

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006: ISA scheme consultation

***pteg* response**

pteg represents the interests of the six Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) in England. Strathclyde Partnership for Transport and Transport for London are associate members, though their views are not represented in this note.

The principle activity of the PTEs insofar as the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (SVG) Act 2006 is concerned is that they contract bus companies to provide bus services that are deemed socially necessary and would otherwise not be provided. Significantly, this includes services principally provided for the carriage of children to and from school. Most PTEs also provide services that are principally for elderly and disabled persons. These may be either 'conventional' bus services, Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services, or 'Dial-a-Ride' style services. The latter are usually used by passengers with a disability who can not use convention bus services.

pteg is grateful for the opportunity to comment on the ISA scheme. Please use Louisa Moore (louisa.moore@pteg.net) as a point of contact if you have any queries about this response.

There are number of practical principles that we feel are important in considering the ISA scheme, from the point of local authorities who secure bus services on behalf of the community:

Firstly, the degree of the protection required for children and vulnerable adults on local, scheduled bus services is no different from those services specifically procured for carrying those groups. Many services that carry children to and from school are registered as local bus services, even though their use by the general public is extremely limited.

Secondly, on any bus service - particularly those which are poorly patronised such as those operating into the evening - there will be occasions when only one passenger is on the bus and that passenger may be a child or a vulnerable adult who need to be afforded adequate protection. Similar situations can clearly occur with elderly passengers. Demand-responsive services, for example, often carry principally elderly and disabled passengers and it is not unusual for drivers to have just one such person on board his/her vehicle.

Finally, where school and social services authorities set higher standards for school services (including those registered as local services), there is a possibility this will lead to multiple checks on drivers (leading to inefficient use of the CRB services).

In response to specific questions in the consultation paper:

Question 1

pteg agrees with the definition of vulnerable adults, although it should be noted that elderly passengers who may not fit the definition may be vulnerable in some instances but not others (as mentioned above).

Questions 2 & 3

pteg agrees that a frequency of at least one instance of contact (or potential contact) a month is appropriate.

Question 4

pteg believes the definition of regulated activity should be widened. Bus drivers, by virtue of their shift pattern, many drive school buses infrequently, but can nevertheless have regular contact with groups of children over an extended period, albeit not continuously. Similarly, drivers providing DRT or 'dial-a-ride' services are likely to have contact with elderly and disabled passengers, on either a regular or ad-hoc basis.

February 2008

