

# Home to School Transport

Policy for travel assistance for children and young people attending school.

Policy Date: April 2018  
Review Date: April 2022



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# Summary

This document explains who can receive assistance with home to school transport, how to apply for that assistance (and how to appeal if you do not receive it), what type of help may be given, and which journeys we will help with. It also explains the standards we expect to provide, how we look after your children, and how to contact us when you need to.

We look at your child's age and needs, and the school they are attending, in order to make our decision on whether to provide transport. We may speak to you, the school and other professionals to make that decision. We aim to let you know our decision within two weeks.

If we decide you are not eligible for help with transport, you can ask us to review that decision. The review will be made by a senior officer outside the transport team, and a second review can be requested from an independent appeal panel. You can also appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman if you feel we have not followed our rules.

If we agree to help your child get to and from school, we will then decide what sort of help to provide. This may be help with public transport, or a payment (called a personal travel budget) to help you to take your child to school. It may be travel training for your child to help them to use public transport, or a companion to travel with them. It may be the provision of a minibus or car to take them to school. It may be a mix of these.

We may also need to arrange an additional adult who travels with them to keep them safe while travelling, or occasionally arrange for a nurse to travel with them.

Usually, we only help with journeys directly between home and school so that your child can attend school, unless we have agreed something different in advance. We expect you to arrange appointments outside school times, and to arrange transport to and from those for yourself. If your child is ill, or in detention, this is your responsibility. We won't take you to and from school for meetings; we only provide transport for your child.

If your child is ill, please let the transport provider know so that they don't come round to collect them.

We have high standards for transport; we expect all our children to arrive at school safely, feeling comfortable and ready to learn. We try to keep the same timings, and the same vehicles and people transporting your child, though sometimes we have to change them. If we do, we will give you as much notice as possible.

If something is wrong with the service, please tell us. You can phone, email or write to us, and our contact details are at the end of the policy.

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy outlines the assistance that the London Borough of Sutton will make available to provide for children of statutory school age to attend school. It sets out for parents and carers the criteria for eligibility, how to apply for assistance with transport, how decisions are made, what assistance may be offered, and how to appeal against decisions that they believe do not comply with this policy.
- 1.2. In general terms, it is the responsibility of the parent or carer to ensure that their child attends school regularly, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006). This includes arranging necessary travel to and from the school and / or accompanying their child as necessary. No special consideration is given for parents or carers who are working or who have children travelling to several schools at the same time. In both cases, parents or carers are expected to make other suitable arrangements for someone else to accompany their child.
- 1.3. Under the Education Act 1996 (as amended), local authorities have a duty in certain circumstances to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary in order to ensure that suitable home to school travel arrangements are made for the purpose of facilitating a child's attendance at relevant educational establishments for children aged 5-16.
- 1.4. This policy has been developed with full regard to the Department for Education Guidance on Home to School Travel and Transport <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>
- 1.5. Assistance is provided on the basis of assessed need. Only where a child or young person is assessed as meeting the eligibility criteria set out in this policy will he or she be entitled to assistance with home to school transport. There is no entitlement for assistance with transport before an application has been received and assessed.

## 2. Eligibility

- 2.1. This policy applies to children and young people who are resident in the London Borough of Sutton (or who are Looked After Children in care to the London Borough of Sutton).

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**Children of pre-school age**

- 2.2. There is no statutory requirement on local authorities to provide travel assistance for children under 5. Parents or carers are expected to take their own children to pre-school provision, and children of pre-school age will not be provided with travel assistance other than in exceptional circumstances.

**Children of pre-school age with special educational needs or disabilities**

- 2.3. It is expected that any pre-school child, whether they have special educational needs or disabilities or not, will be transported by a parent or carer, unless there are exceptional circumstances such that it would not be reasonable to expect parents or carers to do so.
- 2.4. However, transport assistance applications will be considered for children below statutory school age where the child already has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). In applying this exemption, the London Borough of Sutton must be satisfied that, without such assistance, the child would be prevented from attending an appropriate nursery or early years' education placement.
- 2.5. In assessing eligibility for pre-school children, particular attention will be paid to the following criteria:
- The age of the child;
  - The distance between home and nursery;
  - The special educational needs or disabilities of the child;
  - The reasons for the pre-school education placement; and
  - Whether the child has other siblings of an age where it is not reasonable to expect them to travel alone, who attend school(s) a significant distance away from the provision proposed for the child.

