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**Amendment History**

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| Version | Date | Reason for Change | Approved by |
| DRAFT v0.1 | 15/03/2017 | Initial draft version for review. |  |
| DRAFT v 0.2 | 04/05/2017 | Second draft following comments |  |
| DRAFT v 0.3 | 05/05/2017 | Third draft following comments |  |
| DRAFT v 0.4 | 17/05/17 | Amendment following Operational Managers meeting |  |
| FINAL DRAFT v 0.5 | 23/06/17 | Amendment following comments from transport operations and business support |  |

1. **Scope**

This policy, staff guidance and procedures cover the following areas of Somerset County Council (SCC) Children’s & Families Services:

* Children with Disabilities
* Children in Care
* Children in Need
* Child Protection - Safeguarding
* Internal Foster Carers and Independent Fostering Agencies

It will be used by staff within Children’s & Families and Transport as a tool to enable transport to be requested and procured for children who have no other means of accessing education, contact with family members or others, respite or health visits or any other activity relating to the child’s development or wellbeing.

**2. Purpose**

**The purpose of this guidance** is to ensure that:

* + Eligibility for support with transport arrangements is **identified through a relevant assessment** of the child’s needs (e.g. C&F assessment or pathway plan).
  + Support with transport arrangements is **fair,** and is only provided for children or young persons and their family/carers with assessed eligible needs.
  + The assessment of the child’s need will consider a range of transport options. Children and their family are aware of **options for transport** to services, and these are reflected in the child’s care plan.

This guidance will ensure equitable access to transport, where needed, so that support or services can be accessed.

Where a child is able to meet their own transport requirements in order to access services or support, we will expect them to do so.

Where a child is unable to meet their own transport need, we will help to identify the most appropriate transport option for them, for example promoting and developing life skills to enable independent travel.

The need for transport must be part of a child’s plan (or documented by a manager in a case note for emergency placements / placement changes). Where transport is provided, it will be to enable access to a service which is identified in the child’s care plan and will be included in the review process.

Where a young person or family wants to make their own transport arrangements, funding this should be considered as part of their assessment

**3. Accessing Transport for Children & Families Services: Staff Guidance**

This section of the document offers guidance for staff when considering providing transport to a child with eligible needs. Although transport is not a service in its own right, transport arrangements may be necessary so that children with eligible needs can access support and services.

**Planning support and considering transport options**

Once a child or young person has an eligible need identified, the child’s plan will consider how to meet those needs.

Appropriate transport will only be considered in the child’s plan once:

* an eligible need has been assessed;
* the support to meet this need is identified;
* it is identified that, without providing transport as part of the care plan, this need cannot be met.

Once eligibility has been established the need for transport, the following hierarchy of options should be explored by the Social Worker:

The below table provides more detail of the hierarchy of options above.

