

# Home to School Transport - Policy Panel

Date:           **30 September 2020**

Time:           **10.00am**

Venue           **Virtual Meeting - Skype**

**Note:** in response to current Government Regulations this meeting is being held as a virtual meeting for councillors and accessible via Skype. Public speaking and engagement opportunities will be made available.

The meeting will also be webcast live to the internet.

Members:   **Councillors:** Allcock (Chair), Clare, Grimshaw, Hills, Mears and Wares

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# AGENDA

## PART ONE

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### 21 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

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Notes of the last meeting held on the 21 July 2020.

### 22 STATEMENT ON THE COMMISSIONED BARRISTER'S REPORT

### 23 UPDATE ON THE START OF TERM ARRANGEMENTS

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The attached suite of papers were prepared as a briefing just ahead of the start of term this September. At the meeting Regan Delf will provide a verbal update on more recent service delivery.

### 24 DISCUSSION ON FUTURE SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS

This is where people are invited to make a final comment or submission to the Member Policy Panel on any reflections, points of learning and / or recommendations. This will enable them to consider these submissions when forming their final recommendations for Children, Young People & Skills Committee.

Please provide any submissions to [Carolyn.bristow@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:Carolyn.bristow@brighton-hove.gov.uk) by 5pm on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September.

In order to help structure the discussions on the 30<sup>th</sup> September the areas for discussion are likely to fall into the following themes:

- governance and accountability
- stakeholder feedback
- procurement
- continuous service improvement.

### 25 THANK YOU AND CLARIFICATION ON NEXT STEPS

### 26 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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The closing date for receipt of public questions and deputations for the next meeting is 12 noon on the fourth working day before the meeting.

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**FURTHER INFORMATION**

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact , (01273 291006, email [mark.wall@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:mark.wall@brighton-hove.gov.uk)) or email [democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

Date of Publication – 25 September 2020



# HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY PANEL Item 21

## DRAFT Action notes and panel recommendations from the HTST Member Policy Panel 21 July 2020

Present:

Members: Cllrs Clare, Wares, O’Quinn, Mears, Hills, Grimshaw.

Officers: Georgina Clarke-Green, Jo Lyons, Regan Delf, Carolyn Bristow, Alice Rowland, Giles Rossington, Chris Pugh.

Guests:

Fiona England from PaCC  
Rachel Burstow from HillPark  
Bob Wall from Central Hub Brighton

Operators:

Radio Cabs  
Streamline  
Southern  
Ace Travel  
Community Transport  
Brighton Taxi 4U

| Item                                | Discussion and agreed actions   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Welcome and introductions           | <p>Cllr Clare opened the meeting and welcomed the panel and the guests who had joined.</p> <p>She has asked why the agenda was released late and will share an update on that with the panel when she has a response.</p> <p>It was hoped the meeting today would include a report commissioned by the chief executive on some of the issue that arose last summer, however that is not yet finalised so will come to the next meeting.</p>   |
| Procedural business                 | None.   |
| Action points from the last meeting | <p>Action: Carolyn to update minutes of the June meeting with some clarifications from the panel – done</p> <p>Action: Cllr Clare agreed to review and collate outstanding actions from previous minutes. Answers provided and were read out. Provided here below.</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <br/>                     Summary of outstanding questic                 </div> <p>Action: Regan to discuss with the special school headteachers the potential for schools to align to transport groupings. – done.</p> |

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|--|---|
|  | <p>Action: Regan to look to put interim customer satisfaction level back in to the plan. – done.</p> <p>Action: Cllr Clare asked for an officer report to come to following meeting on potential new procurement arrangement. This will be done once the CE report is in. <b>Action: ensure this is logged as a future item.</b></p> <p>Agreed: Regan to share children’s feedback with the panel. Regan explained that more work on this was being done and then to be shared with the panel.</p> <p>Action: Diana to take a suggestion back to PaCC about doing a survey that explicitly tries to split the historical views to what the service delivery is like now.</p> <p>Fiona expressed concern about going back to parents/carers/children and asking them again about their experiences of last September. Cllr Wares agreed that wasn’t necessary, the LGA review covered that. He suggested that November might be a good time to collect some further feedback, to help the panel create their final recommendations for CYPs.</p> <p>Action: Clarity of administration’s position to be sought – Cllr Clare discussed with Cllr Allcock – he recognised that as a non-overall control administration he’s happy take a view from the panel on what the service needs to look like.</p> <p>Cllr Wares thanked the chair and officers for these updates. He explained that he and Cllr Mears felt there were still some outstanding matters. Regarding the overspend they would like to see further detailed breakdown especially within figures like the £404,000. They would also like to request an analysis for the panel on why each route was handed back. What were the details around what happened when they were handed back – were there higher costs associated as a result. With regards to the LGA report, they would like the detailed shared on what was asked to be changed.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Cllr Clare agreed those matters could be taken forward to a future meeting.</b></p> <p>The action points from the previous meeting were agreed.</p> |
| <p>Focussed discussion 1: Arrangements for September</p> | <p>Regan provided a brief overview. She explained that Bob Wall is also in the meeting, who has been working on the training offer and she’ll invite him to provide an overview of that too.</p> <p>Regan explained that the government have asked for all children to go back to school in September. There is likely to be a phased approach at our special schools but by end of September all children should be back on transport. The team have worked with</p>   |

the issued guidance and developed the following principles of service delivery in September:

- Maintained distance where possible on vehicles and reduce numbers on vehicles
- Maintain consistency of service for families eg retain drivers and VPAs were at all possible
- Get children to school in a timely manner

Regan explained that her team were working to reduce the need to use back to back journeys for the operators (as this means some children arrive too early or too late) and reducing the need to use new/out of city firms wherever possible too.

Regan concluded that the main issue the service was facing was a potential shortage of VPAs – it's a hard role to recruit to for the operators. With one firm the advert was also placed on the council website and Regan has made that offer to other operators. She's also gone out to sessional staff in the council asking them if they'd like this additional paid work. The intention is to have a bank of council staff available that can be used to fill any possible gaps.

Cllr Wares thanked Regan and asked the operators to contribute if they had anything to add, he was keen to hear from them as to whether they felt ready. Do they have the right PPE, are their DBS checks likely to be ready on time? He was also interested to hear more about the move to employ VPAs within the council – he queried whether this was the beginnings of a wider in-house model? He was also keen to hear from schools about how they feel about the start of term – are matters such as site marshalling all in hand?

Regan said that she didn't anticipate a PPE problem, operators were able to get PPE if required, if they were unable to source from elsewhere. There is no requirement to wear full PPE but it is accepted that it may be a sensible precaution. The team are working with the schools to resolve and had received positive responses to a recent survey.

**Action: Following a questions raised by an operator it was agreed that an update on PPE would be shared with the panel.**

Rachel Burstow added that plans for September were falling in to place at her school.

Cllr O'Quinn asked for clarification on the physical distancing and what happens if there is symptomatic cases. Regan explained that we were aiming to maintain distancing where possible but speaking with families where there may be occasions where it's not possible. Operators and families have had advice on how to manage

symptomatic cases and there have been a few scenarios already which have been managed.

Cllr Wares added that all operators should be complying with the blue book.

**Action: it was agreed that the panel would get an update on where DBS checks were at for September.**

Cllr Wares asked about the potential in-house VPAs and asked about how they'd be trained. He asked for details on what specific training they might receive. Regan explained that there was a suite of core in-house training which the new VPAs could receive, then specialist training on specific conditions eg epilepsy can be arranged as needed – as would be done for any staff member.

Andy Cheeseman added a comment about potential symptomatic cases and the difficulties this presents operators and the individual drivers because of their inability to work for 7 days. During the pandemic so far some cases have been supported by the LA but an agreed approach on this was needed.

**Action: HTST service to agree an approach with operators on how to manage / support cases where drivers / VPAs need to self isolate.**

Fiona England added that PaCC were very supportive of the intention to maximise space between children where possible and this fits with some longer term concerns they have raised previously. Some operators have raised a concern that it can be difficult for a SEND child or young person to take a Covid test due to anxiety or complications with their conditions/needs. Regan agreed and all suggested that a discussion outside of the meeting would be helpful on this. Cllr Mears wondered if temperature testing might be part of that approach.

**Action: an agreed approach to be reached if possible on supporting the children and young people in reception of HTST to take Covid tests when appropriate.**

Bob Wall joined the discussed and explained that separate from his role on the management committee for the connected hub, he was also working with Regan in an advisory role to support the development of the city's HTST training offer – a mixture of face to face and online options.

