

Home to School and Post 16 Transport Position Briefing Note

Background and Context

Provision is delivered in accordance with the Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy, published in October 2020, for implementation from September 2021. Please refer to **Appendix 1** for more information.

Home to School Transport

The Council currently operates home to school transport provision for both mainstream pupils, and pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) attending special schools and resource bases, via contracted providers. There are currently 31 providers contracted to deliver home school transport for 1,467 pupils, across 92 established routes. The provision of home to school transport changes on a weekly basis in line with demand and new applicants.

Post 16 Transport

Post 16 mainstream transport is delivered via a travel grant, which is used to procure season tickets for eligible students, of which there are 750. In terms of provision for students with ALN, there are 2 contracted vehicles which convey students to the Coleg Gwent ALN Resource Base. There is also 1 contract for which conveys students to the Priory based at Torfaen Learning Zone. The provision of post 16 transport changes on a weekly basis in line with demand and new applicants.

Procurement Processes

All Home to School and Post 16 ALN contracts are procured via a competitive tendering exercise using the home to school transport Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), which is carried out via the E-Tender Wales procurement portal. The Council operates a dynamic purchasing system, which allows us to add new suppliers to our approved provider list, as and when new companies apply. Therefore, we do not close down the market. This enables us to react to address demand, along with resilience-based issues.

The Council is presently in year 6 of the contract period for all contracts with the exception of Pen y Cwm Special School contracts, which were re-tendered in the summer-term for commencement in September 2021. For those contracts in their sixth year, there is a 2 year/24-month extension period which can be utilised as required. Therefore, we plan to undertake contract renewal within the next 12 to 24 months (with the exception of Pen y Cwm Special School).

Current Position and Issues

Presently, there are a limited number of transport providers with sufficient capacity to accommodate home to school and post 16 transport, requests for which are on the increase. The Council are exploring options to increase resilience, including the introduction of fleet vehicles, along with the exploration of partnership opportunities with neighbouring authorities.

There are a number of factors, which have affected the provision of transport over the course of the last 24 months as follows:

- **COVID-19 Pandemic**

The pandemic has resulted in workforce resilience issue due to self-isolation periods etc. This has been managed via cover arrangements which have been established by the providers in line with the contract, and/or by increasing contracted provision in the short-term using alternative contractors to cover

additional routes over and above their contract. In addition, during the initial stages of the pandemic when the schools were closed, the Council initiated a retainer payment (which equated to 75% of their daily rate, in accordance with Welsh Government guidance), in order to sustain contracts and providers throughout the closure period. Therefore, no contracts were lost as a result of financial loss.

- **Brexit**

This has resulted in national shortages within the transport provider workforce i.e. drivers. A number of drivers have sought to seek alternative and better paid full-time employment, with companies seeking to employ HGV drivers. This has resulted in short-term shortages within the workforce, along with operators handing contracts in, as they are no longer able to fulfil the associated requirements. This has been managed by the Council securing alternative providers, meaning that all contracts are currently able to be fulfilled. However, as a result, there has been a reduction in resilience.

- **Strike Action**

Industrial action has taken place among the provider workforce, due to inequity relating to salaries. This has further impacted upon the resilience within the contracted provision. However, we have managed to address the short-term cover via existing operators. Due to the fact that these providers are already contracted to deliver home to school and/or post 16 transport, this has impacted upon conveyance, due to the fact that the additional routes have to be undertaken following completion of their primary contracted routes.

- **Industrial Action Status Update**

The strike action affects 2 schools, with 4 buses covering 4 designated routes, as detailed below:

- **Abertillery Learning Community**, for which we have 3 buses covering the following routes/areas:
 - Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Blaina areas (between 50 - 60 pupils)
 - Nantyglo and Blaina areas (between 40 - 50 pupils)
 - Sofrydd and Llanhilleth areas (between 50 - 60 pupils)
- **Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw**, for which we have 1 bus covering the following route/areas:
 - Blaina, Abertillery and Sofrydd areas (between 40 – 50 pupils)

The Head of Operations at Stagecoach wrote to the Council on 4.11.21, to confirm that there is **no** strike action planned for **Wednesday 10th & Thursday 11th November 2021**. As a result, all services - inclusive of school contracts, are expected to operate as normal on the aforementioned days, along with the following **Monday & Tuesday (15th and 16th November 2021)**.

