



Home to School Transport

A Guide for Parents, Carers and Pupils



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Stockport Travel Co-ordination Service

The Transport Process

Once an application has been approved, an initial risk analysis is undertaken in order to determine the safest and most appropriate form of travel support. This is based on information from the application form, the EHC Plan (if there is one) and any other supporting documents submitted with the application (e.g. medical protocol, letter from a consultant). If necessary, officers will contact the parents/carers or professionals for more information. We will in the first instance, undertake an assessment for Independent Travel Training (ITT). If appropriate a training programme will be offered. If training is not appropriate, a personal budget or supported transport will be put in place. *Please note that if travel training is offered and you choose that your child will not take part, you will have to make your own transport arrangements to school.*

When a taxi/minibus/fully accessible vehicle is identified as being the most suitable form of travel support, a Travel One Page Profile is produced in consultation with parent/ carer. This is a brief document that summarises a student's needs (e.g. communication, physical, behavioural, medical etc.) and what actions drivers/passenger assistants must take to meet these and ensure the journey is safe and stress free for the student, other passengers and staff. The one page profile also contains the emergency contact details provided by the parents/carers on the application form. The driver/passenger assistant staff will store the one page profile securely in the vehicle when transporting the student.

If the child or young person uses a wheelchair, this provides guidance to the driver/passenger assistant on how to correctly restrain the chair and what equipment should be used. Where it is possible for a student to transfer from their wheelchair to a seat in the vehicle unaided, they will not be transported in their wheelchair (it is always safer for children and young people to travel in a seat).

Where the risk analysis/assessment identifies that a student should be transported by taxi, minibus or fully accessible vehicle, officers will check the existing transport network to see if there is a spare seat available as this is the quickest and most cost-effective solution (unless it has been identified that the child or young person requires solo transport). When a suitable vehicle is identified, officers contact the transport company (known as the 'operator') to confirm they can take another passenger.

Officers send the transport company a copy of the Travel one page profile and allow time for this to be received and the home visit to take place before transport can begin. If it is not possible to accommodate the student in an existing vehicle, officers will need to procure new transport. This involves writing a tender specification (this outlines exactly what type of transport is required to meet the student's needs) and inviting a pool of approved transport companies to bid for this work. The length of time that specifications are advertised for depends on a number of factors and can be anything from 3 to 10 days – although longer adverts usually mean we can continue with the same operator for a longer period of time without having to change a child or young person's transport. Once the deadline for the submission of bids has passed, the bids are opened and evaluated.

The contract is then awarded. Officers then have to send the transport company a copy of the travel one page profile and allow time for this to be received and the operator to make contact with parent/carers before transport can start. Sometimes no bids will be submitted which means officers will have to go out to tender for a second time and in these circumstances, they will usually advertise the contract for longer.

Frequently asked Questions

What type of travel support will you provide?

A number of different forms of travel support are provided, including walking escorts, bus passes, independent travel training, personal transport budget, taxis/minibuses and fully accessible (wheelchair) vehicles. The mode of travel support is determined by the risk analysis/assessment which ensures that it is safe and appropriate for the student. The form of travel support is regularly reviewed to check that it continues to meet each child or young person's needs and also to ensure that it remains cost effective.

Will my child have a passenger assistant?

The risk analysis/assessment will determine whether a student requires a passenger assistant and one will only be provided when there is a risk to the health and safety of the student or to other passengers. Passenger assistants are required to stay close to the vehicle at all times as they are responsible for the students in the vehicle. They are not expected to leave the vehicle to accompany children and young people into their homes. If a passenger assistant is suddenly taken ill and it is not possible to find a replacement, the transport may have to be cancelled or delayed. If a passenger assistant is provided, this will be reviewed as part of our regular monitoring of the suitability of transport arrangements and may be removed if the risk assessment identifies that this is no-longer required.

Will my child be able to meet the transport staff?

