

## **Guidance on Cancelling Transportation Services for Children and Young People in Severe Weather Conditions**



### **SCOPE OF THIS DOCUMENT**

This document provides guidance on Children's Services approach to the curtailment or potential cancellation of transport services for children and young people receiving or accessing our services. This guidance applies to transport undertaken in both council provided vehicles and private vehicles used by staff during the course of their work.

### **RELATED WEBSITE ARTICLES**

[RoSPA: Winter Driving Tips](#)

[RoSPA: Driving for Work: Safer Journey Planner](#)

This chapter was added to this manual in February 2014.

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#### **1. Severe Weather Conditions**

Severe winter weather conditions are difficult to define but are generally conditions which are extremely hazardous and which have a seriously disruptive effect on public and private transport. During periods of adverse weather it may be necessary to consider curtailing or cancelling transport services for children and young people receiving or accessing our services depending upon local highway conditions.

#### **2. Localised Decision-making and Risk Assessment**

Whilst in the most extreme circumstances there may be a need for a 'blanket' cancellation of transport for children and young people (see **Section 3, Blanket Cancellations**), generally decisions on whether transportation for children and young people is cancelled will be risk-assessed at a local level by drivers in conjunction with their managers as these parties will be most aware of the environmental and service contexts and the local weather and road conditions.

### **Responsibility of Managers**

- Where adverse weather is likely or is occurring, to check the weather forecast regularly and consider if there are any implications in respect of service delivery (see [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk));
- If further forecast information is required then contact the council's [Duty Gritting Officer](#) for a detailed local forecast;
- Managers have a duty to consider the welfare, health and safety implications of providing transport for children and young people in adverse weather conditions. Decisions to cancel or amend transport services should be taken in the interests of the safety and welfare of children and young people, transport drivers and other road users;
- Managers will consider individual circumstances including the different safety and mobility needs of both employees and children and young people i.e. disability needs, pregnancy etc;
- Managers are to ensure that resources are available to ensure an emergency kit is available in Council owned vehicles (see **Section 5, Emergency Kit**);
- Managers are to ensure Council owned vehicles have been appropriately maintained i.e. MOT & serviced.

### **Responsibility of Drivers**

It is the responsibility of all employees to:

- Make every effort to attend their place of work even in severe winter weather at their normal times of working and/or by the Core Time hours;
- To notify their supervisor/line manager at the earliest opportunity of any concerns that they have regarding their ability to safely transport children and young people in poor weather conditions;
- To ensure that there is a fully stocked emergency kit in the vehicle that they are using (see **Section 5, Emergency Kit**);
- To ensure that they have planned their journey and the vehicle is suitably checked (see **Section 6, Prepare Your Vehicle**).

## **3. Cancellation**

### **Assessment**

When determining whether transportation should be cancelled, managers and staff should assess whether transport could operate at a manageable level of risk taking into account not only the current weather conditions but also the forecasted weather conditions (see [Met Office](#) website) and if further information is required contact the council's **Duty Gritting Officer** for a detailed local forecast.

An assessment should be undertaken which should include consideration of the following and any other issues the manager / driver determine as relevant:

**Areas for considering cancellation of transport for children and young people**

Question	Comment
What are the current weather conditions?	
What are the predicted weather conditions?	
Is the journey critical / essential?	
Is there an alternative mode of transport – walking, bus etc?	
Are main routes gritted / accessible?	
Are side roads likely to be accessible and manageable?	
Destination: Are there likely to be access issues, what are conditions underfoot?	
Equipment requirements i.e. are clear routes to premises needed for wheelchairs etc?	
Condition of the vehicle being used?	
Does the vehicle have an emergency kit available?	
Is the destination out of borough: If so it is likely to be difficult to predict what the conditions will be?	

Driver / passenger issues; age, ability, mobility etc?	
Other issues considered:	
<b>Outcome of assessment:</b>	

Depending on the service area it will be necessary for team managers to assess whether contracted services that include a transportation element i.e. contact need to be cancelled.

