



Guidelines On Transporting A Child Or Young Person In Your Car

The issue of transporting children has become very sensitive for sports leaders and parents. Many coaches argue that their club could not operate without the goodwill of volunteers and parents ensuring that children are returned home or transported to events in a private car.

The guidance from the Sports Councils encourages coaches not to take children on journeys alone in their car.

This view has been taken as knowledge has grown of how those who want to harm children has developed. The vast majority of coaches and volunteers will help out through their genuine desire to see children or their particular sport develop. Unfortunately we must face the reality that a minority of others will join a sports club to gain access to children and create an air of acceptability about their role, justifying their close contact with children.

Best practice is clearly to avoid transporting a child alone, but it is recognised that in some circumstances it is an essential part of a child's participation in training and competition.

If all alternatives have been exhausted and an adult has to transport a child there are a number of safety measures that Tennis Ireland would recommend should be put in place to minimise the risk:

- Your club should check out all those with access to young people (including drivers) using references, application forms and vetting as advised in this policy
- Parents should be informed of the person who will be transporting their child, the reasons why and how long the journey will take

- A person other than the planned driver should talk to the child about transport arrangements to check they are comfortable about the plans
- The driver must ensure that they have insurance to carry others.
- The driver should attempt to have more than one child in the car.
- When leaving children off after a match or training session coaches / volunteers should alternate which child is dropped off last. Ideally two children would be left off at an agreed point i.e. one of their family homes
- The person who leaves children home should be alternated; this would reduce the risk of any one individual from always being alone with the child
- The driver should have a point of contact and mobile phone should they break down
- Ensure that children are aware of their rights and they have someone to turn to or report any concerns they may have. If a culture of safety is created within your club then the child is more likely to talk to another person if they are feeling uncomfortable about a situation
- Children should wear seatbelts at all times. The driver is legally responsible to ensure that a child under 14 in Northern Ireland and under 17 in the Republic of Ireland wears a seatbelt (i.e. the adult would have to pay any fine) but morally responsible to ensure all passengers wear seatbelts
- Late collections. These can present clubs and coaches with particular difficulties. Parents/guardians should be provided with guidelines addressing the issue and outlining their responsibility and the consequences of late collections. Clubs should have contact numbers for parents/guardians and if possible be provided with an alternative contact number. Parents/guardians should have a contact number for the club/coach to inform them of emergencies and possible late collections.

Like all advice these procedures will only reduce the risk and still the best advice is to avoid transporting children alone in a car.