and have connected their seatbelts before moving off.
- ✓ Make sure any passengers who have left the vehicle are well clear of the vehicle before moving off and that no-one is dashing back to collect property they have left behind.

### 3.4 Coach transport

All pupils travelling by coach will have been issued a pass showing their route number and dates of validation. This is to be checked before every journey.

If a pupil in school uniform attempts to board the vehicle in the morning and does not have a pass they should be allowed to board. Their name should be logged on a Driver Report Form and the pupil informed that they must get a temporary bus pass from school for their return journey. At no point should a child in uniform be left unattended at a pick up point. If this causes an overloading issue, you are not to continue with your journey and must phone your office for advice.

In the afternoon, if a pupil tries to board without a pass or temporary pass, they can be refused transport and left at the school. The driver should inform the pupil that they must return to school premises and note the incident on a Driver Report Form. If possible, the driver should alert a member of the school staff that this has happened.

Young people not in school uniform can be denied transport if they do not have a valid pass.

### 3.5 During the journey

- ✓ Work as a team with your Guide Escort, if one has been provided.
- ✓ Ensure that all passenger doors remain closed throughout the journey.
- ✓ Check that all passenger doors are unlocked and can be opened from both inside and outside the vehicle.
- ✓ When a behavioural harness or child safety seat has been provided for a passenger it **must** be used.
- ✓ Do not allow passengers to obscure your vision, or engage in any behaviour that would be distracting to you.
- ✓ All pupils and staff are to wear seatbelts.

- ✓ Drivers are not allowed to take telephone calls when driving on B&NES Contracts, even on hands-free. If a call comes in the driver must wait until he has stopped at a suitable location to listen to a voicemail/read or make a text/phone back as necessary.
- ✓ Music can be played on the vehicle, however the driver must make sure that it is appropriate and at a suitable volume. Please be aware that some children find loud music stressful.
- ✓ Drivers are not to listen to music via headphones.
- ✓ Buses must have their passenger carrying compartment lights ON during the hours of darkness

### 3.6 Lateness/no-answer (home pickups)

- ✓ If you are delayed for any reason, inform your office so that they can take appropriate action and contact parents/school/carers etc. when necessary.
- ✓ On journeys when you are required to connect with another vehicle and the connecting vehicle is late or does not arrive, you are required to wait for 10 minutes, at which point, if the connecting vehicle still hasn't arrived, you must ring your office for further advice. Under **no** circumstances should a passenger be left to await the connecting vehicle unless supervised by a responsible adult authorised by Passenger Transport.
- ✓ In the event of a passenger being late to join the transport from home, the driver is required to knock at the door, **if it's safe to do so**, and then wait three minutes before pulling away. As the driver cannot leave children or vulnerable adults unattended in the vehicle, if you do not have an Escort and other passengers are present in the vehicle, this will not be possible. Please proceed with the three minute wait and let your office know if you pull away without collecting the child

#### **Persistent lateness must be reported to the Passenger Transport team.**

- ✓ If a passenger does not show for a journey home then the driver must contact the Passenger Transport team for advice (please see page 19 for contact details)
- ✓ If a vulnerable adult passenger, particularly if elderly, fails to answer the door at home the driver must check nothing is awry. If everything seems normal and there is still no answer, the driver must contact the Passenger Transport team to notify them of the situation.

### 3.7 Lateness (designated pick up points)

- ✓ If you are delayed for any reason, inform your office so that they can take appropriate action and contact Passenger Transport/Schools etc. when necessary.
- ✓ On journeys when you are required to connect with another vehicle and the connecting vehicle is late or does not arrive, you are required to wait for 10 minutes, at which point, if the connecting vehicle still hasn't arrived, you must ring your office for further advice. Under **no** circumstances should a passenger be left to await the connecting vehicle unless supervised by a responsible adult authorised by Passenger Transport.

### 3.8 End of journey

- ✓ **Door-to-door transport** If there is no one at home to receive a child (and you have not had authorisation for them to enter the house themselves or go with an approved person) you should keep the passenger on board and complete the remainder of the

journey before returning to the address. If possible, and safe to do so, put a note through the letterbox explaining what you are doing (this may not be possible if you do not have an escort on the vehicle). If there is still no one at home at the end of the journey, contact your office which should, in turn, contact the Passenger Transport Team. You may be instructed to take the child back to school or, if no one is available, to a local police station.

- ✓ **Designated drop off points** Only stop at the locations designated in your schedule. Do not divert the vehicle or drop children off at any other points.

