

**TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN**

**HOME TO SCHOOL/COLLEGE TRANSPORT**

**INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS,  
OPERATORS, SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

## **Introduction**

Together for Children provides transport to and from educational establishments for approximately 1200 young people.

This booklet has been created to help set out the obligations of all those involved with school transport, so everyone is clear about their role. An efficient and reliable service can only be provided if everyone involved co-operates fully with the requirements set out within the booklet.

## **The Legal and Policy Regulations Relating to Home to School Transport in the City of Sunderland**

The Education Act 1944 as amended by the Education Acts 1986 and 1996, the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Inspections Act 2006 sets out the statutory minimum provision for home to school transport which authorities must provide. Sections 39 and 55 of the Education Act 1944 contain the principal provisions.

Sunderland City Council Children's Services has a general policy to provide transport to young people where:

- an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) deems transport is necessary to the named provision
- a young person is attending a SEN Specialist provision on an assessment basis and meets the distance criteria
- the Transport Lead agrees to a recommendation from a Senior Clinical Medical Officer of the Health Authority to provide transport on a temporary basis for medical reasons (reviewed annually)
- a young person resides in an area not covered by public transport and is attending their nearest appropriate school
- a young person is attending their nearest appropriate school and that school is over three miles by the shortest walking distance from their home address for secondary aged pupils and two miles for primary aged pupils. Distance is always measured as accompanied.

## **Points to consider in Home to School Transport**

- The provision of an adult escort on home to school transport routes is not a legal obligation but will form part of a contractual agreement with the operator where it is deemed necessary.
- Young people, where deemed appropriate, will be encouraged to participate in Independent Travel Training. The training offers young people an opportunity to help them develop an extremely important life skill.
- The School Transport Mileage Rate (STMR) is an alternative option for parents/carers to consider if a young person meets the eligibility criteria for assistance with travel.

For further information around Independent Travel Training or the School Transport Mileage Rate, please contact Home to School Transport (☎ 561 2284)

Eligibility for assistance with travel is covered in greater detail within Together for Children's Home to School Transport Policy and the Post 16 Travel Statement. These documents can be found at [www.togetherforchildren.org.uk/](http://www.togetherforchildren.org.uk/)

## Parents/Carers

We would ask you as parents/carers to:

- always remember that it is your responsibility to ensure your child is at the pick-up point agreed with the operator.
- always ensure that your child is taken to and collected from the vehicle by a responsible adult. An approximate time can be arranged with your driver.
- always remember that if your child is late for the vehicle, it will not wait. If you miss the vehicle, for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school.
- please impress upon your child the need to wear the seatbelt provided. If a young person refuses to wear a seatbelt or continually unfasten seatbelts, the provision of transport may be withdrawn.
- please note that any persistent misbehaviour on the vehicle may result in the withdrawal of home to school transport.
- report any concerns you may observe or hear in relation to the vehicle, driver or escort transporting your child.

Whenever a change occurs in the contractual arrangements, Home to School Transport will notify you in writing and supply you with the telephone number of the contractor, unless the arrangement was made by way of an emergency and little or no notice was possible.

Home to School Transport routes are subject to Compulsive Competitive Tendering and as such, Together for Children are unable to guarantee that the same operator will continually provide transport for your child. However, we will always endeavour to ensure that the transport provided is safe and reliable with a number of stringent checks conducted with the successful transport operators.

## Frequently asked questions by parents/carers

*Why does the driver/escort not knock on our door?*

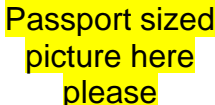

Drivers and escorts are not required to leave the vehicle in order to ring the doorbell of your home address or knock on your door. In a similar manner the driver is not permitted to sound the vehicles horn.

*What happens if the transport is unable to gain access near to my front door?*

If you live in an area inaccessible to larger vehicles, you should arrange an appropriate pick-up point with the driver (i.e. a local covered bus stop) in order that your child can remain dry during bad weather.

*Have all the drivers/escorts been police cleared?*

All drivers/escorts employed to operate school contracts on behalf of Together for Children are required to have received clearance through the Disclosure & Barring Scheme (DBS). Once clearance is received an Education Permit is issued which must be worn at all times when transporting children (see example). DBS checks are required every 3 years. If you wish to validate the identity of your driver or escort, please contact Home to School Transport (☎ 561 2284).

Permit Number: <b>A001</b>	
Full Name: <b>An Other</b>	
 <b>APPROVED OPERATOR</b>	
Valid To: <b>22<sup>nd</sup> August 2025</b>	

*Example of an education permit*

*How long will the vehicle wait for my child?*

It is parental responsibility to ensure that your child is ready at the specified pick-up time. If for any reason your child is not ready when the transport arrives then the driver is only required to wait a few minutes.

