

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE20 April 2023Report by Director of EducationDRAFT HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to update elected members on the draft Home to School Transport policy and seek approval to undertake a non-statutory consultation with stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Elected members are asked to:
- a. Note the draft Home to School Transport policy;
 - b. Approve the Director of Education to proceed with a non-statutory consultation on the draft home to school transport policy; and
 - c. Ask the Director of Education to report on the non-statutory consultation at Education Committee on 8 June 2023.

BACKGROUND

3. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 defines the statutory responsibilities of local authorities with regards to the provision of home to school transport for pupils attending their establishments. The Act specifies that transport is to be provided for children residing within an authority, aged up to 8 years old who live 2 or more miles away from their allocated school, and for those aged over 8 who live 3 or more miles from their allocated school.

4. Within East Renfrewshire, school transport is provided on a more generous basis than that specified in the Act. The Council makes provision for school transport for all East Renfrewshire resident primary school pupils who reside 2 or more miles from the allocated school, and all secondary school pupils who reside 3 or more miles from the allocated school. All distances are based on the shortest safe walking route and are assessed by the Education Department's Health and Safety Advisor in line with the West of Scotland Road Safety Forum Guidelines.

5. School transport is not provided by the Council for successful placing requests, regardless of location of residency and distance from the school allocated.

6. The current eligibility criteria for accessing school transport have developed as a result of previous Council decisions. From the transfer of responsibility for school transport from Strathclyde Regional Council to the Council in 1996, school transport was made available for primary school pupils who lived 1 mile or more from the allocated school. In February 2006, the decision was taken by Council to increase this distance to 2 miles and this applied from the beginning of the 2006/7 school session. A 'Pay & Go' scheme was introduced to enable

pupils no longer provided with transport to pay for the service, however, this was withdrawn in 2010 due to low uptake. The distance for secondary school pupils has always been set at 3 miles and no changes have been made to this.

7. Mainstream school transport is currently provided through a range of different types of transport provision across the authority, including through dedicated buses, public service buses, train services and private minicab services. School transport is currently delivered by a range of different providers, managed by the Council's transport partner SPT on behalf of the Education Department.

8. In addition to mainstream school transport, the Council has additional responsibilities under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) to identify, provide for and review the additional support needs of pupils. Under this duty, the Council is required to ensure that consideration is given to the need for school transport provision to support pupils to travel to and from school.

9. Given the variety of additional support needs across the authority, a wide range of different types of transport provision are in place, primarily serving pupils attending specialist provision at Isobel Mair School, the Williamwood Communication and Support Service and the Carlibar Communication Centre. In addition, provision is also available for individual pupils attending a number of different schools across the authority where there is an assessed need. The majority of ASN school transport is managed on an individual contract basis by the Education Department, comprising internal transport and individually contracted private services.

10. The existing school transport policy is limited in its scope and does not cover the wide range of circumstances which can influence whether school transport is to be provided. With an increasing demand for school transport provision, often very complex in nature, it is considered necessary to implement a codified home to school transport policy to provide greater clarity for all stakeholders.

REPORT

11. The draft Home to School Transport policy is provided in appendix 1. The draft policy is based on the existing practice in place across school transport provision and is intended, primarily, to bring all existing practice in to a single, accessible document.

12. In addition, following on from the ASN and Gaelic Medium Education (GME) reviews undertaken within the Education Department and the subsequent recommendations, including the introduction of an additional communication service operating from Carolside Primary School and a new GME provision at Thornliebank Primary School, the draft policy seeks to streamline existing transport provision, ensuring greater consistency across all schools within East Renfrewshire.

13. The draft Home to School Transport policy is based on a number of key principles, set out in the introduction to the document. The key principles are based on: meeting pupil needs; minimising transport time; ensuring Best Value; and looking forward to the Council's future commitments around Get to Zero and the wider environmental agenda. All transport provision, as defined in the draft policy, is aimed to be delivered in line with these key principles and in line with the Council's statutory responsibilities.

14. In developing the draft policy, the department has sought to align closely with the [Scottish Government's School Transport Guidance](#), refreshed in September 2021. In addition,

the draft policy has been benchmarked against similar existing school transport policies in place across various other local authorities.