Feedback has been received that face to face is ideal however it is understood that that will be difficult at the moment although some sessions are hoping to be run later in the year. Until then an online training offer is being developed. The other advantage of online training is there is a better record of who has undertaken it, however it was acknowledged that it is possible for one person to log into the training and another to complete it. Some operators were looking to have some staff join together to complete their

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <p>training. Bob explained the breadth of the training – some of it will be core requirements like health &amp; safety, equalities, safeguarding etc. Then there will be more specialist elements for types of need and then some will be signposting for further specialist support eg gender reassignment.</p> <p>Andy Cheeseman thanked Regan and Bob for the work they were doing pulling this difficult task together. He shared that the council last had a full training over 8/9 years ago so it is an undertaking to create a new offer now. Cllr Wares also thanked officers for their work on this. He acknowledged that stakeholders were working together to fix a problem that may never be totally resolved however he didn't want to see anything that was simply the 'good enough' solution. He wanted to continue to see a raising of standards and this should include in time a face to face training offer if that is considered to be the most effective model. Bob reassured that operators had already in the past received a breadth of training so there was not a starting from nothing position. What we were looking to do here now is to establish a common set of expectations when delivering HTST in the city.</p> <p>The group discussed pupil information sheets and operators asked when all the details may be shared with them. Regan explained that there was a new system whereby parents/carers only need to give information if it was new or amended, this saved them time and supports the principle of 'tell your story once'. Fiona also supported an approach that didn't require families to resubmit information regularly, but recognised the importance of a system that enables operators to get the most up to date information on the children, including risks or updates on their health. Regan explained that the service were in the process of changing the system, in liaison with PaCC where we want to strike a balance of not harassing families but also enabling operators to have the right amount of information to deliver a safe service. She also explained about the new 'child passports' that were being developed – enabling a combined application, risk assessment process – and that should provide further reassurance on this matter.</p> <p><b>Action: it was agreed that Regan would present an update on this to a future meeting.</b></p> <p>Cllr Clare concluded that the service and arrangements with schools and operators are clearly in a more comfortable situation than this time last year. We accept that there will always be some difficulties and challenges in this work but we've seen evidence of greater collaborative work to get better solutions in place and she wanted to thank stakeholders for that.</p> |
| <p><b>Focussed Discussion 2 (45 mins)</b></p> | <p>Community Transport had provided a submission directly to the Chair ahead of the meeting. Provided below.</p>  |

Last  
September



Letter for BHCC  
HTST Policy Panel 21

Tom Druitt provided an overview of the proposal, which comes from the position of potentially being able to rebuild the process from the start.

The proposal is around contracts being provided to manage whole schools, rather than individual routes. So an operator takes responsibility for a schools arrangements, linking with other operators to deliver some of the runs within that. This allows for schools and operators to use their expertise to tailor the approach needed. Operators can then make swift changes 'on the group' as needed, and can link directly with the HTST and families on those matters.

This allows for greater flexibility and could potentially enable to cheaper service due to sensible efficiencies. It would allow operators the ability to plan ahead and solve that issue of certainty around investments which is currently difficult with the existing contract model.

Tom added that this year is better in terms of planning, whereas previously it was difficult to know in good time how many children would need transportation and the details of the routes.

He also added that there would not be a desire to go back wholly to the old framework agreement as that created some budgetary issues such as operators not being paid if a child was unwell for a day – this was unhelpful as the overheads for the operators was broadly unaffected in that scenario, drivers and VPAs still needed paying.

Cllr Wares thanked Tom for his contributions to the discussions and asked for other operators to share their views on this. He was interest to understand more about what that means in terms of operators being self managing. He also wanted to be clear about how to get the balance of putting children's needs first and the need to achieve value for money in future models. The city needs and deserves a brilliant service.

Andy Cheeseman added that there were some good things from the previous arrangements that might helpfully be reintroduced. He supported the view that an alternative arrangement could help lesson the overall spend on HTST for the city.

Cllr Clare thanked Tom for the letter and suggested and agreed that it continues to be the panels view that looking at a possible hybrid model for the future would be something they are interest in doing during a panel meeting. It was felt important to receive the CE report first as that will inform those considerations.

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
|                             | <b>Action: it was agreed that a wider discussion on potential alternative future arrangements to be on a future meeting agenda.</b> |
| AOB                         | None raised.  |
| Date of next public meeting | Future meeting dates to be determined and shared.   |



**Members' Policy Panel**  
**21.7.20**

Response to previous queries

Panel would like to review the cost of routes

The HTST team with finance colleagues has been working on a route comparison tool which would give us some 'fair price' benchmarking with the sophistication needed to cover variables, such as whether there is a VPA on the route, how many children are being transported, how complex their needs, how far etc. The breakdown of route costs per mile then provides 'outliers' against our benchmarking. We already have this information but are going through a checking process to ensure all variables and complexities have been accounted for in each route. For example, a route cost per mile might seem very high, but further analysis might show the journey the child's needs are very complex, requiring longer to support on and off the vehicle/ load equipment etc.

Panel would like more information about how comparator council budgets' break down

We do not have this information currently. This could be obtained but capacity an issue this summer.

Panel would like a breakdown of overspend in last financial year to understand how this can be prevented in future

- Prior to new software system, Mobisoft, introduced last autumn, the data on pupils and routes was less reliable, making comparisons between July and September difficult. This is a substantial caveat to consider when looking at the table below.
- Best estimate of full year overspend in 2019/20, without the new procurement having taken place, was £498K
- This increased by £470K to £968K on account of a. consultant fees and b. increase in costs relating to changes in transport arrangements (see table below)
- The increase in costs relating to changes in transport arrangements largely resulted from the need to make emergency arrangements, that were not always the most efficient, when routes were handed back in late summer of 2019. This is being addressed for September 2020, although effects will be masked initially by additional transport needed to maintain social distancing.
- Contextually, it is important to note that EHC plan numbers are increasing by an average of 17% a year. The government has acknowledged the resulting budget pressures on SEND budgets and increased the DSG accordingly. HTST budgets have not been increased and yet pressures there are inextricably interlinked to SEND.
- The LGA independent review report (March 2020) recommended that the Council consider pressures on the base budget for HTST and on resources in the HTST team, especially at times of peak demand.
- At Policy and Resources Committee on 27.5.20, it was agreed to increase the base budget of the HTST service from April 2021 to acknowledge pressures nationally and

locally, to bring the budget more into line with statistical neighbour averages and to allow for an increased in staffing in the HTST team.

| Description   | 2019/20<br>Outturn<br>variance<br>£'000 |   |
|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |
| Underlying overspends and new pupils  | 468                                     | Some of the additional cost of new pupils will be as a result of the changes in September |
| Consultants fees  | 168                                     |   |
| Increase in costs as a result of changes to transport arrangements in September/October | 404                                     | Part year effect from September (7 months)  |
| Subsequent savings made by the Home to School transport team by re-routing etc.         | (72)                                    |   |
|   |   |   |
| <b>Total Overspend in 2019/20</b>   | <b>968</b>                              |   |

- Panel would like to recommend corporate risk more swiftly recognised in future when raised by councillors

We accept the need to keep councillors updated on progress when recommendations around corporate risks are made.

- Panel would like final confirmation of insurance situation once all operators have returned information

All transport operators have confirmed full insurance for all duties undertaken. The panel have had a spreadsheet provided to them with the details.

- Panel would like clarity on use of DPS this September

We continue to use the DPS with some administrative changes (ie we email operators on the framework to request bids for new routes, rather than using the online auction tool but we can do that within the terms of procurement rules). We have not gone for a wholesale re-tendering of routes, aiming to maintain stability as far as possible. However, we have new children arriving and a similar number leaving transport, which means a number of routes need to be re-configured and new routes are put out to tender. This is always the case at this time of year for this and all Local Authorities commissioning transport. When we consider bids, we do not just consider price, but also quality and contextual factors. At present, all routes for known children have been planned for September, subject to changes in government guidance on social distancing. HTST is excluded from government guidance on 2m or 1m+ social distancing as it is deemed lower risk than public transport, given that children largely travel in the same groups with the same staff. However, we have reduced the numbers

on vehicles temporarily for September. We will charge costs of extra vehicles to COVID-19.

The government is signalling new HTST specific guidance in preparation. Where there are changes, new drivers and VPAs will introduce themselves to families in the first two weeks of August.

Panel would like to request administrations view on H2ST policy

Cllr Clare to cover separately.

- Panel would like to see further detail on the changes made with the LGA to the Independent review report.

The LGA have provided the version of the report to the panel which explains any amendments that were made between their first working draft shared with a core group for factual accuracy checks and their final published version.





Brighton & Hove

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Cllr Hannah Clare  
Chair, Home to School Transport Policy Panel  
Brighton & Hove City Council  
Hove Town Hall  
Norton Road  
Hove BN3 3BQ

21 July 2020

Dear Cllr Clare

### **Home to School Transport – Future Arrangements**

We are writing to you in advance of the Policy Panel later today further to the Panel's request for ideas to inform future arrangements for Home to School Transport.

