

Cyngor Sir Penfro  
Pembrokeshire County Council



## **CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS**

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# **Coronavirus (Covid-19) – The Recovery Phase**

## **Operational Guidance for School Transport Provision**

**June 2020**

## Version Control

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date issued</b>	<b>Brief summary of Change</b>
0.1	09/06/20	First draft issued to Huw Jones, Education & Large Bus Operators for initial feedback
0.2	16/06/2020	Amended draft sent to Director of Education, Gold and shared with Education Recovery Planning Group

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## 1. Introduction

In response to the global Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic emergency, the Welsh Government (WG) closed all Welsh schools from 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Since then all schools have been closed for the statutory provision of education. However, in line with the Minister for Education's announcement made on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, some schools have operated as Childcare Hubs for the children of critical workers and those deemed as vulnerable.

In preparation for a phased re-opening of schools, and subject to further guidance from the WG, Pembrokeshire County Council's (PCC) school transport network will begin re-activation based on the guidance below.

Specifically, the WG announced on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 that all schools would re-open to all pupils on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020 with the Summer Term being extended by one week to end of 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020 to give children and staff time to catch up before the summer break. Childcare arrangements would also remain in place for the priority groups (i.e. vulnerable and key worker children) but these would now be held in their normal schools.

The plans outlined below set out how provided school transport in Pembrokeshire is to resume and these plans will be updated and re-circulated as the return to school programme progresses. This guidance should be read and adopted by all PCC passenger transport contractors/operators. Clearly, it is intrinsically relevant to schools and parents/carers.

Operators should be aware of the general WG advice stating that we should keep our distance from people outside our households. Public Health Wales recommends keeping a distance of 2 metres where possible. They say that the key thing is to not be too close to other people for more than a short amount of time, as much as you can. The risk of infection increases the closer you are to another person with the virus and the amount of time you spend in close contact: you are very unlikely to be infected from just walking past another person, they add.

They also state that if you need to be near other people you should avoid physical contact, try to face away from other people, and keep the time you spend near other people as short as possible. And be aware of the surfaces you or others touch. On the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 the WG announced that they were now advising people face masks on public transport and in other places where social distancing is difficult to maintain. We therefore feel it would be prudent to carry this advice across to school transport to ensure that the advice being given to everyone travelling on buses is equal and no groups are being discriminated against or left out. The latest guidance from WG on the wearing of face covering can be found at <https://gov.wales/face-coverings-frequently-asked-questions>

Operators should also note that the WG have published guidance on Travel which can be found at <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-travel>

Further advice is that staff employed by operators should avoid mixing with each other where possible and that operators should support individual workers who choose to use face coverings in situations where social distancing is not possible.

PCC greatly appreciates all the support and effort from school transport operators and our other partners in these difficult times and we are always here to support you.

So, for any queries please contact the Council's Integrated Transport Unit (ITU), using the contact details shown at the foot of this guidance.

## 2. General Guidance to School Transport Operators re Coronavirus (Covid-19)

2.1 Safety of staff, pupils and the public will be paramount

2.2 Operators should be aware of advice from the WG on 'Workplace guidance for employers and employees: Covid -19' which can be found at <https://gov.wales/workplace-guidance-employers-and-employees-covid19>

2.3 Drivers, Passenger Assistants and pupils should not travel on transport if they are feeling unwell, particularly if they have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) which include a new, continuous cough, high temperature, or loss of taste or smell, or if they live in a household with someone showing any of these symptoms – they should self-isolate and stay at home. Any pupils becoming ill at school should be taken home by their parents (NB parents should have transport contingency arrangements in place to do this)

