

Appendix A

Children and Young People's Department

**Policy for transport provision in Children's
Social Care**

Agreed by:

Agreed:

Implemented:

Lead Officer: Strategic Service Manager, Children's
Resources

Contact Officer: Simon Garner

Author: Simon Garner
Amended by Cecilia Rathe, Clive Groves
Andrew Roberts

Version Number: 2.05 (7.9.09)

Review Date:

Replaces: Criteria for transport provision for people
who use our services agreed February
07



2002-2003

Community Legal Services

2003-2004

Transforming Secondary Education

Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services

Contents

Contents	2
Introduction	3
Principles governing the approval of transport provision	3
Criteria for the provision of transport	4
Children in need.....	4
Children in care.....	4
School transport.....	5
Young carers	6
Notification of changes	6
Financial assistance with purchasing vehicles for approved foster carers, prospective special guardians or prospective adopters	7
Procedure for vehicle purchase.....	7

Introduction

In accordance with Schedule 2 paragraph 8 Children Act 1989 the Council shall make such provision as they consider appropriate for facilities for travelling to and from home for the purposes of taking advantage of services provided under that Act or any similar service. In addition travel subsistence may be paid for looked after children who are visiting relevant persons. The Council shall also make such provision for transport as may be appropriate for the social economic or environmental wellbeing of relevant carers or children pursuant to Local Government Act 2000.

Principles governing the approval of transport provision

A core assessment must have been undertaken to determine a need for transport provision. Essential information from this needs to be conveyed appropriately to the provider on the appropriate commissioning form at the point of requesting a service.

All transport provision must be recorded as a task that “otherwise a social worker or care provider would have to carry out”. This should be recorded at a placement meeting, service provision agreement meeting, core group, or, planning meeting. Transport provision must be regularly reviewed in line with other services provided as part of a care plan.

Agreement to commission transport must be with team managers within their delegated responsibilities under the financial policy and in line with the criteria set out below.

All agreements to funding must be made in advance of commissioning the provision and not retrospectively.

In certain circumstances following a needs assessment where a care provider or parent cannot transport a child and the child is unable to travel on public transport themselves, transport may be commissioned.

Where funding is to be reimbursed for public transport, bus/train tickets must be provided as proof of expenditure.

Criteria for the provision of transport

Transport will only be provided where it is recognised as necessary following an assessment of need. Assessment factors which would indicate the need for transport are detailed below:

Children in need

- **Children at risk of coming into care where the provision of transport for a specific task would reduce this risk.** This will be short-term only with an expectation that it would discontinue after a maximum of four weeks.
- **Children with a child protection plan at further risk due to non-attendance at children or family centres where this is a requirement of the plan.** This will be short term only with clear expectations that parents or carers will then use public transport following a review within four weeks.
- **Children with a disability attending a specific provision to meet their assessed needs.** Families of children with disabilities who do not have transport, in a small number of cases, may not be able to use public transport due to the nature of their child's disability. In this instance it would be expected that families finance transport through the provision of disability living allowance. Parent carers need to be reminded of their responsibilities to transport their own children. Social workers need to ensure that DLA mobility funds are used appropriately for disabled children who are in care. Where it has been identified through an assessment that specific provision is necessary then consideration may be given to providing transport. Transport may be provided by the service provider who will then charge the parents/carers and in such circumstances cost sharing arrangements may be negotiated with parents/carers.

When a child is required to attend hospital appointments the health authority should be approached to request transport or provide financial assistance toward transport in order to facilitate a child receiving appropriate health care provision.

Children in care

- **Transport to facilitate a care placement.** When arranging/changing a care placement it is the social workers responsibility to make the placement.

- **Transport arrangements for children in care.** Provision to meet the costs incurred by carers transporting children is included within the foster care allowance. Therefore, in relation to contact arrangements where young children have to travel the foster carers are required to provide transport in the first instance. If the foster carer is employed by an Independent Foster Agency and is unable to transport/accompany the child/young person to contact, the additional transport costs must be costed into the package and referred to the Independent Placement Panel.

Parents and relatives who see children as part of a contact plan can be provided with financial assistance equivalent to that of public transport rates for the journey.

Where carers need to attend hospital appointments with a child in care and do not have access to their own transport, public transport should be used. Commissioning it through transport section should only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Prior to commissioning transport the health authority should be approached to request transport or financial assistance towards transport in order to facilitate a child in care receiving health care provision.

Transport arrangements for respite placements should be agreed between carers and the family placement officer and should not require transport to be commissioned, unless specifically adapted vehicles are required to manage children with complex needs.