All transport companies are required to ensure contact is made with parent/carers either via a phone call or a home visit before new transport commences. This aims to provide an opportunity for the child or young person and their parents/carers to meet the driver/passenger assistant and for the student's needs to be discussed in detail, using the travel one page profile.

How can I be sure the transport is safe?

We take every precaution to ensure your child's safety when travelling on the vehicle. In particular we ensure that:

- All drivers and passenger assistants have an enhanced DBS check

- All passenger assistants should wear an ID badge at all times

- All students joining the transport network will have a Travel One Page Profile (the existing students are in the process of being provided with a Travel One Page Profile so that drivers/passenger assistants understand each child or young person's needs)

- All transport companies will contact the family to ensure the driver/passenger assistant can meet the student, prior to the transport commencing (the contents of the Travel One Page Profile should be discussed in detail)

- Site visits take place to check:

- The roadworthiness of vehicles (e.g. inspecting tyres)

- That contract terms are being met (e.g. if we have asked the transport company to supply a passenger assistant, there is one being provided)
- The safety of the site, traffic flow and, drivers and passenger assistants use of equipment (e.g. tail lifts for wheelchairs).
- DBS and ID checks

Any concerns raised by parents/carers, schools or anyone else supporting children and young people and their families (e.g. Social Worker) are fully investigated in a timely way

Training will be provided with support from our special schools for drivers/passenger assistants on topics that relate specifically to the students they are transporting.

What happens if my child requires medication on board transport?

Drivers and passenger assistants are not authorised to administer medication or to undertake any form of medical intervention. However, we can still transport students with medical needs and these will be included on the Travel One Page Profile and we will where necessary consult with the school nursing team for advice and support. In the event of an emergency, the vehicle will stop in a safe place and a member of staff will call 999. If a parent/carer does not want their child to travel on board transport because no medication can be administered, a Personal Travel Budget can be offered as an alternative.

Are students allowed to eat on transport?

No food or drink of any description should be consumed during the journey.

What should I do if the transport arrangements are not working well?

If parents/carers have any concerns regarding the safety and appropriateness of the transport being provided for their child, they should contact the Travel Co-ordination Team immediately. We can discuss the issue and where necessary take follow-up action with the transport company concerned. We are aware that some parents/carers are reluctant to contact us when problems arise because they are concerned that transport may be removed from their child or the driver/passenger assistant will find out that they have reported an issue. However, we do not withdraw assistance because a parent/carer has raised concerns and we can investigate most issues in a way that does not identify the source of the information. We would encourage parents/carers to report problems as they arise, as this allows us to address them at an early stage in case the issue escalates and more significant action needs to be taken.

The types of concerns that parents/carers contact us to discuss include:

Frequent changes of driver or passenger assistant, particularly if there is no notice (over and above changes due to sickness, annual leave, training courses etc.)

Early or late running - (although when a new contract begins, there will be a settling in period within which the timings may vary as the driver gets used to the route)

Lack of understanding of a student's needs (the driver and passenger assistant should have a copy of the Travel One Page Profile which is kept securely in the vehicle)

Unsafe practices (for example, students exiting a minibus from a side door facing into the road).

Poor communication (for example, not contacting parents/carers to advise about changes to collection or drop off times, or changes to drivers/passenger assistants)

Where a breach of contract is identified, we can take various forms of action against the transport company.

What happens when a vehicle arrives at the school?

The exact arrangements vary between schools and according to the student's age and needs. Therefore transport companies will agree suitable arrangements with each school. However, if parents/carers have any concerns, they should contact us to discuss these.

Is it possible to change the collection/drop-off time?

The transport company will inform the parents/carers of the collection and drop-off times that are necessary to ensure their child and other passengers arrive at school on time and that journey times are minimised at both ends of the day. As the timings need to support the efficient operation of the route, family circumstances (e.g. work commitments, siblings attending different schools) cannot be taken into account. If parents/carers contact us to raise this as an issue, we will check the route order with the transport company to see if any alterations can be made, but unfortunately this is usually not possible. In addition, due to changes to the transport network (for example, students joining or leaving a vehicle due to school moves or changes of address), the collection and drop-off times may change over time, but every effort will be made to provide parents/carers with notice of any alterations.