We have, however, been notified that 7 weeks of all-out action is then scheduled to commence on **Wednesday 17th November 2021**. Assuming no resolution can be found in the meantime, we will seek to

secure alternative providers to undertake the required routes for the remainder of the industrial action period. However, should we be in a position whereby the only option available to us, is to retain the existing cover arrangements, school start and finish times for these pupils will be affected i.e. later than the commencement and conclusion of the school day. This is due to the fact that existing providers will be completing these routes in addition to their existing contract arrangements.

- **Provider Sustainability**

At present, there is an aging workforce in terms of both drivers and escorts, who are willing to take on part-time work. However, in the long-term there are likely to be further capacity issues as operators struggle to replace their aging workforce to cover contracted provision. Transport providers are also competing with demand from within the Social Care Sector, who are seeking to recruit a flexible workforce that are willing to take on part-time work, which many of the drivers and escorts can transition easily into. Therefore, market forces come into play.

These sustainability issues have resulted in providers decreasing their contract and fleet capacity, which further reduces the resilience within the transport sector. This has been managed in line with the terms and conditions which require established reserves to be in place, in order to for them to continue to fulfil their contracts.

Future Plans

Currently, the Council are able to meet demand. However, there are concerns that resilience and sustainability will decrease in the medium to long-term, aligned to the national and local issues detailed above. As a result, the Council are seeking to diversify provision. Community Services, Commercial Services and Education are in the process of detailed investigations, in order to identify options, which seek to improve both resilience and capacity in the medium to long-term. A report will be brought forward in the early part of the spring-term, detailing these options and associated implications.

Appendix 1 – Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy

Home to School & Post 16 Transport Policy 2021/22

**Reviewed: August 2020
Adopted: September 2020**

Should you have any queries relating to this policy please contact:

**Education Transformation Team
Anvil Court
Abertillery
NP13 1DB**

Email: 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Telephone Number: 01495 357704 / 01495 35470

Should you have any queries relating to the provision of your child's transport or require support in making an application please contact:

**Transport Team
Civic Centre
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6XB**

Email: hometoschooltransport@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Telephone Number: 01495 311556

Blaenau Gwent has introduced an on-line application system for parents to apply for Home to School or Post 16 transport for their child(ren). Please visit the link below via the webpage:

<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/resident/schools-learning/school-transport/>

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1.0 Introduction

This policy document has been produced by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in compliance with the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure, 2008.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that relevant information around home-to-school and post 16 transport arrangements is available to parents/ carers, pupils and partners. The Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The Council has developed a code of practice, to support safe travel arrangements. The code of practice forms part of the application process and ensures that both learners and operators are aware of the expectations upon them, whilst accessing/ providing transport.

2.0 Background

The Council has a duty to provide transport in accordance with Learner Travel (Wales) Measure, 2008.

The distance by which entitlement to transport is calculated is defined as the walking distance of the shortest available route, that is deemed to be safe. Route designation is carried out in accordance with the risk assessment procedure as detailed in the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance (2014).

Under section 32 of the Education Act 2002 (which was amended by section 21 of the Measure), Councils have the power to change school session times, **if the change is considered necessary or expedient to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel, or to make travel arrangements more effective or efficient.**

3.0 Who Qualifies: The Main Criteria

Blaenau Gwent Council will provide free transport for children attending their nearest suitable school, where the distance from home to school is over the specified walking distance detailed below:

- more than 1.5 miles from home for children aged under 8 years but of statutory school age; and,
- more than 2 miles from home for children aged 8 years and over.