*Does the driver/escort have any training?*

All drivers and escorts must hold a valid PATs Certificate (Passenger Assistant Training). The training includes, manual handling, basic first aid and dealing with children displaying challenging behaviours. In addition to PATs, Together for Children have made it compulsory that all mini-bus drivers and escorts complete an online Safeguarding Course. Taxi drivers already complete this course as part of their taxi licence. Both PATs and Safeguarding are refreshed every 3 years.

Please read all sections in this booklet so that you are aware of others' responsibilities with regard to the provision of Home to School Transport.

If you wish to make a complaint regarding any aspect of your child's transport to and from school, please send this in writing to:

[paul.tomlin@togetherforchildren.org.uk](mailto:paul.tomlin@togetherforchildren.org.uk)

or

[tracey.jackson@togetherforchildren.org.uk](mailto:tracey.jackson@togetherforchildren.org.uk)

## Operators/Contractors

We would ask that you as Operator/Contractor always:

- observe the conditions of the contract.
- ensure that all drivers/escorts have received clearance through the Disclosure & Barring Scheme and have been issued with an Education Permit. **Never use a member of staff who has not been issued with an Education Permit.**
- ensure that all drivers/escorts wear the Education Permit issued by the Home to School Transport at all times whilst transporting children.
- provide contact telephone numbers to all relevant employees in order that the Home to School Transport, the School and Parents can be contacted in case of emergencies or breakdown.
- ensure that someone is available to receive calls. Parents will be supplied with the telephone number of the operator hold holds the contract prior to its commencement; this may save you time and expense if a parent/carer is calling to tell you not to collect a young person.
- ensure that drivers and escorts meet with parents/carers and young people prior to the commencement of the contract. This will give parents the opportunity to discuss any special difficulties/conditions with the driver/escort.
- inform all drivers that they should not stop during the journey, except in an emergency, or when directed to do so by a traffic signal or police officer.
- ensure that drivers and escorts are issued with a copy of this booklet and the guidelines for operators' arrivals and departures.

## Drivers

Before commencing a Home to School contract, you must ensure that you have a valid Education Permit, and this is worn at all times. Further information regarding the Education Permits can be obtained from either your employer or Home to School Transport (☎ 561 2284)

The young people who use Home to School Transport have Special Educational Needs, of which some may include; learning, language, emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is essential that you maintain a friendly yet professional manner, with a sensitive approach towards both the young person and their family/carers.

If a responsible adult is not available to accept the young person at the home address and no-one appears after a reasonable amount of time, be prepared to carry them for the remainder of the journey before returning to the home address. Bring the incident to the notice of the operator/school/Home to School Transport.

We would ask you as drivers to:

- ensure that you have received the appropriate clearance from the Disclosure & Barring Scheme (DBS) and have been issued with an Education Permit. This should be worn at all times whilst carrying out Home to School Transport routes.
- ensure that you hold a valid PAT's (Passenger Assistant Training) certificate before commencing any Home to School Transport work.
- ensure you have completed the online Safeguarding Training Course
- never drive a vehicle you consider to be un-roadworthy.
- ensure you conduct a daily check of your vehicle, including tyres and lights
- inform your operator if the timings or logistics of the route are proving difficult
- always approach each pick up point and school slowly and with care. Always allow the young person to board and alight the vehicle from the pavement.
- familiarise yourself with, and be aware of, any specific problems a young person may have, and be prepared to assist the escort if necessary.
- always keep the doors closed until the vehicle has come to a complete standstill.
- never allow young people to operate the doors or any other mechanical/ electrical equipment on the vehicle (i.e. windows).
- never drive the vehicle until all passengers are seated and have fastened their seatbelts.

- ensure all young people are clear of the vehicle before moving away and never encourage them to cross a road immediately in front of, or behind, the vehicle.
- co-operate at all times with school staff over arrangements of parking and the arrival and departure of young people in the school grounds. Further information regarding arrival and departure procedures at schools can be requested from Home to School Transport.
- familiarise yourself with any safety equipment on board the vehicle and ensure it is used correctly.
- ensure there is No Smoking at any time during the delivery of this service (including electronic cigarettes).
- understand that it is an offence to use a handheld mobile phone whilst driving.
- never leave a young person in the vehicle unattended.
- never offer any young person, food, drinks or gifts.
- please switch off your engines when assisting passengers into your vehicle on school premises (unless this affects a tail lift or other essential electronic equipment within the vehicle).
- adhere to and understand the Safe Touch Policy operated by Home to School Transport. Details of this policy can be found on Page 10 of this Booklet.
- never engage in personal e-mail, telephone, text or social media contact with young people in your vehicle.