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| Circumstance | Considerations | Outcome |
| Can the child travel independently? | * Can the child walk or cycle to the service? * Can they travel on public transport? * Are they eligible for a National Bus Pass? * Are any Community Transport options available? | If someone can travel independently, they are expected to do so. This includes travelling on foot, bicycle or public or community transport.  Any limitations on travelling time, based on the individuals circumstances  We will enquire about a child or young person’s eligibility for a national bus pass on their behalf.  Information about the national bus  pass scheme click here  <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-transport/public-transport/apply-for-a-concessionary-bus-pass/> |
| Could the child be supported to travel  Independently? | * The Person can walk or cycle with a buddy * Following a travel training assessment the Person can travel independently | If a child cannot currently travel independently, we will explore the possibility of supporting them so they can travel independently through travel training or the use of a travel buddy. Further advice on Independent Travel Training can be found here: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-learning-and-schools/school-transport/support-with-using-public-transport/>  During reviews we would expect independent travel to have been considered as part of the young person’s preparation for adulthood.  Funding for independent travel training could be considered as part of the assessment. |
| Does the child have access to their own transport? | * Can they access their own/family vehicle? * Do they or their/family carer receive other funding and benefits that could be used to fund transport themselves? * Is family vehicle funded through a mobility allowance? | If a family or carer receives mobility allowance and/or has access to their own transport, it is expected that they will use it to access services. In some cases a person may be eligible for Mobility Allowance to help fund a vehicle; advice can be given to help with the application. |
| Can the foster carer or care provider transport the child? | * Has the carer access to a vehicle? * Could the carer act as a passenger assistant if required? | External foster carers/providers are expected to provide 200 miles transport per week and payment is included in the standard placement fee. If additional transport is necessary, consideration should be given in the first instance to the carer undertaking transport and being paid an additional 45ppm for the miles above the standard 200.  SCC’s foster carers are expected to offer a minimum of 75 miles per week transport, unless there are exceptional reasons why this is not possible, for example the carer does not drive. Carers will be paid 45ppm for these miles. |
| Is the eligible service the nearest appropriate  Provision? | * Is the eligible service the nearest appropriate provision? | Where Children’s Services are funding transport, consideration should be given to the nearest appropriate provision to meet the child’s needs. A child in care who moves placement whilst in Year 10 or 11 however must remain at their existing education provision wherever possible. |

**Only where there is no alternative means of travel provision should a child’s plan consider transport provision funded by Somerset County Council in order to meet an assessed need.**

If an assessed need for transport has been identified, a Travel Assessment Plan should then be completed on LCS to identify if the child/young person requires a Passenger Assistant (PA) whilst on the transport

**4. Roles & Responsibilities when facilitating Transport**

4. 1 Children’s s Social Care Services

Every effort should be made to complete a transport request as soon as possible, as it forms an integral part of the overall support package for a young person and therefore should be given equal consideration. Under no circumstances should Transporting Somerset (TS) be asked to set up a journey without a completed LCS booking form and manager authorisation as TS will not action such a request;

Children and Families staff are required to complete the LCS transport request form for all new requests or amendments to existing arrangements. The requester will detail all relevant information necessary for TS to deliver an efficient service. They will give particular attention to any issues which may put at risk the health and safety of the young person, other passengers or the transport supplier. The responsibility of risk assessing that a service user is suitable to travel safely will lie with the social worker requesting transport.

The LCS form holds mandatory fields to ensure that TS have sufficient information to provide safe and appropriate transport. Where a form is incomplete/unclear it will be returned for completion, prior to transport being booked.

All requests and changes should be made on the transport request form in LCS and sent via the Transport work tray.

Any supporting correspondence relating to an existing booking should be sent to a generic e-mail address and not to individuals in both the Transport and Childrens Social Care teams. This will ensure continuity of service in times of absence.

Any request for emergency transport for the same day, or after 4.30 for the next day, should be followed up with a telephone call to alert TS of the urgent need.

Where TS receives a call that a child is on transport with nobody to receive them at the requested destination, Children’s Social Care services will assist in getting the child to a place of safety where an appropriately trained / authorised worker can assume care until the parent / guardian is identified and located. TS will require a timely answer, as the taxi operator cannot assume care for the child or young person beyond their agreed booking, as it is likely they will have to continue to other bookings.

Where concerns are raised by Transporting Somerset regarding the conduct of a child these should be investigated by the social worker promptly as a delay could result in transport being withdrawn as the safety of the child or the driver/passenger assistant maybe at risk.

It is SCC’s expectation that all Social Care staff who need to book transport outside of the agreed booking times should use the taxi Short Notice Directory provided.

4.2 Transporting Somerset

TS will be responsible for arranging transport and Passenger Assistants (PA). Services will be appropriately procured in accordance with SCC’s Corporate Procurement Strategy to ensure quality, best value and transparency.

All contractors’ drivers and PA’s are sourced through SCC’s Dynamic Purchasing System. All have undertaken enhanced DBS checks and undertaken the relevant training. The same checks and training is undertaken by volunteer drivers and volunteer PA’s.