Distances are measured by using the Council's Digital Information Mapping System, to determine the shortest available safe walking route between the home address and the main gate of the school to be attended.

Parents are able to choose an English-medium, Welsh-medium or a denominational school for their child. The child will qualify for home to school transport to the appropriate catchment area of the school. When the catchment area school is full and unable to admit a pupil, free transport will be provided to the next nearest available school that has room to take the child, as long as the home is 1.5 miles or

more away from the school for pupils under the age of 8 years, or 2 miles for pupils aged 8 and over.

The provision of free school transport will be arranged to coincide with the start and end of the normal school day and shall be provided during the school term time. Home to School transport is not provided for breakfast clubs, after school clubs or summer schools.

Transport will be provided from pick-up points at approved bus stops on the nearest public transport route to the learner's home, where possible.

*All awarded transport will be reviewed periodically in line with changes to circumstances relating to the pupil(s) transport requirements.

4.0 Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

The Council believes and promotes independence for all learners. This encourages independent living as well as health and well-being.

The Council will provide transport assistance for pupils with ALN:

- if existing transport arrangements are deemed unsuitable in line with the needs of the learner, alternative arrangements will be determined by the Inclusion Service;
- if it is not appropriate for the pupil to walk to school due to the nature of their additional learning need and/or disability; and/or,
- if it is determined by ALN Panel that there is no appropriate education provision within the County Borough suitable to meet pupil need.

*The above arrangements will be subject to review in line with changes to circumstances relating to the pupil(s) transport requirements.

4.1 Residential School Placements not in the County Borough

Pupils with complex additional learning needs may require residential school placements. When considering placement, the cost of transport will be taken into account.

Transport can be provided on the following basis:

- Weekly or fortnightly boarding – transport for the pupil to return home weekly or fortnightly during term time.
- 38-week termly boarding – transport at the beginning and end of each half term and one additional return journey per half term.
- 51/52 week residential placements – one return journey per term.

Transport will be decided on a case by case basis in line with Blaenau Gwent policy.

If parents choose a school other than the school named by the Council's ALN Panel, it is the parent/carers responsibility to secure transport arrangements for their child and cover the associated costs.

4.2 Requests for Transport: ALN Provision

Pupils requiring ALN transport who live more than 1.5 miles (for those under 8 years of age) or more than 2 miles (for those aged between 8-16 years of age) from their nearest agreed ALN provision, will automatically qualify for free home to school transport.

*Please note in instances where the school is a parental choice and not the provision determined by the ALN Panel, no transport will be provided.

The Council has established a process in order to assess the travel needs of children who may require ALN transport, as follows:

- All requests to ALN Panel for consideration of change of placement will firstly be considered by the Transport team to determine their eligibility for transport on distance grounds.
- The Council's ALN Panel will then consider the request for change of placement, and if agreed, determine the appropriate placement and identify if transport is required to access the agreed placement.
- If it is identified that transport is required, a Pupil Transport Request Form will be completed by the ALN team. The form will be returned to the Transport Officer within 5 working days of the Panel meeting taking place. The Transport Officer will then make the necessary arrangements and complete a journey risk assessment.
- Individual pupil risk assessment forms will only be completed if requested by a parent/carer, or if the pupil has needs that warrant completion of a form such as profound and multiple learning difficulties. The ALN team will coordinate completion of the form. The form will identify the pupils transport needs and the type of transport required.
- The Transport Team require 15 school days upon receipt of the Pupil Transport Request Form, in order to arrange transport.

Where transport has been agreed, the Transport Officer will contact the parent and inform them of the arrangements. In cases where transport requests are refused, parents/carers will receive notification from the ALN team, also indicating their right of appeal.

5.0 Transportation of Children Looked After (CLA)

Children's Services will determine if it is considered appropriate for a child looked after (CLA) to attend a school other than the nearest suitable school to their residence, due to:

- the need to maintain continuity in education; and,
- or maintain contact with siblings and friends.

