



# Travel Assistance Procedure for Children's Social Care

2020

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## **Northamptonshire County Council's pledge and legal obligations**

Through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Government set out 7 corporate parenting principles that we and all local authorities must follow when working with children in care and those leaving care. 'Corporate Parent' refers to an organisation that has special responsibilities to children in care; making sure they are safe and well cared for as any other child. The principles are:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To take into account of the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Furthermore, Northamptonshire County Council's pledge to young people in care and care leavers, was set up in conjunction with the Care Leavers Council, which promises to ensure that Children and Young People are as well cared for as any other child or young person and that they are happy and well. Within the pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers states that we will ensure:

- You have access to leisure services and can get around easily.
- You have regular positive contact with your family as long as it's safe.

The Care Leavers Offer also states:

- To meet your travel costs when travelling to training, school/college, apprenticeships or job interviews;
- Give you help with travel costs when attending health appointments.

This Travel Assistance Procedure has been drafted with these principles and pledges in mind and also with regards to the Council's legal duties, under the Education and Inspections Act 2006; to promote sustainable travel for children. The approach laid out in the procedure also apply to children and young people who are in engaged with social care services but not in care.

It makes clear the obligations of our social workers, carers and providers of care.

## 1. Introduction

As a Corporate Parent, Northamptonshire County Council has a responsibility to meet the care and development needs of its children and young people. As with other children, children engaged with social care services, whether living with their families or under the care of the local authority, may require Travel Assistance for a variety of reasons including:

- Education
- Medical
- Family Contact
- Social Contact
- Leisure Activities

It is important that in meeting these needs, children and young people engaged with social care are (as much as possible) provided for in the same way as other children and that differential levels of self-reliance and independence are recognised and catered for.

Travel, in whatever form, provides other benefits in preparing children and young people for adulthood and in determining the best form of travel. The following should also be considered as part of the decision making:

- Exercise and fitness
- Navigation skills
- Communication skills
- Independence
- Traffic awareness
- Resilience
- Dressing for different weather conditions
- Opportunities for socialising with peers on route

Ultimately Children and Young People engaged with social care services should travel as their peers do, and any mode of travel should not highlight any differences as they arrive at their destination. Feedback from Children in Care has told us they whilst they would like support with travel to school, family, friends and clubs they also want to be taught about life skills. Travel is an essential part of everyone's life that children and young people need to be prepared for moving into adulthood.

A Local Authority has a statutory duty to promote sustainable travel. This should therefore be built into any decision making around transport. The Department of Education guidance states that the sustainable school travel duty should have a broad impact including providing health benefits for children and their families/carers through active journeys, such as walking and cycling. This should be no different for our children in care or engaged with social care services.

Travel Assistance arrangements will vary by:

- Placement type
- Age
- Nature of Journey
- Individual needs

This procedure will outline approaches for each. The principles outlined in this document should not only be applied to the planning of Home to School transport, but to the decision making each time there is a requirement for the child or young person to make a journey for whatever purpose.

## 2. Considerations for Decision Making

Considerations for decision making in determining the best travel arrangements for your child/young person are outlined below. Social workers, providers and carers are required to work through these considerations consistently for each of their children and young people to ensure fairness in the application of this procedure.

If home to school transport is being planned, then in the first instance carers and providers should check to see if their child or young person is eligible for mainstream school transport, check for school travel assistance.

The following table gives a sustainability hierarchy of different ways to travel. Social workers, providers and carers need to work through to determine which is best for the child and young person. This hierarchy takes into account all benefits of the type of travel to both the child and young person and also to the community. However, these must be reviewed within the context of the child or young person's specific needs. Walking is considered to be the preferred option with taxis only being used where all other travel options are not possible.

Mode of Travel	Why is this the preferred option?	Possible reasons why this mode of Travel Assistance is not possible	Who would cover the cost?
Walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity for daily exercise.</li> <li>• Opportunity for socialisation with other children/young people.</li> <li>• Reduces traffic congestion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance is too far (please see guidance under s4.2 regarding age).</li> <li>• Child or young person has special educational needs, a disability or mobility problems;</li> </ul>	No costs associated with this option.