15. Whilst the introduction or alteration of a Home to School Transport policy does not require a consultation to be undertaken, it is proposed that a non-statutory consultation be undertaken with appropriate relevant stakeholders. The Education Department will consult with Parent Councils, pupils and staff on the proposed new home to school transport policy.

16. The consultation period will run from Monday 24th April 2023 until Friday 19th May 2023. The results of the consultation will be analysed, with feedback incorporated in to the draft policy. A subsequent report will be submitted to the meeting of Education Committee on Thursday 8th June 2023, with approval sought for the finalised Home to School Transport policy. This will ensure that the new policy is in place for the beginning of the 2023/24 school session in August.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

17. Home to school transport is currently funded through existing budgets within the Education Department. Due to the high rates of inflation over the last year, the existing budgets have come under increasing pressure as a result of increased fuel and contract prices. It is not anticipated that the draft policy, when implemented, will have a significant impact on the existing school transport budgets.

18. The Education Department is committed to fulfilling its statutory duties both to provide home to school transport for those who are eligible whilst also ensuring that we meet our commitments towards Best Value.

CONSULTATION

19. The purpose of this paper is to seek approval for the undertaking of a non-statutory consultation with stakeholders for a period of 4 weeks. This non-statutory consultation will look to engage the views of parents, pupils and staff with regards to the provision of school transport, with feedback informing an updated policy. The consultation process will specifically engage with pupils and staff in ASN provision within East Renfrewshire, including within Isobel Mair School, the Carlibar Communication Centre and the Williamwood Communication and Support Service.

20. In addition, the department has consulted with both the Housing Service within the Environment Department and the Health and Social Care Partnership given the involvement in requesting and funding transport arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

21. The Education Department will seek to consult with all relevant stakeholders on the draft Home to School Transport policy. All views received through the consultation period will be analysed and will inform the development of a final transport policy document, to be considered by Education Committee on 8th June 2023.

22. The implications of the draft home to school transport policy, if approved, are set out in the policy itself, detailed in appendix 1. An Equality and Fairness Impact Assessment will be undertaken on the final version of the policy.

CONCLUSION

23. The draft Home to School Transport policy seeks to update and codify the existing practice in place in the provision of transport for pupils attending schools across East Renfrewshire.

24. Given the importance in ensuring that home to school transport meets the needs of pupils, it is proposed to undertake a non-statutory consultation with pupils, in addition to staff and parents, over a 4 week period. All feedback will be considered carefully and inform the development of the final policy which will be brought to the next meeting of Education Committee for further consideration and approval ahead of the new school session.

RECOMMENDATIONS

25. Elected members are asked to:

- a. Note the draft Home to School Transport policy;
- b. Approve the Director of Education to proceed with a non-statutory consultation on the draft Home to School Transport policy; and
- c. Ask the Director of Education to report on the non-statutory consultation at Education Committee on 8 June 2023.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
20 April 2023

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Appendices
Appendix 1. Home to School Transport Policy – March 2023

Home to School Transport Policy – March 2023

Introduction

The provision of an effective school transport system is an important responsibility of the Education Department and contributes towards our vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving Through Excellent Experiences*.

The Education Department's School Transport Service has responsibility for ensuring the provision of home to school transport, making sure all eligible pupils are able to travel to and from school safely. The School Transport Policy outlines the eligibility criteria, provision and responsibilities for school transport for pupils accessing both mainstream and ASN schools.

All school transport provision is arranged in line with the Council's statutory responsibilities, set out in legislation, most notably through the Education (Scotland) Act 1980¹.

This policy relates to transport between a pupil's home address and the school. Transport throughout the school day, for example, school trips or transport for consortium arrangements are not in the scope of this policy.

Principles of School Transport

In providing school transport, the Education Department will consider our responsibilities under each of the four key principles:

- All school transport is put in place to meet the needs of pupils first and foremost. It is not intended to address any parental or childcare need.
- School transport will be provided in a way which seeks to minimise the time pupils spend being transported to and from school where possible.
- School transport will be organised in line with the Council's statutory responsibilities in ensuring Best Value.
- The Education Department will be mindful of the Council's environmental responsibilities and commitments in the provision of school transport.

