

Travel Assistance videoconference (30.7.20)

This videoconference was organised by Our Voice Parents' Forum to give parents who use home-to-school transport a chance to ask questions about plans for September. Questions were answered by a panel from the Transport Team – Julian Minta and Monica Tyson, and the SEN Travel Brokers – Des O'Donaghue, Nadine Booth and Marie Munford.

For additional information see also the Travel Assistance policy

<https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/children-and-education/local-offer/getting-to-school-policy-local-offer.pdf>

Key points

Existing arrangements for Transport will still be in place, and existing entitlements to travel assistance will continue. Fleet transport options (e.g. buses) are **not** being withdrawn or reduced.

Depending on the numbers of people using fleet transport (rather than a personal budget) there may be some changes to the mode of transport for some children, for example using a large bus rather than a minibus and vice versa.

Parents / carers can expect a letter within the next week to confirm their entitlement.

As an alternative, parents/carers can choose to opt for a Personal budget. If parents already have a personal budget in place this will also remain unchanged. A letter (dated 17th July) was sent to parents setting out the options, in response to questions from parents who had concerns about their children's safety during the Coronavirus outbreak.

Options for using a Personal budget can include payment for mileage, bus/train/tube fares, paying a carer (sourced by parents) to support the child during the journey, taxis (by exception), breakfast or after school clubs, independent travel training, buying a bike.

If parents and carers are interested in moving to a person budget they should talk to Travel Assistance about their options and their specific circumstances. Contact Travel Assistance on travel.assistance@enfield.gov.uk

Whether parents use fleet transport or opt for a personal budget they can request a review at any point if they feel that this isn't working, or if their circumstances change.

Once all the information is received, the Transport team will work out the best options for routing for those children using fleet transport and send a letter to each family. These letters should be sent on 21st August or thereabouts.

Key contact points

Travel Brokerage Team Tel: 020 8379 1000 (ask to speak to the SEN Travel Broker) Email:

Travel.Assistance@Enfield.gov.uk

SEN Services Special Educational Needs Team Tel: 020 8379 5667 [Email: SEN@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:SEN@enfield.gov.uk)

People Transport Service: Tel: 020 8379 1258 Email: transport.operations@enfield.gov.uk

Joint Service for Disabled Children Tel: 020 8363 4047

Mileage and personal budgets

1. One of the options for travelling is the use of a personal budget. Please can you tell me more?

Personal budgets are available for:

Mileage – from home address to school and return. This is paid at the rate of 65p per mile. The SEN Travel Brokers team work out return mileage and use this to calculate a weekly budget which is then pro-rated across the year and added to an e-card (separate to short breaks/Cheviots e-card). i.e. weekly budget is multiplied by 39 weeks (number of weeks children are at school) then divided by 52 and an equal amount is paid each week across the year.

Bus/Train/Tube fares

Paying a carer (chosen by the parents – not supplied by Transport) to support a child to and from school.

Taxi (by exception and if no other personal budget was appropriate)

Funding of breakfast/after school clubs

Independent travel training

2. Why is there no personal budget anymore, and just mileage offered?

Personal budgets are still available. Mileage is offered as one option for a personal budget along with other options.

3. What is the deadline for me to confirm what option I would like to take?

Personal budgets are available all year round, but if the child is presently being transported on a school bus, we would encourage parents to apply as soon as possible. It would be helpful if parents could advise as soon as they have made a decision as this information is important when working out routing options for the new term and late changes can cause delays in this complex process.

Commitment

4. If I opt to take one of the other options available this year (e.g. because there are other vulnerable members in the household or I have concerns about safety), will I be able to access transport next year with no problems?

In principle, yes, however we would need to review as to why the Personal budget option was no longer appropriate. It is appreciated that in some cases arrangements won't be sustainable longer term for example if a parent can drive their child to and from school because they are working from home at the moment but cannot continue to do so once they return to their usual place of work.

5. If this is possible can we get some form of confirmation in writing from the SEN Travel Brokers?

Yes, this can be provided.

6. If we are currently getting transport. If it doesn't seem to work out after a term for our child, could we revert to a personal budget / mileage?

Yes – arrangements can always be reviewed. The Local Authority have a duty to make sure that the children who are eligible for Travel Assistance get to and from school and will make sure that they do what is needed.

Continuation of existing arrangements

7. Are existing arrangements still in place or will transport change in September?

Arrangements will be the same as pre-Covid

A letter will be sent to all families in the next week to confirm previous arrangements will remain in place. A further letter will be sent to every family to confirm specific arrangements for their child, and we will aim to send this out on or around 22nd August.

8. Does this mean that if my child already has a place on a bus this is not guaranteed?

All children will be accommodated. Normally the same mode of transport will be used but in some cases there may be changes e.g. from a taxi to a small bus, but things will be kept as similar as possible.

9. Do I need to reapply for travel assistance for my child?

No, not unless your circumstances have changed e.g. if your child has moved to a different school or you have moved to a new address.

10. If my travel arrangements remain unchanged, will I still get a letter to confirm this, and when can I expect to receive it?

Letters will be sent to confirm specific arrangements for each child, and it is anticipated these will be sent out on or around the 22nd August 2020. If you are concerned or you do not have a letter by the 31st August, please contact Travel Brokers to discuss.

