

# **London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Home to School Transport Policy**

Statutory school age pupils 5 to 16 (Reception to Year 11)

Issued May 2019

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## Introduction

Home to school transport in the Richmond borough (the Council) is delivered by Achieving for Children (AfC). There are separate policies for children of statutory school age and for young people aged 16 to 19 and 19 to 25.

The Council and AfC are committed to meeting the educational needs of as many children and young people as possible within local schools. In most cases, this will mean that pupils can walk or cycle to school with their parents or carers. This policy sets out how we will help the small number pupils who find it difficult to travel to school without some assistance.

## Policy statement

AfC is committed to ensuring that all pupils lead safe and healthy lives and have access to high quality education so that they are able to achieve their full potential. The Children and Families Act 2014 commits partners to work together to develop services that strengthen the abilities and resilience of children and their families to be independent. This includes encouraging partners to work together to increase the independence of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

This policy sets out the criteria for eligibility for travel assistance for pupils aged 5 to 16 (Reception to Year 11), how parents and carers should apply for travel assistance, how decisions are made and how parents and carers may appeal against decisions that they believe do not comply with this policy. The intention of this policy is to ensure that pupils with SEND are appropriately supported to access suitable education.

The policy has been developed in consultation with parents and carers and is based on the statutory requirements placed on local authorities in the Education Act 1996, and the guidance in Home to School Travel and Transport: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (Department for Education, 2014), as well as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children (Department for Education, 2015). It takes account of the Local Offer [www.afclocaloffer.org.uk](http://www.afclocaloffer.org.uk).

This policy applies only to pupils with SEND. It requires that eligibility for such pupils should be assessed on an individual basis to identify the pupil's individual transport requirements. There is a separate home to school transport policy for all other pupils.

Local authorities' duties to provide SEND transport applies only to children and young people of statutory school age (ages 5 to 16) as set out in this policy.

This policy applies to all pupils who are resident in Richmond upon Thames (or who are children in the care of the Council). The policy defines home to school transport as between a pupil's main home address and their school. A pupil's main home address is the place where they are habitually and normally resident. Where pupils have more than one address, home to school transport will be based on the residence where the pupil habitually resides or where the pupil resides for majority of the school week.

This policy applies only to home to school travel arrangements. It does not, for example, relate to transport to sports facilities, work experience or work placements, medical appointments, visits to other schools or locations (including school trips), collection from school due to illness, parental attendance at meetings, travel to or from extended hours school clubs or exams.

If schools would like a pupil to attend on a part-time timetable (either to transition on a shorter day basis to a new school placement, or where a child has been placed on a reduced timetable) the school must communicate with the SEND Transport Service and seek approval before putting this in place.

Transport assistance can only be provided on the basis of assessed need, rather than parental preference. All parents and carers requiring transport assistance for their child should submit an application for transport assistance. Only on receipt of an application will be transport assistance be considered.

Only where a pupil is assessed as meeting the eligibility criteria set out in this policy, will they be entitled to assistance with transport between home and school.

AfC will assess and consider home to school transport on the basis of the most efficient and cost-effective use of the Council resources.

## Eligibility

### All pupils

The legal responsibility for ensuring children and young people receive education rests with their parents or carers. Generally, parents and carers are expected to make their own arrangements for ensuring pupils travel to and from school to guarantee that they attend school regularly.

Under-18s are eligible for free or discounted rates of travel within London. There are different schemes for different age ranges and you may need to apply for an Oyster photocard. For further information, please go to the Transport for London (TfL) website, <https://tfl.gov.uk/>. AfC expects pupils to make use of the free or discounted travel available and applications for this should be made directly to TfL.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide free transport to all pupils who meet the statutory walking distance eligibility criteria set out in the Education Act 1996.

- If a child is under 8 years of age and lives over two miles from school.
- If a child is aged between 8 and 16 years and lives over three miles from school.

In both cases, the pupil must be attending the nearest suitable school. This is defined as a school which has places available and that the local authority deems to provide education appropriate to the age, aptitude and ability of the pupil and any SEND they may have. For pupils with education health and care plans (EHCPs), this will be the school or the nearest of the schools identified as the appropriate placement in the pupil's EHCP. Distance is measured along the nearest suitable walking route to school.

In addition, for pupils who are entitled to free school meals or whose parents or carers are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit, free travel assistance will be provided, if:

- the nearest suitable school is beyond two miles (for children over the age of 8 and under 11)
- the school is between two and six miles (for children aged 11 to 16 where there are not three or more suitable nearer schools)
- the school is between two and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (for children aged 11 to 16)

Local authorities are also required to make transport arrangements for all pupils who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school (accompanied as necessary) because the nature of the route is deemed inappropriate or because of mobility difficulties or the pupils' special educational needs.

In the case of an eligible pupil, there is no duty to provide free school transport unless either:

- no arrangements relating to travel in either direction between the pupil's home and school are provided free of charge by any other person or organisation
- such travel arrangements are provided, but (even if taken together with any other such arrangements) they are not suitable for the purpose of facilitating the pupil's attendance at school

### **School-age pupils with SEND**

Local authorities must make transport arrangements for all pupils who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school (accompanied as necessary) because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their SEND. Eligibility for such children should be assessed on an individual basis to identify the pupil's particular transport requirements.

### **Pre-school children with SEND**

Local authorities do not have a duty to provide or arrange free transport for children who have not yet reached statutory school age. However, transport assistance applications will be considered for children below statutory school age in exceptional circumstances and it is expected that such children will have an education, health and care plan.

