



MOVINGUP

Preparing your child for **safe** independent travel



Your child is about to go through some big changes in their life as they move up from Primary to Secondary School. There will be lots for you both to think about but it's important to start preparing now for your child's new journey to and from school.

This may be the first time that your child will be travelling independently. Maybe they will be having longer or more complicated journeys compared with travelling to primary school.

This is usually a key point in their lives where children gain a lot of independence without having the experience and skills to be able to keep themselves safe. Unfortunately, as statistics show, road crashes are one of the biggest killers of young people in the UK.



Merseyside casualty figures show that pupils in Years 7 to 9 are **THREE** times more likely to be killed or seriously injured in a road traffic collision than children in Years 4 to 6.

At this stage in their lives children often think that they 'know it all' and don't need to think about road safety. This is why it is so important that they are made aware of the increased risks that they will face and how vulnerable they are.



WHY ARE THEY AT RISK?

Crossing a road near junctions, parked cars, buses and other large vehicles dramatically reduces their view of the road. This also means that drivers often don't see the child until the last minute, leaving them little or no time to stop. Remind your child that they need to have a clear view in all directions before they cross and that they need to look properly.

Whether they are walking, cycling or getting on and off buses, there is one common problem – distractions. It's impossible to concentrate properly on two things at the same time. Paying attention to their mobile phones, music or friends instead of their surroundings can, and often does, result in devastating consequences.

Another issue worth discussing with your child now is peer pressure and how this may influence their choices. What would they do if they were in a car with friends who didn't put their seatbelt on? Are they worried that they will be made fun of if they wear a helmet when they're cycling? Sometimes peer pressure can lead to silly or dangerous behaviour. Make sure that your child understands the potential consequences of things like distracting bus drivers, playing games in the road or making unsafe choices just to fit in.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

You can help to prepare your child for their new school journey and make sure that they have the skills and experience needed to stay safe.

Before they start school in September discuss and practice the new school route together using the planned mode of transport. Even though the traffic is likely to be lighter or different from the normal school run, it will still help.

Discuss any potential changes to the routine, such as visits to a friend's house, after-school clubs or late finishing and how this may affect their safety, e.g. will it be dark, will the route involve busier roads, will they be alone or in a group?

TIP!

Did you know that there are smartphone apps that allow you and your child to share your location or follow each other's journey progress? If they are running late, this could save your child having to use their phone to contact you while they are walking along. It can also help you to find them if they need picking up from an unfamiliar place.





WALKING

Under your guidance, let your child plan their route, and maybe alternatives as well, allowing them to work out problems for themselves as far as possible. Discuss how the shortest routes may not be the safest. It is essential that they understand the increased risks that they will face when using busier roads at peak times.

Where possible encourage them to use a pedestrian crossing. Remind them that they still need to check that traffic from all directions has stopped before crossing even when the Green Man is showing. Drivers are often distracted and don't always stop at red lights.

It isn't just drivers who can be distracted. One of the main reasons that young people are involved in collisions as pedestrians is because they have become distracted and simply haven't looked properly. Remind your child that although they know *how* to cross safely it only takes a split second for mistakes to be made. Sadly these mistakes often have devastating consequences.



TRAVELLING BY BUS

It may be worth your child downloading and becoming familiar with a journey planner app before practicing their bus journeys. Once they know which bus stops to use for each journey they can plan the rest of their route, including the best place to cross each road.

In recent years many children have been seriously injured after getting off a bus and crossing beside it. Children crossing from behind have been hit by cars travelling in the opposite direction with the driver having no chance of seeing them until it was too late. Likewise, many children have been hurt by crossing in front of the bus and being hit by a car overtaking it or travelling in the next lane. Make sure your child understands the importance of waiting until the bus has pulled away from the bus stop so that they can see in all directions before crossing.