If you cannot change the collection/drop-off time, can my child be transported from/to a different location (e.g. sibling's school, childminder, grandparents)?

Due to the scale and complexity of the home to school transport network daily, it is usually not possible to respond to requests for transport to/from different addresses, even when these are a short distance apart (although officers can consider these when there are exceptional circumstances, such as Social Care involvement, and the change would not incur any additional cost and would not have a detrimental impact on any other passengers). Parents/carers are advised to explore what before and after school provision is available.

What happens if I cannot meet my child at the designated drop-off time?

A responsible adult must be at home to receive the child or young person at the agreed time they are returned from school. Transport staff cannot wait for an adult to arrive as this not only makes other students late home, but it places an inappropriate level of responsibility on drivers and passenger assistants. To ensure your child's safety, if there is no-one available at home to meet your child, your child will be taken to the 2nd emergency contact address you have provided, (this may incur an additional charge). If the 2nd emergency contact is not available, social care will be contacted and the child will be taken to the nearest Police station. In the event that an adult is unavailable to receive the student, the parents/carers will be advised of their responsibility to ensure someone is available in the future. If this recurs, the transport may be withdrawn until officers are satisfied that proper arrangements are in place.

What happens in bad weather?

In severe weather conditions (e.g. snow, storms, floods) it may be necessary to either change or cancel transport arrangements for safety reasons. It is an individual driver's decision as to whether they can operate or take a certain route, as they are the only responsible party who is aware of all the facts. It is vital that they put the safety of the students first and this means that we cannot insist that the transport runs, or that a child or young person is taken directly to their home if there is no safe route available. If you are advised by the transport company that your child's morning journey has been cancelled, you should assume that the afternoon journey will also be cancelled, unless you hear otherwise.

Parents/carers who have chosen to take their children to school during bad weather should ensure they have confirmed return transport arrangements for their child before leaving them at school. Transport is arranged to run at set times and therefore if a school decides to close early due to adverse weather, it may not be possible for transport companies to arrive earlier than normal. Therefore the school will need to ensure that students are supervised until they are collected. If a parent/carer does not want their child to attend school during bad weather (perhaps due to concerns that they could get stranded at the school or during the journey) they should contact the transport company to inform them at the earliest opportunity.

What happens if there is a breakdown or accident?

If it is not possible for a vehicle to complete its journey, the transport company will make alternative arrangements (this is usually in the form of a replacement vehicle). If the vehicle breaks down prior to the morning collection, the driver/passenger assistant will contact the parents/carers to notify them and to advise on the anticipated arrival time. Should there be a breakdown or accident whilst your child is on board, they should follow any instructions given by the driver/passenger assistant to ensure they remain safe. Parents/carers will be contacted as soon as possible by the Travel Co-ordination Team if their child is on a vehicle involved in a road traffic accident/ incident.

What happens if my child is ill and cannot go to school?

If your child is unwell and unable to attend school, you should contact the Travel Coordination Team at the earliest opportunity (an answerphone is on out of office hours) Parents/carers should provide the Travel Co-ordination Team with an estimated return date and contact them again when their child has recovered and transport needs reinstating. If your child is taken ill during school hours it is parent/carers responsibility to collect them and to inform the travel Coordination Team.

The transport has not turned up. What should I do?

Usually the transport company would contact the parent/carers to let them know there has been a delay. However, if you do not receive a call, contact the Travel Coordination Team to ask for an update. If the vehicle is often late, parents/carers should contact the Travel Co-ordination Team so that this can be investigated.

What can be done if the transport company keeps changing the driver/passenger assistant, as my child is having difficulty coping with this?