### **Contributions for children with special educational needs or disabilities under 5 years**

Parents will be given the option, where spaces are available on existing transport, to contribute towards the cost of home to school travel assistance, where their child has been assessed as not being eligible for free under-5 travel assistance.

The contributions will be dependent on the school's distance from the child's home address. For families on low incomes, where parents are in receipt of the maximum Working Tax Credit, a reduced contribution will apply.

Contributions will be paid in advance on a termly basis. In many cases children will turn 5 during the academic year. Statutory school age begins the term after a child turns 5 and in most cases this will mean they are then eligible for SEND Transport.

Distance – single journey	Contribution – academic year
Less than 8 miles	£700
8 to 16 miles	£933
17 to 25 miles	£1,166
More than 25 miles	£1,400

### Under-5 contribution refunds

If a pupil’s contribution has been agreed and for whatever reason they do not complete the nursery or reception year, any refund for transport will be applied at the end of the academic term in which they leave that provision. The same will apply if they are subject to an extended period of non-attendance due to ill health. However, day-to-day non-attendance would not be subject to a refund. This will only be agreed in the event that the child leaves the provision or for an extended period of non-attendance due to ill health.

The general expectation is that a pre-school child will be accompanied on transport by a parent or carer, unless there is a good reason why it would not be reasonable to expect parents or carers to do so.

### Transition to adulthood – Year 11 reassessment

Consideration of any future transport needs will form part of the young person’s transition into adulthood plan.

For the academic year 2019/20, a change in Richmond SEN transport arrangements, in line with the national policy, means that all young people in year 11 (aged 15 to 16), moving from compulsory schooling to post-16 education, must reapply and be reassessed. This will not apply to young people post-16 currently on SEN Transport where the current provision remains unchanged for the 2019/20 academic year.

If your child is in Year 11, you will need to reapply for transport, applications for transport will be assessed against the 16 to 19 Transport Policy available at the link below, or upon request to 020 8547 4708.

### Short-term difficulties

**Pupils who do not receive transport assistance:** pupils who are not eligible for transport assistance but have short-term difficulties (for example, a short-term illness or health difficulty) may be eligible for transport assistance to and from school during the period of the short-term difficulties.

**Pupils receiving bus transport provision:** where a pupil receives home to school transport from a minibus and cannot get to and from a collection point (for example, due to a broken leg or other short-term illness) temporary assistance may be offered as replacement for this service. Although the child's SEND has not changed, temporary physical or medical constraints make it difficult for the child to access the service.

**Pupils who have temporarily changed address:** transport assistance may not be provided where a pupil who usually receives assistance moves to a different address in the short-term if the changed address results in additional transport costs. The parent or carer will be expected to pay any additional costs associated with the short-term move, or make their own transport arrangements.

**Parents with a disability or illness:** where a parent with a disability or illness has difficulty in getting their child to and from school, additional support may be provided by adult social care services within the local authorities.

**Parents with authorised mileage allowances:** temporary assistance may be provided in those instances where parents or carers in receipt of authorised mileage allowances cannot transport their child to and from school due to a short-term illness.

### Respite and foster care

While providing transport to and from respite and foster care is not a statutory duty, the Council and AfC recognise that respite care provides valuable and necessary support to parents and carers. Applications for transport from a respite care placement to the pupil's school will therefore be considered. It is the responsibility of the parents or carers to notify the SEN Transport Service of the dates of respite at least 10 days in advance to allow sufficient time to plan the transport.

### Re-housed children

If a family has moved to an address within a different local authority area, the responsibility for the child's EHCP and their home to school transport transfers to the local authority area in which they are residing. This is because the family have become ordinarily resident in the new area. This is the case regardless of which local authority is paying the family's housing costs and regardless of whether the family intend to move back to Richmond in the future.

### Dual and link placements, inclusion and pupil referral units

Dual placements are where a pupil attends more than one school, or where a school arranges a college link placement for a pupil. Dual placements may require additional transport assistance, such as transport at earlier or later times, or during the school day. Schools are responsible for arranging and paying for the cost of such transport. Where a pupil is on roll at one school, but visits another school or college for inclusion or link purposes, the school where the pupil is usually based will be responsible for arranging and paying for transport. These arrangements also apply to alternative education arranged by the pupil's school. If a pupil is on roll at a pupil referral unit as their sole placement, then eligibility for transport to the pupil referral unit will be considered on the same basis as eligibility for transport to any other school.

## Residential schools

Pupils attending termly boarding school placements funded by the local authority for a standard 38-week academic year (and who are eligible for transport assistance) will be provided with transport assistance between home and school for the start and end of each term period (generally half-termly). This equates to 12 one-way journeys (four journeys a term). Pupils attending weekly boarding school placements funded by the local authority will be provided with weekly transport. Transport for pupils in 52-week residential school placements funded by the local authority will be agreed on an individual basis.

Transport assistance for any pupils attending termly boarding school placements will not exceed the 12 one-way journeys. If the school is closed on a weekly or fortnightly basis, this must be reflected in the fees being paid by the local authority for the school placement and, accordingly, transport will be provided to coincide with school closure.

Transport assistance will not be provided to parents, carers or family members who wish to visit residential schools for any reason. Any arrangements of this nature will need to be agreed directly with the school. In exceptional cases, parents or carers may be provided with transport assistance to school a maximum of once per year to attend their child's annual review.

