Guidance

Transport to school and other places of education: autumn term 2020

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Department for Education
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On 2 July 2020, we set out our plan for children and young people, in all age groups and places of education, to return to education full-time from the beginning of the autumn term. This document provides guidance for transport providers and schools for the autumn term 2020 to use. The statutory duties of local authorities in relation to home to school transport and other journeys, and school and young people's entitlements are not affected.

Capacity on public transport remains limited given the requirements for social distancing. We will be particularly challenging for children and young people who travel to school or college by public transport. We have commissioned a study to test social distancing measurements guidance for public services, and supplement the public transport network, and assisting home to school transport, with additional capacity, to ensure that children and young people can travel safely to school and college when the autumn term starts.

Part A provides guidance for local authorities on managing the capacity of, and demand for, public transport services, including home to school transport services, and travel to school or college services, so that children and young people can travel safely.

Part B provides guidance about the provision of dedicated home to school or college transport in the autumn term.

Suggestions related to school planning for the wider return of all school and college pupils, including those who do not travel on public transport or school transport, such as those both home to school transport, and public transport, will very greatly be wise, and solutions will need to reflect local circumstances that apply.

Part A: managing capacity and demand on public transport

The application of social distancing measures to public transport has caused a significant reduction in the capacity of the network. This has had a significant impact on transporting children and students to schools and colleges. Reopening of schools is made in the morning peak hour are made for education purposes, and with public transport capacity being restricted, alternative travel options need to be considered.

This section of the guidance sets out what local authorities need to do in their plan for home to school transport, and what they, and the parents and children can do to ensure that children and young people can travel safely.

Local authorities should review:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer travel guidance for passengers
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer transport guidance for operators

How local authorities can manage capacity and demand

The Department for Transport sent a letter to local authorities on 24 August 2020 setting out the role of local authorities in planning for transport when schools and colleges return in the autumn. This section provides further guidance for local authorities transporting children and students to schools and colleges. Reopening of schools is made in the morning peak hour are made for education purposes, and with public transport capacity being restricted, alternative travel options need to be considered.

This section of the guidance sets out what local authorities need to do in their plan for home to school transport, and what the parents and children can do to ensure that children and young people can travel safely.

Local authorities should review:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer travel guidance for passengers
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer transport guidance for operators

Using Travel Management Plans

The Department for Transport has developed a Travel Demand Management (TDM) policy toolkit, which was sent to local authorities on 24 July 2020. Local authorities since in adopting TDM will be able:

- to provide information and guidance on local transport provision
- identify the measures they need to take that pressure is reduced
- develop necessary travel advice and communications for parents and students
- ensure appropriate monitoring and evaluation.

Additional TDM support, in the form of consultancy support and training, has been made available to local authorities in England, outside London, on completion of the TDM policy toolkit, between 31 July to 28 August.

Strongly promoting active travel

Schools and colleges should encourage parents, staff and pupils to walk or cycle to school wherever it is safe and practicable to do so.

All substantial urban areas (50k or more) are to implement 2 trials to make streets more environmentally friendly and healthy, to, need to walk to cycling and walking in order to reduce capacity demand for the use of public transport. These could include:

- building on existing schemes (such as the Mayor's Streets for Walking and Cycling programme)
- encouraging more local businesses to communicate directly with their employees (journeys are most appropriate to switch to active travel to encourage them to do so – implementing 'safe streets' practical measures.

Local authorities have been allocated funding for walking and cycling which should be prioritised on those measures that will be implemented by the end of December.

Accepting increased use of car for longer journeys which cannot be undertaken by public transport, school transport or active travel (cycle or walking) and by taxi or hire car

While it is strongly advised that parents, staff and pupils walk and cycle or use public transport to travel to school, local authorities should be prepared for some of the travel to schooling by car. Local authorities should ensure that the school and car drive to school may do so.

Local authorities must give consideration to the impacts of increased car use on local congestion, and ensure that mitigations to minimise these impacts are implemented. Local authorities should also ensure that the impacts on the local bus government impacts. Local authorities should ensure that the impacts on the local sustainable travel and transport as planned by Section 508A of the Education Act 1996.