TS will be responsible for the recruitment; training and management of PA’s. A PA will only be provided where the transport request form has identified the need for one. PA’s can be either volunteers, employed staff or contractors staff but all will have undertaken basic disability and safeguarding training and will have an enhanced DBS in place which is renewed every 3 years.

TS will ensure appropriate transport provision to the client group and will act upon information provided by C & F staff via the agreed electronic (LCS) form; this will be the only way in which transport can be booked. Emergency telephone requests without supporting authorised booking forms will not be accepted.

TS will only source transport from companies who have suitably Somerset County Council approved DBS cleared drivers to an enhanced level and appropriately licensed taxi/private hire vehicle suppliers and volunteers. Suppliers will be expected to follow the relevant Terms and Conditions of contract including adhering to the driver codes of conduct and training requirements to ensure the safety of passengers and drivers alike.

Safeguarding is at the forefront of all journeys booked. Any safeguarding concerns raised will be referred to the named person in TS. The named person will liaise with the LADO where appropriate.

TS will try to accommodate specific requests (e.g. for a female driver, regular driver or a PA), where it proves impossible to accommodate any such request, TS will seek further instructions from C & F before making any alternative arrangements.

The booking service will be provided throughout the year between the hours of 7:30 and 5 pm. Whilst TS do their best to cover journeys, bookings will not be taken after 4: 30 for non-urgent transport for the following working day. Same day amendments to transport will not be accepted unless they are for a child in crisis (this means without the change the child would be put at risk). If Transporting Somerset feel this is being abused this will be escalated to children social care managers.

TS will book appropriate transport according to the request received, the more notice given will enable greater choice and cost efficiency. Business Support staff can check what transport is in place using the Trapeze reporting tool.

The Transport Provider is contracted to provide transport at the agreed pick up time, there is no waiting time within the contract, unless specifically specified as part of the Transport Request.

TS cannot be responsible for service failure due to weather, breakdowns, accidents or traffic delays. Suppliers are requested to arrive at a specified time but there will be occasions where they may be delayed. TS will endeavour to communicate with relevant parties so that they are kept up to date with emergency situations and where a child might arrive to their destination late.

4.3 New Academic Year requirements

During August and into September each year the response time and staff availability may be affected due to TS service demand in arranging school transport ready for schools to return. During this time, all requests for CLA education transport should be received 5 working days prior to the start of the new academic year and throughout the month of September.

4.4 Emergency Duty Team

EDT often arranges transport outside of office hours for children’s social care. EDT staff use the TS taxi Short Notice Directory to ensure best value for the authority

EDT sends retrospective information to TS to ensure the details are added to the electronic scheduling system to ensure operators can be paid when invoices are received.

TS pay the invoices received by the operator and the costs are coded to the relevant CSC budget on SAP

**5. Circumstances in which a Passenger Assistant may be required**

To ensure the child or young person can be transported safely, any risk or issues need to be identified and passed to Transporting Somerset to ensure the correct provision can be procured.

If, the Social Worker assessment identifies that there is a *significant risk to either the individual or others travelling in the vehicle* a PA may be requested. This does however need to be assessed on a regular basis to determine whether a PA remains appropriate.

Such a request should have prior approval by the relevant manager before the request is submitted to Transporting Somerset.

The following should be considered when assessing the need for a Passenger Assistant:

* Disability – i.e. physical need/emotional need
* Vulnerable young person – i.e. history of sexual allegation
* Driver protection – for example if the young person is vulnerable or has been subject to abuse
* Numbers travelling – i.e. not wanting child to travel alone, or the mix of young people on transport
* Social length of journey – long journeys may require a stop and facilitate child to use toilet
* Special needs of a client i.e. medical/behavioural need
* Age, in particular children under 8
* Level of functioning

The Social Worker is expected to undertake a risk assessment, document this in an LCS case note and provide details for the completion of the Transport Travel Assessment form which becomes part of the LCS Transport Request Form and is sent in the normal way through LCS to the Transport work tray.