## Escorts

Escorts are usually appointed by the contractor providing the transport and the following guidelines are to ensure that the service you provide is of a high standard.

Before starting work you must ensure that you have a valid Education Permit and wear it at all times whilst operating Home to School Transport Contracts. Further information regarding these permits can be obtained from either your employer or Home to School Transport (☎ 561 2284).

It is also your responsibility to ensure you hold a valid PAT's (Passenger Assistant Training) certificate before commencing any Home to School Transport contracts and that you have completed the online Safeguarding Training Course.

The young people who use Home to School Transport have Special Educational Needs, some of which include learning, language, emotional or behavioural difficulties and so the ability to relate in a friendly and sensitive manner is essential.

As an escort we ask that you ensure all young people travel in safety and you can assist by:

- keeping all doors closed until the vehicle is at a complete standstill
- not allowing passengers to open or close the doors
- ensuring that all pupils are clear of the vehicle and cannot return for left luggage
- assisting parents to help passengers board the vehicle
- preventing the young people from crossing the road directly in front or behind the vehicle
- closing all doors and ensuring passengers are seated and that seatbelts are fastened, before the driver moves off.
- stowing all luggage safely, not in the aisles.
- never engage in personal e-mail, telephone, text or social media contact with young people in your vehicle.

You should never leave a young person unattended, if necessary, summon the help of others. Please note that it is not your responsibility to knock on parents' doors; you should always remain with the young people in the vehicle.

We would ask that you:

Try to control behaviour on the vehicle as effectively as possible. **Never evict a young person from the vehicle**, incidents of unacceptable behaviour or inappropriate language should be reported to School, Parent/Carer and Home to School Transport.

Always maintain a courteous and professionally detached relationship with the young people. Inappropriate conversation topics and language should be avoided at all times. The giving and receiving of gifts is also not appropriate.

Ensure that you are familiar with the specific problems of the young people you escort, be prepared to deal with any problems should the need arise. If you require additional training, discuss this with the contractor who may be able to make the appropriate arrangements.

Home to School Transport operates a Safe Touch Policy that escorts should adhere to at all time. Details of this policy can be found on Page 10 of this Booklet.

There must be **No Smoking** at any time during the delivery of this service.

**If a responsible adult is not available to accept a young person at home and no-one appears after a reasonable time, be prepared to carry them for the remainder of the journey before returning to the home address. Bring the incident to the attention of Home to School Transport.**

## **Safe Touch Policy – Drivers and Escorts**

Together for Children Home to School Transport operate a Safe Touch Policy for all Drivers and Escorts. Physical contact may occur whilst young people are transported in various circumstances; assistance offered to young people boarding and alighting the vehicle, safety concerns and the proximity of passengers within the vehicle.

The information below offers clear guidance as to when physical contact may be appropriate;

### **Casual / Informal / Incidental Touch**

Staff use touch with children as part of a normal relationship, for example, comforting a child, giving reassurance and congratulating. Touch may also be a result of putting an arm out to bar an exit from a vehicle, taking a child by the hand, patting on the back or putting an arm around the shoulders. The benefit of this action is often proactive and could prevent a situation escalating or keep a child safe.

It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary.

### **Positive Handling/Restrictive Intervention**

Positive Handling/Restrictive Intervention will only be used as a last resort in order to stop students:

- causing injury to themselves
- causing injury to other pupils
- damaging property
- having a negative impact on good order

The overriding principle relating to positive handling is that the best interests of the child take precedence over every other consideration. The UK Children Act 1989 stated that, the welfare of the child shall be the paramount consideration.

Drivers and Escorts should not attempt to physically restrain any young person unless the safety of the young person or other passengers is of major concern. Young people should not be physically pushed or pulled into seats on the vehicle, but instead be guided to an appropriate seat. In no circumstance should a driver or escort physically reprimand a young person (i.e. slap hand or leg).

It is the responsibility of the driver and escort to ensure a young person's safety whilst on their vehicle and to report any incidents that have occurred on a journey to staff within School and/or their Operator.

