

Newcastle City Council SEND Travel Support Service - Covid19 Guidance and Assessment of Risk – June 2020

Introduction

In the absence of specific national guidance around SEND Travel Support Newcastle City Council's Education Management team have consulted with the Newcastle Public Health team and the national transport guidance to identify any risks and how they can be mitigated in line with the current government guidance in relation to suitability to travel, social distancing, the use of PPE, hand washing and vehicle hygiene.

This guidance will be kept under review and it will be updated in line with any new national guidance that is published.

During Covid19 pandemic many parents and carers of children and young people who would usually travel to their educational placements using the door to door service have decided to request a Personal Travel Budget (PTB) from the SEND Travel Support Service. This has allowed them to minimise the contacts that their children and young people are having as well as giving them the flexibility of staggered start and finish times. The option of taking a PTB is open to all parent/carers of eligible children and the SEND travel assistance team would be happy to discuss this with anyone who is interested in pursuing this option. More information can be found at the link below. If you choose to use a PTB, you can cancel the arrangement at any time and request transport to be reinstated.

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/schools-learning-and-childcare/special-educational-needs-andor-disabilities-send/personal>

If school transport is requested for the first time or for it to restart, please be aware it can take up to 10 working days to put in place as suitable staff and vehicles will need to be arranged.

We aim to make transport arrangements as soon as they are needed, however, during the pandemic, despite our best endeavours, there may be occasions when the SEND Travel support service are unable to arrange transport within the 10 day period. We will however always keep families informed, and we will work with you to identify the best way for your child to access school using a Personal Travel Budget in the interim.

If you would like to discuss any of the information contained in this document please contact the SEND travel support team at SENDTravelSupport@newcastle.gov.uk

Suitability to travel

SEND Transport personnel or children/young people who are unwell (with Covid-19 related symptoms or any other illness) should not be accessing SEND Transport vehicles. If staff or young people have symptoms of Covid-19 which are

- a high temperature
- new persistent cough
- a change to sense of smell or taste
- it is within 14 days of the day when the first member of their household showed any of these symptoms

they must not access SEND transport but must follow the guidance on self-isolation at the following link. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

If a young person appears to be visibly unwell the driver and escort on the route will not be able to allow them to access the vehicle. It must also be noted that if on the arrival at the educational placement or during the school day, the education staff decide that the child or young person is not well enough to be in school it will be the responsibility of the school to look after the pupil until such time as the parent/carer is able to collect them. The school risk assessment in relation to a child becoming symptomatic or ill during the school day would be implemented where necessary. This guidance can be found using the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

Social distancing

In the current government guidance for passengers on transport which can be viewed using the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#exemptions-face-coverings>

The following information is laid out clearly:

Where possible, keep 2 meters distance from others during your journey. If you can't keep a suitable distance from others, you should:

- avoid physical contact
- try to face away from other people
- keep the time you spend near others as short as possible
- Be aware of the surfaces you touch.
- Be careful not to touch your face.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of your elbow when coughing or sneezing.

As with the school settings every measure possible is being made to follow the current social distancing guidance that have been published by the government. However, as this is a bespoke unique service which caters for vulnerable children and young people the services ability in practice to observe the social distancing rules is governed by the needs of the children and young people who access it.

The SEND transport fleet is diverse and the number of vehicles we have access to are limited to what we have available to us in the current market.

Where possible the children and young people will be suitably distanced from each other unless they are from the same household, in line with current guidance.

We are substituting smaller vehicles with larger ones, running 2 vehicles rather than one, where possible, to reduce the number of passengers per vehicle and increase the amount of space between passengers.

Children and young people will not be facing each other and will be placed in the vehicle to maximise the distance between them and others accessing the same transport. Where possible transport bubbles will be identified to minimise the exposure to other people while on transport.

We will continue to ensure where possible that there is continuity of the staff and vehicles delivering SEND transport routes, to minimise disruption and distress to children and young people. However due to the guidance on self-isolation and the unrepresented challenges that we are all facing, the service cannot guarantee that there will not be changes to staff or vehicles, sometimes at short notice.

