

**Response Form**

**Use of Seat Belts by Child Passengers aged 3-13 years on Buses and Coaches**

**Proposal for Operators**

**Question 1: Do you agree with the proposal to require operators to take reasonable steps to ensure that children aged 3 to 13 travelling without an adult wear their seat belts?** *(If appropriate, please provide details of any issues with which you disagree).*

**Question 2. If you do not agree, do you have any alternative proposals?**

**Question 3 Do you have any comments on the draft Code of Practice?**

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (Council) is supportive of the requirement on operators in principle as it is important that children understand the importance of wearing seat belts when travelling on the bus. However, both schools and parents can play an important role in promoting the wearing of seat belts to children. A training and education programme could be rolled out in schools, including activities such as quizzes, games, DVDs and role play exercises, as in schools in Wales. Schools can also raise the issue at parents' evenings, engaging with parents through Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, sending information leaflets to parents or including an article on seat belts and responsibility in school newsletters. A number of local authorities in England i.e. School Transport Providers have adopted a policy of withdrawing transport, either for a temporary period, or permanently for more serious or repeated cases of misbehaviour.

In relation to the Code of Practice, it is important to note that the Driver cannot be held responsible for those children who remove their seat belts during the journey, once all reasonable steps have been taken.

**Proposal for 'Accompanying adults'**

**Question 4: Do you agree with the proposal to require any adult accompanying a group of children aged 3-13 years, to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the children wear their seat belts?** *(If appropriate, please provide details of any issues with which you disagree)*

**Question 5: If you do not agree, do you have any alternative proposals?**

**Question 6: Do you have any comments on the draft Code of Practice for accompanying adults?**

Council is supportive of this requirement.

**Additional Comments.**

Council believes that whilst reasonable steps can and should be taken by Operators and Accompanying Adults, a change of behaviour would be best achieved by a partnership approach with Schools and Parents. The Department, in disseminating the guidance, should also provide links to good practice examples such as the training programme previously referenced. Consideration should also be given to initiatives such as the introduction of parental contracts which require the wearing of seatbelts at all times as a condition of travel on health and safety grounds. Free travel on School Transport would not be awarded to pupils unless this contract was signed.