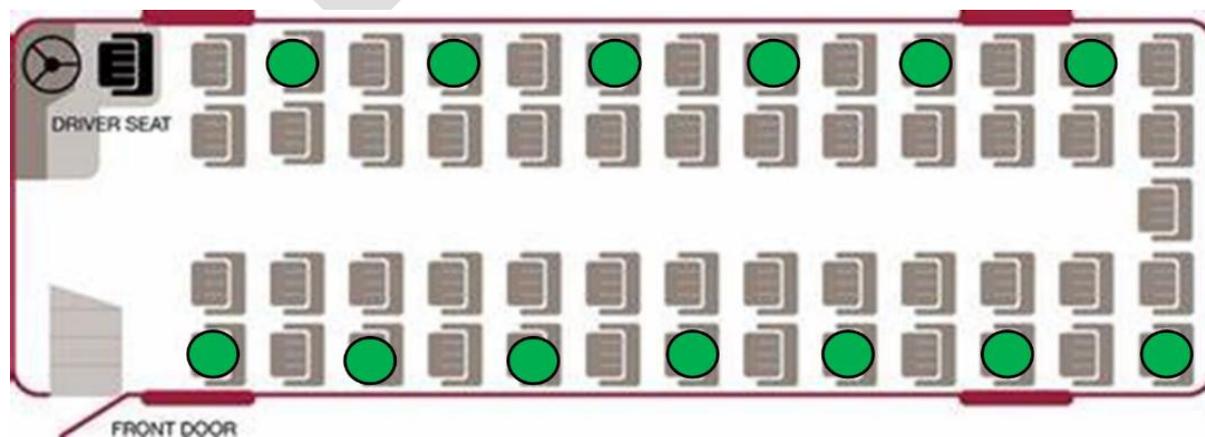
2.4 For staff who live in the same household as someone who is at 'High risk (clinically extremely vulnerable)', Public Health Wales say that the rest of the household do not need to start shielding themselves, but they should stay at home as much as possible - operators and drivers need to consider this advice and their own circumstances before deciding how, when and if they are deployed

2.5 Children who are considered extremely clinically vulnerable and shielding should continue to shield and are not expected to attend school; parents of children clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) of severe illness from coronavirus should follow medical advice about attendance

2.6 The Government's specific Covid-19 advice for staff in the transport sector should be followed and can be found at <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-travel>. Additionally, people in Wales have been advised that three layer face coverings should be used where social distancing measures are more difficult to achieve, for example, public transport. It is therefore advised that this should also be adopted for school transport.

2.7 Operators should ensure that all touch points on school transport vehicles have been cleaned to protect against Coronavirus/Covid-19 prior to and after every new journey – this includes door handles, keys, handrails, armrests, seat backs, seatbelts, driver controls, etc.

2.8 Social distancing inside vehicles means that they will be able to carry no more than 20% of their capacity from 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020 – on buses, only one seat must be used per row (green dots), with alternate nearside/offside window seats occupied, as per the diagram below; bus operators should mark seats accordingly; siblings from the same household can sit next to each other as long as they are socially distanced from other pupils. On taxis only the rear seat diagonally opposite the driver should be used [NB unless two siblings from the same household are transported, when both rear seats can be occupied, subject to taxi operator agreement]



2.9 Schools should let the Council's ITU know which entitled pupils will require provided transport from 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020, by no later than Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020 via email to [school.transport@pembrokeshire.gov.uk](mailto:school.transport@pembrokeshire.gov.uk). The ITU will also need to know which vulnerable / key worker entitled pupils from other year groups will also require transport. The ITU will then contact transport operators about providing the required transport. It's appreciated that not all pupils from designated year groups may require transport. Schools also need to confirm their transport arrival/departure times at the school site, as we understand that some schools may stagger these to reduce site congestion.

2.10 Where the anticipated number of pupils is greater than 20% capacity, the ITU will liaise with the operator to establish what alternatives are available, this may involve deploying a larger vehicle - where this is not possible, operators may be asked to provide additional vehicles, or in liaison with schools, carry out a 'double trip' so long as they can ensure vehicles can be adequately cleaned between trips – where an operator incurs additional costs over and above Supplier Relief payments/standard contract rate payments, they need to talk to the ITU about this on a case by case basis

2.11 Pupils waiting for buses should do so safely and 2 metres apart, and this is a parental responsibility. Boarding buses should be done one at a time and 2 metres apart - the vacant seat nearest the rear of the bus must be used first; disembarking buses should be undertaken one at a time, from the most forward seats first, with pupils staying 2 metres apart, working back in turn to the rear seats (i.e. so that pupils walking down the aisle do not pass any other seated pupils). These rules apply for both inbound and outbound journeys. Drivers should report pupils who do not adhere to these guideline via the normal channels.