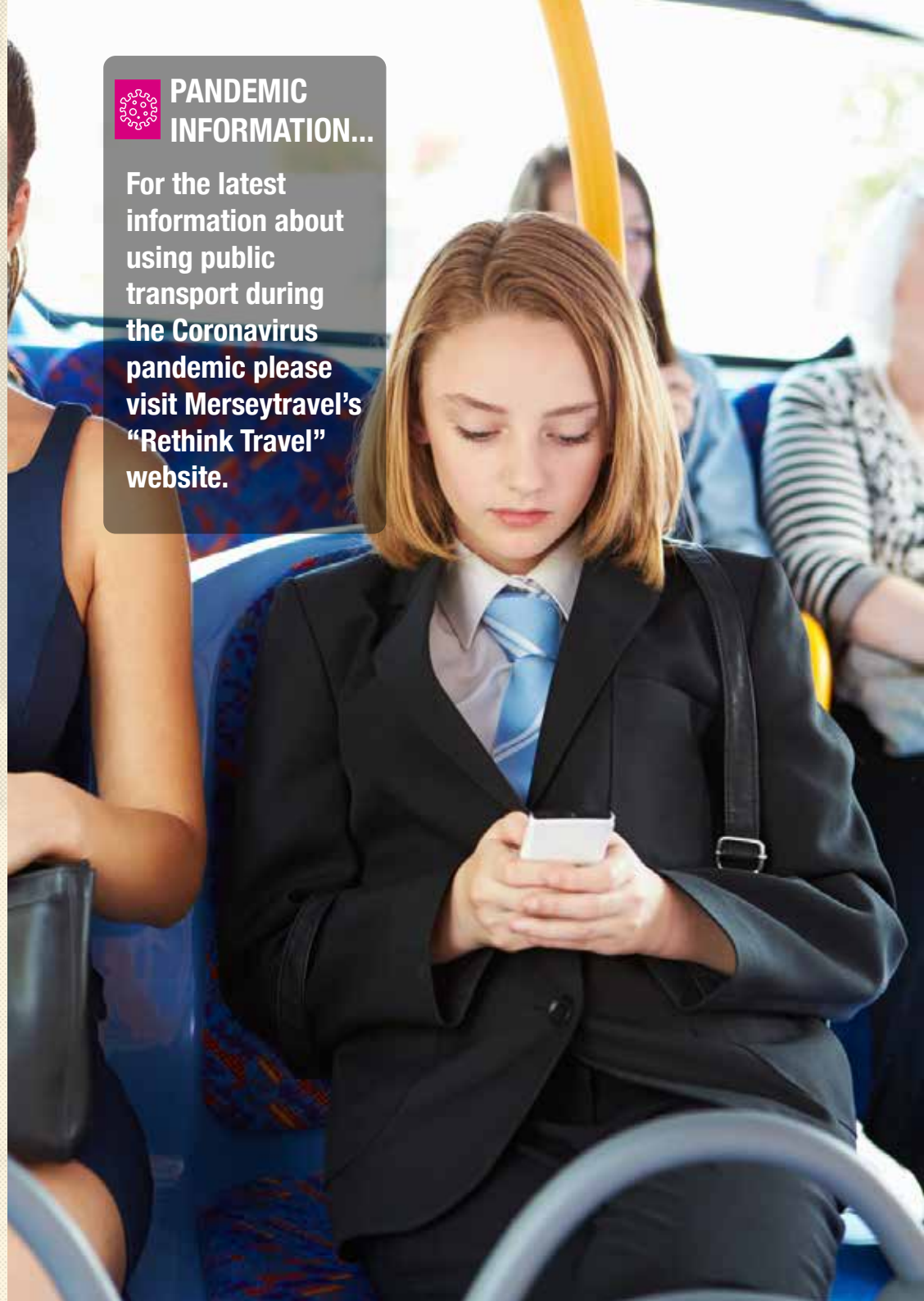
TIP!

It's a good idea to take a photo of your child's bus pass. If lost, you will have the pass number and details handy to request a replacement.



PANDEMIC INFORMATION...

For the latest information about using public transport during the Coronavirus pandemic please visit Merseytravel's "Rethink Travel" website.