Parents or carers who wish to accompany their child on the first day at school will be expected to make their own transport arrangements. Where a school stipulates that a parent or carer should attend on the first day, private transport must be arranged.

## Application process

### Assessing transport assistance entitlement for pupils with SEND

In order for a child to be assessed for transport assistance entitlement, parents or carers must complete an online application form accessed via the Local Offer website [www.afclocaloffer.org.uk](http://www.afclocaloffer.org.uk). The direct link to the application form is [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/send\\_transport](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/send_transport).

All parents of children or young people who are awarded an EHCP will be advised about this process clearly within a letter from the SEND Service within AfC. SEND transport is also a standard section in the current annual review documentation in Richmond. The SEND Service is required to provide a separate referral to the SEND Transport Service to confirm the basis of a child's school placement.

When assessing entitlement for transport assistance for pupils with SEND, the SEND Transport Service will consider the individual needs of each child. This may include taking professional advice from educational psychologists, medical officers and teachers and consulting with parents and carers before arriving at a final decision. Consideration will also be given to the pupil's physical and medical requirements including any disabilities they may have. Assessment may include face-to-face contact with the pupil. The findings and decision will be recorded on a transport assessment form.

In determining whether a pupil cannot reasonably be expected to walk between home and school, the service will consider whether the pupil could reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied and, if so, whether the pupil's parent or carer can reasonably be expected to accompany their child. The general expectation is that a child will be accompanied by a parent or carer, unless there is good reason why it is not reasonable to expect the parent to do so.

The following factors will be considered when assessing transport entitlement:

- the age of the pupil
- the distance of the pupil from school to home
- whether the walking route is appropriate for the pupil
- the SEND of the pupil
- whether the pupil has physical, medical or a social communication difficulty that would prevent them from using public transport
- whether suitable and accessible public transport is available;
- whether the pupil may be vulnerable and at risk of danger if they use public or other transport
- whether the pupil would be a danger to drivers, other passengers or the vehicle if using public or other transport
- the efficient utilisation of resources
- any other individual circumstance

This is not an exhaustive list. It is not presented in any particular order and is for guidance only. Satisfaction of one or more of the criteria does not automatically entitle a pupil with SEND to transport assistance.

The fact that a pupil has an EHCP or attends a special school does not automatically entitle him or her to transport assistance.

Eligibility for transport assistance is related to the pupil's needs. Assessment may take into account the need for transport assistance due to some family circumstances. This will primarily be if a pupil has other siblings attending schools not local to the SEN provision offered to them, or is offered SEN provision at a school which is not their local provision. These factors will be considered when determining eligibility for home to school travel assistance and deciding on the type of transport to be provided. Other family circumstances, such as parents and carers attending work or looking after other children, cannot be considered when determining eligibility.

### **Education, health and care plans (EHCP)**

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice states that transport should be recorded in an EHCP only in exceptional cases, where the child or young person has particular transport needs.

AfC's guidance to schools states that they should carefully review each pupil's individual transport needs at least once a year and advises that this could be completed as part of the annual review for pupils with EHCPs. This is of particular importance for pupils who are in Year 7 and above, who will be beginning their final phase of compulsory education and who may not receive any further transport assistance or a more independence-focused transport assistance offer after they leave school to attend their choice of further education placement or employment. (See 16 to 19 SEND Transport Policy)

Based on the outcome of reviews, AfC will make any changes necessary to transport arrangements which are the result of a pupil's changing needs. For example, a pupil may no longer require a passenger assistant or may be ready to start independent travel training. Any interim changes in circumstances may also result in a change in eligibility for transport assistance. For example, the family may have moved home to be closer to the school. Once a pupil is eligible for transport assistance, it does not guarantee they will continue to be eligible in the future.

The provision of transport assistance will also be reviewed to reflect any changes in government policy or legislation.

### **Nearest suitable school and parental preference**

The nearest suitable school is one that the local authority deems to be suitable for the age, ability, aptitude and specific needs of the pupil.