We recognise that for some students with special educational needs, change can be very unsettling. Where consistency of staffing has been recognised as being important to a child or young person, this is included in the Travel One Page Profile. However, some changes are inevitable (for example, due to sickness, holiday entitlement, course attendance, staff turnover) and alterations may need to be made from time to time to ensure the most efficient use of the available resources. When changes are made, the transport company should notify the travel coordination team and they will contact parents/carers in advance (where possible) and provide an opportunity for the new member of staff to meet the student before any journeys are undertaken.

My child is having a phased entry to school or a part time timetable. Can you provide transport at other times of the day?

Transport can only be provided at the beginning and end of normal school days, and therefore the parents/carers are responsible for any journeys required during the day. Transport services cannot be tailored to meet individual timetables, but consideration will be given whenever possible to minimise inconvenience to the young person. This means that specific transport will not be provided if the public or contracted transport times are not in line with a young person's timetable. In such circumstances, students or parents are expected to make suitable adjustments to their travel arrangements.

My child lives at more than one address. Can transport be arranged from two different locations?

Transport can only be provided to/from a student's permanent home address. This is considered to be a residential property that is a child or young person's only or main residence, and is either owned by the student's parents/carers or leased to or rented by the student's parents/carers. Where parents have shared responsibility for a child, and the child lives with both parents for part of the week, then the main residence will be determined as the address where the child lives the majority of the week. Parents/carers may be required to submit documentary evidence when entitlement to transport assistance is being assessed.

Is transport ever suspended?

It is expected that each school promote appropriate standards of behaviour by pupils on their journey to and from school through rewarding positive behaviour and using sanctions to address poor behaviour. The EIA 2006 empowers Headteacher to take action to address unacceptable behaviour even when this takes place outside the school premises and when pupils are not under the legal control of the school, but when it is reasonable to do so. This would include behaviour on school buses, or otherwise on the route to and from school, whether or not the pupils are in school uniform.

Transport can be withdrawn, either for a temporary period, or permanently for more serious or repeated cases of misbehaviour. Equally, the behaviour of pupils outside school can be considered as grounds for exclusion. This will be a matter of judgment for the Headteacher.

A different transport company now transports my child but we preferred the old one. Can this be changed back?

The Travel Co-ordination Team has to ensure that transport arrangements are safe and appropriate for all students and that contracts are managed in line with public sector procurement regulations. Therefore, the periodic review and retendering of contracts is unavoidable due to our legal obligations and these can result in a change to the type of vehicle, the route or the transport company. However, officers will always notify parents/carers of any changes in advance and the new transport company should arrange for the driver/passenger assistant to undertake a home visit prior to the new transport starting. We have carried out checks on all the transport companies being used to ensure they meet our standards and they are all expected to maintain the same level of service. However, if parents/carers have any concerns, they should report these to us immediately so that they can be fully investigated.

What happens if we move house?

If you are planning to move house, you must contact us to discuss this as a change in circumstances may affect your child's eligibility for transport assistance. We can advise on the type of form you will need to complete and the evidence we will require (e.g. a copy of the exchange of contracts for a mortgage or the tenancy agreement for a rental). In general, parents/carers need to allow five working days for entitlement to be re-assessed and if the student remains entitled to assistance, this could take up another 25 days, this is dependent on whether a vehicle is currently going to the school from the area you have moved to (this can take longer if there are no spare seats and transport has to be procured).

Expectations

What parents/carers can expect from the transport company:

All drivers/passenger assistants will:

- Carry identification badges
- Have an enhanced DBS check
- Be able to communicate clearly with students/parents/carers
- Have read and understood the Travel One Page Profile
- Contact the parents/carers prior to the operation of a new contract
- Be presentable and have a clean appearance
- Not use mobile phones unless this work related
- Treat students/parents/carers in a respectful and courteous manner
- The vehicle provided will be fit for purpose and the company will make a replacement vehicle available should this be required
- The vehicle provided is always operated to a high standard of cleanliness
- All seats in vehicles have a working seatbelt, and passenger restraints and wheelchair securing devices are provided as required
- Drivers/passenger assistants are fully trained in operating any ancillary equipment fitted to a vehicle e.g. tail lift, wheelchair securing equipment, passenger harnesses etc.
- Drivers provide a high standard of driving