¹ Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 sets out the legislative duties in the provision of school transport. Section 42 of the Act sets out the distance criteria for walking distances, whereby transport must be provided.

Mainstream Transport

1. Legislative

- 1.1. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 sets out the legislative basis on which school transport requires to be provided. The Act specifies that transport provision is to be provided for children aged up to 8 years old who live 2 miles or more from their allocated school and for those aged over 8 who live 3 miles or more from their local school.
- 1.2. Transport is only required to be provided to the allocated school and where a pupil attends an alternate school, by means of a successful placing request, transport does not require to be provided.

2. Eligibility for School Transport within East Renfrewshire

School transport is provided for pupils to support their travel to and from school in the following circumstances:

2.1 Distance

- 2.1.1 The pupil lives 2 miles or more from their allocated primary school via the shortest safe walking route.
- 2.1.2 The pupil lives 3 miles or more from their local allocated secondary school via the shortest safe walking route.

2.2 Redirected Pupils

- 2.2.1 Where a pupil is redirected from their catchment school to an alternative school and where they reside beyond the normal distance eligibility criteria, transport will be provided.
- 2.2.2 This transport will only be provided for the period in which the pupil is redirected. In the event that a redirected pupil is offered a place at their catchment school as a consequence of a place becoming available, but the parent/carer or young person decides to remain at the redirected school, in such situations, the child will no longer be regarded as a redirected child and will be removed from the redirected list; school transport will cease to be provided.

2.3 Exceptional Support

- 2.3.1 In exceptional circumstances, where a pupil faces challenges with travelling to school due to a significant medical condition or injury, a request for short term transport can be made. This may include where a pupil has sustained an injury or is experiencing another significant medical condition.
- 2.3.2 Any request should initially be made to the school directly to consider what support may require to be made available.
- 2.3.3 As part of assessment, the ability of the parent or carer to support the pupil's transport to school will be taken into consideration. In addition, medical evidence may be requested to support the application for time-limited school transport.
- 2.3.4 Where any such requests are granted, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and will only be awarded for a period of up to 3 months.

3. Safe Walking Routes

- 3.1. Where required, safe walking routes will be assessed by the Education Department's Health and Safety Advisor, in line with the West of Scotland Road Safety Forum Guidelines. The distance will be measured from the entrance to a property's garden to the nearest suitable entrance to the school grounds.
- 3.2. Any appeal on the suitability of an existing safe walking route can be made to the Education Department's School Transport Service. Where a material change has occurred in the route, this will be reassessed in line with the above outlined process.
- 3.3. Where a route has been assessed as a safe walking route by the department's Health and Safety Advisor and is less than the distance limit outlined above, transport will not be made available.

4. Privilege Transport

- 4.1. The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 enables local authorities to make any surplus capacity on any existing school transport available for purchase by pupils with no other existing eligibility. Within East Renfrewshire, this is known as privilege school transport. Privilege transport will only be made available where there is no additional cost to East Renfrewshire Council.
- 4.2. Privilege school transport is only available where there is surplus capacity on any existing school transport and, as such, is not available for all schools. Where privilege school transport is able to be made available, the capacity is limited and it is often not possible for all requests to be granted.
- 4.3. There is no right or guarantee to privilege school transport and it is always awarded on a temporary basis. Access to privilege transport does not confer any ongoing right to this service in subsequent years.
- 4.4. Privilege school transport is only made available after all pupils with an eligibility have been granted a place at the beginning of a new school session. Following this process, where surplus spaces are available, details will be advertised on the Council's website and communicated through individual schools. Applications for privilege school transport can be made directly to the Education Department's School Transport Service.
- 4.5. All pupils wishing to access privilege transport are required to submit an application for each school session. This includes pupils who have previously used the service.
- 4.6. Privilege transport is allocated by means of a ballot of all received applications. Full details on the allocation of places is available through the scheme's terms and conditions.
- 4.7. A daily charge is applied for pupils access privilege school transport. Where this charge is not paid, the service will be withdrawn.
- 4.8. Any privilege school transport is allocated on a termly basis. Due to the needs to ensure that those with an eligibility to school transport can be accommodated on existing school transport, it is not possible to guarantee that privilege school transport will continue beyond any existing allocation. In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary for privilege school transport to be withdrawn during a school term.
- 4.9. The terms and conditions for the privilege school transport scheme are available on the Council's website and will be shared with all parents/carers accessing the scheme.

