

A Sensory Travel Guide for Disabled Children

Practical, calm, parent-tested advice for journeys that work.

A note from our founder

Travelling with a disabled child can feel overwhelming. After 6,000+ journeys as a licensed private hire driver — many with SEN (Special Educational Needs) children and their families — I've learned what helps and what hurts. This guide is for the parents, carers, and supporters who show up every day.

You are not alone. And the journey can be calmer than you think.

— Mohammed Eijaz, Founder, Disabled Children Fund BD

1. Before the journey

Plan with your child, not at them

- **Use a visual schedule** (pictures of the trip, car, destination). Laminate it. Let your child carry it.
- **Count down the days.** "Two more sleeps until we go to Grandma's." Predictability reduces anxiety.
- **Watch a video of the actual route** if you can — the same streets, the same car, the same driver.

Tell the transport provider

- **Call ahead.** A good driver wants to know: sensory triggers, comfort items, medical needs, communication preferences.
- **Share one page.** A simple "About My Child" card (sounds good, sounds hard, can say yes, can say no) helps strangers help your child.
- **Choose quiet hours** if your child is most regulated in the morning.

Pack a sensory bag

Always include:

- Noise-cancelling headphones
- A favourite comfort toy or blanket

- A safe snack (hunger = dysregulation)
 - A water bottle
 - A tablet with calming videos pre-loaded
 - Plasters, wipes, hand sanitiser
 - Medical ID + emergency contacts written down
-

2. During the journey

The car as a calm space

- **Keep it cool, not cold.** Around 19–21°C is best for regulation.
- **Dim light, not dark.** Avoid harsh overhead lights.
- **Background noise** — soft instrumental music, a familiar audiobook, or simply silence.
- **Skip the strong air freshener.** Sensory-friendly means scent-free.

Seating that works

- Let your child choose the seat (if possible) — front or back, side or middle.
- **Bring a familiar seat cover or cushion** if the car upholstery is an issue.
- **Use a 5-point harness** when needed. Don't feel embarrassed to ask.

Communication

- **Visual cards** (stop, water, toilet, music on, music off, need break).
 - **One instruction at a time.** "Put your seatbelt on" — not five things.
 - **Praise small wins.** "You did so well starting the journey."
-

3. Breaks and stops

Plan for breaks every 45–60 minutes

- Park somewhere quiet if possible — not a busy service station.
- Let your child move, stretch, lie on a blanket, watch clouds.
- A 5-minute "movement break" can prevent a 30-minute meltdown.

Toilet strategy

- Use services with **Changing Places** facilities (UK only). Find them at changingplaces.uk.
 - Bring a portable changing mat and bags for soiled items.
 - Never apologise for needing time.
-

4. Arrival

Smooth handovers

- Arrive 10 minutes early. Let your child finish what they're doing (a song, a snack) before getting out.
- Give the destination host a quick "About My Child" heads-up.
- Have a "settling in" plan — a quiet room, a familiar object, a simple activity.

If it doesn't go to plan

- It's not failure. It's data.
 - Debrief kindly with your child. "What was hard? What helped?"
 - Write it down. Next time will be easier.
-

5. Emergency contacts template

Print and keep in your bag:

,

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Name of child: _____

DOB: _____

NHS number: _____

Parent/Carer 1: _____ Phone: _____

Parent/Carer 2: _____ Phone: _____

GP: _____ Phone: _____

Hospital: _____ Phone: _____

Allergies/conditions: _____

Medications: _____

Communication: _____

Sensory triggers: _____

Calming strategies: _____

About DCF

Disabled Children Fund BD is building a world-class disability centre in Sylhet, Bangladesh — a place for education, rehabilitation, and community integration. We are a UK charity founded by Mohammed Eijaz, a former social worker and the owner of **TeslaRides** (a specialist private hire service that transports SEN children and elderly passengers with dignity and care).

Donate: www.disabledchildrenfundbd.org

Volunteer: trips to Sylhet, raising £1,500 to cover flight + wheelchair distribution

Contact: hello@disabledchildrenfundbd.org

© 2026 Disabled Children Fund BD. Free to share for non-commercial, charitable use. Please credit DCF and link back to our website.