Part of
Education, universities and childcare during coronavirus

Department for Education

Guidance

Transport to schools and colleges: 2020 to 2021 academic year

Updated 4 March 2021

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Main changes since this guidance was last updated

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Capacity on public transport is still limited given the requirements for social distancing. This may be challenging for children and young people who travel to school or college by bus. Local authorities may need to put in place local demand management solutions for public services. They may need to supplement the public bus network, and existing home to school transport, with extra capacity. This would make sure children and young people can travel to school safely and minimise disruption for all passengers on the public network.

The exact pressures on the local transport network will vary greatly by area. Solutions for transport planning for children and young people travelling to school and college must be locally led.

Main changes since this guidance was last updated

The update to part A includes re-ordering and re-wording the Department for Transport guidance without any policy changes.

Update to part B brings the guidance in line with the schools' guidance published on 22 February. This includes references to colleges and FE providers and consistency changes to the system of controls.

Part A: managing capacity and demand on public transport

This section of the guidance sets out what local authorities need to do to increase capacity and manage demand so that children and young people can get to school.

You should read this guidance with:

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

How local authorities can manage capacity and demand

Since the beginning of July 2020, local authorities have successfully worked with schools, colleges and transport operators to ensure there has been enough capacity for children and young people to travel to and from school and college. This success has been achieved by:

- a huge push for parents, pupils and staff to walk, scoot or cycle to school
- schools staggering start times to spread demand
- local authorities increasing capacity with additional dedicated school services

These measures will still be needed as children and young people return to school and college while the wider economy re-opens.

Local authorities should continue to engage regularly with schools, colleges and transport operators. They should use the tools set out below to ensure they can meet current and forecast demand, particularly on routes used by children and young people travelling to school and college. This regular reassessment is especially important as demand for public transport increases as the economy re-opens.

Using transport demand management toolkit

The transport demand management (TDM) policy toolkit for local authorities provides guidance for meeting the continued challenges of transport demand as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is a key tool that local authorities can use to plan for changes in transport demand changes as the economy re-opens. It was initially published to support the return of schools after the first lockdown and has since been expanded to include other transport users and sent to all local authorities.

In addition, consultancy support and funding has been provided to help English local authorities outside London improve their long-term TDM capabilities.

Local authorities using TDM will be able to:

- understand the nature of likely demands on local transport provision
- identify the necessary changes to how that provision is deployed
- develop necessary travel advice and communications for parents, children, young people and the wider community
- ensure appropriate monitoring and evaluation

This toolkit has allowed local authorities to take a holistic approach to delivering TDM. This has included increased capabilities to:

- gather data
- target communications campaigns that promote active travel
- reduce reliance on public transport

Local authorities should continue to use the capabilities that they have developed through this programme.

Strongly promoting active travel

During the autumn term local authorities worked with schools and colleges to encourage parents, staff and pupils to walk or cycle to school where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

They should continue to build on this during the spring and summer, promoting cycling and walking in order to make capacity available for those with longer journeys. This could include:

- building on existing schemes (such as the Walk to School programme and Bikeability training)
- encouraging schools and colleges to communicate directly with the children and young people whose journeys are most appropriate to switch to active travel to encourage them to do so
- implementing ‘safe streets’ policies outside schools

Engaging with local businesses and employers to reduce other demand for public transport during peak school travel hours

The TDM policy toolkit helps local authorities to gather the relevant information and develop plans with local businesses and employers.

With this information, local authorities should work with local businesses and employers to promote the Department for Transport's safer travel guidance. This will encourage people to plan their journeys in advance, avoiding busy times and places.

As the economy re-opens and there is greater demand for transport, local authorities should work with businesses and employers who may be able to amend their start and finish times to avoid conflicting with children and young people travelling to and from school and college.

Staggering school and college start and finish times

Staggering school start and finish times has significantly benefited local TDM and is an important tool for local authorities.

Where appropriate, local authorities should continue to work with schools and colleges to actively encourage neighbouring institutions to work together to stagger start and finish times to reduce pressure on transport services as the economy re-opens and demand for public transport increases. This has the potential, in some areas, to:

- spread demand for school and college travel over a longer period
- enable any additional capacity to be used more than once
- significantly increase the ability of public transport to support travel to school and college

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

Contracting additional coaches or other appropriate vehicles to provide dedicated school transport services

If there is still a need for additional transport capacity after all of the above measures have been considered, then local authorities should continue to procure suitable vehicles, where they are available at a local level.