**Children and young people of statutory school age (5-16)**

- 2.6. The legal responsibility for ensuring children and young people receive education rests with their parents or carers. Generally, parents and carers are expected to make their own arrangements for ensuring children and young people travel to and from school to guarantee that they attend school regularly.
- 2.7. Under-16s are eligible for free travel within London. There are different schemes for different age ranges and you may need to apply for an Oyster photocard. Further information is available from the Transport for London (TfL) website, <https://tfl.gov.uk/fares/free-and-discounted-travel>. The London Borough of Sutton expects pupils to make use of the free travel available and applications for this should be made directly to TfL.

- 2.8. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide free transport to all pupils who meet the statutory walking distances eligibility criteria set out in the Home to School Travel and Transport guidance:
- If a child is under 8 years of age and lives over two miles from school; or
  - If a child is aged between 8 and 16 years and lives over three miles from school.

In both cases, the pupil must be attending the nearest suitable school. This is defined as a school which has places available and that the local authority deems to provide education appropriate to the age, aptitude and ability of the pupil and any special educational needs or disabilities he or she may have.

- 2.9. In addition, for pupils who are entitled to free school meals or whose parents or carers are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit, free travel assistance will be provided, if:
- The nearest suitable school is beyond two miles (for children over the age of 8 and under 11);
  - The school is between two and six miles (for children aged 11-16 where there are not three or more suitable nearer schools);
  - The school is between two and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (for children aged 11-16).
- 2.10. Local authorities are also required to make transport arrangements for all pupils who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school because the nature of the route is deemed inappropriate.
- 2.11. For the majority of children and young people, the free travel available through Transport for London's Oyster card will be considered to be sufficient to meet the local authority's obligation.

**Children and young people of statutory school age (5-16) with special educational needs or disabilities**

- 2.12. The local authority must make transport arrangements for those children who cannot be reasonably expected to walk to school because of their special educational needs, their disabilities, or health and safety issues related to these needs and disabilities.
- 2.13. There is not a blanket requirement for all children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities to be provided with assistance. Eligibility for transport for these children and young people will be assessed on an individual basis to identify their specific transport needs.

- 2.14. In such cases, transport requirements such as the statutory walking distances do not apply and will not be considered when assessing their transport needs.

#### **Post-16 Students**

- 2.15. Local authorities also have a duty to facilitate access to full-time education for young people aged 16-19 and this may include assistance with travel in certain circumstances. Details of the support available to those over the age of 16 are found in the Post-16 Policy.

#### **Children and young people with short term difficulties**

- 2.16. Pupils who do not otherwise receive assistance with transport, but who have a short term illness or health difficulty may be eligible for transport assistance to and from school for a limited period.
- 2.17. Pupils who receive assistance with transport whose circumstances have changed because of a short term illness or health difficulty may require a change to the type of assistance offered.

### **3. The application process**

- 3.1. Assistance is provided on the basis of assessed need. Only where a child or young person is assessed as meeting the eligibility criteria set out in this policy will he or she be entitled to assistance with home to school transport. There is no entitlement for assistance with transport before an application has been received and assessed.
- 3.2. When assessing entitlement for transport assistance for pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, the Transport Manager will consider the individual needs of each child. This may include taking professional advice from SEND Case Officers, Educational Psychologists, Social Workers, medical officers and teachers and consulting with parents and carers before arriving at a final decision. Consideration will also be given to the pupil's physical and medical requirements including any disabilities they may have. Assessment may include face-to-face contact with the pupil.
- 3.3. The following factors will be considered when assessing transport entitlement:
- The age of the pupil;
  - The distance between the pupil's home and the nearest suitable school;
  - Whether the walking route would be appropriate for the pupil, either unaccompanied or accompanied;
  - The Special Educational Needs or Disabilities of the pupil;
  - The type of school provision being made for the pupil;

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- Whether the pupil has physical, medical, or communication difficulties that would prevent them from safely using public transport;
  - Whether suitable and accessible public transport is available;
  - Whether the pupil may be vulnerable and at risk of danger if they use public or other transport
  - Whether the pupil would be a danger to other passengers, drivers or the vehicle, if they use public or other transport;
  - The efficient use of resources;
  - Any other individual circumstance.

The above list is for guidance only. It is not exhaustive, and each case will be reviewed on its individual merits.

