

Torbay Council

TRANSPORT POLICY CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

Version 4

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TRANSPORT FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

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The principals

All children all ages: As far as possible the transport offered to looked after children should be the same as other children. The responsibilities for transporting children to education, medical, family contact, social contact and leisure activities are primarily the responsibility of the child's carers. Differential levels of self reliance and independence of children must be recognized and catered for. The use of taxis should be exception. In all circumstances the child's views and feelings will be taken into account.

For Nursery, Reception and Key Stage 1 – children to stay at the setting that they were at prior to becoming looked after (unless in exceptional circumstances). The child should go to the school that is local (as far as possible) to their placement unless the placement is short term or until a permanency plan is implemented. As a matter of principle, we would expect carers to make their own arrangements to get the children to school. Young looked after children should not be transported on a daily basis in taxis.

For Key Stage 2 – the presumption is that children stay at the setting that they were at prior to becoming looked after (unless in exceptional circumstances) Changes to a school place will only be considered in the child's best interests at the point at which the permanency plan is due to be implemented or where the distance travelled is excessive.

For Key Stage 3 – The first choice would be that children and young people will walk, use public transport or the carer will ensure they get to school. If that is not viable, if the placement is short term (until a permanency plan is implemented), then using a taxi may be justified, or, if the child/young person needs transport providing to ensure their attendance. However, this decision needs to be reviewed on a termly basis and consideration given before the summer term to whether a change of school be made for the following year.

For Key Stage 4 – The first preference should be that the young person takes themselves to school by public transport. Any change of school should be minimized during Key Stage 4 and therefore there is a stronger presumption against any change of school. The child's educational placement must be reviewed during the summer term of Year 9 and this review must include a review of arrangements of getting to school.

A parent or carers access to home to school transport under Torbay's Home to School and College Transport Policy are not affected or altered by this policy.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Torbay Council (TC) carers have a duty to provide transport to meet the needs of all Children and Young People under their care.

1.2 This policy details the transport procedures for Children Looked after (CLA) including those under Foster Care and Residential care.

1.3 This policy has been developed to ensure the safe and efficient provision of transport for CLA between home, school, leisure and contact.

1.4 This policy has been developed within the Education Act 2006 and identifies the Local Authority's (LA) duties in relation to sustainable school travel and the assessing of school travel arrangements for all children and young people this states that:-

"The statutory walking distance is 2 miles for children aged under 8 years and 3 miles for children aged 8 years and over. The duties of the Local Authority include assessing travel and transport needs of children and young people and promoting sustainable travel. This in turn may improve the physical well being of those using them, environmental benefits, ensure the child's needs are met and promote independence". www.DCSF.gov.uk

2. Conditions for providing transport

2.1 Children and young people can become looked after for a number of reasons. As a Corporate Parent, the Torbay Council has a responsibility to meet the care and development needs of its children. As with other children, CLA can require transport for a variety of reasons, this including: education, medical, family contact, social contact and leisure activities.

2.2 It is important that in meeting these needs, CLA are (as much as possible) provided for in the same way as other children and that differential levels of self reliance and independence are recognized and catered for.

2.4 Where possible the disruption of schooling due to changes in care placements, should be avoided. Where necessary, this should be timed to take place when less disruptive to schooling (unless an emergency placement is required i.e. Child Protection).

2.5 Transport provided by the carer may be needed to facilitate continuity of schooling from a new care placement until an appropriate school transfer point is reached. Education stability is crucial and therefore the child should (where possible) continue their education in their current school.

2.6 In the same way, it is essential that a child or young person in care should be provided with transport to enable them to have contact, with their birth families, at a frequency usually set by the court.

3. Who funds the transport for CLA

3.1 The ways in which the transport needs of CLA are met and funded varies according to the type of placement being provided. This includes:

3.2 Independent placements – It is expected that some transport needs of CLA placed with independent providers (residential and fostering) will be met by the provider and funded in accordance with placement contract. Some transport will be provided by individual providers in accordance with individual contracts. This will vary according to the individual contract in place. Providers who are successfully included within the Peninsular Framework Agreement, are required to meet the education, medical, family contact, social contact and leisure activities transport needs for the child/young person up to a 200 miles per week. They are also required to provide transport for child/young people travelling to and from college, training, and apprenticeships and or to work for older children. Any additional mileage must be agreed by the provider and TC and charged at the Council's prevailing rate.