2.12 Where primary school pupils have difficulty fitting seat belts themselves, the driver should offer verbal guidance and support from a safe distance – seat belts should be pre-adjusted for pupil use

2.13 Use social distancing where possible in a transport hub/school site where multiple vehicles may be present where loading and unloading is required – when boarding at a hub, drivers may stand off the bus 2 metres away from boarding pupils/passengers; drivers should not congregate; schools may wish to supervise on-site unloading/loading

2.14 Where school 'feeder' transport is provided, the operator should contact the ITU to discuss the available options, the ITU may consider possible revised arrangements, one of which may be to provide the transport directly to the end destination, and the reverse of this on the return journey

2.15 Operators should provide good vehicle ventilation as much as practicably possible when carrying passengers

2.16 On-board disposable cleaning fluids/cloths/disposal gloves and a suitable secure on-board bin for disposal of any cleaning items, tissues or PPE, for in-journey use, should be provided, all vehicles to be subject to 'deep cleaning' at the end of each day

2.17 All staff and pupils should maintain good hand hygiene (e.g. washing hands with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser, particularly straight before and straight after journeys), avoid direct hand contact with eyes, nose and mouth, and use tissues to catch coughs and sneezes (or at least to cough/sneeze into the crook of their elbow) disposing of tissues in a bin as soon as possible

2.18 To maintain on-vehicle social distancing protocols, only entitled pupils whose parents have notified their school that transport will be required will be allowed to travel on the school bus/taxi;

2.19 Where pupils/passengers do not behave in accordance with transport guidance and/or generate an unacceptable safety risk to staff, they will be refused transport without notice

2.20 Safely dispose of any PPE if it is contaminated and straight after use

2.21 At the end of their shift, drivers and Passenger Assistants (PAs) should minimise possible contamination before entering their own home – key things to do include washing with soap and water, and isolating clothes and personal effects in a bag/box prior to cleaning

2.22 Agreed contractual rates will replace 'Retained Operator Payment Agreement' payments from the date of a reactivation of an individual contracted route – 'Retained Operator Payment

Agreement' is currently payable until at least 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020; inactive routes may be re-tasked/re-scheduled by the Council within this scheme

### **3. Additional Coronavirus (Covid-19) Guidance for Special Educational Needs Transport**

3.1 It is particularly important that ITU is informed by schools which pupils are returning and requiring provided transport. It should be noted that given the social distancing restrictions on transport discussed elsewhere in this guidance, delivering the required transport maybe difficult or not possible; close liaison between schools and ITU is critical

3.2 Where there are vehicle capacity problems, larger or extra vehicles may offer some solution, but their supply is limited; also, 'double tripping' is unlikely to be viable on longer distance routes

3.3 Where taxi transport is normally provided in a normal sized 'car' for 1-3 pupils with a Passenger Assistant, it will be impossible to maintain the current social distancing protocols, so this transport will not be able to operate, in these circumstances, alternative arrangements will be made where possible

3.4 The Passenger Assistant (PA) should be allocated one of the seats in the seating plan outlined below and not sit beside a pupil/passenger. If there is a specific physical, behavioural or medical need the PA should sit close to, but not next to the relevant pupil/passenger. The PA may need to intervene if there is a specific in-journey incident. Appropriate PPE should be worn

3.5 At pick up points, where staff receive passengers from their parents/carers, social distancing guidance must be adhered to and PPE, alcohol hand sanitiser and cleaning deployed appropriately straight before and after passenger handover has occurred; keep a maximum distance from and minimum time with parents/carers - there should be no physical contact with their doors, gates or parent/carer property or belongings

3.6 An additional risk assessment should be carried out where circumstances change or where there are additional issues present

3.7 For pupils/passengers who may require rescue medication it is possible that transport will not be able to be provided because of the potential infection risks that this may cause.

3.8 If the PA needs to fasten a passenger's seat belt/harness, this should be done with minimal physical contact, wearing appropriate PPE

3.9 When applying or removing PPE, it is important that the wearer's hands are washed/cleansed before and after each use, the donning and doffing of PPE in the correct order is essential to avoid cross contamination, full guidance on the correct method and sequence of donning and doffing PPE can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-use-for-non-aerosol-generating-procedures>

3.10. If drivers or PAs have to manoeuvre wheelchairs, they should clean the wheelchair handles and brake levers prior to pushing the wheelchair. Likewise, if installing car seats or booster seats, clean the hard surface areas (e.g. outer shell, buckles) before installing in the vehicle and clean them after use – for these tasks PPE should be worn, and this should include disposable gloves and fluid resistant face masks

3.11 Special Educational Needs Transport (whether by taxi or accessible bus) should take account of the NHS procedures for transporting someone without covid-19 symptoms where social distancing is not possible (please see 'Table 4' infection control) shown at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/879111/T4\\_poster\\_Recommended\\_PPE\\_additional\\_considerations\\_of\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879111/T4_poster_Recommended_PPE_additional_considerations_of_COVID-19.pdf)

