

PRESS RELEASE



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WINCANTON WORKERS DELIVER DRIVER TRAINING IN NIGERIA

Wincanton employees Keith Pulley and Steve Ley have just returned from a voluntary assignment in Nigeria with transport charity Transaid. They were training local commercial drivers, who are part of a pioneering programme to save the lives of pregnant mothers and their children.

The volunteers were recruited from one of Transaid's corporate supporters, Chippenham-based supply chain solutions company Wincanton, who get everyday goods moving around the country for some of the UK's leading companies.

Keith, who works for Wincanton's Somerfield depot in Tewkesbury and Steve from its Matalan operation in Bristol, spent a week in Dutse, the capital of rural Jigawa State which is on the border with Niger.

Transaid's mission is to improve people's access to healthcare, other basic services and work opportunities through better transport systems.

Women in Nigeria have a 1 in 40 chance of dying in childbirth, compared to 1 in 7,000 in the UK, and a lack of transport is one of the main reasons for this horrifying death toll. In Jigawa, women can live many miles from the nearest health facility and getting there in the event of an emergency is often impossible because there is no transport, or it is too expensive.

To tackle the problem, commercial drivers in the Nigerian National Union of Road Transport Workers have joined together to form an Emergency Transport System. Minibus drivers have volunteered to take women in need to clinics to get professional medical attention, giving up more lucrative work to help their communities and bringing a new meaning to delivery driving.

However, formal professional driving standards don't exist in Nigeria and basic maintenance skills are lacking so Keith and Steve were tasked by Transaid with developing a driver training programme for Union members, with the aim of making the system safer and more efficient, and providing an incentive for more drivers to sign up to the scheme. Whilst in Nigeria, they trained 25 drivers and Union reps, who will share what they learned with their colleagues.

"It's brilliant that commercial drivers in Nigeria are prepared to volunteer their time to help these women and their babies but basic driving and maintenance skills are lacking," says Steve.

To illustrate the point, Keith explains: "One guy we were training had been called on to respond to an emergency in the middle of the night, but his vehicle didn't have a battery. So he had to run around and find one, which was the wrong size and he had to wedge it in to get it running."

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To prevent problems like this, the pair showed everyone what to check for under the bonnet and how to improve their driving skills.

“All the drivers were so keen to learn. Now, when everyone’s looking to them to do their bit in an emergency, we hope that their vehicles will always be ready to go and their passengers will have a safer ride.”

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Note to Editor: Transaid is the leading UK-based transport development agency that works to put suitable transport solutions in place in areas of the world where little or no infrastructure exists. With strong backing from the UK Transport and Logistics industry, and the Patronage of HRH The Princess Royal, Transaid works in the poorest countries in the world to help eliminate transport barriers that lead to poverty and preventable deaths. www.transaid.org

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