## **Schools/Academies/Colleges:**

- Do not give young people permission to travel on home to school transport until this has been authorised by Home to School Transport. The presence of an unauthorised passenger in the vehicle may invalidate any insurance cover.
- Do not ask the driver/escort to drop a young person at a different address without seeking permission from Home to School Transport.
- Ensure that young people understand the rules for behaviour and safety on school transport, incidents of bad behaviour should be reported to parents/carers and Home to School Transport.
- Ensure adequate supervision whilst young people are alighting from and boarding the vehicles on, or near, school premises.
- Work together with driver/escort/School Transport in cases of unacceptable behaviours.
- Monitor the times as to when vehicles arrive and depart the premises. If issues are recorded on a regular basis relating to timings, please contact Home to School Transport.
- It is very helpful to drivers and escorts if young people are taken to them in their transport group. This not only saves time but helps the driver and escort know who requires transport home that afternoon (i.e. if a young person remains for after school activities).
- If a young person is given an object to take on to the vehicle by staff, please explain this to the driver and escort (i.e. if this object is something that offers the young person a sensory stimulation)
- Please do not attempt to put a young person on a vehicle if they are in an obvious state of distress or have displayed behavioural concerns near to the time of transport collection
- Do not give young people any food or drink to take on to the vehicle

**Provide safe access to and departure from school premises. Schools should make efforts to ensure that private cars are not parked in such a way that they may cause an obstruction.**

## **Young People/Passengers:**

- Do not approach the vehicle until it has stopped.
- Wait until the driver or escort say you can get on, and then take a seat. The escort will show you where to put any bags.
- Always wear your seatbelt.
- When the vehicle is moving, stay in your seat at all times.
- Do not eat or drink in the vehicle.
- Do not leave any litter in the vehicle.
- Do not distract the driver at any time.
- Do not smoke in the vehicle (including electronic cigarettes)
- Always set a good example to younger children on the vehicle.
- Never push younger children on or off a vehicle.
- Always do as you are told by the supervising adult on the vehicle.
- When getting on or off the vehicle, always make sure any loose clothing or bags are well away from the doors.
- Remember to take all belongings with you when you leave the vehicle.
- Do not cross the road immediately behind or in front of the vehicle.
- Always remember that persistent unacceptable behaviour or bullying either at the pick-up point or on the vehicle may result in you being withdrawn from home to school transport.
- Always ensure you are ready for the transport when it arrives at your home address.
- Never attempt to open the vehicles doors or windows unless permitted by the supervising adult on board.

# Safety

## Green Cross Code

### 1. Think

- Find a safe place to cross the road.
- NEVER cross if you can't see a crossing, remember to cross where you can see in all directions and where drivers will see you.

### 2. Stop

- Just before you get to the kerb, stop.
- Stand on the pavement near the kerb and make sure that you can see the traffic. DO NOT step on to the road.

### 3. Look

- Look all around you for traffic. Make sure that you listen carefully for traffic that you can't see.
- Check to your right hand side first, then check to your left and then to your right again before you cross.
- Beware that some roads, called one way streets, have all of the traffic moving in the same direction.
- Watch out for bicycles or people on rollerblades. You often don't hear them, but they travel very fast.

### 4. Wait

- If traffic is coming, let it pass.
- If you are waiting at a crossing then wait until the cars have stopped or, at pelican, toucan, puffin or pegasus crossings, the green man shows, before you cross.
- If you are not at a crossing wait until it is safe to cross.
- Once the traffic has passed look around again and listen.

### 5. Look and listen again

- When it is safe and there is no traffic, walk straight across the road.
- Keep looking and listening while you cross the road. Watch out for cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders. Always walk straight across the road, DO NOT walk diagonally.
- NEVER run across the road because you might fall over, and you might not get up in time.

### 6. Arrive alive

- Look and keep looking while you cross the road.

## Booster/Car Seats

Where possible, parents/carers are requested to offer your own safety seats to the driver. This arrangement allows the driver to use the correct and familiar seat for your child.

## Seatbelts

All young people on transport must wear a seatbelt whilst being transported. Please impress upon your child the importance of this matter. If a young person repeatedly unfastens their seatbelt it may result in the provision of transport being reviewed. However, Home to School Transport will work closely with families, schools and transport providers to find a solution to help the young person keep their seatbelt on during all journeys.

## Useful Contact Numbers

Home to School Transport  
Bunny Hill Centre, Sunderland, SR5 4BW

☎ (0191) 561 2284

☎ 07717 347 322

☎ 07918 551 357

School/College: .....

Telephone: .....

Operator: .....

Telephone: .....

Driver/Escort: .....

Telephone: .....

If you require a copy of this leaflet in large text, Braille, audio format or an alternative language, please email: [communications@togetherforchildren.org.uk](mailto:communications@togetherforchildren.org.uk)