# **Case Study - Seashell Trust**

## Profile

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| Company Name: | Seashell Trust (formerly The Royal School for the Deaf and Communication Disorders) |
| Business Sector: | Voluntary Sector – Registered Charity (Residential and Educational) |
| Postal Address: | Stanley Road, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport. |
| Postcode: | SK8 6RG |
| Fleet Size Overall: | 11 vehicles 5 Minibuses 4 People Carriers 2 small Delivery Vans  Each vehicle will cover between 10,000 - 15,000 miles per year |
| HGV: | 0 |
| LGV: | 0 |
| Company Cars: | 0 |
| Private vehicles used for business purposes: | Approximately 75 |

## Company Overview

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The **Seashell Trust** is a registered charity providing education and residential care for people with complex communication difficulties from across the UK.

Its vision is to be a recognised Centre of Excellence, which provides high quality education, care and specialist services to individuals with complex learning and communication difficulties whose needs cannot be met in their local environment and which promotes their development, success and participation in the community.

The**Seashell Trust** began as a Royal School, founded by Manchester businessmen in 1823, to teach only deaf children.  Now its students often have a combination of hearing, visual, behaviour and learning disabilities, including autism. Their problems are some of the most severe the education system deals with.

The inspiration which drove its founders to open the Royal School for the Deaf 185 years ago is as strong as it ever was.  However, the old name was misleading and no longer reflected the complexity of need or the diversity of services provided by the school.  As a result, the Royal School for the Deaf and Communication Disorders became the **Seashell Trust** on 07 November 2008.

The charity operates a school, a college and an adult residential home.

[Royal School, Manchester](http://www.rsdmanchester.org/theschool), a day and residential, co-educational, non-maintained special school, offers specialist provision for pupils and students from 2-19 years who have severe and complex learning disabilities combined with significant communication difficulties which include little or no oral language. The complex needs of its students may arise from a combination of sensory and multi-sensory impairment with severe and/or profound and multiple learning difficulties, autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) and physical and medical conditions.

[Royal College, Manchester](http://www.rsdmanchester.org/thecollege) is an independent specialist college which caters for learners who are 19 years and older on the same campus.  Learners may have been students in The Royal School, but the Royal College also admits learners, with a similar spectrum of need, who have completed their statutory schooling in other establishments.  Placements to the Royal College are in agreement with The Learning and Skills Council and the home Local Authority.  The Royal College offers a wide range of courses with an emphasis on a transition curriculum to support personal and social development and learning for life.  Both the school and college take learners from all over the country and offer a range of day and residential provision, including an extended curriculum, to suit individual learners and their families up to and including 52 week care.

[Griffin Lodge](http://www.rsdmanchester.org/adultprovision) is a residential care home in the community, for twelve young adults with complex learning and social communication needs, most of whom are also deaf.

The **Seashell Trust** is also developing a range of inclusive sports and community facilities in partnership with a number of national sponsors.

The values of the **Seashell Trust** are:

* To provide a happy and secure environment for pupils and students in school, college and residence and for the service users at Griffin Lodge.
* To assess each individual’s needs and make appropriate provision for them.
* To provide alternative and augmentative communication systems to ensure learners and service users are able to access a communication system appropriate to their needs.
* To provide an extended curriculum and activities which meet the functional and developmental needs of individuals and promotes their independence.
* To encourage their participation in the local and wider community.
* To realise individual potential by providing challenges and experiences to develop self-esteem and confidence.
* To work in partnership with the service users/learners and their families.
* To work in partnership with Local Authorities, health professionals and others from relevant partner agencies to meet service user/learner needs.
* Where appropriate, in partnership with other agencies, develop or modify services to meet the changing needs of the service user/learner group.
* To develop additional services which augment and enhance the services provided by the core business.

## Nature of Operation and Driving Activities

The **Seashell Trust** uses its vehicle fleet to support the educational and social activities which underpin the high quality education, care and specialist services provided to its students.  Although the fleet is relatively small, the demands placed on it are complex, multi-faceted and inevitably focussed on handling individuals with complex learning and communication difficulties whose needs cannot be met in a normal environment.  The support is driven by individual needs.

To meet this requirement, considerable use is made of privately owned vehicles driven by members of staff.  Members of staff use these vehicle to provide access for the students to events such as personal shopping trips; medical appointments; visits to local authorities; and assessment routines.  The core of the **Seashell Trust’s** activities is provided by its dedicated fleet but the quality of access to normal activities is achieved through the use of a “grey fleet”.

The “grey fleet” consists of approximately 75 cars from 9 departments.  During 2008 these vehicles covered about 30,000 miles and the breakdown between departments is shown below:

Sports Development   – 2,525 miles  
College                        – 4,857 miles  
Ryecroft                      – 3,123 miles  
Care                            – 7,236 miles  
Griffin Lodge               – 250 miles  
Fund raising                – 1,535 miles  
School                         – 3,529 miles  
Support services         – 5,093 miles  
York house                  – 646 miles

## Organisational Structure

The **Seashell Trust** has built up an awareness of and expertise in the detailed and complex Health and Safety issues which result from the provision of support to its students.  As the result of awareness of the importance of work-related road safety, the **Seashell Trust** ensured that the Activities Co-ordinator, who is responsible for the detailed management of transport support, attended the **Seashell Trust’s** Health and Safety Committee.

