



Northumberland County Council

School Transport Operators & Measures Required to Control Covid-19

Government Guidance

National Government guidance is changing as the situation evolves and we can all expect it to continue to do so.

The Department for Education (DfE) issued guidance entitled “Transport to school and other places of education: autumn term 2020” on 11th August 2020 covering guidance for the provision of dedicated home to school or college transport as schools return for full re-opening and also for managing the capacity of, and demand for, public transport from September.

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

Risk Assessment

Transport operators should conduct a risk assessment for all their operations including dedicated school transport services. This will determine the most appropriate safety measures to be put in place for their staff such as for social distancing, face coverings and PPE.

By PPE, we mean equipment such as fluid-resistant surgical face masks, disposable gloves, disposable plastic aprons and eye protection such as a face visor or goggles. We do not mean face coverings.

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. Where your own risk

assessment requires it, the driver and passenger assistant should be provided with appropriate PPE to use where required.

The following are steps and advice we require you to either undertake or consider following to ensure safe travel for your staff as well as children and young people on Home to School Transport from the start of the new academic year.

Where we have used the word “**must**” it is mandatory that the control measure it refers to is implemented. Where the word “**should**” is used, we ask that serious consideration is given to implementing the task it refers to but it is not mandatory. We appreciate that not all initiatives listed below are workable on every contract.

Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell

Drivers and passenger assistants **must not** work if they have symptoms, or if someone in their household has symptoms. If they develop symptoms whilst at work they **must** go home and get a test.

Drivers and passenger assistants who have been in close? contact with someone who has developed symptoms whilst at school or on home to school transport do not need to go home to self-isolate unless (one of these):

- 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

Close contact means:

- direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, unprotected physical contact (skin to skin)
- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected individual

Drivers and passenger assistants **must** wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser after contact with someone who has symptoms.

If a person with symptoms has been in a vehicle that provides home to school transport, the vehicle **must** be cleaned with normal household disinfectant to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

Response to any infection

Any transport personnel who has a high temperature or new persistent cough or is within 14 days of the day when the first member of their household showed symptoms of Covid 19 **must not** access the school transport service but **must** follow the guidance on [self-isolation](#).

Operators **must** inform the school transport team if any member of their staff start to display symptoms of Covid-19 or are tested positive.

Anyone identified as extremely vulnerable should follow the advice provided at [shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable people](#).

Engage with the test and trace process

Transport operators **must** ensure that drivers and passenger assistants [book a test](#) if they display [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) symptoms](#) and let NCC know.

Transport operators should ensure that drivers, passenger assistants understand that they will need to be ready and willing:

- to provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with if they test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test and Trace
- to [self-isolate](#) if they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), or if anyone in their household develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Seating Plans

Seating plans **must** be put in place so that children in designated year groups sit together within the vehicle, whether it is a taxi, minibus or coach.

- Implement systems for boarding, alighting and queuing of children and young people to minimise contact and mixing.
- If children and young people in the vehicle attend different schools then the children for each school **must** all sit together as a group in the vehicle
- Make it clear to children which seats are available for use.
- Face to face seating **must not** be used to sit children and young people on board vehicles

Other initiatives which we encourage you to do if practical and possible are: -

- Use a larger vehicle than that normally deployed on their school transport route in order to allow increased separation of children and young people between year groups or individuals.

- Consider rearranging, limiting or removing seating to help enforce social distancing.

Vehicle

Vehicle Seat Belts and Car Seats

To avoid close proximity between driver and children, parents should be asked to encourage their children to put seat belts on themselves, so far as possible. Where assistance is required (likely to be younger children), the parent/responsible adult should be encouraged to assist when boarding at home. When boarding at the school, the school staff in the child's teaching "bubble" may be able to assist as required. However, where applicable the legal responsibility of drivers to ensure seat belts and car seat harnesses are worn properly is unchanged; but normally a visual check will be sufficient.

Vehicle Ventilation

Keep vehicles well ventilated by opening windows and ceiling vents wherever possible, (whilst being aware of the need to avoid the risk of children leaning out of windows etc). Do not use re-circulation air conditioning

Vehicle Cleaning

- Implement procedures for standard and deep cleaning of vehicles
- Regularly touched objects and surfaces (like door handles and handrails) **must** be cleaned more often than usual and after each journey using standard cleaning products
- An enhanced cleaning regime of the whole vehicle **must** be undertaken using standard products (minimum clean at the end of each day). Coronavirus (COVID-19) is easy to kill on surfaces. Normal cleaning products will do this such as detergents and bleach - specialist cleaning products are not needed. Staff undertaking cleaning to be provided with appropriate PPE

Vehicle Modifications

For the added benefit of drivers and passengers consider the installation of a protective screen in between the rear passenger compartment and the driver in taxis and the installation of a protective screen around the driver area on buses and coaches. The following conditions must be met in relation to their installation in taxis:

- **Must not** be permanently installed in the vehicle;
- **Must not** have a solid frame to the screen;
- **Must only** be fitted by way of either Velcro or adhesive fastenings, which can be removed from the vehicle when the screens are no longer permitted.
- **Must** be fitted in such a way so as to not affect the structural integrity of the vehicle, or interfere with any manufacturer fitted safety equipment e.g. airbags;
- **Must not** wrap around the driver seat and create a partition between the two front seats, in addition to the rear cabin area.

- Must be approved as necessary by either the Council's taxi licensing team or the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

Driver & Passenger Assistants

- The same driver and, where applicable, passenger assistant **must** be deployed for the operation of each contract on a continuous basis to reduce the risk of transmission unless exceptional circumstances apply.
- Remind drivers and (where deployed) passenger assistants that they **must** wash their hands before and after every journey.
- In addition to washing their hands with soap and water before and after each journey, drivers and passenger assistants should use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser (minimum 60% alcohol based) at intervals throughout the journey, and should always do so after performing tasks such as helping a child into the vehicle or handling a child's belongings.
- Drivers and passenger assistants should maintain a distance from their passengers wherever possible. We acknowledge that the nature of school transport, and the needs of the children and young people receiving it, mean this will not always be possible.

Communication & Signage

Drivers should:

- report any concerns to the council about any issues with social distancing at bus stops or collection points
- in a calm, polite but authoritative manner, reiterate standards of behaviour and instructions to children and young people on how they are to board and alight, and allocate seats to children on their first day of travel as they board the vehicle
- issue a reminder each day of behaviours expected and report issues of concern to the school transport team for follow-up.

Transport Operators should where possible implement the following :

- the application of floor tape, signs or paint in passenger areas to help direct students to their allocated seats.
- the use of signage to indicate to children and young people where they should sit
- the display of notices to emphasise the importance of good behaviour e.g. sit in allocated seats, keep your distance when entering and leaving the vehicle etc.
- displaying Public Health posters in vehicles that emphasise the importance of washing hands and the 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it' message
- the use of signs and messages to build awareness of good hand washing technique and other hygiene behaviours, for example, around coughing and sneezing

And finally.....

Drivers should not be expected to police arrangements such as seating plans, queues, the wearing of face coverings - their role is primarily to focus on driving the vehicle safely