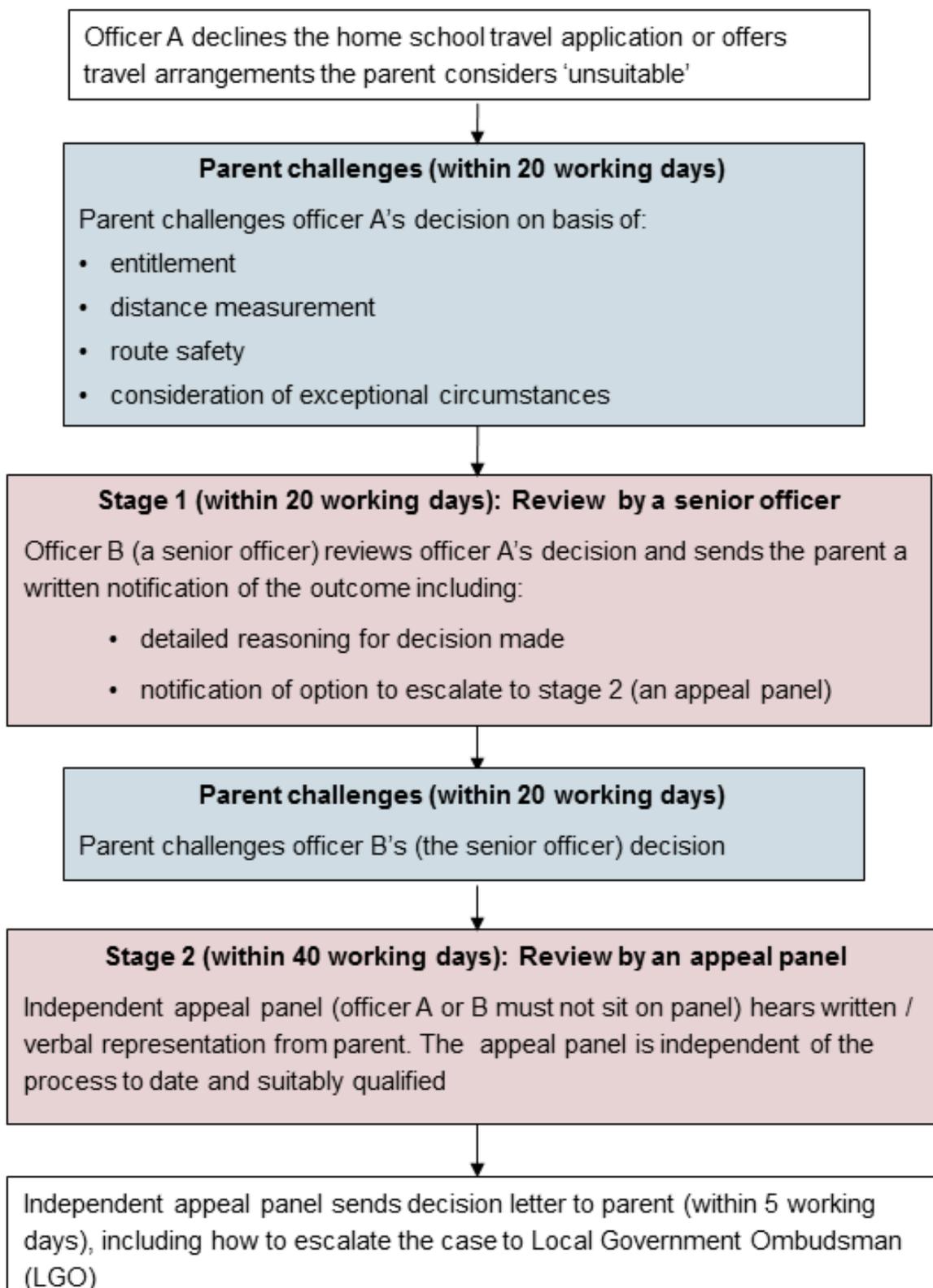
Parents and carers may express a preference for any maintained school or any form of academy or free school they wish their child to attend. If a parent or carer does express a preference for their child to attend a school further away than the nearest suitable school, then the local authority and AfC reserve the right to refuse transport assistance to that school.

### **Appeals**

If AfC, on behalf of the Council, declines a request for transport assistance, the pupil's parents or carers will be advised in writing of the decision and given details of how and when to appeal.

During an appeal about an initial application for travel assistance, transport will not be provided to the pupil. Where the appeal concerns a change to transport arrangements for a child who has previously been assessed as eligible, then the previously agreed transport arrangements will continue.

The appeal process is outlined below:



In line with national guidance, the independent appeals panel referred to in the flowchart will, in Richmond, be made up of a group of councillors who will be assembled once a Stage 2 appeal has been submitted.

## Transport assistance options

Transport assistance may take one of the following forms.

- Training to travel independently (walking and using public transport, see section below).
- Training to cycle independently (reimbursement of bicycle and safety equipment.)
- Reimbursement of bus, train, tube travel costs, where pupils are able to use public transport to make solo journeys (parents or carers would need to confirm that the pupil is able to travel independently).
- Mileage reimbursement, where pupils are not able to travel independently, but where parents or carers are able to provide transport.
- The allocation of a travel buddy equivalent to a passenger assistant to support independent travel.
- An SEN Travel Bursary.
- The offer of funded driving lessons (where pupils are of the correct age, and this is the most cost-efficient option. You can drive a car when you are 16 if you get, or have applied for, the enhanced rate of the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP)).
- Provision of a local authority minibus service with or without collection points as appropriate.
- Provision of individual taxis or licenced private car hire (in exceptional circumstances) with or without collection points, as appropriate.

The SEN Travel Bursary scheme is a discretionary offer to families, which can be put towards the cost of alternative transport (for example, a private taxi) where students are not able to travel independently and parents or carers are not able to provide transport. It would be assessed on an individual basis. Some families have expressed concerns about the level of mileage reimbursement as they would like to make their own transport arrangements, but need upfront investment to take up this option. A bursary would be agreed on a case by case individual basis upon request.

Parents and carers are required to complete an application for home to school transport assistance. Once eligibility has been assessed and agreed, transport will ordinarily take up to 12 working days to arrange. It may be faster when a child is being added to an existing route with a space available. In some cases, this may take longer, for example where there is a need for a larger or specialist vehicle. This time period allows the SEND Transport Service sufficient time to assess each child's needs, obtain quotes for the transport provider, and ensure that appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place.

Parents and carers will be informed of the transport arrangements in writing in advance of travel. They will be provided with a Getting to School booklet which sets out the

arrangements and duties of AfC and the transport provider, alongside the responsibilities of parents and carers. Parents and carers will be asked to confirm agreement to the arrangements by signing and returning a letter of agreement. Transport will not commence until the signed letter of agreement is received.