This Committee meets under the personal direction of the Chief Executive.  Although there was an understanding of the need to manage the health and safety aspect of transport support, the **Seashell Trust’s** focus until recently was principally on the delivery of its core activities.

The new Chief Executive, Mr. Mark Geraghty, has recently brought all elements of the provision of transport support within the overall management of Health and Safety within the Trust.

The **Seashell Trust’s** Transport Safety Policy is written by the Activities Co-ordinator and approved by the Head of Care and Nursing Services, who is responsible for the detailed management of Health and Safety issues within the **Seashell Trust**.

As a result, there is now an Action Plan to ensure that the **Seashell Trust** meets all the requirements of Health and Safety Legislation and Guidance in the use of its transport support.

The Action Plan addresses the following issues:

* The ongoing development of a work-related road safety policy.
* The completion of a driver’s risk assessment for all types of vehicles.
* The checks and procedures required to ensure a safe and legally compliant “grey fleet”.
* Improving awareness among members of staff of their personal contribution to ensuring a safe “grey fleet”.
* Briefing members of staff on the procedures to be followed for the “grey fleet” and developing and improving these procedures with their assistance.
* Identifying the training requirements needed to support members of staff.
* Establishing an administrative system to support the process for checking and recording insurance, driving licences and MOT Test documentation.
* Further integrating this policy and these procedures within the routine management of Health and Safety within the Seashell Trust.

It is the intention of the new Chief Executive to review progress against the targets within the Action Plan in April 2010.

## Work related Road Safety Policy and Procedures

The **Seashell Trust** Transport Safety Policy lays down the need for all members of staff to conform to its contents in the spirit of the **Seashell Trust’s** vision statement.  It covers the detailed requirements for its minibus drivers and the drivers of adapted vehicles.

In essence, all drivers are required to meet certain criteria (age; appropriate driving licence; and appropriate experience) and to have completed a Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MIDAS) training session and a practical assessment of driving skills.  In addition, drivers and their line managers are required to be familiar with the **Seashell Trust’s** Journey Risk Assessment process.  This process involves each driver completing a risk assessment form and checklist for serviceability and health and safety prior to each journey.  These documents are authorised by line managers.

The MIDAS scheme has been adopted by the **Seashell Trust** because it is a nationally recognised, certificated scheme designed to enhance the driving skills and safety awareness of mini bus drivers.  It begins with classroom-based theory instruction.  Participants are made aware of all the legal requirements and their responsibilities.  They then complete a multiple-choice theory paper (25 questions on general health and safety issues associated with driving a mini bus and 5 questions covering accessible mini buses).  At the end of the theory instruction, each participant will be given a practical demonstration on how to clamp in wheel chairs using the UNWIN wheel chair restraint straps and clamps.

The next stage is the driving assessment which includes familiarisation on the vehicle; learning and practising new driving skills; and a driving assessment or assessments, if necessary, to meet the required standard.  Only on successful completion of the MIDAS training is a member of staff allowed to drive a minibus and carry students as passengers.

Certificates are renewed every 4 years.  All members of staff are aware that they can be revoked if the required standard of driving is not maintained at all times.  In the event of a certificate to drive being revoked, an application in writing to the **Seashell Trust** Chief Executive would be required before a new assessment process could be authorised and the process to award a new certificate could begin.

The responsibilities of the **Seashell Trust** are:

* Making sure all **Seashell Trust** owned vehicles are properly maintained, serviced and have the appropriate certificates as required by law.
* Providing training, as and when required, to all drivers and providing any relevant training to all staff drivers using their own cars as assessed.
* Ensuring that all staff drivers are aware of any relevant information, changes to the law or changes to this policy in a timely fashion.
* Holding on file all relevant information affecting drivers and ensuring that this is kept up to date. This information is updated regularly and published to all line managers across the Trust.

## Work related Road Safety Guidance for Drivers

The **Seashell Trust** Transport Safety Policy makes all drivers responsible for the following:

* Making sure the **Seashell Trust** owned vehicle and their own vehicle, if they are using it on **Seashell Trust** business, is road worthy and fit to be driven on the road.
* Understanding and adhering to the **Seashell Trust** Transport Safety Policy or any other relevant **Seashell Trust** policies and procedures.
* Providing the **Seashell Trust** with any relevant information as required by the organisation or by law.
* Understanding their own responsibilities, as explained to them in the **Seashell Trust**training programme; the law; and any relevant **Seashell Trust** policies and procedures.
* Understanding and adhering to any road traffic law and/or the Highway Code as appropriate.
* Informing the organisation of any changes to their insurance details, change of vehicle, driving licence, including any penalty points issued, change of address or medical conditions.
* In the event being involved in a road traffic collision, drivers must stop before attending to any injuries or exchanging driver details.