- 3.4. Satisfaction of one or more of the criteria does not automatically allow entitlement to transport assistance. Attendance at a Special School does not automatically entitle a pupil to transport assistance. Having an Education, Health and Care Plan does not automatically entitle a pupil to transport assistance.
- 3.5. Eligibility for transport assistance is primarily determined according to the pupil's needs. Assessment may take into account the need for transport assistance due to some family circumstances. This will typically be that a pupil has other siblings attending schools not local to the SEN provision offered to them, or is offered SEN provision at a school which is not their local provision. These factors will be considered when determining eligibility for home to school travel assistance and deciding on the type of transport to be provided. Other family circumstances, such as parents and carers attending work or looking after other children, cannot be considered when determining eligibility.
- 3.6. In order for a child or young person's entitlement for transport assistance to be assessed, parents or carers must complete the application form accessed via the Local Offer website - [https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200611/suttons\\_local\\_offer](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200611/suttons_local_offer). The completed form may be returned in paper or electronic format to the address on the final page of the application.
- 3.7. Once the completed form has been received, parents or carers will be advised in writing of the Local Authority's decision. This is typically within 10 working days from receipt, but may be longer if it is necessary to allow time to take professional advice or consult with parents or carers.
- 3.8. If assistance with transport is agreed, it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to allocate travel assistance which is suitable and appropriate for the needs of the child or young person. The options typically allocated are described in section 5, below.

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- 3.9. The most suitable form of travel assistance will usually be implemented within 10 working days following the decision to agree transport. If a parent or carer does not accept the travel assistance allocated, this can be challenged through the Decision Review Process, outlined in section 4, below. While the review is being undertaken, the parent or carer remains responsible for their child's attendance at school.
- 3.10. In general, transport will be agreed for the current academic year only. Where an application is received during the summer term, a decision will be made for the current term and for the following academic year, so long as the student is continuing at the same school.
- 3.11. Parents or carers must re-apply for transport each year during the Summer term (April to July) to allow for review of a child or young person's eligibility for transport, and the type of assistance that is required. For example, a pupil may no longer require a passenger assistant or may be ready to start independent travel training. If you do not re-apply, we will assume that you no longer require assistance for your child
- 3.12. Any interim changes in circumstances may also result in a change in eligibility for transport assistance (for example, a child's SEN may have improved, or parents may have moved house to be closer to the school).
- 3.13. If changes take place at any time of the year (e.g. change of placement or home address), transport provision will be reviewed in accordance with the normal criteria. Transport will not be provided solely because a house move has taken the child beyond distance limits for his or her current school.
- 3.14. It should be noted that if a child is currently eligible for transport assistance, this is no guarantee that they will continue to be eligible in the future. The London Borough of Sutton reserves the right to review transport requirements outside the annual application process in order to safeguard its duty to ensure the efficient use of resources.

#### **4. The Decision Review process**

- 4.1. If the London Borough of Sutton considers that transport assistance should not be provided, the pupil's parents or carers will be advised of the decision. This is typically within 10 working days from receipt, but may be longer if it was necessary to allow time to take professional advice or consult with parents or carers.

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- 4.2. The London Borough of Sutton has a two stage home to school transport review process for parents who wish to challenge a decision about:
- Their child's eligibility;
  - The type of transport arrangements offered;
  - The distance measurement;
  - The safety of the proposed route.
- 4.3. During a review regarding the outcome of an initial application for travel assistance, transport will not be provided to the pupil. Where the review concerns changes to or withdrawal of transport arrangements for a child who has previously been assessed as eligible for the same journey, the Local Authority will continue to provide transport assistance, though this may not take the same form as that provided previously.

#### **Stage One**

- 4.4. A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's home to school transport decision to make a written request asking for a review of the decision.
- 4.5. The written request should detail why the parent believes the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal or family circumstances the parent believes should be considered when the decision is reviewed.
- 4.6. Within 5 working days of receiving the request to review, the local authority will acknowledge the receipt of the request and confirm the expected timescale for review and response.
- 4.7. Within 20 working days of receipt of the written request, a senior officer will review the original decision and send the parent a detailed written outcome setting out the nature of the decision reached, detailed reasoning for how the decision was reached, and information about escalation to stage two if appropriate.

#### **Stage Two**

- 4.8. A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's stage one decision to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.
- 4.9. Within 5 working days of receiving the request to review, the local authority will acknowledge the receipt of the request and confirm the expected timescale for review and response.
- 4.10. Within 40 working days an independent appeal panel will consider written and verbal representations from the parent and officers and will review the original decision. They will send the parent a detailed written outcome setting out the

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nature of the decision reached, detailed reasoning for how the decision was reached, and information about escalation to the Local Government Ombudsman if appropriate.