Availability of transport is not guaranteed. For example, a case may arise where a young person is non-ambulant, but has not been allocated a crash-tested buggy or wheelchair for use on transport. Transport crews are not permitted to lift pupils onto or off transport. Parents, carers and schools are also not permitted to lift pupils onto or off transport as a situation may arise (such as a mechanical fault to the vehicle) which may require the transport crews to lift the pupil during a journey. In these circumstances, parental mileage reimbursement may be given as an alternative.

Individual transport will not be provided. Pupils must expect to travel to and from school with other pupils unless there are exceptional circumstances where it would not be reasonable to expect a pupil to do so and increasingly they may be asked to travel to a designated collection point.

Closed-circuit television (CCTV) with audio recording or global positioning systems (GPS) may be used on vehicles. The CCTV footage will not be shared or circulated with anyone outside the Council or AfC, but, along with GPS, can help to improve the speed and accuracy of incident resolution, and also supports transport crew training.

## **Independent travel**

Local authorities have a duty to encourage, enable and assist the participation of young people with learning difficulties or disabilities up to the age of 25 in education and training. Independent travel training aims to achieve this.

Independent travel is a valuable skill for preparing for adulthood, an essential employability skill, and provides greater opportunities for young people, not least increasing confidence in their abilities and reducing their sense of reliance on family members.

In 2018/19, independent travel training (ITT) has been effectively delivered since 2015 with 67 young people having successfully completed the training, which represents an 85% success rate. In line with the local authority's aims and objectives to support independence and prepare young people for adulthood, and where appropriate employment, ITT will be expanded as an option from April 2019. In line with this expansion, we will be adopting a targeted approach, identifying, with the assistance of the SEN team, children who we believe would benefit from ITT. Families will be contacted and invited to take part in the ITT. In line with this expansion, we will be adopting a targeted approach, identifying young people who will be transitioning from compulsory education into post-16 and above, with the assistance of the SEN team, who we believe would benefit from ITT. Families will be contacted and invited to take part in the ITT.

An ITT assessment will be carried out in the home, with the support of the family, to confirm the suitability of the candidate for the ITT programme, taking into account the following criteria:

- existing level of independent travel skills

- the likelihood of the pupil being eligible for SEN transport under the 16 to 19 Policy
- the age of pupil
- the distance between home and school
- the SEND of the pupil
- the route which the young person would need to undertake
- journey times using public transport and the complexity of the journey
- the frequency of the journeys required

This assessment would take place before the pupil undertakes the ITT programme, which would last for approximately four weeks. During the programme, the pupil will travel to and from their education or training provision each day with their dedicated one-to-one ITT trainer.

During the period when a pupil is taking part in the ITT, this will be their designated transport assistance offer. At the end of the ITT programme, we will review the pupil's progress, to decide if it is appropriate with the family for the pupil to continue to travel independently. In some cases, we have found that it is not appropriate for the pupil to travel independently, in which case, their previous transport offer will be reinstated. Moreover, we acknowledge in a significant minority of cases, due to the nature of the pupil's SEND, that ITT is not appropriate, which is why we are adopting a targeted approach.

### **Passenger assistants**

Passenger assistants will be provided on some transport routes. The provision or non-provision of a passenger assistant on a route is based on several factors, including:

- the age of the pupil
- the distance between home and school
- information provided on the transport assessment form
- the SEND of the pupil
- the number of other pupils travelling on this route

There is no minimum or maximum age that determines whether a passenger assistant will be automatically provided and AfC will consider age in conjunction with all the factors listed above in paragraph 61 to make its decision.

Provision of a passenger assistant at any one time does not guarantee that this will be an ongoing arrangement. The requirement will be re-assessed in the pupil's annual review, periodically during the year, and in the event of any change in circumstances.

## **Implementing the policy**

### **Transport management**

Transport is co-ordinated and managed by the SEND Transport Service in AfC on behalf of the Council. Each transport provider (whether taxi or minibus) will also have a nominated

controller who is the first point of contact for schools, parents and carers, and who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the service.

### Pick-up and drop-off arrangements

Transport providers are authorised to make pick-ups and drop-offs at authorised pick-up points only. The authorised points will usually be those specified on the EHCP (normally the home and school address), or an allocated bus stop or collection point. Parents and carers should provide one alternative address, wherever possible, which must be within one mile of the usual home address, to be used in the event that the parent or carer is unable to meet the child. Any changes to these addresses, whether permanent or temporary, must be communicated in writing to the SEND Transport Service. Until written confirmation is received, the only other authorised place for drop-off will be the nearest Children and Family Services centre. The location of this centre will be communicated to parents and carers at the start of each transport arrangement. A change of address will be regarded as a change in circumstances, which may affect a pupil's eligibility for transport assistance.

### Collection points

Collection points are similar to bus stops, where we identify designated pick-up and drop-off locations for the pupil to meet the bus or taxi rather than offering a door-to-door service. This reduces the time needed for the route to pick up the pupils, allows us to allocate more pupils to each route, and (in line with our broader aims) supports children and young people to become more independent and better prepares them for adulthood.