As we all know, the children in our care benefit hugely from continuity and the ability to form positive relationships with staff, and as such whatever system we have for Home to School Transport must provide that. We appreciate that getting best value for money is also very important, and we believe the following outline format for the contracting out of Home to School Transport is the best way to provide the continuity our children need and give best value to the council at the same time.

This is by no means an oven-ready solution and there will be detail to work out. The council will also need to consider whether after the experience of the last year it is wise to change the system again, and we don't have the answer for that. However, if the council does choose to review the way it procures Home to School Transport we believe, based on our experience over the last two decades, that this is the most sensible way forward:

1. Operators bid for the whole school, as previously, and work out the most efficient way to transport the children based on their locations and their needs. To enable operators to offer the best value for money (and encourage as many local operators to engage as possible) operators should be able to work with other providers on the council's preferred supplier list to deliver the service. If an operator engages a third party to deliver any of the services, it is that operator's responsibility to ensure the third party delivers the service as specified, and it is up to the operator holding the contract to manage all the runs within their contract regardless of who ultimately delivers the service.
2. Operators notify BHCC of the runs, vehicles, drivers, VPAs and, if appropriate, the provider of the service as well as staff training qualifications and any other relevant information in advance of the start of the service. They also arrange for staff to meet the children and parents/guardians prior to the commencement of the service.

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Brighton & Hove

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3. The price is set by the contract according to the winning bid; the price goes up by a certain amount per child if more children are added, and the price goes down by a certain amount if children are removed. There may be different prices depending on the needs of the children; for example a wheelchair user or a child with complicated needs may require more support, staff training or equipment than other children and the prices for additional children may reflect that.
4. The contract should be a minimum of 4 years to enable operators to plan and invest in appropriate vehicles, training and equipment, and to provide continuity for the children.
5. BHCC should give the operator 8 weeks' notice of the number of children for the following year; if BHCC doesn't have the final figure at this time it provides an estimate and the transport is worked out according to the estimate, with extra children taken at a later date at an additional price agreed within the contract. There is no discount for children taken off the run at less than 8 weeks' notice; by this time vehicles, drivers and passenger assistants will likely have already been allocated and there is negligible saving if a children is removed from a run.
6. Each contract has a base price, below which the price never falls no matter how many children are taken off, to enable the management and administration of the contracts to be maintained to a high standard.
7. Payment is made for every registered child every day regardless of whether they travelled assuming the transport was available. This gives operators certainty over their income and costs and enables operators to give lower prices as a result. The alternative is that due to the uncertainty operators over-shoot and the council over-pays.
8. Operators manage the service and are required to find transport from a third party if for whatever reason they cannot provide it themselves. Operators can use any third-party operator on the BHCC preferred suppliers list.
9. Operators notify BHCC and the school concerned of any delays, incidents, alternative arrangements etc at the earliest possible opportunity.
10. Operators provide a simple monthly report with the monthly invoice with KPIs for the contract.

There is clearly a lot more detail to be fleshed out, but a system like this enable operators to plan ahead and design efficient routes, and manage them easily without too much effort on the part of the council. This would enable the council to save money on the extra management and administration, and give operators time to plan, and freedom to manage the service in the most efficient way to maximise continuity and stability for the children.

Tom Druitt  
General Manager

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|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Subject:</b>               | <b>Briefing on Home to School Transport Arrangements for the Autumn Term 2020</b> |
| <b>Date:</b>                  | <b>29 August 2020</b>   |
| <b>Contact Officer: Name:</b> | <b>Regan Delf</b>   |
| <b>Email:</b>                 | <b>Regan.delf@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>  |

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The briefing provides an update on arrangements for Home to School Transport for the autumn term 2020.
- 1.2 Appendices to the briefing include the latest communication with parents and carers on arrangements for September and a 'Social Story' written to help children and young people cope with changes.
- 1.3 Also attached are longer documents providing further information on:
  - Guidance for Operators on Arrangements over the Autumn term
  - The first two training modules in the new suite of online training materials– 'Introduction to HTST' and 'Safeguarding on HTST'

## 2 ROUTE PLANNING

- 2.1 Planning took place in good time this year and details of known children and young people for transport were passed on to firms before the end of July.
- 2.2 Our providers will be transporting around 480 children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities to around 50 different schools and colleges.
- 2.3 At the point of writing the briefing, the HTST service is still receiving details of a small number of new children needing transport. This happens every year and in all Local Authorities and necessitates last minute changes to arrangements in some cases.
- 2.4 Our transport providers have been flexible and supportive over a period of much change and uncertainty, working in partnership with the service to ensure that arrangements are the best they can be over the pandemic period and in relation to the return to school.
- 2.5 The Parent and Carers' Council, often under extreme pressures themselves as parents and carers over the period of school closures, has provided highly valued challenge and support in relation to autumn arrangements and very helpful input into planning and communications.
- 2.6 In these uncertain and challenging times, we have said to parents and carers that there may be imperfections and issues to be resolved at the beginning of the term. However, we are committed to providing a good and safe service and will work swiftly with all stakeholders to resolve any issues that might arise.
- 2.7 Social distancing has been continued on vehicles in line with the latest government advice, issued on 11 August. While it is not mandatory to operate reduced numbers on HTST, Government advice is to try to do that as far as possible.
- 2.8 Our routes have been planned to leave a spare seat between each passenger in vehicles. Where this has been difficult for practical reasons, one extra passenger only has been allowed.

- 2.9 Social distancing has necessitated the commissioning of more vehicles and crews, and while we have managed to secure sufficient capacity, resources have been stretched with additional vehicles commissioned and providers have had to recruit extra staff.
- 2.10 The Government has provided extra funding for COVID-relief generally and a grant for dedicated school transport, including specifically commissioned buses.
- 2.11 Parents/ carers have all been asked to contact us if they have any worries about their arrangements. In the few instances where they have done so, we have been able to make changes and provide reassurance.
- 2.12 Firms were asked to ensure all families knew of arrangements and had met new teams where applicable by 16 August. While in the majority of cases, firms met this deadline, we have had to chase up a number beyond this date. Although in some cases, we have been told of genuine difficulties in making contact with parents and carers, we do not feel this system has worked as well as it should and needs further improvement. We have been discussing with a PaCC representative how to make changes to ensure greater compliance with deadlines in the future.

### **3 GUIDANCE TO OPERATORS AND FAMILIES**

- 3.1 New updated guidance was issued to operators on 18.8.20 in response to the government's latest guidance for school transport issued on 11 August. This guidance is circulated as an attachment to this briefing and covers all aspects of prevention of virus transmission and response to virus symptoms on HTST.
- 3.2 We have also required our operators to send us their risk assessments before the start of term and these are in the process of being returned currently.
- 3.3 We issued our latest communication to parents and carers on 20.8.20 (see Appendix 1) with a 'Social Story' (see Appendix 2) to help some children and young people prepare for the changed transport arrangements for September.
- 3.4 All our communications with parents and carers have been discussed and approved by PaCC.

### **3.5 VEHICLE PASSENGER ASSISTANTS**

- 3.6 This workforce is often difficult to recruit and retain because of limited hours needed, split shifts and time of day when transport required.
- 3.7 A high percentage of VPAs (and drivers on HTST) are an older workforce and their safety is a priority, alongside that of children and young people.
- 3.8 Acknowledging recruitment and retention difficulties, our supplier relief over the period of school closures has paid VPAs at 100% of their expected pay.
- 3.9 The LA has also recruited 6 'bank' VPAs who can cover for any gaps caused by sickness or any issues that might arise with time taken for acquiring enhanced DBS for new VPAs.

### **4 MONITORING**

- 4.1 Our checks with providers are complete and no transport staff member will begin their work in September without a current enhanced DBS
- 4.2 Following issues last year, where parents and carers reported feeling burdened by requests for new Pupil Information Sheets annually, this year parents and carers have only been asked to update the existing sheets if there have new information to provide about children's needs.

- 4.3 All operators have been told that they will only get an updated Pupil Information Sheet if the parents or carers have provided updated information. Where routes have changed, transport operators have been provided with Pupil Information Sheets for children and young people new to their service.
- 4.4 The Home to School Transport Service has conducted risk assessments on all children using our transport.
- 4.5 The service is monitoring compliance with COVID-19 safety standards by:
  - 4.5.1. requiring an updated risk assessment from each firm;
  - 4.5.2. staff being required to complete the training modules sent out to them by the beginning of term;
  - 4.5.3. team presence at key school sites in the first week of term to monitor traffic flow;
  - 4.5.4. regular spot checks on COVID preventative and cleaning regime compliance at key school sites from the beginning of the autumn term.