The Department for Education has provided additional funding for local transport authorities to procure dedicated, additional transport capacity. Local transport authorities should try to ensure that the level of service provision reflects the level of attendance at educational establishments in order to ensure continued value for money.

It is a condition of the funding that local authorities will charge children and young people fares for using the additional transport, unless they are entitled to free home to school transport. The fares should be equivalent to the usual public transport fares for children and young people in their area.

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

Identifying existing bus services used exclusively or predominantly by school children and designating them as school only services

Many local authorities have worked with transport operators to temporarily designate some public bus services as school or college only services. This has included temporarily re-directing bus services from quieter periods to duplicate existing services on some key school routes. This has provided school and college only services for children and young people with minimal impact on members of the public who travel at these times.

Government will continue to work with local authorities and transport operators to ensure that these changes do not affect the availability of funding to operate these services. If this option is explored, local authorities should work with transport operators to ensure that sufficient alternative or residual services remain available for members of the public who would normally use these services.

Car use

Local authorities must actively consider the impacts of increased car use on local congestion and ensure that mitigations to minimise these impacts are implemented through their network management duty. The government expects local authorities to continue to discharge the duty placed on them by section 508A of the Education Act 1996 to promote sustainable travel and transport.

Part B: guidance for dedicated transport to

schools and other places of education for the 2020 to 2021 academic year

Dedicated transport to schools and colleges often carries the same group of children or young people on a regular basis. They do not mix with the general public on those journeys. This helps limit the number of other people with whom they come into contact.

This 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 colleges, whether on the public network or procured by the local authority, schools or parent groups. These are services which exclusively carry children and young people travelling to their place of education, including mainstream and special schools, colleges and alternative 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 colleges
- provided by transport operators (commercial travel routes) that cannot be used by members of the public when it is carrying children to school or college

Vehicles that provide transport to members of the public at other times are considered to be providing dedicated transport when they are exclusively carrying children and young people travelling to school or college.

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

- schools and colleges, 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

In this guidance, the term 'home to school transport' includes dedicated transport to other places of education such as further education colleges.

References to colleges in this guidance include all further education (FE) providers including general FE colleges, sixth form colleges, 16 to 19 academies, independent training providers, specialist post-16 institutions, adult community learning and designated institutions.

We have developed this guidance with advice from Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). We will keep it under review and update as necessary.

Key points

Local authorities remain under a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for all eligible children of compulsory school age. They also remain under a duty to publish a transport statement detailing what travel assistance they will provide for young people aged over 16.

Those involved in providing home to school transport must do all that is reasonably practicable to maximise social distancing where possible and minimise the risk of transmission. What is practicable is likely to vary according to local circumstances.

Local authorities, working with schools, colleges and transport operators as necessary, should:

- identify the risks arising from coronavirus (COVID-19)
- work through the system of controls set out in this guidance
- adopt measures in a way that addresses the identified risk, works in the local circumstances, and enables children and young people to attend their school or college

Local authorities are not required to uniformly apply the social distancing guidelines which are in place for public transport on dedicated school or college transport.

However, social distancing should still be put in place within vehicles wherever possible.

It is of vital importance to work through the steps set out in this guidance. In particular:

- maximising social distancing within vehicles wherever it is possible, between individuals or 'bubbles'
- maximising the ventilation of fresh air (from outside the vehicle) on dedicated school and college transport, particularly through opening windows and ceiling vents

It is the law that children and young people aged 11 and over must wear a face covering on public transport. PHE advises that children and young people aged 11 and over must also wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated transport to secondary school or college. This does not apply to those who are exempt from wearing a face covering on public transport. For more detail, see 6. Consider how to minimise contact and maintain social distancing wherever possible.

We believe the measures set out in this guidance represent an appropriate balance, because:

- the overall risk to children and young people of serious illness as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low
- they do not mix with the general public on dedicated transport
- dedicated transport often carries the same group of children and young people on a regular basis, and they may also be together in school or college
- the predictability of home to school transport will allow for planning so that protective measures can be put in place

Where something is essential for public health reasons, as advised by Public Health England (PHE), we have said 'must'. Where there is a legal requirement we have also said 'must'. This guidance does not create any new legal obligations.