Drivers/passenger assistants are aware of their duties and responsibilities, particularly in the event of an emergency

Drivers/passenger assistants do not smoke during the performance of the contract

Upon arrival at the agreed collection or drop-off time, drivers wait for up to five minutes (although they cannot be expected to do this on a regular basis - see section below)

Drivers/passenger assistants keep parents/carers informed of any significant delay to transport

Transport companies notify the SEN Transport Team of any incident or accident affecting the students

Transport companies avoid, where possible, changes in drivers/passenger assistants.

What parents/carers can do to help transport to run smoothly?

Ensure that your child is ready five minutes before the company is due to arrive.

Drivers are only able to wait for a maximum of five minutes after the agreed pick up time for each student. However, drivers should not be made to wait for five minutes on a regular basis because if waiting is repeated along the route, all students will be late for school. If a vehicle arrives on time but your child is not ready or is not ready after the five minute waiting time, transport to school becomes the responsibility of the parents/carers.

Take your child to the vehicle (the driver/passenger assistant is not expected to escort them from the house to the vehicle).

Be at home in time to receive your child on their return from school. If there is no responsible adult at home to meet your child (this person must be named on your application form as a parent/carer or emergency contact), you may be asked to meet any additional expenditure involved in ensuring your child is returned to you safely. In such cases, it may be necessary for officers to contact other agencies (e.g. Social Care or the Police).

If your child requires a child seat or booster seat for the journey, given the variety of size and design of child and booster seats we would expect parents / carers to provide these for the young person, these will then be transferred between home and the vehicle.

Inform the Travel Co-ordination Team as soon as possible if your child is not attending school for any reason (e.g. illness). In addition, do not forget to inform the school.

Inform the Travel Co-ordination Team if your child does not use transport in the morning (for whatever reason) and you take your child to school later that day, but you would like the transport company to bring the child home in the afternoon.

Inform the Travel Co-ordination Team if you collect your child from school during the day (e.g. to take him/her to a medical appointment) meaning they do not need transport home at the end of the school day.

Ensuring the passenger assistant/driver is aware of anything affecting your child on a particular day.

Ensuring, where possible, your child is aware of appropriate behaviour whilst travelling to and from school.

Ensuring your child does not leave personal belongings on the vehicle. If this does occur, parents/carers should contact the transport company/driver/passenger assistant.

Providing us (on the application form) with the name, telephone number and relationship to your child of at least one adult who can take responsibility for your child in an emergency if you are not available.

Informing us of any changes that might affect the transport arrangements, including but not limited to: changes to your address; changes to your contact details or those of your emergency contact(s); allergies or medication (please note that drivers and passenger assistants are not authorised to administer medication or undertake any form of medical intervention); or if your child is getting a new wheelchair.

Notifying us of any problems with the transport so that these can be addressed in timely and appropriate way.

Providing positive feedback on transport companies so that this can be fed back to them and good practice can be shared with other transport companies.

Notifying us of any problems with the transport so that these can be addressed in a timely and appropriate way.

Contact Details

If you have any questions about home to school transport for students with special educational needs and/or a disability, you can contact us on 0161 474 2504 or email travelcoordination@stockport.gov.uk

Please contact us if you would like to:

- Discuss the application process or ask a question about the eligibility criteria

- Request that we post a blank application form to you

- Check we have received your application form

- Discuss a refusal to provide transport assistance and the options available to you

- Raise a concern about the current transport arrangements

- Report a problem with the transport company (e.g. late collection)

- Provide positive feedback on the transport company

- Inform us of a forthcoming change of address

- Explore the possibility of changing the form of transport assistance provided (e.g. moving from taxi/minibus to Personal Travel Budget, independent travel training to facilitate the use of a public/school bus)

- Provide an update on your child's needs (e.g. change of medication, new wheelchair, improvement or deterioration of an existing condition)