

Assisted Travel Home to School

Policy statement

- 1.1 It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to accompany a child (or arrange suitable supervision) as necessary when walking to and from school, including to and from a provided transport pick-up and setdown point, unless such arrangements form part of the provision arranged by the Local Authority. Passenger Assistants will only be supplied on provided transport arrangements where they are necessary to meet a child's assessed needs.
- 1.2 The Policy accounts for the implementation of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and implementation of the Child's Plan; Education (Scotland) Act, 2004 (Additional Support for Learning); The Equality Act 2010; UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990.
- 1.3 The Policy reflects the implementation of The Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011, implemented in 2013, The Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- 1.2 The City of Edinburgh Council, in line with all education authorities in Scotland has a statutory duty to decide the measures it considers necessary to assist parents with home to school travel; to determine the terms and conditions that will apply and to pay all or part of reasonable travelling expenses for school children residing in the Council's area, attending designated schools.
- 1.3 The Council's statutory duty extends to keeping school transport provision under review to secure, as far as is reasonable and practicable, the ongoing safety of children under its charge, when travelling on dedicated school transport.
- 1.4 Under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000, the Council also has a duty to implement Best Value for assisted home to school travel that is subject to scrutiny by the Auditor General for Scotland.
- 1.5 Accordingly, the Council is responsible for the discharge of a fair, consistent, thorough, and transparent approach to the provision of assisted travel to achieve the required balance between demand and the allocation of available Council budgetary resources.
- 1.6 The Council's transport strategy aims to promote sustainable travel by encouraging the use of alternatives to the car, and seeks to reduce emissions from motorised travel, working towards the air quality standards set down in European legislation. As part of that strategy the Council is committed to improving public transport services within the City of Edinburgh. Accordingly, wherever feasible, assisted school travel will take the form of a free bus pass.
- 1.7 The Council is also committed to assisting children in moving towards greater travel independence wherever feasible to aid their transition to adult life, whilst having due regard

to safety, and equality considerations under the Equality Act 2010.

- 1.8 This policy outlines the parameters of the Council's statutory provision and priorities under the power of discretion to provide additional school assisted travel provision within available budgetary resources and subject to identified and assessed travel need.
- 1.9 The Council's Home to School Assisted Travel – Parent Guidance provides further detail on the application of this policy.

Scope

- 2.1 Within the legislation outlined above the scope of this policy encompasses the range of provision the Council chooses to make to deliver assisted home to school travel and includes social work services and respite provision.
- 2.2 The scope of the policy has been widened to include the values of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) - requiring joined-up working, is child focused, early intervention, and an understanding of the full needs of the child and family.

Definitions

- 3.1 Special school: A school is to be identified as a special school if the sole or main purpose of the school (or standalone unit) is to provide education specially suited to the additional support needs of children selected for attendance at the school (or unit) because of those needs.
- 3.2 Specialist provision: education especially suited to the additional support needs of children selected for participation in such provision because of those needs.
- 3.3 This policy refers to the term 'parent' which includes anyone who has parental responsibilities under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 as amended or has care of child or maintain a child.

Policy content

2. Assisted Travel Eligibility

Council statutory responsibility for assisted home to school travel

- 2.1 Under the Education Act free school transport must normally be provided for children of statutory school age under 8 living 2 or more miles away and children aged 8 and over living 3 or more miles away, from their catchment school.
- 2.2 Council entitlement to free assisted school travel is more generous than the above national parameters resulting in higher number of eligible children and associated costs. The Council's statutory walking/qualifying distance is:

- 2 miles or over for primary aged children
- 3 miles or over for secondary aged children.

- 2.3 The legal walking distance/ qualifying distance does not mean that a child must walk and represents the boundary limit for Council statutory duty to assist with school travel on distance grounds. It is the parents' responsibility where the child lives within the legal walking/qualifying distance to decide on the method that they think is most suitable to get their child to/ from school.
- 2.4 The statutory distance will be measured using Council approved software programs in a consistent manner along available walking routes from the address point of the child's main residence to the nearest school gate of the catchment school available for his/her use.
- 2.5 If no safe walking route is available to the catchment school, because all routes assessed by the Council are considered unsafe, even when accompanied by an adult, assisted travel will be considered regardless of distance.
- 2.6 Parents are responsible for home to school travel arrangements if their decision is to start or move their child to a non-catchment school.
- 2.7 Statutory school age is 5 to 18 years (or 19 years, with the authority's agreement). The Council's school admission arrangements allow for 'rising 5's i.e. aged over 4 years within the specified date range when due to start primary school in P1.
- 2.8 Where a child attends an Edinburgh school with a city-wide catchment area, the statutory walking distance threshold will still form part of the travel need assessment.