Collection points may be introduced on some routes, where the pupils are able to walk to improve the efficiency of the route and reduce the time needed for the route to pick up the pupils. Where the introduction of collection points is being considered, AfC will formally carry out a 28 day consultation with the parents and carers already on those routes affected by this potential change in service. Achieving this level of independence will not be possible for some children and young people with the most complex SEND needs, and in some cases parents' own mobility or disability may impact on them being able to accompany their child to a collection point. Where this is the case, the ambition for the service is to improve the range of options available for families to take responsibility for their own children's transport where this is desired and appropriate. In such circumstances, AfC will carefully consider and assess the individual child's needs as well as the mobility and or disability of their parents.

Where a collection point is allocated, it is the parent's or carer's responsibility to make sure that their child travels to and from the collection point and transfers to and from the vehicle safely.

**Parents who are unable to take their child to a collection point:** no temporary assistance will be provided in those circumstances where a parent or carer is unable to take their child to and from a collection point for onward transport to school by a transport company. This is because the child's special educational need or disability has not changed and the transport service from the collection point is still available.

All collection points will be within a one mile walking distance of the home, and will be assessed in advanced for their suitability.

- Wherever a bus stop can be legally used as a collection point, it will be.
- Minibuses can stop to collect and drop off on yellow and double yellow lines, vehicles cannot stop on red routes, white zig zags (. near a zebra crossing) or school keep-clear hatchings.
- We always plan not to cause obstructions to other road users whilst making a drop off or collection and try to stop in parking areas or bays.
- Ensure collections or drop-offs, are always made kerb side.
- Each collection point is physically assessed before being used in service, a driver will go out and test to see if they feel the location is safe (for example, a well-lit public location, not too close to a junction or on the brow of a hill, etc)
- The drivers complete dynamic risk assessments at the time of collections or /drop offs in the eventuality of any changes (new road layouts, another roa user in the stopping space) and will slightly adjust the collection point if it is unsafe to stop.

### Timing

The timings for pick-up and drop-off will be specified by the appropriate transport provider's controller, and parents and carers must ensure they are aware of the correct times. Times may change if new pupils join a route, or if pupils leave a route.

Where pupils are picked up or dropped-off at home, the parent or carer is responsible for accompanying the pupil to and from their door to the vehicle. The parent or carer should keep a lookout for the vehicle's arrival since the vehicle will not sound its horn. It is against the law to sound a horn from a stationary vehicle. In exceptional circumstances (for example: where the child travels alone in a taxi with a passenger assistant) the driver or passenger assistant may call at the door or telephone ahead, although this is at the discretion of the transport crew. Any variation to the usual procedure must be agreed with the controller. Parents and carers must ensure that there are no delays in making pupils available for the journey (or collecting them in the evenings) as this is one of the main factors affecting total journey times and can have a detrimental effect on how other passengers manage the remainder of their journey.

In order to minimise journey times for every pupil on the transport, pupils are required to be available within three minutes of the specified time of pick-up, and parents or carers are required to be available within three minutes of the specified time of drop-off. If the pupil, parent or carer is not available within that time, the transport provider's will attempt to make telephone contact with the parent or carer to find out if there is a particular difficulty on that morning or afternoon. If the controller is unable to make direct contact with the parent or carer, the driver is instructed to leave that pick-up or drop-off point and move onto the next point. Should the transport move on without the pupil in the morning, transport to school will then become the responsibility of the parent or carer for that individual journey. If the parent or carer is unavailable to receive the child in the afternoon, the child will be transported to

the nearest place of safety, which is the Children and Family Services centre. Transport assistance will be reviewed and may be removed if there are ongoing delays.

In some exceptional cases, to recognise the needs of an individual pupil, the three minute waiting time may be adjusted and the transported provider informed.

In some cases, it may not be legal or safe for the transport to stop directly outside a pupil's home. In these cases, parents and carers are required to walk with their child to the safest nominated collection point, as specified by the transport provider.

## **Absences**

Where a pupil cannot attend school on any particular day (for example, due to illness), it is the parent's or carer's responsibility to contact the transport company immediately. For long-term absences, parents or carers should contact the SEND Transport Service.

Parents and carers should contact their respective transport company the night before travel if they know then that their child will be unwell on the following day. Alternatively, they should contact the transport provider as early as possible on the morning of travel if their child only shows signs of being unwell on the day he or she is due to travel.

All transport which is not cancelled in advance of the vehicle arriving at the home address must be paid for by the Council whether or not the pupil boards the vehicle. Where parents or carers repeatedly fail to cancel transport provision for their child before it arrives at the home address, or where a pupil suddenly refuses to travel in transport which has arrived on any given day (without any prior notice having been given to the transport company), the pupil's transport provision will be reviewed.

Where it can be established that public funds are being used inappropriately, as a result of vehicles not being cancelled with sufficient prior warning, pupils may not be allowed to travel on transport for a period of time. Parents and carers will be responsible for transporting their own children during any period of exclusion from transport.

## **Parent or carer not at home**

Transport providers are instructed to take children and young people to the nearest place of safety, which is the Children and Family Services centre, in the event that a parent or carer is unable to meet the pupil at the specified drop-off point at the specified time. Children's social care services may be notified and/or transport assistance withdrawn if this happens frequently. Parents, carers or schools should contact the controller or SEND Transport Service if there are any emergency changes. The controller will have a duty to advise parents, carers and schools if there are going to be any foreseen delays to the delivery of the service.

## **Parents with other commitments**

It is not possible to take into account family circumstances when allocating pick-up and drop-off times for pupils. Timings will be based on the most efficient route available. The efficient planning of routes is a priority, especially as it is important to minimise the time that pupils need to spend on transport on every route. If AfC were to consider requests for pick-up times from parents or carers, then this could lead to inequality, since a vehicle cannot collect two children from different addresses at the same time. In addition, requests for pick-up

times would also compromise route efficiencies, making them longer for all the other children and less economical.