Mode of Travel	Why is this the preferred option?	Possible reasons why this mode of Travel Assistance is not possible	Who would cover the cost?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces parking problems.</li> <li>• Good for the environment.</li> <li>• Develops understanding of weather patterns and how to dress appropriately for different types of weather.</li> <li>• Develops navigation skills.</li> <li>• Develops traffic awareness skills including crossing roads.</li> <li>• Usual way for people to travel.</li> <li>• Develops planning and timekeeping.</li> <li>• Allows flexibility to attend afterschool clubs and activities.</li> </ul>	<p>where the child or young person cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Child is too young to walk alone (please see guidance under s4.2 regarding age).</li> <li>• The Carer/Provider has multiple children or young people in their care with Travel requirements where this is not possible.</li> <li>• The nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk.</li> </ul>	
Public Travel Assistance (Bus/Train etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity for socialisation with other children/young people walking to destination.</li> <li>• Reduces traffic congestion.</li> <li>• Reduces parking problems.</li> <li>• Good for the environment.</li> <li>• Develops navigation skills.</li> <li>• Usual way for people to travel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a suitable bus/train route or times.</li> <li>• May be more expensive than use of carer's own transport.</li> </ul>	Carers or Providers

Mode of Travel	Why is this the preferred option?	Possible reasons why this mode of Travel Assistance is not possible	Who would cover the cost?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and timekeeping.</li> </ul>		
Carer/Providers own Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usual way for people to travel.</li> <li>• Chance for the household to socialise.</li> <li>• Possible for carer/provider to drop off at multiple locations if required.</li> <li>• Most cost effective after walking /cycling</li> <li>• Opportunities for lift sharing with other parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carer/ Provider does not drive or have a suitable vehicle.</li> </ul>	Carer or Providers
Taxi or minibus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This option should only be selected where all other options are not suitable for the child or young person.</li> <li>• This option is by exception rather than the normal option.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not required as other options, as outlined above, are available.</li> </ul>	This would be the Social Care transport budget.

If carers/providers say that they are unable to support travel and it is required due to the child's age or location of the home, then social workers need to explore this further to ensure that this is the case.

Please note that where social workers select a taxi as a mode of travel this should only be under exceptional circumstances, and should expect that this will be challenged.

### 3. Costs and Budgets

#### 3.1 Who covers the cost?

The following is guidance for children in care only including those that have been placed in a placement under s.17.

The following applies to all journeys whether ad hoc (less than 10 days) or planned (greater than or equal to 10 days).

Walking and cycling are not possible and have been discounted as an option.

**Home to School transport only** - Carers/providers should check to see if they if their child or young person is eligible for mainstream transport. Can access this via the following link via the following website -

[www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/schools-and-education/school-transport](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/schools-and-education/school-transport)

Please note that Children in Care will only qualify for mainstream home to school transport paid out of the education budget if:

1. If they are deemed in a permanent placement
2. They meet the criteria of the H2C transport policy i.e. they were attending their nearest suitable school and this were over the statutory walking distance – 2 miles for children under 8 years and 3 miles for older children.

Please note that if transport is provided through mainstream schools transport budget then a deduction will be made from the placement cost or provider allowance to reflect this

If not eligible for mainstream home to school transport or if the journey is for another reason and where walking and cycling are not possible then the carer/ provider needs to consider the cheapest option between using their own car (also considering car sharing opportunities) or public transport. For the majority of cases the carer's allowance or provider placement costs will cover the full cost of this - see section 4.1 for full details on this.

Please note that if a dispute arises with the carer/ provider then please let Business Support know and they will pass the information onto the relevant team for advice/ support (either internal fostering and residential or commissioning & strategy)

If none of the above applies and only in exceptional circumstances then the social worker should make a travel assistance request for planned journeys using the [Travel Assistance Request Form](#).

For ad hoc journeys to take place within the next 10 days contact the Business Support Service.

The Social Worker will be expected to evidence why no other options were available.

If a child or young person also has an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) then when considering home to school transport the social worker will need to consider whether the placement is temporary or permanent and whether the child or young person is attending the nearest suitable school (NSS) for their needs.

The social worker will know whether the placement is intended to be temporary and whether the child or young person will be moving again.

Identifying the procedure to follow when arranging Travel Assistance for a child with an Education and Health Care (EHC) Plan

Does the child have an EHC Plan?

1. Yes – Does the child attend the nearest suitable school (NCC)?
  - **Yes** – Is the placement permanent
  - **Yes** – Follow Home to School Transport Policy and the procedure
  - **No** – Placement is not permanent - Follow the procedures as outlined in this document
2. No EHC Plan – Follow procedures as outlined in this document

Note that if the child moves from one permanent placement to another permanent placement and stays at the NSS then continue to follow Home to School Transport policy. You can access this via the following website:

[www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/schools-and-education/school-transport](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/schools-and-education/school-transport)

### 3.2 Budget

If the child and young person is eligible for school transport, then the Home to School Travel arrangements are to be organised and funded by the Home to School Travel Assistance Service. It is the social worker's responsibility to regularly review these arrangements, to ensure they are still in place and are being charged to the Home to school budget and not the social care budget.