5. Placing Requests

- 5.1. There is no school transport for pupils attending an alternative to their allocated school by means of a successful placing request.
- 5.2. School transport is not available for pupils residing out with East Renfrewshire Council.
- 5.3. Where an East Renfrewshire resident pupil attends either Calderwood Lodge Primary School or Thornliebank Gaelic Primary School by means of a successful placing request, transport will be provided where the pupils resides 2 or more miles from either school, due to both schools' authority wide catchment area.

6. Out of Authority Provision

- 6.1. School transport will not normally be provided in circumstances where a pupil attends a school outwith East Renfrewshire.

Gaelic Medium Education Provision

- 6.2. Where a pupil attends GME provision which is not offered within East Renfrewshire, transport will be provided.

7. Early Learning & Childcare Transport

- 7.1. Transport is not provided for children attending early learning and childcare. Families are able to access a range of different types of locally available provision within their Early Learning and Childcare Community.

8. School Transport Provision

Types of Provision

- 8.1. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 indicates that school transport can be made available through a range of different types of provision. This includes, but is not limited to: dedicated school buses, service buses, trains or individual or shared minicab services. Where a service (or public) bus or train is used, a pass will be provided where required.
- 8.2. Where an appropriate public service bus is available, this may be allocated as school transport provision. In such circumstances, the pupil would be expected to use the National Entitlement Card to access this service.
- 8.3. Where alternative provision is not available, in exceptional circumstances, the Education Department may also offer mileage costs to parents/carers who are able to transport their own children to school. Any such request for mileage should be submitted to the School Transport Service and will be considered in line with the principles outlined in the policy.
- 8.4. Where a pupil has an eligibility to transport, it will be made available via the provision outlined above. All transport will be allocated in line with the needs of the pupil. There is normally no choice offered in the type of provision that would be preferred.

Collection and Drop-off Locations

- 8.5. Pupils will be required to travel to and from a designated pick-up/drop-off location to access school transport. This distance will be in line with the existing distance criteria outlined in sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2.

- 8.6. Parents/carers are responsible for pupils' safe travel to and from the allocated location. Where a pupil is unable to travel to and from the location independently, the parent/carer must ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place.²
- 8.7. School transport will not normally collect and drop-off pupils from an individual home address.

Transport outwith Normal Hours

- 8.8. School transport will normally cover a return journey on each school day; to school in the morning and back to the drop off location in the afternoon. Arrangements may be made by schools to cover pupils taking part in activities outwith the course of a normal school day; however this will be considered on a case by case basis. The costs of additional transport accrued because of extra-curricular provision will not normally be met by the Council.
- 8.9. School transport will not normally be provided for pupils attending appointments through the course of the school day and it would be the responsibility of the parent/carer to arrange for transport in such circumstances.

Applying for Transport

- 8.10. Applications for school transport are only required to be made for pupils starting either P1 or S1. There is no requirement for an annual application to be made.
- 8.11. Where a family's circumstances change, for example, moving to a separate address or different school, an application for school transport can be made on the Council's website. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform the school of any changes to their home address and this must be submitted as quickly as possible.

Accessing Transport

- 8.12. Where a pupil is accessing a public service, they will be required to have a valid National Entitlement Card. This card provides free access to bus travel and, where necessary, a train pass will be allocated to this card.
- 8.13. Responsibility for applying for and maintaining this card sits with individual parents/carers and pupils. Where a pupil loses or forgets their card, they may be charged for or denied travel. A lost card should be reported to the Education Department to ensure the existing travel pass is deactivated.

Escorts

- 8.14. Escorts will not normally be present on mainstream school transport services.

Cancellations

- 8.15. Where a pupil travels via a minicab or small vehicle service and is not requiring school transport for a particular day, notice should be provided to the driver of the vehicle wherever possible. Where this is not possible, the School Transport Service should be advised as far in advance as is possible.

² Scottish Government, *School Transport Guidance* (2021), para 8

ASN Transport

Transport may be provided for pupils who have an additional support need which means they need help travelling to and from school.