- 4.11. The independent appeal panel members will be independent of the process to date, and suitably experienced to ensure a balance is achieved between meeting the needs of parents and the local authority, and that road safety requirements are complied with.

#### **The Local Government Ombudsman**

- 4.12. There is a right of complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman if complainants consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled.

### **5. Transport Options**

- 5.1. It is important to offer a range of transport options, based on the identified needs of the child or young person. The options will also take account of the local authority's duty to make best use of public resources.

#### **The TfL Oyster card**

- 5.2. For many young people, the free travel within London offered by the Oyster photocard is a suitable option. There are different schemes for different age ranges and you may need to apply for an Oyster photocard. Further information is available from the Transport for London (TfL) website, <https://tfl.gov.uk/fares/free-and-discounted-travel>.

#### **Independent travel training**

- 5.3. Independent travel training, focused on the needs and capabilities of a young person, can increase independence by developing personal, social and life skills. By working closely with parents and carers, the child or young person and the school, travel training will contribute to greater independence for the child or young person and thus will always be given priority as an option when considering suitable solutions.
- 5.4. Independent travel training will increase young people's resilience against bullying and abuse when using public transport because they will not be marked out as "different" which many of them are concerned about. Criteria for successful completion of the training are based on an agreed rigorous training programme and assessment process undertaken by a qualified Travel Trainer. A copy of the final assessment will be provided to parents and carers. Successful completion of

Independent Travel Training will be signed-off by the young person, the family and the SEND Transport Team, and will normally result in the withdrawal of any form of travel assistance.

#### **Personal Travel Budget or mileage allowance**

- 5.5. This is a sum of money paid directly to parents and carers to enable them to make travel arrangements for their child. The amount that parents and carers receive will be based on the distance travelled from home to school and the child or young person's needs. Payments will be made half-termly in advance. The Personal Travel Budget is not taxed and does not affect any other benefits that parents and carers receive; the only requirement is that children attend school regularly and on time. A Personal Travel Budget can be refused or withdrawn if these conditions are not met.
- 5.6. A personal travel budget is funded at £0.45 per mile, paid in six equal installments across the year. The distance funded is calculated for the round trip, to take the pupil to school and the parent to then return home.

Example:

Distance from home to school	3.0 miles
Distance funded per day	2 round trips = 12.0 miles
Annual funding	190 days x 12.0 miles @ £0.45 /mile = £1,026 per year

#### **Walking companion**

- 5.7. If a child or young person is able to walk to school accompanied, and the Local Authority accepts that it would be unreasonable for the family to provide this accompaniment, it may be possible to provide a walking companion for the child or young person.

#### **Shared vehicles**

- 5.8. Where assessed as necessary, the London Borough of Sutton may provide a vehicle to transport a child or young person to and from school. Where transport vehicles are provided, they will be provided by a suitably qualified, registered commercial provider working to contractual standards set by the Council.
- 5.9. Whenever possible, children will travel together in buses and other shared vehicles, suitable for the needs of those travelling on them. Each route will be planned on the basis of school start and finish times. Most vehicles run closely to time and are required to transport several children. The pick-up and drop-off times reflect the required timings to give the shortest possible route for all children travelling on a particular vehicle. Small changes at one point may make the the journey excessively

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long or otherwise unreasonable for other children. We are unable to arrange times specifically to suit parental preferences.

- 5.10. The London Borough of Sutton currently offers both a “home to school service” for children and young people in receipt of vehicle transport as well as utilising appropriate safe and convenient ‘collection points’ at reasonable distances to and from family homes. The home to school service will only be agreed where it is deemed essential due to the child or young person’s particular needs. This will normally be on the basis of one pick up point / address and one drop off point / address per day.

**Taxi / private hire vehicle**

- 5.11. Under some circumstances, the London Borough of Sutton may transport pupils in separate taxis or private hire vehicles based on the assessed needs of the child or young person. Arrangements of this kind will be kept under regular review and, where possible, the opportunity will be taken to move to an alternative suitable form of travel assistance.

**Passenger assistants**

- 5.12. A Passenger Assistant is a person who accompanies students on a route to ensure their safety and the safety of the vehicle.
- 5.13. In some circumstances, a Passenger Assistant may be provided to accompany pupils to school on transport provided by the local authority. Passenger Assistants will only be provided where they are necessary for the safe operation of vehicles or the care of children or young people. A Passenger Assistant will not be provided simply because of the child’s age or because he or she does not know the driver.
- 5.14. Passenger Assistants are provided for all buses and coaches used to transport children with special educational needs.
- 5.15. Children transported by other vehicles will normally only be provided with a Passenger Assistant in the following circumstances:
- Where a pupil is under the age of seven years and is transported to out-borough provision;
  - Where the Principal Physician for Child Health confirms that a passenger assistant is required on medical grounds, and a health care plan is provided;
  - Where a child has a behaviour, learning or communication difficulty which is such that there is evidence to indicate that their safety or the safety of other passengers could be compromised without provision of a Passenger Assistant.

