

TRANSPORT GUIDANCE FOR PASSENGERS, PARENTS/CARERS AND SCHOOLS/VENUES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

(August 2020)

On August 11th, the government released updated guidance on dedicated school transport [transport to school and other places of education autumn term 2020](#). A much shorter version of the guidance can also be found in the parents/carers guide [what parents and carers need to know about early years providers schools and colleges](#)

Guidance on shielding and people/pupils who are high risk (clinically extremely vulnerable) can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

Please visit <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> to keep up to date with the latest information on corona virus.

Following the guidance, all vehicles used for dedicated school transport in Sandwell will implement the following protective measures to limit the risk of infection. These include:

Daily Covid-19 symptom checklist

The Travel Assistance Service now require ALL transport staff and ALL passengers to complete a COVID-19 symptom checklist daily. Each passenger (or a person on their behalf where required) will be asked the following questions BEFORE boarding the vehicle on EVERY journey as a condition of carriage:

1. Have you, any member of your household, or anyone you have come in contact with, tested positive for covid-19 in the last 14 days?
2. Have you, any member of your household, or anyone you have come in contact with, suffered from any of the following symptoms in the last 14 days?
 - new, continuous cough
 - Fever/high temperature
 - Loss of sense of smell and/or taste
3. I certify that the answers provided by me are true

If the answer is 'yes' to any of the above, unfortunately we WILL NOT be able to transport the passenger. They will be politely advised of this and the need for them to seek further advice from the NHS by calling 119 or via <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youve-been-in-contact-with-a-person-who-has-coronavirus/>

Get a free NHS test to check if you have coronavirus <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>

Transport staff will inform the Travel Assistance Service immediately. Should this be before a return journey, unfortunately parents/carers will need to be contacted by the school to make alternative arrangements to transport the passenger home.

Returning from foreign travel

You will know that a number of countries have now been added to the government list for quarantine. It is important to check guidance as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)s provide regular updates on restrictions and quarantine requirements. See www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice and [latest border control information](#) for updated guidance.

As Sandwell currently has a high number of Coronavirus cases, we want to avoid a local lockdown and any new outbreaks in settings and in our communities. Therefore, it is expected all returning passengers, parents/carers, school staff and transport staff adhere to current guidance at the time of their arrival back in the UK.

For the restricted countries they are expected to quarantine for 14 days.

If you develop symptoms (persistent cough, high temperature or loss of smell/taste) to book a test at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119. If you develop symptoms, you must remain at home for 10 full days.

What can you do to help?

Passengers, parents/carers and school staff should do all they can to help make sure they and others can travel safely. This can be done through:

- Talking to your child/foster child/pupil about how transport will 'look' different to what they are used to
 - This can include explaining about transport staff and passengers wearing masks, sanitising their hands regularly and maintaining social distance wherever possible etc.
 - Talking about the seating plan and explain that they will need to stick to this every journey.

This forms part of the compliance with NHS Test and Trace, and it is important that our passengers sit where they are allocated for the time-being to ensure the risk of infection is kept as low as possible.

- Answer the COVID-19 daily checklist honestly.
 - Our passengers will be asked these questions before every journey and we need honest answers to keep everyone safe.
 - If your child/foster child, or any member of your household displays any symptoms of COVID-19 (main symptoms being a new, persistent cough, high temperature or the loss of taste or smell), you must contact TAS – we will put your child/foster child/pupil's transport on hold temporarily until the appropriate isolation period is over. We can be contacted at Travel_assistance@sandwell.gov.uk.
- Ensuring good respiratory hygiene by using the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach where appropriate
- Encourage or assist your child/foster child/pupil to wash their hands or use hand sanitiser before and after their journey.
- Pupils over the age of 11 can wear face coverings if they wish and are safely able to do so, however it is recognised that many pupils with SEN will be exempt from wearing a face

covering <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#exemptions-face-coverings>

If pupils do wish to wear face coverings, school will help them to store or dispose of them safely. For more information on face coverings visit

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#how-to-wear-a-face-covering>

Face coverings should not be used by children under the age of 3, or by those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly.

Where a passenger can and is tolerant to wearing a home-provided facemask on provided transport then it would be advisable to do so. However, we are unable to enforce this where a child is unable to wear one.

- Only ONE small bag per passenger if essential. All hard areas of the bag will be sanitised before storing on the vehicle.