Non-statutory assisted home to school travel

- 2.9 The Council has the power to provide other assisted travel on a discretionary basis, subject to its budgetary resources and priorities and based on the outcome of travel need assessment by the Travel Allocation Panel. Further details of the main priority categories for discretionary travel consideration are provided in the Parents' Guidance.
- 2.10 The Travel Allocation Panel will review all aspects of the child and family situation including transport means and mobility allowance in payment and, where necessary additional information sought from the school and through a relevant social work service assessment in support of a Personal Travel Budget option, for example.
- 2.11 Under the Equalities Act 2010, the Council's duty to make reasonable adjustment is to enable children with a disability to gain access to an education as close as is reasonably possible to the education generally offered to children.
- 2.12 Assisted travel provide on a discretionary basis will be subject to ongoing review with the aim of moving the child or young person towards independent travel wherever appropriate.

Living within one mile of the catchment school

2.13 Where a child lives within 1 mile of the school this is not routinely assessed as an assisted transport need, unless there are safety or child at risk issues. Where the Travel Allocation Panel has confirmed there is no requirement for vehicle transport and a parent cannot reasonably be expected to accompany the child, schools will provide walking escorts from amongst school staff.

Spare seat scheme (formerly grace and favour)

2.14 Where spare seats exist on dedicated Council school transport vehicles, a child who does not meet the eligibility criteria may be temporarily allocated a seat if there is no additional cost involved and the route is not disrupted. Where a spare seat is re-allocated to an eligible child the temporary occupant will no longer be provided with assisted travel.

2.15 All routes and vehicle size will be closely monitored and reviewed to ensure the most cost-effective use of overall Council resources for eligible child numbers and, wherever possible and efficient, smaller vehicles deployed to replace larger vehicles or routes amended.

3. Home to school assisted travel parameters

3.1 Assisted travel is from the child's main home residence to and from the catchment school, or nearest special school with a suitable place available, at the start and end of the normal school day.

3.2 The Travel Allocation Panel may consider requests for alternative arrangements within available budgetary resources in exceptional circumstances and subject to a robust assessment of travel need whilst ensuring the most cost-effective and efficient mode of transport is used with no adverse impact on other passengers.

3.3 Transition visits to/from another school or college or part-time attendance (other than the normal Council temporary reduced hours arrangement for children starting in P1 during the Autumn term) do not fall within the Council's assisted home to school travel parameters and schools must make their own travel arrangements for such circumstances if required.

3.4 Distances will be measured from the address point of the child's house to the nearest school gate available for children's use along available walking routes using a consistently applied software program. The statutory walking distance measurement is not necessarily the shortest distance by road but the shortest route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, can get safely to school.

3.5 The Council's is committed to improving public transport services within the city and, wherever feasible, assisted school travel will be provided using the most cost-effective form of public transport i.e. a free bus pass. Alternatively, where this is assessed as not appropriate for the travel need, a suitable Council vehicle will be used with contract private hire only used where Council provision is not available.

3.6 The Council will keep assisted travel under review, benchmark best practices and be proactive in offering parental choice options wherever better outcomes for children and improved value for money can be achieved.

- 3.7 Schools, other relevant Council officers and parents are expected to accommodate the alignment of school business delivery at the start and end of the day to facilitate the achievement of these objectives as an integral part of assisted travel management, wherever feasible.

Independent travel training

- 3.8 The Council will work in partnership with parents, schools, and other key agencies to provide appropriate travel training for children as required to aid their transition to adulthood by promoting and supporting independent travel to and from school, wherever feasible.

4. Assisted travel health and safety

- 4.1 A parent will accompany a child where it can reasonably be expected for them to do so and where they consider it necessary for safety along a suitable walking route or when getting their child to/from school by other means within the qualifying distance.
- 4.2 A parent will ensure their child's supervision to and from the designated drop off point for assisted travel by Council or contract vehicle to the home address where they consider this is necessary due to the child's age or disability.
- 4.3 Where no public transport exists and/or where route is assessed as unsafe, even when accompanied by a responsible adult, assisted travel will be considered subject to Travel Allocation Panel assessment where the child lives within the statutory walking distance from their catchment school or nearest special school with a suitable place available.
- 4.4 Schools will be responsible for ensuring the child's supervision as required to and from designated school transport vehicle drop off and pick up points and escorting the child into /out of the school building as necessary to ensure their safety.
- 4.5 The Travel Hub will be responsible for ensuring recruitment and performance of all transport staff complies with Council requirements and that of Disclosure Scotland for the protection of children during assisted travel. The Travel Hub will ensure that the Council's tender parameters and standards for private contract hire are adhered to where no Council vehicle is available.
- 4.6 The Assisted Home to School Travel Support Risk Assessment Guidance forms an integral part of this shared responsibility in the identification and management of anticipatory risk throughout the journey lifecycle.

School travel plans

- 4.7 All schools will be responsible for agreeing and committing to operating school travel plans as part of a whole school approach to supporting a child's health, wellbeing, and safety.