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- 5.16. Provision of a Passenger Assistant at any one time does not guarantee that this will be an ongoing arrangement and the requirement for a Passenger Assistant will be reviewed at least annually, or more frequently in the event of a change in circumstance.
- 5.17. If you are concerned that your child may find travelling without you upsetting, it may be possible for you to travel with your child on the first day when he or she meets the driver. You should contact the Cognus SEND Transport Team if this applies to you. Contact details are given in Section 10.

## **6. Provision of transport**

- 6.1. For children attending school on a daily basis, travel assistance will only be provided for the beginning and end of the school day.
- 6.2. For children attending school on a weekly boarding basis, travel assistance will be provided at the beginning and end of the school week, and before and after other periods of closure only.
- 6.3. For children boarding on a termly placement where the school is not closed at weekends, travel assistance will be limited to the start and end of the school term, half terms and for periods of whole school closure only.
- 6.4. Where a child attends planned respite provision, we can arrange for school transport to collect or return the student to the respite provision. This should be arranged as soon as dates are known, to minimise disruption to other students.
- 6.5. Any other journeys required will be the responsibility of parents or carers.
- Breakfast and After School clubs; transport will not normally be provided to enable students to attend such clubs, which do not form part of the National Curriculum, unless this transport can be provided at no additional cost to the Local Authority;
  - Attendance at annual reviews or parental meetings; transport will not be provided to allow parents to attend such meetings. This is a parental responsibility;
  - School trips; schools must notify the Local Authority of any changes to curriculum times to allow for adjustment to be made. Where additional costs are incurred by the Local Authority, such costs must be reimbursed by the school;
  - Examinations; home to school transport timings may be adjusted to enable early departure from school when students are undertaking national

examinations. However, to avoid unnecessary additional costs it is expected that such journeys will be co-ordinated and schools may be asked to retain students for reasonable periods at school after examinations to enable this;

- Work experience; transport will not normally be provided to allow students to attend work experience;
- Induction days / observation days / taster days; transport may be made available to allow students to attend Induction (or similar) days at special schools, resourced provision or independent schools which the Local Authority is considering naming in the child or young person's EHCP;
- Curriculum appointments; transport will not be provided to allow parents to attend such meetings. This is a parental responsibility;
- Doctors, dental or hospital appointments; transport will not be adjusted to allow students to attend such appointments. This is a parental responsibility;
- Clinical, psychiatric or therapy appointments; transport will not be adjusted to allow students to attend such appointments. This is a parental responsibility;
- Illness; transport will not normally be provided to collect children who are ill at school. This is a parental responsibility;
- Detention; transport will not be provided to take children home after detentions. This is a parental responsibility;
- Any other similar circumstance.

In these circumstances, it is the parents' responsibility to arrange transport.

#### **Pick up and Drop off arrangements**

- 6.6. Transport providers are authorised to make pick-ups and drop-offs at authorised points only. The authorised points will be those specified on the parental agreement letter (normally the home and school address, or in the case of bus journeys, an allocated bus stop).
- 6.7. Transport staff will assist a child or young person to board a vehicle by steadying them, but cannot lift a child or young person into the vehicle. If a child or young person cannot board without such assistance, consideration must be given to whether they would be more able to travel in a crash-tested wheelchair or similar. It is unlikely that a parent would be allowed to lift a child or young person into the vehicle as most schools also operate a 'no lifting' policy which would cause the passenger to be unable to exit the vehicle, or to board for the return journey.
- 6.8. All children and young people must be handed over to a responsible adult at the authorised point. Drivers and Passenger Assistants are not permitted to leave children and young people with any person under the age of 16, or any person who

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is not an 'authorised' adult. Parents and carers are expected to bring their child to the vehicle in the morning and collect from the vehicle in the afternoon.