Transport assistance is awarded to pupils with SEND because of their needs and should not be considered as an extension to childcare or a service which facilitates parents or carers working or looking after other children who are not yet of school age.

### **Severe weather**

In cases of severe weather, where parents and carers are advised that transport has been cancelled for their child's morning journey, they should assume that transport will also be cancelled for their child's afternoon journey, unless they are advised otherwise. If parents or carers decide to take their child to school despite the severe weather, they will also need to arrange to collect their child after school.

### **Safety assessments**

Where the Council and AfC agree to provide either minibus transport or taxi transport for a pupil, it may be necessary to complete a safety assessment of the pupil's physical and medical needs. Until this safety assessment is completed, transport between home and school will be the responsibility of the parents or carers.

Some pupils with SEND have physical and medical conditions which deteriorate over time. If, at any point, it is felt by the SEND Transport Service that a further risk assessment may be necessary to ensure that a child's physical and medical needs are being met on board transport, this risk assessment will be planned and completed. Until the recommendations from this updated risk assessment are complete, it will be the responsibility of the parents and carers to transport their child between home and school.

### **Medication**

All members of transport staff have received accredited emergency first-aid training.

Although there is no statutory duty for transport staff to administer medication, they are expected to ensure the health and safety of all pupils in their care. First-aid training includes managing the symptoms of shock, dealing with an unconscious casualty, cardiac arrest and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, choking and seizures.

The emergency services can advise members of transport staff about the closest automated external defibrillator for use in treating a patient in cardiac arrest.

AfC will ensure that every driver and passenger assistant is able to respond to an emergency situation, however, they will not normally be expected to administer medical assistance. Every parent, as part of their application, is required to provide detailed information directly to the SEND Transport Service about their child's SEND and medical needs. This information forms the basis of the pupil's transport plan. In some cases, where a child has very specific and complex needs, an additional care plan from medical professionals may be required.

Members of transport staff are not permitted to carry or administer medication or to replace medical accessories (for example, gastrostomy or tracheotomy tubes) on board a vehicle. The exception to this are pre-loaded EpiPens® or pre-loaded buccal midazolam devices as these

devices are loaded with the correct dosage of medication and do not require members of transport staff to accurately measure medication within a confined and possibly moving space.

In the event of an emergency on board a vehicle, the procedure is for the passenger assistant or driver to seek guidance from medical professionals by calling 999 and asking for a paramedic crew to attend the scene. It is for parents or carers to decide whether they wish for their child to travel on regular transport in these circumstances.

Where it is assessed to be unsafe for a pupil with complex or acute medical needs to travel with only a passenger assistant, AfC will seek to secure a medically-trained professional, such as a nurse or carer, to accompany the pupil on the vehicle. A risk assessment will be undertaken to ensure the correct level of medical support can be arranged.

### **Journey times**

The nature of transport congestion in London means that travelling times can vary greatly. It is expected that children should arrive at school safely and fit to learn. Journey times should reflect this. The maximum journey time for a pupil travelling to a school in the borough in which they are resident is 75 minutes, however, this may be affected from time-to-time by traffic pressures, road works and other environmental and operational conditions. These journey times do not apply to pupils travelling to out-borough schools, where distances and the frequency of journeys will vary.

### **Behaviour standards**

Any pupil may experience behavioural difficulties. AfC will work with schools, parents, carers and transport providers to manage instances where a pupil exhibits extreme behaviour characteristics. Poor behaviour may affect the concentration of the driver, and the overall safety of the other pupils or passenger assistants, and in some cases alternative arrangements will need to be made.

In consultation with the pupil's school, it may be necessary to issue periods of fixed or permanent exclusion from transport. Parents and carers will be responsible for transporting their own children during any period of exclusion from transport. Non-provision of transport during these periods does not mean that the Council is not fulfilling their statutory duties, merely that transport arrangements were made but, as a result of behavioural issues, had to be suspended or removed.

Where an allegation of unacceptable behaviour is received (either from a parent, carer, school or transport provider), the pupil against whom the allegation has been made may be temporarily excluded from transport services whilst an investigation is completed. Written statements will be requested from the driver and any passenger assistant, the school, SEND Panel and other parents or carers may also be consulted.

Depending on the SEND of the pupil, the circumstances of the behavioural problem and consultation with the school and other parties, the procedure will be:

Level	Incident	Outcome
1	First incident	First written warning
2	Second incident	Final written warning
3	Third incident	Permanent exclusion from transport services
*	Physical abuse (at any stage)	Instant exclusion from transport services pending investigation, including written statements

When using home to school transport, pupils must:

- remain in their seats at all times
- wear their seat belts at all times
- follow and abide by the passenger assistant’s and/or driver’s instructions

Pupils must not:

- abscond from the vehicle
- speak in an offensive or abusive manner to the crew, other passengers or any other member of the public whilst in or around the vehicle
- behave in a way which may create a danger to themselves or other passengers, or in a way which could cause damage to (or shows disrespect to) the vehicle itself
- exhibit behaviour of a sexual nature
- spit or fight

Additionally, no eating, drinking or smoking will be allowed on any vehicle at any time, except in hot weather, or where a child is unwell, when water may be allowed on the vehicle.

