

# Policy for home to school transport for children with additional needs

## Introduction

This policy statement supports the Council's vision for Children and Young People set out in the Children's Plan "Children and young people who develop to their full potential and have the life skills and opportunities to play an active part in society". This includes promoting easy access to the Council's services.

The policy statement is in addition to the Local Authority's General Policy for Transport to School. It applies to:

- children normally resident in Gateshead
- all children of statutory school age and to pre-school children

A separate policy exists for Post 16 students attending colleges or school sixth forms.

## 1. Policy statement

- 1.1.** It is the duty of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school, to be responsible for their safety on the journey between home and school and to meet any travel costs. It is the responsibility of every parent/carer to help their child to develop the skills and confidence for independent and safe travel to and from school. Most school pupils do not require any help from the Local Authority (LA).
- 1.2.** The LA provides help with home to school transport in cases where we consider it necessary to help a child or young person to attend school.
- 1.3.** Some school pupils will be entitled to help simply because they live more than the "statutory walking distance" from their nearest suitable school - in these cases the LA's General Policy for Transport to School applies.
- 1.4.** In a small number of cases, school pupils need help because they have additional needs. These may include school pupils:
  - with special educational needs (with or without statements)
  - with a physical disability (temporary or permanent)
  - with a medical/psychological condition (temporary or permanent)
  - with other special needs, including family circumstances

- 1.5.** In assessing whether a school pupil needs LA help with home to school transport, the LA takes account of the following factors:
  - the statutory walking distance from home to school
  - the nature of the route
  - the age of the child
  - whether the child is capable of independent travel
  - the child's special educational needs (if any)
  - the child's physical disabilities (if any)
  - the child's medical condition
  - the child and family's religious denomination
  - the family circumstances
  - any other factors the LA considers relevant
- 1.6.** The assessment will be carried out following the receipt of a request from the parent/carer, which can be made at any time during the school year. The parent/carer will apply for help using a form supplied by the LA. The LA will consider such additional information about the child as it considers necessary to make an assessment, including the advice of:
  - the child's school
  - LA educational psychologist or other specialist staff
  - any social worker involved with the child or family
  - any other agency providing support for the child or family
  - the local transport authority
  - any other person/agency suggested by the parent/carer

Where the LA does not already have such information, it is the responsibility of the parent to obtain such advice and submit it to the LA with their application.
- 1.7.** The LA will normally process applications within 10 working days, subject to the necessary information and advice from other agencies being available. We will inform applicants if we are unable to meet this target.
- 1.8.** If the LA agrees to provide help, the LA may review the provision at any time, but changes to the provision will normally take effect at the start of a new school year (1 September). There will always be a review of provision when a child:
  - moves from primary to secondary education
  - completes secondary education
  - changes school
  - moves house
  - has a change in their physical/medical or other condition.

- 1.9.** It is the duty of the parent to inform the LA of any change in the child's or the family's circumstances. The provision may also be reviewed/removed if the parent or child refuses to co-operate with reasonable requests from the LA or transport provider.
- 1.10.** If the LA does not agree to provide help, the parent/carer will be informed by letter and advised that they may appeal against that decision, provided they do so in writing within 15 working days.
- 1.11.** The parent/carer should submit the reasons for the appeal and their case in full to the Director of Education in writing, together with any other supporting information. There is no entitlement to a hearing in person. The Director will normally consider appeals within 10 working days of receipt and will give her/his decision in writing. If an application/appeal is unsuccessful, a parent may only apply for a further assessment after twelve months has elapsed, or if there is a significant change in circumstances in the meantime.
- 1.12.** If the LA agrees to provide help with home to school transport, this shall be free of charge and by whatever means the LA considers appropriate, including:
  - taxi, bus or ambulance service contracted by the LA
  - a permit to travel on public transport
  - escort provided by the LA
  - meeting the costs of a parent/carer who makes their own transport or escort arrangements.

## 2. Other Provisions

- 2.1.** Transport for a child with special educational needs will not normally be recorded in their statement, but will be considered separately in accordance with this policy.
- 2.2.** Where a child is temporarily attending provision other than their usual school, their need for assistance will be assessed in the same way as described above.
- 2.3.** Where a child is temporarily residing at a different address (including respite care), their provision will only be maintained if this can be achieved at no additional cost.
- 2.4.** Where the parent/carer has chosen to send their child to a school other than the nearest suitable school, the LA will only provide help with transport if the cost of the provision is no greater than that required to attend the nearest suitable school.