**All drivers - Before leaving the vehicle unattended a check is to be made that all passengers have disembarked, there is no property left in the vehicle (especially medication), the passenger area is clean and there are no incidences of vandalism or accidental damage.**

#### **4. Guide Escorts (where provided)**

- ✓ Guide Escorts are responsible for the care and supervision of the passengers.
- ✓ Guide Escorts are not responsible for giving the driver instructions on the correct route, but may from time to time need to inform the driver of a last minute change.
- ✓ Drivers and Guide Escorts work as a team and must work co-operatively at all times.
- ✓ If you have any difficulties with the Guide Escort you should speak to the Passenger Transport team.
- ✓ Opening and closing doors and securing wheelchairs remains the responsibility of the driver.

## 5. Dealing with behavioural issues

### 5.1 Minor incident management

- ✓ When a disturbance occurs you should stop the vehicle at a safe point and use your best efforts to stop the disturbance so that the vehicle can proceed safely.
- ✓ Be firm but polite.
- ✓ Communicate the facts that you have observed. You might wish to offer a warning to 'first offenders'. This should be reported on a Driver's Report pad and forwarded to Passenger Transport.
- ✓ Do not take the bad behaviour of the passenger personally.
- ✓ If you are unable to stop the disturbance the words below should be stated:

**"I have stopped the vehicle because you are causing a disturbance which makes it unsafe for this journey to continue. I will remain stationary until you are all sitting down in your seats and become quiet."**

- ✓ Submit a report to the Passenger Transport Team. This may not lead to immediate action, but helps to build a portfolio of incidents with particular passengers.
- ✓ If ultimately the incident becomes more serious, the report may be required by other parties such as the police.
- ✓ Remember – no problems can be resolved if management is not involved.
- ✓ Under **no** circumstances should you evict a child from the vehicle either by express language or gesture.
- ✓ When passengers have learning difficulties, they may display challenging behaviour. If you are finding the passenger difficult, please inform your manager who will contact the Passenger Transport Team.

### 5.2 Serious incident management

- ✓ Follow the emergency procedure and position the vehicle so that it is not a hazard or obstruction to other road users.
- ✓ Where appropriate, inform your control room of the situation, vehicle number and location.
- ✓ Inform them of which support service you require and ask that they inform the Passenger Transport team.
- ✓ If a Guide Escort is on board, they must remain with the passengers and inform the Passenger Transport team of the situation.
- ✓ Inform your passengers what is happening as this will help to reduce anxiety.
- ✓ Try to obtain co-operation from other passengers by getting names and descriptions of any witnesses, victims or offenders.
- ✓ If a long delay is likely, inform your office so that they can take remedial action.
- ✓ Any passengers who are not required as a witness or by the police could, and should, be transferred to another vehicle.

## 6. Emergency incidents

All drivers have an obligation to report:

- ✓ all Road Traffic Accidents (RTA) or incidents
- ✓ all personal accidents to staff and members of the public occurring on council vehicles or premises This allows your operator and Bath and North East Somerset Council to meet any legal obligations and to assist in accident prevention.
- ✓ all RTAs involving wheelchairs and child-safety seating.

Both WTORS equipment and child-safety seats are designed to withstand **one** accident only. All items must be replaced once an accident has occurred.

Wheelchairs involved in RTA must be inspected to ensure that no damage has happened to the device.

### The speed and accuracy of your report is vital

In the event of an accident or breakdown, the primary concern is to ensure the safety of the passengers. If necessary, the driver must give clear instructions with this in mind.

#### 6.1 Evacuation procedures

- ✓ Stop in the safest place possible by pulling as far away from moving traffic as possible.
- ✓ If you are not able to stop in a safe place, or there is risk of fire, evacuate all passengers to a safe place away from any danger, traffic and other possible hazards.
- ✓ **Do not** under **any** circumstances, leave passengers unattended. If a Guide Escort is on board he/she should stay with the passengers whilst you obtain assistance. Otherwise you must wait until another vehicle passes and inform the occupants to alert assistance.
- ✓ Do not permit passengers to wander off or make their own way home as there may be a possibility of delayed shock.
- ✓ Remember though, that you cannot detain them against their will and so take the names of any passengers who leave.
- ✓ Contact the emergency services (if required) immediately and then your base, who should contact the Passenger Transport Team.
  
- ✓ If carrying passengers in wheelchairs, evacuate all the able bodied passengers first. This is achieved by:
  - ✓ leaving the wheelchair restrained and not using the lift
  - ✓ removing passengers from their wheelchairs and evacuating the vehicle as safely as possible.
  
- χ Never delegate escorting/care duties to passers-by. You do not know their background.

If you have a warning triangle, place it 20 metres behind the vehicle before calling for assistance. Always take great care when placing them and **never** use them on motorways.