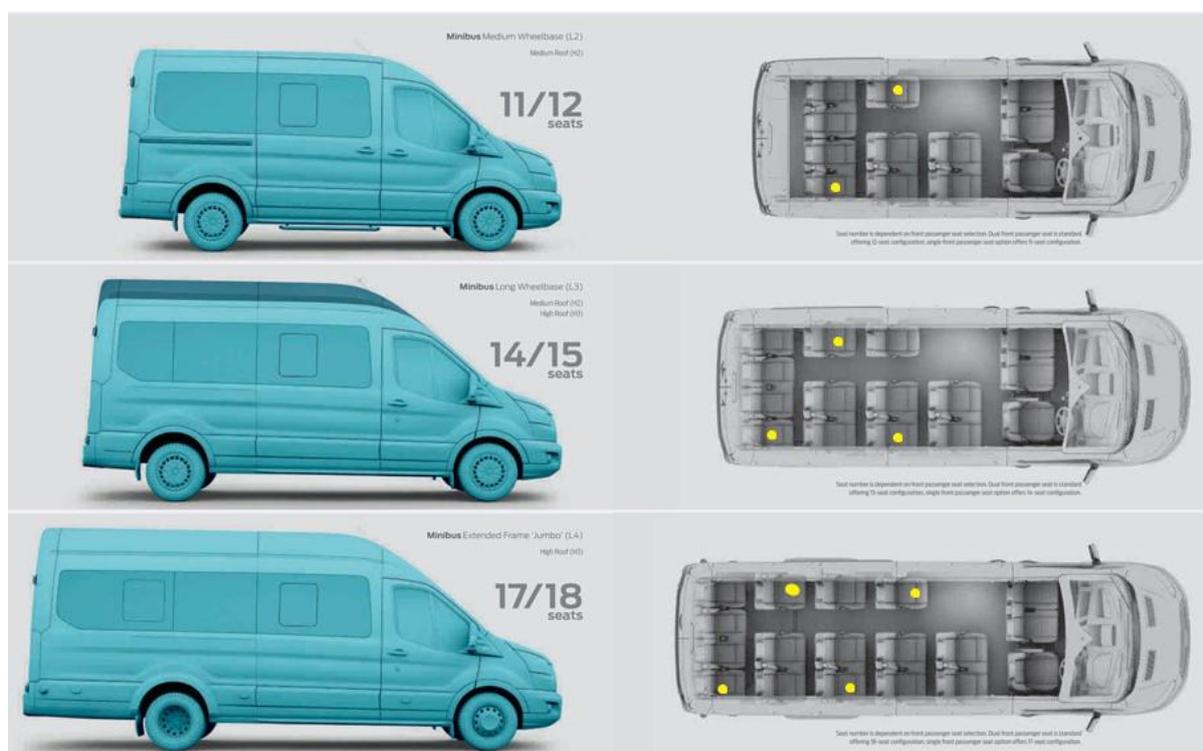
3.12 Proper planning and the use of appropriate PPE will be needed for wheelchair users and those with disabilities where handling and sustained contact may be required for getting on and off vehicles, as in the NHS procedures

3.13 Transport will only be provided if it is the only option for the pupil's/passenger's needs and is the right mode of transport for the person being transported

3.14 Any unnecessary moving and handling or close sustained contact with the pupil/passenger will be avoided

3.15 If pupils or passengers present an unacceptable safety risk to staff or other pupils/ passengers, the Council reserves the right to withdraw transport without notice

3.16 Seating arrangements should be in accordance with the principles outlined above, and specifically for smaller minibus type vehicles from June 2020, the following diagrams indicate how seating arrangements should be provided, with the yellow dots indicating the only seats to be occupied, please note the diagram showing 11/12 seat would also apply for 8 seater vehicles:



3.17 The UK Government have issued advice in respect of 'COVID-19: infection prevention and control (IPC)' and operators and staff should be aware of this. It can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>

3.18 Operators should also be aware of 'Guidance for Ambulance Trusts' which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-ambulance-trusts/covid-19-guidance-for-ambulance-trusts>

#### **4. Local Bus Services (public bus) Covid-19 Guidance**

4.1. Whilst the general principles above will apply, the WG has now issued guidance advising that face masks should now be used by all passengers travelling on public transport.

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## **5. Community Transport Groups**

5.1 The general principles above apply to community transport but if Groups have any queries, they should contact the ITU.

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*Email: [school.transport@pembrokeshire.gov.uk](mailto:school.transport@pembrokeshire.gov.uk)*

*Web: [www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk](http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk)*

*Date: 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020*

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