

## **SEN Travel Enablement Gloucestershire County Council**

### **Frequently asked questions regarding home to school transport for SEN students as schools return in September 2020**

In line with the government's aim for all young people to be back at school full time from the start of the autumn term, your child will be returning in September. You may have questions or concerns regarding what their home to school transport will 'look' like in light of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic which we would like to address now. If there are any questions that we haven't covered here, please contact the team by emailing [sen.transport@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:sen.transport@gloucestershire.gov.uk) and a colleague will be happy to get in touch.

The provision of home to school transport in September is being planned in accordance with the latest government guidance '**Transport to school and other places of education: autumn term 2020**', published on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2020. This guidance was developed with advice from Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). It is possible that our plans may have to change if further guidance is issued but we will continue to keep this document updated. In the meantime, we are making arrangements now to ensure we can transport all eligible children with additional needs to school in September.

#### **Will you transport my child in the same 'bubble' or zone that they are in at school?**

We have been working closely with special school Heads and understand that many schools will be operating in 'bubbles' or zones in September. We will support school 'bubbles' by ensuring any vehicle we use only transports children to one school, but this may include children from another group within that same school.

However we will be adhering to safer travel principles as outlined by the government (please see 'extra hygiene measures' section below).

#### **Will there be social distancing on home to school transport?**

Government guidance for the full opening of schools states that social distancing requirements will not be compulsory from the autumn term on dedicated home to school transport or on public transport. Whilst we will endeavour to keep passenger numbers as low as possible on each vehicle, there is no guarantee that social distancing can be maintained and it is for parents to consider their own child's needs in light of this. Some vehicles may appear 'busy' but they are, in fact, transporting children who will be in that same group all day at school.

#### **Does my child or the driving crew have to wear face coverings?**

The law regarding wearing face coverings does not apply on dedicated school transport. However, passengers, drivers and passenger assistants are strongly advised to wear face coverings and passengers will be provided with two washable, re-usable face masks each for their personal use. Whilst we highly recommend their use, this will not be mandatory as we understand that some students with additional needs will not tolerate this.

#### **Can my child go to school if they are showing symptoms of Coronavirus at home?**

If your child is showing symptoms of C-19 such as a new and persistent cough, a high temperature or a loss of taste or smell, or if a member of your household is showing these symptoms, your child must not board school transport and must stay at home.

### **How will my child get home if they develop symptoms of Coronavirus at school or come into contact with someone who has symptoms?**

The school will contact the parent/carer as it will be their responsibility to collect their child. They must not travel on home to school transport.

### **How do I know the transport vehicle is clean?**

Vehicles will be cleaned thoroughly after each journey using standard cleaning products such as detergents and bleach. Particular attention will be paid to door handles, handrails, windows and any other surface which will be frequently touched. This will include the car seat framework, seatbelt clips etc. Any object which cannot be thoroughly cleaned will be removed from the vehicle

### **What extra hygiene measures will be in taxis and minibuses to keep my child safe?**

To lower the risk of the transmission of Coronavirus, the following measures will be in place:

- Face coverings and in some cases, plastic visors, may be used by drivers and passenger assistants where it is appropriate to the needs of the young people being transported
- Wherever possible windows on the vehicles will be kept open to aid ventilation
- We will endeavour to keep the same passenger assistant (where there is one) and driver on each vehicle so that your child is in contact with a limited number of people each day. However this cannot be fully guaranteed due to their own shielding requirements and other factors
- Vehicles will be cleaned thoroughly after each use (see above).
- Passenger assistants are very often required to work in close proximity with, and to physically assist, passengers for example: hand holding, putting seatbelts on, handling belongings. For the safety of both parties in this situation passenger assistants may use personal protective equipment (PPE) in the form of face masks, gloves, aprons and hand sanitiser unless the young person they are supporting cannot tolerate this

### **Can my child still take the toys and items needed to comfort him/her on transport?**

Any equipment that is essential to the well being of the young person on transport may be taken on the vehicle and for the safety of your child items will be cleaned and disinfected twice a day by the passenger assistant.

### **Will my child's driver or passenger assistant change?**

Where contracts came to their natural end in July, routes will be re-tendered for September so there may be a new transport operator taking your child to school from the start of term. You will be advised in advance if there will be any changes and a home visit will be carried out. Passengers should be prepared that they may not see the same driver, vehicle, passenger assistant or travelling companions that they are familiar with from before lockdown.

### **Do I have an alternative?**

We understand that parents, carers and children may remain apprehensive, and you might chose to make your own home to/from school travel arrangements in the short term. If this is the case, please ensure you keep us informed of your plans.

Delia O'Connor  
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