3.3 In house foster placements – the foster carer is expected to take responsibility for providing the transport for a foster child/CLA where possible. Where the total weekly transport needs per child are greater than 200 miles per week, the cost of travel may be claimed through the Fostering Service. The claim will have to comply with TC transport and expenses policy and will be subject to audit. It is expected that the carer will transport the child to school. The foster child will benefit from the presence and support of his/her foster carer on the journey.

3.4 Transport should be reviewed at the CLA review as part of the care plan.

4. Exceptions to funding for Transport

4.1 Torbay Council's Children's Social Care department has access to transport services that arrange minibus/taxi for CLA.

4.2 Requests for transport through the transport service and not the carer or provider are requested at the discretion of Executive Head for Safeguarding and Wellbeing or the relevant Service Manager. The request must be based on an assessment of need. Transport arrangements made under this section of the policy must be considered to be temporary and will need to be reviewed within 3 months by the Practice Manager. The presumption is that both in house and independent sector carers will provide or arrange for the transport of the children in their care.

4.3 If emergency transport is required, a relevant Service Manager may authorize transport. Any emergency arrangements will be considered as temporary and will be reviewed within a week

If you are making a request for transport to be provided for a child via the local authority then please use the service planning module on Paris.

5. Where transport needs are recorded

5.1 An Individual Placement Agreement must address the placement arrangements of the child i.e. long or short term placements, travel arrangements, educational and health issues and any special needs is required to take place in advance of the placement, where possible. All agreements from this meeting are recorded within the Child's Plan, Individual Placement Agreement and Permanency plan.

6. Transport expectations on Fostering Carers

6.1 Foster Carers will normally be expected to undertake 'normal' parental duties, which will include taking a child to school, access to leisure activities and contact.

6.2 Foster Carers are expected to meet the cost of any journeys, including arrangements for children to attend school.

6.3 Foster Carers are expected to meet the costs of local travel by car from their weekly allowances which includes a proportion for transport. Payment of mileage claims will be considered by the Fostering Service Team Manager, where the child is taken to a school or contact more than 200 miles over a week.

6.4 Prospective foster carers should always confirm that they can safely provide sufficient space and safety equipment in line with transport law in their existing vehicle (s) for the number of foster children they offer to provide care for.

6.5 There may be practical reasons why it is not possible for the foster carer to provide transport for the child, foster carer does not drive or does not have access to a car, or they may have foster children from different families. However, every effort should be made to ensure carers do provide the transport so that foster children do not feel different e.g. by arriving to school by taxi.

6.7 Carers are expected to meet the cost of any local journeys within the weekly distance quota of 200 miles per week including arrangements for children to attend school. Where this is not possible arrangements around travel to school (e.g. for children not attending local schools) must be made individually in the child's Individual Placement Agreement and still fall within the weekly travel quota.

6.8 All carer's availability to provide transport for CLA will be recorded on PARIS and kept up to date via the annual Foster carers Review.

7. Transport for Contact Arrangements

7.1 Arrangements for contact are facilitated by the child's social worker.

7.2 Contact at a foster carer's home, will be encouraged by Torbay Council, where it is

safe enough to do so. This will mean less reliance on transport arrangements and children being escorted around.

7.3 Older children/young people may choose to transport themselves to contact if able and appropriate to do so.

8. Emergency Transport

8.1 Following agreement by the Services Manager, a transport request form (see appendix) signed by the Services Manager is faxed / emailed to the Transport Services. This also applies to transport in emergency situations. All emergency claims will be reviewed within 7 working days at Placement Planning Meetings.

8.2 The Transport Service will confirm transport arrangement with 24 hours and then provide an estimate of the costs via email to the team Administrator within 3 working days. If the cost is not reasonable it will be referred to the relevant Service Manager and Administrator for discussion and decision.

9. Accountability and review process for additional transport costs

9.1 The Executive Head and relevant Service Managers within Children's Services hold the responsibility and accountability for the budget. The Finance Team will be responsible for providing financial information and review of the budget. The Permanency Panel will take the following principles into account when reviewing transport requests and when making any recommendations.

- Journeys are reasonable, based on assessment of the child's individual needs.
- The cost of journeys is reasonable; this is dependent on information provided from the child's record.
- An end date must be specified or CLA review date.
- No transport will be provided for children where the end of review date is not set.
- Full and accurate information is given at the time of the request on the approved form, as attached in the appendix.

9.2 The Permanency Panel will review all additional spend on transport.

10. Resolving Disputes

10.1 Responsibility for the funding and provision of all transport rests with the carer unless it is agreed as an exception by the Service Manager. In cases where this is disputed the carer or young person has recourse to Torbay Council's complaints procedure.