Transport for children who are looked after will be funded and coordinated by Children's Services with the exception of those cases, whereby placement is agreed by Education with a clear rationale, based on the educational needs of the pupil.

Requests for transport for CLA with ALN will be co-ordinated by the CLA Education Coordinator; however, where placement requests are agreed by the ALN Panel based on meeting the pupils needs, these requests will be funded by Education and administered by the Transport Officer in accordance with the Belongings Regulations. The transport application will be made by the CLA Education Coordinator along with a completed pro-forma which will be submitted to the Transport Officer and copied to the ALN team, detailing the associated requirements.

In cases where children looked after reside and are educated outside of Blaenau Gwent; transport arrangements will be the responsibility of the Local Authority within which the pupil resides.

Transport is not routinely provided in circumstances where a child or children looked after are in respite accommodation. If it is possible for existing school transport to accommodate the pupil(s) to and from the respite provision without delay or deviation from the route, this can be considered, subject to regular review. Requests must be made to the Transport Officer in advance (where appropriate) and not drivers/escorts/operators directly.

6.0 How to Apply for Home to School Transport

Application forms for transport assistance can be obtained via the following one of two methods:

- You can apply online by accessing the Blaenau Gwent Website: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk and selecting "My Services" register, Schools and Learning and completing the Home to School or Post 16 transport application form.
- If you do not have internet access, then you can still apply by contacting the Councils Contact Centre on 01495 311556 who will complete an application form on your behalf over the telephone.

The Council aims to process all applications received within 10 school days, unless specialist provision is required which may exceed the 10 days' dependent on the pupil's need.

7.0 Discretionary Welsh- medium Nursery Transport

In line with the Council's desire to promote access to Welsh-medium education, provided that there is capacity within the current transport arrangements, the Council will offer free transport for nursery pupils who reside over 1.5 miles from their home address to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg.

This discretionary nursery provision may be withdrawn on the basis that it reduces availability of transport places for statutory aged learners.

8.0 Transport Considerations

8.1 Change of Address - Transport Arrangements

Pupils studying for their GCSE exams in years 10 or 11 who change address after the autumn half-term in year 10 will be entitled to free school transport - **usually a bus pass, the Council does not have a duty to provide a separate taxi**; providing that the new address is **over 2 miles walking distance** from their current school. Transport can also be provided on an existing contract. The entitlement to free transport is provided in this instance, if the pupil attended their catchment area school prior to the move. It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that the pupil is able to access the designated pickup and drop off points if using existing transport, and the pupil is able to access designated bus stops for season ticket holders.

8.2 Schools with Multiple Campuses/Sites

For multi-site/campus schools, if the campus nearest to the pupil's home is unable to offer a place and an alternative campus or site is offered which is over the distance criteria, then free home to school transport will be provided.

8.3 Permanently Excluded & Managed Move Pupils

If a child has been permanently excluded from school, the Council will provide a bus pass as necessary. This will only be applicable in cases when the pupil enrolls at another mainstream provision in Blaenau Gwent.

Where a pupil has moved schools as part of the managed move process, bus passes will be provided to enable the child to attend the new school. This will not apply to pupils where parents have elected to change schools.

8.4 Before & After School Activities

If a pupil attends breakfast club or after school activity/club, then it becomes the responsibility of the parent/carer to transport their children to and from activities outside of the normal the school day.

8.5 School Trips

On occasions when school trips fall outside the normal school day, pupils in receipt of free home to school transport will need to be collected from the school as per the arrangements in 8.4 above.

8.6 Escorts

All drivers of home to school transport provision and accompanying escorts are required to have enhanced Disclosure Barring Scheme (DBS) checks. The Council may provide more than one escort on transport should the need arise to do so. All arrangements will be reviewed on a regular basis.

The transport provider may change throughout the time a pupil receives Council transport – meaning that drivers and escorts may change; however, where possible, continuity of drivers and escorts will be provided by contracted providers of transport.

