

Section 9: Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk

Safeguarding means protecting children and adults at risk (sometimes called [vulnerable](#) adults) from harm and abuse.

This section gives you information on how to keep your passengers safe.

Online [safeguarding awareness training](#) is also available. It is important that you take this training.

Who is a child or an adult at risk?

According to the law, a child is a person under the age of 18. All children are vulnerable to harm and abuse because of their age. Children are less able to protect themselves and are dependent on adults. This makes them vulnerable to being [exploited](#) or abused.

An adult at risk is anyone over the age of 18 who is in need of extra care and support. An adult may be at risk of harm or abuse because they are unable to protect themselves. This might be because of their age, a disability or mental illness.

Carrying unaccompanied children in your vehicle

If your passenger is an unaccompanied child, make sure your operator knows, and that you know the name of the adult who will be meeting the child at the end of the journey. Your operator should give you that information.

Carrying children and adults at risk in your vehicle

As a driver, you may have to transport children or adults who are at risk. You may come into contact with passengers that are being [trafficked](#), exploited, abused or who are in need of help in some other way.

Keeping children and adults at risk safe from harm and abuse is everybody's responsibility, not just social workers or the police. You can help with this and you should know what to do if you have concerns that a person is at risk. You might notice things which do not seem quite right, and you could be in a position to report something to the police that may help protect someone at risk.

Make sure your behaviour with all passengers, including children and adults at risk, is appropriate and professional at all times. Be aware of how your actions could affect others.

County lines

Criminal exploitation is also known as 'county lines'. This is when gangs and organised crime groups use children and young adults to sell drugs. These children and young adults are often forced to travel across counties for example, by train or in taxis and private hire

vehicles, and they use mobile phone 'lines' to keep in contact with individuals in the drugs trade.

Signs that a child or vulnerable person is at risk may include:

- Young or vulnerable people being picked up and taken to hotels or suspected [brothels](#) particularly at odd times of the day and night
- A young person travelling to meet someone they don't know, perhaps who they have met online
- A young person or adult who shows signs of being abused, harmed or neglected
- Adults putting a young person into your vehicle who may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- A child or young person who looks concerned or frightened in the company of adults
- An adult or young person who may be poorly dressed/unclean or look like they do not get enough food
- An adult who seems to be controlled by someone else or is having decisions made for them by another adult
- An adult who seems to have their money controlled by someone else

If you think you have seen a child or adult at risk who needs help or is suffering from any signs of abuse or if they have told you directly, you must report it to your operator and the police.

It is helpful to keep a note (written or recorded) of the incident or situation that you are worried about. Include details such as dates and times, a description of what happened, the name, address and a physical description of the people involved. You can then give these details to the police.

As a driver it is important to:

- **Be aware** of children and adults at risk
- **Be concerned** about their well being
- **Listen** to what they tell you
- **Reassure** them by being professional, kind and considerate
- **Report concerns** to your PHV operator or the police using 101. In an emergency, call 999

Other support

In most situations you should report any incidents or concerns to your PHV operator/controller and the police by calling 101. If it is an emergency call 999.

These are some other options if you do not feel it is appropriate to report the matter to the police:

- Crimestoppers (an [anonymous](#) service) - 0800 555 111
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) - 0808 800 5000
- Modern Slavery Helpline - 08000 121 700

You do not need to give your details and can report anonymously but the more information you can give the better.