- 6.9. Where pupils are picked up or dropped-off at home, the parent or carer is responsible for accompanying the pupil to and from their door to the vehicle. The parent or carer should keep a lookout for the vehicle's arrival since the vehicle will not sound its horn. It is against the law to sound a horn from a stationary vehicle. In exceptional circumstances (for example, where the child travels alone in a taxi with a passenger assistant) the passenger assistant may call at the door or telephone ahead, although this is at the discretion of the transport crew. Any variation to the usual procedure must be agreed with the controller.
- 6.10. Parents and carers must ensure that there are no delays in making pupils available for the journey (or collecting them in the evenings) as this is one of the main factors affecting total journey times and can have a detrimental effect on how other passengers manage the remainder of their journey.
- 6.11. Parents are asked on the application form to provide two alternative addresses, to be used in the event they are unable to be present to meet their child. Any changes to these addresses, whether permanent or temporary, must be communicated in writing to the London Borough of Sutton's SEN Transport Team who will make the necessary arrangements. Until such communication is received, the only other authorised place will be the nearest place of safety; see below for details.

#### **Absence from school**

- 6.12. Where a child cannot attend school on any particular day, for example due to illness, it is the parent or carers' responsibility to contact the transport company immediately. For long term absences, parents should contact the Transport Team.
- 6.13. Parents should contact their respective transport company the night before travel if they know that their child will be off ill the following day, or as early as possible on the morning of travel, if their child only shows signs of being ill on the day they are due to travel.
- 6.14. All transport which is not cancelled in advance of the vehicle arriving at the home address must be paid for by the London Borough of Sutton whether or not the pupil boards the vehicle. Where parents repeatedly fail to cancel the transport provision for their child as a result of the child's illness before it arrives at the home address, or where a child decides not to travel in transport which has arrived on any given day, without any prior notice having been given to the transport company, the child's transport provision will be reviewed.

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- 6.15. If it can be established that public funds are being used inappropriately, as a result of vehicles not being cancelled with enough prior warning, children may be excluded from transport for a period of time. Parents will be responsible for transporting their own children during any period of exclusion from transport.

**Place of Safety**

- 6.16. In the event that a parent or carer is unable to meet the child at the specified drop-off point at the agreed time, transport providers are instructed to take children to the nearest place of safety. Currently, this place of safety is:

Sutton Family Centre,  
Sutton West,  
Robin Hood Lane,  
Sutton,  
SM1 2SD

Tel: (020) 8770 5739

- 6.17. Parents, schools and the Transport providers will receive instructions from the London Borough of Sutton on what to do if this happens. Transport assistance may be withdrawn if this happens frequently. Parents or schools should contact the Transport Team if there are any emergency changes.

**Severe weather**

- 6.18. Overall responsibility for the safe running of the transport service rests with the Transport Manager. However, it is expected that each transport provider and each school or college will assess local conditions and make decisions based on those conditions and their knowledge of the passengers involved.
- 6.19. Where schools inform the Transport Team that the school will be closed, transport to that school will be cancelled. For Sutton schools, and those in many other Local Authorities, the school's status can be checked online at <https://opencheck.atomwide.com>.
- 6.20. In cases of severe weather, where parents and carers are advised that transport has been cancelled for their child's morning journey, they should assume that transport will also be cancelled for their child's afternoon journey, unless they are advised otherwise. If parents or carers decide to take their child to school despite the severe weather, they will also need to arrange to collect their child after school.

**Medication on transport**

- 6.21. As part of the service, we require that every driver and passenger assistant is able to respond to an emergency situation. Although there is no statutory duty for transport staff to administer medication, they are expected to ensure the health and safety of all pupils in their care. First-aid training includes: managing the symptoms of shock; dealing with an unconscious casualty; cardiac arrest and cardiopulmonary resuscitation; choking; and seizures.
- 6.22. In the event of an emergency on board a vehicle, the procedure is for the passenger assistant or driver to seek guidance from medical professionals by calling 999 and asking for a paramedic crew to attend the scene.
- 6.23. Members of transport staff are not generally permitted to carry or administer medication or to replace medical accessories (for example, gastrostomy or tracheostomy tubes) on board a vehicle. Where it is assessed to be unsafe for a pupil with complex or acute medical needs to travel with only a passenger assistant, the London Borough of Sutton will seek to provide a medically-trained professional, such as a nurse, to accompany the pupil on the vehicle. A risk assessment will be undertaken to ensure the correct level of medical support can be arranged.

## **7. Service Standards**

### **7.1. Vehicles**

All vehicles are provided by contractors under contract to the London Borough of Sutton.

