



NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

CONCESSIONARY (SPARE SEATS) TRAVEL SCHEME 2023/24 SCHOOL YEAR

1. What is the Concessionary Travel Scheme?

- 1.1 If your child is not entitled to free school transport, he or she may be able to take up a spare seat on one of the Local Authority's school contract vehicles. The Concessionary Travel Scheme is **not** available throughout the County, often this is due to the prevalence of local bus or rail services in an area, but other factors may also apply.

Whilst the Local Authority is keen to encourage the use of spare capacity on school transport there is a charge associated with this service. You would also have to accept the conditions of the concessionary travel scheme, which does have a number of limitations (see below).

- 1.2 It must be stressed that, as the term suggests, a concessionary ride is a concession and, therefore no guarantees can be given about the availability of a seat. You need to be aware of this and to bear in mind that at some point in the future you may have to make alternative arrangements for your child's transport. This is very important if you are thinking about basing your choice of school on the availability of concessionary travel.
- 1.3 A charge is made for concessionary travel. The charge does not apply to a child who is under the age of 8 and in receipt of free school meals. If your child is between the ages of 11 and 16 and in receipt of free school meals you may be eligible for transport under the Extended Rights to Transport Scheme. For further information and advice please contact the School Transport Team 0345 6006400 or email school.transport@northumberland.gov.uk.

2. How Much Does it Cost?

- 2.1 The charges which will apply for the 2023-2024 school year are £200.00 per term for a return journey and £100.00 per term if transport is only required for a one-way journey, morning only travel or afternoon only travel. No further reductions are made so, for example, if a child requires an outward and return journey 3 days a week then the termly charge will be £200.

Payment **must** be made in full in advance of the start of each new school term. If the payment is not made in full when requested, transport arrangements will be immediately stood-down. There are no exceptions to this.

The charges will be reviewed annually in accordance with the principles outlined in the Authority's Home to School Travel and Transport Policy.

3. **When Will I Know if My Child Can Have a Concessionary Ride?**

The position regarding the availability of concessionary seats is not usually known until after the start of an academic year, **the very end of September**. This is because priority is given to children for whom the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to provide free school transport and students returning to Post- 16 education. So, even where spare seats exist on school transport, parents are advised to ensure that they make alternative transport arrangements to get their children to and from school for the first month of each new academic year. Parents are also advised to make an early application for concessionary travel as spare seats will be allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis.

The maximum unbroken period of time that a spare seat can be occupied by a child following payment of the concessionary fare is from the beginning of October to the end of that academic year. Spare seats are then re-awarded from the start of October in the following academic year.

4. **Where Would My Child Be Picked Up and Set Down?**

4.1 The routes school transport vehicles undertake are determined by the local authority which has the statutory responsibility to make transport arrangements for children who are entitled to free school transport. Your child would, therefore, be collected at the nearest existing picking-up point which may be some distance from your home. It is not possible to re-route a vehicle for the benefit of concessionary riders.

4.2 The picking-up and setting-down points may be altered to reflect the needs of those pupils entitled to free school transport.

5. **Can the Concessionary Seat Be Withdrawn?**

5.1 Yes. A concessionary seat can be withdrawn for a variety of reasons:-

- the number of children entitled to free school transport may increase;
- a vehicle may have to be re-routed to accommodate children who are entitled to free school transport;
- a reduction in the number of children who are entitled to free school transport may lead to a reduction in the number of school transport routes operating in your area, and/or a reduction in the seating capacity of the vehicles used;
- the local authority reviews and re-tenders its school transport contracts which would substantially alter the network operating in your area.

5.2 The local authority cannot increase the seating capacity of the vehicle in order to accommodate concessionary riders.

5.3 If a vehicle becomes overcrowded because the number of children entitled to free school transport increases and it is necessary to withdraw some concessionary seats, it will be done in the following order:-

- children from outside the school's normal catchment area;
- children within the catchment area served by the school;

- children within the area served by the school, but in receipt of free school meals.

- 5.4 A valid concessionary travel permit does not provide any guarantee of a seat on school transport. Wherever possible, a reasonable amount of warning is given to parents when it is necessary to withdraw a seat, or offer a less convenient picking-up or setting-down point.

Sometimes concessionary seats have to be withdrawn at a week's notice because the local authority must give priority to those children for whom it has a responsibility to provide free school transport.

- 5.5 When a concessionary seat is withdrawn and payment has been made then a refund will be given on a pro-rata basis.

Where a concessionary seat is no longer required a refund will again be given on a pro-rata basis from the date we are informed that the seat is no longer required.

6. **How is an Application made for a Concessionary Seat?**

- 6.1 The application form attached to this information sheet should be completed and returned to the Passenger Transport Unit, Local Services, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF or emailed to:
schooltransport@northumberland.gov.uk.