Please note that Children in Care will only qualify for mainstream home to school transport paid for out of the education budget if:

1. They were deemed to be in a permanent placement
2. They met the criteria of the Home to School transport policy i.e. they were attending their nearest suitable school and this were over the statutory walking distance – 2 miles for children under 8 and 3 miles for older children.

**Report any change of circumstances here.**

It is often the case however that in order to maintain stability within the child or young person's education that if a child moves placement they will remain at their school, and this will therefore not be considered as the nearest suitable school. They will therefore not be eligible for mainstream school transport under the Home to School Transport policy. The social worker must explore all travel options with the carer/ provider. Furthermore, where no other option for travel exists in exceptional circumstances the social worker should make a travel assistance request using the [Travel Assistance Request Form](#).

The NCC Social Worker should follow the Northamptonshire Children's Trust policy to obtain approval for the expenditure and provide the appropriate purchase order number/ budget code prior to Travel Assistance being arranged. The Localities Business Support service will support with this. Please note that weekly reports with travel request will be sent to team managers for their review and to ensure that request are not being made without appropriate authorisations.

If a child or young person with an EHC Plan who is in care, then please look at Diagram 2 under section 3.1 to determine whether any travel assistance costs are covered by the Home to School Transport service budget or by the Social Care budget. The following principles apply:

1. Child or young person must still be attending their nearest suitable school to qualify for mainstream transport.
2. The distance criteria do not apply and the needs of the child should be taken into account.
3. Where a child in care moves closer to their nearest suitable school, then the Transport Service will re-assess entitlement to transport in accordance with NCC's policy and the statutory guidance.

Each team will have their own s.17 budget to charge costs to, if the costs are associated with travel arrangements for children engaging with social care or placed under section 17.

## 4. Travel Assistance

### 4.1 By Placement Type

It is recommended that carers and providers should be encouraged by the social worker to carry out a risk assessment if they are transporting the child or young person.

#### 4.1.1 External Placements - Residential and Fostering

Where the considerations have been explored under section 2 and walking and cycling have been discounted as viable options, then any cost associated with travel will be dealt with under the terms of the service specification as set out in the contract with providers.

The contractual requirements for the Travel Assistance of children and young people in external placements are the same whether in residential care or fostering.

The Carer/Provider is contractually obliged to provide:

“All travel and transport, unless the Authority and the Provider agree otherwise, within a 20-mile radius of the Placement address and to include school, normal family activities, for example holidays and days out.

Additional mileage over and above 20-mile radius will be agreed and evidenced in advance and paid at 45 pence per mile.

For the avoidance of doubt, where the carer/provider cannot provide transport for the Child, the transport element of the allowance will be deducted from the weekly fee. Transport costs incurred will be deducted from the cost of the Placement.”

The use of a taxi must only be undertaken by exception and this should always be agreed up front, and noted in the Individual Placement Agreement for planned journeys or in the Business Support tracker for Ad hoc journeys citing the reason why this was the only option. If the journey is within a 20-mile radius, then the cost of the taxi will be deducted from the weekly placement cost.

#### 4.1.2 External Placements - Independent Supported Accommodation

For Care Leavers in Independent Supported Accommodation the providers are asked to support the young person with travel arrangements. The service specifications states:

‘Accompany and support to attend appointments - in these cases, cover must be in place if other Young People remain in the property, unless agreed otherwise with their PA or Social Worker, and there is a risk assessment in place for the Young People staying in the property unsupervised. Where it is not possible for the staff to

accompany the Young Person then they should support the Young Person in identifying and utilising other forms of transport such as public transport.'

The Provider should have built in reasonable travel requirements into the placement cost and the Care Leaver should cover reasonable transport costs with their Young Person's Allowance. Independent travel using a variety of modes of transport is part of the development of the young person's independence skills for adulthood.

#### 4.1.3 Internal Placements - Residential

The travel needs of children in care placed in internal residential units are met through the use of staffing and other resources, such as pool cars, allocated to those units.

