

Transport

Date: 15/07/2020

Fair Access and Public Transport

Introduction

This transport section aims to:

- inform you about the work we are doing
- identify where our plans will impact on your provision
- identify actions you will need to take and
- outline the areas where we can work together

KCC's retains responsibility to manage how eligible learners will be supported in accessing school in September and will also be required to consider what contingencies may be required for those pupils who make use of one of our discretionary transport schemes (Kent Travel Saver and Kent 16+ Travel saver), as these make use of the public bus network and Government guidance remains for students to avoid using this at peak times where possible.

While only roughly 15% of Kent pupils receive support from KCC to access their place of learning, it is important that schools have an understanding of what transport support might be provided and what limitations are likely to be present in the model as a result of the continuing Government restrictions.

Coverage

The following will give you information about:

- the free and subsidised transport that will be provided from Autumn term
- what schools may need to consider when making plans that include children who make use of it.
- how schools will be included in processes to develop these plans as more students are expected to return to school.

Contact

Provision of school transport is managed by different services within KCC, so it is imperative that you direct your query to the correct department to ensure they can be addressed as quickly and efficiently as possible.

- Transport Eligibility – Queries related to a child's eligibility for free school transport and requests for changes to free transport offerings (eg change of address/school, different vehicle, Passenger Assistant requests etc) should be directed to HomeSchoolTransport@kent.gov.uk
- Public Transport – Incidents or issues that occur within transport for mainstream students should be directed to MainstreamSchoolsTransport@kent.gov.uk
- Client Transport – Incidents or issues that occur within transport for SEN students should be directed to ClientTransport@kent.gov.uk
- Kent Travel Saver or Kent 16+ Travel Saver queries should be directed to KCCTravelSaver@kent.gov.uk

Main Transport issues schools will need to consider

While school transport is identified within the recent guidance from Government as a major consideration in the plan to return to school in September, we continue to await clarity on a number of key areas and promised transport specific guidance is still outstanding. While final plans will not be possible until this guidance is released, schools should be aware that Government intend to make a distinction between dedicated school transport and wider public transport:

- dedicated school transport refers to services that are used only to carry pupils to school or college. This includes statutory home to school transport, but may also include some existing or new commercial travel routes, where they carry pupils or students only
- public transport services refers to routes which are also used by the general public

Pupils on dedicated school services do not mix with the general public on school journeys and tend to be consistent each day. This means that the advice for passengers on public transport to adopt a social distance of 2 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***.

Social distancing requirements will remain for students who make use of public transport. Government continues to instruct that the use of the public transport should be kept to a minimum and for schools to continue to advise parents to find alternative means to get their child to school wherever possible. Unfortunately, the majority of Kent students who are eligible for free school transport are provided a bus or train pass which utilise public transport services. Users of the Kent Travel Saver and Kent 16+ Travel Saver will be similarly affected by national guidance to avoid public transport. While 'one metre plus' will provide some additional capacity for those learners who are unable to get to school via alternative means, this will still only equate to an increase from 20 available seats to 32 on a 90-seater double decker bus, when compared to 2m social distancing. KCC is therefore working with transport providers to see what solutions are possible to fill this gap, however, this is proving challenging while guidance from Government is still outstanding and is the primary reason why more detailed plans are not yet available. Officers are investigating whether public transport that mainly supports pupils can be ring-fenced so that it can be re-categorised as dedicated transport and what alternative capacity can be brought online to support the remaining eligible cohort.

While school specific plans will be finalised in line with the processes detailed further in this guide, schools should consider the following when making their own plans to reopen:

- Schools have been [advised by central Government](#) to encourage parents where possible to walk or cycle to school and avoid public transport at peak times.
- While government guidance has advised local authorities to ask schools to survey parents to ascertain their intentions for transport for the new school year, Public Transport are confident that they can secure this information directly from parents of eligible pupils and users of Kent Travel Saver and Kent 16+ Travel Saver. While this means that schools will not be required to complete additional surveying tasks on KCC's behalf, if you are aware of local themes from your wider conversations with parent groups, please pass these on to Public Transport directly.
- You should remind learners and staff that it is the law that they must wear a face covering when travelling in England on a public bus, coach, train, tram, or other forms of public transport, as per the [safer travel guidance for passengers](#). This external guidance includes exceptions where face coverings are not required.