Keeping schools/colleges with their catchments and expansions may reduce other demand for public transport during peak school travel times

Local authorities should consider the impact of school expansions on school transport. Local authorities should take the increased demand into account when making school place planning and school organisation proposals.

Staggered school and college start and finish times

Local authorities should work with schools and colleges to consider whether changing or staggering school and college start times would reduce pressure on transport services. This has the potential, in some areas, to:

- increase capacity on public transport by spread over a longer period
- increase capacity on school buses to the same more than once
- increase opportunity for people of public transport to support schools and colleges staggering

Staggered start and finish times should not reduce the amount of overall teaching time.

Contracting additional coaches or other appropriate vehicles (where they are available) to supplement existing school transport services, and/or to provide additional services

If there is still a need for additional transport capacity after all of the above measures have been taken, local authorities should consider contracting additional coaches.

The Department has provided funding for local authorities to hire coach and minibuses to provide dedicated, additional capacity transport system to help students get back to their schools and colleges for the education sector in September.

Local authorities must charge pupils and students a fare for using the additional transport provided. Local authorities should ensure that the fare charged is at least fare should be the same as the passenger fare on normal public transport. The school transport distancing guidelines that apply on public transport will not apply on dedicated school transport services. Local authorities should ensure that the school transport services put in place will operate safely.

Read Part B of this guidance for more information about the measures that will apply on dedicated school transport services.

Identifying existing bus services and routes and assessing or predominantly by school children and designating them as school services

Local authorities may wish to work with transport operators to explore temporarily designating existing bus services and routes as school services. Local authorities may wish work with local authorities and transport operators to ensure that these arrangements not affect the availability of forcing to operate these services commercially. Local authorities should ensure that the school services are operated safely and that school services remain available for members of the public who would normally use these services if this option is explored.

Part B: guidance for dedicated transport to schools and other places of education for autumn term 2020

Dedicated transport to schools and other places of education often carries the same risk as other public transport services, and should be used by children and young people on those journeys. They report that the number of other people and other journeys come into contact.

The guidance aims to help those responsible for the provision of dedicated transport to put in place proportionate safeguards to further minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

It applies to all dedicated transport to schools and other places of education, whether the public network or procured by the local authority, schools or parent groups. It applies to all children and young people who travel on dedicated transport to schools and other places of education, including maintained schools, colleges and independent provision settings. This includes transport:

- commissioned or provided by local authorities, whether or not the service is provided free of charge
- commissioned or provided by schools or other places of education
- provided by transport operators commissioned by parents that cannot be used by members of the public when it is carrying children to school or other places of education

Vehicles that provide transport to members of the public at other times are considered public transport services. Vehicles that are used for transporting only children and young people travelling to school and other places of education.

Pool dedicated transport is organised by local authorities. However, this guidance also applies to:

- schools and other places of education, where they commission transport for children and young people
- transport operators, where they provide transport directly to children without being commissioned by the school or local authority

This guidance, the term 'school transport' includes dedicated transport dedicated for other places of education such as further education colleges.

We have developed the guidance with Public Health England (PHE) and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC). We will keep it under review and revise it if necessary.

Where something is essential for public health reasons, as advised by PHE, we have set out this.

Key points

Local authorities remain under a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for children who are eligible to receive it. Local authorities should ensure that they put in place a transport statement setting travel assistance that they will provide for young people aged over 16.

Those involved in the provision of home to school transport must do all that is reasonably practicable to reserve social distancing where possible and minimise the risk of transmission. There is a public duty to keep pupils safe.

Local authorities, working with schools, should consider the following actions:

- identify the risks arising from coronavirus (COVID-19)
- ensure that they have a sufficient supply of vehicles to carry children and young people on regular routes, and that they are identified, assess the risk to local circumstances, and enables children and young people to attend their school or other place of education

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, it is mandatory to implement measures that are reasonably practicable and have an effective of reducing the risk. The measures should be based on the risk assessment. Risk measures are reasonably practicable and, where they are, to take these measures.

Local authorities, transport providers, schools and colleges, and education all have a role to play in ensuring effective measures are put in place at home to school transport.

This system of controls is equivalent to the PHE hierarchy of controls, as set out in the guidance for full systems for workers. See the special schools, and the guidance of SLMS for more information.

