



**Press release  
July 2018**

### **Ten's the winning number! The Bingo Association gifts special needs schools with 10 new minibuses**

Ten schools in England, Scotland and Wales have each received a minibus to transport pupils with disabilities out into the community, where fun activities and everyday tasks – including food shopping – boost their learning and development.

**The Bingo Association**, working in support of **Variety**, the Children's Charity, funded the minibuses, which are officially known as Variety Sunshine Coaches.

The iconic Variety Sunshine Coaches were simultaneously wheeled out of a depot in Kent, during the first week of June and reached their various destinations by the end of that week. Schools wasted no time in making the most of the shiny new minibuses. Staff and pupils at one school piled into their one shortly after it arrived!

"We couldn't wait!," enthused Lesley Mavin, headteacher of Columbia Grange School, which caters for 2 to 11 year olds with autism and learning difficulties.

"We have used the coach for lots of trips to places such as the supermarket where we bought ingredients for our teddy bear's picnic!: the whole school, staff parents, governors and pupils are really grateful to Variety and **The Bingo Association** for making our new minibus a reality."

As well as trips to supermarkets and cafés, zoos and theme parks are among the fabulous places special needs pupils have visited in their brand new Variety Sunshine Coaches. As Karen Alty, headteacher of Holly Grove School remarked, trips in the minibuses don't just provide fun for special needs kids, but a good education too.

**The Bingo Association** has now funded 22 Variety Sunshine coaches over the last three years thanks to the fundraising efforts of the bingo industry, their staff and customers. The Bingo Association has now raised more than £1m for Variety.

Miles Baron, Chief Executive of **The Bingo Association** heaped praise on the bingo industry. He said: "More than 350 bingo clubs across the UK make these very worthy donations of Sunshine Coaches possible and so I must thank the generous staff and bingo players for their support. As an industry we are delighted to be able to help more children get the most out of their childhood and reach their unique potential."

Colleen Ettridge, Head of Fundraising, at **Variety**, said: "Hundreds of children today are benefiting from the generosity of the Bingo Association, its members and their staff and customers, but over

many years, thousands will benefit from this generosity, which enables young people with special needs to access learning and recreational facilities outside the school environment.”

Variety has been improving the lives of young people who are sick, disabled and disadvantaged since 1949.

**- E N D S -**

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Notes to the editor:

#### **About Variety, the Children’s Charity**

Variety, the Children’s Charity, believes that neither disability nor disadvantage should prevent a child from realising their full potential. Since setting up its UK division in 1949, the charity has raised over £200 million and supported over 800,000 children affected by ill health, disadvantage and disability.

Variety was launched in the United States in 1928. It has charities across more than 10 countries (United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Jersey, and Republic of Ireland.

Israel, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Australia, Barbados, and Eastern Caribbean) helping children at the local community level.

With a focus on helping children make the most of their childhood, Variety provides support through four core programmes:

**Mobility** - providing specialist equipment including customised electric wheelchairs and bespoke Sunshine Coaches for schools ensuring children develop a greater sense of freedom and adventure

**Health** - equipping children's hospitals with the latest medical technology and life changing aids

**Education** - equipping Youth Clubs and young people’s organisations – facilitating new skills and developing greater self-worth

**Variety Great Days Out** - providing new experiences through educational programmes and exciting outings

Variety is a registered charity in England and Wales (209259) and Scotland (SC038505)

For more information or to donate to Variety, please visit [www.variety.org.uk](http://www.variety.org.uk)

Follow Variety, the Children’s Charity on twitter @VarietyGB or [www.facebook.com/VarietyGB](http://www.facebook.com/VarietyGB)

### **About The Bingo Association**

The Bingo Association is the trade association of the licensed bingo industry in Great Britain, representing the proprietors licensed under The Gambling Act 2005. [www.bingoassociation.co.uk](http://www.bingoassociation.co.uk).

There are 51 proprietors in membership. Membership profile ranges from the large operators, including Gala (138 clubs) and Mecca (97 clubs), to smaller operators like Carlton Leisure (14 clubs) and many single unit businesses.

The bingo sector directly employs over 13,000 people in the UK. Over 3 million customers made over 48m visits to bingo clubs last year.