Open letter to parents.

Hello, my name is Sergeant Templeman.

I am a Response Sergeant with Lincolnshire police.

I have been asked on numerous occasions about what the law is around the correct use of child restraints and have also had to deal with offences at the roadside when I have found young children either unrestrained or, at worst, on an adults lap. I have even found children sitting in footwells of vehicles. This has always led to prosecution for the driver due to the danger of injury that could be caused in a collision.

As such, I thought it would be beneficial to write an open letter to parents regarding the law surrounding child restraints, especially as this directly affects you when travelling to and from school with young children.

Below is a direct lift from the gov.uk website in relation to child restraints in vehicles, for your information:

Using a child car seat or booster seat

Children must normally use a child car seat until they're 12 years old or 135 centimetres tall, whichever comes first.
Children over 12 or more than 135cm tall must wear a seatbelt.

You can choose a child car seat based on your child's height or weight.

Height-based seats

Height-based seats are known as 'i-Size' seats. They must be rear facing until your child is over 15 months old. Your child can use a forward-facing child car seat when they're over 15 months old.

You must check the seat to make sure it's suitable for the height of your child.

Only EU-approved height-based child car seats can be used in the UK. These have a label showing a capital 'E' in a circle and 'R129'.

Weight-based seats

The seat your child can use (and the way they must be restrained in it) depends on their weight.

Only EU-approved weight-based child car seats can be used in the UK. These have a label showing a capital 'E' in a circle and 'ECE R44'.

You may be able to choose from more than one type of seat in the group for your child's weight.

	Group	Seats
0kg to 10kg	0	Lie-flat or 'lateral' baby carrier, rear-facing baby carrier, or rear-facing baby seat using a harness
0kg to 13kg	0+	Rear-facing baby carrier or rear-facing baby seat using a harness
9kg to 18kg	1	Rear- or forward-facing baby seat using a harness or safety shield
15kg to 25kg	2	Rear- or forward-facing child car seat (high-backed booster seat or booster cushion) using a seat belt, harness or safety shield
22kg to 36kg	3	Rear- or forward-facing child car seat (high-backed booster seat or booster cushion) using a seat belt, harness or safety shield

Manufacturers can now only make booster cushions approved as group 3. This won't affect any existing booster cushions in group 2 and you'll still be able to use them.

Fitting a child car seat

You must only use a child car seat if your car's seat belt has a diagonal strap, unless the seat is either:

- specifically designed for use with a lap seat belt
- fitted using ISOFIX anchor points

You must also:

- deactivate any front airbags before fitting a rear-facing baby seat in a front seat
- not fit a child car seat in side-facing seats

The child car seat website has information on how to choose a seat and travel safely with children in cars.

Children with disabilities or medical conditions

The same rules apply for children with disabilities or medical conditions, but they can use a disabled person's seat belt or a child restraint designed for their needs.

A doctor can issue an exemption certificate if a child is unable to use a restraint or seat belt because of their condition.

If your vehicle doesn't have seat belts

If your vehicle doesn't have seat belts, for example it's a classic car, you aren't allowed to carry any children under 3 years old in it.

Children over 3 are only allowed to sit in the back seats.

These rules only apply if your vehicle was originally made without seat belts.

Some points to remember:

- In a crash you're twice as likely to die if you don't wear a seat belt.
- The purpose of a seat belt is to keep adults and children in their seats during a crash.
- The seat belt is designed to work with other safety systems in vehicles to protect the occupant such as an air bag.
- Drivers and passengers aged 17 - 34 have the lowest seat belt- wearing rates, combined with the highest accident rate.
- People are less likely to wear seat belts on short or familiar journeys - putting them at serious risk of injury in a crash.
- Drivers caught without a seat belt face on the spot fines of £100. If prosecuted, the maximum fine is £500.
- Places occupants in real danger if not wearing one, they literally save lives and reduce the risk of death or serious injury.
- Some insurance companies may decline to cover if involved in an RTC and not wearing a seat belt.

The driver is responsible for occupants wearing seatbelts in a vehicle if the child is under 14 (even if it is not your child) and would be the person who would face prosecution if the vehicle is stopped by police and offences are discovered involving children not being correctly restrained. This could result in points on your licence and a fine.

If I can leave you with one thought, it would be that your children are the most precious thing in the world and no amount of prosecution will match the guilt of them being injured or worse, killed, when it could have been prevented had they been correctly restrained.

Please do not risk the safety of your children or prosecution if caught by the police.

Please keep children safe and help us keep Lincolnshire's roads safer.

I really hope this helps with any confusion around the issue, for more information or insight into what I do please follow my social media channels below:

Twitter: @SgtTempo

Instagram: @sgt_mike_templeman

Kindest regards

PS 1341 Templeman.

Mike Templeman
PS 1341 Mike Templeman

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