Contamination will be minimised by doing the following:

- The passenger MUST be brought to the vehicle by their parent/carer/staff
- Transport staff will complete the daily checklist with the passenger (or their representative where required). If the answer is 'yes' to any question, unfortunately we WILL NOT be able to transport the passenger. They will be politely advised of this and the need for them seek further advice from the NHS. Transport staff will inform the Travel Assistance Service immediately.
- No face to face seating will be used on vehicles.
- Passengers will be transported based on a seating plan for each multi occupancy vehicle and must travel in this place for each journey.
- Where passengers are able to do so, they must put on and do up their own seat belt. Transport staff MUST check that this done correctly before the vehicle moves off.
- Ensuring that there is good ventilation during the journey, keeping the windows or roof lights open wherever possible.
- Passengers MUST be collected from the vehicle by school staff or parent/carer - those waiting to collect children should wait for arrival whilst maintaining social distancing.
- Before the return journey, transport staff will again complete the daily checklist with the passenger (or their representative where required). If the answer is 'yes' to any question, unfortunately we WILL NOT be able to transport the passenger. They will be politely advised of this and the need for them to seek further advice from the NHS. Transport staff will inform the Travel Assistance Service immediately. Should this be a return journey, unfortunately the school will need to contact parents/carers to make alternative arrangements to transport the passenger home.
- A responsible Adult MUST be at home to collect the passenger from the vehicle. If transport staff find that no-one is home to receive the passenger, they will contact the Travel

Assistance Service immediately. This will put the passengers and transport staff at further unnecessary risk in an enclosed environment. If this occurs for any length of time the parent/carer/staff will put the transport provision at risk of being suspended. The Travel Assistance Service will contact the parent/carer and school and depending on the circumstances, a warning letter or transport suspension letter will be made available to the parent/carer.

- During this difficult and worrying time we would ask that you continue to treat transport staff and Travel Assistance Service staff with respect. We have a zero tolerance policy regarding abuse towards our staff and will suspend or cease transport for people who do not comply. Anyone who uses coronavirus as a threat against our staff will also be reported to the police.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Passenger groupings on dedicated transport

We are aware that many parents are concerned about grouping pupils for dedicated transport. Pupils will only travel with other pupils from the same school in the same consistent transport group each day. This will create a transport bubble. Although this very small bubble may not reflect the school's wider teaching bubbles, government guidance for schools acknowledges that they may need to operate different teaching and transport bubbles.

The government and Public Health England have stated that the risk and impact of contamination for Covid 19 is very low for children travelling to school on dedicated transport particularly when the protective measures listed have been put in place.

However, we recognise that some parents may not want to use the dedicated transport the council is able to provide and, to assist, SEN are also giving parents/carers the option of taking a personal transport budget or parental mileage. This will give you the option of making alternative travel arrangements rather than using dedicated school transport.

A personal transport budget or parental mileage does not have to be a long-term commitment as it is acknowledged that family circumstances can change quickly. However, we do ask that if you take a personal transport budget and then wish for your child to return to being transported by the Council's dedicated transport you give SEN 30 days' notice so that we can arrange the vehicle.

If you are interested please contact SEN_transportOfficer@sandwell.gov.uk and leave your name and phone number together with the name of the young person being transported and SEN will contact you to discuss the offer.

Vehicle Hygiene/Cleaning

To help reduce possible spread of the virus amongst passengers, parents/carers and staff, key areas will be cleaned as often as possible, ideally after each use. Surfaces will be cleaned regularly with sanitising wipes or detergent spray. Focusing especially on areas of the vehicle which receive the most regular contact:

- door handles (exterior and interior)
- gear stick
- handbrake
- handrails/grab handles

- Hard surfaces of seats, arm rests and headrests.
- seatbelts (tongue/buckle/webbing)
- clamps/stalks/real/cant rail
- lift control/buttons/switch
- manually deployed ramps
- booster seats/car seat/harness buckles
- dash board
- driver controls (e.g. steering wheel, gearstick, handbrake, indicators, push buttons etc) if drivers share vehicles
- shared mobile phones or radio handsets

It is recommended to clean before the first passenger boards and after all passengers have alighted at the destination, on each journey.

In addition, if staff must manoeuvre wheelchairs, they are advised to clean the wheelchair handles and brake levers prior to pushing the wheelchair. Likewise, if they are required to manoeuvre walking frames/other equipment, install car seats or booster seats, they will be cleaning the hard surface areas (e.g. outer shell, buckles) before storing/installing in the vehicle and clean them after use.