- Transport providers have been issued guidance to ensure drivers and support staff make appropriate use of face coverings and implement cleaning regimes for their vehicles.
- Schools should advise students to make use of hand sanitiser or wash their hands upon boarding and/or disembarking vehicles.
- Where vehicles collect students from within a school grounds, or nearby, consideration should be given to ensure organised queuing and boarding where possible.
- Parents may decide to drive their child to school where they have not done so in the past. Schools should consider what adjustments may be required to account for this additional traffic on and around the school site.
- The same Government guidance advises schools to consider the introduction of staggered drop-off and collection times. Schools should consider which children receive free school transport when making these plans, as they have less control over when they can arrive or leave school.
- Where local transport arrangements can allow for additional runs to be provided to support staggered entry into school, it is unlikely that these will be more frequently than every 60-90 mins, which will have an additional impact on school planning.
- Government guidance makes clear that school bubbles are only necessary on dedicated transport “where possible”. It is highly unlikely that this will be practicable due to the limited vehicle resources that will be available and the wider constraints on how pupils will be expected to travel.
- Schools should consider what they will do if a child who receives free school transport exhibits Covid-19 style symptoms during the school day:
 - In the first instance, schools could seek to organise for the child’s parent to collect them from school.
 - If this is not possible, schools could contact HomeSchoolTransport@kent.gov.uk for further advice.
 - These children should not be allowed to enter free school transport vehicles without prior consent from KCC.
- Significant organisational changes will be required to reimplement transport, which means that a number of students are likely to be provided different drivers, support staff or vehicles than they are used to. This will prove challenging for pupils who require consistency as a result of their additional needs. There may also be some delay while additional capacity is identified for eligible learners. KCC will seek to keep these limitations to a minimum.
- Where schools have the option to manage capacity on different sites, it is imperative that consideration is given to any implication on each child’s eligibility for free school transport. A change of school site would require children must be reassessed for eligibility before transport can be provided, and there is no guarantee that they will remain eligible if the new school site is within distance guidelines or where it affects whether the school can still be considered the child’s nearest appropriate school for transport purposes. Where a child remains eligible, it may not be possible to simply re-direct vehicles, which would require a new tendering processes to be applied.
- If it is not possible for learners, particularly vulnerable learners, to attend due to public transport routes being limited or closed, you should contact KCC (contact details above) to discuss what alternative transport arrangements might be put in place.
- Although provision of transport for post-16 learners is not a statutory duty for local authorities, KCC will continue to provide transport to those students, particularly those with SEN or disabilities, who have been assessed as suitable. As a result of Government guidance, Independent Travel Training will be postponed until public transport restrictions are sufficiently relaxed. Pupils who are suitable for travel training will be temporarily provided transport in dedicated school vehicles until training can be initiated.

- Operators will be monitoring demand for services from the start of the school year and will adjust schedules where necessary.
- KCC will also be monitoring need for services.
- Schools may also have their own wider transport issues to be considered that are not affected by the free or subsidised transport provided by KCC. These include:
 - transport to alternative school sites/satellites during the day
 - transport to alternative provision where the child remains on the school role
 - schools with their own independent transport offering
 - schools may wish to consider [this Government guidance](#) when discussing these issues

Further development of Transport plans

KCC will do its utmost to ensure as many eligible pupils as possible are provided free school transport for the new school year.

Special schools

Free school transport plans for Special schools will be designed on a school by school basis, via close co-ordination between the establishment, the Transport Eligibility Team and Client Transport. As the majority of Special school students that receive free school transport are assigned to private hire vehicles, there is potential for greater flexibility when finalising these individual transport plans, although local capacity will dictate what is ultimately available. Schools should contact client.transport@kent.gov.uk directly to discuss their transport plans.

Mainstream Primary/Infant/Junior Schools

Free school transport for most Primary-aged pupils is provided via dedicated private hire vehicles. This will increase the potential for more flexible models to be developed for these students, although as vehicles may serve more than one school, some area-based limitations are likely to apply.

As further guidance is received from Central Government, school specific transport plans can be finalised. Area Education Officers will work on a locality basis to connect schools to colleagues within Public Transport to develop transport plans. Discussions will also be conducted where schools are a part of local transport groups. As local transport provision will vary greatly in one area of a Kent to another, these discussions will include details of how transport was provided before the lockdown and details of limitations that may impact what transport arrangements are possible. We appreciate the urgency for clear information on this area of your return to school planning and are making every effort to provide this to you as quickly as possible.

Mainstream Secondary Schools

Free school transport for a small number of Secondary-aged pupils is provided via private hire vehicles. This will increase the potential for more flexible models to be developed for these students, although as vehicles will often serve more than one school, some area-based limitations are likely to apply.

Mainstream Secondary-aged pupils usually predominantly travel via the public bus network, which runs contrary to current Government guidance. As further guidance is received from Central Government, school specific transport plans can be finalised. Area Education Officers will work on a locality basis to connect schools to colleagues within Public Transport to develop transport plans. Discussions will also be conducted where schools are a part of local transport groups. As local transport provision will vary greatly in one area of a Kent to another, these discussions will include

details of how transport was provided before the lockdown and details of limitations that may impact what transport arrangements are possible. We appreciate the urgency for clear information on this area of your return to school planning and are making every effort to provide this to you as quickly as possible.

3.5. Links to guidance

Mainstream school guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

Special school guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>

Passenger Guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>