8.7 Travel Assistance Reimbursement

Fuel expenses can be claimed in circumstances where appropriate transport cannot be provided, and the need of the pupil is such that the parent/carer may be required to transport their child. This will be assessed via the ALN team in partnership with the Transport Officer and agreed in writing in advance of finalising arrangements.

8.8 Pupils on Exchange Visits

The Council does not provide transport assistance to pupils on exchange visits.

8.9 Pupil Attendance

In circumstances where a pupil is in receipt of free home to school transport and is not attending school regularly, the Council can withdraw the travel offer. This will be determined on a case by case basis. Parents/carers of those found to be in breach of the travel offer due to attendance issues; will resume responsibility for ensuring the travel arrangements of pupils to and from school. This process will be overseen by the Education Welfare Service.

8.10 Preferred Schools/Parental Choice

Parents/carers who choose a school other than the nearest suitable catchment school are responsible for getting their child to and from the school throughout the time that their child attends the school. This is also applicable for pupils with additional learning needs; please refer to section 4.3 for more information.

8.11 Pupils Under 16 years Attending Vocational Training Provision

Blaenau Gwent Council does not provide transport for pupils of compulsory school age attending training provision.

8.12 Dual Residency

Where parents have shared responsibility for a child and the child is permanently resident at more than one address, the Council will provide transport from both addresses, as long as they are both in the catchment area for the school concerned and are located over the required qualifying walking distance.

8.13 Rural Areas/Transport Links

Where appropriate, the Council will use its discretion in determining whether or not a taxi link will need to be provided to an existing bus service for those pupils living in rural locations.

8.14 Temporary Medical Conditions

The Council understands that in some circumstances the health of a mainstream pupil may restrict use of mainstream transport, due to a temporary medical condition. In these instances, individual assessments will be undertaken in assessing pupil need and risk.

If an ALN pupil has a temporary medical condition, transport may be provided on request from the ALN team. Transport arrangements provided on medical grounds will be reviewed regularly.

Requests for long-term transport due to a medical condition must be made to the Council's ALN team and accompanied by a letter from the pupil's consultant. The request must outline the pupil's medical condition and health risks encountered should they be required to walk to and from school.

The Council will not accept requests directly from GPs.

8.15 School Organisation Proposals

The Council will provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age, where the closure of a school results in a learner being transferred to another school. Learners already on the register of the closed school will be provided with free transport to the new catchment school or the nearest school, subject to meeting the policy's distance criteria - until the learner finishes education at that school. If the learner leaves this school, entitlement to this discretionary provision will end.

9.0 Post 16 Travel

9.1 Transport Entitlement

All students living in Blaenau Gwent will be provided with a discounted bus ticket or travel grant to the Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone, Ebbw Vale Campus as their designated Post 16 provider; or, the nearest institution where their course is available depending on the following criteria:

- students must be between the ages of 16 to 19 (under 19 prior to the 1st September of the commencement of their course) to qualify;
- students shall reside in the County Borough of Blaenau Gwent;
- students must reside 2 miles or over (nearest walking distance) from their nearest college campus; and, the students should attend a full time course which requires attendance of 16 or more hours per week or a minimum 4 days' attendance per week at the institution.

Students and pupils aged 19 or over at the commencement of the course are not eligible for travel assistance from the Council and in these circumstances they are advised to contact their respective college for details of any available transport provision.

All transport for Post 16 pupils including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), is agreed on a case by case basis by the ALN team in consultation with the Transport Officer. The Council may provide transport up to a maximum of three years.

9.2 Travel Grant

The Council's present policy is to provide travel assistance to those who meet the criteria up to a maximum of £150 per academic session. This will be paid termly as follows: £50 autumn, £50 spring and £50 summer.

9.3 Welsh Medium/Faith Education

Pupils who wish to undertake their Post 16 studies via the medium of Welsh or attend a Faith school are required to travel further distances for their education, with no direct public service bus routes. These students have the opportunity to utilise the existing contract bus provision in lieu of the Travel Grant, if appropriate.

