

**Sandwell Children’s Trust –**

**Transport Policy**

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**Guiding principles/Policy statement**

Sandwell Children’s Trust has a duty to provide transport for all children under its care. This policy has been developed to ensure the safe and efficient provision of transport for children in care and children in need between home, school, leisure, contact and any other place or activity which forms part of the child’s care plan;

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is of paramount importance and will be given priority when making transport arrangements. Arrangements will be authorised and will reflect the outcomes of a robust risk assessment, which should consider and reflect the needs and vulnerabilities of the child or young person;

The first (preferred) option is always for a child or young person to be transported by someone who has an existing relationship with them such as a carer or their social worker. Only where this is not possible will alternative provision be arranged;

Children should travel as their peers do. Wherever possible children and young people who live close to their school should:

* Be walked to school by their carers; or a suitably mature person
* Walk/cycle alone if they are of an appropriate age and can do so safely; or
* Be transported by their carers

Children and young people should not be taken to new placements or short breaks without someone they know who can support them appropriately through such a significant transition and stay with them for good quality introductions to their new carers, likewise;

Care planning for individual children will require school placements to be maintained whilst permanency is sought. Ideally, children should not move school at certain key points in their education (e.g. GCSE years);

Children and young people who live further away from their school but live in the city should also travel in the same way as their peers where possible, e.g. public transport;

Children and young people who are accessing therapy or counselling may be anxious prior to the appointment and may exhibit varying degrees of distress before and after the session. Some children and young people may wish to disclose very sensitive matters, including possible abuse disclosures. Therefore, wherever possible, children and young people who are accessing therapy or counselling should be transported by their carers. Where this is not possible, the child's social worker, supervising social worker and the carers must consider other options, bearing in mind that there should be as much continuity as possible. This should be clearly communicated to the child and planned in such a way so that the child knows who will transport them to and from the appointment.

Children and young people should be consulted by social work staff before transport arrangements are made and their wishes and feelings considered.

**1.** **Determining if Transport is Required**

Once the social worker has identified a transport need for a child or young person, this should be recorded within the Child's Plan. The frequency and method of transport to contacts with parents or to other services should be agreed and also noted in the plan.

Transport may also be required for contact if a child is taken into care. Transport could be required for travel to respite, school, contact, and other activities.

If transport is required, staff should first speak to a family member, foster parent or alternative carer to determine if they are able to provide the transport for the child.

If the transport cannot be provided by the family or the foster parent, the next preferred option is for the child or young person to be transported by the social worker or appropriate worker. Where this is not possible, arrangements can be made to transport the child via taxi in line with agreed procedures outlined in this document.

**2.** **Transport to School**

Wherever possible children and young people, who live close to their school should travel in the same way as their peers:

* Be walked to school by their carers; or
* Walk alone if they are of an appropriate age and can do so safely; or
* Be driven by their carers and dropped off;
* Reach school by public transport if they are of an appropriate age and can do so safely.

In house foster carers are expected to meet all their travel costs as part of their fostering allowance, but if the journey exceeds 3 miles, they can receive a mileage rate for undertaking this transportation. This must be agreed by the Fostering Team Manager.

All transport requests must be fully completed by the child' social worker and be agreed by the responsible Team Manager.

\*All claims for school transport must be submitted at the end of each term

**3.** **Fostering Service**

Foster carers will normally be expected to undertake ‘typical’ parental duties, which will include taking a child to and from a local school, this journey should be made by walking where possible. Foster carers are expected to meet the cost of any local journeys, including arrangements for children to attend local schools. 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 Placement Plan.

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 the below \*age appropriate miles away from the home.  Mileage claim forms should clearly indicate the deduction of the appropriate miles from the round trip. The mileage meter readings must be completed.

\*2 miles if under 8 and 3 miles if 8 or older

Prospective foster carers should always confirm that they can safely provide sufficient space in their existing vehicle (s) for the number of foster children they offer to provide care for.

There may be practical reasons why it is not possible for the foster carer to provide transport for the child, e.g. 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.

\*All claims for mileage must be submitted at the end of each month

\*For any further queries or details that are needed please see the [Fostering Handbook](https://www.fosteringhandbook.com/sandwell/transport.html), or alternatively seek advice from the duty Fostering manager/worker.

**4.** **Out of Hours Transport**

If a child needs to be transported to a place of safety out of working hours, out of hours staff should arrange transport using the same process and approved providers list, obtaining authorisation from the duty manager.

If Transport is required, this should only be in place for the duration of the out of hours service. This should then be reviewed by the daytime service within one to two working days.

**5.** **Respite/Short Breaks Transport**

Transport for respite or short breaks should be arranged in the same way as detailed throughout this procedure.

**6.** **Recording and Reviewing of Transport Plan**

All travel arrangements agreed by the social worker should be clearly defined and reflected in the care plan. This should form part of the discussion within the subsequent Looked after reviews and be regularly reviewed and updated.