## Specific examples of procedures

Detailed Driving Risk Assessments have been prepared for each type of vehicle likely to be driven by members of staff and include minibuses; people carriers; the laundry van; and personal vehicles driven for business purposes.  The Risk Assessments identify individual hazards and their effects; those affected; and the precautions or control measures to reduce the risks.

In addition, members of must complete a Vehicle Health and Safety Checklist prior to the commencement of each individual journey.  The checklist ensures that all vehicles used by members of staff are scrutinised prior to use and faults are reported promptly to the Maintenance Department.

The Vehicle Health and Safety Checklist for private cars requires members of staff to confirm the registration details of their vehicle and the mileage information prior to and at the conclusion of their journey.  This enables this document to be tied in to the payment of claims for the usage of private vehicles for **Seashell Trust** business (without the correction authorised information no claims will be paid).  In addition, it requires members of staff using their private vehicle to confirm the status of their insurance in relation to business use; the roadworthiness of their vehicle; and the validity of their licence.

Finally, members of staff are required to complete a Short Journey Risk Assessment prior to each individual journey.  This document provides the information likely to be required in the event of a student being involved in a road traffic incident and ensures that the driver has all the relevant information relating to the condition and requirements of his passengers and that the journey has been appropriately authorised.

Members of staff using their private vehicles for business purposes in support of the **Seashell Trust’s** activities are also asked to reconfirm the **Seashell Trust** has copies of their documentation.  The Short Journey Risk Assessment form also confirms that their insurance is valid and endorsed for business use; that they hold the appropriate driving licence; and that their MOT certification is current.

The **Seashell Trust** clearly lays down the fact that if these procedures are not followed, members of staff are not authorised to transport students in private vehicles.

## Auditing and review

Under the current obsolescent system, the responsibility for ensuring that the Seashell Trust was legally compliant with Health and Safety legislation for all transport issues lay with the Activities Co-ordinator.

As part of the initiative developed by the new Chief Executive in co-operation with the Activities Co-ordinator and the Head of Care and Nursing Services, the existing management processes for Health and Safety in relation to transport support will be reviewed.  The aim will be to ensure that transport issues are considered along with other main stream Health and Safety requirements.  This will allow them to be appropriately prioritised and dealt with.  The current Action Plan addresses the issues which require resolution before the Chief Executive can complete a full review in April 2010.

## Performance measures

At present a simple database provides information on the status of each driver in relation to the following items of information:

* Induction training completed.
* MIDAS assessment completed and certification issues.
* Driving licence held.
* Copy of MOT document for private vehicle held.
* Copy of Insurance document for private vehicle authorising appropriate business use held.
* Annual training completed.
* Termination dates of licences; MIDAS certification; and insurance and MOT certification.

## Accident reduction

The **Seashell Trust** and its members of staff have an extremely good work-related road safety record.  Their aspiration is to ensure that this is maintained.

To do this, they are aware that they manner in which they conduct their transport support depends on the whole hearted support of all members of staff for the vision of the organisation and the objectives and responsibilities laid down in the **Seashell Trust** Transport Safety Policy.

## Financial and other benefits

The **Seashell Trust** wishes to ensure that it spends its transport budget as effectively and efficiently as possible.  The **Seashell Trust** owned vehicles have a relatively low annual mileage.  However, the insurance, fuel and maintenance costs of these vehicles are carefully scrutinised.  The **Seashell Trust’s** work-related road safety activity and good safety record has enabled its Insurer to reduce insurance premiums.

A significant proportion of the transport support comes from the use by members of staff of their privately owned vehicles for business purposes for the **Seashell Trust**.  Work is now taking place to understand the exact costs of this support and to ensure that it is managed in a way which looks after the interests of its passengers while dealing fairly with the members of staff who volunteer for and provide a critical facility.

## Lessons learned

The **Seashell Trust’s** greatest asset is its people – members of staff and students.  It is responding to the change in the law affecting the provision of transport support within the **Seashell Trust** brought about by the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 on the basis of its considerable experience with its existing core Health and Safety policies and procedures.  While doing this, it is mindful that the bulk of its transport support is provided willingly on a voluntary basis by its members of staff.  It is therefore seeking their full involvement in the process of developing and updating existing procedures.

## Current and future developments

The new Chief Executive is keen to ensure that management processes within the **Seashell Trust** address the implications of the changes to legislation affecting work-related road safety.  The work to achieve this will begin in the coming months.

The role of the Activities Co-ordinator is being reviewed.  The expectation is to provide more time to be spent on the coordination of work related road safety including:

* Mini bus and people carriers driving assessments.
* Road safety awareness training for all staff.
* Appropriate management and advice to staff around securing wheel chairs when transported.
* Rigorous and consistent monitoring of staff car documents.
* Reviewing the action plan and work related road safety policy.

In addition, the feasibility of assisting any staff who wish to undertake advanced driving skills training and assessment is being reviewed.  The aim would be to improve safety through improved driving standards delivered through appropriate training.

## Additional Information

The **Seashell Trust**has provided copies of all its policy and procedural documents supporting its Transport Safety Policy.  These are held by RoadSafe Driving for Better Business.