5. Application for assisted school travel

- 5.1 **Parents who wish to apply for assisted travel will be responsible for submitting an annual application form ahead of the start of each new school session in line with Council communicated timescales and deadlines.**
- 5.2 Schools and other relevant Council officers including a child's social worker where appropriate, will be responsible for providing support to parents in the completion of the application form where requested or where the school proactively identifies assistance would be welcome.
- 5.3 A completed application form will be required for any change request to existing travel provision during the session or if a child starts at an Edinburgh school during the session.

6. Home to school assisted travel code of conduct

- 6.1 The responsibility of ensuring safe and acceptable behaviour rests with the parents for children travelling on school transport vehicles or on public transport.
- 6.2 Misbehaviour or action of children during school transport that could put the safety of others at risk may ultimately result in the removal of their child's transport provision on a temporary or permanent basis and police involvement may be sought where considered necessary.
- 6.3 Parents who abuse Council staff or Council contractors involved in assisted school travel, either verbally or physically, may result in the removal of transport on a temporary or permanent basis and police involvement may be sought where considered appropriate.
- 6.4 Further information on the code of conduct is provided in the [Assisted Home to School Travel Code of Conduct](#).

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 Council Travel Hub

- Will plan, organise, and deliver school transport using the most cost-effective and efficient mode available that meets assessed travel need.
- Will act as first point of contact and support for parents, school and other council officers on all assisted travel matters.

7.2 Travel Allocation Panel (TAP)

- Will comprise professional assessors and senior social work and education managers qualified to make appropriate judgements, monitor their implementation, and regularly review these where travel needs change.
- Will comprehensively assess travel need and apply a consistent, fair, and transparent approach to the allocation of school travel budgetary resources using the most cost- effective mode of shared transport where available.
- Will support and facilitate other travel support initiatives to supplement to Council vehicle transport, within the parameters of this policy that deliver best outcomes for children, efficient and effective use of Council transport resources and, wherever feasible, increase parental choice.

7.3 Communities and Families

- Senior management will ensure schools and child social work services act in accordance with this policy and its associated processes and procedures.
- Schools and other council officers involved with the child will support parents in the operational delivery of assisted home to school travel.

8. Implementation

- 8.1 For details of the completed **Implementation and Monitoring** form, contact the named author of the policy.

9. Related documents

Publications

- Education (Scotland) Act 1980 Sections 51, 60-60G
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/44
- <https://www.mygov.scot/free-school-transport/>.
- <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/contents/enacted>
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2011/1/contents>
- <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>
- Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 Section 37
www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2000/6/contents
- Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 Section 45
www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/1/contents
- Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 www.legislation.gov.uk/asp

/2004/4/contents

- Guide to Improving School Transport Safety:
www.transport.gov.scot/system/files/documents/guides/Improving_School_Transport_Safety_-_guide_-_final.pdf
- Scottish Executive School Transport Guidance Circular
www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/Parents/transport/transport-guidance
- The parent's guide to additional support for learning, Enquire, (2018) Sustrans.org.uk school travel planning toolkit

Websites: Disclosure Scotland: www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/

Council documents

- Assisted Home to School Travel – Parents Guidance.
- Assisted Home to School Travel Support Risk Assessment
- Assisted Home to School Travel Code of Conduct

10. Equalities impact

10.1 The rights of children and young people attending Edinburgh schools or other educational establishments as allocated by the Council include rights to education and protection.

10.2 Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child the Council has a duty to promote and protect children's rights which include rights to education and protection and it is committed to the protection, respect, and fulfilment of these rights.

10.3 This policy reflects the Council's statutory duties under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (as amended 2016) and its common law duty of care for the safety of pupils under their charge and this duty extends to children using school transport. Accordingly, parents and their children have a right to expect that suitable arrangements for a safe school transport system will be made by the Council for eligible children, taking account of local circumstances. Given these provisions are laid down in policy there will be no negative equality or human rights impact.

11. Sustainability impact

11.1 Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Act Edinburgh Council has a duty to ensure its policies, plans and strategies contribute to the emission reduction targets. This is because local authorities are well-placed to drive and influence emissions reductions in their wider areas through the services they deliver, including transport.

11.2 The Council's transport strategy aims to promote sustainable travel by encouraging the use of alternatives to the car and high carbon vehicles, and seeks to reduce emissions from motorised travel, working towards the air quality standards set down in European legislation. As part of that strategy the Council is committed to improving public transport services within the City of Edinburgh and for school transport provision to be reflect this commitment wherever feasible.

12. Risk assessment

12.1 The risk assessment has been conducted in conjunction with the Travel Demand Management Project Board and subsequent Project Initiation Documents submitted to the Board and Senior Responsible Officer.

13. Review

13.1 The policy and associated procedures will be reviewed within 12 months, subject to any further changes in legislation.