**7.** **Risk Assessments and Transport Request Form**

* An individual child risk assessment and transport request form [[Transport request form SS41a](https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms1/media/6827/tx190-ss41a-transport-request-form.xls)] must be completed each time a new transport arrangement is agreed and authorised by the Team Manager.
* Business Support colleagues have been instructed not to progress transport requests without the appropriate paperwork, and will report non-compliance to Finance, who will liaise with team and service managers to resolve any issues;
* The risk assessment should be reviewed termly
* A risk assessment is an important tool in ensuring the safety of young people being transported and also to protect drivers and passenger assistants. Health and Safety legislation requires risk assessments to be undertaken. The law does not expect us to be able to eliminate all risks but to protect people as far as ‘reasonably practicable’. Social Workers transporting children in their cars must ensure that a risk assessment, in liaison with their line manager or a duty manager, is carried out before transporting a child;
* A copy of the risk assessment must be stored on the child’s file and also provided to any relevant parties to enable them to manage the risks effectively (for example, the taxi company)
* The Local Authority, acting on behalf of the Trust, will have followed their Travel Assistance Service [TAS] [Safeguarding procedure](https://www.sandwellchildrenstrust.org/intranet/TAS-Safeguarding-procedure.pdf), prior to listing them on the [successful operator list](https://www.sandwellchildrenstrust.org/intranet/TAS-Transport-Operator-List-and-contact-details.xlsx).

\*\*Please also see [TAS letter of assurance](https://www.sandwellchildrenstrust.org/intranet/TAS-letter-of-assurance.pdf)

**8.** **Recording Transport Arrangements**

* Transport arrangements should be detailed within a child’s care plan and reviewed regularly to ensure they are still appropriate, and all relevant documentation is up to date.

**9.** **Auditing Compliance with Transport Procedures**

* The Finance team will conduct a quarterly dip sample audit of transport documentation to ensure arrangements are only being made using the specified forms, authorised providers and processes (including financial processes such as petty cash). Any issues of non-compliance will be reported to the relevant Finance manager for escalation with Service Managers;
* The quarterly compliance check will also review whether long standing payments to families are being managed appropriately;
* The results of the quarterly compliance check will feed into ongoing risk monitoring.

**10.** **Use of Passenger Assistance**

* No child/ren (under 13) should be in a taxi without a responsible adult and ideally it should be someone they know: a carer, member of staff or if this is not possible an approved passenger assistant provided by the taxi firm;
* For older children 13 years and older, judgement should be made based on their vulnerability, and reason for travel. Responsibility remains with the worker and Team Manager to ensure all safety aspects have been considered and they have confidence that the most appropriate arrangement has been made.

**11.** **Financial Arrangements**

* Only authorised personnel will be able to make transport requests
* Requests for regular scheduled journeys are to be made through the finance department
* All expenditure will need to be approved by an appropriate Budget Holder
* All requests will be reviewed before being approved so must be made in good time
* Requests for transport to schools will last no more than a school term and new requests will have to be submitted before each new term commences

**12.** **Cancellation/Amendment of Transport**

Any cancellations or amendments must be notified as soon as possible to the taxi firm, to avoid unnecessary charge to the Trust. Where the taxi has already left the base, the Trust will be liable for cost recovery.

**13.** **Parents Travelling to Contacts**

Parents can be assisted with travelling expenses\* to enable contact to go ahead. The social worker should submit a request for financial support to their manager with the reasons. Once the manager’s approval has been given, the social worker should ask the administrative staff to arrange for the payments to be made or travel warrants to be issued. Receipts for travel should be obtained from parents in all cases before payments are made.

\*The expenses will be inline with the public transport rates

**14.** **Children and Young People who are Refused Bail and Remanded to Local Authority Accommodation**

Children aged 10-17 who have been refused bail may be remanded to Trust [Local Authority Accommodation] with or without conditions. Even if the child was not previously Looked After, they will become a Looked After Child when remanded.

Please see: [**Remands to Local Authority Accommodation or to Youth Detention Accommodation Procedure**](https://www.proceduresonline.com/sandwell/cs/p_rem_la_yth_det_accomm.html)

The Trust’s [Local authority] support to the child and their family during this time is important, and efforts should be made to ensure that time on remand does not disrupt existing ties between the child and their community. Care planning should consider the young person’s needs both during the period of remand and following the court hearing. The Care Plan will also need to consider arrangements for the young person’s support should they be convicted and receive a custodial sentence.

Transport to placements should be undertaken by the local Youth Offending Service in partnership with the allocated Social Worker. This will be based on a full Risk assessment taking place and appropriate liaison between the YOS Team Manager and relevant Children’s Service Team Manager.

**15.** **Deviations from Policy**

Any deviation from any element of this policy, such as authorising the use of a taxi company not on the approved providers list, can only be done with the authorisation of a Service Manager, following assessment of all relevant risks, and must be noted clearly on the authorisation for transport form.

**Appendices**

[Appendix 1: Successful Operator List and LOTS](https://www.sandwellchildrenstrust.org/intranet/TAS-Transport-Operator-List-and-contact-details.xlsx)

[**Appendix 2: Transport Request Form**](https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms1/media/6827/tx190-ss41a-transport-request-form.xls)

[Appendix 3: Checking of Car Seats](https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms1/media/8584/tx323-car-seat-policy-appendix-3-of-transport-policy-v4-20201104.docx)

[Appendix 4: Use of Pool Cars](https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms1/media/9685/tx322-pool-car-policy-2020-appendix-4-covid-amendment.doc)

[Appendix 5: Accident Report Form](https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms1/media/7278/tx324-motor-claim-form-v3-appendix-5-of-transport-policy.xls)