The controls are based on 'prevention' and 'response' to a case of COVID-19. Prevention is implemented in a way that addresses the identified risk, they create an intensity safer environment for children and young people and staff and ensure that a consistent approach is in place.

The controls describe every scenario. They provide a set of principles, local authorities will need to apply these to implement their circumstances and local circumstances.

Local authorities should take account of the particular needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and, where necessary, be informed by the views provided by the parents and school.

Prevention

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell

Parents and carers should be advised that children and young people must not travel to school transport if they, or a member of their household, has symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or are self-isolating, or have been tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) and the test result is pending, or have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

If a child or young person develops symptoms which all school or their place of education. Should not travel. They must not travel to school or their school transport. The school or place of education should contact the parent or carer who should make arrangements for their child to be picked up.

A responsible person, such as a member of staff, should be the support in such cases. Arrangements for the child or young person to wait for their transport may be provided. The school or place of education should ensure that the child or young person is not left unattended. The school or place of education should ensure that the transport at the same time as the child with symptoms.

Drivers and passenger assistants should be aware of the main symptoms, or if someone in their household has symptoms, if they develop symptoms which at work they should go home and get a test.

Anyone with symptoms must follow Stay at Home, guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection (COVID-19).

Children, young people, drivers and passenger assistants who have been in contact with someone who has developed symptoms which at school or on home to school transport do not need to self-isolate unless they develop symptoms.

- they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange a test)
- they live with someone who has developed symptoms which at school or transport
- 48 hours of them first developing symptoms, they live with someone who tests positive of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- if they have been requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace

People must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water at regular intervals and in accordance with hand hygiene guidance.

If a person with symptoms has been in a vehicle that provides home to school transport, the vehicle should be cleaned. Drivers and passenger assistants should be trained in carrying the vehicle to other people. For more information, read Cleaning of premises and hygiene for workplaces.

2. Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an easy virus to kill when it is on skin. This can be done with soap and running water or hand sanitiser.

Children, young people, drivers and passenger assistants must clean their hands before and after journeys to school or other places of education.

Drivers and passenger assistants should use alcohol-based or anti-viral wipes throughout the journey, and should always be able to offer performing tasks such as helping a child into the vehicle or helping with seat belts.

3. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach is an important way to ensure that people follow the message with children, and local authorities may also want to consider reinforcing it in their communications with parents.

Children should be encouraged to cough and sneeze into a tissue, dispose of the tissue in a bin and wash their hands as soon as possible after coughing or sneezing.

Drivers and passenger assistants should be encouraged to follow the same hygiene arrangements for the children or young person travelling home. Transport may be provided. The school or place of education should ensure that the child or young person is not left unattended. The school or place of education should ensure that the transport at the same time as the child with symptoms.

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If a person with symptoms has been in a vehicle that provides home to school transport, the vehicle should be cleaned. Drivers and passenger assistants should be trained in carrying the vehicle to other people. For more information, read Cleaning of premises and hygiene for workplaces.

4. Ensure social distancing measures are observed

Children and young people will be encouraged to sit with their family and friends throughout the journey, and should always be able to offer performing tasks such as helping a child into the vehicle or helping with seat belts.

5. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach

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Children, young people, drivers and passenger assistants must clean their hands before and after journeys to school or other places of education.

Drivers and passenger assistants should use alcohol-based or anti-viral wipes throughout the journey, and should always be able to offer performing tasks such as helping a child into the vehicle or helping with seat belts.

7. Ensure social distancing measures are observed

Children and young people will be encouraged to sit with their family and friends throughout the journey, and should always be able to offer performing tasks such as helping a child into the vehicle or helping with seat belts.

Response

Case coverings In accordance with advice from PHE, from the autumn term, we recommend that secondary school children and young people should be required to wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated transport. This does not apply to people who are exempt from wearing a covering or who are disabled.

Until the start of the autumn term, children and young people have not been expected to wear face coverings in schools. Children and young people should not be required to wear. We are adopting the same principle of children and young people in schools and colleges and Part Two. Social distancing measures will not primarily mitigating transmission of coronavirus.

A face covering is covering of your face which covers your nose and mouth. It can be a single use face coverings are available for parents and carers to buy. A cut-fit bandana, scarf, or a cloth mask can be made at home. Face coverings do not mean that social distancing fit cover the rule of the face.