#### 4.1.4 Internal Placements - Fostering

Where the considerations have been explored under s2 and walking and cycling have been discounted as viable options then any cost associated with travel will be dealt with under the terms of the Financial Guidance April 2020 for NCC Foster Carers as outlined below:

##### Mileage for Drivers:

Transport costs can include petrol/mileage, parking tickets (but not fines), and bus fares and passes. The first 6% of your transport costs is already covered within the main allowance payment (under up to 10 years = £9.31pw, 11 and over = £13.66pw). This is designed to cover all normal mileage, for example:

- Attendance at clubs and social activities like visiting friends
- Trips to the doctor/dentist and other routine appointments
- Costs associated to school trip travel (locally)
- Transport costs linked to preparing a young person for independence.

In addition to the aforementioned examples, mileage claims can be made for the following circumstances:

- Where the foster carer is taking an active part in transporting a child for contact.
- Where there are non-routine and ongoing health appointments.
- Where the foster carer is providing the transport for a child to attend a school more than 3 miles from the foster home.

Foster carers are encouraged to provide school transport for children/young people in their care wherever possible/advisable. Travelling in a taxi, or NCC transport to a school some distance from the foster carer's home can be a very isolating

experience for a child/young person and significantly impact on their well-being and relationships with peers and family. Transport arrangements and funding will be confirmed at the Placement Planning Meeting.

Financial support to enable this transport to be provided will be paid at 45p per mile.

In order to claim mileage a foster carer will need to complete a Foster Carer Mileage Claim Form. This can be obtained from their supervising social worker. The completed form is then returned to this social worker for authorisation and processing. Payments for mileage should be received by carers within 4 weeks of submission to their Supervising Social Worker.

Non-Drivers:

The first 6% of your transport costs is already covered within the main allowance payment (under up to 10 years = £9.31pw, 11 and over = £13.66pw). This is designed to cover all normal transport costs (public transport or taxis) including, for example:

- Attendance at clubs and social activities like visiting friends
- Trips to the doctor/dentist and other routine appointments
- Costs associated to school trip travel (locally)
- Transport costs linked to preparing a young person for independence.

In addition to the aforementioned examples, transport costs claims can be made for the following circumstances:

- Where the foster carer is taking an active part in transporting a child for contact.
- Where there are non-routine and ongoing health appointments.
- Where the foster carer is providing the transport for a child to attend a school more than 3 miles from the foster home.

In order to claim mileage a foster carer will need to complete a Foster Carer Mileage Claim Form. This can be obtained from their supervising social worker. The completed form is then returned to this social worker for authorisation and processing. Payments for mileage should be received by carers within 4 weeks of submission to their Supervising Social Worker.'

The use of a taxi must only be undertaken by exception and this should always be agreed up front at the placement planning meeting for either planned or ad hoc journeys where the reasons will be recorded in the notes.

## **4.2 By Age**

Whether the distances are suitable to expect a child or young person to walk is determined by statute:

- A maximum of 2 miles, one way from home to school, if below the age of 8
- A maximum of 3 miles, one way from home to school, if aged between 8 and 16 years old.

In assessing whether the distance between a child's placement and their school is further than the statutory walking distance, the route measured must be the shortest route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk safely. This is not necessarily the shortest distance by road. The route may also include footpaths, bridleways, other pathways and alternative entrances to the school.

For young people who are 16+ years - the distance that is deemed suitable for walking is 3 miles.

The social worker will decide whether it is reasonable to for a child to walk unaccompanied. For guidance children under 8 should be accompanied. When considering whether children 8 and over need to be accompanied this should be assessed in the context of the school route and mode of transport and balance against the child's confidence, maturity and autonomy. In the event that the carer is unable to take the child to school because of other conflicting school run priorities they will need to consider asking for help from friends and family or other parents from the same school.

Transport will only be booked by the Local Authority in exceptional circumstances. Passengers Assistants (PA) will only be used to escort children and young people in booked transport. PAs will be provided for children age 11 and under with booked transport and for any children over 11 the requirement for a PA requirement should be risk assessed using the template found at Appendix C.

## **4.3 By the Nature of the Journey**

The social worker must decide whether the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk.

In assessing safety, the social worker, carers and providers should consider a range of risks, such as: canals, rivers, ditches, speed of traffic and fields of vision for the pedestrian or motorist. This should be recorded in the child's care plan.

## 4.4 Out of County Placements

If a child or young person is placed in a placement that is out of county, then all of the same principles as outlined in this procedure apply for travel arrangements. It is primarily the carer or provider's responsibility to provide travel assistance. Any other arrangements must be discussed in the first instance with the Placement Brokerage Service.

As with in county placements taxi's will be arranged by exception only and the sourcing and booking of taxi's will be the responsibility of the provider who must undertake appropriate assurance checks in terms of quality, safeguarding and value for money. If the Provider or carer are expecting Social Care to cover the cost of the taxi, then three quotes will need to be provided up front. Alternatively, social workers could contact the relevant county's own Transport service to source from their transport framework as this will also provide assurance around quality, safeguarding and value for money.

