



## 6. On the Road!

*Want to take your youth group away? Or are you just arranging transport for a one off event a mile down the road? Whatever you are planning you need to know a few things!*

### Who can drive a Mini bus?

A person who obtained a full driving license before 1 January 1997 can drive a minibus provided he or she is over 21, the minibus has a maximum of 17 seats, including the driver's seat, and is not being used for hire or reward. If a driver passed their car-driving test after this date, or if the driver is being paid to drive, or a charge is made specifically for the transport, and the minibus has more than nine seats, the driver will need to hold a license to permit him or her to do this. They are required to pass an additional Category D1 test to drive minibuses other than in certain circumstances. (See the Fact Sheet *Driving a Minibus in Great Britain* published by the Department of Transport and available from the DVLA on 01792 772151 or the booklet *Passenger Transport Provided by Voluntary Groups* available from Traffic Area Offices).

### Are you responsible enough to drive?

Even if you are legally qualified to drive you should also consider if it's responsible for you to drive a mini bus. For instance, if you are supervising a

group, busy with the logistics of the trip, loading and unloading luggage, dealing with high spirits, along with all the other pressures of taking a group away, then you may not be the one for whom it is safe and appropriate to drive. Do you have suitable adult supervision to deal with problems in addition to yourself? Do you have a co-driver? Ensure the driver has adequate breaks and rests. If a journey will take more than six hours a second driver should be provided. Has the driver had suitable rest for the journey ahead? Or has he or she been awake for most of the night dealing with the excitement of the group's last night away, for instance.

### Seat Belts

Legislation requires that when a group of three or more children are transported in a minibus or coach on an organised trip, they must each be provided with a forward facing seat with a seat belt. For the purpose of the legislation, a 'child' is defined as a person who is aged three to fifteen, and a 'seat belt' is a minimum of a lap belt. A seat has a minimum width of 400mm. The legislation does not define an organised trip. However, the key element is whether the journey is undertaken to transport children. School outings, trips by youth organisations and voluntary organisations, where transporting children is the key element, are all subject to this legislation. A journey to or from a youth group, even when accompanied or driven by parents, and by road, from one part of a youth organisation's premises to another, is an organised trip. However, an organised trip using a normal scheduled service intended for the general public, which would operate whether or not children were travelling, would not be included. While the legislation does not apply to public transport, it does apply to all minibuses and coaches used to transport children, whether or not

privately owned or used for hire or reward. A mini bus is defined as a motor vehicle constructed or adapted to carry more than eight, but not more than 16, passengers in addition to the driver. A coach is defined as a vehicle constructed or adapted to carry more than 16 passengers which has a gross weight of more than seven and a half tonnes and a maximum speed exceeding 60mph. The legislation does not apply to buses that do not meet the speed or written criteria.

Who is responsible for ensuring that a young person wears a seatbelt?

**Front and rear seats of minibuses (with unladen weight of under 2540kg).**

It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that children under 14 wear seat belts (or seat restraints if the child is under 3) if they are available. Children of 14 and over sitting in the front must wear a seat belt and they are responsible for doing so.

**Larger minibuses (over 24540 kg) and coaches**

Although there is no statutory requirement that young people in the rear of larger minibuses or in coaches wear a seatbelt, youth workers supervising a trip should try to ensure that the restraints are worn. A single seat belt should not be used by more than one child, nor should a belt be placed around a child who is on an adult's lap. In his book *Health and Safety in Youth and Community Work*, Doug Nicholls says, "I am...firmly of the view that no youth and community worker is expected to drive a minibus unless: Diagonal seatbelts are anchored to the frame (proper anchorage points) of the vehicle rather than the seats. Any modification to fit diagonal seat belts should fully comply with the 'Construction and Use Regulations.' One seat with a diagonal seatbelt is available for every

passenger, any lap top belted seat in the front is left vacant, young people can be transported with one seat each."

Can we still use a vehicle with rear facing or side facing seats?

The legislation requires that forward facing seats with a belt be available for each child. Vehicles fitted with a side or rear-facing seat can still be used, but the number of children will be limited to the number of forward facing seats with seat belts. So, for example, if there are 14 passenger seats of which three are rear facing and two are side facing, the driver will be limited to carrying nine passengers.

**Note:** *The legislation does not apply to children in wheelchairs. A code of practice entitled The Safety of Passengers in Wheelchairs on Buses (VSE 87/1) is available from the DTRLR Mobility and Inclusion Unit, Zone 1/18, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR*

Who is responsible for ensuring that the correct type of vehicle is used?