Face coverings:

- may be particularly useful where measures such as distancing and sitting in bubbles are difficult to maintain
- may help children to feel more confident about coming back to school, and may prevent to feel more confident about their child using home to school transport
- may be particularly useful in areas where there is a local outbreak of coronavirus (for example, young children in areas with COVID-19 or in areas testing to increase the risk of transmission

Other ways to protect the school or other protection measures such as guard hygiene

Ensure that any additional risk associated with them are identified, for example, children who are unable to wear a face covering because of a medical or disability. Young children cannot fit may wear face covering if they are able to keep it on, and children who are unable to wear a face covering should not be expected to do so.

Children and young people may need to be able to talk to, mend, or see people's faces, in order to communicate. Drivers are encouraging people to wear face coverings, if they can.

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Children with SEND When developing the package of measures that is appropriate to your school or college, local authorities and their partners should take into account the particular needs of children who travel on the transport, and to the following groups and cohorts:

Special schools tend to be smaller, meaning all the children is a school might be on a single bus. Special schools may be able to arrange for a single bus to be used only with no mixing of the number of children with SEND mixed on the transport.

Some vehicles carry children to a number of different special schools. Some children with SEND display behaviours such as spitting uncontrollably. In circumstances such as these, local authorities should consider the following measures:

We recognise that transporting children and young people with SEND may be important control. Where this is the case other measures the system of controls should put in place. Transport providers, staff for example, staff may wear face coverings, if they feel that it is appropriate.

Some children and young people with SEND will not be able to use a face covering properly and should not expected to do so. Some may be able to use face covers that transmission. Some children may be distressed by wearing a face covering, or by others wearing face. Others may become distressed if they cannot see people's faces.

Some children and young people may need to be able to hear, or see people's faces, in order to communicate. Drivers are encouraging people to wear face coverings, if they can.

Although drivers and passenger assistants will not normally require personal protective equipment (PPE) in addition to face coverings, PHE has advised that PPE is a key part of the system of controls. Local authorities should consider the risk of PPE that they should continue as usual.

Transport providers, staff for example, for schools and other places of education also them to

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consider introducing staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups of children apart as they arrive and leave and to enable more journeys to take place outside of peak hours.

Staggered starts may be helpful where local authorities fulfil their duty to provide free transport for eligible children by providing with them with a pass for free travel on public transport, so that those children are able to avoid using public transport at peak time.

We recognise that it is likely that children and young people in different groups or bubbles will need to travel together on home to school transport so that it may not be possible for them to arrive at different times from one another. Schools, places of education and local authorities will need to work together to ensure the arrangements for home to school transport and staggered starts complement one another.

Where there is a safe walking route, schools may want to consider having buses drop children off a short way from the school, to ease congestion around school sites.

6. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is not normally needed on home to school transport

By PPE, we mean equipment such as fluid-resistant surgical face masks, disposable gloves, disposable plastic aprons and eye protection such as a face visor or goggles. We do not mean face coverings, advice on which is set out above.

Drivers and passenger assistants will not normally require PPE on home to school transport, even if they are not able to maintain a distance from the children and young people on the transport. This is because, as set out above, children and young people with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) must not board home to school transport.

If the care a child or young person usually receives on home to school transport requires the use of PPE, that should continue. For more information, read:

- How should I care for children who regularly spit or require physical contact?
- Guidance on the specific steps that should be taken to care for children with complex medical needs, such as tracheostomies (this includes aerosol generating procedures)

Response to any infection

7. Engage with the test and trace process

Local authorities must ensure they understand the NHS Test and Trace process and how to contact their local Public Health England health protection team.

They should expect drivers and passenger assistants to book a test if they display coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms and expect families to get a test if children are displaying symptoms.

They should ensure that drivers, passenger assistants and families, on behalf of children, understand that they will need to be ready and willing:

- to provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with if they test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test and Trace
- to self-isolate if they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), or if anyone in their household develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)

8. Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Swift action must be taken when someone tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). Local authorities should contact local health protection teams. Local health protection teams will identify people who have been in close contact with a person who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) and tell them what they need to do. Further information is available on the NHS website.