This will then be agreed through the Finance Panel and use the placement variation process.

Your business support team will be able to advise on any invoicing arrangements.

## 4.5 By the Child or Young Persons Individual Needs

4.5.1 Transport Arrangements for High Needs Children and Young People  
Children and Young People may need other travel arrangements where they cannot reasonably be expected to walk or cycle to school because of their mobility problems, or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs or disability. Usual Travel requirements (e.g. the statutory walking distances) should not be considered when assessing the travel needs of children eligible due to SEN and/or disability.

### 4.5.2 Passenger Assistance for High Needs Children and Young People

Social workers should also consider whether there is a requirement for passenger assistance.

A risk assessment needs to be carried out for all children who have complex physical, emotional or behavioural needs, as outlined in section 6, to determine whether passenger assistance is required. Please use the form found at appendix C to carry out a risk assessment and once completed upload to the relevant casefile.

If a passenger assistant is required, then this can also be requested using the [Travel Assistance Request Form](#).

Passenger Assistance of High Needs/ Disabled Children - scenarios where passenger assistance may be required

Transport of High Needs/Disabled Children - (A Risk Assessment needs to be completed at all times)

1. Long term severely restricted independent mobility, due to a physical disability e.g. severe cerebral palsy

Passenger assistant if necessary (e.g. oxygen dependency – highlighted in risk assessment)

2. Long term severely restricted independent mobility due to a condition resulting in severe persistent pain and/or extreme fatigue e.g. juvenile arthritis

Passenger assistant if necessary (e.g. if driver required assistance to move child in and out of the car)

3. Long term restricted mobility due to a medical condition resulting in serious persistent health and safety risks e.g. epilepsy

Passenger assistant essential if child has potential life threatening medical condition

4. Impairment resulting in severely restricted oral communication skills, e.g. profound hearing impairment or severe autism or severe language disorder

Passenger assistant if necessary (e.g. child with no effective verbal communication)

5. A sensory impairment resulting in severely restricted mobility, e.g. severe visual impairment

Passenger assistant if necessary (e.g. child effectively without functional sight)

6. Cognitive abilities within the range associated with severe learning difficulties

Passenger assistant if necessary (e.g. child known to demonstrate constantly challenging behaviours resulting in risk to own and others safety)

7. Severe behavioural emotional and/or social difficulties in comparison with other children of their age, e.g. Asperger's Syndrome with little awareness of personal danger

Passenger assistant if necessary (e.g. child known to demonstrate constantly challenging behaviours resulting in risk to own and others safety)

Risk assessment to identify if child requires 1 or 2 passenger assistants (excluding the driver)

### 4.5.3 Specialist Equipment

**The Travel Assistance Request Form** can also be used to request any specialist equipment that is required to transport the children and young people.

### 4.6 Children and Young People engaged in Social care but are not Children in Care

Travel Assistance is only provided for Children Looked After under s20, S31 or interim arrangements, or Placement Order, and High Needs, Substantial Disability Needs when Travel Assistance is specified in EHC Plan or has access to level 4 overnight short breaks as an assessed need.

For Children in Need, the Section 17 Financial Guidance for Children in Need provides information on the circumstances when travel assistance may be provided **Travel Assistance Request Form**. However social workers are still required to work through the considerations for decision making as outlined under section 2. A taxi will only be provided if all other options are not possible.

If possible payments should always be made directly to the provider.

The list below provides some possible scenarios where travel assistance may be provided under section 17:

- Contact where parents may be separated.
- One parent has been asked by the courts to leave the family home.
- A venue has been selected for assessments that is difficult for the family to travel to.
- Specific arrangements for regular/long term contact has been specified by the courts.
- Transport requirement for a child to go to nursery to prevent a case from escalating
- Respite

If a social worker feels that a taxi is the only option then they should complete the online **Travel Assistance Request Form**.

Please note that where social workers select a taxi as a mode of travel this should only be under exceptional circumstances then the social worker should expect that this will be challenged.

### 4.7 Other scenarios where Travel Assistance may be required

The same principles as outlined in this procedure should also be applied to the following scenarios when considering travel arrangements.

#### 4.7.1 Contact

Arrangements for contact with parents should always be clearly detailed in the Placement Information Record, setting out how contact will take place, the venue, the frequency and how the arrangements will be reviewed and evaluated. This should also include travel and be planned using the same principles as outlined in this procedure. It is expected that the provider/carer will transport the child or young person in the majority of cases.