## **5 TRAINING**

- 5.1 We have issued our firms the first two training modules for all staff to complete by the beginning of term (see attachments with the briefing) – they are:
  - ‘Introduction to HTST’
  - ‘Safeguarding on HTST’
- 5.2. We are checking that our firms are complying with the requirement that all staff have completed these two modules before starting work in September. Initial feedback from firms on the content is very positive although there have been some teething problems with accessing the Learning Gateway. We have issued the modules as PDFs also to make sure everyone has access irrespective of access to the Learning Gateway.
- 5.3 We are then requiring all staff to have completed a further three modules by this half term and a further four by the end of the autumn term, covering all aspects of SEND, Equalities and Exploitation.
- 5.4 The training programme has been developed by relevant specialists from across the Local Authority and produced in consultation with representatives from PaCC and our transport providers.
- 5.5. VPAs, drivers and parents and carers have contributed to the module on ‘Introduction to HTST’.
- 5.6 We are also just about to issue training on epilepsy for staff transporting children with epilepsy plans.
- 5.7 Epilepsy plans are now being written by the specialist nurses at Seaside View with a dedicated section providing advice specifically for transport staff, and with parents’ and carers’ consent, each updated plan is being forwarded to our operators.

## **6 RECRUITMENT**

- 6.1 Low capacity in the HTST service is the most significant risk to continued service improvements currently. Low capacity in the team at peak times, was referenced in the report from the Independent Review Team, published in March 2020.
- 6.2 The current service establishment is small at 1.75 FTE client transport officers and a seconded team manager plus an interim Head of Service (part-time).
- 6.3 Low capacity at the peak time from mid-summer to September has been exacerbated by the need to respond to special arrangements for the pandemic.

- 6.4 Currently recruitment is underway for a permanent team manager and an administrative assistant. Our attempt to recruit a contract manager 0.5 FTE and an interim Head of Service did not produce a short-list and the posts will be advertised again. The current interim Head of Service is still in post.
- 6.5 We will be advertising for a SEND officer and 1.8 further transport officers once these posts have been graded.

## **7 GOVERNANCE BOARD**

- 7.1 The Home to School Transport Governance Board meets monthly and its membership includes representatives from the Parent and Carers' Council and from schools.
- 7.2 The Governance Board has provided challenge and support in relation to new policies and practices relating to the co-produced action plan for the service and preparations for September 2020.

## **8 FURTHER QUESTIONS ON SEPTEMBER ARRANGEMENTS FROM CLLRS WARES AND MEARS**

- 8.1 *Have H&S risk assessments relating to Covid been completed for all the drivers and escorts being engaged in transporting children?*  
Individual risk assessments for each driver and VPA on transport would be the responsibility of transport operators as they are the employers of these staff.

However, the safety and wellbeing of transport staff is extremely important to the service also and we have regularly updated our advice to providers, including advice on the safety and wellbeing of staff, signposting the relevant government and Public Health advice on all issues. See Pages 2-6 in the attached guidance letter sent to all providers on 18.8.20.

While the wearing of face coverings and PPE is not mandatory on HTST, our guidance supports the risk assessments of our providers, based on their individual situations. In relation to PPE, the Council has accepted applications from transport providers in some cases for free PPE from Council stocks at times of shortage. However, to preserve stocks for where most needed, the council's policy has always been that PPE can only be accessed from the Council by suppliers if they cannot reasonably source it elsewhere.

Where issues relating the safety and wellbeing of staff have been raised with us by providers, we have consulted with Public Health colleagues and responded.

We have asked all our providers to update their firms' overall risk assessments in line with the latest guidance from the government for dedicated school transport (11 August) and to provide the HTST service with a copy. We have also been offering them guidance and support in this area, as well as a proforma to use if necessary and have required the updated versions to be returned to us.

- 8.2 *Do all the operators/drivers/escorts have Covid insurance in place?*  
This is not a contractual requirement and the council has not asked firms to acquire this insurance. All our firms comply with council requirements on

insurance cover. We are not aware of any insurance firms willing to insure against COVID-19 transmission specifically.

8.3 *Have arrangements now been put in place with the schools to deal with the drop-off and pick-up of the children at school and what are they?*

We transport to 50 schools. Arrangements for drop-off and pick-up are the responsibility of the schools and transport providers working together. The council's responsibility is to monitor effectiveness and to resolve any issues if necessary.

We surveyed all 50 schools in July on a number of issues, including handover arrangements. We had a 50% response rate. Of those responding, 100% reported that they were satisfied with the service, including handover arrangements, and half of those responding rated the service as good or better. There have been access issues at Hill Park Lower School, due to restricted space on the site and the narrowness of the road, and so the HTST team met with operators and Hill Park senior staff on 28<sup>th</sup> August and put in place a plan to resolve issues through staggered starts and a self-imposed one-way system for transport vehicles in Foredown Road.

We intend to monitor the situations directly at Hill Park and Downsview at the beginning of term to check runs are flowing smoothly.

Traffic issues in the City could be a concern. We have planned routes on the basis of normal conditions, but new restrictions and road works may delay routes and we have warned parents and carers of this. We will monitor arrival and departure times in the new term to check for issues.

8.4 *Have compliance checks been carried out on all the vehicles being used?*

Vehicle standards are the contractual responsibility of the operator. The HTST service carries out spot checks at school sites with the Council's Licencing Team. While it is not the responsibility of the HTST to undertake vehicle safety checks, we monitor contractual compliance in relation to the specifications in the HTST contract, such as punctuality, drivers carrying identity badges and CCTV in vehicles. From the autumn we will also be doing spot checks on compliance with cleaning regimes, for example carrying of sanitiser and cloths for cleaning between journey.

8.5 *Are there any vehicles proposed to be used non-compliant with the Blue Book?*

All providers are required to comply with Brighton and Hove HTST standards, which include the Blue Book and additional specifications in the Home to School Transport contract. As stated above, the Home to School Transport Service works with the Licencing Team to support the Licencing Team's role in monitoring standards set out in the Blue Book. Regular spot checks at school sites are carried out by HTST officers working with officers from the Licencing Team.

The HTST service also monitors standards through termly contract reviews against Key Performance Indicators in the contract. In addition, any incidents or complaints about the service from any quarter are thoroughly investigated and action taken as appropriate. Investigations into complaints with a safeguarding element are conducted in close liaison with the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Our new training modules cover standards expected from transport staff and promote a thorough understanding of safeguarding responsibilities.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Most recent comms to parents and carers sent on 20.8.20**

Dear Parents and Carers,

#### **Home to School Transport – special arrangements for September 2020**

With the beginning of the autumn term approaching, I am writing to update you on the special arrangements we've put in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people on Home to School Transport (HTST).

We realise this continues to be an anxious time for families.

However, we want to assure you that the safety and wellbeing of children and young people on transport is extremely important to us and we have taken care with special arrangements for the autumn term.

Please bring any problems or issues to the attention of the Home to School Transport Service.

Also, please get in touch if you would like help with this letter and we will go through what it says with you on the phone.

You can ring us on 01273 293501 or email at [Hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:Hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

#### **September Arrangements**

The latest guidance covering Home to School Transport was issued by the government on 11 August. Here is a link to it:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>

We have considered all national guidance carefully in constructing the following advice to you about arrangements for the autumn term.

### **If your child or someone in your household has COVID-19 symptoms**

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

If your child or young person, or a member of your household has these symptoms, **you must not send your child on Home to School Transport or to school.**

Our transport staff must not be asked to take your child or young person if they have symptoms. This is because it risks spreading the virus to other children and staff. In these circumstances, your child or young person must stay at home and be tested. Please follow the guidance in the link below:

[Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection.](#)

If your child or young person develops COVID-19 symptoms while at school, **we cannot allow the transport team to take them home.** To avoid potential transmission of the virus, we will ask you to collect your child and take him or her home. If that causes difficulties for you, you can ring us to discuss – but we have to protect the safety of all children and our transport staff.

### **Social Distancing on Transport**

The government has said that the rules for public transport on social distancing do not apply to 'dedicated' or Home to School Transport.

The risk is deemed to be lower on Home to School Transport, as pupils do not mix with the general public on those journeys and the same groups travel together every day.

However, the government encourages arrangements that leave more space between passengers wherever possible.

Brighton & Hove is reducing the numbers of children and young people on vehicles this autumn term to allow for greater distance between them.

This has meant we have had to commission more vehicles and staff crews than we would normally over the pandemic period. This means there is less spare capacity in the city in the event of staff illness or absence.

However, the council has recruited a small team of Vehicle Passenger Assistants (VPAs), to provide extra cover if needed.

The principles we've used are:

- Distancing within vehicles where possible / reduced numbers on vehicles
- Maintaining consistency for children and young people / familiar firms / crews
- Ensuring everyone gets safely to school in an efficient and timely manner

In most cases, there will be a spare seat between each child or young person. Where this has been difficult to achieve, we have added one extra child in to enable everyone to get to school in a timely and efficient manner.