9.4 How to Apply

Applications for transport assistance are available on Blaenau Gwent's website. Parents/Students can submit an application for transport assistance at any time, however, there is always an increase in demand prior to the start of an academic year and parents are advised to allow additional time. The Council sets a target to process all applications received within 10 school/college days, unless specialised provision is required.

Further information can be found on the following website www.coleggwent.gov.uk and <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/resident/schools-learning/school-transport/>

10.0 Procedures

10.1 Safe Routes to School/Learner Travel Arrangements

Safe Routes to school are assessed individually by the Transport Division in line with Welsh Government Learner Travel Measure (2014). A route is considered to be available if it is safe for a child/young person to walk alone or with an accompanying adult, where appropriate. It is recognised that occasions may arise when routes may become hazardous. In these circumstances, the Council reserves the right to provide free home to school transport for distances below the discretionary limits in the interests of the safety of the relevant learners. The Council will assess route safety through using clear Council criteria and a determination will be made on a risk assessment basis, where necessary.

10.2 Extreme Weather

Severe weather may impact on Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's ability to provide Home to School Transport safely. In such circumstances, the safety and wellbeing of the children and transport providers remains our key priority. Where severe weather results in the requirement to cancel transportation, the school will always notify parents at the earliest point to avoid unnecessary disruption.

Up to date weather information is posted on the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's website during periods of severe weather conditions.

If the Home to School Transport provision is cancelled, the Education Transformation team and Transport Officer will advise schools, as best they can,

when transport services are likely to resume. During these periods, the school will aim to keep parents/carers informed of developments.

If transport is cancelled due to extreme weather, the following is applicable:

- where a route is cancelled and a parent/carer takes the decision to transport the child themselves, the parent/carer remains responsible for the return journey or any subsequent costs should a return journey not be possible;
- if a child is unable to attend school due to severe weather, the parent/carer remains responsible for their child; and,
- out of hours' emergency contact can be made with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council through the main contact centre – 01495 311556

10.3 Exclusions from Home to School Transport

The Council has an approved travel behaviour code that covers all home to school transport provision. All parties will be required to sign the Blaenau Gwent Transport Behaviour Contract prior to approval of transport provision.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council reserves the right to refuse travel assistance where a child(s)/young person's behaviour is such that, it is unacceptable in line with the travel code and/or presents a significant health and safety risk, or whereby excessive and purposeful damage to vehicles has been identified. In these instances, the Transport team will issue warning letters and parents will receive no more than four letters. The behaviour management process is as follows:

- **Stage 1** - Initially raising the concerns/issues
- **Stage 2** - Informal warning indicating the remedial steps taken and the potential of transport removal
- **Stage 3** - Final warning indicating that transport will be removed.
- **Stage 4** - The school jointly with the Transport team will issue the final letter confirming the removal of transport, citing the reasons for the removal, the date of the proposed removal and the parental route of appeal.

If a pupil is refused/ excluded from transport due to behavioural issues, parents/carers then become responsible for their child's attendance at school and any transport required.

Any wilful damage that incurs cost to the transport provider for either repair or cleaning remains the responsibility of the parent/carer of the pupil concerned. Continued or repeat behaviour that result in wilful damage can result in exclusion from home to school transport.

Please note should a situation arise in during transportation, which constitutes a health and safety hazard, pupils can be removed from the vehicle with a police presence, and further transport provision withdrawn with immediate effect pending investigation.

10.4 ALN Transport Issues & Exclusions

The Transport team will monitor and review issues and incidents relating to ALN transport, and determine with relevant professionals, any reasonable adjustments required to accommodate the pupil(s).