11. The letter dated 17th July only lists the travel options available. It does not confirm whether my child has transport in place and what that is. When will I find out this information?

If transport has been agreed it will be in place, and Transport will aim to send out the letters with full details on or around 22nd August when we have all applications in and are able to do the routing. If you are concerned or you do not have a letter by the 31st August, please contact Travel Brokers to discuss.

12. My child was transported to school by taxi before lockdown. He is staying in the same school. Is he going to have the same arrangement from September or is this going to be revised?

This will be advised when we carry out the routing in August. He will continue to be transported but depending on the overall picture (e.g. if another child nearby is now going to the same school) and individual circumstances (e.g. if there was a specific reason why that arrangement was put in place) sometimes the means of transport may change e.g. a minibus instead of a taxi.

13. Will my son's transport resume as usual in September - he usually gets in a shared taxi with a PA?

See previous response. Wherever possible, existing arrangements will be maintained

Safety precautions on fleet transport

14. What precautions are you putting in place to make my child safe?

A range of daily cleaning/sanitising of buses (by a separate cleaning team) and track and trace measures are in place. We have increased the cleaning of air-conditioning systems from once every 3 years to once every 3 months. Also, we are looking at the possibility of giving children, driver and escorts digital temperature checks (more advice on this will follow).

Sanitiser and face-masks will be provided.

15. Does my child have to wear a face mask?

As per government advice, face coverings for SEND children are not compulsory, but can be used at the parent's discretion.

Government guidance doesn't compel drivers and escorts to wear masks if they choose not to do so but generally we expect that they will do so.

16. Will there be sanitiser on the bus?

Yes, sanitiser will be provided.

17. Will my child have to sit next to another student?

Potentially yes, but this dependant on the run your child is on and the numbers of children on that bus. This is in line with government guidance. We will make every effort to keep the numbers of children in each vehicle to minimum and space children out as much as possible. In general, we normally expect there to be spare places on each bus even in normal circumstances, to ensure that children don't have to spend an excessive amount of time on the vehicle.

18. What happens if one of the people on my daughter's transport gets Covid?

Your child will be advised to self-isolate as per current guidelines, as will all other persons on the bus (including the driver and escort). Currently this is for a period of 10 days but we will follow government guidance in place at that point in time.

19. Why can't the children travel in their class bubbles to and from school?

School bubbles are arranged to suit teaching and educational needs.

Transport is tailored around location of pickup and drop off points, to make sure children spend as little time on transport as possible.

20. If the children are travelling with children from other class bubbles how will SEN travel brokers and transport maintain their safety to and from school?

We will follow government guidance (see below under question 22). We will have safety measures in place as discussed including enhanced cleaning, sanitizer, face-masks and social distancing as far as is practicable. We will do everything possible to keep children safe.

- 21. What is the max capacity of children travelling on the school bus given the social distancing guidelines? Will you be leaving empty seats in front, back and sides given most of the children will not be able to tolerate a face mask.**

As per government advice: “Pupils on dedicated school services do not mix with the general public on those journeys and tend to be consistent. This means that the advice for passengers on public transport to adopt a social distance of two metres from people outside their household or support bubble, or a ‘one metre plus’ approach where this is not possible, will not apply from the autumn term on dedicated transport”.

Numbers on each bus will depend on the numbers continuing to use fleet transport (rather than personal budgets). We will do what we can to maintain space – we are committed to keeping everyone as safe as possible.

Practicalities re fleet transport

- 22. Will we have the same escort and driver as normal?**

If at all possible, yes. We can’t guarantee because it will be dependent on take-up and routing, but will keep things the same wherever we can.

- 23. Will the escort and or driver call parents to introduce themselves (if new), before the term starts?**

Yes – escorts will contact parents in the first week of September (approximately), and the detailed arrangements will be explained e.g. pick up and drop off times.

- 24. Could we have a picture of our drive and escort in advance to help us prepare our children and reduce anxiety?**

Although we are not allowed to send pictures because of GDPR regulations it is possible for the escorts to the family address to introduce themselves to the child and parents, and parents can request this. PAs will be requested to offer this as an option.

- 25. Can working parents request a specific pick up time?**

Such requests will be looked at on a case-by-case basis and will be agreed if this is feasible. We cannot guarantee that we will be able to accommodate all such requests.

- 26. Is it possible for children to be dropped off a different address to the family home, e.g. a work address or a grand-parent’s home?**

Yes, this may sometimes be possible if the address is sufficiently close to the route, but arrangements will need to be formally agreed in writing first.

- 27. What happens if transport has 2 schools primary and secondary to collect, but primary finishes early one of the days, what happens to transport for secondary?**

Transport will be arranged to accommodate this.

28. I have heard that you may transport one group of students then go back for a second group. Is that the case? If so what criteria would you use for selection of pupils to go in the 1st or 2nd grouping?

That was one option that was discussed at an early stage, but it is not being pursued now.

Communications

29. At the moment all communications from Travel Brokers and Transport are sent by letter. Would it not be possible for email to be used to speed up communication (and reduce costs)?

Email may not work for all parents so we would want to retain that option for some. But we will look into the possibilities of using email for some communication for families who would prefer that.