- All transport will be provided in accordance with contractual standards and legislation;
- All vehicles will be properly licensed in accordance with local regulation and national legislation;
- The Transport Team will conduct regular monitoring of quality and service standards on all vehicles operated by its contractors;
- Vehicles will have specialist wheelchair access and wheelchair restraint systems where necessary;
- All vehicles will be road worthy, clean inside and out, fitted with seat belts and carry emergency equipment (for example, fire extinguisher and first aid kit) and any other equipment or notices required by law.

### **7.2. Drivers**

- Drivers must carry and display suitable identification at all times;
- Drivers must have enhanced DBS clearance;
- Drivers have completed safeguarding training;
- Drivers are provided with certified first-aid training;

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- Drivers must, as far as possible, be punctual;
  - Drivers must treat parents/carers and children with respect and avoid confrontations. It is also expected that parents/carers will treat our drivers with respect and consideration;
  - Drivers must adhere to the Council's no smoking policy;
  - If the driver has a concern for any child in their care, they must report their concern to their supervisor, who will inform the Transport Team;
  - Drivers must report any poor behaviour of passengers to their supervisor to relay onto the Transport Team, and to the school and parent as necessary;
  - Drivers must ensure that all wheelchairs are securely clamped, all passenger harnesses are worn and safety straps are properly adjusted and fitted securely before the journey commences;
  - The driver is to stop as close to the home address or collection point as traffic conditions will safely permit;
  - The driver is not allowed to sound the vehicle's horn to alert parents or carers that the vehicle is there;
  - Drivers are not authorised to leave a child with anyone other than their parent or carer or a named responsible adult (16+) identified in writing in advance by the parent or carer to the Transport Team;
  - Drivers have strict instructions not to enter into any personal arrangements with parents/carers, including changing pick up or drop off points without consulting the Transport Team;
  - Every effort will be made to ensure the same driver is used on a regular basis. This may not always be possible due to illness, holidays, retirement and staff resignations. Changes may also be necessary from time to time to ensure the efficient use of resources.

### **7.3. Passenger Assistants**

- Passenger Assistants must carry and display suitable identification at all times;
- Passenger Assistants must have enhanced DBS clearance;
- Passenger Assistants have completed safeguarding training;
- Passenger Assistants are provided with certified first-aid training;
- Passenger Assistants must treat parents/carers and children with respect and avoid confrontations. It is also expected that parents/carers will treat our Passenger Assistants with respect and consideration;
- Passenger Assistants must adhere to the Council's no smoking policy;
- If the Passenger Assistant has a concern for any child in their care, they must report their concern to their supervisor, who will inform the Transport Team;

- Passenger Assistants must report any poor behaviour of passengers to their supervisor to relay onto the Transport Team, and to the school and parent as necessary;
- The Passenger Assistant should assist children on and off the vehicle and ensure they are seated safely while the vehicle is moving;
- Passenger Assistants should deliver children to a member of school staff on arrival at the school so that at no time are children left unattended on the vehicle;
- Passenger Assistants are not authorised to leave a child with anyone other than their parent or carer or a named responsible adult (16+) identified in writing in advance by the parent or carer to the Transport Team;
- Passenger Assistants have strict instructions not to enter into any personal arrangements with parents/carers, including changing pick up or drop off points without consulting the Transport Team;
- Every effort will be made to ensure the same Passenger Assistant is used on a regular basis. This may not always be possible due to illness, holidays, retirement and staff resignations. Changes may also be necessary from time to time to ensure the efficient use of resources.

#### **Continuity of staff**

- 7.4. Every effort will be made to ensure that the same passenger assistant and driver continue to transport a pupil; however this will not always be possible and changes may need to be made due to illness, holidays, retirement and staff resignations, or to ensure the most efficient use of available resources.
- 7.5. Parents, carers and schools will be informed by the transport company about any changes to the crew member(s) in advance. Parents and carers are advised to take the name of the new driver and/or passenger assistant, and ask to see their identification, or contact the transport provider to verify identity if they are in any doubt.
- 7.6. Local authorities have a duty to spend public funds in the most appropriate and cost-effective manner. Routes will be reviewed regularly. Separate routes, taking pupils to several different schools, may be brought together into a single route where this is appropriate. Longer routes will be reviewed periodically with the respective schools to ensure that concentration and attentiveness are not compromised by any change to pupils' journeys.

#### **Journey times**

- 7.7. The nature of transport congestion in the Borough means that travelling times can vary greatly. The London Borough of Sutton, in accordance with DfE guidelines, expects that children should arrive at school safely and fit to learn, and journey

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times should reflect this. The maximum journey time for SEN transport has been set at 1 hour 15 minutes, although this may be affected from time-to-time by traffic, road works and other environmental and operational conditions.