Equipment hygiene / cleaning

Equipment will be cleaned before and after being used with disinfectant or detergent surface wipes:

- shared mobile phones or radio handsets
- clamps
- stalks
- reals
- seatbelts (tongue/buckle/webbing)
- cant rail
- harness buckles
- manually deployed ramps
- car seats or booster seats, cleaning the hard surface areas (e.g. outer shell, buckles) before installing in the vehicle and clean them after use.

Transport staff

Transport staff will wear face coverings (unless exempt) and wash their hands with soap and water as often as is practical and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser. Hand sanitiser should be used after a journey, collecting passengers, touching equipment/seatbelt, storing equipment/bag and after cleaning. Disposable tissues and a bag/container are also recommended for used or potentially contaminated material to be dropped into for secure disposal later.

Gloves are not recommended in this context. The most important way of preventing the spread of infection is cleaning/sanitising hands. Gloves can become contaminated just as easily as hands can and it is known that wearing gloves reduces hand hygiene. It is far more effective to regularly decontaminate hands with alcohol gel than it is to wear gloves.

Should individuals/companies wish to issue/wear any further PPE they are free to do so, we want staff to feel safe at work.

Passenger Assistant duties, by their nature, may require close contact with those requiring the PA. If there is no physical, behavioural or medical need to sit beside the passenger being transported then PA's should sit on the opposite side of the same row of seats.

In some cases, it may be necessary for them to sit beside and have physical contact with the passenger being transported depending on their needs. PA's should have discussed this with their Manager and ensure that they wear PPE (if required) and follow the advice above.

Meet and Greets

Planning is required for meet and greets to take place outside at pre-arranged times, ensuring social distancing. The Travel Assistance Service require that the meet and greet form and the mobility aid or wheelchair risk assessment (if required) is completed by transport staff. Parents/Carers will NOT be able to physically sign the form, so transport staff will record their full name. The form(s) will be emailed to travel_assistance@sandwell.gov.uk

Busy educational setting areas

Schools are required to identify safe meeting/pick-up/drop-off points minimising time on transport, changes of transport and contact with others. They will advise transport staff on their safe queueing system – in line with hygiene and guidance from Public Health England.

Signing of Transport record cards and personal items record card

Transport cards/personal items cards are NOT to be signed by carers and school staff. Transport staff will complete the transport record card daily, recording the passenger collection and drop off and the member of staff/carers initials. Transport staff will also complete the personal items record card when required, recording the specific details of the item(s) and the member of staff/carers initials. The Travel Assistance Service will liaise with schools, parents/carers to confirm the record is accurate where necessary.

Transport staff I.D. badges

During the pandemic members of transport staff whose badges were due to expire were issued a badge extension until September in the first instance, so that they could continue to work on these contracts. This was in the form of an official letter (in .PDF format) for the member of staff to carry with them. This letter **must** be carried by the member of staff at all times as directed by TAS, this can also be presented if questioned by a parent/carer or member of school/centre staff.

TAS will be processing all of these extensions from letters to official badges throughout September.

If you have any concerns, please contact TAS as soon as possible.

Sandwell Taxi Licensing

During the pandemic Sandwell Council Taxi Licensing was not issuing any new driver badges or vehicle plates. Instead an exemption letter was provided allowing the vehicle to operate with expired plates. Sandwell Taxi Licensing is also prioritising these Drivers and vehicles and will be ensuring that badges and plates will be issued as soon as possible.

Guidance for Transport Operators, Passengers, Parents/Carers and Schools

TAS have issued guidance to all the above and will continue to liaise with all parties.

Schools will have completed their own individual risk assessments for pupils who are attending/will return to school which will also include travel risks.

Schools also receive communications via SMBC (Education circulars and Head teacher letters) with covid-19 information and advice including Frequently asked Questions – these include school transport.

Sandwell Education have also written to all parents/carers regarding transport arrangements and the offer of personal transport budgets.

Travel Assistance Service contact details:

Due to the continued disruption caused by Covid-19, our staff are working from home at present. For any enquiries, please use the email address travel_assistance@sandwell.gov.uk this inbox is manned as usual so your enquiry will reach the relevant TAS officer.

For further enquiries, you are able to contact the TAS team on the following phone numbers:

Dee Watson	07392 285423
Jagdeep Tiwana	07392 285414
Joann Hodgetts	07825 098219
Karen Beaumont	07392 285405
Rina Viridi	07392 285412
Robert Shenstone	07392 285426
Sabby Gakhal	07760 172015

This guidance will continue to develop as Government advice changes.

STAY ALERT TO STAY SAFE

Go to [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

STAY ALERT → CONTROL THE VIRUS → SAVE LIVES