## Providing a quality service

### Transport standards

Transport provision will be in accordance with contractual standards and legislation.

It is recognised that the quality of transportation to and from school can often affect the emotional welfare and behavioural pattern of a child. All drivers, passenger assistants and other crew members are expected to show understanding of, and empathy with, pupils, their parents, carers and school staff. They are expected to treat all children with respect and in a dignified manner appropriate to their age.

All drivers and passenger assistants will greet passengers, parents and carers politely and ensure that all passengers travel in comfort and safety.

All drivers and passenger assistants will have undergone a training programme and will be in receipt of an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check, in line with the Council's and AfC's commitment to safeguarding children and young people.

Husband and wife (or civil partners) transport crew teams are permitted, however, families will be informed prior to the allocation of the route.

The competency of the driver and crew, the conduct of the vehicle during the journey and at the pick-up points will all be of a contractually prescribed standard.

The vehicles will be properly licensed and roadworthy.

- All vehicles with nine passenger seats or more will be inspected every six to 13 weeks. The frequency of inspection is set independently by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) and is not set by the transport companies themselves.
- All taxi vehicles with eight passenger seats or less are licensed by the Public Carriage Office (PCO) and are subject to two MOT inspections a year.

All vehicles will offer standards of comfort and safety as prescribed by relevant legislation. Regular audit checks will be carried out on all vehicles. Vehicles will have modifications to allow for wheelchair access where appropriate.

The vehicle must be at its prescribed point of pick-up within five minutes of its allotted time (although traffic conditions and delays at the pick-up points for other passengers may affect these timings). Any major delays will be communicated, either via the relevant controller or the SEND Transport Service, to the school, parents or carers.

## Continuity

Every effort will be made to ensure that the same passenger assistant and driver continue to transport a pupil, however, this will not always be possible and changes may need to be made to ensure the most efficient use of available resources.

Parents, carers and schools will be informed by the transport company about any changes to the crew member(s) in advance. Parents and carers are advised to take the name of the new driver and/or passenger assistant, and ask to see their identification, or contact the transport provider to verify identity if they are in any doubt.

Local authorities have a duty to spend public funds in the most appropriate and cost-effective manner. Routes will be reviewed regularly. Separate routes, taking pupils to several different schools, may be brought together into a single route where this is appropriate. Longer routes will be reviewed periodically with the respective schools to ensure that concentration and attentiveness are not compromised by any change to pupils' journeys.

## Safeguarding

The Council and AfC are committed to ensuring that children and young people on transport travel safely to school and arrive ready to learn. The following safeguarding systems are in place to protect children's safety and promote their wellbeing.

- There are fixed and pre-vetted crews on all routes.

- Crew members have valid DBS certificates and appropriate licences.
- Crew members have completed safeguarding training.
- Crew members are provided with certified first-aid training.
- Child-seating is provided for young people below 135cm in height.
- Non-ambulant buggy or wheelchair users undergo a wheelchair risk assessment to verify that their buggy or wheelchair has been crash-tested for use on transport and to ensure that the correct safety equipment is used to secure the buggy or wheelchair in place.
- All confidential information is sent by secure email.
- All incidents on board transport are logged and investigated.
- Safeguarding concerns or allegations about a transport crew member are referred to the local authority designated officer (LADO) – see paragraph 111 for further information.
- Crew members are provided with a procedure in circumstances where parents or carers are not available at their home address at the end of the school day, or have requested an agreed alternative destination.
- Taxi crews and vehicles are audited on a regular basis and checked for compliance against the service specification, including compliance with safeguarding procedures.
- Taxi providers are audited once per academic year and further strategic level checks are completed within these audits.

### **Local Authority Designated Officer**

Every local authority has a statutory responsibility to have a local authority designated officer who is responsible for co-ordinating the response to concerns that an adult who works with children may have caused them harm. The role of the LADO is to manage and oversee any concerns or allegations about an individual who works with children and young people either in a paid or voluntary capacity. In the first instance, parents should make contact with the SEND Transport Service about any concerns. Concerns should be referred to the LADO by contacting 020 8547 5008 or email: [lado@achievingforchildren.org.uk](mailto:lado@achievingforchildren.org.uk)

### **Comments, compliments and complaints**

The Council and AfC are constantly looking at ways to improve the SEND Transport Service and welcomes comments from parents, carers, pupils and school staff on any issue relating to the service. Comments or concerns about operational issues should be addressed to the relevant bus or taxi provider in the first instance. In the event that the provider cannot resolve the concern, the issue should be escalated to the SEND Transport Service for resolution.

Formal complaints will be managed in line with the Council complaints procedures which are available online at [www.richmond.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.richmond.gov.uk/complaints)

### **Equalities statement**

The Council and Achieving for Children are committed to delivering a high-quality service to everyone regardless of their age, disability, gender, race, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation

and economic status. We are committed to delivering a service that meets individuals' needs and choices in a sensitive, meaningful and practical way. Where necessary the service user's cultural, religious or any other specific needs that is brought to our attention will be considered and appropriate action undertaken in the delivery of the service.

We are committed to ensuring that our services are delivered in a fair, equitable and transparent manner. We will collect data from our service users and analyse these in order to identify any negative impact on specific groups or communities, including families entitled to the service due to their economic status. Nothing within this policy, or any omission from it, should be interpreted as relieving the local authorities or AfC from their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 or any other statutory requirements.