“Getting school transport right and making it accessible to all can be an enabler for many young people to reach their full potential and live fulfilling and independent lives. The journey to and from school should not be underestimated in the role that it plays in building confidence in young people to travel more independently, which may help them access higher and further education and, ultimately, support with employment.”³

9. Legislative Context

- 9.1. Local authorities have duties under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) to identify, provide for and review the additional support needs of their pupils. Additional support may be required to overcome needs arising from the learning environment; health or disability; family circumstances; or social and emotional factors.
- 9.2. Under this duty, local authorities should consider if a pupil has been assessed as having additional support needs whether this would also include the need for school transport.

10. Accessing School Transport

- 10.1. School transport is primarily provided for pupils based on the distance which they live from their catchment school. However, in addition to the distance criteria, school transport can be provided due to:
 - Placement within a school
 - Additional support needs
- 10.2. The distance criteria applies to all children, whether attending a mainstream or ASN school, however, in some circumstances, it may be that a pupil will be considered for transport due to their additional support needs as detailed below:
 - The pupil has a physical or sensory impairment or a severe, profound or multiple learning difficulty which requires specialist transport arrangements;
 - The pupil has a disability which prevents them from accessing the transport generally available to take other pupils to the school;
 - The pupil attends a specialist provision or school (distance criteria will still apply);
 - In exceptional circumstances, the parent/carer is unable to transport the pupil to school.

Placement within a School

- 10.3. Where a pupil is placed in a school which is not their catchment school and the distance between the residence and school is greater than the distance criteria, transport will be provided. This applies to pupils attending Isobel Mair School, Carlibar Communication Service, Carolside Communication Service, and Williamwood Communication Support Service.
- 10.4. Transport will not normally be provided for those pupils who reside within the distance criteria. Only in cases where a pupil is assessed as requiring school transport (section 9.5) would this be provided.

³ Scottish Government, *School Transport Guidance* (2021), para 24

Assessment for School Transport based on Additional Support Needs

- 10.5. Where a pupil does not have eligibility for school transport based on the distance criteria, the parent/carer can request school transport be provided where there are additional support needs. It is acknowledged that whilst many children will be able to make use of mainstream transport to travel to and from school, ensuring inclusion and encouraging independence, this may not be appropriate for all pupils.
- 10.6. Where a parent/carer wishes to apply for an assessment for school transport, they should initially contact the school directly who will provide an application form to be completed. In considering applications and determining individual transport needs, recommendations from: school staff; Psychological Services; and community and allied health professionals may be considered. Information from parents/carers will also be considered as part of this process.

11. Transport Provision

Types of Provision

- 11.1. For pupils accessing ASN transport, this will normally be provided through either a private shared minicab service; a larger minibus vehicle; or an adapted minibus or other such vehicle. The specific type of vehicle provided will be suitable for the assessed needs of the pupils travelling. All legislation regarding the safety of wheelchair users is considered in allocating school transport. In addition, current guidelines around the safe transportation of oxygen are also adhered to at all times.
- 11.2. Where a pupil has an eligibility to transport, it will be made available via the provision outlined above. Emphasis will be placed on the safety, sensitive care and comfort of the pupil travelling. There is normally no choice offered in the type of provision that would be preferred. Should the needs of a pupil change to the extent that they require alternative transport provision, this should be discussed in the first instance with the school directly. This may require to be assessed before any changes can be implemented.
- 11.3. The type of vehicle used will also be informed by the number of pupils from the local community also requiring to access the service. This will be balanced with the need to ensure that time spent on school transport remains appropriate. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and the allocated transport may be altered throughout the session where improvements to journey times can be made.
- 11.4. Consideration will be given to a parent/carer transporting a pupil to school where they have access to a Mobility vehicle. This is particularly suitable for those pupils with an adapted or specialist vehicle. Where this arrangement is in place, the parent/carer will be provided with a mileage rate. This will be in line with the Council's mileage rate paid for staff travel.

Out of Authority Provision

- 11.5. Where a pupil has been placed in a school outwith East Renfrewshire, transport will be provided. This transport may be shared where more than one pupil is attending the same school.