We are asking firms not to seat children opposite each other if at all possible.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed with families, the HTST team and the transport provider, we are not permitting children to sit in the front of vehicles.

We are also asking our firms to make sure vehicles are well-ventilated, with open windows where possible, and that surfaces are cleaned thoroughly between passengers.

Transport staff will not be permitted to enter your homes. Please make sure you bring your child to and from the transport vehicle. School staff will meet transport staff at the school entrance.

All routes for September have been planned and all new transport teams should have introduced themselves to you and your child by now. Please let us know if this has not happened and we will chase this up.

## **Face coverings**

The government are recommending that children and young people over 11 years old wear face coverings on Home to School Transport, as on public transport.

However, our children and young people on HTST are excluded from this recommendation under the following circumstances:

- if they have a physical or mental illness or impairment, or a disability that means they cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering;
  - if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering would cause them severe distress.
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#exemptions-face-coverings>

If your child or young person cannot manage to fix and remove the face covering or mask safely on their own, it is not safe for them to wear them.

If your child or young person is over 11 years old and can manage to fix and remove a face covering safely and independently, we would recommend that they do wear one. However, this is at your discretion.

## **Other safety measures**

Please make sure your child or young person has washed their hands thoroughly before joining transport in the morning.

Please make sure you take your child to the vehicle in the mornings and collect from the vehicle in the afternoon.

It can help if your child travels with tissues.

If you would prefer to transport your child yourself over the continuing pandemic period, please contact us in relation to a mileage allowance or personal travel budget.

We are keen to support parents and carers who are able to do this. This does not in any way affect your entitlement to free transport and you can end any such arrangement at any time.

### **PPE for Transport Staff**

Government guidance does not require staff on Home to School Transport to wear PPE or face coverings.

However, it is recognised that masks or face coverings and sometimes other forms of PPE may be a sensible precaution where social distancing is not possible. This will depend on the risk assessments carried out by our transport providers of their own situations.

Your child or young person should be prepared for staff wearing PPE when they return to school. I have re-attached a 'social story' we put together that may be a help to you in preparing your child for what to expect in September.

### **Emotional and Behavioural Needs**

We understand that many of our children and young people are highly anxious, and that the pandemic can make this worse.

We know that anxiety and distress can lead to challenging behaviours for some young people. Our VPAs, if there is one on the route, will help them and reassure them to the best of their ability.

Our new training programme will support transport staff in meeting children's needs.

However, drivers must be allowed to pay full attention to the road and cannot be expected to manage children and young people's behaviour.

For the safety of all children and young people and transport staff, we may have to make special arrangements if staff are struggling with unsafe behaviours over the pandemic period.

In these circumstances we may ask you to travel with your child, although you do not have to do so.

### **Cleaning of vehicles**

We have set out expectations for all transport providers about thorough cleaning of vehicle surfaces between journeys.

We will be carrying out spot checks at school sites to check that cleaning and safety precautions are being complied with.

### **Training for Transport Staff**

Please be assured that all staff on transport have the required DBS checks.

Our transport providers have been given all the information in this letter.

We are also introducing online training for all staff and require all transport staff to have completed introductory and safeguarding modules before the start of term.

Over the course of the autumn term, all staff will have to complete online modules on Equalities and a broad range of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Our training has been produced by specialist staff at the council with input from transport operators and PaCC representatives.

### **Traffic**

We are aware that with planned roadworks and other changes to the traffic systems across the city, there could be some temporary hold-ups. We are hoping that journeys won't be adversely affected, and we will monitor the situation in the autumn and check on arrival times at school or college.

### **And finally...**

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or queries about the above or any other aspect of your child or young person's transport:

- phone 01273 293501
- or email [hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk).

We are here to help if we can and you will receive a warm welcome from us.

Your child or young person's safety and wellbeing is very important to us and we want to be sure you are comfortable and confident in the arrangements made for the autumn term.

The pandemic is a challenge for all of us and we cannot guarantee that everything will be perfect straight away as we all come to terms with the 'new normal'.

I hope you can bear with us if there are any unforeseen challenges. However, we have planned to the best of our ability and – working together with PaCC and our families in partnership – we will do our very best to ensure a smooth transition back to school for everyone.

Best wishes,

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **'Social Story for Children and Young People'**

## **My Story: Back to School**

My name is ....

I go to .... School.

I am going back to school on ....

I go to school by (taxi, minibus, school bus)

Some things will be different.

This is because of the virus.

I might see my old driver and VPA again.

But I may have a new driver and VPA for a while.  
If I do, my new driver and VPA will still be kind to me.  
They will say hello and goodbye.  
They will want to get to know me and what I like.

I may have to sit somewhere different.

This is to help keep everyone safe.

My driver and VPA may be wearing a mask and gloves  
like in these pictures





This is to help keep everyone safe.

If I am worried, I can tell (mum/dad/ carer).

School is fun.

I can see my teachers and friends again.



# Introduction to your role as a HTST Driver or VPA

“Happy, safe, and well supported on their journeys ...”



**Brighton & Hove  
City Council**

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## By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Explain the importance of home to school transport for children and young people with special needs, their parents, and the schools they attend.
- List the benefits you get in the role of driver or vehicle passenger assistant.
- Describe the Home-to-School Transport team and their relationship to transport providers and their values.
- Explain and understand how to react in an emergency.
- Explain and understand the procedure for reporting concerns.
- Recognize the importance of confidentiality and GDPR requirements.
- List Brighton and Hove training requirements for drivers or vehicle passenger assistants.
- Use the Learning Gateway.



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# “Not just another job ....”

- Home to School Transport (HTST) is not just another job.
- Our children and young people have significant and complex special educational needs and disabilities.
- The journey to school and back is a very important part of their lives but they may not find it easy to communicate their wishes and needs to you.
- This means you will need to use special skills of thoughtfulness, kindness, sensitivity and understanding to make sure that they are **happy, safe and well on their journeys.**



## “Not just another job ....”



- This training is very important as it will help you to develop these skills and understand the role more fully.
- Let’s hear now why the role is so important to children, young people and their families ....

# Why is the role of driver or VPA so important ... the parents view ....

My name is Jane and I live in Brighton and Hove. I have a son called Tom and he attends a special school in the City.



Tom has autism with global developmental delay.

- He is a happy, placid little boy and he loves going to school more than anything. He is non-verbal and relies on us for 24-hour care.
- He has no awareness of danger and very limited understanding of language.
- He runs off, so he needs a hand held at all times.

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Jane's "golden rules" to remember when transporting children like Tom are:

- It takes a huge amount of trust to let Tom or any child with special needs out into the world with strangers, especially if they are very young and can't yet communicate like my son.
- Please take time to get to know Tom or any child and their family and take seriously any concerns that they may have. Tom will run into traffic and I need to know that his taxi driver and VPA wouldn't let go of his hand **at any point**. Once I was sure of this this, I could relax.
- Your role is so important and makes a huge difference to a family who otherwise couldn't work or take their other children to school. It takes so much stress off families so always remember how important and appreciated turning up every day to do this job is!
- If you are kind, caring, patient, positive, and want to play a huge role in helping the most vulnerable children in the city to have the education they deserve (and help their families with work and respite in the process) then that's all you need!

## Jane and her son Tom

- Tom goes to school by taxi with a fantastic driver and VPA.
- They are so kind to Tom and to us and they are such an important part of his care.
- We trust them completely with Tom, and this is a huge help to us.



## The child's view ...

- What do you like about coming to school in the taxi?

I can talk to my friends. The same taxi picks me up from my mum and dad's house.

- What do you want your driver and escort to be like? How can they help you?

I would like them to be very kind and helpful. They can talk to me and help me out of the taxi.

What do you like about coming to school in the taxi?

I can talk to my friends

The same taxi picks me up from my mum and

Dad's house.

What do you want your driver and escort to be like?  
How can they help you?

I would like them to be very kind and helpful.

They can talk to me and help me out of the taxi.





## The School View – Rachel, Executive Headteacher from Hill Park School ....

- We see HTST as an important part of the child's day and our day. You are part of our school community and part of the jigsaw of people that makes a wonderful day at school happen!
- Bringing our pupils to school is not just getting them from A to B. Having our pupils arriving at school calm, happy and safe makes a huge difference to their day (and ours). The children's ability to learn, manage their emotions and behaviour all starts with the journey to school.

- We care about you and want to support you to bring our pupils to school safely and enjoyably. We want to support you with advice and resources (like social stories or timetable boards) to help you support the pupils.
- We want you to enjoy the best relationships possible with our pupils, so we are really pleased you are engaging in training to support your role.
- Our pupils feel really safe when they have familiar drivers and VPAs who care for them.
- Parents tell us how excited their children are when they see the taxi or bus arrive. We see their faces light up at the end of the day when we open the school doors and you arrive!
- People are the most precious resource in any school. We want you to know how important and valued you are - as part of the team that supports our pupils.

