



SEN Passenger Transport Services



For further advice or guidance contact:

Passenger Transport Office
020 8489 5629 / 5692



Wheelchair and Harness Handbook - General Information

The purpose of this guide is to ensure wheelchair users and those secured in harnesses have a safe and comfortable Journey;

And for Coach Escorts and Support Workers so that they:

- understand their responsibilities
- can safely use the equipment in their vehicles to support wheelchair users and fit harnesses correctly
- treat their Passengers with respect;

Wheelchairs

Communication is the key when assisting passengers in wheelchairs. Be polite, patient and speak to the passenger directly. Do not handle the wheelchair without first informing the occupant. When moving a wheelchair always ensure that you explain what you are doing to the passenger.

Passengers (or their carers) should ensure that wheelchairs are maintained in good condition, tyres pumped up and brakes working properly etc, so that they can be transported safely. If you (the Coach Escort) see a chair that requires attention this should be reported to transport office / your manager as the safety of the passenger may be at risk through transportation or in the event of an accident.

If a wheelchair user changes their wheelchair for a different model they should contact the person who arranges their transport, to make sure that the new wheelchair can be transported safely and has been crash tested.

If a wheelchair user can transfer out of their wheelchair and into a vehicle seat (without assistance) they should do so as this is generally a safer way to travel. Remember you are not allowed to lift any passenger.

Other points to note

- Tuck in any loose clothes or rugs/material before moving off to ensure they don't catch in wheels.
- Use both hands to ensure safe control when moving the wheelchair.
- Move the chair carefully, avoid rushing and turning quickly, be observant; avoid hazards such as pedestrians, pot holes, soft ground, kerbs.
- Never tip the chair forward or too far back.
- Do not lift the chair by the arm rests or any other detachable part.
- Always apply the brakes when waiting, resting, transferring, and when leaving the chair unattended.

Information for SAFE Wheelchair Operation

Pushing an occupied wheelchair down a kerb

It is always safer for the wheelchair user and yourself if you use crossing places where there are dropped kerbs. There

may however be instances where this is not possible or convenient.

- It is safer to go down a kerb backwards. It requires less strength and gives a gentler ride. Care needs to be taken though as you will be stepping backwards into the road
- Always tell the person in the wheelchair what you are about to do.
- Make sure the road is clear then back the wheelchair to the edge of the kerb.
- Pull the rear wheels down onto the road making sure that both wheels touchdown at the same time.
- When the front castors are at the edge of the kerb, pull back on the handles and at the same time push down and forwards on the tipping lever with your foot. This will balance the wheelchair and occupant on the rear wheels. Do not tip the wheelchair back more than necessary. Make sure that the weight of the wheelchair and passenger does not put you off balance
- Carefully pull the wheelchair further back into the road and when the feet are clear of the kerb gently lower the front to the road.
- Check that the road is clear before turning around and crossing.

Pushing an occupied wheelchair up a kerb:

- It is safer to go up a kerb forwards. It requires less strength and gives a gentler ride.
- Always tell the person in the wheelchair what you are about to do.
- When the occupant's feet are nearly touching the kerb pull back on the handles and at the same time push down and forwards on the tipping lever with your foot. This will balance the wheelchair and occupant on the rear wheels. Make sure you do not overbalance backwards.
- When the front castors are just clear of the kerb push the wheelchair forward until the castors rest on the pavement. Do not tip the wheelchair back more than necessary.
- Push the wheelchair forward until the back wheels touch the kerb and then lift up the handles as you continue pushing forwards to place the rear wheels on the pavement.

Loading and Unloading a Wheelchair passenger onto a vehicle.

The passenger's safety during transportation depends on the diligence of the person securing the tie-down restraints and it

is essential that they have received appropriate training in their use. Manufacturer's and Trainer's instructions should always be carefully followed. **If in any doubt ASK.**

Never attempt to load or unload a passenger if the tail lift is not working properly. If the tail lift does not operate contact the office immediately and seek guidance

Never use anything other than the correct anchor systems which would likely fail under crash conditions.