By the very nature of the needs of the young people who access our service it is not possible to socially distance the staff members on a vehicle from the children they are supporting. The needs of the children are paramount, and staff will be required to assist when needed to fasten seatbelts, secure wheelchairs, fit harnesses and sooth them if they are distressed. For some young people their identified needs require staff to sit next to or very close to them to ensure their safety. This will continue.

Drivers and escorts should maintain social distancing guidance, wherever possible, even when the children are not in the vehicle.

If possible, the driver's window should be open to ensure that there is a flow of fresh air in the vehicle and air conditioning should not be used.

The use of PPE and face coverings on SEND travel support vehicles

In line with the measures recommended to schools in relation to the need for PPE the SEND transport Service in Newcastle will be working to the following recommendations from the governments published guidance. **Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings** Updated 1 June 2020 which can be found at the following link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

The guidance states that

- Most staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain the current social distance recommendation from others. PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases including:
- children, young people and students whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE due to their intimate care needs should continue to receive their care in the same way
- if a child, young person or other learner becomes unwell with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) while in their setting and needs direct personal care until they can return home. A fluid-resistant surgical face mask should be worn by the supervising adult if current social distancing guidance cannot be maintained. If contact with the child or young person is necessary, then disposable gloves, a disposable apron and a fluid-resistant surgical face mask should be worn by the supervising adult. If a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes, for example from coughing, spitting, or vomiting, then eye protection should also be worn.
- children and young people with additional needs are not required to wear Masks or face coverings as they are exempt.

The transport staff on SEND travel support routes are employed through provider's who have signed up to the SEND transport framework. In line with the guidance from the government if their employer wishes them to wear face coverings or PPE it is for them as the employer to provide it as detailed in the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators>

Personal Hygiene and Vehicle Hygiene

It is recommended that all staff and students wash their hands prior to boarding the SEND travel support vehicle as well as when they disembark at either school or home.

When Keeping vehicles as clean as possible it is critical to reduce the spread of COVID-19, therefore:

All vehicles used to provide support should have a cleaning regime – Standard cleaning products can be used for regular cleaning, cleaning materials should be disposed of in the normal waste.

Where it is suspected that the vehicle may have been contaminated, e.g. due to being occupied by a person who has become covid-19 symptomatic, the vehicle should be withdrawn from use for a thorough deep clean with disinfectant which kills the virus (containing 1,000 parts per million available chlorine - 1000 ppm av.cl.) as per govt guidelines for non-healthcare settings.

Bleach and peroxide-based cleaners are likely to damage vinyl or plastic – use a product that is recommended for vehicle cleaning (of which there are several) and read the manufacturer's instructions.

When cleaning SEND travel support vehicles there are a few things to bear in mind:

- Using too much liquid can make interior fabrics damp, which will increase the likelihood that germs will collect and thrive
- Adhesives can also fail with excessive cleaning
- Make sure wet floors and surfaces are dried before any passengers board

If passengers not known to have COVID-19 (or similar symptoms) are in the vehicle, a deep clean is not necessary after each use.

If a driver/ passenger from a shared vehicle is subsequently confirmed as having COVID-19, seek specialist advice from Public Health England (via NCC Public Health department). The vehicle will need a deep clean involving disinfectant spray and will need to be left unused for at least 72 hours.

Cleaning of the vehicle by each driver should be completed at the start & end of each journey and the areas of the vehicle to be cleaned include:

- The steering wheel / gear stick / handbrake
- Window controls
- Internal handles
- External handles
- Seat belts (tongue/buckle/webbing)
- Head rest
- Touch points such as rails and the backs of seats

Conclusion

The SEND travel support team, senior education managers and the Newcastle public health representatives have worked together in drafting these guidelines and they will be reviewed when the government updates any of the relevant guidance.