- **Transport to facilitate attendance at a specific appointment which a Court orders a parent carer to attend as part of the proceedings.** The local authority should take reasonable steps to commission appropriate transport that ensures prompt attendance.

School transport

- **Transport for looked after children of insufficient maturity or reliability or who are at risk of travelling unaccompanied.** Generally the care provider should be able to transport the children to school or accompany them on public transport. If the care provider is unable to transport/accompany the child/young person to their education provision, the additional transport costs must be costed into the package and referred to the Independent Placement Panel. The Contracts Section should be notified of any agreed transport arrangements so that they may be included within the Individual Placement Agreement.

- Where children are placed within the Borough the expectations should be that secondary school aged children should use public transport unless their assessment indicates that they are not sufficiently mature or reliable, or may be at risk to travel unaccompanied.
- In relation to children with a disability, transport to school will be provided in accordance with the existing home to school transport policy.
- For placements outside of Wirral Borough, consideration needs to be given as to where and how a child's education is provided. In such cases transport must be costed into the package and referred to the Independent Placement Panel. The Contracts Section should be notified of any agreed transport arrangements so that they may be included within the Individual Placement or Service Agreement.
- Staff need to ensure full use is made of the bus passes provided to children in care that allow them free use of the bus service within the Borough.

Young carers

- **Transport provided where there is an assessed need for a child or young person to attend the young carers' project.** Generally, where reasonable and appropriate to the child's age, public transport should be used. A copy of the completed assessment must be made available to the appropriate team manager for a decision to be made and this should be reviewed in line with any other child's plans.

Notification of changes

Providers of care must be told at the placement agreement meeting that they can cancel but **not commission additional** transport arrangements if circumstances warrant this and be given the contact details of the relevant transport provider.

Financial assistance with purchasing vehicles for approved foster carers, prospective special guardians or prospective adopters

It is expected that any support for additional transport costs will be met from the element of the weekly fostering, adoption or special guardianship allowance that is to assist with transport; and from Disability Living Allowance where the child receives the mobility element of this allowance.

Vehicles will only be provided by the local authority in exceptional circumstances taking account of the needs of the child (or children) in care and the carers ability to provide for that child (or children) and in accordance with best value principles of the Authority.

The criteria which may indicate **exceptional circumstances** are:

- normal arrangements for using public transport is not appropriate and the children cannot be routinely transported by other reasonable means **AND**

For foster carers

- more than three children are placed in the care of the foster carer and are subject to an exemption, **AND**
- this is the permanent placement for the children, matching has been formally approved and the carers are seeking to secure the children with them through residence, special guardianship or adoption;

For adopters and special guardians

- more than two children are placed with a potential adopter or special guardian and this brings the total number of children in the household under 18 years of age to 4 or more children.

The purchase of vehicles in these circumstances is subject to approval by the lead member of the Council for Children's Services under delegation.

Procedure for vehicle purchase

Where it is agreed that there is a need for a vehicle to be purchased the following procedure will apply.

- The Councils procurement procedures will be used to identify three estimates for the purchase of a suitable vehicle taking into account the needs of the carers and looked after children and the best value principles of the Council.

- Having identified a suitable vehicle, the Council will grant fund to the carers an appropriate sum for the purchase of the vehicle. This may be the total purchase price or a proportion of that price, as is appropriate or necessary with regards to the best value principles of the Council and the ability of the carers to contribute. This should be negotiated with the carers. Where agreement cannot be reached the carers will then have a right to complain under the Councils complaints procedure.
- The grant funding arrangement will be subject to a Legal Agreement. The following terms will be standard :
 - The carers shall have ownership of the vehicle and will be responsible for all costs associated with such ownership including insurance; car tax and registration; maintenance and MOT and the purchase of fuel.
 - The Council shall not be liable for any loss or damage, howsoever caused, incurred to the vehicle, any driver, passenger or third party.
 - There shall be no sale of the vehicle whilst it is needed for the purposes of caring for the children unless the purpose of such sale is to fund the purchase of a suitable replacement vehicle with the agreement of the council.
 - Any sale of the vehicle other than for the purchase of such a replacement vehicle shall be notified to the Council and will be subject to the proportionate reimbursement of the original grant funding based upon the current value of the vehicle. (For example, a vehicle purchased with 100% grant funding at a cost of £5000 and currently valued at £2000 will require reimbursement of £2000 to the Council on sale. The same vehicle, purchased with 50% grant funding, will be subject to reimbursement of £1000). This reimbursement is to ensure the proper use of public funds and is in accordance with the best value principles of the Council.
 - Priority use of the vehicle is to be given to fulfilling the responsibilities of the carer to the children

Legal Services should be requested to advise on the detail of the Legal Agreement.