If you have passengers on board, you must notify your control and the Passenger Transport team immediately. As soon as possible another vehicle will be sent to the scene of the accident or breakdown to transport all passengers to their destination.

## 6.2 Fires

In the event of a fire:

- ✓ **stop** the vehicle immediately
- ✓ switch off the engine
- ✓ do **not** open the engine compartment
- ✓ get passengers out of the vehicle in a **fast** and orderly way; walking passengers first then lifting wheelchair passengers out of the vehicle
- ✓ take the passengers to a safe distance (at least 15 meters) away from the vehicle, and to a place that is away from traffic
- ✓ call the emergency services
- ✓ if you have time, remove the ignition key
- ✓ **do not** return to the vehicle once everyone is evacuated – **even if you think the fire is out.**

If there are hazards on board, such as gas, oxygen bottles or wheelchair batteries, be sure to inform the emergency services both on your initial telephone call and again when they arrive.

## 6.3 Contacting the Police

In an emergency **ALWAYS** call **999**.

For example:

- A crime is in progress
- You are picking up or dropping off a vulnerable person and find a crime has taken place
- There has been an incident where there are injuries
- When there is danger to life
- Violence is being used or threatened
- You have immediate concerns about persons in the vicinity of housing for vulnerable people

To report less urgent crime or disorder and for general police enquiries, call **101**.

For example:

- Your car has been stolen
- Your property has been damaged
- You suspect drug use or dealing
- You have general concerns about persons in the vicinity of housing for vulnerable people
- To give the police information about crime in your area
- If you'd like to speak to your local police officer

## 6.5 Doorstep Crime

As a taxi driver, you have the benefit of getting to know people in the local area where you work and are more likely than others to notice situations that may be suspicious.

If you see anything that concerns you, especially in areas of housing for vulnerable people, please report it to the police. They would much rather check on an innocent person, than get a report of a vulnerable person who has been the victim of distraction burglary, a rogue trader or violence.

## 7. 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 Bath and North East Somerset Council conditions of contract.

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

Guidance of the Safe Transportation of Wheelchairs – MDA DB2001 (03) June 2001 (Medical Devices Agency)

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

If you have not seen these documents, please ask your employer for a copy. Failure to comply with these will be deemed as a breach of Bath and North East Somerset Council contract terms and conditions.

- ✓ 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
- ✓ 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).

### 7.1 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).

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.

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 your employer.

## 7.2 Using vehicle wheelchair lifts

- ✓ When using a wheelchair lift, the wheelchair must be facing either forward or backward – your office 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 Guide Escort 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.
- ✓ Motorised wheelchairs must have the drive disconnected with the master switch in the off position when accessing or using lifts.
- ✓ Always stop the vehicle in a safe position with the handbrake applied and on flat firm ground. If on a gradient face the vehicle downhill.

**Never leave a leave a client unattended on a tail lift.**

## 7.3 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 Guide Escort, 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.
- ✓ Treat your clients as you would wish to be treated.

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

## 8. Seat belts and child safety seats

It is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that all seat belts and child safety seats are fitted both correctly and securely. The following table acts as a compliance guide and should be adhered to at all times:

Passenger	Front seat	Rear seat	Who is responsible?
Baby	<b>Not to be used in this seat</b>	Correct child restraint must be used: i.e. Infant Carrier. If the infant is under four months of age, additional head padding must be fitted to the seat	Driver
Child up to three years	Correct child restraint must be used. The front passenger airbag must be switched <b>off</b> . Booster seats are <b>not</b> permitted in this position if side airbags are fitted.	Correct child restraint must be used.	Driver
Child aged three – 11 (up to 12 <sup>th</sup> birthday) <b>and</b> under 1.35 metres in height (approx 4' 5")	Correct child restraint must be used. Side airbags do not present a risk to a correctly fitted child seat, but in the case of booster seats, the occupant must not be allowed to rest against the airbag location. In these cases, if the car has a rear centre lap and diagonal seat belt and the booster fits correctly, this would be the preferable location.		Driver
Child aged 12 – 13, <b>or</b> over 1.35 metres (approx 4' 5") in height.	SEAT BELTS MUST BE WORN		Driver
Adult passengers (14 years and over)	SEAT BELTS MUST BE WORN		Passenger

## **9. Contact Details**

If you need to contact Bath and North East Somerset Council Transport Team, please use one of the following numbers:

If serving establishments starting A to P – Hayley Ewin 01225 394380

If serving establishments starting between Q to Z - Helen Dewar 01225 394370

Guide Escorts, Schools outside of County, Child Protection or Serious Behaviour Issues –  
Karen Giles 01225 394371