Collection & Drop-off Locations

- 11.6. Pupils will normally be required to travel to designated collection and drop-off locations to access school transport. Parents/carers are responsible for making arrangements for the pupil's travel to and from the pick-up/drop-off location. The parent/carer should consider the appropriateness of any pupil travelling to this location independently and, where they are unable to do so, the parent/carer must ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place.⁴
- 11.7. Appropriate locations will be identified within close proximity to the pupil's home address. All locations will be accessible via a safe walking route from the pupil's home address and, where possible, will be based at existing bus shelters. This will provide shelter in the event of inclement weather whilst waiting to be collected.
- 11.8. Consideration will be given to establishing alternate locations, for example at a local school, where this is more appropriate and accessible. Parents/carers can make such requests to the School Transport Service. Such arrangements will only be possible on the provision that there is no detrimental impact to the wider operation of the service.
- 11.9. Only where a pupil has been specifically assessed as unable to travel to and from the pick-up/drop-off location will consideration be given to arranging a collection at or near the home address. It is automatically assumed that all children attending Isobel Mair School will meet this threshold and will therefore all be collected and dropped off at their home address.
- 11.10. Where a parent/carer is not at the allocated location/address at the end of the day to collect the pupil, and no alternate arrangements are in place, the driver or escort will initially look to establish contact with the parent/carer to arrange for them to collect their child. In the event that contact is not made and no alternative provision is in place, the driver/escort will contact the Education Department who will identify an appropriate drop-off location in conjunction with HSCP colleagues.

Escorts

- 11.11. Escorts will only be provided on any school transport to look after pupils specifically assessed as requiring supervision. This may include medical or safety needs.
- 11.12. Whilst an escort may offer support to a pupil in accessing the vehicle, they will not collect a pupil from a home address or undertake any such similar duties.
- 11.13. Escorts will normally only be provided on larger vehicles on which a number of pupils travel. In smaller vehicles, there is normally no requirement for an escort to be provided.
- 11.14. Appropriate training and support is available for all escorts (including those employed by East Renfrewshire Council and those on contracted services) to ensure the ongoing safety of all pupils travelling on dedicated school transport.
- 11.15. Where more specialist support is required due to more complex individual needs, this will be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with health professionals.

Applications

- 11.16. For the majority of pupils accessing ASN school transport, there is normally no requirement for an application to be submitted. The provision of transport is normally arranged by the School Transport Service on confirmation of the pupil's attendance at the specific school.

⁴ Scottish Government, *School Transport Guidance* (2021), para 25

- 11.17. Where there is no assumed eligibility to ASN school transport, an application for provision can be made through the Council's website or by contacting the school directly.

Cancellations

- 11.18. It is required that parents/carers contact the operator if the pupil does not require school transport due to illness or other reasons to avoid any undue cost to East Renfrewshire Council. Where this is not possible, parents/carers should contact the School Transport Service directly.

Administration of Medication

- 11.19. Medication cannot be administered by operators or escorts under any circumstances unless they have been fully trained and authorised by the Education Department to do so in respect to the specific pupil. Operators should be advised of any medical condition which may impact on the pupil during the course of the journey.

12. ELC Transport

- 12.1. Transport is not normally provided for children attending early learning and childcare. Any exceptional requests for pre-school ASN transport to a specialist service will be considered by the Early Years Intervention Group (EYIG).

Temporary & Short Term Transport

13. Transport may occasionally require to be provided for pupils who would not normally qualify under the school transport policy. This can be for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to:

- Short term injury impacting mobility (section 2.3)
- Housing referrals
- Social work referrals

- 13.1. Where a pupil is displaced from their home address, for example due to domestic violence/crisis, homelessness or foster/kinship care arrangements, transport may be provided in the short term to enable the pupil to continue to attend their school. It is recognised that this continuity will be important during such challenging periods. The need for transport will be considered by the Education Department in conjunction with the pupil's school. Any such requests will require to be supported by the relevant service (for example, social worker or housing officer). It is essential any such requests are supported by the appropriate Head of Service/Senior Manager within the relevant service.

- 13.2. Where the need for transport is agreed by the Education Department, signed off by the Head of Service/Education Senior Manager, consideration will initially be given to any existing transport options available. This will be through the availability of public transport options. It is possible that existing public transport could provide a link to other existing school transport services which may be able to be accessed. A parent/carer may be asked to consider alternative means of transport to support the pupil's journey to and from school, including support from other families. It is only in exceptional circumstances that dedicated transport will be made available.

