

Home-to-School-Transport Arrangements for September 2020

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Background:

The Home-to-School-Transport Service fully recognises and acknowledges that the transition to 2019/20 academic year did not go well for our service and that this caused a very significant and negative impact on the children and families who rely on us.

A key priority for the Home-to-School-Transport service at this time is ensuring that we do not repeat the mistakes of last September and that the transition to the 2020/21 academic year is achieved in a way that causes minimal disruption to the children and families who rely on our service and that they are fully aware of their Home-to-School arrangements in advance of September 2020.

There are challenges, however, in sustaining services over the pandemic period, with school closures and the financial challenges facing both councils and suppliers. Actions to ensure a sustainable service for when schools re-open are being finalised and there will be individual discussions with firms about their particular circumstances and the relief to be requested both from government schemes and from the council. The council is particularly concerned to ensure the sustainability of the workforce, both drivers and VPAs.

Moving Forward:

With the above in mind Home-to-School Transport have planned for the following:

Children and Young People currently using our service who will continue using HTST in the new academic year:

- Children and young people who are currently using our service and will continue to use our service in the 2020/21 academic year and will be attending the same educational setting will not need to re-apply for Home-to-School-Transport
- Children and young people who are currently using our service but will be attending a different educational setting in September 2020 will be asked to re-apply for home-to-school transport. The reason for this is to ensure continued eligibility at the new setting. Applications forms will be sent out to parents/ carers by the 2nd week of May 2020
- Parents and guardians of children and young people currently using our service will be emailed in the first week of June 2020 offering them the opportunity to provide us with any changes for their child's pupil information sheet
- If the information on the current pupil information sheet is still relevant and up-to-date they will not need to submit further information to us or complete a new one
- For parents who do not have a copy of their child's current pupil information sheet we will get a copy to them in whichever way is the parent/ carers' preference

- Whilst some change in the next academic year is inevitable, our preference, wherever possible is not to change the routes, drivers and VPA's from what is currently in place and we guarantee to keep changes to a minimum and to only make changes when absolutely necessary
- Our route planning will be completed by the end of July 2020. We will therefore be informing our existing, and new parents and guardians of their driver and VPA in the last week of July 2020 at the latest
- In instances where the route, driver or VPA are changed, the transport company, including the driver and VPA will make contact with the parents and guardians early in August. The reason for this timescale is both to minimise any potential feelings of stress caused by a change of educational setting or return to school and also to ensure that the time between getting to know the new driver and VPA and returning to school is kept to a shorter period as is practical. Parents/ carers have reminded the HTST service of the crucial importance of these introductions, which are specified in the contract with firms, but have not always been adhered to in the past.

Communication with existing parents and guardians:

- We will be emailing all existing parents and guardians in the second week of May 2020 laying out the above information and timescales and inviting them to submit additional and new information for the pupil information sheet and to let us know if there are any worries or concerns with their child continuing with their current transport arrangements in the 2020/21 academic year
- We are also aware that whilst the majority of our parents and guardians use email, some do not. We will ensure that these remaining parents and guardians are contacted by our service by the close of the third week of May 2020

Children and young people who will be new to our service in September 2020:

- We are continuing to work closely with our colleagues in the SEN Team and inviting the parents and guardians of children who have just been awarded a EHCP to submit an application for Home-to-School-Transport
- Once received applications are considered at SEN/Home-to-School-Transport Panel. These take place approximately once a fortnight throughout the year but this is variable depending on number of applications
- To ensure full representation going forward on the Transport Panel, an Amaze worker who is also a parent/ carer of a child with disabilities, will be invited to join the Panel and offer advice from a parental perspective.
- The above is a continual process that takes place throughout the year thus ensuring that parents and guardians receive an outcome to their application as soon as possible and prevents a backlog of applications
- Once a decision has been made parents and guardians are informed of the decision in writing and are invited to complete a pupil information sheet

- If the application is successful we either add the child or young person to an existing route, if available and appropriate for their individual needs, or put the new route out to tender
- As with existing children and young people we will inform new parents and guardians of 2020/21 routes in the first week of August 2020 and the transport provider, including the driver and VPA, will make contact with the parent or guardian by the close of the 3rd week of August 2020
- New applications to Home-to-School-Transports received after the start of August 2020 will be prioritised in order to ensure that the process as described above is kept to or as close to the above timescales as possible

Risk Assessments

- The Home-to-School-Transport Service is currently in the process of producing up-to-date risk assessments for all the children and young people who use our service, we have employed a temporary member of staff for this purpose with a SEN background and we are also getting support from a current member of the SEN Team
- As part of our risk assessment process, we will also be considering children's compatibility on shared transport, as well as journey lengths, to ensure our children and young people are travelling in appropriate transport that fully meets their individual needs and ensures they are arriving at school ready to learn and get the very best out of their school day
- Finally, whilst we do not anticipate that this will be in place by September we will in the next month be embarking on the process of updating our Pupil-Information-Sheets. This will be a joint piece of work that will be undertaken with PACC with the intention of further tailoring journeys to the individual children and young people for example by ensuring that as well as receiving information about individual health conditions of our children and young people that transport providers are also aware of whether they like to listen to music or talk to the driver, and what their individual interests are

Covid-19

- As well as the above, Home-to-School Transport are working to a September 2020 Covid-19 contingency plan
- This plan focuses on issues that may arise if measures are still in place to control the spread of Covid-19 and will discuss control measures to ensure the smooth operation of our service in this scenario
- The HTST service is mindful of the problems with social distancing on transport and is considering measures that can mitigate risks in this respect, which will be fully discussed with parent/ carer representatives.
- The HTST service is taking steps to ensure government guidance on cleaning of vehicles is followed and is considering whether further steps need to be taken in this respect.

- The service is also making contact with a range of other LAs to keep abreast of developments nationally.
- This plan will be updated regularly as circumstances change and the way out of the crisis becomes clearer, alongside timescales.

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