All wheelchair passengers should **always be loaded and unloaded on the tail lift or ramps facing the vehicle.**

Direction of Travel

The Code of Practice on the Safety of Passengers in Wheelchairs on Buses (VSE 87/1) advises that Wheelchairs must never travel facing sideways or on an angle as these positions offer the least amount of protection from crash forces.

Wheelchair users should travel forward-facing unless provided with a vertical bulkhead against which to travel rear-facing. Wheelchair accessible taxis with integral bulkheads and suitable wheelchair restraints may offer this rear-facing facility, as do some wheelchair accessible low-floor buses. It is not advisable for a wheelchair user to travel rear-facing against the back of a vehicle seat because the backs of seats are rarely vertical; rather they are usually angled towards the rear for the comfort of the forward facing passengers.

Securing the wheelchair to the vehicle:

Once the wheelchair is position within the vehicle it and its passenger must be secured in place using wheelchair clamps and an inertia reel seatbelt.

It is recommended that four point anchorages or an equivalent system is provided for each wheelchair location. A four point anchorage system should comprise two for attachments at the front of the wheelchair and two at the rear of the wheelchair.

Position the chair where it is to be secured.

- Apply the wheelchair brakes,



- Locate the front straps into the floor tracking; the metal fixing locates over the tracking and then by lifting the yellow clip the fixing will lock in place in the track.
- Attach the other end of the straps to the mainframe of the chair (do not attach to the foot rests, around the

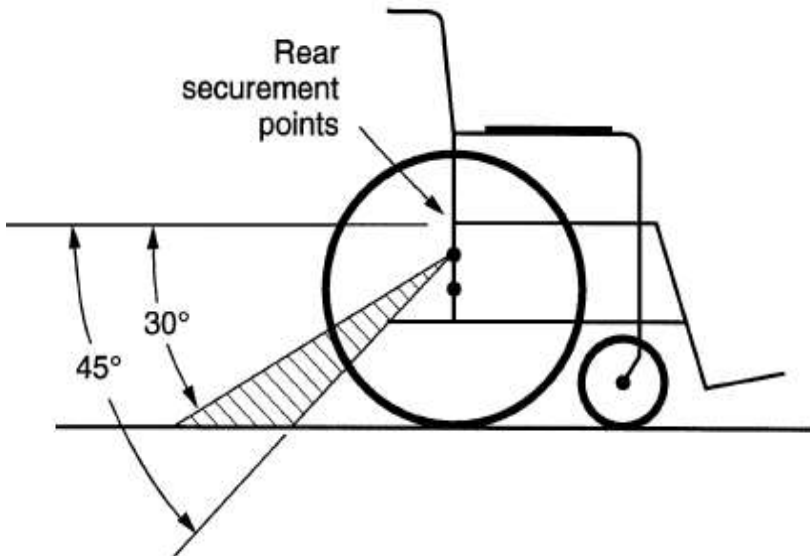
hand-rims, or the spokes of wheels). The two straps should be positioned so that they mirror each other.



- For ease of operation make sure that the press button is on the outside of the strap.
- On some wheelchairs, the point where the tie-down should be secured may be indicated on the wheelchair itself.
- With the front pair of straps attached, release the wheelchair brakes and roll the chair back until the straps are taut. Apply the handbrake again.



- The rear straps have the ability to be tensioned. Clip them into the floor tracking in the same way that the front straps were attached. Ideally when they are tensioned the straps need to be angled within the shaded zone displayed below. Again their position should mirror each other



SIDE VIEW

- The rear straps have a tensioner; pull the loose strap tight and then turn the bar over and this tensions the straps. The straps should be tight enough that the wheelchair does not move but not too tight as to deform the chair.