- 13.3. Where there are any additional costs associated with the provision of such transport, the relevant service, either Housing Services or Social Work Services, will be liable for 50% of the cost of the provision. This will be agreed in advance of the transport being made available and will require to be approved by an appropriate senior officer in the respective department.
- 13.4. Any transport provided under such arrangements will be in place for an initial period of up to 4 weeks. The arrangement must be reviewed following each 4 week period up to a maximum of 3 months. It is expected that alternative transport arrangements will be established in advance of the end of the 3 month period. Where transport arrangements are required beyond the 3 month period, this will require to be approved by a Head of Service following consideration of any exceptional circumstances.

Pupil Behaviour when Accessing School Transport

14. Parents/carers have a vital role in working alongside the Education Department to make sure school transport is safe and accessible for all eligible pupils. Parents/carers should encourage all pupils to behave appropriately at all times when accessing school transport and emphasise the importance of safety, reminding pupils to be vigilant when boarding or leaving school transport. Where pupil behaviour is consistently unacceptable, the department may suspend access to school transport, with the parent/carer assuming responsibility for their children travelling to and from school.

Parent/Carer Responsibilities

15. Parents/carers have a number of responsibilities in ensuring that pupils are able to access school transport safely.
 - 15.1. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure pupils can travel to and from the transport pick up and drop off location safely, and ensure that there is someone at home to receive them. Where a parent/carer has a concern about their child's ability to travel independently to any pick up location, they should ensure appropriate arrangements are put in place.
 - 15.2. For those circumstances in which a parent/carer considers their child able to travel independently, they must ensure that they prepare them by ensuring they are aware of and follow the safest walking route, crossing at the most appropriate places and behaving responsibly whilst waiting to be picked up. In such circumstances, parents/carers must ensure that they have discussed with their child what to do if the transport does not arrive or if they fail to access the transport for any particular reason.
 - 15.3. Where, as a result of persistent inappropriate behaviour, school transport provision is withdrawn, the parent/carer will assume responsibility for making and/or paying for alternative transport provision.

Contractual Arrangements & Conditions

16. Contracts & Procurement

- 16.1. School transport is delivered by a number of different providers, contracted through the Council's transport partner SPT and by the Council directly. Each provider is required to align with the Council's procurement specifications. This includes specifications around the operation of the contract, safety of the provision and vehicle specifications.

- 16.2. All drivers and escorts are required to complete a PVG Disclosure process to ensure the safety of all pupils accessing school transport. This is monitored by SPT and individual providers as part of the condition of the contract.
- 16.3. The Education Department works with SPT and individual providers to monitor performance and ensure compliance with contract specification. Where a provider is not meeting the contract specification, for example due to time delays, either SPT or the Education Department directly will engage with the provider to monitor performance and seek improvements where possible.

17. Vehicle Timetable

- 17.1. Tender specifications normally allow a 10 minute time band within which pupils must be picked up or set down with the middle of the band being the preferred time. Given the volume of traffic at the beginning and end of the school day, there can be occasions where school transport is unavoidably delayed.
- 17.2. The Education Department expects all pupils to arrive at school before the start of the school day and all timetables are designed to achieve this. Unfortunately, at the beginning of each session, there can be a degree of short term disruption as providers and pupils adjust to new routes. Whilst in most cases this will resolve itself very quickly, where this is not the case, the Education Department will work with providers to ensure any necessary adjustments are made.

Complaints

18. Where a parent/carer or pupil is unhappy or concerned about school transport provision, they should follow the department's complaints procedure.
 - 18.1. For mainstream school transport, complaints should initially be made to the pupil's school directly. The school will record the complaint and send it on to SPT who will investigate the complaint with the operator directly. The complaint may also be sent directly to SPT, using their own complaints policy. Where the issue cannot be resolved by the school in conjunction with SPT, the complaint can be raised directly with the Education Department. This should be completed in line with the Council's complaints policy, available online.
 - 18.2. For complaints related to the provision of ASN or temporary transport, these should initially be raised with the pupil's school who will aim to offer an initial resolution. Where the issue is not resolved, the complaint should be raised through the Council's complaints procedure, available online.

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