The system of controls: protective measures

Local authorities, working with schools, colleges and transport operators as necessary, must review and update their risk assessments as the circumstances and the public health advice change. This is particularly relevant as more children and young people return to school and college.

The risk assessment should identify the risks arising from coronavirus (COVID-19) and take into account the ways the virus may be transmitted - through direct contact, surface transmission and through the air.

They should then work through the system of controls set out in this guidance and adopt measures in a way that addresses the identified risk, works in the local circumstances, and enables children and young people to attend their school or college.

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, it is mandatory to implement measures that are reasonably practicable and effective at reducing the risk. This means it is mandatory to consider the extent to which measures are reasonably practicable and, where they are, to take these measures.

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

This system of controls is equivalent to the PHE-endorsed system of controls set out in the guidance for schools, for special schools, and for places of further education.

When implemented in a way that addresses the identified risk, they create an inherently safer environment for children, young people and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. The way to control this virus is the same, even with the current new variants.

They cannot describe every scenario. They provide a set of principles, but local authorities will need to vary how they implement them according to local circumstances.

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

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate

When an individual develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or has a positive test

Children, young people and staff must not board home to school transport or public transport if:

- they have one or more symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- a member of their household (including someone in their support bubble or childcare bubble if they have one) has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms
- they are required to quarantine having recently visited countries outside the Common Travel Area
- they have had a positive test

They must immediately self-isolate and not attend their school or college for at least 10 days from the day after:

- the start of their symptoms
- the test date if they did not have any symptoms but have had a positive test (whether this was a lateral flow device (LFD) or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test)

Anyone told to isolate by NHS Test and Trace or by their public health protection team has a legal obligation to self-isolate, but you may leave home to avoid injury or illness or to escape risk of harm. For more information, read NHS Test and Trace: how it works.

If a child or young person develops symptoms or has a positive test while at school or college, they will be sent home to self-isolate. The school or college should contact the parent or carer who should make arrangements for the child or young person's journey home.

They should avoid using public transport and, wherever possible, be collected by a member of their family or household.

In exceptional circumstances, if parents or carers cannot arrange to have their child collected, if age-appropriate and safe to do so the child should walk, cycle or scoot home. If this is not possible, alternative arrangements may need to be organised by the school. The local authority may be able to help source a suitable vehicle which would provide appropriate protection for the driver, who must be made aware that the individual has tested positive or is displaying symptoms.

Anyone with symptoms or who has tested positive must follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

When an individual has had close contact with someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms

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

- the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive
- they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should self-isolate and arrange to have a test)
- they are requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace, the Public Health England (PHE) advice service or PHE local health protection team
- they have tested positive from an LFD test

People must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser after contact with someone who has symptoms.

If a person with symptoms has been in a vehicle that provides home to school transport, the vehicle must be cleaned with normal household disinfectant. This will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. For more information, read COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance.

2. Use face coverings, where required

In accordance with advice from PHE, children and young people aged 11 and over must wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated transport to secondary school or college.

Children under 11 may wear a face covering if they are able to handle it as directed. For more information, read how to wear a face covering.

Transparent face coverings which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate can also be worn. There is currently very limited evidence regarding the effectiveness or safety of transparent face coverings, but they may be more effective in reducing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) than not wearing a face covering at all.

Those who rely on visual signals for communication, or communicate with or provide support to such individuals, are currently exempt from any requirement to wear face coverings in schools or in public places.

Face visors or shields should not routinely be worn as an alternative to face coverings. They may protect against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are unlikely to be effective in preventing aerosol transmission. In a school environment they are unlikely to offer appropriate protection to the wearer.

Exemptions

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. This applies to those who:

- cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical impairment or disability, illness or mental health difficulties
- speak to or provide help to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate

The same exemptions will apply in education and childcare settings and you should be sensitive to those needs, noting that some people are less able to wear face coverings and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

Access to face coverings

Due to the increasing use of face coverings in wider society, staff and pupils are already likely to have access to face coverings. Public Health England has published guidance on how to make a simple face covering.