Contact arrangements will be regularly re-evaluated in relation to both the child's needs and their wishes and feelings. This will take place through the planning and review process and arrangements will change as the child's needs, wishes and feelings in relation to contact change.

If the Contact meeting is taking place on the way home from school and the child or young person is eligible for mainstream home to school transport, and the only option is for transport by taxi then the journey should be split with the same taxi provider so that the second leg of the journey is not being paid for twice.

Even if a young person has been placed into care under section 17 if contact is required, this should be organised following the same principles as outlined in the procedure and charged to the social care budget rather than the section 17 budget.

#### 4.7.2 Parents who require Travel Assistance

On rare occasions travel assistance may be provided to parents to attend meetings etc. and only when all alternatives have been fully explored to assist in accessing and utilising the families existing resources to the best effect. If the social worker believes that there is a case for providing travel assistance to parents then a request should be submitted on the **Travel Assistance Request Form**.

Parents may require cash to purchase petrol.

#### 4.7.3 Respite Care

Respite care may be provided to foster carers and any travel arrangements made regarding the child and young person should be carried out following the same principles as outlined in this procedure. Either the main foster carer makes the travel arrangements or agrees that the respite carer will transport the child or young person.

For respite care provided to parents under s17 then any travel arrangements made regarding the child and young person should be carried out, following the same principles as outlined in this procedure but the cost will be paid from the section 17 budget.

### 4.8 Court

It is vitally important that if the child or young person is due in court that they arrive on time. It is the Carer/Providers responsibility to ensure timeliness of arrival and to make travel arrangements in line with the principles as outlined in this procedure.

On the rare occasion that a child or young person requires secure transport then a request should be made using the **Travel Assistance Request Form**.

The Transport service would help and advice with the commissioning of this service, and it would be paid for out of the Social Care transport budget.

## **5. Review of Travel Assistance arrangements and change of circumstances**

Social workers should regularly review the travel assistance requirements of the child/ young person to ensure that the arrangements that are in place reflect the current circumstances, and needs of the individual.

This should be done through existing review mechanisms, such as the annual care plan or pathway plan review as well as the review of Personal Education Plans. Additionally, the application of this procedure will be monitored when placements are made, tested through contract management arrangements and through quality monitoring visits to external providers.

The Home to Schools Transport Service expect school travel arrangements and other planned journeys to be reviewed 6 monthly with any changing requirements to be submitted by the first week of September and the first week of May each year.

If a child or young person has a change in circumstances then please record using the **Travel Assistance Request Form**.

## **6. Risk Assessment and consideration for the requirement of a Passenger Assistant (PA)**

A risk assessment is an important tool in ensuring the safety of young people being transported and also to protect drivers and passenger assistants. Health and Safety legislation requires risk assessments to be undertaken. The law does not expect us to be able to eliminate all risks, but to protect people as far as 'reasonably practicable'. A risk assessment should be carried out for all travel arrangements for

Children in care, who are over the age of 11 or if a child has complex physical, emotional or behavioural needs, to establish whether a PA is required.

Social workers must consider physical, medical and behavioural needs. Whilst age is also an important consideration this should be assessed in the context of the school route and mode of transport and balance against the child's confidence, maturity and autonomy.

PAs will only be considered where the child or young person has their transport booked for them by the local authority. If carers are unable to accompany children under 11 to walk or cycle to school, then they need consider asking for help from friends and family or other parents from the same school.

Please use the template found at Appendix C to carry out a risk assessment and once completed upload to the relevant casefile.

**The Travel Assistance Request Form** must be completed when making any travel assistance requests.

## **7. Procedures for arranging Travel Assistance**

### **7.1 Planned Journeys**

Please note that all planned journeys will be commissioned using the Adams Dynamic Purchasing System to ensure that the best value for money option is sourced.

#### **7.1.1 Home to School Travel Assistance**

A review should be undertaken annually to ensure that changing circumstances, such as age or change of school are taken into account. This review should be undertaken over April and determined by the first week of May each year.

This 'Planned Journeys' process should only be followed once the following steps have been explored in conjunction with the carer/ provider:

**Step 1** Has the carer/provider worked through the considerations for decision making as outlined in s.2?

**Step 2** If walking and cycling are not an option has the carer/provider checked to see whether the child or young person is eligible for home to school

**Step 3** Is the Carer/Provider able to drive the child or young person or is the child or young person able to travel by bus whichever is the cheapest?