Close contact means:

- direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, unprotected physical contact (skin to skin)
- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected individual

Other considerations

Meeting the home to school transport duty in alternative ways

Section 508B of the Education Act 1996 permits local authorities to meet their duty to provide free home to school transport to an eligible child in alternative ways, provided they have the parent's consent. The duty on local authorities for those over 16 is different, but the practices detailed in this section should be considered good practice for that age group as well.

We know that, to maximise home to school transport capacity, some local authorities have started to ask parents to accept personal travel budgets or mileage allowances to take their child to their school or place of education. This is permissible with the parent's consent.

Local authorities should not expect parents to commit to accepting a personal payment or mileage allowance for a specified period of time, particularly in the current economic climate. For example, a parent may feel able to take their child to their school or place of education in September because they are furloughed, but subsequently their circumstances may change. However, parents should understand that the local authority will need reasonable notice to put in place home to school transport for their child or young person.

Mileage allowances and personal budgets should cover the cost of the parent's journey to school with their child in the morning, and home again afterwards, and their journey to collect their child in the afternoon, and home again afterwards.

Where a child normally travels on dedicated home to school transport, local authorities should not provide a personal travel budget if that would mean the child then needs to travel on public transport.

Where a child or young person needs a passenger assistant on home to school transport, a local authority may ask their parent to travel with them in place of a passenger assistant. The parent's consent is required for this arrangement to meet the local authority's statutory duty. The parents should not have a role in supervising any other children in the vehicle.

Local authorities should be mindful of their duties under the Equality Act 2010 when asking parents to accept alternative offers.

Workforce

Implementing the measures in this guidance will reduce the risk to all staff.

Drivers and passenger assistants should maintain a distance from their passengers wherever possible. We acknowledge that the nature of school transport, and the needs of the children and young people receiving it, mean this will not always be possible. Drivers may be able to leave the vehicle to maintain distance while children and young people are getting on and off.

Guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people who were shielding has been paused from 1 August, with the exception of any areas where local lockdown means that shielding will continue.

Some drivers and passenger assistants may feel concerned about returning to work. Local authorities (or the driver or passenger assistant's employer, where this is not the local authority) should discuss their concerns and explain the safeguarding measures that are in place to reduce risk on home to school transport.

Communication with families, schools and transport operators

Communication is key to make sure everyone involved understands the instructions they need to comply with and can feel confident that risks are being considered and controlled in the most effective way.

Local authorities should consider how to communicate the home to school transport arrangements clearly to children, young people, parents, schools and transport operators. Schools and places of education will also have an important role in communicating with families, children and young people.

Things to consider:

- encouraging parents and children to walk or cycle where possible
- parents will need to understand that their child or young person must not travel if they or anyone in their household has symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- children, young people and their families will need to understand any arrangements for queuing for and getting on home to school transport, and where they should sit in the vehicle
- children, young people and their families will need to understand whether they will be expected to wear face coverings on home to school transport
- drivers and passenger assistants will need to understand any rules that they, children and young people need to follow on home to school transport
- local authorities, schools, places of education and transport operators will need a shared understanding of the arrangements for children and young people's arrival at school or place of education in the morning and collection in the afternoon
- drivers should not be expected to police arrangements such as seating plans, queues, the wearing of face coverings or use of hand sanitiser - their role is to focus on driving the vehicle safely
- some parents, children, young people, drivers and passenger assistants may feel concerned about the risk of infection on home to school transport and may want to be reassured about the safeguards that are in place

Behaviour

We do not expect drivers to police pupil behaviour. Their role is to focus on driving the vehicle safely.

The home to school travel and transport statutory guidance sets out our expectation that schools should promote appropriate standards of behaviour by pupils on their journey to and from school.

The guidance for schools on returning in the autumn term sets out that schools should consider updating their behaviour policies with any new rules and policies. This may include rules relating to behaviour on the way to and from school. It also includesthe consequences for poor behaviour and deliberately breaking the rules and how they will enforce those rules, including any sanctions.

Is this page useful? Yes No Is there anything wrong with this page?

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support

The UK has left the EU

Check the new rules for January 2021

Services and information

Benefits
Births, deaths, marriages and care
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Citizenship and living in the UK
Crime, justice and the law
Disabled people
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Education and learning
Employing people
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