## And the driver / VPA's view ...

- My name is Amira. I have been working as a VPA for three years. I help to take special needs children to and from school in the Brighton and Hove Area.
- I really enjoy this role because I like working with children and helping people. I started this job because my children are grown-up and I wanted to give something back to the community.
- Sometimes this job can be unpredictable, and this is what I particularly enjoy. No two days are the same, and I enjoy the experience of facing different challenges every day.
- Facing these challenges gives me immense satisfaction, as I am intrinsic to the well-being of these vulnerable children.
- I believe that providing high quality Home to School Transport is important because it gives all children equal opportunities to engage with education.
- Training helps me to do my job better. I have undertaken training in Disability Awareness, Epilepsy awareness, Safeguarding, and Emergency First Aid.



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# The HTST (Home to School Transport) Team

- You work for what we call a “Transport Provider” such as a taxi company.
- Your first point of contact will normally be with your employer, the “Transport Operator”.
- The Home to School Transport Team is part of the local council – they work with Children and Young People (CYP), their Parents and Carers, and schools to assess transport needs and establish contracts for taking CYP to and from home and school.
- If you have an urgent query, or one that your Transport Operator cannot answer – contact the HTST Team:

[hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.sch.uk](mailto:hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.sch.uk)

01273 293501 or 01273 295196

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## HTST and Transport Providers – Our Shared Values

The HTST Team and transport providers share the same values:

- We aim to treat each other, CYP, their parents and carers as well as school staff as **we would wish to be treated**
- We work and treat each other with **fairness** and **respect**.
- We recognise the need to maintain **appropriate boundaries** with CYP, their parents and carers as well as school staff
- We use **appropriate language** with each other and with CYP, their parents and carers as well as school staff
- We strive to provide **warmth** and **professionalism** at all times

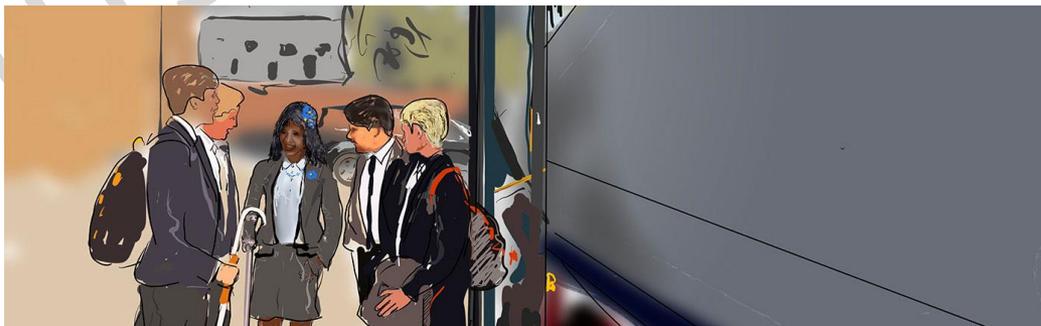


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# Medical Emergencies

We aim not to have medical emergencies on HTST journeys **BUT** ... if one happens .... this is what we expect you to do ...

- *If a child or young person you are transporting is known to have epilepsy you will have been provided with their Epilepsy Care Plan. This plan contains a section called “Transport statement for children with epilepsy”. If the child or young person has a seizure whilst you are travelling with them you should follow the instructions written in this section of the plan.*



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# Medical Emergencies

- *For all other medical emergencies, including a child or young person with no epilepsy care plan who appears to be having a seizure, the driver should stop the vehicle in a safe location, call an ambulance dialling 999 and await their arrival. This should be done without delay. It is very important that a note is made of the time the incident started. After calling the ambulance, the parents/carers, the HTST Team office and your “Transport Provider” office should be informed of the situation and kept updated. If the incident occurs on the route to school, they should also be notified.*
- *The only exceptions to this guidance will be where the vehicle is within two minutes clear driving of the child or young person’s home address, two minutes clear driving of arrival at their school, or two minutes driving of a hospital with an Accident and Emergency Department.*



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## Medical Emergencies

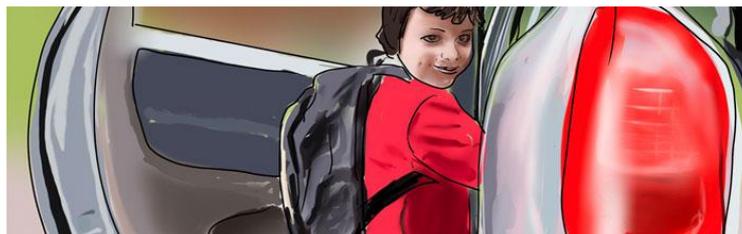
- It is important to note that drivers/VPAs (you) are not medically trained and therefore will not administer any medication to the child or young person.*



This information is given to parents when home to school transport is arranged and available to schools so they will always expect you to carry out these instructions if there is a medical emergency.

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## Reporting an incident or a concern



- If you witness an incident or an event happens that concerns you then you should contact and report it to your Transport Operator and the HTST Team office as soon as is safe to do so.
- If you are concerned that a child or young person is in **immediate danger of harm or abuse** then contact the Police by phoning 999
- For all other **safeguarding** concerns contact the Council's **Front Door for Families** by ringing 01273 290400 or complete their online referral form.
- We will explain safeguarding more fully in a later learning module.
- The HTST Team office contact details are:

01273 293501 / 01273 295196

[hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

# Compliments and Complaints

- With your help we aim to provide a high-quality home to school transport service.
- It is good to get compliments, please make sure that you tell your Transport Provider and ask them to pass them on to the HTST Team.
- If you are asked to pass on a complaint, please make a note of the details as soon as you can and tell your Transport Provider and ask them to pass the details to the HTST Team.
- The HTST Team has a procedure for managing complaints which they will follow.



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# Confidential Information

- As a driver or VPA you will have access to **confidential information** about children and young people, their parents and carers details, and which school they attend ...
- This information is for **your use only** and only while you are working as a driver or VPA ...
- When not being used on a home to school transport journey any information should be **stored away securely** ...
- Make sure any confidential information is **not stored** in your taxi or vehicle overnight when it is not in use ...
- It is fine to talk about your job to others, especially how rewarding it is, but **not about specific children or young people** or to mention their names or personal details ...
- Any **breaches of confidentiality** around written documentation or other storage method (e.g. mobile phones) will be taken **extremely seriously** and is likely to result in the suspension of the route.

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# Training Requirements – 1 - Core

- The Brighton and Hove HTST Team have currently identified five core training modules for drivers and VPAs to undertake:
  - Module 1 – Introduction to your role as a HTST Driver or VPA (this module)
  - Module 2 – Safeguarding on Home to School Transport
  - Module 3 – Equalities and the Equality Act
  - Module 4 – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
  - Module 5 - Exploitation

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## Training Requirements – 2 - Extended

- Children and young people who use our service will be risk assessed. Some will have additional needs identified. We will expect drivers and VPAs to undertake the following modules relevant to the children and young people that they transport:

- Module 1 – Language and Communication
- Module 2 – Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC)
- Module 3 – Supporting Behaviour
- Module 4 – Epilepsy

- We think training is really important .... if you want to complete them all you can do and we are sure it will help you do your job better.

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## Training Requirements – 3 – Individual



- Some children or young peoples' needs are so specialised and individual that we will have to provide individual training to individual drivers and VPAs. If this is for a child or young person you transport, we will arrange this training for you.
- We also aim to arrange face-to-face training when the Coronavirus pandemic allows us to do so.

# Brighton and Hove Learning Gateway

- You will access the training modules on Brighton and Hove Council's Learning Gateway.
- You can complete the training modules on a computer, tablet or phone.
- You will get an electronic badge for each module completed.
- If you use a computer or tablet with access to a printer you can print a certificate on completion of each module.
- Your Transport Provider will give you details of how to access the Learning Gateway and links to the training modules.





Date: 16.8.20  
Phone: 0786 7545450  
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Dear Transport Operators

### **Special Arrangements over the COVID-19 Crisis Period: Updated HTST Working Guidance**

Our thanks again for the dedication and flexibility you and your staff continue to show over the pandemic period towards the transport of our children and families. We appreciate the responsiveness and consideration you have shown over these uncertain times.

Drawing upon the latest DfE guidance issued on 11.8.20, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>), this letter sets out updated working guidance for September 2020 onwards, including:

- risk assessments over the pandemic period
- suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases on transport
- use of PPE and face coverings
- social distancing
- cleaning of vehicles

This letter does not attempt to replicate or include all that is contained within Government and Public Health guidance and directives, which should be read separately and followed. Please do also read the latest guidance in the link above and use this to update your own risk assessments.