When a youth organisation seeks to hire a minibus or coach for a trip, the driver and his or her employer should supply a vehicle that meets the statutory standards. A failure on their part to do so would open them to legal liability for operating a vehicle that does not comply with the requirements of the legislation. However, the youth worker arranging a trip should inform the vehicle operator that the vehicle is required to transport children or and young people.

**The Vehicle**

Seats in minibuses should all face forward, with ample room for entry and exit, especially bearing emergencies in mind. In addition to routine safety

checks and roadworthiness (also see the written evidence from the log book and service report) a driver should bear in mind the inbuilt inappropriateness for carrying passengers of many minibus designs. This is because many are based on commercial van frames designed for carrying loads rather than people. One feature of this is the closeness of the back seats to the rear doors. Drivers should ensure that there is adequate space between rear doors and the first passengers, even if this means leaving rear seats empty. This is known as a crush area and would act as a buffer. Perhaps use the rear set as luggage carriers or remove them altogether.

## Luggage

Ensure this doesn't obstruct passengers and is firmly secured. Unsecured luggage in a crash or emergency braking can be dangerous. Keep emergency exits clear. Most road traffic experts recommend separate luggage compartments in the form of a roof rack, luggage bins or a trailer.

## Child Protection

If young people are being transported by car, remember that there should be two adults supervising the journey. The Child Protection procedures of the Church in Wales requires this for young people under the age of 18. The same rules for seat belts apply.

## Supervision

- Ensure that there is adequate supervision at all times when travelling, and that young people are supervised whilst boarding and leaving the vehicle, especially whilst using the rear exit. Carry out a head count when getting off or onto transport. Do not allow young people to operate the doors. Never

allow passengers to board or leave until the vehicle is at a complete standstill. Use Hazard warning lights where young people are boarding or leaving a vehicle.

- Make sure everyone is sitting one to a seat, that seat belts are used and that you do not exceed the carrying capacity of the vehicle.
- Carry a complete list of passengers along with any special needs, and keep this with other relevant documents in a place where it can be readily found in an accident.
- Allow adequate time for the journey and ensure there are adequate stops and breaks and the driver is not distracted during the journey.
- Occupy the young people on long journeys. This will make the journey pass quickly and prevent boredom, which often leads to trouble! Avoid long periods of driving when the young people might get bored and restless.
- Enforce no smoking and no alcohol bans.
- Young people must not be left unaccompanied on the bus. If you have to stop in an emergency or break down while on a motorway, only stop on the hard shoulder and as far away from the carriageway and passing traffic as possible.
- When you arrive home, ensure that each young person is met by a parent at a prearranged meeting point and time. Do not leave young people alone if no one has come to collect them. If there is a serious delay in your journey, inform the parents.

## Advice for young People

- Arrive on time.

- Don't push or run to the mini bus when it arrives.
- Find a seat quietly and without pushing. You may have already been allocated a seat.
- Stay seated when the minibus is moving and wear your seat belt.
- Make sure your bags do not block gangways or exits.
- Do not distract the driver.
- Never throw things or play about in the minibus; never throw things out of the minibus.
- Use the Green Cross Code when arriving at or leaving the vehicle
- Pressure on brake pedal
- Lights and indicators are working
- Wipers and washers working
- Fuel level (and type of fuel)
- Seat belts are undamaged and working properly
- Location of wheel brace and jack
- Location and contents of First Aid kit and fire extinguishers
- Location of relevant paperwork (permit, MOT etc)
- Luggage securely stored and exits kept clear
- Change for parking/telephone/tolls

## Pre-Drive Safety Check

### **Outside, check:**

- Oil Level
- Coolant level
- Windscreen washer fluid level
- Brake fluid level
- Windscreen and windows are clean and undamaged
- Lights (including brake lights and indicators) are clean and working
- Tyre pressure, including spares
- Tyre tread
- Doors open and close properly
- Trailer brake lights and indicators work (if applicable)
- Roof rack or trailer is properly fitted, and all luggage securely held.

### **Inside, check:**

- Mirrors correctly adjusted, clean and unobstructed
- Position and function of all dashboard controls
- Position of driving seat so all pedals can be operated comfortably

## Useful Addresses

*Community Transport Association,*  
High Bank,  
Halton Street,  
Hyde,  
Cheshire. SK14 2NY  
Tel. 0161 366 6685  
[www.communitytransport.com](http://www.communitytransport.com)

*Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents*  
Rospa House,  
Edgbaston Park  
353, Bristol Road  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham  
B5 7ST  
Tel. 0121 248 2000  
[www.rospa.com](http://www.rospa.com)  
See also [www.dvla.gov.uk](http://www.dvla.gov.uk)

*Whilst every effort has been made to offer accurate and up to date information the Llandaff Diocesan Youth Department can take no responsibility for omission or errors*

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