Safe wearing and removal of face coverings

Schools should have a process for how children and young people remove face coverings.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires the:

- cleaning of hands before and after touching - including to remove or put them on
- safe storage of them in individual, sealable plastic bags between use

If a face covering becomes damp, it should not be worn, and the face covering should be replaced carefully. Staff and pupils may consider bringing a spare face covering to wear if their face covering becomes damp during the day.

Children and young people should:

- not touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing it
- dispose of temporary face coverings in a ‘black bag’ waste bin (not recycling bin)
- place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them
- wash their hands again before heading to their classroom

3. 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 boarding transport and again on disembarking.

Drivers and passenger assistants should use hand sanitiser at intervals throughout the journey. They should always do so after performing tasks such as helping a child into the vehicle or handling a child's belongings.

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

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach is very important. Schools will be reinforcing this message with children, and local authorities may also wish to consider reinforcing it in their communication with families.

Children should be encouraged to carry tissues on home to school transport. These will need to be disposed of in a covered bin on transport or in school or college.

Some children and young people with complex needs will struggle to maintain good respiratory hygiene, for example those who spit uncontrollably or use saliva as a sensory stimulant. This should be considered when deciding what safeguards should be put in place in order to support these children and young people and the staff working with them. For more information, see 6. Consider how to minimise contact and maintain social distancing wherever possible.

5. Maintain enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is easy to kill on surfaces. Normal cleaning products will do this - specialist cleaning products are not needed. For more information on keeping public and private areas and modes of transport clean, read Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer transport guidance for operators.

Local authorities should work with transport operators to agree the arrangements for cleaning vehicles. Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned after each journey wherever possible, and enhanced cleaning should take place at the end of each day.

6. Consider how to minimise contact and maintain social distancing wherever possible

The guidance for schools recommends that, wherever possible, they should reduce the number of contacts between pupils and staff by keeping groups separate (in 'bubbles') and through maintaining distance between individuals.

The guidance for schools acknowledges that separating groups and maintaining distance will still bring benefits even if partially implemented, and that schools may need to allow mixing into wider groups in certain circumstances, including on transport. Siblings may also be in different groups.

Local authorities should work with schools and transport operators to consider how mixing might be minimised on school transport. However, we know that vehicle capacity and the complexity of some home to school and college transport arrangements mean there will often be limits to the extent to which mixing can be minimised.

Wherever possible, it is recommended that:

- children and young people from different schools do not travel at the same time or, if they do, the children from each school should sit together as a group
- children either sit with their 'bubble' on school transport, or with the same constant group of children each day
- local authorities and transport providers work with schools to put in place arrangements for organised queuing and boarding

Where distancing and grouping are not possible, other measures in the system of controls become even more important.

Local authorities, working with schools, colleges, transport operators, and parents as necessary, need to work through the list of measures below to decide on the appropriate package of measures for their circumstances:

appropriate package of measures for their circumstances.

- distancing between individual passengers or groups of passengers should be applied wherever possible - distancing is particularly important where children attending different schools travel on the same vehicle, and for certain children with complex needs, for example, those that spit uncontrollably
- working with schools or colleges and transport operators to consider whether children can sit with the other children in their 'bubble' on transport
- working with schools, colleges and transport operators to draw up seating arrangements so that children and young people understand where they need to sit on home to school transport - ensuring the same children always sit together will help to minimise the number of contacts each child has - for example:
  - allocating specific seats
  - having rules such as sitting in ascending year groups - front to back, youngest to oldest
  - 'first in, last out', with those children getting on first seated at the rear of the bus and the bus filling forwards (such arrangements will require clear communication between schools, families and children)
- avoiding the use of face-to-face seating on home to school transport wherever possible
- working with schools to put in place appropriate queuing or other arrangements needed for picking up and dropping off children and young people to ensure they are able maintain distancing when waiting for, boarding and alighting from transport
- providing clear information for families, young people and children about the arrangements needed for picking up and dropping off children and young people at their home destination

Operators should conduct a risk assessment for all their operations including dedicated school transport services. This will determine the most appropriate safety measures to put in place. The guidance for operators provides further advice for staff.

Children with SEND

When deciding on the package of measures that is appropriate on transport for children and young people with special educational needs, local authorities will need to take account the particular needs of the children using the transport, and to be informed by the views of the parents and school.