The safety and wellbeing of your staff and our children and young people is very important to us.

This is an anxious time, so operators and staff will need to maintain strong empathic relationships with children and young people using HTST and their families, and to be sensitive to the safety and emotional wellbeing of children and young people at a difficult time. Please bring any problems or issues to the attention of the Home to School Transport Service. We are here to help.

Regular parallel communications are being sent to our parents and carers, which we will ensure operators receive.

## **Risk Assessments**

Government guidance requires operators to have conducted a risk assessment for dedicated their school transport services. This will determine the most appropriate safety measures to put in place such as for social distancing and face coverings. The [guidance for operators](#) provides further advice for staff. You may also find the following link useful:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/vehicles>

In conducting your risk assessment, you need to be mindful of:

- *risks to workers, passengers, customers and the public, along with the control measures required*
- *the impact of control measures and whether they result in additional, different risks or non-compliance with other requirements (for example health and safety or equalities legislation)*
- *applying the hierarchy of controls set out in the [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#)*
- *consultation with workers, or bodies representing workers, and the public*
- *the visibility of the results of any risk assessment*

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

The HTST service requires a copy of your updated risk assessment to be sent to [Hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:Hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk) by the 31.8.20.

## **Suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19**

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

Transport staff who develop symptoms that might indicate COVID-19 should to home and get a test.

Anyone with symptoms must follow [Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

Government guidance on staff who come into contact with a passenger showing coronavirus symptoms is that they do **not** have to go home and self-isolate unless:

- they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange a test)
- the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive and they were in contact within 48 hours of them first displaying symptoms
- if they have been requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>

Staff must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser if they have been in contact with someone with symptoms.

If a child has symptoms of COVID-19 while on board a vehicle, transport staff should take them home. **Do not take the child to school.** Clean the vehicle thoroughly before the next journey. If there are no family members at home or if there are any complications with this advice, call the HTST team.

If a child develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, the school **should not ask you to take the child home.** The parents or carers should be asked to take the child home. Please call the HTST team if you are unsure what to do or if parents/ carers are unable to collect.

**The council prohibits the transport of passengers with confirmed COVID-19 on vehicles used for HTST under any circumstances.**

For more information where children have particularly complex needs, follow the links below:

- [How should I care for children who regularly spit or require physical contact?](#)
- [Guidance on the specific steps that should be taken to care for children with complex medical needs, such as tracheostomies](#)

### **Response to any infection**

Operators along with the Local Authority must ensure they understand the NHS Test and Trace process and how to [contact their local Public Health England health protection team](#). Operators must require drivers and passenger assistants to [book a test](#) if they display [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) symptoms](#).

If you are unsure what to do in relation to any of the above, call the HTST team for advice.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Face Coverings on Journeys**

Government guidance states that the routine use of PPE by transport staff is unnecessary.

*Drivers and passenger assistants will not normally require PPE on home to school transport, even if they are not able to maintain a distance from the children and young people on the transport. This is because....children and young people with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) must not board home to school transport.*

*If the care a child or young person usually receives on home to school transport requires the use of PPE, that should continue.*

However, guidance also says that:

*Face coverings offer some benefits in work situations where [social distancing](#) is difficult to manage. For example, when working in passenger facing roles including when providing assistance to disabled passengers.*

*Public health advice is that staff wear a face covering when they are unable to maintain social distancing in passenger facing roles, recognising that there will be exceptional circumstances when a staff member cannot wear a face covering, or when their task makes it sensible (based on a risk assessment) for them not to wear a face covering.*

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

The council acknowledges that social distancing is often not possible on HTST. We require our **transport providers to have made their own risk assessment in relation to COVID-19**, based on the particular routes covered and the needs of the children on those routes, and to take action accordingly. This will determine the most appropriate safety measures to put in place such as for social distancing and face coverings. The [guidance for operators](#) provides further advice for staff. The council is supportive of the outcomes of individual providers' risk assessments in relation to PPE, providing they are carried out to a suitably high standard.

We are aware that our providers are using PPE, particularly masks and gloves, and are supportive of the rationale and reasons for this, proving such equipment is used and disposed of properly (please see attached guidance on the donning and doffing of PPE).

Please note also face masks must:

- cover both nose and mouth
- not be allowed to dangle around the neck
- not be touched once put on, except when carefully removed before disposal
- be changed when they become moist or damaged
- be worn once and then discarded - hands must be cleaned after disposal

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

The advice from the council for HTST is as follows:

- Where social distancing on HTST is not routinely possible, we are supportive of transport providers who are using, or wish to use masks or other face coverings as a precautionary measure and where risk assessment deems necessary, plastic gloves and aprons. This is subject to PPE being of the **required standard and the operator providing staff with guidance and training on the effective use of and disposal of PPE**. Please see the attached guidance from Public Health in this respect.
- Where social distancing is reasonably achievable on HTST and where no physical contact need normally be made with children and young people by drivers and VPAs, the routine use of PPE may not be considered necessary. However, we understand that local providers may wish to use PPE on the basis of their own risk assessment in specific circumstances.

The acquisition of appropriate PPE is the responsibility of transport providers and not of the council. Suppliers can access PPE of a verified standard via the government website <https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/covid-19/covid-19-buyer-information/safer-working-supplies/>

Providers who have exhausted all avenues for acquiring PPE can apply to the council for support on the form attached, which should be returned to [hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk). The council will support suppliers as far as possible, but only if supplies cannot be accessed elsewhere, and subject to prioritisation and available stocks. There is no guarantee that the council can provide PPE, and this should not be a routine demand when other avenues for accessing supplies are available.

PPE is only one effective measure within a package of administrative, environmental and management controls. This includes maintaining social distancing where practicable, monitoring staff and clients for coronavirus symptoms, and applying correct waste management and cleaning regimes. Where PPE is used, it is important to apply internationally recognised principles i.e. all PPE that is provided to help manage Coronavirus hazards should be:

- Provided and worn only in relation to an associated task risk assessment;
- Compliant with the relevant BS/EN standards (European technical standards as adopted in the UK) and used in accordance with manufacturers' instructions;
- Used after relevant staff training and fit testing where relevant (see resources below);
- Located close to the point of use;
- Stored to prevent contamination in a clean/dry area until required for use (expiry dates must be adhered to);
- Changed immediately following completion of a procedure, task, shift or session (as directed by the risk assessment); and
- Disposed of after use by double bagging waste in domestic waste bags and disposing after 72hrs into the appropriate waste stream.

Transport services will still need to follow the general Coronavirus avoidance guidance, even when using PPE. As such, staff will need to:

- Avoid close contact with others where possible
- Resist the urge to touch their face/mouth/nose/eyes

- Report any COVID-19 symptoms early, a new continuous cough or a fever, however, mild
- Cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue
- Regularly wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Where facilities are not available, hand-wipes may be used.
- Only use sanitiser/hand gels when hands are visibly clean.
- Avoid touching surfaces that may have been contaminated by others and clean such areas with an approved disinfectant frequently.

Please see attached Public Health guidance on donning and doffing PPE.

You are aware that the special needs and disabilities of our children and young people mean that many find change very difficult to cope with, so where there are changes you are making on safety grounds, the council asks operators to ensure families are aware and can work with you to prepare children and young people appropriately. We will work in partnership with you and our families over this.

### Face Coverings for Children and Young People

With regard to face covering for children and young people, current guidance on mandatory use of face coverings does not apply to dedicated home to school transport nor are children and young people with disabilities of any age required to wear face coverings on transport.

Latest guidance says:

*It is now the law that children and young people aged 11 and over must wear a face covering on public transport. **This law does not apply to dedicated school transport. However,** we recommend that local authorities advise people aged 11 and over to wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated school transport to secondary school or college from the start of the autumn term. This does not apply to [those who are exempt from wearing a face covering on public transport.](#)*

*We believe this is an appropriate balance, because:*

- *the overall risk to children and young people of serious illness as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low*
- *they do not mix with the general public on those journeys*
- *home to school transport often carries the same group of children and young people on a regular basis, and they may also be together in school or college*
- *the predictability of home to school transport will allow for planning so that protective measures can be put in place*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>

However, children over 11 years on transport do not need to wear a face covering if they have a legitimate reason not to. This includes:

- if they have a physical or mental illness or impairment, or a disability that means they cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering
  - if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering would cause them severe distress
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#exemptions-face-coverings>

Transport operators and their staff must not require children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities to wear face coverings for the reasons above. **Please do not ask parents/ carers or young people to provide or wear face coverings.** If there are any issues with this, please contact the HTST team.