- 7.8. These times may not apply to children travelling to out of borough schools, where distances and frequency of journeys vary.
- 7.9. Any ongoing delays due to major road works or weather will be taken into account and where possible alternative routes will be provided. In this situation parents and schools will be notified accordingly.

#### **Quality surveys**

- 7.10. Surveys are sent to a random selection of schools each term to assess and ensure the quality of service. Questions are asked regarding the punctuality of the service, the perceived safety of passengers, the crew's understanding, empathy and communication with their passengers, and the readiness of students to learn after they have arrived at school.
- 7.11. Surveys are also sent to a random selection of families each term to assess and ensure the quality of service. Questions are asked regarding the punctuality of the service, the perceived safety of passengers, the crew's understanding, empathy and communication with their passengers, and their politeness. Parents are also asked for their comments, and their child's comments if appropriate.
- 7.12. The survey responses are shared with contractors, and used to improve the quality of the service that we provide.

## **8. Safeguarding**

- 8.1. The London Borough of Sutton is committed to ensuring that children and young people on transport travel safely to school and arrive ready to learn. The following safeguarding systems are in place to protect children's safety and promote their wellbeing:
- There are regular authorised crews on all routes;
  - Crew members have valid DBS certificates and appropriate licences;
  - Crew members have completed safeguarding training;
  - Crew members are provided with certified first-aid training;
  - Child-seating is provided for young people below 135 cm in height;
  - Non-ambulant buggy or wheelchair users undergo a wheelchair risk assessment to verify that their buggy or wheelchair has been crash-tested for use on transport and to ensure that the correct safety equipment is used to secure the buggy or wheelchair in place;
  - All incidents on board transport are logged and investigated;

- Safeguarding concerns or allegations about a transport crew member are referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer;
- Crew members are provided with a procedure in circumstances where parents or carers are not available at their home address at the end of the school day, or have requested an agreed alternative destination;
- Taxi routes are audited on a regular basis and checked for compliance against the service specification, including compliance with safeguarding procedures.

#### **Local Authority Designated Officer**

- 8.2. Statutory guidance and procedures state that every Council has a duty to manage allegations and concerns about any person who works with children and young people in their area. This includes Council staff, staff or partner agencies and volunteers. The London Borough of Sutton complies with this duty by employing a LADO.
- 8.3. The LADO is responsible for investigating and co-ordinating all child protection allegations made against staff and volunteers who work with children and young people in Sutton.
- 8.4. Referrals to the LADO are made by a designated senior manager, within one working day of being made aware of the allegation. For the Transport Team, the designated manager is the Transport Manager, though any team member may refer if necessary.
- 8.5. Concerns should be referred to the LADO by contacting 020 8770 4776 (or via the Out of Hours service on 020 8770 5000) or by email: [lado@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:lado@sutton.gov.uk)

#### **9. Comments, compliments and complaints**

- 9.1. The London Borough of Sutton constantly strives to improve the Transport Service and welcomes comments from parents, carers, pupils and school staff on any issue relating to the service.
- 9.2. Comments or concerns about operational issues should be addressed to the relevant bus or taxi provider in the first instance. In the event that the provider cannot resolve the concern, the issue should be escalated to the SEND Transport Team for resolution.
- 9.3. Formal complaints will be managed in line with the Council's complaints procedures which are available online at [https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200436/customer\\_services/1058/feedback\\_complaints\\_and\\_compliments](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200436/customer_services/1058/feedback_complaints_and_compliments)

**10. Contact Information**

10.1. Transport is arranged and managed by Cognus Limited on behalf of the Local Authority.

10.2. Contact details for the SEND Transport Team are as follows:

SEND Transport Team  
Cognus Limited  
24 Denmark Road  
Carshalton  
Surrey  
SM5 2JG

Tel: (020) 8323 0460 (a voicemail system operates out of office hours)

Email: [SEN.Transport@cognus.org.uk](mailto:SEN.Transport@cognus.org.uk)

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Version	Date	Amended by	Notes
1.0	03/04/2018	Colin Hagreen	
1.1	01/09/2018	Colin Hagreen	Updated address s.10.2
1.2	12/02/2019	Colin Hagreen	Updated Sutton logo
1.3	07/04/2019	Colin Hagreen	Updated contact phone number s.10.2. Updated TFL web links
1.4	15/10/2019	Colin Hagreen	Clarified wording s.4.3