In cases whereby there are recurrent issues i.e. behavioural and or medical, and where it is deemed that:

- the planned transport arrangements no longer meet the needs of the pupil; and/or,
- there are health and safety risks to both the pupil and contractor

In these instances, the Transport team will issue warning letters and parents will receive no more than four letters. The behaviour management process is as follows:

- **Stage 1** - Initially raising the concerns/issues
- **Stage 2** - Informal warning indicating the remedial steps taken and the potential of transport review/removal
- **Stage 3** - Final warning indicating that transport will be removed.
- **Stage 4** - Transport will be suspended and parents notified in writing, pending detailed assessment of the risks and transportation needs of the pupil. A Review Group will then be coordinated by the Transport Officer, with representation from relevant services and professionals, in order to determine a suitable solution.

If a pupil is refused or excluded from transport due to behavioural and/or medical issues, parents/carers then become responsible for their child's attendance at school and any transport required, until a suitable solution has been found.

Any wilful damage that incurs cost to the transport provider for either repair or cleaning remains the responsibility of the parent/carer of the pupil concerned. Continued or repeat behaviour that result in wilful damage can result in exclusion from home to school transport.

10.5 Safeguarding

The safety of children/young person on home to school transport or post 16 transport is Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's first priority. In particular, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will ensure that:

- all drivers and escorts have been checked and cleared by the DBS;
- all drivers and escorts will have access to safeguarding training and report any concerns that they may identify to the Transport team, the school and where appropriate, the Police and/ or Social Services;
- all drivers and escorts carry a form of identity;
- lap and diagonal seat belts are provided on all contract vehicles;
- car seats/booster seats are provided in accordance with current Government legislation;
- drivers and escorts receive appropriate training and are familiar with safety and emergency equipment;

- drivers, escorts and operators are aware of their duties, particularly in emergency situations; and,
- wheelchair occupants are correctly restrained. Wheelchairs will need to meet specific authorised crash test requirements (this specification can be confirmed directly by the user in conjunction with our Transport team).

10.6 Home to School/College Transport - Code of Good Practice

Across all of home to school transport provision and post 16 learning, the Council operates a **Code of Practice** for pupils, students, parents, schools and transport operators. The code of practice can be found on the link below;

http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Resident/Schools_and_Learning/SchoolTransport_CodeofGoodPractice.pdf

10.7 Free Transport - Right to Withdraw

The Council reserve the right to withdraw awarded transport, if an error is made or where legislation has changed which affects the entitlement of a pupil or pupils using school transport. The Council will honour the transport provision for that pupil(s) for the remainder of the academic half-term, during which the awarding error was identified, or that legislation became effective.

All awarded transport is reviewed periodically.

10.8 Appeals Procedure

Where the one of the following circumstances apply:

- a child or young person is not eligible for travel assistance;
- a change in transport arrangements has been made and the parent/carer notified; and,
- transport has not been agreed.

Parents/carers may ask for the decision to be reconsidered whereby an appeals form will then be issued. Parents/carers may then highlight exceptional circumstances they wish to be considered in relation to their entitlement.

Appeals should be made in writing to the Education Transformation team, and wherever possible forwarded by recorded post to ensure delivery/tracking. All appeal related correspondence should be addressed to:

Education Transformation Manager
Anvil Court
Abertillery
Blaenau Gwent
NP13 1DB

Appeals will then be considered by the Appeals Panel, who look to determine the level of prejudice to the child should they not be granted transport. The prejudice will be considered in relation to the impact in terms of:

- distance
- disability; and/ or,
- medical considerations on the advice of a consultant.

Parents will have 10 working days to submit an appeal from the date that the refusal letter was issued. Their appeal will then be heard within 30 working days from the specific closing date indicated within the refusal letter.

10.9 Monitoring Procedure

All vehicles will be made available for random checks by Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) and/ or another appropriate body, when required. Any complaints received by the Council concerning services or vehicles will be investigated in line with the Council's complaints policy. In the event of the complaint being upheld, the necessary and appropriate steps will be taken in accordance with the contract or as a matter of urgency and will be reported in a timely manner to the Education Directorate's Management Team (DMT).

