

26 APR 2017
H.M. SENIOR CORONER



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Professor C.P Dorries OBE
HM Senior Coroner
The Medico-Legal Centre
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Date 20th April 2017

Dear Sir,

Ref: Mrs Sheila Bowling (Deceased) Regulation 28 Response

Thank you for your letter dated 7th February 2017. First Bus take safety very seriously with respect to all areas of the business i.e. staff, passengers, pedestrians and other road users. There are a number of systems and training programmes in place to ensure our drivers are safe and also drive responsibly with consideration to the impact they have on the environment.

On behalf of First South Yorkshire Ltd, I respond as directed to the following matters of concern contained in the Regulation 28 report which refers to an investigation carried out in November 2013 following a fatal road traffic incident.

The safety of our customers, staff and other members of the public is our number one priority and all drivers are made aware of this through regular briefings and training (see below). We strongly refute any suggestion that the Drive Green system, or the way in which drivers are rewarded, would have any adverse impact on safety or the way in which a driver would react to an incident of the nature considered by the November 2013 investigation. In fact, the number of collisions in South Yorkshire has reduced by 23.5% since the introduction of Drive Green in 2010.

Drive Clean (Green) System

The Regulation 28 report refers to "Drive Clean". We understand this to mean the "Drive Green" system installed on our vehicles, which is a vehicle telematics system used to assist in improving the comfort and safety of our bus services and to improve fuel efficiency. Driver performance is monitored by a range of measures, including Drive Green. Drive Green provides an objective assessment of driver performance and is intended to improve driving styles, reduce our carbon footprint, and reduce the number and severity of road traffic collisions and personal injuries. It analyses driving behaviour and provides objective in-vehicle feedback to the driver via an LED light display and online assessment, highlighting when a vehicle has carried out an unusually sharp braking or cornering manoeuvre.

Along with a variety of other tools, it is integrated within First South Yorkshire's existing driver training programme to embed the behaviour of forward planning and spatial awareness within drivers' minds.

Training:

First Bus, including First South Yorkshire, has '*dedicated to safety*' as one of its core values. To implement this commitment there are a number of safety systems in place to ensure drivers, passengers and other road users are safe and that our drivers drive responsibly.

At the heart of these systems and to support the concept of safe, smooth driving is the Smiths System training programme. The Smiths system is based on 5 keys

- Key 1 Aim high in steering
- Key 2 Get the big picture
- Key 3 Keep your eyes moving
- Key 4 Leave yourself an out
- Key 5 Make sure they see you

Our staff are required to undertake this course and receive periodic training as part of their Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (DCPC) accreditation. It is fully integrated into existing driver training, new employee training and ongoing developmental training.

Actions taken/proposed:

As one would expect of a responsible operator, First Bus and its operating companies, including First South Yorkshire, continuously monitor safety and operational training, and make regular improvements. As part of this ongoing review cycle, in 2016 First Bus, including First South Yorkshire Limited, implemented a new safety training programme called Be Safe. This replaced the previous programme and underpins the First Bus injury prevention strategy.

The aim of Be Safe is for everyone within the business to make safety matter personally to them and to strive for zero harm. Be Safe is about being positive and constructive, focusing on colleagues doing the right thing. This is known as positive reinforcement and uses a behaviour management coaching methodology. Constructive conversations are known as touchpoints and focus on safe behaviours across all areas of the business. This concept is actively encouraged and practised by the Operating Company Senior Leadership Team and Depot Leadership Teams.

Since late 2015 First South Yorkshire have also recruited a Driving Standards Manager who works closely with drivers to monitor and improve their driving performance. Low performing drivers are now managed through a Driving Standards Support Plan which, has helped reduce collisions and passenger injuries on a year to date measurement.

As part of the First South Yorkshire driver reward and recognition scheme, since 2016 each driver is able to earn a modest £20.00 annual safe driving bonus. This payment is subject to meeting qualifying criteria, which requires the driver to have no blame worthy or 'at fault' collisions recorded within a 12-month period. It is not in any way linked to Drive Green, which has no connection to a driver's compensation or bonus payments in First South Yorkshire. Clearly, therefore, Drive Green would have no effect on the likelihood or impact of an incident of this nature. Moreover, even were Drive Green to be linked to a driver's compensation, all of our drivers are trained to understand that our number one priority is safety and that safety, including avoidance of a collision with a pedestrian, will always take precedence over the desire to provide a smooth ride to passengers on the bus.

We strive to continuously improve our overall performance and will not compromise on safety. We therefore trust that this response provides you with confidence that, while we do not accept that Drive Green played any

part in this incident, we have demonstrated positive actions since the tragic events of November 2013 and that we continue to implement new propositions to demonstrate our dedication to safety.

Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely



Head of Business Performance