

Special Needs Home to School Transport



Guidelines for Parents and Carers

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These guidelines are for parents and carers of young people needing specialist home to school transport arrangements. It lists what is expected from you and young people using the transport facilities provided by Derbyshire County Council.

Derbyshire County Council believes whenever possible young people should be encouraged to develop independent travel habits using public transport. But the nature of placements in schools and centres means that arrangements have to be flexible. To achieve this the authority works in partnership with transport providers, parents and carers, schools and young people to provide a quality service.

The county council provides more than 300,000 taxi and minibus journeys each year for young people who have special educational needs.

These are monitored and reviewed regularly. Most of the time things run smoothly, but when problems occur Derbyshire County Council will deal with and resolve issues as quickly as possible.

We try to avoid constant changes of operator but we have to maintain high, cost-effective standards of service and are required to tender every five years. In cases where a contractor regularly fails to meet the terms of its contract we may terminate its services and find a replacement.

As parents and carers you have

an essential role in helping the council's transport service run smoothly. Please read these guidelines to ensure that a young person in your care gets the best out of using specialist home to school transport.



Transport arrangements:

- transport is normally provided by minibus or taxi with or without an escort in the most appropriate and cost effective manner. Where this is not appropriate then a bus or rail pass will be issued. Alternatively the parent will be offered a refund of petrol expenses at a rate determined by the county council. The decision whether or not to provide these payments will consider factors such as the pupil's well-being, safety and cost.
- a door-to-door service cannot always be provided. Passengers may need to travel to a pre-arranged pick up point.
- where a door-to-door service is provided it is parents/ carers responsibility to take passengers to and from the vehicle as escorts are not permitted to leave children unattended. Nor are drivers and escorts allowed to lift children in and out of vehicles, although physical support may be given following advice from school staff.





Transport arrangements: (continued)

- taxi and escort arrangements are reviewed every year at the student's annual review meeting. For some, specialist transport will continue throughout their school life. For others, improved skills and increased independence will mean this is no longer necessary. Decisions regarding the ending of transport will be taken in partnership with the passenger and their parent/carer.
- all drivers and escorts are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau. Taxi drivers should always wear their identification badge.
- while we try to keep changes to a minimum routes and vehicles may change at the last minute because of extra passengers.
- every effort is taken to keep journey times to a minimum. However sometimes the distances travelled to special schools mean that children have longer journeys. Transport routes are organised to be cost effective and therefore your child may not always travel to school by the most direct route.

- the timetabling of transport cannot be arranged to fit in with parents/carers domestic or working arrangements.
- operators are contracted to transport children only between home and school or between school and short-break carers where this is authorised by the Area Social Services Office. They are not permitted to transport children to any alternative address without prior notification.
- transport is provided on the basis of one return journey at usual school opening and closing times. It is not the responsibility of the county council to provide separate transport for medical or dental appointments, for external examinations or to collect children who are ill or where they are excluded from school for any reason.
- drivers and escorts are not allowed to give medication to passengers, although it may be carried on the vehicle if it is in a sealed container or bag clearly labelled with the passenger's name.

Vehicles operate to scheduled times so it is important that:

- your child is ready on time in the morning. Drivers are advised to wait no longer than five minutes past the scheduled time before continuing with the journey as any delay may affect other passengers.
- you inform the contractor as early as possible if your child is not attending school for any reason. The county council is liable to meet the full cost of journeys where less than 24 hours notice of cancellation is given.
- you inform the contractor if your child is returning to school after an absence.
- a responsible adult is at home when the passenger is due to be dropped off. Drivers are advised to wait no longer than five minutes past the usual arrival time before continuing the journey. They will then call back after all other passengers have been dropped off. If there is still no one there the passenger will be taken to a safe place of care such as a social services office or police station.

Transport arrangements: (continued)

- you give written permission to the transport office if you wish the student to be left with someone else, such as a neighbour or relative. Drivers and escorts are instructed not to leave passengers unattended or in the care of anybody but the parent/carer unless written permission has been given.
- you supply the council's transport office, driver and escort of your telephone number and an emergency contact number.
- you inform the council's transport office of any changes in your home circumstances, address, telephone number or your child's physical or medical needs.





Behaviour:

Parents or carers are responsible for the behaviour of passengers in their care during the journey. Persistent problems may lead to transport being suspended or withdrawn. If transport is withdrawn it is the responsibility of parents and carers for making alternative arrangements during this period. Withdrawal of transport does not excuse young people from attending school.

It would be helpful if you could regularly remind your child:

- to listen to the driver and escort and follow their instructions.
- not to throw anything that would be a danger and risk causing an accident.
- not to distract the driver.
- to avoid eating, drinking or smoking in any vehicle at any time.
- to stay in their seat the whole time.
- to wear any seatbelts or restraints they are supposed to use.
- to wait until the vehicle stops before getting in or out.
- not to leave any belongings in the vehicle.
- to remember that repeated bad behaviour such as bullying, fighting or vandalism might lead to them being suspended or banned from using the transport service.

Further information:

We hope you find these guidelines useful but if you have any queries or need more information about special needs school transport please contact **Call Derbyshire 08 456 058 058** (8.00am–8.00pm weekdays, 9.30am–4.00pm Saturdays).

Or you can write to:

**Special Needs Transport
Environmental Services Department
Derbyshire County Council
County Hall, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 3AG**

Email: public.transport@derbyshire.gov.uk

Guidelines are also provided to contractors, drivers and escorts and schools. If you would like copies of these leaflets please contact **Call Derbyshire 08 456 058 058**.

If you have difficulty reading these guidelines they can be made available in other formats. Please contact **Call Derbyshire 08 456 058 058** for more information.