Older and/ or more able young people over 11 years of age may wish to wear a face covering. This should be at the parent or carers' discretion and should be safe. We do not want transport staff to fix face coverings in place for children and young people and parents/ carers should not ask you to do this, as this could result in greater risk. Young people must be capable of using a face covering correctly as failure to do so could increase the chances of virus transmission. If any problems arise in this respect, please contact the HTST team.

## Social Distancing

For the autumn term 2020, the HTST service has continued to arranged transport with reduced numbers on vehicles to allow for greater social distancing. This is in line with the most recent DfE guidance, published on 11.8.20, which states:

*As set out in the [guidance for full opening for schools](#), for [special schools](#), and for [places of further education](#), from the autumn term local authorities will not be required to uniformly apply the social distancing guidelines for public transport on dedicated school or college transport. However, the full opening for schools guidance also sets out that distancing should still be put in place within vehicles wherever possible.*

*It is of vital importance to work through the steps set out in this guidance. In particular:*

- *social distancing should be maximised within vehicles wherever it is possible, between individuals or 'bubbles'*
- *it is very important to maximise the ventilation of fresh air (from outside the vehicle) on dedicated school and college transport, particularly through opening windows and ceiling vents*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>

In order to preserve social distancing to the maximum degree possible while national policy is in force, the HTST service is limiting the numbers of children and staff on vehicles, leaving a spare seat between every child wherever practical and possible.

We are aware that with some very large vehicles and some seating alignments, it may be possible to accommodate another child safely on some routes and that there may be good practical reasons for this over the pandemic period, **but this must be agreed with the HTST team in advance**. Partnership with parents and carers is also crucial as they must be in agreement with any variance to standard arrangements.

The council requests that operators:

- allocate specific seats to children
- avoid the use of 'face to face' seating wherever possible
- ensure good ventilation through open windows wherever practical
- make careful arrangements for boarding and disembarking from vehicles to preserve social distancing where possible.
- Consider 'first in last out' policy with those children getting on first seated at the rear of the vehicle and the vehicle filling forward.

## Screens

The council is supportive of operators who are installing, or investigating the installation of, screens between the front and back of vehicles or between the driver and front passenger seats with certain provisos. This potentially provides a protective barrier and could enable more passengers to be carried safely but such installation needs to be subject to professional and safe installation and maintenance, appropriate risk assessments in relation to passengers carried, and any considerations in relation to licensing and insurance cover.

## Cleaning of vehicles

The council requires all transport operators and staff to follow national guidance, as previously circulated, on the cleaning of vehicles between passengers and to be meticulous about frequently cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces using the appropriate cleaning products. Please see guidance below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings> updated 15.7.20. It states:

*All surfaces that the symptomatic person has come into contact with should be cleaned and disinfected, including all potentially contaminated and frequently touched areas such as bathrooms, door handles, telephones, grab rails in corridors and stairwells*

*Use disposable cloths or paper roll and disposable mop heads, to clean all hard surfaces, floors, chairs, door handles and sanitary fittings – think one site, one wipe, in one direction.*

*Use one of the options below:*

- *a combined detergent disinfectant solution at a dilution of 1,000 parts per million available chlorine (ppm av.cl.)*

*or*

- *a household detergent followed by disinfection (1000 ppm av.cl.). Follow manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants*

*or*

- *if an alternative disinfectant is used within the organisation ensure that it is effective against enveloped viruses*

If a passenger either on a school run or via another route has suspected COVID-19 symptoms, operators must follow national guidelines to carry out a very thorough cleaning of the vehicle concerned, using apron, mask and gloves. If a child is diagnosed with COVID-19, the vehicle must be cleaned as above and left for at least a 72 hour interval before next usage.

Where cleaning products and equipment cannot be accessed elsewhere, providers may be able to access supplies from the council via the attached form, although this is not guaranteed.

Please remember to call the HTST team for any issues where there are concerns or you are unsure what to do on 01273 292501.

With best wishes

Regan

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Brighton and Hove HTST - Training

# Safeguarding on Home to School Transport

“Happy, safe, and well supported on their journeys ...”



**Brighton & Hove  
City Council**

HTST Training - Pilot

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## By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Understand the difference between safeguarding and child protection.
- Understand the council's Code of Conduct for Home to School Transport drivers and VPAs.
- Appreciate and list the things you should **not** do as a driver or VPA.
- Take the necessary action if, as a driver or VPA, you have a safeguarding or child protection concern about a child.
- Understand the council's Whistleblowing Policy.



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## The difference between safeguarding and child protection

**Safeguarding** is what we do, in our behaviour and our work, to keep children and young people safe and promote their well-being.



**Child Protection** is what we do to protect specific children and young people who are either suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

# Safeguarding – some examples .....



- We make sure that children and young people:
  - eat well and see a dentist regularly
  - have friends they see and play with
  - are treated with kindness and respect
- As a driver or VPA we:
  - do not take photographs of the children or young people we transport
  - ensure that children and young people wear seat-belts when they travel in our vehicles
  - provide transport that is clean, comfortable and quiet so children and young people have a calm trip to and from school
  - protect children and young people, ensuring we do not use rude language, bully them, or make fun of them

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# Child Protection

If we think a child has suffered from abuse, in any setting, we make sure we report our concerns:



- If a child tells you they have been hit or punched by an adult or another child ...
- If a child (you know well) is always hungry or wears thin clothes in very cold weather ...

**You must report your concerns.**

# Code of Conduct

- Behave in a mature, respectful, safe, fair and considerate manner to children and young people and other staff.
- Use appropriate language – do not shout or swear.
- Dress appropriately – make sure you are clean and tidy, wear clothes that do not cause embarrassment and make sure you have sensible footwear.
- Use your radio/work mobile to report any difficulties you are having as soon as possible.
- If you are worried about something then report it.



# Things you must not do - 1



- Do not transport a lone child or young person in the front of your vehicle (unless exceptional circumstances have been agreed with the HTST Team and with the written permission of parents/carers) ...
- Treat all children and young people the same – make sure you don't have favourites ...
- Don't give children and young people treats or favours ...
- Do not give or receive gifts from children or young people ...

- Do not allow, encourage or condone children or young people to act in an illegal, improper or unsafe manner ... (for example, smoking or drinking alcohol ...)

# Mobile Phones ...

- Do not give your mobile phone number or personal details to a child or young person ...
- Do not handle a child or young person's mobile phone, even if they offer ...
- Do not allow a child or young person to use or access your mobile phone ...
- Do not accept mobile phone numbers if they are offered to you ...
- Do not take photos of children or young people on your mobile ...
- Do not allow children or young people to see stored photos or videos on your mobile phone ...
- Make sure you do not use inappropriate ring tones or messages ...



# Social Media ...

- Do not have contact with children and young people on social networking sites such as Facebook or Instagram ...
- If you have social media accounts make sure your privacy settings only allow people you authorise to see information ...
- Never refer to your home to school transport work on your social media sites ....
- Never share your social media access details with children or young people ...
- Be aware of what you post – things may be misused or abused by children and young people ...
- If you use gaming sites – use a made-up name and don't share personal details ...



# Things you must not do - 2

- Do not develop personal or sexual relationships with children or young people ...
- Do not push, hit, kick, punch, slap, throw missiles, smack or threaten to smack a child or young person ...
- Do not touch or hold a child or young person in a way that could be seen as sexual, threatening or intimidating ...
- Do not be sarcastic or bully children or young people ...
- Do not make remarks or “jokes” that are personal, sexual, racist, discriminatory, intimidating or otherwise offensive ...
- Do not embarrass or humiliate children or your people ...



# But do make sure that you ...

- Help a child or young person by holding their hand when they are crossing a road or car park ...
- Steer a child or young person by placing a hand gently on their shoulder ...
- Handover to a parent/carer or member of school staff before you leave the child ...
- Be patient and respectful, things may take the child or young person a little longer ...
- Remain calm and make sure that the child or young person always arrives safely to their destination and they are met on arrival ...



# And if you have a concern .....

- If you have a concern .....report it !!
- If you believe that a child or young person is in immediate danger of harm or abuse then contact the Police by phoning 999
- For all other concerns contact the Council's Front Door for Families by ringing 01273 290400 or complete their online referral form
- Ensure you also report your concerns to your Transport Provider and the Home to School Transport Team



# Whistleblowing

- Brighton and Hove Council is committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability.
- As an HTST driver or VPA you are working for a service contracted by Brighton and Hove Council.
- The Council expects and encourages any employee (or contractor) becoming aware of another employee acting inappropriately, corruptly or illegally to come forward and voice those concerns.
- The Council's Whistleblowing Policy:
  - Encourages you to feel confident about raising concerns.
  - Provides information on how to raise concerns and ensures you receive feedback on action taken as a result.
  - Ensures you receive a response to your concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue them further if they are not satisfied.
  - Reassures you that you will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for raising concerns in good faith.







