

Integrated Transport Unit

Home to School/College Transport Policy Statement

Guidelines for Parents/Carers

October 2019

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

We would ask that you read these guidelines alongside the Council's 'Home to School Transport Policy 5–16 yrs' which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Education/Special-Educational-Needs-and-Disability/Local-Offer/Parent/Transport-and-getting-around/Transport.aspx>

Wigan Council believes whenever possible students should be encouraged to develop independent travel using public transport.

The nature of placements in schools and centres means that transport arrangements have to be flexible. To achieve this, the Council works in partnership with transport operators, parents and carers, schools and students to provide a quality service that prepares students for learning.

The Council provides more than 60,000 taxi and minibus journeys each year for young people who have special educational needs and disabilities. These are monitored and reviewed regularly. Most of the time things run smoothly, but when problems occur Wigan Council will deal with and resolve issues as quickly as possible.

We try to avoid constant changes of taxi/minibus operator but we have to maintain cost-effective standards of service and are required to tender in accordance with procurement regulations. In cases where an operator 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 to ensure that 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 specialised home to school transport.

TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

- Wherever possible, students should be encouraged to travel independently. To find out more information, or to make a referral contact the travel training team on 01942 489 685 or email itu@wigan.gov.uk

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- Assistance may be provided by reimbursement of a parent/carer's mileage expenses at a rate determined by the Council. The decision whether or not to provide these payments will consider factors such as the student's well-being, safety and cost;
- Transport may be provided by minibus or taxi with or without a passenger assistant in the most appropriate and cost effective manner. Where this is not appropriate then a bus or rail pass may be issued;
- 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 bring/take the student to/from the vehicle as passenger assistants are not permitted to leave other students unattended in the vehicle;
- Drivers and passenger assistants are not allowed to lift students in and out of vehicles, although physical support may be given following advice and support from school staff;
- Transport and passenger assistant arrangements are reviewed every year. For some, specialised 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 school, the student and their parent/carer;
- All drivers and passenger assistants are checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for criminal background checks;
- Taxi drivers should always wear their identification badge and passenger assistants should always wear the Council's ID badge which is issued upon application and successful DBS clearance;
- While we try to keep changes to a minimum, routes and vehicles may change at the last minute due to additional passengers;
- Every effort is taken to keep journey times to a minimum. However sometimes the distances travelled to some schools or establishments mean that students have longer journeys. Transport routes are organised to be cost effective and therefore your child/young person may not always travel to school/colleges by the most direct route;
- The timetabling of transport services cannot be arranged to fit in with parents/carers domestic, access, or working arrangements including after school commitments;
- Operators are contracted to only transport students between home and school. They are not permitted to transport students to any alternative address unless previously authorised by the Council;
- With prior agreement by the Council, students can be dropped off at one alternative address if there is no additional cost incurred in doing so;

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- Transport is provided on the basis of one return journey at usual school opening and closing times. It is not the responsibility of the Council to provide separate transport for medical or dental appointments, for external examinations, taster days or to collect students who are ill or where they are excluded from school for any reason; and,
- Drivers and passenger assistants are not allowed to give medication to students, although it may be carried on the vehicle if it is in a sealed container or bag clearly labelled with the students name.

VEHICLES OPERATE TO SCHEDULED TIMES SO IT IS IMPORTANT THAT:

- Your child/young person 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 students and arrival at school/college;
- You inform the Council as early as possible if your child/young person is not attending school for any reason. The Council is liable to meet the full cost of journeys where less than 24 hours notice of cancellation is given;
- You inform the Council if your child/young person is returning to school after an absence;
- A responsible adult is at home when the student is due to be dropped off. Drivers are advised to wait approximately five minutes past the usual arrival time before continuing the journey;
- They will usually then call back after all other passengers have been dropped off. If there is still no one there, the student will be taken to a safe place of care such as a Police Station, in liaison with the Transport office (or duty social worker if out of normal office hours)
- 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 are instructed not to leave passengers unattended or in the care of passenger assistants or unauthorised person(s) unless prior written permission has been given;
- You supply your telephone number as well as an emergency contact number to: the Council's transport office and passenger assistant in order to liaise about changes in arrangements, delays etc.
- You inform the Council's transport office of any changes in your home circumstances, address, telephone number; and,
- You inform the Council transport office of any significant changes to the student's physical, medical needs or emotional behaviour.

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If you have any queries about these guidelines or need more information about special needs school transport please contact

Call 01942 489 685 (7.30am– 5.00pm weekdays).

Or you can write to:
Integrated Transport Unit
Wigan Council
PO Box 100
Wigan
WN1 3DS
Email: itu@wigan.gov.uk