Special schools tend to be smaller, meaning all the children in a school might be in the same bubble. Also, special schools will typically use smaller vehicles. Both these things will help to minimise the number of contacts children with SEND have on school 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, maintaining distance on transport is particularly desirable.

We recognise that transporting children and young people with SEND may requireclose contact. Where this is the case,other measuresin the system of controlsshouldbe put in placeto reduce risk. For example, staff may want to wash or sanitise their hands more frequently.

Some children and young people with SEND will not be able to use a face covering properly and should not be expected to do so as this may increase the risk of transmission. Some children may be distressed by wearing a face covering, or by others wearing them. Others may become distressed if they and other people do not wear them.

Some children and young people may need to be able to lip read, or see people's faces, to communicate.

Staggered starts

Local authorities and schools may wish to consider staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times. This would keep groups of children apart as they arrive and leave and enable more journeys to take place outside of peak hours.

Staggered starts may be helpful where local authorities provide eligible children 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 it may not be possible for them to arrive at different times from one another. Schools, colleges 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.

7. Keep vehicles well ventilated when occupied

Good ventilation reduces the concentration of the virus in the air, which reduces the risk from airborne transmission.

It is important to ensure vehicles are well ventilated when occupied, particularly by opening windows and ceiling vents. Heating should be used as necessary to ensure comfort levels are maintained.

8. Wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary

Face coverings are not classified as personal protective equipment (PPE). PPE is used in a limited number of settings to protect wearers against hazards and risks, such as surgical masks or respirators used in medical and industrial settings. A face covering is a covering of any type that covers your nose and mouth.

Most staff on school transport will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. If a pupil already has routine care needs that involve the use of PPE, the same PPE should continue to be used.

Additional PPE for coronavirus (COVID-19) is only required in a very limited number of scenarios, for example, when:

- a pupil becomes ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, and only then if a 2 metre distance cannot be maintained
- performing aerosol generating procedures (AGPs)

When working with children and young people who cough, spit or vomit but do not have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, only any PPE that would be routinely worn should be worn.

The guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care provides more information about preventing and controlling infection. This includes:

- when and how PPE should be used
- what type of PPE to use
- how to source it

9. Engage in asymptomatic testing, where available

Rapid testing remains a vital part of our plan to suppress this virus.

The Department for Transport is working with NHS Test and Trace to scale up workplace testing for public and private organisations across the transport sector. The self-employed and organisations with fewer than 50 employees or a widely dispersed workforce can access the expanding community testing sites being rolled out by local authorities.

10. Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process

Children on transport will need to:

- book a test if they have symptoms
- self-isolate immediately if:
  - they develop symptoms
  - they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for coronavirus

(COVID-19)
  - anyone in their household or support or childcare bubble develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
  - they are required to do so having recently travelled from certain other countries
  - they have been advised to isolate by NHS Test and Trace or the PHE local health protection team, which is a legal requirement
- 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

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can and should get a test. Tests for symptomatic illness can be booked online through the NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus (COVID-19) website, or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet.

Essential workers, which includes anyone involved in education or childcare and those involved in transporting passengers, have priority access to testing.

All children and young people can be tested if they have symptoms. This includes children under 5, but children aged 11 and under will need to be helped by their parents or carers if using a home testing kit.

NHS COVID-19 app

The app is available to anyone aged 16 and over to download if they choose.

11. 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.

A close contact includes:

- anyone who lives in the same household as someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)
- anyone who has had any of the following types of contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) with a PCR or LFD test:
  - face-to-face contact including being coughed on or having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
  - been within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
  - sexual contacts
  - been within 2 metres of someone for more than 15 minutes (either as a one-off contact, or added up together over one day)
  - travelled in the same vehicle or a plane

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.

To maximise home to school transport capacity, some local authorities have asked parents to accept personal travel budgets or mileage allowances to take their child to school or college. 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 college while 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.

Some drivers and passenger assistants may feel concerned about going 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.

Guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable is available.

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 colleges 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 who is required 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, colleges and transport operators will need a shared understanding of the arrangements for children and young people's arrival at school or college 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.

Schools may wish to 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 includes the consequences for poor behaviour and deliberately breaking the rules, and how they will enforce those rules, including any sanctions.

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