- Be careful not to catch your fingers as you tension the straps.
- Once the chair is restrained, you will need to secure the passenger with a seat belt.
- The occupant restraint is provided by a lap belt and diagonal seatbelt. The lap belt part should be anchored to the floor around the passenger waist and clipped in into the holder. The shoulder belt should be connected

to the floor over the shoulder and clipped into the holder on the floor.

- Make sure that the belt restrains the passenger's body and is not around the chair or over the chair handles.
- Once the chair and passenger are secure re-check that the wheelchair brakes are on and that the chair is secure. If the wheelchair is a powered one, the power source must be turned off and the wheelchair not left in free wheel mode.
- If the passenger has a lap tray or other attachments to the wheelchair including bags, these should be removed and stowed safely.
- It is the Coach Escorts responsibility to make sure the above procedure is followed correctly, however ultimately the driver is responsible for the final check before moving off.

Once this procedure has been completed the vehicle is ready to move off.

Releasing the Wheelchair clamps:

- Do not unclip any of the clamps or straps [even if the wheelchair brakes are on] **UNTIL** you are ready to take the passenger off the vehicle.
- You must wait for the tail lift to be in position and the school or centre staff ready to collect the passenger before disembarking or attempting to disembark the

passenger from the vehicle. If the tail lift does not work **do not attempt to lift** the passenger off the vehicle.

- Remember to disembark onto the tail lift with the wheelchair facing the vehicle.

In the event that the passenger is involved in a vehicle accident, their wheelchair and the restraint system shouldn't be used again until they have been checked by the manufacturer or an approved repair agent.

Health and Safety

- Your health, safety and wellbeing is equally as important as that of your passengers
- It is important you protect your posture when manoeuvring and securing wheel chairs
- NEVER lift a wheel chair
- Bend with your knees – Not your back
- If you have any medical conditions that may prevent you from safely supporting passengers in wheel chairs, you must speak to your Line Manager

Harnesses

Body Harnesses also known as Crelling or Houdini Harnesses are for children and adults with special needs.

The harnesses are designed to offer postural support or in the case of learning difficulties and challenging behaviour a certain degree of restraint.

They must only be used on those passengers for who approval has been sought and given. They do not take the place of vehicle seat belts which must still be used.

The harness requires cooperation from the user when fitting

- Place the PVC chest pad against the passenger's chest.
- Pass both horizontal fixing straps around the passenger and fasten straps behind the seat back. The lower strap at waist level and the top strap at chest level to hold the passenger securely in an upright sitting position.
- Pass the shoulder straps over the passengers head and shoulders so that the tongue end of the Steel Safety Buckle is hanging down behind the seat back. The shoulder straps can be adjusted in length so that the buckle can be positioned well away from their head and out of sight and out of reach of the passenger.



- Pass the under strap between the passengers knees, down underneath the seat base and up behind the seat back to connect to the shoulder strap buckle.



- Adjust all straps to fit securely yet comfortably.
- Make sure you then fit the vehicle seatbelt.

Seatbelt clips

All children must have their seatbelts fastened whilst on the vehicle. If a passenger removes their seat belt whilst the vehicle is moving, you should alert your driver to stop the vehicle where possible

For those passengers who persistently remove their seat belts there is a clip that can be fitted over the existing seat belt, that hides the release button away and can prevent the removal of belts. We have a variety of types and the diagrams below are for illustration only.

These will only be issued after an assessment of the passenger, vehicle and route.



These guideline notes should be safely kept and read in conjunction with your issued job description.

If you have any queries regarding your duties, please contact your Line Manager for advice. **IF IN DOUBT ASK!**

**PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICES
Wheelchair & Harness Handbook 2019-20**

DO NOT TEAR OFF THIS PAGE

PLEASE SIGN THIS SLIP TO CONFIRM THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED & READ A COPY OF THE WHEELCHAIR and HARNESS HANDBOOK.

Ensure that a copy is handed to your Line Manager

NAME OF STAFF

SIGNATURE

DATE

Return photocopy of this page to:

PTS
2ND Floor
Alexandra House
10 Station Road
London
N22 7TR