

## **Travel Assistance Policy for Children in Care**

***Supporting eligible children/young people, promoting independence  
and wellbeing***

**September 2023**

People Services Directorate  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
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Cambridge  
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Agreed by

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<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>General Principles</b>	<b>3</b>
Home to School	3
Other Transport Requirements	4
Transport to Therapy	4
<b>Individual Children's Needs</b>	<b>5</b>
Babies and Pre-school Children	5
Children of Primary School Age	5
Older children and Young People	5
<b>Parents Travel to Contact</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Alterations to Agreed Travel Arrangements</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Useful Contact Information</b>	<b>6</b>

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** Cambridgeshire County Council (The Council) has a duty to provide transport for all children under its care. This policy has been developed to ensure the safe and efficient provision of transport for children in care between home, school, leisure, contact and any other place or activity as a part of the child's care plan.
- 1.2** The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is of paramount importance and will be given priority when making transport arrangements. Arrangements will be authorised and reflect the outcomes of a robust risk assessment, which should reflect the needs and vulnerabilities of the child or young person.
- 1.3** The Council considers that children who are in care should share the normal expectations and day to day experiences of all children. Part of this principle extends to children being able to expect that their full time carers will take them to school, leisure activities, contact, etc.
- 1.4** It is recognised that a child should remain in their school placement wherever possible for consistency of education, minimal disruption, and social aspects such as friendship groups.
- 1.5** It is, however, also acknowledged that for those children who are in care, there may be practical difficulties for their carers in transporting them to and from school, leisure activities, contact, etc.

## **2. General Principles**

### **2.1 Home to School**

Children should travel as their peers do. Wherever possible children and young people who live close to their school should:

- be walked to school by their carers; or a suitably mature person;
- walk/cycle alone if they are of an appropriate age and can do so safely; **or**
- be transported by their carers.

**2.2** Care planning for individual children may require that school placements are maintained whilst permanency is sought. Additionally children should not move schools at certain key points in their education (e.g. during GCSE years).

**2.3** Children and young people who live further away from their school but live within a reasonable travel distance (45 minutes for primary aged children and 1 hour 15 minutes for secondary aged children/young people) should also travel in the same way as their peers where possible, using the means above or by public or existing council contracted transport.

- 2.4** Where a bus pass is deemed appropriate, these will be issued by the Passenger Transport Team, providing authorisation has been granted by the relevant authorising officer.
- 2.5** Where individualised transport arrangements are deemed appropriate, supporting evidence will be required, detailing the other options which have been considered, and reasons why these are deemed unsuitable.

## **2.6 Other Transport Requirements**

The Council recognises that Children in Care may be required to attend, and travel to, other locations including, but not limited to:

- after school clubs and activities;
- Child in Care conferences;
- contact arrangements;
- court.

Where travel is required, it is expected that, wherever possible children and young people should:

- Be walked by their carers; or a suitably mature person; **or**
- Walk/cycle alone if they are of an appropriate age and can do so safely; **or**
- Be transported by their carers.

- 2.7** Where none of the options stated above are possible, and other informal arrangements cannot be identified, it may be necessary for alternative travel arrangements to be commissioned by the Passenger Transport Team. All requests must be authorised by the relevant authorising officer and include which of the following reasons apply:

- it conflicts with the needs of other children living in the family; or
- the use of public transport would present risks which are not consistent with safeguarding vulnerable children, (e.g. multiple placements or additional needs of child/children).
- the foster carer was approved as a carer in employment and cannot reasonably be expected to undertake all transport arrangements.
- the foster carer has no transport available, and the journey cannot be reasonably undertaken on foot or by public transport.

## **2.8 Transport to therapy**

It is likely that children and young people who are accessing therapy or counselling will be anxious prior to the appointment and may exhibit varying degrees of distress following the session. Some children and young people may wish to disclose very sensitive matters. Therefore, wherever possible, children and young people who are accessing therapy or counselling should be transported by their carers.

- 2.9** Where this is not possible, the child's social worker, supervising social worker and the carers must consider other options, bearing in mind that there should be as much continuity as possible. This should be clearly communicated to the child

and planned in such a way so that the child knows who will transport them to and from the appointment.

- 2.10** The use of commissioned transport will be a last resort once all other possibilities have been explored.

### **3 Individual Children's needs**

#### **3.1 Babies and pre-school children**

Given the age and vulnerabilities of this age group, the foster carer should be the person transporting the child.

- 3.2** If the foster carer is unable to transport a baby or a pre-school child to and from the contact venue, the use of commissioned transport will be a last resort once all other possibilities have been explored.

- 3.3** When transport arrangements must be commissioned, the Council will supply the provision of one car seat, per eligible child, if one has not been previously supplied.

#### **3.4 Children of primary school age**

Given the age and vulnerabilities of this age group, the foster carer should be the person transporting the child.

If the foster carer is unable to transport a child to and from the contact venue, the use of commissioned transport will be a last resort once all other possibilities have been explored. The use of an escort will need to be assessed depending upon the child's individual needs.

#### **3.5 Older Children and Young People**

The expectation for older children and young people is that, following a risk assessment of contact arrangements within the planning and review process, these arrangements are safe and meet the individual child's needs, giving due consideration to their expressed views. This may include public transport.

Children and young people will be encouraged to travel independently, wherever this is considered appropriate and possible. Some young people may require additional support to travel independently. These needs should be considered by the Social Worker, in conjunction with the carer and assessed and reflected in their care plan.

When older children and young people are assessed as being unable to travel independently, and all options have been explored, then a request for transport, and escort if required, must be submitted with the authorisation of the team manager and any required supporting evidence.

### **4. Parents Travel to Contact**

Parents may be assisted with travelling expenses to enable contact to go ahead. The social worker should submit a request for financial support to the relevant

team manager, with clear reasons for the request. Once the manager's approval has been given, the social worker should submit the authorised request to the Passenger Transport Team, for the appropriate form of assistance, such as bus tickets.

## **5. Alterations to Agreed Travel Arrangements**

- 5.1** The Passenger Transport Team must be given as much notice of cancellations as possible in order to avoid unnecessary costs being incurred and drivers undertaking unnecessary journeys. These must be emailed to the service without delay.
- 5.2** The Passenger Transport Team cannot accept a permanent cancellation from a foster carer. This instruction must be submitted by the child's social worker on the relevant form.
- 5.3** Any minor changes to transport arrangements such as change of time, temporary cancellations due to illness or school closures, must be notified by the foster carer social worker or business support via e-mail. However, changes that have a financial implication can only be made with a new authorised request.
- 5.4** The Passenger Transport Team will not accept a request from a foster carer to alter the destination of a child's journey; any such request must be made via the social worker.

## **6. Useful Contact Information**

Passenger Transport Team  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
ALC2649  
Emery Crescent  
Alconbury Weald  
PE28 4YE

Email: [ssdtransport.requests@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:ssdtransport.requests@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Tel: [0345 045 5208](tel:03450455208)