The Council will undertake random checks to contracts, to ensure that they are being operated in accordance with the Council's terms and conditions. As part of this monitoring exercise, the following checks will also be made:

- punctuality;
- adherence to route;
- size of vehicle;
- licences; and,
- staff DBS checks are in place.

All of the above are designed to ensure safe and stress free travel.

11.0 Glossary of Terms

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)	A pupil who has an identified additional learning need
Catchment Area	A marked out geographical area made up of the streets around a school.
Catchment Area School	A school within the catchment area
Children Looked After	Children who are in the care of, or 'accommodated by', a Local Authority.
Child Protection	Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.
Designated Area	A geographical area, which is usually made up of Parishes served by a voluntary aided school (see section 2.2 for Faith/voluntary aided schools).
Nearest Suitable School	For transport purposes, the nearest suitable school may not be the catchment area school.
Officer Review	The process of someone within the Council looking again at an application for transport assistance.
Parent/Carer	Anyone who is responsible for the care of a child. We use the same definition as stated in the Education Act 1996.
Preferred School	Parents have a right to say they prefer a school other than the catchment area school. This is known as 'a preferred school'. This school will remain a preferred school when parents apply for help with transport, throughout the pupil's attendance.
Pupil	A young person who is of compulsory school age, which is the term after the child's fifth birth day and before the last Friday in June in Year 11. For transport purposes the term pupil will also include those in Foundation Stage 2.
Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children	Protecting children from abuse and neglect, preventing impairment of their health or development and ensuring that they receive safe and effective care to enable them to have optimum life chances.
Shortest Walking Distance	The shortest safe walkable route between the main access to and from your private property, such as your front gate or the top of your drive and the nearest school gate.
Special Transport Needs	Some pupils may have special transport needs that come from a disability or a special educational need.
Statutory Walking Distance	As set out in section 2, in accordance with the definition provided in the Education Act 1996.
Student	A young person who attends a sixth form or college beyond the statutory school age, which is the last Friday in June in Year 11.
Suitable Walkable Route	A route where a child can walk to and from school safe from traffic – with the parent or another

	'responsible adult' if the parent decides this is needed. If a parent cannot do this, the Council is not responsible for escorting your child to school.
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11.1 Blaenau Gwent Schools

Blaenau Gwent has the following schools and provision for pupils:

- **Community Maintained Schools** – schools managed by the headteacher and governors, in partnership with the Council. The Council arranges admissions.
- **Voluntary-aided Schools** – schools supported by the relevant Religious Board and the Council jointly. The governors will normally employ all staff and manage admissions. These schools are sometimes called 'faith' or 'denominational' schools.
- **Foundation Schools** – schools maintained by the Council but the governors are responsible for admissions. For transport assistance purposes, all pupils attending Foundation schools are treated in the same way as pupils attending community schools.
- **Resource Bases** – some mainstream schools have Resource Bases which are Council funded provisions that meet the additional learning needs of pupils whose needs cannot be met in mainstream classes. Resource Bases have a higher level of staffing providing more specialist support to meet pupil need. Pupils access mainstream classes where appropriate and placement into a Resource Base is determined by the Council's ALN Panel
- **Special School** – a school which caters for pupils with additional learning needs whose needs cannot be appropriately met in a mainstream or Resource Base setting. Special schools receive pupils with a degree of disability and placement is agreed through the Council's ALN Panel. The Council arranges admissions for all special schools.
- **Pupil Referral Units** - cater for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural Difficulties and provides short term, as well as longer term placements. The Council arranges admission through the Council's ALN Panel.
- **All Through School 3-16 model** – where there are more than one campus or site associated with the school. The school is responsible for admissions for all site allocation.
- **Welsh Medium School** – caters for children who are being taught through the medium of Welsh as their first language.

For more information on Blaenau Gwent Schools, please refer to the Blaenau Gwent Starting Schools Booklet, which can be found on the Council's website, via School Admissions.