CYCLING

If your child is going to be cycling to school help them to plan and practice their route. Talk about why the shortest routes may not be the safest way to go.

Discuss what they will do if they need to make changes to this route because of road works or other problems that may arise.

Did your child take part in Bikeability Cyclist Training at school? Bikeability is the national cyclist training programme and, unlike the old Cycle Proficiency Test, it teaches children how to cope on today's roads. Your child may have missed this training due to the recent lockdown or they may need a reminder of what they need to do to cycle safely.

The Bikeability website (bikeability.org.uk) has lots of useful information for you and your child, including a downloadable Parents Handbook which covers all of the content of the training and more. This website is a fantastic resource with essential information for all cyclists not just those on the school journey. It will remind your child of the need to look and signal properly when riding as well as how to move through a junction and what position in the road they need to take up. You may be surprised to learn the importance of your child taking up a 'Primary' position in a road as opposed to the old fashioned messages that taught us to ride as close to the kerb as possible!

They need to recognise and obey traffic signals, be aware of the dangers of blind spots and know never to cycle up on the inside (left) of large vehicles. If they are going to be riding on a shared pedestrian/cycle path remind them of the need to respect pedestrians and give way to them if necessary.

Make sure that their bike is well maintained and fitted with a bell, reflectors and with a white light at the front and a red one at the back – it's the law! Does your child know how and where they will leave their bike securely when they arrive at school? Planning these things now will reduce unnecessary panic on their first day at their new school!

During the school holidays there may be a chance for children to take part in the free cyclist training that they may have missed out on. For details of how to book please contact www.bikeright.co.uk/courses/child-group/



TRAVELLING BY CAR

Car travel is unlikely to be a new option for your child but travelling in a car or taxi without you may be. It's a good idea to remind them of the importance of wearing their seatbelt on every journey. Not only is it against the law to not wear one, in a crash, you're twice as likely to die if you don't.

Unfortunately, people are less likely to use seat belts on short or familiar journeys, just like the school run – putting them at serious risk of injury in a crash. Don't let anyone travel in your car while not wearing their seatbelt and make sure that your child will always wear one when travelling with other people.





RAIL SAFETY

You can help to prepare your child by taking a few practice journeys to and from school. Talk to them about the hazards and dangers that exist on the railway network. The railway has both overhead and conductor rail electrification and if they were to come in contact with them they could be seriously injured or even killed. Make sure that they know:

- To keep away from the platform edge and stay behind the yellow line
- Never to touch, walk along or take short cuts over the tracks
- To listen carefully to station or on board announcements and follow instructions
- That they can get help on board a train or a station by finding a member of staff or the guard at the back of the train
- That there are help points at stations and they can text British Transport Police on **61016** if they need any help with their journey

For more information and tips on how to travel safely on the rail network please visit the following sites:

www.btp.police.uk/safety_on_the_railway/our_travel_advice.aspx

<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/>



GENERAL PREPARATION FOR SAFE JOURNEYS

As a parent you will naturally have concerns regarding your child's personal safety. You may be worried about gangs, bullies or "stranger danger" or whether your child will be able to cope with anything unexpected. The points below might be useful for you to consider with your child, so that both of you can minimise any risks.

DOES YOUR CHILD?...

- ? Have money, plus some for emergencies? Do they know your phone number or have a list of numbers to be able to contact someone if their phone is lost or the battery dies?
- ? Know that listening to music through headphones can be dangerous when alone, walking around, and certainly when trying to cross roads?
- ? Have the right equipment or high visibility clothing for their journey?
- ? Have places along the way (shops or a friend's house) where they can stop if feeling unsafe?
- ? Know where to go if they forget their door key?

DO YOU?...

- ? Know who your child is with and have an updated list of the phone numbers of their friends (including surnames, not just first names or nicknames?)
- ? Know where they are going, how they are getting there and when to expect them to get home?

To discuss any of the information in this guide or for any other road safety advice please contact the road safety team in your local authority:



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