If the social worker is satisfied that the answer is no to all of the questions under steps 1 to 4 then they should submit a request using the **Travel Assistance Request Form**.

Social workers, carers and providers should complete the form with the requirements for their child young person by the first week of May.

Social workers at this stage should also consider whether Passenger Assistance is required, and should carry out a risk assessment following the approach set out in section 6 and should be mindful to the guidance provided under s3.6 as to the types of circumstances when passenger assistance might be required.

Please use the Risk Assessment template found at Appendix C.

#### 7.1.2 Other planned journeys

For any journeys that are being planned 10 days in advance the same process should be followed by completing the **Travel Assistance Request Form**.

#### 7.2. Ad hoc journeys

All other options for travel options should have been considered initially in line with the rest of this procedure for ad hoc journeys.

This should only be for:

- Journeys within the next 10 days
- One off journeys.

Please contact the Localities Business Support Service for Ad hoc requests and Business Support will organise the travel assistance.

#### 7.3 Staff claims process

Social Workers transporting children or young people in their cars must ensure that a **Risk Assessment** is carried out, in liaison with their line managers or a covering manager, before transporting a child or young person.

When completed, both documents should be added to the child or young person's electronic file.

##### 7.3.1 Staff Travel Claims when using their own vehicle

Sometimes a social worker may be required to transport a child or young person in their own car.

Staff should follow the usual travel claims process as outlined on the **LGSS staff intranet**.

### 7.3.2 Car Hire

If a Social Worker does not own their own car then they should hire one from the **ESPO framework**.

A purchase order number will be required to book a hire car. This means that Strategic Manager approval will be required ahead of make a booking.

**8. Appendix A: High Level Flow Diagram of Home to School Travel Assistance Decision Making**

If you would like a copy of this diagram please email the Transport Hub - [NCTtransport@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:NCTtransport@nctrust.co.uk)

## **Appendix B Key Contacts and their role**

### **The Localities Business Support (LBS) Service**

The LBS Service will assist with queries on process and cost centres for request made through the Firm step form for planned journeys. They will also signpost social worker teams to relevant services for specific transport related queries.

The LBS Service should also be contacted directly if an ad hoc journey is required.

Contact emails:

Children in Care North - [childrenincarenorth@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:childrenincarenorth@nctrust.co.uk)

Children in Care West - [childrenincarewest@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:childrenincarewest@nctrust.co.uk)

Safeguarding North (Penrith/WK) - [localitiessafeguardi@childrenfirstnorthamptonshire.co.uk](mailto:localitiessafeguardi@childrenfirstnorthamptonshire.co.uk)

Safeguarding Corby - [grccadmin@childrenfirstnorthamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:grccadmin@childrenfirstnorthamptonshire.gov.uk)

Safeguarding OAS - [centuryhouseadmin@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:centuryhouseadmin@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

Safeguarding Daventry - [daventryadmin@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:daventryadmin@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

DCT - [DCT@childrenfirstnorthamptonshire.co.uk](mailto:DCT@childrenfirstnorthamptonshire.co.uk)

### **External Placements**

For Travel Assistance related to external placements for children and young people in external placements please contact NCT PMS Contracts - [Pmscontacts@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:Pmscontacts@nctrust.co.uk)

### **In house Fostering and Residential**

For Travel Assistance queries for children and young people in internal placements please contact NCT Fostering Duty Team - [Fostering\\_Placement@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:Fostering_Placement@nctrust.co.uk)

**Home to School Transport for Children and Young People with EHC Plans**

For any queries for children/young people with an Education Health and Care plan please contact the Travel Co-ordination Unit - [TCU@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:TCU@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

**Home to School Transport - mainstream**

For mainstream transport queries, contact Home to School Transport - [schooltransport@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:schooltransport@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

## Appendix C Risk Assessment Template for a Passenger Assistant for children

### The Northamptonshire Children's Trust Passenger Assistant Risk Assessment

Once completed upload to the relevant casefile.

A risk assessment should be completed for every Children in Care who is over the age of 11 years old or present with needs or behaviours that may require additional support and supervision during when being transported to school. The risk assessment will allow you to make a decision as to whether a Passenger Assistant is required for the child or young person.

Please note that all children age 11 and under will require a passenger assistant if travelling alone in a taxi.

It is important that prior to school transport being commissioned all other options for the child has been considered. School transport should only be considered and utilised following thorough exploration of other ways for the child to travel to school; i.e. walk, bicycle, car share, carer transport the child etc.

As part of the risk assessment it is important that the authors read and understand the school transport procedure.

