

GUIDANCE ON HOME TO COLLEGE TRANSPORT FOR PARENTS AND FE STUDENTS DURING COVID-19



DATE: 18 August 2020

This operational guidance is designed to help everyone travel as safely as possible on home to college transport during the Covid-19 outbreak. It reflects the requirements of the [‘New School Day’ guidance](#) published by the Department of Education on 13th August 2020, government health guidance and Department for Infrastructure guidance on [safe travel on public transport](#).

How to apply for Home to College transport assistance

To reduce the need for paper forms to be sent between student, college and EA, an [online application process](#) has been developed. All applications should now be made online where possible. Paper forms will still be accepted where a student cannot avail of the online service.

Arrangements for the restart of home to college transport

The Education Authority is working collaboratively with transport providers such as Translink to maximise capacity across the transport network for eligible pupils and students. **Use of public transport, even when provided through the EA, should only be used when there is no alternative available.**

All students should therefore seek to use alternative methods of travel in particular:

- **Active travel** such as walking and cycling, where it is safe to do so. Using active travel for pupils’ journey to school/college carries the lowest risk of transmission of COVID-19 and will bring a range of health benefits as part of a healthier lifestyle. Department for Infrastructure guidance on [Safer travel guidance for public transport users, walkers, cyclists, drivers](#) provides a range of advice and information on how to safely use active travel methods.
- **Use of Park and Stride facilities:** many major towns now have Park and Ride facilities whereby parents/students could park and walk to college providing it is safe to do so.

For those students who have no alternative but to travel on dedicated buses, taxis or public transport then the EA will endeavour to make transport available as far as possible.

Home to College transport services will be operational from Tuesday 1 September 2020.

- ✓ Parents and young people are strongly encouraged to consider alternatives to using public transport, to plan their journey to and from college and to use active travel methods such as walking or cycling.
- ✓ The guidance published by the Department for Infrastructure on [Safer travel guidance for public transport users, walkers, cyclists, drivers](#) documents that when travelling, users should keep two metres social distance at all times. Where that is not possible, they should try to keep at least one metre, taking suitable precautions such as wearing a face covering.
- ✓ **Wear a face covering on all transport if you can.** It is mandatory for all persons aged 13 and over to wear a face covering on public transport. Children using dedicated school/college transport, and those who have a physical or mental illness or impairment, or a disability that means that they cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering are exempt as are all children under the age of 13 on public transport. Further details are contained within the relevant [guidance document](#).
- ✓ The non-operational dates for 2020/2021 are now available. Individual schools/colleges have discretion for exact holidays within the guidelines outlined in this section. [Find Out More](#)

Students travelling on Translink services

- Where pupils must avail of public transport services to facilitate their attendance at College, it is strongly recommended that they check the timetable for their journey in advance, as this may differ from what was available previously. Timetable information can be found on the [Translink website](#).
- As capacity will be reduced on public transport vehicles and the vast majority of students travel to college via public transport services, students should be aware of alternative options for their travel and leave additional time for all journeys.

- Students should ensure that they have appropriate face covering available prior to travel and use as required on public transport.
- If you have made a successful application but have not yet received your sessional travel pass, don't worry! Translink sessional passes will be distributed as normal through Colleges and Translink will advise their drivers on what to do if a student doesn't have their pass in the first weeks of term. Translink sessional passes are valid on public services from 1st September 2020.
- To allow greater flexibility with class schedules, sessional passes can be used by FE students for a return journey up to 9:30pm. Further terms and conditions of use can be found on the [Translink website](#).
- Translink have introduced enhanced vehicle cleaning and mobile cleaning teams travelling on board to clean common touch points
- Pupils who are not eligible for a free Sessional Pass should use one of the Translink pre-paid ticket options such as mLink, Smartlink, dayLink, iLink or contactless payments - don't forget there will be no change given on board the bus or train.

Students travelling on EA scheduled services such as taxis

- Students who travel on EA scheduled transport such as a taxi will have arrangements communicated to them directly by the local transport office. If you have made an application but have yet to receive notification of your transport arrangements please contact our Transport team on 028 9598 5959 (Mon-Friday, 8.30am-12.30pm and 1.30pm-5.30pm) to speak with your Transport local office.
- Social distancing is encouraged, but not required, on dedicated school/college transport. Dedicated school/college transport is any vehicle that only carries school pupils or FE students e.g. an EA yellow bus, Translink school service or taxi/bus contracted by the Education Authority.
- Face coverings are not mandatory on this transport but are strongly encouraged if you are able to wear and use them.

- Guidance has been issued to all private hire operators contracted to the Authority detailing requirements for hygiene and cleaning, PPE and infection control.
- Individual risk assessments may be carried out for students requesting transport assistance with medical/SEN needs to ensure that safe transport can be provided.
- Only a student's official college timetable presented to the EA will be used to clarify pick up & drop off times to ensure that no unnecessary journeys are carried out.
- Please let your Operator know as early as possible if you will be unable to travel on any given day or if your course timetable changes.

Help us help you

Here are the things that you or your child can do to help keep themselves, and others, safe on their journey:

- ✓ Wash your hands regularly and especially before you get on a vehicle.
- ✓ Use hand sanitizer where it is provided.
- ✓ Wear a face covering when you can.
- ✓ Catch It, Bin It, Kill it! Carry tissues, cover coughs and sneezes.
- ✓ Give other passengers their space when queuing, and getting on and off the vehicle
- ✗ DO NOT travel if you are experiencing any symptoms of Covid-19 [symptoms](#) or your household has been advised to isolate. If your child is displaying symptoms our EA driver may speak to you about making alternative arrangements.
- ✗ DO NOT share phones or other personal items with other passengers.
- ✗ DO NOT eat or drink on board (unless it is required for medical purposes).
- ✗ DO NOT approach the driver.
- ✗ DO NOT litter. Take any rubbish with you and dispose of it safely.

We recognise that some of these steps may not be possible; particularly for students with a medical or special educational need.

However, if we have reason to believe you or your child is putting their, or others', safety at risk by not following this guidance we retain the right to withdraw transport assistance.

Key Contacts

EA Transport Operations Helpline - 028 9598 5959

EA Transport Email - HomeToSchool.Transport@eani.org.uk

EA Website – [EA Transport](#)

Translink Website - <https://www.translink.co.uk/>