### **Blanket Cancellations**

In the most severe conditions, an Assistant Director may consider a blanket cancellation of transportation for children and young people. The basis for a 'blanket' cancellation is primarily based upon the perceived risk to service users and Children's Services staff arising from predicted severe weather conditions and / or actual weather being experienced. Specific consideration should be given to:

1. The weather forecast: Does it predict adverse weather i.e. severe snow and ice which could be a risk to employees / children and young people?
2. The journey and destination; the severity of the conditions on the road, in particular on the side roads. Main through routes across the borough will most likely have been gritted but this may not be the case on side roads;
3. The conditions underfoot on pavements, access routes, car parks and driveways etc. In some cases if the road has been gritted or the volume of vehicle traffic is sufficient to melt / clear cleared snow or ice, vehicles can pass with care; this is not the case for the pavements and the risk of falls for children and young people and staff in icy and snowy conditions becomes a real risk;
4. The potential for injury; What if a member of staff falls and is injured and is not then able to care for the child or young person he/she is with. Even if they are able to raise the alarm how easy and soon will assistance arrive.

Where a blanket cancellation is called, Heads of Service will make arrangements to notify service areas of the cancellation. In these circumstances, no passenger-carrying vehicles within Children's Services should be used and managers must ensure that vehicles parked on site are not used.

Where a blanket cancellation of transport for children and young people is determined, transport for service users organised through the Taxi Framework Agreements will similarly need to be cancelled.

### **Variations to Blanket Cancellations**

On the day(s) of a cancellation there can sometimes be a variation between the forecasted and the actual weather conditions experienced in the various area of the Borough.

As a consequence, when managers arrive at service areas they may feel that, based on the known factors including environmental and service area context and local weather conditions, transport could operate at a manageable level of risk in contrast to the predicted risk level which had prompted the blanket cancellation.

In these circumstances, the team manager can liaise with their Head of Service (or nominated officer) in order to discuss the possibility of offering a localised transport service for children and young people on that day subject to a risk assessment having been undertaken (see **Section 2, Localised Decision-making and risk Assessment**).

### **4. Driving in Snow – Useful Advice**

- Don't ignore police warnings about closed roads;
- Double or even triple your normal stopping distance from the vehicle in front. Drive so that you don't rely on your brakes to be able to stop – on an icy surface they simply may not do that for you, but keep moving as much as possible, even if it is only at walking pace;
- On a downhill slope get your speed low before you start the descent, and do not let it build up – it is much easier to keep it low than to try and slow down once things get slippery;
- Start gently, avoiding high revs, and use second gear to avoid wheel spin. If you get yourself into a skid the main thing to remember is to take your foot off the pedals and steer. Only use the brake if you cannot steer out of trouble.
- Plan your journey around busier roads as they are more likely to have been gritted. Avoid using short cuts on minor roads – they are less likely to be cleared or treated with salt, especially country lanes;
- Always clear your windows, lights and mirrors. Don't forget that snow on the bonnet can blow back onto your windscreen, so clear that off, and clear the roof to avoid snow being blown onto traffic following you before moving off;
- Make sure you have an emergency kit so you are prepared in the event of a breakdown. This should include a charged up mobile phone, torch, food for energy, water and a blanket. For snow you also need a shovel with you. On longer journeys always let someone know you have set off and tell them your planned route;
- You can also improve car performance in snow by fitting winter tyres. Winter tyres have a different tread pattern to give better grip on snow and ice and have a snowflake on a

mountain as a symbol on the sidewall. The symbol indicates that they use winter grade rubber which stays flexible and maintains grip to well below freezing. The rubber used on standard tyres hardens as the temperature drops.

(Source: [RoSPA: Winter Driving Tips](#))

## 5. Emergency Kit

When extreme weather is possible, keep an emergency kit in your car, especially if you're going on a long journey:

- Tow rope;
- A shovel;
- Wellington boots;
- A hazard warning triangle;
- De-icing equipment;
- First aid kit (in good order);
- A working torch;
- A car blanket;
- Warm clothes;
- Emergency Rations (Inc hot drink in a flask – non-alcoholic, of course);
- Mobile Phone (fully charged).

(Source: [RoSPA: Winter Driving Tips](#))

## 6. Prepare Your Vehicle

It's a good idea to have your vehicle fully serviced before winter starts and have the anti-freeze tested. If you can't have it serviced, then do your own checks. In particular, check:

- Lights are clean and working;
- Battery is fully charged;
- Windscreen, wiper blades and other windows are clean and the washer bottle filled with screen wash;
- Tyre condition, tread depth and pressure (of all the tyres, including the spare);
- Brakes are working well;

- Fluids are kept topped up, especially windscreen wash (to the correct concentration to prevent it freezing), anti-freeze and oil.

It's also a good idea to stock up on de-icer, windscreen wash, oil and anti-freeze at the start of winter.

(Source: [RoSPA: Winter Driving Tips](#))