The Northamptonshire Children's Trust Travel Assistance Procedure can be found at:

Northamptonshire Children's Services Procedures Manual/Resources/Local Resources/New and Amended Procedures/Travel Assistance Procedure for Children's Social Care

#### Risk Assessment

1. Child is over 11 years

If yes, risk assessment needs to continue.

2. Child presents with some complex physical, medical or behavioural needs, for example aggression to others, absconding, sight or visual impairment.

If yes, risk assessment need to continue.

Activities and Hazards identified	Risk Factor Likelihood / Consequence HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW	Control Measures in Place to manage risk	Additional Measures to be considered to reduce risk
Child/Young Person's needs compromise health and safety of themselves / other passengers / drivers	Detail of the risk factors and who is at risk.	If high, then behavioural contract to be considered and escort to be provided by school transport.	Can the risk factors be reduced by providing additional support - i.e. Carer transporting with child or designated pick up and drop off persons and points etc.
The child or young person presents with a risk of unpredicted risk of physical aggression toward others		What can the carers or drivers put in place to reduce risk.  If high, then escort to be provided.	Where necessary, Drivers and Passenger Assistants are given information regarding behavioural traits and potential triggers for poor behaviour.
The child or young person presents with a risk of absconding from vehicles i.e. Has attempted to do so before		If high risk, then escort to be provided. If medium what measures can be put in place to reduce risk.	What action should the PA do if the young person attempts to abscond from the vehicles. What measures can be implemented to reduce the risk of the young person/child absconding.
The child or young person suffers with ill health or a disability that may require them to seek immediate attention.		If high - does the young person/child always require an escort with them when in the care i.e. When being	What measures/actions should the driver/escort take if the child/young person becomes ill. Ensure appropriate transport and passenger assistant are provided after consideration of handling

Activities and Hazards identified	Risk Factor Likelihood / Consequence HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW	Control Measures in Place to manage risk	Additional Measures to be considered to reduce risk
		transported by their Foster Carer. If no, consider other strategies to manage risk. If yes, escort to be XXX	plan / care plan and / or other relevant information.
<p>Pupil may stumble or fall over when walking to vehicles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• footpaths, kerbs could cause pupil to fall</li> <li>• pupil may have to cross road to board vehicle</li> </ul>		If high or medium, then carer escorts to vehicle. Request school to support child/young person to support on and off vehicle.	No escort or additional support or escort required.
<p>Pupils cannot board / depart vehicle safely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of injury from other vehicles if bus or transport vehicle parks away from school entrance.</li> <li>• Risk of injury if other vehicles are moving whilst vehicles are loading.</li> <li>• Risk of injury if wheelchairs pushed</li> </ul>		<p>Appropriate safe area identified on school grounds or as close to the entrance as possible.</p> <p>Where appropriate, school identifies member of schools-based staff to manage transport operation on a daily basis.</p>	No escort additional control measures required at present.

Activities and Hazards identified	Risk Factor Likelihood / Consequence HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW	Control Measures in Place to manage risk	Additional Measures to be considered to reduce risk
between moving vehicles without drivers seeing them.			
<p>Long journey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk that journey time is too long / stressful for pupils.</li> </ul>		In general, journeys to Northamptonshire should be no longer than 1 hour or reassessment of routings should take place. This is not a trigger for a PA.	Ongoing co-operation with schools essential to identify 'triggers', travel sickness, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child or young person's behaviour can distract driver</li> <li>Risk of road traffic accident due to distraction</li> </ul>		Driver uses techniques to engage with child and avoid being distracted - radio, etc. Can carer(s) accompany young person/child. If high risk PA to be utilised but other ways to accompany child should be considered.	Social worker and carer to explore ways of how to keep the child/young person accompanied.
<p>Risk of young person/child not being able to safely understand where to go when dropped off or picked up. Increasing the risk of the following:</p> <p>Road Traffic Accidents (RTA) leading to minor or major injury.</p>		<p>Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that student is collected from drop-off point at the end of the day.</p> <p>Drivers to take reasonable steps to ensure students are met by an adult where necessary.</p>	<p>Social Worker to ensure that the school and carer are aware of the arrangements and where/time the child/young person is being collected and drop off.</p> <p>PA is not necessary but Social Worker to ensure that school, carers, and transport team are clearly aware of arrangements.</p>

Activities and Hazards identified	Risk Factor Likelihood / Consequence HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW	Control Measures in Place to manage risk	Additional Measures to be considered to reduce risk
Abduction.  Young person absconding.			

## Appendix D

Risk assessment template to transport children in their own vehicles

Once completed upload to the relevant casefile.